Monty Alan Hostetler: This is Monty Alan Hostetler, it's 6:45 PM on February 26th 1990. I am interviewing, for the first time, Michael Horton. This interview is taking place at the office of Mr. Horton, at Lubbock Airport. This is part of the Vietnam Archive Oral History Project at Texas Tech University. Basically, just to begin, are you a resident of the South Plains all your life? Were you born and raised here?

Mike Horton: Yes Monty. I was born in Lubbock Texas, raised here, schooled here, in the public school system, in Lubbock Texas. I attended Texas Tech, graduated in 1969 and went through ROTC at Texas Tech. And then went on active duty right out of Tech. I was away for two years of my active duty in the military and have been back here ever since.

MAH: O.K. You were in Army ROTC while you were here at Tech?

MH: That's right.

MAH: What was the attitude on Tech campus like in '64? Was that when you attended?

MH: Yes. In fact, I'm going to, I'm going to refer to my notes if you don't mind because there's some points I'd like to be sure that are brought out and I didn't want to miss any of them. Having grown up in this part of the country, as a WASP, in this conservative cocoon of West Texas and I went through the very structured program of Boy Scouts and that sort of thing. My dad was a World War II Army fighter pilot, flew P-
40's. In my mind, when I came to Tech, it was only natural that I enroll in ROTC. That was in the fall of 1964. At that time, Vietnam was one of those things that was just starting to be talked about a lot, come into the news every evening. Something that, for those of us who were freshmen in college we never perceived it would still be in the limelight as far down the road as when we were able to graduate. I noticed on your shirt talking about 5 or 6 of the best years of your life spent at Texas Tech. That, I think, probably is relatively close. I will go back and tell you that for those of us who came out of high school at that time… In fact, let me offer you these observations. At one point in time, back there, there was a situation that existed that if a male, who was otherwise draftable if he were married, that then became an automatic deferment. At some point in time, and my memory's not good enough to tell you when the cut offs were, that no longer became a valid deferment for military service but they then had one that if you were married and had a child there was a valid deferment from military service. The rest of us, of course, being subject to the selective service act and the draft. At a point in time somewhere back there before, when I got out of high school, that no longer became a valid deferment. So for those of us who graduated high school in the early and mid-60's it was only, the only choices we had were come out of school, if we were physically capable we were either going to, or in some way go to the military. Or go to school, or in some way forestall the inevitable. Now what I can't tell you is how popular Army Reserve and National Guard units became about that time. There were waiting lists of two to three years at that time, out in this part of the country. And because of those things, one of the options, which appeared very clear to me, was to, because I was eligible, go to school, get into an ROTC program and of course, at that time the program was, the first two years was a non-binding program. At the end of your second year you signed a contract and you literally became enlisted in the United States Army. You were called a cadet, in fact, at home I have an honorable discharge as a private from the United States Army, which they had to give me so that I could accept my commission on graduation. So, you know, it was kind of a natural thing, in my mind, to go in to. If you were in school, and if your grades were such that you were deemed by Texas Tech, or any other university, to be a satisfactory student, for the most part you were exempt from the draft. If your grades fell and you didn't make school, then you were imminently
draftable. Now the ROTC department carried that a step further and they used to prompt
us, quite a bit, in reminding us that not only were we expected to keep up our grades, and
our academics and also our military science courses or air science if you were Air Force
ROTC (and back then, only Army and Air Force ROTC were at Texas Tech. I think we
now have Naval ROTC). But at any rate, they would prompt us, and remind us that if we
were physically capable of passing a commission physical, we were also physically
capable of passing a draft physical and if we didn't perform to their standards we would
be imminently draftable. So that was a kind of underlying unspoken threat that was... that
the professionals in the ROTC program had. And it was quite effective I'll have to add. I
look today at some of the students I see out here and wonder if there's the same level of
motivation to get through that freshmen semester as we had back then with the news
starting to be popular to talk about the Vietnam conflict. But at any rate I'll, having said
that, I'll mention that as time went on there got to be more and more of a difference
between those of us in ROTC and the rest of the student body. Hair length was, at that
time, starting to become popular to be longer. Now the norm now is quite the opposite
but at the time, and this was before the days of the real long sideburns, that came a little
later. But hair length started going down and of course those of us in the program were
expected to keep our haircuts short. So needless to say, the Rodeo Cowboy Association
and ROTC students stuck out like sore thumbs on campus. At that time, one of my
favorite stories here. What I think it the architectural building. Now it's not the
building right off of Flint Avenue? That's right across from the dorms. That building was
under construction at that time, and they built a construction fence, we used to call it a
graffiti fence because that's what it amounted to. And we had people that we'd call
hippies in those days, and some of these people were probably return veterans, some of
them were probably just folks who adapted that mindset. And these would be the guys
with the long hair and the pony tails and an old Army fatigue jacket, usually with a big
peace sign on the back of it. Now they'd go out there to draw on the fence and they'd
draw their peace signs and their anti-war slogans and that sort of thing. And of course the
funny thing, for those of us who were in the ROTC program, almost diametrically
opposed to the hippies were the cowboys. And Tech's always had a good strong Ag
program. And here you had guys coming out of the wilderness around this part of the
country, conservative Texas. And these guys came to school with their pickups and their .22s in a gun rack in the back window and they'd keep them loaded with birdshot and they'd drive down Flint Avenue and pull those .22s out and shoot at the hippies with the birdshot, and of course this is when we first had the campus cops. Before they issued them weapons they were relatively harmless in those days. And they had the little Chevy Nova's with 4 cylinder engines and automatic transmissions and they'd go out and try and chase the cowboys. The cowboys, of course had these big-engined trucks and they'd just motor off into the sunset. And that was always kind of fun for us because we were usually taking it on the chin otherwise. Another thing that I remember, fairly well, and something that came to be during those days, as time went on, this had to be in '65, '67, somewhere in that time frame. The ROTC department finally had to establish a rule for the ROTC cadets, that we had to wear our uniform on the days of the drill. And if we were caught not in uniform, there was a demerit system. And of course by this time, being a part of any kind of a military entity had become enough of an unpopular thing that most of the guys just slipped in to class in their jeans, their tee-shirts, or whatever they were wearing those days and then ran home and changed for drill. So that was always an interesting little anomaly. But even when we finally got home and got our uniforms on, and had to come back and form for drill, and march to the drill fields, which is between those dorms out on Flint up on the north end of it, almost west of the baseball field now. We’d march between the two dorms, and we'd have guys of course with the windows open, sitting up there harassing us and all these anti-war slogans, throwing Coke bottles, anything else at the cadets drilling the drill. That's something that I will kind of always remember. The, for those of us who went during my time, we went to what we call summer camp. The summer between our junior and senior years. And that was basically Infantry Basic training at Ft. Sill, Oklahoma. And at that time there were so many people in the Army, that were at Ft. Sill proper that they moved us out about 17, 18 miles on the base and, or actually the fort. And we lived in a tent city with gravel floors. And very temporary training conditions and in essence went through infantry basic training. If you can imagine the culture shock coming from, what we didn't appreciate as the soft life of a college student going into the strict confines of a military situation. But we did those things, and this was after we had signed our contracts, and literally were
committed to at least some time in the military. After 4 years of ROTC programs and the
completion of our course work we got branch assignments. Now we were told, we were
handed a form, an ROTC form and told to fill it out. Now what we all called those forms
were ‘Dream Sheets’ because they basically, like a lot of forms I'm sure you've seen in
classes said, ‘If you had your choice where would you like to serve? If you had your
choice what would your branch assignment be?’ This sort of thing. So we filled out the
