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Charles Runnels, interviewed by Gary Waters, Part 2

Charles Runnels

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**Transcript of an Interview
with Charles Runnels
by Gary Waters
June 22, 1999
Abbott, Maine**

The following interview was conducted for the MAINE VIETNAM VETERANS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT. Tapes and transcripts of project interviews have been deposited at the Maine Folklife Center at the University of Maine at Orono, where they are available to the public in accordance with the Center's policies. Some restrictions may apply to the use of these interviews by researchers. The Maine Folklife Center should be consulted concerning fair-use guidelines.

Reference copies of the tapes and transcripts are also available in the library of the University of Maine at Farmington and in Special Collections in Ladd Library at Bates College, Lewiston, Maine.

Monique Leamon of Casco, Maine, transcribed the recordings.

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CR:Charles Runnels

GW:Gary Waters

Tape One, Side A:

GW:...'99. I'm Gary Waters. I'm the interviewer for the MAINE VIETNAM VETERANS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT. I'm in Abbott, Maine. I'm speaking with Charles Runnels, and we have discussed the release form and Charles has signed it.

Charlie, would you please begin by first stating your full name, and then tell me what you were doing just immediately prior to going into the military?

CR:OK, my name is Charles Runnels, and that's spelled R-U-N-N-E-L-S. Just immediately prior to going into the military I was in high school. I grew up in Bethel and I went to high school at Gould Academy. I graduated from Gould in June of '65, and prior to my graduation back in the winter I'd been originally recruited to play football for the University of Maine and apparently wrote one of the all-time lowest scores on the written, on an SAT test, so they withdrew that. And I originally went through the physical process and everything else in March of '65 to go in the Marine Corps and I was sworn into the Marine Corps on the delayed program on May 10th, 1965, by a school teacher Reserve Air Force officer at Stevens High School in Rumford. I still remember that, and I graduated on June 13th and went on active duty on August 30th.

That summer I spent the majority of it helping a guy named Walter Grover build an old three, one of those monster three story chicken brooder houses for a guy name Henry Godwin over in Mayville [*unintelligible phrase*] is also the town of Bethel over by the green bridge. And I went on active duty August 30th, took us down to Boston on a bus, and then we flew out of Boston, first time I'd ever been on an airplane, down to Buford Naval Air Station outside of Parris Island, and we got there and there was a bus there and, as I learned later, you always pick the biggest guys you can find [*unintelligible word*] the best drill instructors, but you always find the biggest guy from your [*unintelligible phrase*] on the bus, because years later I was to become a drill instructor myself. And you stand at the foot of the stairs and there's a bus there, and I'm the, in the very back seat of the airplane, and they said OK, everybody get up and leave the airplane, so the gangway was there, so old dummy here gets to be the first one down the gangway and I hit the bottom of the stairs and this guy who, I came not quite to his shoulder, mucked me by the front of the shirt and kind of picks me up in the air a little bit and screams that this is a Marine Corps private, it is not a human being, it is a Marine Corps private. When I release

this Marine Corps private, he will do a double time. And then he looks at me and he says that means run, stupid. Into that bus, go as far to the back of it as you can, and, I should really reiterate, it was not a bus, it was a cattle car, *[unintelligible word]* a Marine Corps cattle car. There's no seats and when there's seats in it they pull them out, and he says you go back as far as you can in the corner and you will then get on the floor and roll up in a ball and all the rest of you morons will pile right in there, too, he says, and you will keep your heads down because you're not fit to run your filthy eyeballs over my Marine Corps base. And my feet were going about eighty miles an hour when that boy let go of me and I hit the ground and bang, I was on the bus, actually I was in the cattle car.

And then they hauled us in to receiving and went through the usual goat roping, screaming and yelling and pushing people around. I remember my recruiters had told me what all this horror was going to be like, and I'm standing kind of in front of my little rack saying, I wonder when the bad stuff starts, I wonder when the bad stuff starts, you know. I think that attitude made me one of the few people that can remember everything that happened to me the first few days at boot camp, because my recruiters were like World War II and Korean veterans and things had changed not much, and I just kept waiting for the bad stuff to start and it never did. We were picked up at, oh, *[unintelligible word]* daylight the next morning by our DIP, run across the parade deck with our little seabags and our little baggy green utilities. Then there's the usual one which was always one of my favorites later as a drill instructor, you have eighty idiots standing out there with their seabags and you point to the door, which is the size of a common door in your house, in one end of the squad bay and you tell them, and he told us that when he said to move we were all to double-time and then he reiterated the fact to us morons that that meant run, with our seabags through that door and that there was eighty racks in there, forty sets of two. And there was to be two privates standing in front of each set of racks, not one and not three, always two. Guess what? In all the platoons I ever picked up they never got it right and we didn't get it right. And the other thing I always thought comical was eighty people trying to go through, with sea bags and baggy boots and clothes, a door the size of your kitchen door. I always thought, and they pile up like chickens at a *[unintelligible word]*, it's amazing. Well, I got through that and boot camp was not a big beast. I mean I was, I had, was in good shape in the spring before and I was in good shape in the summer and the big key to boot camp is you use noise and fatigue to put pressure on people, and if you're in good shape, even though I didn't know I was but evidently I was, the fatigue, all the, the PT and everything doesn't hurt

as much. Therefore you're able to withstand all the other stuff better. And you also have to keep in the back of your mind that there is a rule that says that even if they do kill you they aren't allowed to eat you and they have to send you home, so it works out well that way.

I graduated from boot camp end of October, about the third week of October I think, something like that, third or fourth week of October, and then I went up to ITR, which is the infantry training regiment, and that was at old Camp Geiger which was part of Camp Lejeune, had the little stone barracks and the fifty yard run to the building that was the head, and it was cold and it was the middle of the winter. Well, middle of winter in North Carolina is not a big problem, except I always thought that down south it was like hot year round. And one night in early December we're in the field on a field problem and it's spitting snow and I'm just laying there thinking, gee, this is not what I thought the deep south was supposed to be like. And also, they had some really rotten creepy crawlies down there. I was, one time I was assaulting through a mud hole toward a hill in this field problem, and there was a water moccasin already occupying the mud hole. He won, I left.

So you graduated ITR and then they sent us to two weeks of additional special training of some kind, and granted us our MOSs before we got out of there, which was something unusual. I was an O311, which is infantry rifleman, like everybody else. Show you how much things have changed nowadays, I had a son that went in the Marine Corps, it's almost impossible to get an 03 MOS, an infantry MOS, because they just don't need that many any more. Of the eighty guys in my platoon in boot camp, we had one guy who went to artillery, we had three or four radio operators, couple combat engineers, and everybody else was an 03.

GW:Did you, is this where you received your combat training?

CR:Yes, in the Marine Corps you, you go through boot camp and boot camp is just what they, is basic training. You go, on the first week is forming, it's actually thirteen weeks, first week is forming, or the Army calls it zero week because it don't count, and in those days you didn't take all your, the tests to determine your MOS and your aptitudes and all this other stuff was not done before you went in, it was done that first week after you went in.

[unintelligible phrase] your GSD test. That's why you have guys that were college graduates get their GT scores that were so low that they theoretically were

mentally retarded. Well, that's because they were so terrified and in such shock they couldn't see what they were doing. I did pretty good. In fact I retook it three years later and hardly got a better score than I did then. The, once you, and that's when they issue you your uniforms and give you your rifle. Unlike today, they didn't lock it, they issued you your rifle and your bayonet and all that stuff and you get to *[unintelligible phrase]* kept it forever. They didn't lock them up in armories. Even years later, I mean, you always, that was something you always had to lock up in the barracks someplace was your rifle. I went through, then you, then the first, oh, close to a month, it was a number of weeks, was physical training and classes, school. I mean you had everything from all your basic stuff, your weapons, your Marine Corps history. Years later I was in the Army Reserve for a long time and the, I think one of the places the Army misses the boat is they don't spend enough time instilling a historical value in their troops, a special concern or they don't make you feel that you're something very special. And the Marine Corps is very good at making you feel that there's something very special here, and I think that makes a difference in the way they operate later.

So what you do is you get up in the morning, you know, just turn the lights on and scream and yell and throw a few things around, you get up. And then you go to breakfast, clean the barracks, and by the time that was over your little breakfast had settled and we'd go out and literally, probably two hours of PT ended up by a three mile run, and sometimes it was just calisthenics and running, sometimes we'd run the obstacle courses, that type of stuff. But basically just a couple hours of physical training, at least two, sometimes even three.

GW:Now this was in boot camp?

CR:This is in boot camp.

GW:OK, which of the schools afterwards, the I-, was it ITR?

CR:Yeah.

GW:Is that where you go, received your actual combat training?

CR:Right, yeah, because you see, as I said, boot camp and then you get classes, then you go to the range and spend three weeks out there shooting. You go to swimming class. A few things you've got to do to graduate from Marine

Corps boot camp, you got to pass the PT test, got to qualify with a rifle, and you got to be able to swim, or at least pass whatever they're, *[unintelligible word]* proofing or, which was the in-thing in the sixties and so on, those are the three things you got to do. Beyond that it's your basically, one of our drill instructors told us, don't worry about being stupid because you kill the enemy with your rifle and your body, not with your mind, see, we'll take care of the thinking part. But then your actual combat training, and here again this is something every Marine gets. If you're going to be a cook, a clerk, and infantry man, it doesn't matter, you go through this IT- *[unintelligible word]*. It's called MCT now, Marine Corps Combat Training, but then it was just infantry training regiment, and that is when you started getting all your tactical training, everything that went along with actually learning how to fight. Prior to that they just made a basic Marine out of you, a controlled individual that knew how to shoot basically, and then they, you had all your live fire courses, I don't think they do that much anymore, we used to do a lot of that, where you actually had to control your fire with other people moving out there and you're shooting live ammunition. And everything about, from immediate action drills to ambushes, to every, every facet of your combat training.

It takes everyone a month, they had us there six weeks, the 03 stayed there six weeks.

And then four or five days before Christmas I came home for my twenty day boot camp leave, and then I went back to Lejeune in early January. And I was originally assigned to the 1st MP Battalion. Now this was resurrected from the Korean war. It was, MOS-wise it was an 03's job and we were supposed to be combat MPs in and around the Danang air base, that was our original function.

So I went to, oh, second week or so of January, they flew us out in a big old beat-up prop plane. It wasn't a 130, it was almost like a, I don't know what it was, it had airplane engines on it. And then we landed in Oklahoma to refuel and what little I could see out the window was absolutely flat and I remember thinking, my God, *[unintelligible phrase]*.

GW: Did you get the news that you were going to Vietnam right from your training facility?

CR: Basically, my initial orders, and this you get the night of graduation, after you graduate from boot camp, you all sit there and your drill instructor has a list of everybody with their MOSs and what their, where their orders of their first unit are, and virtually everybody in our unit either went to the First MP Battalion, or the BLT 3/5, the Battalion Landing [Team], 3rd Battalion 5th Marines, which was at that time training at Camp Margarita and also at Camp Pendleton,

which is 5th Marines, Camp Pendleton. We were about fifty-fifty. And then after I got to California, then we started actually, we went through two, almost three months of MP training, something most Marines never get because being an MP at that time, there was no special MOS, it was just a duty assignment for an O3, for an infantryman and they trained you after they got you there.

So we worked with the base MPs and we practiced, mostly we did an awful lot of still infantry training, a lot of, you know, fifteen mile forced marches up and down the little hills in California, there was this miserable little nubble out there called Morrill Hill and we had a lieutenant that seemed to think there was something glorious about climbing that hunk of rock. I never figured out exactly what it was. And, but our MP training was actual, you know, a lot of it was actual military police training, which we never used, some more infantry type stuff because we were supposed to be combat MPs. Let's see, May 6, 1966, they stuck us on a boat at San Diego, it was an MSTTS, a military sea transport, and for the life of me right now I cannot remember the name of that rustbucket. I remember it was on the, what it was is we had a battalion and then we were an under-strength, we were about a nine hundred man battalion which is way under what a rifle battalion's strength would be for a specialized nature.

They stuffed us below decks in this thing, because up topside was the officers, staff NCOs and a bunch of military families who were being taken to different installations in the Pacific. I mean it's, like, your assigned to Japan and they say, yeah, we're going to fly you over but we're sending your wife and kids on a boat, they'll be over there in a while. So they were topside because we had, they picked some of the biggest, ugliest guys, the regular sea duty Marines, *[unintelligible phrase]*, filled it up topside. And we via Hawaii, Japan, Okinawa and Taiwan, which was a little bit out of the way, it took almost a month, but that's why they went over there with us, because they were dropping these people off all the way along.

And so we left on May 6th of '66. Oh, yeah, we had a special project going. They were, some genius somewhere, probably at Quantico at the club one night come up with the idea that they could precondition troops to heat and humidity so they wouldn't have to go through that couple weeks, thirty day period when they first got in country in which you had your troops dying of the heat, because Vietnam is a rather warm place. So they decided that A and B Company were going to be in this, and C and D, now C and D Company were going to be just the standard, same as the Marine Corps had done since time

and forever, PT on the way over. They do their PT on the deck in t-shirts, utility trousers and boots, same as they'd always done, just standard PT, no problem. A and B Company would do their, they had an empty compartment down in the hold in the bottom of this ship, and first off they would pump steam into it to get it nice and hot in this hold. Then they would dress up A and B Company in sweat suits, sweatshirts, utility trousers and boots, and they would be taken down there and they would have their PT in this steam filled box. And the idea was that when they got in country these, A and B Company, I was in A Company by the way, would be conditioned to the heat. And for a test, the test, well, I'll tell you about the test when I get to *[unintelligible phrase]*. So after going through all these places we landed off in Red Beach at Danang. There was no port, dock facilities in then, so we got to go over the side and go in peter boats. They thought that was nice, you know, there was only friendly gooks on the shore so it wasn't a problem.

So we got there, we landed, and one of the things that I remember the most about the day I got there is we're standing in our boat teams on the deck, waiting to go over the side to go in, and that was the days before they had, they had the old kind of soft rubber-soled combat boots, and the deck of that ship was so hot, you know, if you've ever stood at parade, at ease at parade rest for a long period of time, you learn all kinds of ways of moving your feet and rocking. No exaggeration, you could actually feel the soles of those boots stick to that steel deck, it was that hot. I don't know how hot it was, but it was hotter than it ever, ever got in Maine, I know that. It was even hotter than it got at Parris Island, which I thought was one of the warmer places I'd ever seen.

So we get over the side, we land on the beach and we form up in company, battalion lines, and now comes the test, which if you're familiar at all with the map of Danang, you've got Red Beach, then you've got the city, then you got the airfield, and then you got the other side of the airfield over beyond old Marine Corps transit, which at that time was undeveloped, it was just field. They force-marched us from Red Beach to the other side of the transit, which was going to be, eventually did become a First MPs Battalion area, we had to build it, it was like field and we had to build it.

Well, the whole bottom line of this wonderful test we went through was, it didn't make any damn difference. They had just as many guys fell out in Alpha and Bravo Company as fell out in C and D Company, they were following us in trucks, you know. You know, if you were a real smart person, what you did is you keel over in the first mile, got to ride in the truck, and then your NCOs had

to watch you like you like a hawk for the first month or so because you were heat susceptible. But I had already proved that I wasn't so, as uncomfortable as I was I made it. And I think it was, back a little bit, they used to, in boot camp, to find out how well you took the heat. During that forming phase they'd get you out between a couple buildings and they'd stand you at attention for hours to see who would be really taken in, medical personnel had to see if the heat would take you down, and I thought I was going to die but I refused to fall down for those people. So no matter what I did, no matter if I looked like I was dying or whining, they knew I was okay. Well, I did the same thing in Vietnam, very, very stupid.

GW:I'm going to take you back just a second, the day you got your orders that you were going to Vietnam. How did you feel?

CR:I fully expected it, you know? I didn't, I was definitely in no great hurry to go to Vietnam and get shot at. However, I voluntarily joined the Marine Corps. I figured, you know, I was hired to do this job. I, this is what I, I enlisted to join the Marine Corps and I will do whatever they tell me to do. So I was really pretty much neutral on that. I never had any, I was never anxious to go, I was not one of those guys, boy, let me get to Vietnam and shoot something, because I'd already been told that they shot back, so I had no great interest in going. And I would never, you know, jumped up and down and send in paperwork volunteering to go, but I also had no great fear or great concern about going. I just, I guess I'd assumed from day one after the war started that I was eventually going to end up over there. I certainly was in no hurry.

GW:How did you feel about guys that tried to stay out and did everything they could to stay out of the military? How did you feel about those folks?