dream sheets and sent them in and little did we realize that quotas from Department of the
Army in the Pentagon are what determined those branch assignments. I think in my
graduating class there were probably 5 people who were other than combat arms. And in
the Army combat arms branches are Armor, Infantry, and Artillery. All the others
Quartermasters, Signal Corps, Engineers, so forth...that was about the ratios they were
taking at the time. My initial assignment came back infantry. And of course this was after
the '67 TET Offensive, and we'd had quite a bit of insight, at that time, into what Vietnam
was about, what was going on over there. So as a...what I considered at the time a bright
young college student I thought I ought to do something to see if I could remedy this
Infantry assignment. I'd just completed a letter-writing course in the Business school. So I
set down and wrote a letter to the Department of the Army expounding on my vast
maintenance background in the civilian area of aircraft and requested a transfer to the
transportation corps. And told them that I felt I could better serve their purposes in the
field aviation maintenance. Well I promptly got back a transfer, and a nice little letter that
said, in essence, ‘No, we didn't realize you had this vast technical background and based
on that we are going to re-assign you from infantry to armor.’ So that's how I got to be a
tanker. And my branch assignment then was for commissioning in armor and I was
deferred for a year because I had changed majors. I started in the school of Engineering
for about 3 semesters then transferred to Business so I had about a year of schoolwork
left to do and from the time I completed the 4 year course work in ROTC I was basically
just on a deferment for graduation. I married in the summer of 1968 right after what
would have been my senior year, I actually had two senior years. And was commissioned
in the summer of ’69 after I completed my degree. The only thing we were kind of held
up on at that time was getting us into a branch school. Because once we'd accepted our
commissions as officers then we had to go to officer branch school for our specialization
and armor school was at Ft. Knox, Kentucky. So I attended what we fondly called ‘tank college’ at Ft. Knox, Kentucky in 1969. One of the little things I remember that we had there. Here all the sudden you had all these guys who had, other than summer camp, seen nothing but college life, and all the sudden here we were in a green uniform expected to act like soldiers. An acquaintance of mine, in fact he was my roommate in Bachelor Officer Quarters there had come from North Dakota if my memory serves and he was an art major in college and his dad was a wholesale liquor salesman and needless to say, Ken had kind of grown to a fondness for alcoholic beverages. And really was a guy that I figured out up until the time frame when he had to get his hair cut to come into active duty was probably one of those long-haired hippie types and really did have a cultural shock to come from what he was used to evidently a quite liberal background relative to some of us into a structured military. And he used to sit up in tactics classes and he was a cartoonist, and he'd draw cartoons of the major or whoever was teaching the course and pay absolutely no attention to what we were supposed to be learning that ultimately had to do with saving both our lives and those who would be under us. That one day in a tactics class we had a major who was real short, real prim and proper everything perfect on his uniform kind of guy, kept his haircut in almost the Marine type cut. In fact we all laughingly called him ‘Major Haircut’ for the life of me I couldn't tell you what his name was. But he could see that this guy in the top row was not paying attention to his class and unannounced to everybody he kind of backed off across the room and got about a five foot run. Our desks were tiered, five levels, and he made those like steps and presented himself right facing my friend. And confronted him with some questions from class. That was really kind of an interesting thing to have happen and it really taught the rest of us the value of what to get in perspective to what we were there for. Here we had both ends of a spectrum- you know a person whose life was dedicated a career soldier and was in there teaching his heart out with a liberal minded person who really probably wondered how in the world he got there. I really wondered at the time, how he got there. And then all the rest of us in the room somewhere in that area in between. One of the things we did at that time, one of the things we had to do as armor officers was qualify on all the weapons that were that were OEM on the tank. Everything from the main gun, we actually fired 105mm main gun rounds on the tank gunnery range at Ft. Knox, Kentucky,
.50 caliber that's on the cupola and of course the .30 caliber that's down in there. And of course on a tank our main sidearm was a .45 pistol, which we all had to qualify on. And at that time a part of the tank weaponry was a little tin sub machine gun made by American Tin Company in Dallas. Kind of had a folding stock. And we had to do those, of course to fire those you basically kind of pointed it down just in front of your feet, pulled the trigger, and held on until it was out of rounds. Because it fired a 45 pistol shell and had quite a kick to it. We also had to go ahead and qualify on all the rifles that were in the inventory at the time with the exception of the M-16. That was absolutely the last weapon that they let us have our hands on before we went overseas. They were so short in supply, having just recently been issued to the troops in Vietnam there just weren't enough for training stateside. And even with the magnitude of funding that was thrown at that war we saw those constraints in our training. We basically carried, in ROTC we carried M1's a World War II rifle and qualified on those in ROTC. And all our training at both Ft. Sill, Oklahoma and when I was at Ft. Knox as late as 1969 we had the M-14. A 7.62mm weapon. One of the things we did in our training for the .50 caliber was that we had to have... we had to learn to field strip those. And the instructor's avenue to get us to have any kind of competence at it at all was to break us into groups and let us have competitions on field stripping it and re-assembling those things. So we even played silly little games in Tank College. That's the one thing I really excelled at in Tank College because of my mechanical background with airplanes. I won the competition for field stripping and re-assembling the .50 caliber. We had to set the headspace and the timing on the little things. Little did we know that some day that might well be the difference in life or death. But at that point it was just a game. They, from the time we completed our branch schools we were deemed then to be qualified to be military officers. I went on active duty from Ft. Knox, Kentucky I reported to Ft. Hood, Texas and that's where I, my first active duty time was. My major at Texas Tech was administrative management that was the name of the degree plan that I followed at that time. When I reported at Ft. Hood, Texas as green as a gourd, and I only hoped that I had my uniform on straight. The young man to whom I reported was a first lieutenant who had been in the Army a whole year more than I had. And had never been anywhere other than Ft. Hood, Texas and here he was in a personnel sections literally controlling the destiny of everyone who walked
through the door. And to give you a kind of understanding of the mentality that went into
some of these assignments. That day he had an opening for an executive officer in the
administration company in the 1st Armor Division. So because my degree was in
administrative management and he had an opening in the administration company it was
a natural. So all the sudden, first day on active duty in the Army, other than in a school
situation, I was an executive officer. Little did I understand at the time, and of course
technically that should be the senior lieutenant’s position in that situation, and here I was
the very junior lieutenant. I didn't understand, at that time at Ft. Hood, Texas we had 2
full armor divisions and a Corps Headquarters. I don't know if you've been watching the
news but here recently they've announced that one of the potential cuts in the state of
Texas on manpower is at Ft. Hood, Texas. Where they are talking about pulling out a
division, that's 10,000 men. So you can imagine the size of the military installation we
had at that time at Ft. Hood because it had a Corps Headquarters. It was a very formal
post. Everybody broke starch every day, we wore fatigues. The gate guards... white
gloves and the whole nine yards, very formal post so to speak. The administration
company was one where within our company, we had the whole personnel and finance
sections to administrate to our division. Our job as the administration company was to
house, billet, feed, transport whatever the people who were in these jobs. We had nearly
600 people in that company. The company commander at that time, I'll call him Captain
John, was a single young man, fresh back from Vietnam. He'd been in the Army two
years. At that time unless you really did something to insult the intelligence of the
Colonel's wife if you just really gave it any kind of an effort at all with one years time in
service you could make first lieutenant with another year time in service, and especially if
you were in Vietnam and served in Vietnam it was almost automatic that you could make
Captain in a year. If you really did poorly it took about a year and a half to two years. But
Captain John had the minimum time in, he served as an armor officer in Vietnam and his
dad was a retired general. So John knew the Army game backwards and forwards even
though he was somewhat a junior officer. Being a single fellow he had a brand new silver
Chevrolet Corvette. He felt like one of his primary jobs was to spend as much time as he
could running back and forth between Killeen and Austin try to keep all the college girls
busy in Austin. Well now he did me a favor. Because here I was, the first day on active
duty in the military, and he did me the favor of setting me straight on the military. He made me a promise he told me when the time came for decisions to be made don't hesitate to make those decisions. Make the absolute best decision I can make, and if they were right he would promptly take the credit for it, and if they were wrong everything was going to be my fault anyway. So understanding that I had nothing to lose he then informed me that the responsibility for running that company would be mine up until 5:00 every afternoon. Early formations, I'd take them, anything that ran through the day in administration. I'd run it. He came in about 5:00 every afternoon to do the mandatory paperwork, all the soldiers work would be gone from 5:00 and then he could be on his way to Austin. During the day he felt like it was part of his responsibility to go down to the handball courts and play handball and do politics with the field grade officers unit. So right quickly...from day one I was found in a position of direct responsibility beyond my experience. The first thing that happens to junior officers at any new post was they were assigned extra duties. So all of the sudden I was a mess officer for 600 men. Motor pool officer, and our motor pool we had like 28 jeeps because we had to furnish jeeps for every colonel or field grade officer who was either finance or personnel or so forth. Little did I understand at the time what that 9 or 10 months that I spent at Ft. Hood working far beyond my capability would do for me. What I later learned was in the military that is more the norm than the exception. And he really did me a service in that I didn't hesitate to get in gear and learn my job. I got my orders to report for Vietnam. Well, let me back up and tell you another little aside. There was a program in the Army at that time, those of us who were reserve officers our choices basically at the time and these weren't choices because of the Vietnam conflict. Up to the time of the conflict we could either go through ROTC and serve our time something on the order of six months on active duty and six years of inactive or active reserve and then go to inactive reserve. That choice was virtually deleted and those of us who were in that category during the Vietnam time frame were called to active duty service for two years and if we got two years in active duty service then we were inactive reserve. And that's the situation that I was in, and interestingly enough, after having gone through the intense military training and military experience that I had in the two short years that I was there but having served in Vietnam I feel like it would have been extremely difficult for me to come back and serve in a
peacetime military or at least at the time I think it would have. A lot of guys did stay in
the reserves, I know some who are still in. At that time it was not an option that I
considered. For those who were in my category who were reserve officers the Army
offered them a program. And the name of the program was ‘voluntary indefinite.’ The
buzzword for that was ‘volindef.’ As you know from your military exposure the military
has buzzwords or letter abbreviations for everything. Voluntary Indefinite program was
one where basically if you signed for a third year of active duty and it was a third year
guarantee, you really didn't know that they wouldn't keep you longer but it really was
almost just an extra year. They would allow you to stabilize your one-year tour the first
year wherever you chose. And I know guys who went indefinite to get a assignment to
Hawaii I knew guys who did it to stay at Ft. Hood, Texas because it was right next to
their dad’s ranch. You know whatever motivation causes those things. Almost without
fail the third year of those voluntary indefinite programs were in Vietnam. (recording
continues but is not transcribed. Track 1 28:23)

MAH: From this point forward on the first side of this tape the rest of the taping
went bad because the tape recorder drive belt started to fail. Therefore any further
information on this side of the tape will be considered null, void and will be recovered on
the second side of the tape in the second interview on or approximately about the 7th of
March 1990.
MAH: This is Monty Hostetler it is 7:00 pm on March 7th, 1990. I am interviewing for the second time Mike Horton. This interview is taking place at the home of Mike Horton in Lubbock, Texas. This is part of the Vietnam Archive Oral History Project at Texas Tech University.

MH: I think I recall that, from the last time that we had gotten to the point where I had gotten in country orders to report to Vietnam in October of 1970. My wife and I were expecting our first child however due November the 17th 1970. Who picked that date I'll never recall. Needless to say I didn't want to go in country with my-the birth of my first child coming a short period of time later. So what I quickly learned in military you either accept everything as set in concrete or you somewhat control your own destiny. So at the advice of a very wise E-9 I got a phone number and picked up the AUTOVON phone and called the Armor branch in Washington. I talked to a colonel, whoever answered the phone, I should've know when he answered something on the order of ‘Have I got a deal for you.’ What I ended up doing was volunteering for a two-week jungle survival school in Panama with a bunch of Airborne Special Forces Infantry types to fill a quota. By doing that he offered to start my in country time with the travel time it took for me to get from Ft. Hood to Panama. And from the original October date then after my two weeks in jungle school then I'd take my 30 days leave time. Then report on December the 17th for processing in Travis Air Force Base in California. By the time all of that took place my daughter was born on December the 8th of 1970. And she was 9 days old when I left Lubbock to fly out to Travis. When we got to Travis, by the way, an interesting story that
I like to tell along the lines of this. When you talk about airport security and so forth that we have today. We go through all the metal detectors. When I, when we were traveling to Charleston, South Carolina, where we took a MAC flight then down to Panama and then back to Charleston and then back on civilian air carriers, there was a guy who went to jungle school with me who had decided he was going to carry his own personal sidearm. He carried a 357 Smith and Wesson revolver in his briefcase with his orders through every terminal two directions across this country and back. Back at that time, this was before the days of the... of the, what do you call them? Sky soldiers who ride the airlines? Air Marshals yeah. When I was at Ft. Hood Texas they came through to get some of the first volunteers to be air marshals on the airlines. So that all took place while I was on active duty. From Travis Air Force Base we flew to Anchorage, Alaska then to Tokyo, Japan then on to Saigon. Now I spent a week in in-transit quarters assigned to USARV, United States Army Vietnam. I was to go to II Corps up in Nha Trang to be a part of the 1st Field Force. But when we got there needless to say, everybody in the Army, wherever they are takes off for Christmas so while everybody who was assigned in Saigon took off for Christmas vacation for a week we sat there in transit quarters. Now one of the first things that happened to us there was that... well we, let me get through that. We ate our Christmas dinner in the transit mess hall there in transit quarters in Saigon. After that week we were sent on up to Nha Trang to 1st Field Force Headquarters and of course then we got caught in the New Years Rush. So we sat there for another week in transit. During that time, that week when we were are Nha Trang we were introduced to bunkers. Of course, it was the first time we had heard or seen mortars and that sort of thing. But the first night we were at Nha Trang we had a sergeant who caught some sappers coming in the wire and shot them with his 45 pistol. Of course we didn't know what the difference in incoming and outgoing mortar that sort of thing. They did tell us where the bunkers were and I can remember going in there the first night and that musty smell and not understanding what it was all about. We later learned the first things you spotted were the bunkers. Form there we were sent on up to our unit. I was assigned to the 1st of 10th Cavalry, originally part of the 4th Infantry division. We were at An Khe and which is in the Central Highlands in the valley between Qui Nhon on the coast on Highway I and Pleiku in the center of II Corps. Pleiku, there was a big Vietnamese air
center there, where our soldiers taught their soldiers how to fly both helicopters and on
the Air Force side of the base fixed wing fighters. My assignment was officially as
assistant XO which is kind of interesting because as short as we were on Lieutenants at
that time there were no such things as the luxury of being an assistant XO. What I later
found out was, I got that job by virtue of the fact my experience at Ft. Hood as an
Executive Officer. The principal XO was actually a Military Intelligence Officer. Military
Intelligence Officers had dual training. They took their Military Intelligence training at
Ft. Holabird, Maryland and then had to take one of the three combat arms branch schools,
and this black officer had taken his training in Armor at Ft. Knox, Kentucky. And he was
there wearing cav brass. His mission was to investigate all the racial problems in the
squadron, and I'll touch on those later because there definitely were racial problems. And