CR:Well, obviously I didn't think much of them, but it was not something I spent a lot of time thinking about. It's like, so what, you know? I never, you know, had any, any great hatred or animosity to them because I didn't have time enough in my life to hate, have a lot of hatred and animosity for anybody or anything, and I never was like that. I certainly would have never done it myself. Just as a little side light, when I was in Vietnam, my father had heart trouble, was disabled, and I don't remember, it was a politician, somebody he knew told him that they could probably get me out of Vietnam or even out of the Marine Corps because of his physical condition, because they could have needed me at home and so on. He says we can do this if you want to. And my father refused. He said, he said, he said he'd be mad at me if I did that. And it

would have been like, yeah, I probably would have been, you know. Even though I would have loved to have gone home, I mean I was ready to go home before that boat ever got to Red Beach, but I guess I'd have never felt really good about myself if I'd done that, you know.

GW: You mentioned, when you pulled into Danang how, how you, first thing you noticed was the heat, the boots melting almost on the ship. What did, was there anything else that you noticed once you got on shore?

CR: Vietnam has a smell that once you've smelled it, you'll never forget it, and it's almost hard to describe. It's a combina-, I don't know what they burned for wood over there, but it's a combination of wood smoke and shit, and I'm not sure what the hell it. I can't, I heard a guy describe it that way once, but it's a very, it is a combination of the smoke from their cooking fires, the just general, the fact that if it's any sort of a built-up area, since they, their bathroom just consists of one corner of the ville, like a pig has one corner of his pen, the, but as I say, I'm not sure if that smell can be described to anybody. At least not, I have trouble describing it, I guess that's as close as anything. And also the foliage, of course I grew up in the woods so I notice trees and stuff like, at this right time of year there's some, the flowers over there. I mean, I have chopped my way through acres of orchids with a machete. And it's not really unpleasant, it's just different, there's no place else I know that smells like that. The Vietnamese have a unique odor of their own, and I think that is a combination of the wood smoke and so on. But when I was *[unintelligible phrase]*, walking point, I could smell them. *[unintelligible phrase]*, I could smell them.

GW: OK, now tell me, if you will, what your first assignment and continuing assignments were after you landed? And be specific with, as specific as you can with names of places you were, and with company or battalion, you know, or unit you were with.

CR: First MPs, we landed out there, we were in the middle of field, big, dry, it was the middle of summer so everything was dry as a bone. We put up some tents and proceeded to go out and, I mean, we didn't even bother to dig holes, we really didn't know what we were doing. We just, I stood watch, I remember before we got our mess hall, put up our mess hall, it was over at the 8th Motor T, you could barely see the place from there. It was good for your weight control if you had a weight control problem because it was so hot most of those days it was not worth the walk, it just wasn't. We had our little cots in our little

hooches, and we started proceeding to basically build a battalion area as far as putting up hard back tents [*unintelligible word*] and then building the wooden frames and putting the tents on them and so on.

And then our primary assignment, after all this really good MP training, was that they assigned us a sector of the Danang perimeter running from the Air Force gate, which was on the opposite side from Transit, around, where that air base sets, around the east end of the runway. The nice thing in the trade winds in the east end of the runway is everybody takes off and lands over you, which is part of the story later when the cripples start coming in. It's like, oh, Christ, is it going to land on me? But the whole thing was undeveloped. They had a cyclone fence around it which I could have breached with my leatherman tool in about thirty seconds. So they had us then starting to build regular wire perimeter, double apron concertina, and bunkers. Now I'm convinced, me and an Indian fellow name Phil [*name*], they called him the chief, he was a carpenter, or his father had been a carpenter, and I figured since I built a giant chicken house once, I was a carpenter. And we convinced the lieutenant that we were carpenters, and we got to build the wooden frames out of two by twelves and four by fours, and the other guys had to fill the sandbags and cover them. So me and the chief thought we'd done a good job, I mean, we were out there, we were high tech finish carpenters. Christ Almighty, we both figured out in about thirty seconds that neither one of us had the slightest damned idea what we were doing, but by God we put those frames together so we didn't have to fill and lug sandbags.

And what they'd do to us is, you got up in the morning, you got generally one hot meal a day, you got C-[ration]s in the morning, and we would work until two in the afternoon doing heavy physical work building bunkers, digging holes, laying wire. Two o'clock in the afternoon, they would give us the rare privilege of walking, usually, sometimes we'd get a truck, all the way back to the battalion area where we were blessed with one hot meal which was generally, I found that hot meals in the Vietnam that they brought, you're better off with the C-rations. And then by five or so we were back out there in our holes, and stood fifty percent alert watch all night in these positions, and then worked all day the next day. Had a real big-time fatigue problem after a while, we had guys dropping like flies, everybody going to sleep, all kinds of problems. Well, it was a combination of things that caused it. First off, I think compared to later, there was no reason I was that tired, but you just weren't conditioned to it yet. You weren't conditioned to going, to managing to, four to six hours sleep a night in two hour shots was not something you were used

to yet. Eventually we got used to it, but we weren't used to it yet. They were working the hell out of us there, it was incredibly hot because it was now late June, July, it was a rather warm time of the year. Generally if you wanted a shower was, in the afternoon you'd get these little scud showers would come through, little old black cloud. Now there's nothing funnier than an entire Marine Corps company sitting butt-ass naked on, with a bar of soap in their hand, watching a cloud, and when that cloud comes over, he runs out. Now the trick is is to get wet, get soapy and get rinsed before the shower goes by, otherwise you've got to live with the soap until the next day and that really sucks. So that's what we did all summer, built bunkers, other assorted things.

The only time I ever got an Article 15, *[unintelligible word]*, the entire time I was in the Marine Corps was there. The lieutenant thought I was asleep. I wasn't, I was screwing off but I wasn't asleep, and it was coming daylight in the morning so I saw no real sound reason to challenge him. You know, he was, he had probably, he learned later the way things worked. The captain, I think, had been right up his ass about he had too many people dozing off, so he decided to make an example of me because I was there. And so I got written up, Article 13-, what, 135, 136, 136, the one that says anything you do we don't like we can court-martial you for, the catch-all article. I think that's unconstitutional but nobody's going to challenge it since it's normally used only in, you know, nontraditional punishment. So I went before the captain and he said that I was laying down at my post. And I said I wasn't exactly laying down, I was kind of leaning. The captain says were sitting less than erect? And I says, yes sir, I was. He says then you're guilty. So they gave me a five dollar fine, wasn't too bad, and ten days of extra punishment duty. You know that time in the afternoon, I got two hours I was supposed to work. Well, that captain loved to play softball so he wanted a softball field built and they needed a backstop. So they had a pile of wire and some poles, and I was supposed to start working on building this backstop. Well, I figured, that's not that bad a deal. So I dug some holes, set the poles, *[unintelligible word]* a ladder, put up the wire and nailed everything in. I got it done in two days. Four hours work *[unintelligible phrase]*. And the captain come by and he sees this and he was just ecstatic that I had done so much work so fast that he dropped the rest of my extra punishment and put me back to regular duty. So that was my, my whole thing, whole works.

The only one small problem with it, when you get an Article 15 it makes you ineligible for promotion for six months. I almost broke the all-time world record for being an *[unintelligible word]* PFC. I was a PFC forever. Anyway,

that was, Danang was not terribly exciting. We used to do patrols, night patrols often there, and *[unintelligible word]* patrols and all kinds of other patrols. They'd send us out without, have you ever seen a PRC-10 radio? Stuff almost drags along the ground behind you, before they come up with the 26, we used to have 6s and 10s, then they come up with the PRC-26, which was, has been the universal radio for years and years and years. And we'd go out and wander around in the swamps and the buffalo wallows and one thing or another out on the Danang peninsula. there's a peninsula runs out into the ocean there and where the Danang River comes through. Supposed to be looking for infiltrators? We wouldn't have found an infiltrator if we stepped on him. But we infiltrated and run around.

I did endear myself to my squad leader, my, when I first, I think the first one I was walking point. For whatever reason, they thought I should walk point a lot, I was good at it, eventually. And we are just outside the perimeter, we're going to this ville, and *[unintelligible word]* there's this little curve in the trail and there's a lot of trees over the top, and a cobra sat up right in the trail, right in front of me, and I shot it. I shot him until my gun was empty, I shot him so many times. And everybody hit the deck and Paul C. *[name]*, my squad leader, had me right by the neck. He was a huge sucker. And he says, what was it? Snake! And he, probably the only reason he didn't shoot me is because they didn't want to shoot one more time out there. And a month later I would just point at the snake and walk around him, but I didn't think that was a good thing to have in my life. Anyway *[unintelligible phrase]*.

GW:How many days would these patrols last that you'd go out on? Just daily?

CR:Yeah, it was in and out. Most of them were night patrols, which is something that was given up later completely. They were, it was just a standard security perimeter patrol and they were generally a matter of hours. We'd walk out and walk back.

GW:So how many months did you continue in this military police role?

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CR:I'll tell you, that was July, August, in September, in the summer operations of August and early September, which was Hastings, J. Hastings and the first part of Prairie One, 3rd Marine Division got shot up bad. Fifth Marines got shot up some, but mostly the 9th and the 4th, 5th Marines was 1st Division, the 9th and 4th got beat up bad. And we started, and they started, somebody pulled out their manning roster one day and said, you know, we've got nine hundred nice

strong healthy fully qualified O3s sitting down at Danang digging holes and playing with themselves. We got to find a use for these boys. So they started coming in requesting people from us for replacements. And if you had been in any way, shape or form a bad boy, you got to be the first one to get rid of. Unlike the supposed tradition, you don't send your garbage to somebody else, 1st MPs seemed to think that was the best thing to do with us. So first batch of guys, a lot of them were volunteers. Here again, I ain't volunteering to get shot at, so I did not volunteer to go get shot at. But we had some guys who did, they wanted to go out and be big Marine Corps war heroes or something. And I'm sure they got over that right off quick. Went to the 9th Marines. And then they came down, they needed guys for the 4th. And I was volunteered by my platoon commander to go in the field and become a real live Marine Corps war hero. Turns out it's probably the best thing they ever did for me because that was, of all the things I ever did in the Marine Corps it may have been the thing I did best because I'm not real good at staying shined and polished and stuff, that was something that was a real long learning process for me to maintain the military prettiness. But as long as they didn't care what I looked like, I was pretty good at this. So they shipped me and a guy, who's still a good friend of mine, from Tamaqua, Pennsylvania named Lionel Luther Lorenzo Laurence Lawson, III. Honest to God, that's the guy's name. He is now a bank president. They called him Choo-choo, like in Lionel trains? And a couple others, the others, Walt Smith who I went to boot camp with, good Marine, sergeant last I knew, been a long time ago, and they shipped us to 1st Battalion 4th Marines. And we started out from Danang, they put us, the last thing they knew 1-4 was at Phu Bai, so they put us on a truck and they shipped us to Phu Bai which was right outside of Hue. We land at Phu Bai and now 2-4, 2nd Battalion 4th Marines is at Phu Bai and 1-4's been shoved up to Dong Ha. So now they rounded up, they, there's a C-130 sitting there going someplace, anyway they stuffed us in there and they dropped us off on the, the brand new *[unintelligible word]* runway at Dung Ha, and we found the headquarters of the 1st Battalion 4th Marines, and we're originally assigned to B Company, and here again, 1-4 had just been pulled back off the rock pile, they were, had been quite badly shot up, and they just assigned us to holes with the other guys, *[unintelligible word]* lieutenant came around and visited us, you know, hi, who are you, why are you in that hole, that type of thing. And we were there for, oh, most of October, and it was raining by this time, raining and cold. We did some minor daylight patrolling, but we really weren't in the field that much. A couple of minor, you know, snipers and skirmishes and nothing of consequence. And mostly we just sat in the rain. And then come along the end of October, sometime, the latter part of October, they moved us back to Phu

Bai. They loaded us up in trucks and shipped us back there, and when we got back to Phu Bai we found out we weren't in the same company any more. What they did is Charlie Company had been almost completely wiped out from Prairie One, and they rebuilt the company, they took the third squad of every platoon in the battalion [*unintelligible phrase*] at the others, and rebuilt Charlie Company. I was in 3rd Squad along with Smith and Lawson. And I'm trying to think, there were some other guys. I was on this little road trip and I met a guy who turned out to be one of my best friends, met the guy, ended up getting me out to Wisconsin, a guy name Skip Bayer, Ray Bayer, he was a farm kid from southeastern Wisconsin and we ended up riding on top of a load of sea bags telling hunting stories and one thing and another all the way back to Phu Bai, and then we ended up in the same squad, same platoon and same squad for, you know, virtually the rest of our time over there. So we got back to Phu Bai and they, we sat there for just a very short period of time, in the rain, and they decided that we should go out and occupy a hill, and it was Hill 43, it was way out west of Phu Bai somewhere, I don't know, in the woods, a long ways. And we walked out in the rain, and we got out there and we dug a three hundred and sixty degree perimeter around the top of this hill and plunked ourselves down, and about two days later we were on an island, the water had come up so much. I remember there was an old tarred road that just kind of went off into the jungle [*unintelligible phrase*] uphill, uphill, uphill and then it just, the jungle just kept closing in and closing in and the road disappeared. We used to love, they used to love to have us patrol down that. So we sat out there and that was when I met some of the guys I really liked, Doc Long, Greg Long, lives in California now, he's originally from Idaho, we used to have some heated discussions over who grew the best potatoes. He was a Mormon but didn't exactly live up to all of it. And a lot of the guys were, you know, here again, there was Bob Broils, several of the others that I met then that I was going to be with most of the rest of the time I was there. And they had us running patrols and night ambushes off this, this island. And they'd give you a, you know, a trail and a section and you were supposed to slither out there just before dark, lay down in the mud and water, and wait for the North Vietnamese to come by so you could shoot them. Now you see, the monsoon is, the North Vietnamese army is a lot smarter than we are. That's when they send their guys home. They just took the winter off, you know, monsoon off, and meanwhile we spend our time slopping around in the water looking for them. We never, the only enemy that I saw the entire time I was on that hill was one day Bob Broils and I were out down this, you know, there was a field off, an open area, and they used to send us out there on outpost, you know, outpost and listening post. That's what they do is they send you way out

someplace and if the enemy, if the bad guys come, your job is to make enough noise to let the other guys know they're coming before the bad guys kill you. I always thought that was a nice way to do it. So Broils and I are sitting out there in the rain when we see come walking out of the weeds this North Vietnamese trooper. He's got nothing on but his uniform. His helmet's gone, all his leather gear is gone, his boots are gone, and he's hands up *[unintelligible phrase]*, I quit, I surrender. And it's like, well, should we just shoot him? Nah, the guy acts like he's giving up, and he don't look good, but God these people are in bad shape. He comes out and I guess he, he probably, he was either the guy in charge or the private they hated the most because they sent him out first. You know, theoretically the guy in charge would do it but I don't think they worked that way, like we didn't. And before we got done, we had twenty two, three, four of these guys, just horrible looking shape, and we rounded them up and we shipped them back to the company CP where, he never let me forget this, Ralph Grant, he was our company gunny, the thing that makes this story so unique, he only spoke to me about four times in Vietnam, but in 1971 after he retired and I got out, we were both hired the same day in the same county sheriff's department out in Wisconsin, and he never let up on me about these, these big prisoners. Because, well Broils and I are feeling pretty good, you know, we were like, you know, shit, Sgt. York only captured twenty seven guys, they gave him the Medal of Honor. Of course his were shooting back. So we, then they loaded them in a helicopter, they sent them back to the rear. And about three or four days later a group of corpsmen came out from the rear and a doc, and everybody got shots. These guys had typhus. What they'd done, and they told the interrogators back there that they were sick and their unit said well we can't do anything for you, so you have a choice, you can stay here with us and maybe you'll live through it, maybe you won't. If you want to, we'll allow you to surrender to the Americans because we do know they can probably save you, but then you'll end up in a prison camp. And these guys had chosen to surrender after the medical attention is literally what they'd done. And they took all their gear off them, you know, everything worthwhile, just left him with his shirt and his trousers. Probably the greatest adventure we had out there. That and the day that I, lieutenant took us out and we found a few roaring rivers we couldn't cross and everything and got lost. They didn't tell us we were lost, but I've been in the woods long enough to know that after I go by the same place twice I'm lost. Then we finally wandered out of that. Anyway, we sat out there in the hail and the rain and a few other sopping things. Can I back up a little bit, because I have something about Danang. When we were at Danang, I always loved this, they had that big wire perimeter and we had our bunkers, and then

behind us was another string of wire, and behind that was the Air Force enlisted barracks. Now we were living in full field conditions, working our asses off and sleeping in the dirt out there. And back here they had these barracks and you could see the air conditioners sticking out of the windows. And at night, they got off work at like four or five o'clock in the afternoon, and at night they'd come out and sit there with their barbecue grills and grill stuff and drink beer and wave to us. And finally one day it dawned on me why the second string of wire was there, it was to keep me from attacking them. I still remember that. I often, I used to sit there thinking, how the hell can they drink in the Air Force. Got a friend of mine went in the Air Force, you know, why didn't I join the Air Force with that other guy, you know? He's probably the same combat pay I am. I always thought that was *[unintelligible phrase]*. Anyway, after sitting out there in the rain, I think it was, we kept count, it was like forty six or forty seven consecutive days it never stopped raining and we sat out there in this hill, and if you got immersion foot, that's when you like, turn like, super, you're whole body turns to dish pan hands, if you get it in your feet and your feet start bothering you, they send you back in the rear to dry out. Well, my feet were just as nice and pink and healthy as could be, but I had trouble with my hands. In fact to this day, if my hands get soaked, they get numb and stiff and funny feeling. I mean just to sit outside *[unintelligible phrase]* and the rain will do it. And they get, tips of my fingers are numb. I mean, I could hardly use them. I remember one morning me and, in fact me and Lawson are trying to get the top off from a pop flare so we could fire the green starter, get ourselves back to the perimeter, when we were out there. You know, just, I mean, we can't even grip anything, but our feet were fine. Also when we were out there, we were going on night ambushes every night and it was cold and wet and just absolutely miserable. . .