my job was to do the XO's job to cover for him to free him to give him the time to do his
spy stuff. Of the eight classmates who were in my Armor branch school at Ft. Knox,
Kentucky all of us who went in country at the same time or of the eight of us who ended
up at An Khe in the Cavalry. I don't know how many were in our branch school but eight
that class ended up in the 10th Cav at An Khe. I was the only one who didn't go to the
field, all the other ones went in cavalry slots out in the field units to be platoon leaders or
whatever in the personnel carriers. I didn't understand at the time what it all meant but
what I quickly learned was that within the first week or 10 days I was called in the
colonel’s office. And they had reviewed all the records and discovered that I had civilian
maintenance experience in aircraft. And that colonel offered me one of those deals that
you sometimes are offered in the military where you can't refuse. And all the sudden I
was made a commanding officer of the 518th Transportation Corps Detachment. Now our
Cavalry squadron, which was assigned to patrol the valley. We were augmented by some
infantry units to man the guard towers. We had our Headquarters troop and one of the
troops at the main firebase and we had 2 field fire bases with other of our troops at each
of them and then they rotated and one roving troop out in the valley all the time. We were
assigned an Air Cav troop where we had Cobras, we had what we call ‘slicks’ the Huey
helicopters that were troop-carrying helicopters and LOH's the Light Observation
Helicopters. The Transportation Corps Detachment was a maintenance unit assigned to
maintain those helicopters. The colonel that day didn't have anyone to sign the morning
report so I met two requirements. I was an officer and qualified to sign the morning report and I had maintenance experience. So that's about the criterion that a lot of those decisions were made on. I'll stop and interject right here one of the things that we were doing at that time. I've never been the world’s best communicator and writing letters seemed to be something that was hard to find time to do. What was popular and in vogue at the time was to make tapes, not a lot unlike what we are doing right now. And what we would do was make those tapes back to the family members at home. And I tried to do something on the tape, or write some kind of a letter every night. Just so that I wouldn't miss communicating with either my parents, my brother, wife, whoever. What I caught myself doing very early in those days...we'd go out at night because it was so hot in the hooches or in the bunkers, and we'd get out on top of the bunkers and make the tapes. And what I'd catch myself doing, if we would always see the light from the mortar round and we'd try to stop those tapes to keep the outgoing mortar sounds off those tapes. Never realizing at the time that a year later when we got home the questions would be ‘What were those blank spots on the tapes early on?’ I'm not sure the blank spots didn't scare them more so than the mortar noise would have. It was taking about two weeks time either direction. My tapes were taking about two weeks to get home, and then the answer would be about two weeks later. So we would be about a month in communication if memory serves. From that point I'll go on and say that what we quickly determined that we had to move the maintenance unit. This was the primary motivator to my colonel to get someone to volunteer to take the CO’s position. What I learned very quickly was that without a commanding officer the maintenance unit had gotten to be kind of a gathering pool for all the ne’er-do-wells. The tactical unit commander would always interview everybody coming into the unit and he picked the best people for his positions and then slough the others. What I discovered a week later when we moved to An Son, which was a heliport near Qui Nhon on the coast. I had 54 people in my unit, I had virtually no tools, I had a W-3, a warrant officer, who was an alcoholic, he'd done 10 years in the Air Force enlisted, realized he'd probably never make it beyond the rank of E-6. So he joined the Army and he took a direct Warrant appointment. Technically he was brilliant, he just had a drinking problem. When he was sober we had the advantage of his expertise, at night you just didn't depend on him. I had an E-6 who was in the First Sergeant's slot he was
just a super, super motivated individual. He was the kind of person that not only was he technically proficient in the military sense he had gone out to the airport on weekends, when he was at Ft. Rucker, Alabama, learned enough experience and taken his test and so forth and was qualified as an FAA licensed airframe and power plant mechanic. And of course that was my civilian technical background. So we had a lot in common. One of the salvations of my unit. I also had an E-5 a buck sergeant, Boston College graduate who was the company clerk. He got that job by virtue of the fact that he could type. Like I say, there were a lot of stringent requirements for these jobs. He was a super straight guy and between he and my sergeant and my alcoholic W-3 that was the only reason we could even make the unit run. All the rest of the troops were roughly equally divided between the drug abusers or alcohol abusers. Now I'll go to a set of notes I've got here and interject something right now. I say that about the drug and alcohol abusers, and a lot of people don't understand that. Peer group pressures being what they are. One of the things I observed during my tour of duty in Vietnam was that when a new troop came into the unit, one of the first things he was called on to do was to make his choice between being a juicer or head. Now those were the buzzwords. And basically he had to align himself between one of the two groups of drug users or alcohol users. The abuser part came later, and this was such a clear line that was drawn. We would occasionally... the cooks would occasionally swap or come up with some boxes of steaks and we'd have a company party. And in doing so we'd get two jeep trailers and we'd ice down beer in one and soft drinks in the other. And when the guys would come to the company party, you could almost line them up behind the trailers and call the roll. Of course the juicers went to the beer trailer, they wouldn't be caught dead with a Coke in their hands and vice versa, and the drug users wouldn't be seen by their peers with a beer in their hands. Never the 'twain shall meet so to speak. And it was just about that black and white. That's sad to say but that's kind of the way it lined up. Another thing that I'll add at this point. And if you think you can't make up your mind real quickly about abusing drugs and alcohol when you've seen this sort of thing and lived with it you can. [phone call] O.K. One of the interesting anomalies that I incurred over there, having determined that I was not going to be an alcohol user, when the truck convoys would come through the firebase, one of the things we liked to do was stock up on our Coke or Pepsi or beer. All the beer drinkers were
getting off light because Miller was $1.80 a case over there, and Coke or Pepsi went for $2.20. And that was just kind of an odd turn of events. Beer drinkers loved it, I'll tell you that. Miller was a little flat but it was kind of interesting about the pricing there. I'll go on to another part of my notes here. One of the things I'd like to talk about here is that during my time, when I was with my transportation corps unit over on the coast. And of course we were having daily communication back and forth because we were a part of the basic unit at An Khe. I was not present to observe this personally but I do know these stories to be true because I was dealing with the rest of the officer corps there. During the time summer of 1970 when I was at An Son one of the instances that we had was that we had a field troop commander, a West Point graduate, who was shot by two of his own men. They were black soldiers, they were drug abusers. They were part of what had kind of become in his outfit a drug cult. And they literally were dared by their peers to shoot the old man. And as he walked up out of the tactical operations center, which we had kind of a bunker affair built. Basically dug down into the earth and then built up on the sides with sandbags, then covered over with PSP or some equivalent and then sandbagged on the top. And as he walked up the stairway they literally shot him down with their military issued M-16's. These are the kind of instances that the Military Intelligence Officer would come out there to investigate. Another occurrence that took place during that summer. We had a black E-6 a very dedicated career soldier who walked in on two of his black soldiers who were drug pushers making a dope deal. He determined that they were a conducting themselves in a fashion that was not good for his race so he whipped out his .45 and shot them both. In his opinion that got rid of two ne'er-do-wells, and he didn't care what color they were. They were dopers and that wasn't good for him as a career soldier and he didn't think they were doing his race justice. Another thing that happened while I was at An Son in my unit two things would happen. And I'll talk about this here. We would occasionally have a red alert. And I'm sure in your experiences as a child you had fire drills in school. Now a red alert, taken to that extreme, is a military version of a fire drill. And in the middle of the night we would have an audible horn or whatever that announced the red alert and everybody was supposed to go to battle stations. One of the things that you quickly learned when you are surrounded by both drug and alcohol abusers, by military regulations we had to issue them their weapons. But I put an armed
guard on the ammunition containers. Those are the things you do to protect yourselves.