End of Tape One, Side A

Tape One, Side B:

[Short segment of tape garbled - unintelligible]

GW:Charlie, you had, you'd mentioned about firing signal flares, I wonder if you'd go into that with me a little bit and describe, explain the colors and what they meant.

CR:OK, the, we had what we called pop flares. They were an aluminum canister, they were about fourteen, sixteen inches long and about an inch and half, two inches in diameter. You could tell what color they were, you could pull the cap off and there was a plug in the top. Red, mostly reds and greens were what we used. To fire it you took the cap off, there was a firing pin and a primer in the bottom of the cap, so you put the cap on, there was a line, and you lined it up on the line and smack it and it would detonate the flare, it would fire it up from a hundred feet in the air and then it would pop just like a mini fireworks. And to this day I don't like fireworks, I don't pyrotechnic displays *[unintelligible word]*. And the two primary colors we used were green and red, green marked friendly troops, red was a signal to mark the enemy. Also under certain circumstances, if you were under attack, red was a signal to fire the FPL, final protected line, that's when you blew everything to try to break an attack, I only saw it happen once. Also, we used a lot of signal smoke. Smoke comes in red, green, yellow and just plain old grey, screening smoke. There again, red marked enemy, the bird dog planes would come in over an enemy position and dump a red smoke into them to mark for the jets. We used yellow to mark landing zones, you want to bring a helicopter in you'd use a yellow smoke to mark the landing zone. Of course the Vietnamese after a while figured that out so, when we had a helicopter come in there'd be like five yellow smoke grenades go off, so then we started identifying color, we'd throw a grenade of whatever color we had in rotation, and the helicopter pilot would identify the colors he saw and then you'd tell him what color was you, so we kind of *[unintelligible word]* out on that little trick. Mostly, we always carried a green star cluster with us when we went on these ambushes, because that was how we got back in. When you'd come back in from crawling back through the mud, well actually walking, slopping around and stuff, you get back at a certain distance from the perimeter you don't want to get shot by your own people, so what you do is when you reach that point, you'd fire that green star, they'd identify the green star and then let you back in through the safety lanes, through the wire. And that was what they were used for. Probably we used a zillion red stars. Also pop flares most of the time are fairly dependable, but

once in a while they'd go nuts on you, they come out of the thing and they'd take a ride. I know one night, in fact I think it was up at 43, we were sitting there and there was something out front, so the guy was going to use a clear, an illumination star, in the next hole to me. He fired it and it went about ten to fifteen feet out of the end of the tube, went round and round in circles a few times, and then went screaming right down the line right by our, right by us, then it went smacking off into something. You don't want to get hit by one of those things, I don't think. I never saw anybody hit with one, and I don't want to get hit with one. But that's pretty much how the system worked. And we carried them with us, they were there all the time and the squad leader generally had a couple stuck in his pack or in his pocket because they were, sometimes you needed them like right now. We generally had smoke grenades always loaded up. So we had a, but, I lost my train of thought, which is not that easy for me to do. And so we sat out there on Hill 43, I went on R&R for a week in November, I went to Bangkok. Lovely place. Had to capture me and drag me back, I wasn't about to leave there. I had quite a *[unintelligible word]*, I still think it's, at that time it was the best liberty port in the Far East, and I was in a lot of them before I got done. Got put back on top of the hill and slugged around in the mud for another period of time, and then right around the twentieth of December they walked us out of there and, oh, we spent on night guarding a bridge. God knows why we guarded that bridge, it was in a swamp. Why would anybody want a bridge? Anyway, we *[unintelligible word]* around this bridge with some ARVNs, you know, Marvin the ARVN? He was a real prize. The guy spent the entire night shooting at God knows what, and then if you really did get hit then ninety percent of them left.

GW: Could you explain for those who may listen to this tape what an ARVN is?

CR: OK, ARVN's the Republic of Vietnam Army. They were the South Vietnamese troops. And I shouldn't *[unintelligible word]* them, they were not all bad. There were some, the ones that wore the tiger stripes were like ranger elite units. Most of those guys were pretty dedicated and fairly competent soldiers. They had some real leadership problems. I'm not talking about the squad leaders and platoon sergeants and the company commanders, but at higher level they had some major leadership problems, in my humble PFC opinion. They were always shooting at something. You'd have them on a part of your perimeter and they'd be blasting away at God knows what. Marine Corps is fanatic about, you know what you're shooting at and you take well aimed shots and you hit, that's why they worked so hard on us on it. That's one of the first things you're taught as a junior leader is if you see a guy shooting away like

that, you jump right into the hole with him and grab him and make him tell you what he's shooting at. And if he doesn't know, he stops shooting. After you rap him on the side of his head a couple times. It's not so much conserving *[unintelligible word]*, granted there was times in Vietnam when you used area fire, in that jungle it was normal, but ARVN was always shooting at somebody. And you never were sure who they were shooting at, and the bad part of it was they were so bad they were likely to hit you accidentally. They were, I had a friend of mine that was with a CAC, combined action company, which was a Marine Corps squad attached to a South Vietnamese company guarding like a ville complex or something, and he said when he went out on patrols he always arranged his Marines throughout the patrol so if he was hit he had three hundred and sixty degree coverage with his Marine Corps squad, he said, because most of the ARVNs would leave on him and he knew it, you know. So he had to set up to protect himself, he couldn't put his Marines all in one spot.

GW: So you had a couple of...?

CR: Well we had, we always had, there was always South Vietnamese units around. Well, when you get back to places like Phu Bai and Danang, you didn't see many of them up crawling around the DMZ with you. We did have some at Ha Tien later in the war which were not really very valuable to anybody, including themselves. The best troops the South Vietnamese had were the Montagnards. The Montagnards were fantastic, I mean those guys would fight like hell, they knew what they were doing. The Montagnard doesn't look anything like the Vietnamese, they're, I think the term, the proper word is Nigarino, they, a Montagnard, except his hair's straight, looks a lot like an Australian aborigine, many of them do. They're very dark complected and they're much larger people. I've seen Montagnard men standing well over six foot, you know, nothing unusual about it. They live in houses, they live in tree houses in the highlands, and one of their characteristics, if I remember correctly, is they hate regular Vietnamese in general. In fact I'm sure they suffered terribly after the war was over only because they sided with us more than anybody else did. Yeah, same as the Hmongs did in Laos, And they were very identifiable. But they were, they were great. When you had Montagnard troops around they were fine. They liked Americans, they got along well with Americans, but you couldn't integrate them into regular South Vietnamese units because they'd kill the regular South Vietnamese for entertainment because they didn't like them. It was something that goes back, you know, five thousand years or something when they originally got run out by the

Chinese which became the Vietnamese and so on. And anyway, we got done guarding this silly bridge for a night and we got back to Phu Bai, and we were informed that we were going back to Okinawa to refit, and that was a rather good day. In fact me and Skip got hold of some beer that night, drank too much and puked our guts out, we hadn't had a drink in months. Also, I guess, we were only eighteen, we probably weren't supposed to, right? No, we were nineteen, I was nineteen. So they took us down to the beach and they lined us all up on the beach down at Hue, and they had a ship called the U.S.S. Lennoway, we were the last troops ever on the Lennoway. It was an old APA, been commissioned in the early thirties, and they were going to take us back to Okinawa and then they were going to go back to California and of course they were going to turn this thing into scrap iron. Naturally there was no dock facility there, so they came in in the peter boats, we had to wade out in the surf, climb in the boat, and then we had to climb wet nets onto the ship. And we went through the usual boat roping that you do when you first get on a ship, you change compartments several times and I'd been on a ship before, I knew this was going to happen. I piled my gear [*unintelligible word*] and I just sat on it and twiddled my thumbs until they finally got around to telling me where I was going to go. Well, we spent five days, most of it in a pretty nasty storm, going back to Okinawa. We landed at White Beach Okinawa a day or two before Christmas '66, and we were assigned to Camp Swab, which is the northernmost Marine Corps installation on Okinawa, and Camp Swab is named for some Marine Corps private who won the Congressional there in the battle of Okinawa. In fact I think there's an old, the old position that he was killed in is out there or something. Anyway, they had buildings with running water, flush toilets, a lot of these unique little things we hadn't seen for a while, and we were there allegedly for training, going to be refit. What that meant is they brought in all kinds of new personnel straight from the States and they brought us up to full strength. This is when I picked up the guy that I was going to basically finish with, my tour over there with. We got, we had no platoon commander, we had a staff sergeant named John Somanski, Sgt. Ski was, had been running the platoon for quite a while. They brought in a new platoon commander, Larry Dickenson, he was a lieutenant and school teacher from Delaware, and they brought in a whole bunch of new guys from the States. Oh God, we got Doug Dickie, Jerry Ejack, I could get my crewman's book, give you the whole list of whoever, you know, we got a herd of people. Those are two I remember in particular. Dickie was destined to win the Medal of Honor, so [*unintelligible phrase*]. And we basically, we got retrained during the day, at least that's what they called it. Also we ran through sugar cane fields and things of that nature, and then at four thirty in the afternoon they'd start liberty

and we'd go jump a cab. It used to cost a buck to go by cab from Camp Swab to Kin Village, and they were using, of course that was, Okinawa at that time was still occupied Japanese territory from World War II and so we used, it was great, I mean we used green money, you know, the whole works. And we'd get out at Kin Village and see how much drinking, fornicating and other perversion we could commit before we had to be back at one o'clock in the morning before they shut the gate at Camp Swab and we turned into a pumpkin. And then you got back up at five o'clock in the morning and did it all over again. For thirty seven days, about thirty days we did this. Amazingly I survived fine. One night of that now and I'd be dead. During the middle of all this, they set us up for a five day training exercise at NTA, northern training area in the northern end of Okinawa at which time we ran through the jungle up there for a while. *[unintelligible phrase]*, all I remember is thinking that, that northern end of that island, in fact the whole island, is nothing but little sharp coral ridges with a type of growth on it that would remind you of alders, and I remember thinking, we used to talk about it going through there, that must have been the most God awful place to fight because these hill tops were, you know, they were just like little sharp ridges with little brooks in the bottom, and I mean, you could almost throw a rock from hill top to hill top. And I figured with a rifle squad I could hold up a battalion in there forever. What a mess it was. One of the most exciting things that happened while we were up there was a guy in, not in my company, another company in our battalion, got snake bit. We had a critter, they had a critter up there called a *habu* (*sounds like*) snake, it means horrible snake in Japanese. Looks like a big nasty headed black snake, and what they call a semi poisonous snake. They told us that the only American ever to die from being bit by one was a guy that was bit by one, was allergic, and it was during World War II and they couldn't get him out. So they always preached to you, in the Marine Corps, in the service in general at least at that time, if you get snake bit, you sit down, relax, if you smoke, smoke because it constricts the blood vessels, if you don't smoke take it up. And don't do any cutting or sucking or anything like this and it's a priority medievac. Well this kid listened, he listened a little too well. He's walking down the trail in the middle of the night on this silly field problem and a *habu* snake bites him in the leg. So he sits down, on the snake. The second bite hits him in the penis. Now, this boy is not in good shape. The snake escapes. So they call in an emergency priority medievac and medievac the guy who goes to Coolie Hospital. Now, I know up to that point the story is true. Allegedly, this kid was so gutsy, he's laying on the table down there, and needless to say he is swollen considerably, and he grabs the doctor by the shirt sleeve when he comes in and asks him if he can take the pain out and leave the

swelling in. Now I don't know if that's true, but the first part of it's true. We also had a thing up there, they had a night, some guy got hurt and they tried, it was raining, because it was still raining on Okinawa, just it wasn't raining as bad as the monsoon which got us over there, and we had a, the guy had a PERT-26 backpack radio, and this is what can happen with, you know, cloud cover, with radios. This guy calls for a priority medievac and he can't reach, we actually had an ambulance service out in the NTA, the guy's call sign was 'mad driver' and they couldn't get hold of him, they couldn't raise him. And they tried Coolie Hospital and they couldn't raise them, so he opens up his frequencies and he calls for emergency priority medievac, any station on this net, and he gets an answer, good audible answer, and he starts giving his coordinates and then the guy starts asking the standard questions, including is your LZ hot, which means are you under fire. And it's like, negative, and he gave his coordinates again which then tipped off the radio operator at MAG 11 at Dong Ha that he was in Okinawa. And both, and the radio operator, when the guy told this *[unintelligible phrase]*, but then they contacted MAG-11 and the MAG-11 operator had recorded the skip transmission, so he had talked almost five thousand miles on a backpack radio because of weather conditions. And I've seen other times when you could have been on opposite sides of my lawn out here and you could have yelled to each other, but you couldn't hear a thing over the radio.

GW: So when you finished your stint in Okinawa, where did you go after that?