Another thing that happened during that time frame, we had such a drug abuse problem in our firebase. And of course we were an assigned unit to An Son, basically the Charlie troop 7 of the 17th Air Cav were the people who were in charge of that and their CO called all the unit commanders in one night. We had an engineering outfit there. We had a medevac outfit there. He called us all in and told us that at 4:00 the next morning we'd have a command formation. The red alert horn would sound, everybody would be formed up outside the barracks area in formation. We would leave a responsible individual with the formation and then take another NCO or someone with us, to act as a witness among other things, and take the people one at a time back into the billet area to search for drugs. It was a shakedown. We did that the next morning, I left my warrant officer and my E-6 in charge of the formation. I took my buck sergeant and one at a time we took the guys into their area and searched their area. The two of my guys that I had suspected of being drug pushers, sure enough we found a lot of evidence. Amazingly one of the young men had talked my E-6 into letting him go to sick call and had evidently been practiced enough at his art that he talked those guys into medevacing him out to Japan. We never did catch up with him with his paperwork. In his personal effects we discovered a half of a footlocker full of grenades. All sorts of hand grenades everything from fragmentary grenades to white phosphorous hand grenades. All kinds of colors of smoke grenades. And of course this was during the time it was popular to you know 'frag the old man.' Those of us who were fortunate enough to hold the rank of lieutenant, we all had a nice short little buzzword that described us, we were LT. And one of the things that happened if you crossed your guys sometimes in anyway they'd set up a hand grenade with a trip wire to blow you away. And of course there was no evidence, nobody could get blamed. Finding a half a footlocker full of hand grenades in your outfit, that were unauthorized weapons is a kind of a shock to your system. The other guy that we found drugs and weapons during that... well we found drugs in that footlocker also. The other guy had a stand up wall locker that he shared with another soldier. We found taped to the bottom of that wall locker a nearly perfect Thompson submachine gun. Fires a .45 caliber pistol round at short range it's devastating. Of course we secured it and turned it into the arms room. Some of the drugs we found during that shakedown inspection were marijuana
cigarettes. And the marijuana cigarettes that were available over there at that time were
manufactured in a factory. They looked just exactly like anybody else’s cigarettes. The
even had the logo stamped on the paper. And that might be Lucky Strike or whatever the
brand in vogue at that time. So these guys were walking around during the day smoking
what looked like a cigarette just high as a kite. Other drugs that we found were liquid
opium, a dark purple liquid in a small vial. We found powdered heroin. Heroin at that
time we used to find in capsules roughly the size of sewing thimble. A little larger
perhaps, with a little cap. And what we learned they do with those things they take these
marijuana cigarettes and they dipped them in the opium. And that then became an OJ.
The heroin was used, there was a false understanding running around at the time, that if
you didn't inject this heroin it wasn't habit forming. So they'd take a cigarette like they'd
buy at the BX take about the end quarter inch of tobacco out of it, which left about a
quarter inch of the paper and they'd tap the little vial of powdered heroin in there and then
they'd roll it in their fingers, and work the powdered heroin all the way down in the
tobacco, then twist the end off and light it up and they are walking through the compound
smoking heroin getting high as a kite. Needless to say, it was addictive. What I ended up
doing after that shakedown with two drug cases, I tried to prosecute those two guys by
the UCMJ, Uniform Code of Military Justice. What I quickly discovered after a trip to
Qui Nhon to talk to the Judge Advocate Officers there in the headquarters there was that
because of a lack of being able to prove control of that area, in other words, the other
soldiers had access to their footlockers, to their wall lockers whatever, that we wouldn't
be able to prosecute. And I was advised to try to go back and bluff them into accepting an
Article 15, which is the highest punishment that a unit commander can meter out under
the UCMJ. Which I did, fortunately. Of course the one boy we never did catch up with
him with the paperwork. We did process an Article 15. I hope that it finally did get there,
I never knew. The other one we did get to accept the Article 15, and that was a loss of
one pay grade, and I think a month or two of pay. A kind of a slap on the wrist. He
thought we were letting him off light, I was just trying to get him for something just to
make an example out of him so that I would at least somewhat dissuade the drug trade
that was going on in the unit. I'll go on to an area and discuss, during this time, even
though I was a unit commander with my hands full babysitting these 54 dopers and
alcoholic, occasionally we get an assignment to be investigation officer. Primarily, in fact
about 90% of the time, on the loss of a military weapon. What the soldiers would do was
hitchhike down to some village if they were out near to party, and they'd take their
weapons with them. And then if they got high on dope or got drunk whatever, and lost
that weapon then there had to be an investigation. Some of the stories we got I can't tell
you. And I can't... I can't believe that I don't remember the cost of an M-16, because I bet
of all of them I did every one of them was an investigation in the loss of an M-16 rifle.
No telling how many M-16's are left in Vietnam. I will say that one of the things that I
did during this time, a friend of mine who was in charge of the transit quarters
confiscated off of one of the soldiers a .38 caliber Smith and Wesson revolver. A Model
10. It was a stolen military weapon, he wasn't supposed to have it and it was a military
weapon. It was what helicopter pilots carried. The pistol was missing a firing pin and I
got my armorer to order and get me a firing pin and I made the weapon operational. I was
issued a .45 but I couldn't hit the broadside of a barn with a .45. We had to qualify on all
those weapons before we went overseas. But most of the military issue .45's at that time if
you grabbed them by the butt and rattled them you could hear all the parts swapping
holes, and the .38 was such a more precise weapon I just felt a lot more comfortable with
it. I slept for a year with that .38 under my pillow and I did so not because of the bad guys
on the outside of the wire but because of the good guys on the inside of the wire. Other
duties that we had extra duties that junior officers had at that time. We would have boards
of review for promotions and basically promotions were so virtually automatic all you
had to do was keep from insulting someone's wife's intelligence and you could get a
promotion. Strange as it was there were some interesting competitions for those things.
We had a change of command while I was at An Son. Our colonel who had basically
offered me this job in fact I... his name fails me. I though I'd never forget that. He was a
West Pointer, a very driven and ambitious officer. He was a ... he was a full colonel
trying hard to be a general. One of the things that he did during this time frame was to
land our aerial rifle platoon, part of the Cav, on top of an NVA element in the An Khe
pass. In my opinion a blatant error in judgment for which he wrote himself up for a Silver
Star. I never did know how that went because it was all happening as he transitioned out
and here I was at a remote base away from my headquarters. But needless to say, his
replacement was an older Lieutenant Colonel Peter C. Haynes. A fellow who always
judged himself to be at a disadvantage because he was not an officer commissioned
through the Academy. I think he was an ROTC officer in fact. But the net result was that
he worked a little harder, and he did a little better job. I was always impressed by that
man. I don't know whatever happened to him but he was a fine officer. Oddly enough, I
nearly was fired by him because his XO a major by the name of Morrey failed to tell him
the situation that I was in with no tools and all these druggies and alcohol abusers and
they came in to inspect my outfit one day when Colonel Haynes was real fresh in the unit.
And after seeing the mess that we had, and we were working hard just trying to keep
everybody occupied and out of trouble. He stood me up one day and gave me a lecture
that I'll never forget to the point that out of frustration I looked at him and told him that
he could either find someone else to run that unit and let me go to the field in my cavalry
position that I was trained to do or get me some help. And I think that I was ... here I was
in a rear area in a relatively, and I'll say this word cautiously, safe area, offering to go to
the field got his attention. That proved to be very much an advantage later on because he
did me more good as a commanding officer in getting those tools we needed than the full
Colonel had with all his connections. Because of that, the major by the way, filled him in
on the whole story later. And the next phone call I got was from the Colonel with as close
to an apology as I ever got from a Colonel, and asking what I could do or what he could
do to help me with my plight. One of the things I got him to agree to do was from that
point on let me screen the people coming in, and if they were trained in an MOS that we
needed... primary MOS of a helicopter mechanic rather that let the tactical unit get them
and make door gunners out of them, to let us have them so that we did have, in fact
trained people to do the mission. He agreed to do that and that worked very well. Another
of the interesting things that happened, he called a friend of his and my buck sergeant and
I ended up taking a week and making a journey, and we traveled up and down the coast
of Vietnam looking for this equipment that we were short. We were authorized to have it,
we just didn't have it. The two of us, and the colonel had gotten us an E-9 out of 1st Field
Force Headquarters at Nha Trang. And this guy was plenty, plenty sharp. And we toured
up and down the country looking for these tools. One of the things that happened to us
that... that I'll never forget we got caught in Saigon during a time when the orders were
cut to move a lot of the units up into an invasion of the North. When that happened all the
Air Force operated transportation network came to a screeching halt. People were being
diverted, airplanes were being diverted and the Air Force airline system was virtually
shut down, and we were sitting out there for about three hours and I looked around and
the E-9 was gone. The next thing I knew, when he came back over, within about 30
minutes we were called to a desk and given...

MAH: This is tape 2 of the interview with Mr. Horton on the 7th of March 1990.
MH: O.K. Going on down my list of notes I will talk here about while I was at An
Son I had the good fortune, and didn't realize it at the time, to be at a firebase, the ground
security of which was assigned to a ROK infantry outfit. ROK Infantry is Republic of
Korea. Now those guys, very fortunately, were not... didn't have the same constraints we
had in our rules of engagement. And they were known to do things like cut off the head
of the village chief if they took incoming mortar rounds just to get their attention. And for
the nearly six months that I was at An Son not one time did we take any incoming mortar
or rockets. The Vietnamese simply were that fearful of the Koreans. Now we talked about
the red alerts right?

MAH: I believe so, yes sir.
MH: One of the things that I saw, I mentioned a while ago that while I was at
Saigon... OK, I didn't finish that story. While we were at Saigon on the trip up and down
the coast the E-9 made a phone call. The next thing that happened, within about 30
minutes, there was a Beechcraft Queen Air (an airplane used primarily for VIP
transportation) that rolled up outside the area and they, when they called the manifest it
was the E-9, myself, my buck Sergeant and a full Colonel that they let go with us because
there was an available seat. And we were flown from Saigon on up to 1st Field Force, and
from there we caught a Caribou that was running back through and got back up to Qui
Nhon. One of the things that I saw, one evening we went over to the Officer's Club and
some of the guys were there who had come back from that movement up North. And
some of the Cobra drivers, and of course one of the things that everyone did was, one of
the first things you did was order a 35mm camera. A lot of people took slides, a lot of
people took prints. And one of the things that we played with a lot was doing time delay
photography. We'd go out on the top of the bunkers at night and do time delay photos of
mortars and rockets and so forth, and there's some interesting color photos somewhere around in peoples cedar chests of those sorts of things. But we actually saw pictures during that time where the Cobra pilots would take their 35mm cameras and take time delay photos of the rockets going out of the rocket tubes on the Cobra next to them. And not that that is anywhere close to art, but it sure is interesting if you've never seen it before. One of the things I want to talk about also right now is the fact that during the time frame when we were over there was right during and just after the William Calley trial here in the United States. Basically while Calley was on trial for the situation down at My Lai, which by the way my first sergeant that I later had at when I went back to my unit at An Khe was an E-6 in an E-9 slot, he had been a buck sergeant his first tour down in the area where My Lai is in an armor outfit. And he said that every time they came within mortar distance of that village they took mortar rounds.. That was a commonly known VC infiltrated village. It was known to be a mortar emplacement. There was no question in the minds of the military people that I talked to that were in that area that that was just a VC village. One of the things he used to describe that they would do, occasionally after they got just tired of being pounded day after day with mortar rounds was that they'd make a thunder run with their tank. And the old M-48 Korean War vintage tanks we had a 90MM main gun, right beside the main gun was a 30mm machine gun and then up on the commanders cupola was a .50 caliber machine gun. And they'd swing the turret over one direction and swing the .50 cal over the opposite direction and run right up through the village with a .30 caliber machine gun running on one side and a .50 caliber machine gun running on the other side. Just run up through the center of the village and then it would be quiet for about a week. Having said that, what I will say is that during the time William Calley was on trial those of us in Vietnam who were junior grade officers or NCO's up through about the rank of E-6, people who hadn't yet made the commitment to career intentions found ourselves running the war. It became very, very difficult to get a decision out of anyone field grade or above or career NCO's because they were so afraid that...of the outcome of the Calley trial, how that would work. That was an interesting time to have lived through. OK. Moving down the list. By the time June came of that year I was eligible for an R and R. One of the things that had gone on during this time was there was a ... early in the war there was a kind of a