CR: OK, they put us back on a ship called the U.S.S. Vancouver, one of those landing ship docks, the ones that the tail end opens up. And, a little sideline to that, in 1974 when I was in the Marine Corps Reserve we went out to Camp Pendleton and we did a field problem in which we went out to sea and then came back and made a landing, and it was on the Vancouver again, which is LPD2, LSD. A lot of the guys thought that having a ship named LSD was interesting. But, they put us on that and, right around the end of January, late January, and we went first to Kelaung, Formosa, there was a big harbor at Kelaung, beautiful harbor. You go through a narrow channel and you come up on a big rock spire in the middle of the harbor. Except it was the middle of a typhoon and they decided you couldn't get in there, so we went chugging off to Subic Bay in the Philippines, *[unintelligible word]*, and we ended up tying up there with the rest of the task force, we were part of a task force. Now we were the, we were the battalion landing team for the 7th Fleet at this point, that's what we'd been designated. And, let's see, we were there for a week or two, we went down to Menduro (*sounds like*), that's another island in the Philippines, and we did a,

like a three or four day field problem, however we discovered that our aggressors was a recon unit that was shackled up in a ville up three miles away and didn't really feel like leaving, and we didn't, you know, feel like doing much so we dug in on the beach and a group showed up with all the beer and that Philippine rum, that sticky shit that came in the clear bottles, and all the prostitutes and we pretty much had a rather nice party for a week. We were a combat unit, we didn't see any earthly reason that we should do anything, you know, beyond that. And then I remember the captain saying what a great, gratifying field problem it was as somebody was holding him up at the last speech. So then we went back to Subic, we were there another two or three days, something like that, and then we went off on Operation Deckhouse Six, it was our first amphibious landing. See, there was only, I believe, three amphibious landings made in Vietnam, and I had the rare privilege of doing two of them. The other one was done by 2-4, 2nd Battalion 4th Marines down in the Delta about a month earlier. So we, it was early February, early, second week of February, something like that, and we landed, let's see, then it was the (*name*) ville complex which is about twenty five, thirty miles south of Chu Lai, right at the very southern extreme of the I Corps. I remember the beach, it was a, it was high ground on one side, there was a river and high ground on the right flank, and there was an island, a small island right off the mouth of the river and there was this big ville complex in there. It was supposed to be, now this was the only time that I ever fought Viet Cong, Vietnamese guerrillas. Other than that I never saw anybody but the North Vietnamese army, which incidently is a very good organization. They were uniformed, well equipped, well trained, they were good soldiers. And they fought basically with conventional tactics, which actually in many ways I think mentally made it easier for us. I know it did for me, because that's what I'd been taught. The only, I mean they did some stuff that would have been different than we did, but a lot of that could be attributed to the fact that they had no air support. We had complete air superiority which meant they had to change some of what would have normally been conventional tactics. I mean they had artillery, heavy mortars, they were, they used to, in World War II they called the Stalin's organs, 140 rocket launchers. It's not a particularly beautiful weapon, doesn't have much shrapnel in it. Makes an awful lot of noise but doesn't do much else. So we got down that morning and we landed, our company had the, it was a Berkman Envelopment (*sounds like*), that was a tactic in Vietnam. See, we had two ships, our, us, Charlie and Delta Company were on the Vancouver and we were the amphibious assault force, we were coming in on the water. Alpha and Bravo Company were the air assault force, they came in off the helicopter carrier Princeton. And what you did is, the idea was while one,

while half your unit hit the beach in the conventional manner, the other half was dropped by helicopter in the enemy's rear. Basically it was the same thing with the paratroop assaults that were used in WWII, the only thing is you get them on the ground where you want them when you use helicopters, and most of them *[unintelligible phrase]* broken legs and things. So, that was what it was, it was a Berkman Envelopment, the air drop with A and B company, and then we were, we went in on the beach. And I still think that the UDT guys that went in and reconned the beach for us are still giggling about this one because the section of beach that our company got was the village outhouse with acres and acres of shit. In fact, I remember when I hit, we did get some resistance, the village idiots shot at us, you know, some, on the way in. First objective was to cross the beach and secure a railroad trestle, not a trestle but a high bank with a railroad track on it, and where it went in, and we had already sent, I think they already sent recons *[unintelligible word]* and then taken the railroad bridge. So, matter of fact I still remember, I hit that beach, I'm running, there's some shots fired and I hit the ground, and I realized I'm swimming in shit. And I look off to my right and here's a kid, must have been about five or six years old, squatting down there, about half done, with his eyes the size of saucers, you know. And he's too far along, he can't stop before he can run for it. But that place was terrible, it was punji picks and stakes. Every time you'd go up a, you finally learned if you were going to hit the ground, you were in the grass, you'd drop your rifle and slide it ahead of you to break the punji stakes off. I mean, I broke them at three or four small foot traps, I was quick enough to get out of them, *[unintelligible phrase]* just getting in on the beach, it was everywhere. The entire populace was against us. Everything you touched blew up. It was just a miserable place, and you couldn't, and there was cane fields, huge sugar cane fields. We eventually brought in some zippo tanks, flame thrower tanks, and burned the cane fields, we just couldn't get through them without, you go in there and you start taking casualties. You've got nothing to shoot back at. It was very, very frustrating, mentally frustrating fighting the Cong in that area because you didn't know who was which. The little old ladies, well I, first or second night we moved in through the tree line, the Vietnamese coast is all the same, at least in the northern end of it. You get this wide white sand beach, and then you have a tree line of these little furry evergreens, they kind of look like scrawny hemlock, which would be a few hundred yards or a half a mile or so wide, and then you'll hit, further north, rice paddies, for a period of miles before it starts going up into the highlands. That far south, when you cross your little tree line, there's going to be a trail running along and so on, it's sugar cane fields. And we were *[unintelligible phrase]* right up to these sugar cane fields. And we had a, I remember I, my, I

was a fire team leader by that time and we had a hole, there was a path, there was a trail through the sugar cane field and so I took the center of the trail, me and my automatic rifleman, a guy name Lyle Mahoney, used to call him Jock, couldn't remember his name and I got Mahoney *[unintelligible word]*. And then we had the squads, you know, the whole works was spread out in there. And we had been getting some sniper fire, nothing special. I dug in, right into that trail, and I went out and I booby trapped the trail in front of me, which was a habit I'd got into, when I'd dig in for the night I'd go out and booby trap in front of my position. And what I used to do, I'd take a piece of comm wire, comm wire was always used, you'd find it laying around somewhere, and I'd go out and I'd tie two or three of them across the trail at different heights and then I'd take a regular hand grenade and I'd tie the wire around the head of the hand grenade, below the spoon, and then I'd pull the pin out of the grenade and put it in my pocket and take the grenade and find like a little fork in a small tree or something like that, and I'd just lay the grenade in there on the spoon. It's weight would keep the spoon on. And then if anything hit it it would pop out instantly, and six to eight seconds later according to the manual it'll go bang. Well, and also the next morning it was a very simple matter to go out, grab your hand grenade, shove your pin back in, rip off the piece of comm wire, stick it in your pocket and away you went. Well around probably four o'clock or so the next morning, Vietnam is kind of a unique place, it's so close to the equator that it doesn't have the variation in days that you do in this part of the world. In the middle of the winter it's, between the middle of the winter and the middle of the summer I don't know if there's a two hours difference in daylight. We normally figured it was six to six and six to six. So round about four o'clock in the morning, something hit my booby trap, booby trap went bang, there was a shadow down there and then we opened fire on it, and I also had my M-79 there, it was that shoulder held grenade launcher, who was further down the line. I had *[unintelligible word]* him off in two trees to where my grenade was. If that goes, I says, drop something right in there. Well we got it. Come daylight the next morning, what we had was a rather elderly Vietnamese woman with her rice basket, a blanket, and three *[unintelligible word]* hand grenades, trying to sneak up on my position. I didn't feel too bad about that. Well, the next day we finally decided the cane fields had to go so Blackjack Westman, Col. Westman, the tank commander, ordered the zippo tanks to flame throw it. *[unintelligible word]* still had flame throwers then and we burned that place off. Anyway, we screwed around in there probably until almost the end of February. Took, we only took, my platoon only took one fatal casualty. We had a few minor wounds. A guy named Melvin Cole was killed by a .50 caliber sniper's rifle on patrol one day from a leg wound. He

was hit high in the right thigh in the carotid, the femoral artery. Doc Long, our corpsman, big tall fellow, and he'd been a, you could always tell him when he was running, he'd been a champion hurdler in high school, and he'd come up to these hedgerows and he step over them. You could always tell Doc by the way he ran, and he could fly. When they called up to the end of the column that this guy was hit, Doc got up and he ran without a stop the entire length of that column. By the time he got there the man already dead, combination of blood loss and I think he scared himself to death. He was one of these guys that was, he was a little black guy, he was scared all the time and knew he was going to die. And generally when you're like that, you have a much greater propensity for severe shock if you do get hit than some of the other guys do. So that's the only fatal casualty we took. A guy named Camillio I went through boot camp with was [*unintelligible word*] was killed by a sniper, I heard about that [*unintelligible word*]. But anyway, I always got a kind of a side effect to the story, back in what was it, '68, when Lt. Calley started to do that, the My Lai massacre, My Lai is only a few miles from (*name*), inland and a little south, and unlike us who went in there and pulled one very frustrating, aggravating operation with these people, him and his unit were assigned there and they worked in this area every day, day after day, week after week, month after month, and I can really understand how a person who was in that environment for as long as he probably was, seeing his people get killed over and over and over again, having the whole populace against you, not being able to do anything about it, you know. You can't condone what he did, but I understand how a person who was not terribly, if he was not incredibly stable, how it happened. Because I'll tell you, in three weeks I had an urge to herd all them people up and shoot them, you know. We didn't do it, but it was, you know, a very, very frustration situation. Not as hazardous a combat and not near-, nothing compared to what we were going to go through later up north, but very, a more frustrating situation than locking horns with a North Vietnamese battalion, you know. Very different, not nearly as intense, but consistent, and it made these, you know, I can unders-, I can truly understand why what happened happened. Probably not the only time it happened, he's was just the only guy that got caught. We were going to leave this place, we, they put us back on ship because we'd been, through this operation we were supported by the ships the entire time we were in. Yeah, they used to bring us in, every couple days they'd bring us in hot chow. Oh God, [*unintelligible phrase*], they'd bring in these conex cans full of this ship board chili, you know what that is, and ship board bread, the stuff that you break the loaves over your knees, and everybody got a canteen cup full of that chili and half a loaf of bread. And I had rather eat ham and limas, you know? Of course I was

one of the few guys that would eat ham and limas. That's a C-ration that is so bad that the Vietnamese, they used to call it chop-chop, and they'd run alongside of the trucks and stuff begging for food and they'd, you know, G.I., G.I., chop-chop, chop-chop, right? Well they got so they'd recognize the can, you throw them a can of ham and limas they'd yell number ten and throw it back, I mean it was bad. You know, a starving man wouldn't eat it. However, C-rations are so much better *[unintelligible phrase]*. So we went back, back in the boat and back to Subic Bay where we basically pulled eleven days of straight living. Now, Subic, you're not supposed to be off that place from midnight to six a.m., even officers and senior NCOs were only allowed out until one, and after that they shut the gate, right there by the, by shit river. And, as soon as you come out the main gate there's a river there that's basically a giant open sewer, full of little kids diving for coins, and the little buggers can find them in that water and their skin wasn't coming off, it was amazing. Then there was the shoeshine boys you had to contend with. So, but they told us that we had liberty from noon to nine a.m. the next morning. The reason for noon to nine a.m. the next morning was at nine a.m. every platoon sergeant was required to hold a platoon formation to make sure they were all there and none of them was floating in the shit river, that they had to have a comfleet, commander of the fleet, had ordered the colonel that we would have training. So after the formation, we were all double timed to the mess hall, it was about a hundred yards. That's training, PT is training, and then every man was required to go to the mess hall and eat a full noon meal at the mess hall in the supervision of his platoon sergeant, that was *[unintelligible phrase]* get sick from just drinking. And then at noon time you'd hit the beach again. Now, the way the *[unintelligible word]* there used to control you is if you came in late or something, they'd take your liberty card. You couldn't get back out without a liberty card, and they'd wait five days I think it was before they'd send your liberty card, so basically they restricted you for five days no matter what your command did. Well, the colonel had ordered all the first sergeants in the battalion to print up seven liberty cards for every man in the unit, so every day we could just go pick up a new one in the time that we'd lost the last one, the next one came back. They finally reached a point, they wouldn't even take them away from us any more, it was a waste of time. They also got sick of writing report chits and sending them up to the colonel because he was said to make paper airplanes out of them and throw them out his office window. He decided his people were going to have liberty and that was the way it was. He was a, Blackjack Weston was quite a character, great big man, had his head shaved, and he had all *[unintelligible word]* on the left side of his face from, a shell went off in his face on I think Saipan during WWII. *[unintelligible]*

phrase]. Had a reputation for being able to drink more than any other man in the Marine Corps and walk off. Whether it was, I don't know, but I've seen him sitting in a bar in the Philippines drinking whiskey straight out of a bottle, didn't want to be *[unintelligible phrase]*. Anyway, we spent eleven days, we had a wonderful time. During this period of time our platoon commander turned twenty three, that was Larry Dickenson, and he went up to the White House Bar, this place was upstairs right after you made the turn to go down the main street there in Subic. We went up there one night and it was the lieutenant's birthday and we threw everybody out except our platoon, and we kept the band and the girls, mamasan wasn't too happy but we handed her a handful of pesos that changed her mind, and we proceeded to party all night. The next morning about daylight, we had a platoon formation. We could all stand, just barely, in the street, and the lieutenant marched us back to the main gate where the guards are standing there shaking their heads, and with the support of the platoon sergeant so he didn't fall down, he informed them that his people had been out all night and he would take care of the matter. And then he marched us back in through the gate and piled us on one of the trucks they had and *[unintelligible phrase]* back up. But we had a great time. Anyway, I think it was, oh, mid March we left the Philippines and went back for the last time actually, I went back on Monday, March 20th, we landed a thousand meters south of the DMZ on Operation Beacon Hill. And this one got a little out of hand. We, the first day nothing much, we made it in across Route One, we dug in just the other side of Route One that night and there was some sniper fire and the usual, but nothing special. The objective of the operation was to sweep through an area they used to call the seven gates of hell. I have no idea why, but there was these huge ornate wooden gates, like gates, on this trail, and there was seven of them between the coast and Con Thien. And there'd been other units in there that had been pulled out. It was brushy and thick and it was one of the main, it was the main coastal infiltration route for the North Vietnamese army, dominated by the hill at Con Thien. The idea was, we were supposed to sweep through there, shoot up the North Vietnamese, and take Con Thien. Once we had done that, and did eventually do it, they were going to cut a two hundred yard wide firebreak all the way to the ocean, bulldozer, the CVs and the engineers, and bulldozer it right out so you could sit on top of that hill and check infiltration all the way to the ocean. The North Vietnamese did not want us to do this. So we went on Monday, Tuesday we walked all day, nothing special, Tuesday night we dug in just east of a big grown up ville complex. And Wednesday morning we got up, moved out as usual, our company, see we had a, the battalion was spread out with Charlie company on the, in a big wedge, with Charlie company on the,

centered on the trail and the point, my unit, Alpha company behind us with a CP group, Delta company on our north flank running right down the DMZ, and Bravo on our south flank. Well, we were moving down the trail that morning early and we got into an opening, it was like these two open fields and then there was like brush and this ville complex. Now, we knew we probably were going to have problems that day because the night before we had had Vietnamese peasants, refugees type, obviously scared to hell coming back through our perimeter. Now this area was what they called a free fire zone, it was all out warfare, there was no, it was just like fighting in WWII. We had to take no regard for roads, for bridges, for houses, for people, for nothing because we were up against I think it was the North Vietnamese 325 B Division which we ended up fighting a lot. They're a pretty good organization. In fact the war up there was pretty much between the 3rd Marine Division and the 342 B out of the North Vietnamese. Three forty two A was up there once in a while, too, but you could always tell them, they'd been fighting the Army and they fought different, just because we used different tactics. So we're moving out the next morning, and this is living proof that every army has its *[unintelligible word]*, every army has one, and it's ten percent of the world is screwed up and it doesn't matter who you are. Kirk Hanson, who was, he used to be called crazy Hanson for a number of reasons, never believe it to see the guy now, is walking, he is physically walking the point, he was, my team, we got the point, and we got teams on each side of the road, the squad, we had the lead of the squad and the rest, because basically we were in a five team wedge, squad wedge, platoon wedge, couple of battalion wedges, it was just a massive formation that covers a huge area. Fifteen paces between people, you always stay fifteen steps apart. That way, the old saying 'one shell can't get all of you,' don't bunch up. Well Hanson's walking point and all of a sudden he stops the column and he looks at me and he points like this, and probably seventy five or a hundred yards ahead of him is this little North Vietnamese trooper, helmet off, entrenching tool in hand, digging like a bastard by the side of the trail. Everybody else is dug in, they had us, my God did they have us. Another hundred yards and they would have had us in a, not a battalion, probably at least a company size ambush, they would have torn us to pieces. This guy wasn't dug in yet, and Hanson sees him. So I just flicked with my hand indicating shoot him, and Hanson takes his rifle up and he nails the guy, and when he does the ambush springs on nothing right in front of us, his first shot *[unintelligible word]* the ambush, the ambush sprung right in front of us on nothing. We, my platoon went one way and the other two came in behind us to form a straight line and we immediately started assaulting these positions. There was gooks everywhere dug in in three sets of interlocking trenches.