unspoken agreement that... that junior grade officers anyway would go in country and spend six months in the field and six months in garrison. By the time I got there I think that pretty well evaporated, but that was kind of the scenario that we were led to expect. The breakpoint would be your R&R time.. And you had to have six months in-country, when I was there, to be eligible for your R&R. Now because I was married I chose to meet my wife in Hawaii. And other guys would go to Australia, some guys went to Tokyo, some of them went to Bangkok, Thailand, lots of places that were eligible for R&R. One of the interesting things that happened when I went back to Saigon, en route to my R&R. It was kind of funny because here I was right out of the field firebase, the only uniforms we had were fatigues, jungle fatigues. And of course had to travel in uniform in-country and we were catching the Air Force airline. And when we flew in down there, of course I had ordered my 35mm camera from the Pay Six catalog and we had all ordered Seiko watches and here I showed up on Saigon looking like a country bumpkin tourist to the big city. I was in transit quarters again, the very same ones we were in when we went in-country down there. But a friend of mine from branch school, who was a Military Intelligence Officer, and I had been in branch school at the same time he was in his secondary branch school, had been on the briefing team for General Westmoreland and was still on active duty in Saigon. Those guys lived in French Hotels and went out every night to eat at some kind of a fancy restaurant. He, by this time, he had gone to law school. So he'd gone on active duty as a captain, and was still a captain when I met him at Saigon. But we met and he took me out to eat at a fancy French restaurant and of course, coming from West Texas, I didn't even know what to order at a French restaurant. And that was kind of a interesting thing. The thing impressed me so, though, was that when he came to pick me up he had a jeep that he was driving. And I think this has been fairly accurately depicted in some of the movies. He came in to pick me up and we went back out to his jeep and the first thing he did was go to the front hood. Now there's a little pin up through the hood with a padlock on it. He took a key out of his pocket and unlocked the padlock and lifted the hood, reached down and flicked some kind of a hidden switch that was a kill switch to the ignition system, put the hood back down and locked the padlock back. This was so people wouldn't steal the jeep for trade on the back market. He went back around and go in on the driver's side, and I, of course, had jumped in on the
passenger side and he stopped in place almost and he looked over and he said, ‘Now you
got to take any jewelry that you would normally wear on your right hand and put it on
your left hand, the inboard side. And take your camera and be sure and put it on the
inside. ‘Of course I fell for it, I said, ‘Why?’ And the answer was that the small
Vietnamese boys, and these are kids that are like 7, 8, 12, 13-year-old kids. Very small in
stature, and he called them, ‘slickie boys’. And they would go two, they paired up, and
they'd ride on these little Honda 50's. And the driver would be in the front the slickie boy
would be on the back. And they made it a practice as a GI jeep would pull up to an
intersection they'd come roaring by on these little motorcycles and could reach out and
grab a 35mm camera and break the strap in a heartbeat. He said they'd steal these watches
off your wrist and this sort of thing. And of course we'd been out at these firebases not
realizing that we were in a protected environment. Now that we were in the big city of
Saigon fell prey to some of these elements. I'll not forget that for a long time. Now one of
the things that I'll talk about, well I'll come back to that later. One of the interesting things
that I remember, having been a kind of a sports car enthusiast during my college days. I
owned an old Porsche at the time, an old bathtub Porsche. I'll never forget while I was in
Saigon at that time I looked up and saw an old Porsche speedster driving down the streets
of Saigon. And to have been so far from home yet see something like that that would
connect us back to civilization always seemed to me to be an interesting kind of aside. I
did meet my wife for R&R in Hawaii, we spent a week there. Kind of an interesting time
frame. I saw a lieutenant colonel, I believe he was an Air Force colonel. It's amazing what
20 years will do for a memory. When we were going into the terminal there in Hawaii we
had to in-process, the drug dogs had to sniff all our luggage, go through that routine,
which we did every time we traveled anywhere. We were subject to spot inspections of
paperwork, orders, whatever. I mean we were just at the mercy of the security people.
And this was the first time I ever had a hint of airport security was right there in Hawaii.
And of course our wives are waiting for us out in the open area, we had to go through and
get our V.D. lecture and some of the things that everybody had to suffer. And the guy
right in front of me was a lieutenant colonel, and they asked to look in his wallet of all
things. And he pulled out his wallet and the inspector opened it up and like a lot of men's
wallets it had like a hidden compartment where a lot of men will stash an extra $10 bill or
whatever, mad money. And when he pulled this little flap up there were some military
payment certificates. Our buzzword for that was MPC. MPC was what we were issued in
lieu of cash. In the country of Vietnam we were not allowed to have currency. And I'm
sure that he had put it in there as mad money and simply forgot about it. And of course
that was a violation of military regulation, and I'll never forget they whisked him off to
another room to grill him about this blatant disregard of military regulation when it was
quite obviously just a slip of memory. But those were some of the things we went
through, even field grade officers had to do that. After enjoying the sanctity of a week in
peace and comfort, I saw Bobby Gentry's show and so forth, had to go back to Vietnam.
Shortly after I went back to Vietnam, and went back to my unit, it was a time when
politically back in this country the tide had turned and the feeling was away from the
support of the military movement in Vietnam. The pressure was on to slow down and
stand down the war. General Westmoreland had been promoted to the Pentagon to get
him away from the military build up that had taken place. General Abrams was trying to
kind of slow things down and politically the pressure was there and what that equated to
in Vietnam was that a lot of units started to be stood down. Now standing down a unit
basically involved reassigning what people were left to other slots and then the colors
were taken back stateside or whatever. And my maintenance detachment was stood down
during that time. Basically all the people who had been assigned to my unit who were
working in their primary MOS, as aviation maintenance folks, were basically re-assigned
to Charlie Troop 7 of the 17th Air Cav. I was kind of the third thumb in this deal because
here I was, even though I was the commanding officer, I was combat arms. I was wearing
cavalry brass... those people didn't know what to do with me, and basically they got
together and gave me a choice of what to do: whether to stay in Air Cav and continue in
some function there, or go back to the 10th Cavalry at An Khe. And my new Colonel,
Colonel Haynes said he had something that he needed me to do so I chose to go back to
the 10th Cavalry at An Khe. At that time I was again re-assigned as Executive Officer of
the 10th Cav and oddly enough what I found that he... I had nearly, roughly two months
left in country was all the time I had left and because of that I think was why they chose
that assignment. What I found that I had to do was get my unit ready for an Inspector
General or IG inspection in-country in Vietnam. An IG inspection is if you've ever been
through one, is one where the Inspector General team comes in and checks the whole unit, all the paperwork to be in order even down to motor pool vehicles that needed parts that those parts were properly requisitioned and this sort of thing. Just an administrative nightmare. Just that we had IG inspections in-country in a combat zone I never did get over. But that's what I did for last two months that I was in-country. Now, during this time, my last two months in-country, I observed, we had an enlisted man who came into our orderly room. He was a drug pusher who had, in some way, gotten cross ways between his suppliers and his customers. And they had threatened to kill him. So he turned himself in and we literally saw this man come off of heroin cold turkey in the orderly room. Now that was something that we basically were charged with guarding him. It was going to take at least a week to get the paperwork cut to get him back to any kind of a unit where there was any kind of help for him. I saw that man literally bang his head against the walls, go through a severe physical pain withdrawal. Had a little short stocky captain, armor captain that I saw take that man by the collar one day. The guy was taller than he was but he literally lifted him up and banged his head against the wall. The guy was just out of his mind for about three days. Now once the three or four day physical withdrawal was over with the guy was just wrung out, he was physically spent and it was a tremendously insightful thing to watch. My goodness if you ever think there was anything that would make you decide not to be a drug user I will guarantee you that if you could see that you would, you would jump on the presidents band wagon here. But I literally saw that happen. Oddly enough, years later, my captain who had been involved in that deal showed up back here in Lubbock about 1975 to attend this Sunset School of Preaching and had gotten a letter from that young man. And as it turned out he was a married man and had children, we didn't know it at the time. And having gone through a drug rehab program, had gotten out of the military and had written a letter to my captain thanking him for helping him get his life straightened out. So it was a good thing to know at least all that went to some good purpose. One of the things I did during that time frame having had all the extra duties assigned again. My job, one of my jobs was to, was the mess officer and as mess officer one of the things I had to do to please my colonel was to be behind the chow line every morning when he came through for breakfast at 5:00. You know, 1st Lieutenants who are mess officers are supposed to be in charge and be there