They were there. Sgt. Ski was one of the first ones killed, they were in an attack on the left flank, less than two weeks before he was supposed to rotate. And we just continued to attack into that mess. Now, Marine Corps standard tactic is, you fire and maneuver, you get on line, get as close as you can, and then you, on a signal you jump up and start your walking assault, which is actually a running assault, firing as fast as you can and try to overrun their position. This was a tactic actually invented in WWII because of the believe it or not tremendous advantage of the M1 rifle. In WWII we had the only semi automatic general issue rifle in the world, so the average rifleman could generate so much fire power than a man with a bolt action that he just couldn't shoot back. It wasn't quite as good as the AK-47s, but *[unintelligible word]* less, it worked. And, you know, it's fixed bayonets and you went for them. Now this is where you find out if the people you're fighting are used to fighting Marines or Army. The Army doesn't use that tactic, the Army tries to bring in superior fire power and it's very methodical. The Marine Corps gets on line and attacks immediately and tries to literally close with you. Now the average Vietnamese is no match for the average Marine in a fist fight, they know this. So as soon as we would start working on line, they'd leave. These guys didn't leave, they hadn't learned the rules yet. We overran them. We got like, really nice hand to hand fight with them. That was the day I came the closest to knowing I was going to die. I was, by this time I was their M-79 man, I was carrying the, yeah, M-79, which is that grenade launcher and a pistol. It had a long strap on it, hung the M-79 on my back when I know we were going in assault, and I had a pistol. One of the reasons I had the squad's ma-, I had to carry the squad's machete, I had a machete *[unintelligible phrase]*, but it's the only thing I had for a hand weapon. So we got into that first position and I remember *[unintelligible phrase]* and I shot the, this gook right in a hole right in front of me is reloading, and I jumped over him because I saw another one coming out of a position right behind it, I mean it was just a swirl *[unintelligible word]*, and I hit in the loose sand and slipped, fell over backwards. And this guy, this Vietnamese was at least eight foot six and his rifle about eight feet long. Actually he was probably the average run of the mill North Vietnamese trooper with a rifle and a bayonet, but when he stood up he looked awful big because I was down in this hole now with this dead North Vietnamese, and I'm, all that's going through my mind is there's no way I'm going *[unintelligible phrase]* that sucker's going to stick me. And all of a sudden his chest just exploded and he went right down on top of me, and I hooked him away like this and this big hand grabbed me right where the belt *[unintelligible word]* and just ripped me right out of the hole and we kept right on going. Because what happened is when I jumped and fell, Skip Bayer was

standing right behind me and he had shot the guy. Rule number one, when you know you're going into an assault in which you may actually close with the enemy, that is when you drop a magazine and put in a full twenty round magazine. That means you don't have to wrestle with the first twenty you meet, and maybe there won't be any more than that. Well they had learned right off quick they were losing the battle so they broke off and they were gone. We proceeded to clear the rest of the ville, cleaned up our casualties, we had quite a *[unintelligible phrase]*. I mean, we lost two platoon sergeants and a number of other leadership people that day, you know, just in that one fight, it was a pretty good fight. Well, once we got reorganized we continued to move as we had been down the trail, a little sniper fire, nothing special. But I do remember later that afternoon we were moving through this *[unintelligible phrase]*, kind of an open area, trees here and there and the occasional hooch. And they passed the word down the line that there'd been a plane gone through there a few days before that had been hit over North Vietnam, it was for this, basically spreading butterfly bombs which were a few inches in diameter, like a little kid's top, had black and white stripes on them, and black and yellow stripes, and little fins, and they'd *fffffft-boom*, when they hit the ground they become a mine. Well, I'm going along and I see this thing laying in the ground and it looked like a little kid's top. Now, rule number one, I'd been over there a long time - you don't kick, step on, pinch, pick up, play with anything that looks odd or anything at all if you can help it. In fact if you can walk with your feet off the ground it's a good idea. So I took my toe and flip this thing ahead of me and I was like, you know, moping along. They pass the word down the line about that. So somebody else, what do these things look like? And it's like, well, they're so big around and they look like a little kid's top, and I'm like, *huh-huh*. I mean, you mean like that one? I had kicked this thing, wonder it didn't blow my damn leg off, you know. I lived through that one. That night we reached a place called the Market Place, it's on all your maps of the I Corps, it's a four corners, four corners in the trail in the, the southeast corner is a round grassy knoll, kind of an open, big open area, and there's the four corners, there was a big old stone French house about two hundred yards about two hundreds yards to the, two hundred, two hundred fifty yards to the front of this hill, and we had, you know, that was where we dug in for the night was on this round grassy knoll. Well, daylight the next morning, they put the mortars to us. In fact it was before daylight. That was when I learned that the mortar does, see most times mortars don't make any noise, you hear them hit the tube and then you hear them hit the ground. But that was the night I found out that mortars coming straight down make a very high pitched whistle. I'm laying outside the hole, I was dug in with Mahoney, and it was

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standing practice [*unintelligible phrase*] his automatic rifle. And he heard the, he was on watch, he heard it hit the tubes, they were close enough to us, you almost always will, and he reached out and hit me and I dove in the hole. Well, I dove in that hole and all of a sudden you hear this first barrage coming down on you, this high pitch squeal, whistling, and I had three of those landing within a foot of the back of our hole, right along the back of it, and another one hit right in front of the hole on the parapet. It split my rifle stock, blew our shit all over hell. And then they tried to att-. then they walked it across the hill and tried to attack underneath it. Well we stopped that, but then I had to run around and find somebody that didn't need their rifle any more and trade stocks with him. But we spent two days sitting on that hill, we had all kinds of unique experiences up there.

End of Tape One, Side B

Tape Two, Side A:

CR:...yeah, I mean we were getting constant harassing fire, sniper fire, they were getting into that stone house. So we called a 155 artillery concentration from the field Arty Plat, artillery plateau, on that stone house. Pretty much demolished it. Of course that didn't amount to much because they just crawled back in the rubble and started shooting at us again. And, now we had the, kind of the, ideally you do not fire artillery straight over you, you fire it from somewhere else. But we just happened to be in the line [*unintelligible word*], a straight line between the house and the artillery plateau. So we called for a repeat and a fire for effect on the house, it's just a, we have a, what they call a concentration number, they start with midnight and when you call in your fire mission they'll give it a concentration number and if you want the same thing fired again, all you do is call them back and tell them to repeat concentration fifty or whatever it is. They did, they set the guns one click shot and dropped fifteen rounds of 155 right on top of us, and we never took a casualty. Jerry Ejack got bombed completely out of his hole by one, but there was enough dirt in between the two, he wasn't hurt. Later we had a freak, we had a guy named Banbakker, Tennessee or something, Kentucky, real skinny guy. We bombed, we had planes come in and bomb out there. If you've ever seen the hunks that come off of bomb casings, sometimes they're huge and they're just jagged and pointed, I guess that's the whole idea. Well, they're bombing two hundred and fifty, three hundred yards easily away from us. We were down in the bottom in our holes. A shell fragment, probably two and a half, three feet long, and that shell casing is extremely heavy material, blunt on one end a sharp point on the other, flew twice as far as it ever should have through the air, came down point first and speared him in his hole. You know? I mean, even at the very end there was a fifty-fifty chance the blunt end would have hit him and just busted some ribs, you know. It was just, you talk about your time to go, that was his time to get it. We went out on several counter attacks that day, pushed them back. Lt. House, the 3rd Platoon commander, was killed during one of those attacks. We had a number of other guys wounded, we had two guys in my squad got hit, they had to be medievaced. We managed to secure a landing zone out in front of us that night and get resupply in. See, we had a standard ammo load we were supposed to carry, you were supposed to carry a hundred and twenty rounds in magazines, that's five magazines, four in your belt, one in your rifle, two hundred rounds in bandoliers. These were in stripper clips, you could shove it the old M-14s, and six hand grenades, that's what every man is supposed to have on him. And if you used up any of that during the day, when they resupplied at night, the right guy, kind of like the platoon

supply sergeant, knew we needed three meals of C-rations for every man, new water, and then he get a list from the squad leaders of who needed ammunition and what kinds of ammunition and they'd draw back and pass it out every night. You do three meals of C's at night, that was for sup-, that was for breakfast, lunch and supper the next day, but you were always resupplied at supper time the next day. That's, after a few experiences you learn that you don't eat that last meal of C's until you been resupplied because it'll taste better several days from now if you don't get resupplied. But that was pretty much the standard procedure every night. And then you dig in, you know, when you dug in for the night, improve your holes and there we'd stay. Well we were there all day, that was Thursday, actually I think House was killed the next day. This was, see this was Easter week, '66, '67. Next day, I think he was killed actually on Good Friday. The next day was worse, they made several attacks. That was the morning that we got the Chinese advisor. Guy really did something stupid. You know advisors? Of course the Chinese said they had nobody there. Of course the North Vietnamese to the best of my knowledge have never admitted that they had any troops in the south. They did. In fact *[unintelligible phrase]*. But they attacked the other side of the perimeter and all of a sudden in the back there, basically driving these troops, is this great big guy in what was, we all seen on TV, a Communist Chinese uniform. I mean he wasn't, he was wearing a Communist Chinese uniform. Talk about drawing fire, that boy, we got him and we, they didn't get the body, we got the body, and the uniform and the goodies and we sent it back to the rear for the, you know, so I guess they could hang him out there and say see, see, see? Didn't work that way *[unintelligible word]*. I don't know exactly what those intelligence guys did with all that stuff we brought them. So the next day, here again was a repeat of the other, they shelled us several times. A guy got a leg blown off from shelling. We made some counter attacks out there, some local counter attacks, push them back. Then along towards night they just disappeared again, they backed off. Well, the next morning we moved again and we moved to Hill 190 which is a low hill on the northeast corner of Con Thien, it's just *[unintelligible word]* approach hill. Dug in there that night, not much happened. Now the lieutenant commander reorganized. We had had the point for this entire operation and we'd already taken a fairly severe beating, we'd taken a good number of casualties, and we'd been engaged almost constantly since Wednesday. Delta company, which had been the north flank had been getting, also getting beat up, so they had taken a number of casualties. So what he decided to do, and in fact I remember Delta company, they pulled Delta company through us and sent them to the south flank. They wheeled us north and gave us the north flank, I don't know why, I

guess they didn't like us. And then they brought Alpha and Bravo up because they figured Con Thien was fortified, there was going to be quite a fight for it. So now they had two companies that had seen no action that they were going to send in to make the attack on the hill, while Delta and Charlie company protected their flanks. Well, Delta company went out there and walked around in the sun, didn't find anything. Alpha and Bravo company made a magnificent screaming assault on the hill and didn't find anything. About nine the next morning, we got hit. We were moving, we went out and hit the DMZ and then came back, *[unintelligible word]* thank God, there was a mucky old paddy out there. If you stepped off the dikes you were right up to your crotch in the mud. If they had hit us in that paddy they'd have wiped us out, we wouldn't have had a chance, we couldn't maneuver. But right across the paddy was a steep hill, went up there, and we're only, it's only a thousand meters from the top of Con Thien to the DMZ, so we couldn't have been more than six hundred, seven hundred yards out from the top of the hill. When we topped the top of this high ridge it was flat, and it was an old blown up banana plantation, long lines of straight, great big old banana trees and brush higher than your head. Well we were moseying down through there on this trail and my point, *[unintelligible phrase]*, Choo-choo Lawson was the squad leader at that moment, Bob Bryson and Jerry Ejack and Larry Larson were on the point. Me, a guy named Heider and Mahoney had the right flank, *[unintelligible phrase]* on the left flank, no, Bayer was in 3rd Squadron, *[unintelligible word]* was over there. Anyway, we come around this trail, it was real brushy, it was hard to stay out, and I remember that they almost blew it. A grenade come flying through the hair and actually hit Heider. Those things are bad, they didn't go off half the time. Grabs it and throws it back, like that. *[unintelligible phrase]* shit, that was a gook grenade. About that time Bob Bryson yells back that he's found a booby trap, the trail is booby trapped. When he did they detonated what I think it was a command detonated bomb underneath that point or mine of some kind, and they opened up right down the trail with the machine guns, they were all over the place. Bryson and Larson were killed immediately. That was Cain's fire team on the right flank, Dicky and Smith. So Ejack managed to get blown out of the way, and he came crawling back, and we just slid over to form a straight line and just as a squad counter attacked. That's what you're taught to do, you just counter attack immediately. We actually broke their initial front position. I got that M_79 and I'd learned a long time, you could make like air bursts on an M-79. Banana leaves are tough enough to set the shell off and if you hit them, they will blow down and work great. So we had the M-79, we had opened up there and we just started pushing them back. Another two squads from our platoon

started coming up behind us then and we assaulted probably, let's see, a long ways, but probably it was not much more than the length of a football field, hit back through that brush, and we shoved them back into their prepared positions. This was an initial ambush position, then they dropped back. And there was a small open field, it was surrounded on the back, in like a Z-shape trench, I mean this was a trench dug in, there was a berm, must have been ten, twelve feet high put up in front of this, it was heavily prepared position. There was a 50-caliber machine gun in the corner, and there was a trail, came down on the trail and around the field and there was a cross trail there. We hit that trail intersection and by that time everybody was down except me and Mahoney, and we took the 50-caliber position, but we couldn't move the gun, we turned the gun on them. Nice thing about the M-250, the M-250 is identical all over the world. If you've ever seen one, you can shoot it. We pushed them back but we weren't going to be there long, so we wait until the rest of the platoon tops up behind us, and then 3rd Platoon was coming up hard behind them to protect our flank. But they were getting on the sides, too, at the same time. And that's when I put an illumination grenade to good use. Illumination grenades are magnesium, they're the greatest thing in the world to spike a weapon with. All you do is jam the sucker into the breach and pull the pin because when it cooks off the grenade melts and then when it cools it's become molten metal, you can drop them in the bottom of the tube, you can shove them in machine guns, throw them into the barrel, into the breach of an artillery piece, anything, and they will just absolutely destroy it. But I didn't want that, I didn't like fifty caliber machine guns *[unintelligible phrase]*. So we got back into the tree line, and by that time Mahoney got himself killed. I'm still all right. And we got the rest of the unit up there. The initial shock, we lost our other corpsman, we were now down to one corpsman, talked with him on the phone the other day, I should be able to remember his name. Old age is awful. Nichols, Greg Nichols, took a bullet through the left shoulder, shattered his shoulder blade while he was working on somebody, and he said, *[unintelligible word]*, he says I'm patching this guy up, he says, and I get hit worse than he does so he crawls up on his knees and patches me up. Right behind us there was a huge bomb crater almost as big as this room, it's a big room. The *[unintelligible phrase]*, and we started putting our casualties in the bottom of it, but we were just fighting, I mean we were just nosed up with these guys. We were within hand grenade range, we were winding grenades back and forth through the brush at each other. We can't see them, they can't see us, but we are maintaining a good solid volume of fire and, with the grenades *[unintelligible phrase]*. And we made, oh, I don't know how many times, throughout the day we consolidated our perimeter so we had the

company basically dug in a big circle, we weren't really dug in, we were just fighting in a circle, with this bomb crater in the middle. And we were trying to keep the casualties in the bomb crater. We kept taking them along and throwing them in the bomb crater, *[unintelligible word]* bring them back to you, Doc, yeah, yeah, and he was out again. We had, let's see, I don't how many times, at least three times that I, we counter attacked these positions. Lt. Dooley, who was a 1st Platoon commander, he was a, none of them, see all our officers in that unit except for Larry Dickenson, were Mustangs, they were former enlisted men, the Marine Corps commissioned *[unintelligible word]* E6s and E7s, staff sergeants and gunnery sergeants at the beginning of the war. You want good platoon commanders, commission the platoon sergeants. They were special short term commissions, they were enlisted, promotions and benefits remained, and they knew they'd never go above the rank of first lieutenant. And they were, because all the, House was a Mustang, Lt. Deavitt was a Mustang, and Dooley was, and then the company commander was, from years ago. That's how you get white haired captains. So, but we just continued to hold them off and kept taking casualties and taking casualties and kept pushing the perimeter back in. Dooley led several attacks on this, *[unintelligible phrase]* seventy nine men so I went on them. Jerry Ejack really got nailed about the second time we went out there. He was an automatic rifleman, we were almost to the top of that berm, and I believe, I still believe it was a satchel charge they threw up there went off. And the only reason I didn't get hurt really bad was just the angle. The charge was like off to my right front, Ejack was a step or two ahead of me directly between me and the charge. Now Ejack was a big man, Ejack, he still is, was a first team all state linebacker in Michigan in high school, so he was really rugged, a hell of a football player. That charge went off and he went airborne, hit me, and we both ended up in a pile at the bottom of this berm. And by that time the pack had petered out, so we had to get back to the line, me and Lt. Dooley and I think Charlie Burgess who was a grenadier with 1st Squad grabbed him, and somebody else, I don't know who the fourth guy was. Each one had a leg, each one had an arm, and took him right back through the thing and put him in the bomb crater. Not only was he hurt from the concussion, but he also took a bullet through both hips somewhere in the process. And, in fact I would have bet my next month pay he wasn't going to live, but he looked good the last time I saw him. So we put the, put him back in the bomb crater. Then we went back at it again, and we just continued this all day. They would make spoiling attacks at us, we'd make attacks at them. I found out that an M-79 has to, the round has to spin for fifteen yards to arm, so what I found is that you can shoot them right through brush and through hedgerows, just point blank,

you don't have to see, you can put it in there and just fire it right into position and it won't detonate until it gets out there. I also found that if a North Vietnamese, or anything else, is only about eight or ten feet from you when it stands up and you shoot him in the chest, an M-79 will go right straight through because it's a great big bullet and doesn't go off at all. A little further away and they really make a mess. I think I shot up there, because I was the only grenadier that didn't get nailed. Laramie got killed, he was one of the others. I think I shot the *[unintelligible word]* 79 round in the unit and I was down to a, I actually ended up fighting that night with an AK-47 I'd taken off a dead Cong because I was running out of ammo. Well this continued all day, and we, we'd push them back, they'd come back at us and we'd stop them again. And along towards night we tried to, we had some of the most serious casualties, we brought a medievac in for them and Benny Grant, Ralph Grant, brought the medievac, he had a very, very small place to do it. He got the helicopter over his head and then he actually laid down on the ground and brought the helicopter in, it set down right straddling him. But we loaded up some of our most serious casualties, Lawson, Ejack, Larrabee, some of these people, and that helicopter took off and it came off and actually *[unintelligible word]* me. I was dug in with Bayer on the *[unintelligible phrase]* east side of the perimeter. And that helicopter got right over us and they hit it with a machine gun, probably a 50, and just tore the tail section right off it. Down it came, probably not more than fifty, sixty yards in front of us, right into the brush. The tail section broke off and went tumbling through the jungle right at us. There's no place to go, and I remember sitting there thinking, you know, after all this shit I'm going to greased with the tail section of a helicopter. And it stopped right in front of us. Well, the crew bailed out, at least one of them was bright enough to bring the machine gun, and me and, let's see, I think Gordon Cardinal, a couple others, we went out to the helicopter because we were going to carry, most of, the guys who could walk were up. Ejack had to be carried out, and I found Lawson because he was hit in both legs, I got him over my shoulder and I carried him back. Probably wasn't the most comfortable ride he ever took, but it was all right considering he was machine gunned across the legs, and probably the fireman's carry is not the best way to go but he didn't mind at the moment. And then we covered it with fire and we got back out there again and we got all the ammunition out of it. See, M-60 machine gun fires a .762 round that is identical to a round for an M-14 except it's a belted ammunition. We actually threw it down in the hole, the ammo, and the guys like Choo-choo and the ones that could, you know, were hit but they couldn't fight, but they could use their hands, they spent, oh God, their hands were raw the next day, these guys spent the night down there breaking

machine gun belts and stripping rounds out of stripper clips and loading magazines for us and throwing them back out of the hole, that's how close we were. But, really funny, every guy down there insisted on having a weapon. They didn't care if you left them more than one bullet, but they all insisted on having a weapon of some kind because there was an innate fear of being captured. That bothered guys more than anything else. I know Choo-choo, he says to me, can you get me something to shoot with. I said, well I got a pistol. He says, good, he says, give me that. I says I only got like one or two rounds left for it. He says, don't worry, he says, I won't miss with the first one, and he stuck it under him. Never did see that thing again, I had to write a report on how I lost it. So basically, come along towards dark, now it's getting dark, and that was never good. We had a, one guy did a tremendous job out there that day, it was a, we had a lieutenant, I have no idea what his name was, he was assigned to us just for that day, he was an artillery observer, artillery and air observer, he was a first lieutenant. His radio operator was killed and he was wounded in the shoulder, his shoulder was very painful, and he spent that entire night sitting outside that hole up against a tree with his radio and he plotted artillery concentrations all around us. During the, first off during the night they started, he got Puff in there to help us out, Puff the Magic Dragon, you know who Puff the Magic Dragon was? It was that big jungle fighting plane, and he did a good job, he plowed the place. Well, back in the story a little bit, back earlier in the day, probably mid afternoon, our last radio operator got hit, got shot in the leg. He's laying in a depression and Lt. Dickenson was there with him, *[unintelligible word]* hook to the radio. Doc Long was up there working on him, and they, and Doug Dickie, who's from southwestern Ohio, was our backup radio operator, he was just a regular infantryman who'd been trained to operate the radio, so they sent me because I didn't have much to do. I was the only guy in my squad who wasn't in the bomb crater, in fact five of them were already killed, and so I went out and got, brought him back, and he was down on his knees right near Dossie's feet while Doc is working on him, and they're working the radio off him, and he's going to take over as the radio operator. And about then I had just dropped him off and I had turned to go back and I'd taken about two steps when somebody yelled grenade, and here comes two *[unintelligible word]* flying through the trees. One of them landed right in front of Dickie and the other one landed right between Dossie's feet. Dickie just took one look and he scooped one under and scooped the other one under and it rolled right around him and they went off and killed him. But nobody else was hit, he got the, posthumously, the Congressional Medal of Honor for that, they awarded *[unintelligible phrase]*. I showed a lot of courage by yelling grenade and diving behind a tree. But it just continued,

you know, and once dark came we got Puff in there, we got some, they brought jets and they bombed so close to us they blew Cardinal completely out of his hole, I'm looking *[unintelligible phrase]* there's Cardinal flying over into a tree. But by dark, we had it pretty well stabilized, the bomb crater was the center of our position and we were just dug in tight right around it. And they fought some during the evening, it wasn't too bad, and then after that it was just the single rounds here and there, which we learned were signal shooting. Also, one of the jets that came in radioed our FO and said that there was dead gooks everywhere out there, he said you guys done a number on them, they're everywhere. I think the thing was, there was only, well the next day after they got done medievacing people, there was only eleven of us that didn't have to be medievaced out of the company, and we probably had thirty guys who were still able to fight by night. And the reason they didn't wipe us out is they, I don't think they ever realized how badly they'd hurt us because we'd managed to keep a, the Marine Corps trains everybody to use everybody, we kept our M-79s in operation, we kept our machine guns in operation, we kept our 60 mortars in operation, so they never, so our volume of fire never dropped that badly. We just lost riflemen, and I think that they had no idea how bad they'd hurt us because they couldn't see any of that stuff any more than we could. We had no idea how much damage we'd done to them, which was evidently a great deal more than we realized. And by the middle of the night it was pretty much over. There was nothing, they were gone. In fact they, those guys fleece a battlefield. There was blood and body parts here and there the next morning, but basically all the equipment was gone, all the bodies were gone, everything was gone. Around that green, there was a green spot in this thing, and I'll bet there was a hundred and fifty meters around this little circle, it looked like, I remember one time seeing in a history book a picture of the Battle of the Argonne Forest, where everything was black and about knee high, that's what it looked like. When the planes and everything, when the artillery got done we had plowed that place. About dawn the next morning Lt. Debert, who had been back in the rear, was our platoon ser-, our weapons platoon, platoon sergeant, had put together a unit of just anybody who was standing around doing nothing. And he had started in during the night trying to reach us, and he reached us about dawn the next morning and with his troops and what we had left he secured an LZ and medievaced everybody, and what was left of us walked out. And I was always, still always amazed me how such a short distance it was back to the *[unintelligible word]*, you know. Seems like it was just a very short ways, you know, it was five, six, seven hundred yards if that. You know a lot of times you feel that things are, you know, it's like an eternity. You've taken forever and then you look back and *[unintelligible]*

phrase], Christ, it was only seventy five feet, you know? That was probably the worst fight I was ever in. And we, miraculous, I think I was the only guy in the company that didn't get a Purple Heart for that. So we went back there and then we continued on, what was left of us, continued on with the operation. That was the last battle in Operation Beacon Hill, it was over by then. So then we moved on to Con Thien and we proceeded to turn Con Thien into something that looked like World War I, with trenches and bunkers and we bulldozed everything out for about two hundred yards all the way around us, put in a big double set of double apron concertina fence, a mine field, and we were patrolling off it constantly. And then they pulled us back and sent us all the way back to the coast and made us security for the engineers and CVs cutting what they called at that time was Operation Firebreak. I think it was like, eventually ended up with an official title of like Prairie Five or something like that. And we were the security while they came from the coast all the way into Con Thien to clear the, basically protect them while they cut all the trees and bulldozed this two hundred, I think it was two hundred yards wide, this swath. And we, matter of fact, one of the most adventurous things out there, one day they, I was squad leader at this time, by attrition, they worked their way down to me, there was a little ville complex off to our right and the captain told Lt. Dickenson to send a squad around there to make sure they weren't going to get any surprises out of it, so we went ahead of the column and swung around back of this ville. And, now when you've set an ambush, you always put out rear security to prevent this from happening to you. Now either they didn't have rear security, the rear security was asleep, or something. Because we walked right into the back of probably a company size North Vietnamese ambush. It's like we're standing there going, these guys are all sitting in their holes with their backs to us, there's three mortar pits over here. So we get, like any good little Marine would do, we started shooting. In fact, I think it was Carpenter, had *[unintelligible phrase]*. Anyway, we opened up on them. Of course when they started taking fire, they started shooting the wrong way and the company, our unit, wasn't in the ambush yet. Now we had a platoon of tanks, four tanks with us on this operation. And they of course, the primary weapon over there, unless you were busting a bunker or something, is a canister shot which is nothing but a 90mm shotgun. There was three mortar pits down this way, we knocked out, me and a guy named Phil Avis, who had just come over, well just come over for his second tour, he was a corporal, he and I got the three mortar pits. We basically threw in some grenades, shot the gooks and then dumped a light grenade down each tube, that way we destroy the tube without having to haul it off. And then we were running down the line shooting them in the back. By then the company started counter attacking

because they were being fired at. They swung those four tanks on line and they came with the whole rest of the company straight at us. We were behind then and we just went to ground, I mean I just tried to see how flat I could get. And all of a sudden the Vietnamese just went poof, what was left of them, they just got the hell out of there because they had already been totally ruined. And now we can hear those tanks crunch into the jungle and about every second or two another one of those canister rounds would go off and we were getting basically grazing fire from our own troops. And, this was just supposed to be a quick little walk through the ville, right? I didn't have a radio, I didn't have one of them marvelous little green pop flares, I never was caught without one of those again, I never had anything. Finally, I saw this guy in a Marine Corps uniform hop over a hedgerow, it had to be the Doc, he was the only one that runs like that. So I yelled at him in English, and also you want to find out, too, one of the first things I was told when I was over there, put a lot of profanity in your English when you're yelling at another Marine because the Vietnamese may be able to speak English but chances are he won't accent it properly, so I did. And our corpsman had learned a long time, you didn't respond to Doc, they didn't respond to corpsman. They would, if they had any doubt whatsoever, they would hit the ground and they would tell you their unit and you had to call them by name, because that was a Vietnamese trick, they'd yell Doc, Doc, I'm hit and nail a corpsman, which was a big deal to them. So, he went down and yelled, I'm 2nd Platoon's corpsman, *[unintelligible phrase]*, I said, Long, you son-of-a-bitch, get over here. And that was, and then we all started yelling and they heard us and they ceased fire on us, somebody got the tanks to shut up, and they come rolling through the brush. And I had, and in that entire fracas I had one guy, I can't remember his name, he was a new guy, had a hunk of shrapnel about the size of my thumbnail in his forehead. That was the only casualty I booked in that mess. I come walking out of there, you know, what a mess that one was. I come walking down the line, one of the guys looks at me and he says, how do you get yourself in so much trouble? I don't know.

GW:Charlie, what was morale like?

CR:It was great, great.

GW:All your guys...

CR:Oh yeah, most of them, we had guys that year that quit college to join the Marine Corps to go fight in Vietnam. This was early in the war, we were still all doing

a good thing. I mean there was, we were, I don't think we wanted to be there, most of us wanted to go home, but there was no morale problems. We got along well. All these movies have always bothered me because they show them fighting each other and all that stuff, that just didn't happen. The other thing that didn't happen, at least in my units, was drug use. We were a year or two ahead of drugs when we graduated from high school, so most of us weren't familiar with it. And, we'd drink anything we could find, we drank stuff over there that, no wonder we all wear glasses, you know. We drank some bad stuff, like Pump 45, Tiger Piss, the Tiger Piss, that was that whiskey, had the big tiger on the label. We couldn't read the writing because it was in Vietnamese, and that's what it tasted like so we called it Tiger Piss. And plus anything else we could dig up by ourselves, so, but, no, and you never drank in the field, that was just not done. And nobody thought anything of it, it was just, you wouldn't have been accepted by the other guys, and I don't think anybody would have accepted anybody using any kind of drugs. Oh well, we went through, in the highlands, this was shortly after this, we were going through this big highland meadow and we found all these pretty big red flowers. So we're picking the red flowers and a gook with a gun took exception to us picking the flowers, we shot him, and then we couldn't figure out what the hell he was so upset about until one of the guys figured out that these things looked like his mother's poppies, and they were probably opium poppies. Well, we didn't know what they were, they were big, pretty, red flowers.

GW:What was the, did you have any discipline problems, any disobedience in your unit?

CR:No, never, absolutely never. I mean the worst thing that could have happened to you, probably, at least the initial reaction to being killed, was to not do your job, not do what you were supposed to do, let the other guys down. I mean you fought more, I mean there was very little mother and apple pie and any of this junk, but we fought very, very hard for each other and for ourselves, and doing your job, confirmed kill, something like that, that was a source of pride, you know, you know, that was something that, you know, that was like making the game saving tackle. You know, I caught one and I could boot it, you know? We were, it was, as I say, the movies and stuff they've made, from my experience, were so far out in left field that, you know, we didn't have morale problems, I never saw a Marine even look like he was thinking about refusing to do something. I never saw, the only Marine I ever saw crack under fire was a guy who had been hit in the face by a charge of mortar shrapnel and had

come back, and we were, he was fine with rifle fire and everything else, but the first time we got shelled real hard we had to run him down and he got medievaced, but that was not a big deal and that's the only time I ever saw that happen. I never saw anybody not move, I mean most of the guys you didn't need to tell them what to do, they knew what to do and they fought like hell. And, as I say, it wasn't, it was, there was just, we didn't have those kind of problems at that time of the war, at least now with that unit. And I think that was, you know, very fortunate to me because I think that's why I came out of it with such a, the attitude I have.

GW:How did you stay in touch with people, I mean you have like family ties and relationships back home, how did you stay in touch while you were in Vietnam?

CR:Letters. There was no other way. They didn't have, I really love it, these guys go to Desert Storm and go to the phone booth, hi, Ma, what's for supper, you know? I mean I didn't talk to my parents for more than a year. My mother wrote me routinely, I had a number of girls that wrote me. Actually *[unintelligible phrase]*. In fact, this guy Bayer, old Skip, his girlfriend had a friend who worked with her for the Social Security department *[unintelligible word]* and he wanted to know if I wanted to write to her and I said, sure, I'll write to anybody. I don't write well, but I'll write to them. So this girl wrote me. And after I came back to the States I went out there and met her, and married her ten days later. It lasted about fifteen years. But anyway, I found out later that she really didn't like me all that much. And I got, I got two kids. She was with me for, both at Boston and Parris Island. But that's how you communicated, that was the only way you communicated was through letters. They'd send you boxes. My father used to send me chewing tobacco.

GW:Did you get mail frequently, or?

CR:We got mail pretty regular, we got mail pretty regular. Here again, they wouldn't, they didn't fly mail into your, if you had a, you know, you were on an operation, you were in the field in a cold, you know, cold area, nothing was going on, yeah, they'd fly mail in. We got mail regularly.

GW:Once a week.

CR:I don't even know. It seemed like we got mail real regular, we got our mail, they got our mail out to us dai-, near on a daily basis when it was possible. They

were very good about that.

GW:Coming home, how did you come home?

CR:Oh, I came home, I went over on a boat so I got to come home in an airplane. We were up to Con Thien, dug in up there on the firebreak, in fact that's where I finally got myself wounded was on the firebreak. We just got caught in a big open dry paddy with a, and they started shelling us and I got, I had a guy get hit and I went back to get him out of the hole and see how bad he was hit, and truth is he wasn't, he was a new guy and he really wasn't hit very badly [*unintelligible phrase*] and about the time I got to him another mortar round come in right behind me, but it landed like in a mud hole and a lot of the shrapnel came out of it so I just got a lot of, I think I had, I had seventy three pieces but they were like steel slivers. And we continued attacking this tree line, and we finally drove the mortars out and shot the gooks and so on, and, but we took, had thirty one guys in the company that day that had to be medievaced, just from the shells. So they asked me if I could stay out overnight and the doc picked the shrapnel out of me, because I wasn't hurt that badly but my clothes were all shredded with blood and I was smoking and stuff.

GW:In your back?

CR:My back, my left shoulder and my left side and my hip and down my leg. My wife always takes great pleasure in saying now where were you hit? What portion of your anatomy? I said, yeah, but the citation says I was assaulting the enemy, and she says, yeah, right. And so Doc laid me out on a poncho and I'm laying there, you know, I had a little of his medicinal alcohol he had hidden in his unit one, and he proceeded to, it was just like picking slivers, he picked all the slivers out of me and then he took that miserable pink disinfectant horse liniment shit they had and poured that on my back. Doc's a big man, he held me down to do that, but he wouldn't have done it otherwise. But I never got an infection. In fact I think that would kill just about anything. Had enough alcohol in it so once in a while some guy would steal it and [*unintelligible phrase*]. Anyway, we kind of just kept moving and we didn't get any replacements. In fact they sent me out replacements, I got two clerks and a cook. The Marine Corps, everybody has infantry training before they go to their own MOS, and I got two clerks and a cook. The cook was worthless, one of the clerks was all right and the other one was, see, he was a corporal, and he was good enough, I used him for a fire team leader. He was one of our

chief clerks in back, in the rear. Then they sent us back, for a while they sent us down to the mouth of the (*name*) River to guard a bladder farm down there. That was where I got rid of the cook. We went on an ambush one night and he got hit on the way out, and I had told him [*unintelligible word*], he was always breaking the machine gun ammo up, two thousand round cans, and he'd break them up and have the different guys carry them. Well all you got is a hundred round assault pack on your machine gun, and when we got hit I yelled for that ammo to come up and the other guy brought his up, and this guy doesn't show up. So I went and found him, where's the machine gun ammo? It was too heavy, I left it in the bunker. Now here again, if I'd had extra ammo I would have shot him, but I didn't. And we broke off the action and got back inside the perimeter. And I took this young man right by the collar and I took him up and gave him to the lieutenant, told him what had happened and said I'm sorry, I'm going to kill him. I'd been over there about a year then, I was one of the most senior guys still on his feet because all the other old guys like Bayer and (*name*) had all got their three hearts and were gone. This was late May, and I was working on my thirteenth month, so I had a considerable amount of respect for seniority and longevity by that time, so I never did see that cook again. We were down there for a while screwing around. I always thought that was a great place, guarding the perimeter in a bladder farm. You know what a bladder farm is? It's these huge rubber tanks full of fuel. I always wondered what would happen if somebody dropped a little peter round right in the middle of one of those things. It never happened, but I always thought that it would probably look like the Hiroshima bomb going off. It was, the river and the ocean were right there, so we're sitting there one night, you know, we could swim and stuff, you know, it was kind of a break for us, and we'd been paddling around there, and one night we see this shark close to shore. And me and the guy in the hole with me shot the shark, went out, we said we were going to clear our gun, right, we did, shot the shark, went out and grabbed that sucker and hauled it in. Like I said, I'd been there a long time but you still do stupid things. So we got the shark, we're staring at its mouth, sitting there beside our hole, the company petty comes down [*unintelligible phrase*], oh we shot it, you know. He says, now let me get this straight. He says, you two geniuses shot a shark out there in the water, then you went in the water after a bleeding, thrashing shark, finished it off and dragged it ashore. What makes you think that there wasn't, you know, bleeding and thrashing draws other sharks, just how many do you think were out there along with this one? We thought, oh Jesus, stupid. It smelled too bad so we got rid of it. Went back up into the Con Thien area again for a while, a few days, and then they took us to, put us on props and took us down to Phu Bai. What I didn't know was

basically we had been pounded up so bad and the unit had, you know, pretty much distinguished itself up there, they sent them back to Phu Bai and on the morning of June 11, June 10th, they went to the field on Operation Cumberland, which was nothing but a security job with the convoys, which is incidentally what that unit did for the next six months was security of the convoys. They hardly had more than a few snipers the rest of the time they were there. And me, I got on the helicopter and flew to Danang in a very raunchy condition, I had more beard than I do now, because we'd just come in from up north, and they sent me home. I left on, before midnight the night of the 11th, landed in Okinawa, they cleaned us up, gave us Stateside uniforms, paid us. See, unlike the Army, the Marine Corps does not pay in the field. I hadn't been paid since March, and gave us formal orders, sealed our seabags, and just before midnight on the night of June 12th, we took off from (*name*) Airbase headed for El Toro in California. We landed in El Toro three and a half hours before we left. It's great when you're on leave because you get your day back across the date line, the other way. Some of the guys were really topped up because they were going to be sent back by ship, but the rule was, we send so many back by ship, we fly so many back and so on, but if you came over on a ship, you went back on an airplane, you were guaranteed a plane ride home. And I had made sure they saw my boat [*unintelligible word*] card and everything else I had to prove I'd been on that ship. So thirteen some odd hours later at about eight thirty at night on the 12th we landed at El Toro, and then me and about five other guys piled into a cab, one of them was a guy that had been one of our machine gunners, he was from Boston, guy named Roser. What we wanted to do is we wanted to catch the midnight flight back to Boston, and, because that was great, because generally like nobody wanted that flight, it was a plane, they were returning a plane. It was always the greatest flight at that time to Boston, it was a nonstop and it was usually virtually empty. It got you back into Boston before daylight in the morning. And we all piled into this cab and Roser, Roser was a huge guy, best way to describe him, remember the goons in the Popeye cartoons, these guys with huge bodies with monstrous arms and little tiny heads and a long nose, that's what Roser looked like. He used to be able to throw an M-60 machine gun on his shoulder and shoot it like a rifle. He puts his arm over this cabbie's neck, around, you know, his shoulder like that, and he says, what's the fare to Los Angeles Airport, and I don't know what in the hell he answered, the guy told him what it was. He says you get us there in time to catch the midnight flight to Boston, we'll pay you double, and then he just tensed his arm up and he says, if you don't I'll pop your head like a pimple. The guys going, he only hit the ground about four times [*unintelligible word*] to Los Angeles. We all made the flight, it was

great, we were the only, it was five of us who were from that, had been in that flight from Boston, and we were the only ones in the airplane. The stewardesses took us up in first class, brought out like whole big boxes of the little tiny liquor bottles. And the captain came back and, the guy flying the plane, came back and visited. We're sitting there, we're getting half in the bag by this time, we're sitting there, you know, and he's talking to us and he was telling about how he was a pilot during WWII and all that. Finally one of the guys looks in there, the navigator's asleep with his head on the desk, the co-pilot in the chair like this. He goes, excuse me sir, but who's flying this thing? He says see that little handle right there, he says, that's flying. He says, I have to go in there about every half hour and slap it, he says, to keep it in line, he says, we'll land in Boston. Landed in Boston and of course there was basically no plane service up there then. There was a bus from Bo-, I went over and got the, and I hadn't had time to call yet to let my folks know I was back in the States because every time I hit it was just real close. I managed to get a cab over to the Greyhound bus station and I finally landed in Portland, oh, latter part of the morning and I called my father. First my...

[Taping stopped before end of Tape Two, Side A)

Tape Two, Side B:

CR: So, I was in uniform, I had my chrome shit and doodads on and my, I was, *[unintelligible phrase]* my Purple Heart, you know, little ribbon, one of the, as one of my friends called them, North Vietnamese marksmanship medals. And, should know, he had three of them. And I land there and I get the phone and I call my father. And my mother worked, he, *[unintelligible phrase]*, my mother worked for the, for J.A. Thurstons *[unintelligible word]* mill, she used to work in the office over in Rumford, just outside of Rumford, right up on 120. So I called him, hey Dad, I'm home, I'm down in Portland, come pick me up, he just hung up. He was so excited he never said a word, just hung up, no answer, and, I'm pretty sure he got the message. What he did, he just, he even realize he hadn't said anything. He bails in the car, drives over to Rumford and gets my mother and comes back around, they've got to come to Portland to get me. So I'm going, hmm, I've got quite some time here to fart, to worry about this. So there was, happened to be a bar across the street, you know. You had to be twenty one, but I looked a lot older than I was. *[unintelligible phrase]* I mean I was just burnt black, and I only weighed a hundred and thirty eight pounds. I had, in fact when, after my folks passed away I was cleaning out my closet at home, I found a pair of pants that I bought when I was home on leave from Vietnam because everything was too big for me, with a twenty eight inch waist. I, now I think I have a twenty eight thigh. But anyway, I go across there and there's some old fellows in there and they see me in uniform and they ask me, I tell them I just came back from Vietnam. They were real nice to me, bartender wouldn't have thought of not serving me. Hell, not serving, he didn't even charge me anything, you know, treated me wonderful. So I figured about the time it would take father with his old Chrysler at the speed he traveled to get down there, and I went back across and I, I'm in the lobby of the bus station when I saw my folks, the car, they had my little brother with them, stop down here. So I stood there, okay. Now I didn't have my glasses on, I hadn't worn my glasses almost all the time I was over there. I'm fortunate in having pretty good vision without them, and with the sweat and the heat you couldn't see anything anyway, and I'm, as I say, I am just about black I'm so tan, and I also am half the size, I weighed about a hundred and eighty the last time they saw me. My mother almost, and I had a moustache, my mother almost walked right by me at the bus station, before I spoke to her. So after the little hugging and stuff we piled in the car and went home, and I've often thought that it was no wonder some people had problems, because later they used Treasure Island as a reintroduction center, to human activity, because it was less than three days from the time they picked me out of actual being

under fire combat, I was sitting on my folks steps [*unintelligible phrase*], you know, just plunked down there happy as could be. My mother told me later that, she said I was really quite scary. She said, your eyes, she said, it was like you were constantly watching. She says, I was always afraid something was going to happen and you were going to attack somebody or something. I never did. Probably just as well I didn't have a chance. And then I was home on leave for thirty days, and then I was assigned to Marine Barracks in Boston and I was there for the better part of a year and I got orders to Parris Island, and I finished my time on active duty down at Parris Island. And then I got out and stayed in the Marine Reserves for twenty one years.

GW:You had mentioned your not getting paid for several months. What was your rate?

CR:I was corporal, and I was, what had happened is, I was, I told you I was PFC for life, well the day I was [*unintelligible word*] in January on Okinawa, I became eligible and I made it, because I was already leading a fire team, which is a corporal's job, is an E-2 as a PFC, because of my seniority and the time I'd been over there, I was longer than most of the guys already. I made lance corporal right away, and that was in January, and then during the Easter Sunday battle, the company commander meritoriously promoted me to corporal, during the fight, he said Runnels you're a corporal, now try not to get shot, and I said, okay sir, I'll see what I can do. He didn't do so well, he got shot. However, he remembered, and the thing was it took months for that warrant to catch up. I got all kinds of back pay. I'd been a corporal since March but I was still wearing lance corporal chevrons when I come home. And, but then I get back, I find out I've been promoted, which was not uncommon to have that happen. The warrant with his signature on it and little muddy hand prints from Vietnam finally caught up with me in late July in Boston, the actual promotion warrant dated March 26.

GW:So what was the rate of pay in Vietnam for a lance corporal?

CR:Lance corporal was about, let's see, a hundred, maybe hundred to a hundred and, hundred dollars a month, hundred and ten dollars a month, plus fifteen dollars a month sea pay and sixty five dollars a month combat pay.

GW:So we're talking roughly two, a little, maybe two hundred, a little over.

CR:No, roughly two hundred a month with all your goodies.

GW: So, to be a target.

CR: Yeah. Well, when I first went in a private got seventy six dollars a month, and I made PFC and that jumped up around ninety bucks a month or something. I know that when I was in California before I rotated, before I went over, we got religiously paid twice a month. I got, my take home was thirty two dollars every two weeks, and they paid us in cash in two dollar bills, that was how they put the two dollars in circulation, they paid the military with them and they paid cash then. I got sixteen two dollar bills every other Thursday. Again, see, first off I, the Army goes to such great problems. I had a friend of mine from Bethel, Greg Lyons, who was a paymaster's guard. I mean, they used to fly into combat situations every month and pay these guys in the field. What are you going to do with it outside of lose it? So, they, we were paid, the Marine Corps paid every two weeks, depends on where you were, some places they paid every two weeks, some they paid every month, some places they paid bi-monthly. Some places they'd actually break it up into twenty six paydays and pay you every two weeks. And the, but I never saw the sense in paying in the field in a combat situation because there's nothing to do with it besides, I mean I had, they prorated it out of me. When I got to California and they paid me, they said oh, my God, you got all kinds of money on here. And they said, here, and they gave me five hundred dollars and they said, that's only part of what we owe you but this should get you through your leave. I'm going, yeah, it was the most money I'd ever seen in one place in my life. And then I got, I bet I drew two hundred, two hundred and fifty dollars a payday for three or four months after I got back to duty until they caught up all the money they owed me. But it certainly would have been no good to me out there. What was I supposed to do with a bunch of MPC?

GW: After you come home then, of course you still had some military time left, active duty time left.

CR: Yeah, I spent nearly three more years on active duty.

GW: How did Vietnam work on you, how did it affect you? Did you talk about it to other people?

CR: Oh sure, I always did. I never had a problem with talking about it, I never felt bad about it, I never got depressed, I never got down. And I never really felt any real resentment from anybody else, but I, I told people, I was, I spent most

of my life in a very insulated society, it's hard to *[unintelligible word]* that way. I stayed in the Marine Corps where going to Vietnam and getting decorated and getting shot at and so on was something to be proud of. This was, you know, something that all the other guys had done, you know, it was like, everybody in Boston was a Vietnam veteran. In fact it was used as a reentry for the semi-cripples in the Chelsea Naval Hospital. You know, a lot of guys there, as soon as they were fit to go to duty but not really fit like to go back in an infantry unit, they'd send them over to us as gate guards. We had guys, we had guys with ears shot off and everything else. He had an ear shot off, but he had a Navy Cross so it wasn't too bad. And, you know, he kept going back, they were refixing his ear and he'd come and guard gates in between. And then of course you get down to Parris Island, now you're training recruits to where, you know, that was a big deal, if you were a Vietnam, you had already been there and you'd done your stuff and you could.

And we were really quite valuable as trainers because the Marine Corps prior to Vietnam had been strictly an offensive organization. I mean, you hit a beach and you just drive into the island, just take it type of thing. In Vietnam we had to learn how to defend, and we became the Marine Corps' foremost experts on defensive combat. They didn't have any. And we were the guys who had survived and come home, so we were, well, we were in an environment where we were, well, not heroes, but we were definitely the guys that were looked up to. We were like everybody else, and we didn't much care how the rest of the world thought about it because your peer group, the people who were *[unintelligible word]* thought you were wonderful. Well, I got out of the Marine Corps and after cutting wood for about six months for the captain, (*name*), my first wife whined and cried and howled and I moved to Wisconsin.

Skip Bayer kept telling me I should come out to Racine where he lived. Well I was out there for a short period of time, worked in a factory, and most of the guys I worked with in the factory were older guys and they were, you know, WWII and Korean veterans who thought very highly of us. You very seldom, them, these idiots *[unintelligible phrase]* didn't pay much attention. And then in early '71 I became a cop. Now if you think the military's a closed society, you should try that. Here again, the guys that I worked with were all WWII, Korean veterans. It wasn't mandatory that you be in the military to be a police officer at that time, but it was a huge step up in getting hired. I mean, the sheriff was a WWII ex-Marine, the chief deputy was, the lieutenant was. All the guys I worked with, you know. I worked with one, an old destroyer sailor who actually was involved in the ramming of a Jap cruiser off in the *[unintelligible word]*. You know, I mean these were guys who valued your military experience and thought this was a good deal. So, and cops really don't

give a damn what the rest of the world thinks as long as they're happy. So my peer group, and you also become an, because of the hours you work and the days you work, you get to a point where you have to be very, very careful that you don't, that the only people in the world you socialize with are other police officers. And, so I was always in a sheltered, even though you don't think of the Marine Corps and being a law enforcement officer as being a sheltered society, but psychologically it's a sheltered society. And because of that, I never had any problems, I never received any pressure from anybody, you know. I mean I had a friend, he was an ASP, a technician, a National Guardsman, he was an ex-Marine, *[unintelligible word]*, Silver Star winner, and he one day was late for class, and he worked full time for a Guard unit so he attended class at UW Parkside in uniform. Well, he comes, he walks out of the class and the professor is standing there and he goes, which one of those is for killing babies? He looks at him like that and he goes, this one. And he says, you know what this one's for? What? Killing obnoxious old bitch professors. So he didn't real well in the class, but, he was, but that was, you know, I never, I never experienced that. Well, let's face it, there ain't nobody going to come up and bad mouth some cop because he's a Vietnam veteran in uniform. I didn't socialize with those people otherwise, so who cares? I mean, I one time arrested a, got a guy six months for burning a flag at a Vietnam demonstration. Me and Ralph Grant, right, my old company gunny, these idiots are having a flag burning, so we figured we'd break that up. We caught one, and we charged him with desecrating the flag, which in Wisconsin is a Class A misdemeanor punishable by up to one year in the county jail. We locked him up. Next morning he goes on, he should have known he was in trouble, he went before old Judge Harvey who was a PT boat captain during WWII, who still had the shredded remains of his battle ensign off his PT boat hanging in back of his bench. And this guy gets in there and starts right out making the mistake of giving Harvey an anti-Vietnam lecture, and then telling him, oh of course he did it and so on. So Harvey gives him six months closed confinement, which means no *[unintelligible word]*, no work release, nothing. And he goes, but your honor, can't you take into consideration I was drunk? Harvey said, I already did. Could have given you a year. Next?

GW:Charlie, how has your vision of Vietnam changed over the years? From what, you know, you thought it was when you went there to today?

CR:I'm really not sure it has. Vietnam was in many ways one of the best experiences in my life because of what I in the end personally got out of it. I think that, I really attribute a lot of my success in life, and I'm always pretty good at it, to a

lot of the things I learned while I was there. But I guess I wasn't answering your question exactly. I'll get around to it. My concept of Vietnam when I went over there was it was a war, I was in the Marine Corps, I go fight wars. I remember telling somebody one time that I'll go anywhere and fight anybody they tell me to because that's what they're paying me to do. And that mental attitude I think was very beneficial to me personally. It was no different from going and breaking down the door on a search warrant or going and hauling some guy away which deep in your heart probably figured he wasn't guilty anyway, but that really doesn't matter. That's not my concern? And it was the same way, the politics of Vietnam were not my concern, and I refused to allow myself to be concerned about it, because then you make yourself nuts and there's no sense in doing that. You know, it was, I've often laughed at guys when I was in the service, I said hey, it's great career development, I said, I'm *[unintelligible phrase]*, you know? I really never mentally wrestled with the politics of it in one way or the other. It's a little aggravating for everybody to think that you lost only because when I was over there, we went anywhere we wanted to go, we took anything we wanted to do, we won every fight we were ever in, you know, so I don't have any feelings of I lost the war. I won my piece of it. And I had a friend of mine, he was a Navy, he was a boatswain on a Navy river boat in the Delta, Mike Vodie, he was one of my detectives before I retired out west and Mike and I worked together for years. Mike had a unique attitude, a unique thought, and I never thought of this until he said it. He says, Vietnam was simply a battle in a war that lasted nearly forty, almost fifty years. It was a war between the United States and the Communist bloc. The big hot fights, he said, was the Cold War, it was Korea which was a hot war, it was kind of a draw, but we still maintained. Vietnam was the biggest single battle in this war. And in 1990 and '91, the Communist empire worldwide collapsed. He said, you fought in a battle of the Cold War, which we won. It took us fifty years, but we won it, he says, so I don't care what anybody says, we won the war, we were just some guys that fought in one battle, and so are the guys in Korea, you know. I thought, you know, he's actually got a point, politically he's got a point. Because the whole thing was a political goat roping that lasted for nearly fifty years between us and primarily the Soviet Union, the Communist bloc and the western bloc fought a war that was hot and cold, off and on, for nearly fifty years. And we ended up on top. Because it was a political-economic thing anyway. But no, I never got myself into wondering about right or wrong. I have no regrets about going. I've told people and I think it's true, knowing everything I know today, put back into that same situation, I'd do it again because I don't see any reason not to do it again. Because I would go over there with the same attitude as I did this time.

I joined the Marine Corps, it's my job, and I'll go do it. And I have the, as I say, I have a unique ability to take horrible, terrible things and not think about them, to stash them away, to have them never bother me. I can resurrect them, I can talk about them, I can deal with them without ever attaching any emotion to them, which is something that stood me fairly well in the six years I worked homicide in a place where everybody was getting shot, you know. And I just don't attach any emotion, and, to it. It's a, probably some psychologist or shrink will say I'm probably crazier than the other people are, I'm crazy as hell, but I'm also very happy and I'm not bothered by any of this because I have stashed it. And I can resurrect it at any time, just like the, you know, the axe murder of a child, and I've actually dealt with such things, you know. I mean, you do the autopsy, do everything else, and you type it all up and you throw little body parts in bags and you process all the evidence. And then you go to court six months later and you resurrect it and you talk about it. Some guys, it really gets to them. It never did me. I always said I was preconditioned, Vietnam preconditioned me, I learned these mental tricks to save my own sanity and they've done me very well throughout my life.

GW: Before we wrap this up, any last thoughts, anything you'd like to say?

CR: No, I could just tell you, you asked about keeping contact with the guys in that unit. Back here, '97, January '97, I had no, the exception is Skip Bayer who lived out in Racine, I had not seen anybody in my platoon. I think it was, I think the Marine Corps rifle platoon is like forty six enlisted and one officer, and I think there was less than thirty of us survived to return to the States. That was in my platoon that left Okinawa. And we had, all of us had at least one Purple Heart. I think somebody figured up one time, we had a total of eighty four Purple Hearts in that platoon, plus a Medal of Honor, some Navy Crosses, Bronze Stars, so on. I got a call from Larry Dickenson, my old platoon commander. He was then a principal of a high school in Delaware. And he had been on the Internet trying to locate as many of the guys he could, and I helped him, I, of course, had the advantage at that time of working for the department and I, if I can find out your name, date of birth, sex and race, if you possess a driver's license in this country and I can get my hands on a police computer, I can f-, well I can't, but my wife can find you in about ten minutes. If you live in some states like California, they'll give you what they call near hit, if you just come close, a bunch of stuff will come up. That's why guys in California are real easy to find. That's how I found all the corpsmen from the old company command. But, so he was trying to find as many guys that he could. Well we ended up finding twenty three. The twenty fourth one we

know of only, we know of one, Lt. Dooley died of cancer a number of years ago. Tomlin was our other radio operator, a rather wild individual, and in the early seventies he drove through the side of a brownstone on his motorcycle down in Boston, which did him. But otherwise than that, we found everybody else. So Memorial weekend of '97 we went, all gathered at Doug Dickie's home town in the middle of (*name*) in southern Ohio, we met with his family and had a three day drunk and just had a wonderful time. It was amazing to see those guys. I mean, you never thought that you'd ever see them again the rest of your life. And when you stop and think about it, Vietnam, I mean, what percentage of my fifty two years is thirteen months? And yet that, the relationships you develop during that thirteen months, how significant, I've often told people that I refuse to let that smaller part of my life control the rest of it, which I do, but the relationships with these guys. Like Ejack, the fact that Ejack was able to stand, let alone look almost as rugged as he ever was. The only thing is, about every four years one of the things that that bullet did that went through his hips, it blew out his urethra and it's plastic, and about every four years he has to, he says, I have to go in for an operation, he says, and be repiped, he says, replumbed. He says, otherwise than that he's had a very successful life. We've only got two guys from the unit who have had any really significant mental problems, or problems of any kind. Now this is a unit that took a hell of a beating and shot a lot of gooks, and had a lot of guys get shot up, had people blown all over them. Every one of them was at least wounded at least once, you know. So we were in some very significant combat, more so than most units in Vietnam I guess because of where we were at the time. And yet most of these people are extremely successful. I mean, we have, I don't know, I'm a retired police lieutenant, we have bank presidents, one man owns a major construction outfit down in, around New Orleans. We have office managers, business managers, Doc Long owns his own electrical contracting company in California, Doc Nichols was such a prosperous car dealer in California that he now basically just does what the hell ever he wants. Everybody, the lieutenant was, you know, a high school principal, and I say was because he went and found all these guys, and I think that was good for them but not good for him because about a year a half later he committed suicide, you know. And that was, and that's, [*unintelligible phrase*] because he seemed like as stable as anybody. But evidently he had more problems than he or anybody ever let on, and he waited until after he retired and I think after he retired then he became so absorbed in this stuff. Which is a problem. That's why you don't think about it that much. Skip Bayer is conduction welder, in fact that's all he ever does. You know, but most every, virtually everybody in the unit, we had two guys who have had

some real significant mental problems, and the actual truth of the matter is I knew them both quite well and I don't think their bindings were terribly tight to begin with. So, you know, you get something that'll set you off. But as I say, most of the guys have been extremely successful in their lives, and still are, you know. So it's not a, you know, it was not a, I don't think a real bad thing for the majority of us. As I say, you, the things you learn about yourself in combat are absolutely amazing, you know. About yourself and about other people and about what you can do and what you can't do, and mostly you learn what you can do, that you can do things that you never dreamed possible. That you are physically and mentally capable of taking pressures that are beyond, you know, anything you ever dreamed you could do. And sometime later in your life when things look like they've really gone to shit on you, you can always say, man, this really isn't that bad.

GW: Well, I guess for today that pretty much wraps it up, and I want to thank you for participating in the oral history project. And I'm going to shut this off now.

End of Interview



LOCAL and STATE

SUNDAY, JANUARY 13, 2008

Morning Sentinel

SECTION B

On the Edge
J.P. Devine

Ed Muskie couldn't, but Hillary? OK

"There is no crying in baseball."
Tom Hanks in "A League Of Their Own"

Back in 1961, two of baseball's greatest players, Roger Federer and Mike LaBatina, faced each other in the ring for the sixth time in what was then called "The St. Valentine's Day Massacre." Robinson won the world mid-weights title by knocking out LaBatina in a 13th-round technical knockout. I'd get back to that.

Opinion

Obama faced each other in the top political ring of New Hampshire. It was only their second official bout, blown out of proportion by media gas and the hyper-ventilated eyes of New Hampshire voters. One would have thought it November already. We'll have to do something about that crowd in January '09. Hillary only clipped Barack, but it was a clip heard around the world. Hillary was on the ropes. First, she panicked when she couldn't find Bill in an Iowa grocery store—arrange a levy of case check-out girls, after she was told she was not on rice as an Obama, and then when Obama had been endorsed by most pundits as the sure winner, so to pick up New Hampshire, Nevada, and South Carolina in that order.

You could hear the music from "Charlies Of Fire" on the soundtrack. Obama was hot. How hot was he? (I don't recall Pat Buchanan had to be reminded that "Obama wasn't born in Kentucky." Indeed he wasn't. But still.) You see the tapes. When it came down to the last round, Hillary sank to her knees like Scarlett O'Hara in the waxy park, and aimed into the camera with tear-soaked eyes. No, she didn't grab Scarlett's lace-up bodice to her eyes, she didn't sob like a woman going to the chair, but there they were, floating around her baby blues. Oh, so soon, were those tears? I could hear Tom Hanks: "No you crying! There's no crying in baseball!"

And then her base, that moment of older women, went all wobbly in the knees. That which had sunk Ed Muskie in 1972 suddenly yanked Hillary from the edge of doom and handed her a silver victory.

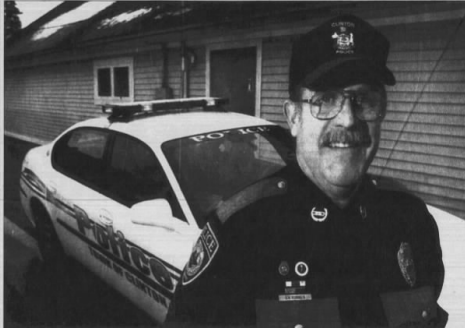
We boys and girls, there is something in Hillary's team quickly pointed at Republican Super-Morose Mitt Romney's two terrible moments. One, when he first heard that his church would admit blacks to the priesthood in 1978, and once upon seeing the coffin of a soldier killed in Iraq and snapping it to be one of his sons, who appear at this printing, to be in no mortal peril in Iraq.

We girls can cry. Just guys have to be dry-eyed at all costs. This is reflection. I cry often. I cried when Frankie Laine died. I cry each year watching "A Wonderful Life," and I read when I run out of water in the last snowstorm. There is a time and place for many tears. An empty wine glass is one of them.

I'm not going to cry. I know Barack is still on his feet, and hopefully he is coming back to go to jail. It is an unenviable number of needs to be required, and emerge a hero.

Monday night was peaceful. But all Barack had to say to himself and Hillary, in what late LBJ said that night in 1961, take command the ring, bloodied and swollen on shaky knees. He said to Roger Federer: "This one's easy... they can't knock me down." Obama took a beating, but she never knocked him down. He's still on his feet and will be in his corner. Knock gloves, kids, and come out swinging, and NO CRYING!

17 Photos by J.P. Devine for the Morning Sentinel



NEW CHIEF IN TOWN: Charles Runnels is the new Clinton Police Chief.

Around-the-clock coverage

New Clinton police chief to start new system on Feb. 1

By Morning Sentinel staff

CLINTON — Around-the-clock police coverage is on the way to Clinton as part of departmental goals set by new Police Chief Charles Runnels.

"The job is fine, there's a lot of things that need attention and I'm trying to get to them in priority as fast as I can."

Runnels, a former U.S. Marine who saw combat in Vietnam in 1969-72, is a career law enforcement officer. He served 16 years as a police officer, part of it as a robbery and homicide investigator and commander of the detective division with the Bangor (Me.) Sheriff's Department.

Runnels, 60, succeeds Clinton police Detective Andrew Hill, who was named chief in August only to find he had been hired for a position in civilian law enforcement with the Department of the Navy in Albany.

He accepted the other job a day later and technically was police chief for less than a week.

Hill replaced Police Chief Randy Wing, who accepted a job as patrol-

Chief

CLINTON POLICE
■ Chief: Police Chief Charles Runnels
■ Sgt. Craig Johnson
■ Patrol Officer: Jeff Bringer
■ Where: 27 River St., Clinton
■ Telephone: 459-5121
■ Email: clintpol@2008.com

PLEASE SEE CLINTON 13

Winslow fretting about cost of keeping sewer line safe

By Morning Sentinel staff

WINSLOW — Town officials have long been concerned that the removal of Fort Halifax Island, which is planned this summer, will expose a town sewer line that the impoundment covers.

When the board meets for its regular monthly session, the meeting is scheduled at 7:30 on the Town Office.

However, he needs more time to review PFL Energy's offer before he can present the proposal to the Board.

They seem to be willing to work with us and pay some of the cost," he said, "but nobody has a clear idea of what the cost will be. I don't think we can know until the claim removal process is done."

However, agrees with Susan Samuel.

Sugarloaf/USA employee injured

Staff report

CARRABASSSETT VALLEY — A Sugarloaf USA employee was admitted to an undisclosed hospital late Saturday morning after an accident on a ski lift, authorities confirmed.

Another Sugar Police saw the Franklin County Sheriff's Department would provide further details Saturday.

The victim's injuries were not life-threatening, Sugar said. "He was injured while working near a 'buckle' seat."

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Clinton

from BI

Runnels, whose family once lived in Benton, most recently lived in the town of Abbot. He worked for the Greenville Police Department until retiring last July.

He and his wife, Donna, now split their time between their farm in Abbot, where they have teams of oxen and horses, and their new home in Burnham. Donna Runnels is the victim advocate for the Piscataquis County District Attorney's office.

Runnels said he has made his way along the main streets and back roads of Clinton over the last month or so under the guidance of Sgt. Craig Johnson, a 19-year veteran of law enforcement and, for a short time last year, the only full-time police officer in Clinton.

"The job is fine, there's a lot of things that need attention and I'm trying to get to them in priority attention as fast as I can," Runnels said.

"One of the first things I had to do is just get a feel for the community, a feel for a new computer system I've never seen before."

The Clinton Police Department now has three full-time police officers, including Runnels, and eight reserve officers who will be filling six weekend shifts after Feb. 1, along with on-call, full-time officers.

As a result of the increased coverage, Runnels said his department budget for 2008-09 will go up from \$175,200 to \$199,256 project for next year.

"I like it here, my father's family lived here, especially in Benton for four generations and I'm related to a great number of people here and in Benton," he said. "I'm familiar with the area from coming here as a kid all the time with my folks."

He said his great-grandparents' place is the old Richards farm in East Benton.

"Everybody I've met here has been fine; I get along fine with everybody and I've had no real problems with anybody that we've had to deal with," he said.

Runnels said he wants the people of Clinton to know that if they call the Clinton police, they will respond. Calls are directed through dispatch services at the Waterville Police Department and immediately patched through to Clinton units, he said.

He said officers will respond to all 911 calls in Clinton, even if they are dialed in error. Police also will respond to assist all rescue calls, as well, he said.

"I need the public to call and tell me what's happening," he said. "If you have a problem of any kind, if you see something that needs attention by the Police Department ... If you have a complaint, a problem with any one of my officers, you call me and tell me."

"My goal would be that I want the people of Clinton to trust, rely on and actually like their Police Department."

CHIEF CHARLES RUNNELS

*Doug Harlow — 861-9244
dharlow@centralmaine.com*

"My goal would be that I want the people of Clinton to trust, rely on and actually like their Police Department."

Around-the-clock coverage



Tue, Nov 29, 2022