running things. Needless to say, I had to get up pretty early and one of the things I did one morning as I came in and I was the first one in there. We had night bakers who worked all night baking the breads and what not that we needed for the next day. And I couldn't find the guy and I got to looking for the guy, and I found him, he had locked himself in a walk-in freezer. He had gotten on heroin and had lost his supply and was coming off that heroin, and literally locked himself in there. And of course the sad part is when we got him out he had his britches legs rolled up and as he stumbled out of that wall locker nearly frozen, one of those capsules of heroin had fallen out of his britches leg, I guess he forgot he had it. So all of the sudden there I was the witness for his court-martial. In fact the last official duty I had as an active duty soldier was to handcuff that guy to my right arm because I'm left handed and had my pistol on my left side, and take him to the court-martial at Pleiku. It was a sad situation. He was a second tour soldier, his first tour highly decorated infantry soldier down in the delta, and he'd gotten on heroin and came back for a second tour just to have the access to the cheap drugs. It's a sad state of affairs but it did happen. I'll tell a story right now about water trucks. We had a situation at our firebases where we really, if we weren't right on a freshwater river, had to truck in water for the troops. And as a net result we had a kind of a constant run of water trucks and trailers. Our showers, those of us who were fortunate enough to be blessed with those showers we'd always take an old hulled out water truck or trailer that the container could be made to passed or made to hold water and build an elevated stand for it, and we'd pump the water from those trucks up into those tanks and then the gravity would feed the showers. Through the day the sunshine, the heat would warm the water, so if you could get away from the work place early enough to get over there before dark you could have a relatively warm shower. If you were like some of us and worked way into the wee hours of the night. Go over there about midnight and you could have a refreshing cold shower. But nonetheless, one day, in my function as executive officer I was called, and this was daylight hours. I was called down to the guard gate down at the perimeter fence. And normally when that took place it was some infraction of the drug rules. And I expected that the drug dogs had sniffed out some dope on one of these drivers trying to smuggle drugs into the base to sell. I got down there and sure enough the drug dogs were going wild. And one of the sergeants who was down there at the guard
gate said, ‘Lieutenant, you're not going to believe this but, come look.’ So I stood up on
the top of the trailer and looked down in the opening and what I saw was not a full water
installer like they were supposed to have, but a trailer that only had about three feet of
water in the bottom of it, and three Vietnamese girls, ladies of the evening, that he was
smuggling in the firebase to sell their services to his friends. His punishment was kind of
unique but that was some of the things we dealt with. If you don't believe it can be done,
leave it to the ingenuity of a GI, he'll do it.

MAH: What kind of punishment did he suffer?

MH: He got an Article 15, the maximum punishment, and he also had to both
empty and clean the inside surfaces of that water tank trailer. He was out there for about a
week scrubbing on the inside of that trailer. And of course we had no idea if that would
serve any purpose or not but it seemed like the appropriate thing to do at the time.
Another of the last things that I did in my active duty days, we, even at our remote
firebase, were notified that we were going to have a USO show. We were going to have
Dean Martin's Gold Diggers, not Dean Martin, but the Gold Diggers were going to come
in for a USO show. And I was to prepare a sight for them to perform. So we looked
around and found a barracks building that was nearly empty, and we re-assigned sleeping
quarters so we could empty that building. And we just knocked one wall out of that old
barracks building. And that became their stage. To tell you how near the last of my tour
that was, when I was, we went on a road convoy to Pleiku, when I took the soldier up
there for the court martial. I had a driver and a guard and myself, with my weapon, and I
think another guard. So there were four of us armed and then the prisoner. We went in a
3/4 ton truck, and we drove from An Khe up over the Man Yang Pass to Pleiku, and it
was a known VC operational area. Of course, we went during the daytime when the
helicopters were flying and really it was a relatively quiet trip in. By the time we went
through that court-martial, which took all of that day, we went early one morning, it was
very, very late in the day by the time it was completed. And of course my DEROS, the
Date for Return from Over Service, was the next day... was that day in fact. So I had to
get back to meet my DEROS. And the colonel, it seemed like that court-martial went over
night, we had to stay there over night and it was the next day that ran so late. So to get me
back in time he sent his helicopter, a little Bell OH-58, we now call them a Jet Ranger,
sent his helicopter to pick up myself and the prisoner and get us back to the firebase so I
could get the prisoner to the MP's, turn in all my gear and get out of there. We had a
former Cobra pilot who was flying that so we were terrain flying in the mountains down
below the tree line. And I think that's probably the most scared that I ever was in my
whole tour in Vietnam and to this day if offered the chance to ride in a helicopter I don't
take it. I've ridden the last one I intend to take in a conscious state, but we landed. I took
the prisoner and turned him over to the MP's, I went back, grabbed my duffel bag which
was already packed and grabbed a copy of the orders and then I ran out to meet the
Caribou that brought the Gold Diggers in. I passed them coming in on the truck as I was
running out to catch the airplane to leave. So I prepped for the show and missed it. But
I've never looked back on that. I think now what I'd like to do is talk about a few little
details that have come to mind that I've made notes on after I kind of went through this
chronologically. One of the things that I want to talk about are the ARVN soldiers that we
used to drive by all the time, that guarded a little bridge in our area. The Vietnamese
people, once they finish their equivalent of our public school were tasked to go in to their
military. The ARVN's were the Army of the Republic of Vietnam. The buzz word
ARVN. When they went in they went for something like eight years when they were
drafted. You know our guys were drafted for two years and then they were out, when
they went in it was a way of life for a time. So they went ahead and married they had
children, whatever they did. There were two ARVN soldiers that used to guard this one
bridge we used to go by quite often. And their place where they lived was a kind of a
bunker built into a little hill surrounded by concertina wire, and their wives were out
there and they'd dry their clothes on the concertina wire and that's how they lived,
sometimes for years at a time. Something that was completely foreign to our way of
thinking. One of the things we did during this time was to keep a short timers calendar.
We all had calendars and ever day, it was kind of a high spot of a day to take your marks-
a-lot and scratch through that day. And of course as the tour went on, as soon as the paper
became predominantly the darker color that meant that you were getting short time. And I
can remember writing letters home to my wife the shorter I got, and I'd always draw a
little helmet with a little pair of boots sticking out from under it. And that was supposed
to depict that I was a short timer. I've still got that calendar somewhere. Because of some
confusion, one of the things that happened to me as I came back through Saigon leaving my outfit. When I got there it was late enough in the day and there were enough troops coming home that the manifest were so full that I was detained an extra day. So I spent one extra day in Vietnam that I didn't have to spend. When I, when we came home we flew from Saigon to Hawaii. Can't remember if we had a fuel stop. Seemed like we may have had a fuel stop somewhere between there. But from Hawaii then we went on in to SeaTac airport, Seattle, Tacoma, Washington. Went into the military side and we out-processed. And then we had to catch a cab and pay our way to get back around to the civilian side to interface with the commercial airlines. And of course I had to have my wife send me a pair of khakis so I had a set of khakis to wear. But from the time we left Saigon to Hawaii to SeaTac, out-processed, physicals and so forth. Then a friend of mine from Waco, I'd just, the luck of the draw, run into him, we'd caught the same cab from the military side around to the civilian side. We were going to be traveling from there to Los Angeles, LAX with a lay over there, and the back to Dallas and then I was coming to Lubbock and he was going to Waco. I ended up spending 36 hours in that uniform, in that trip. One of the first realities that we were back in the world was that when we were sitting there in LAX airport. The first time that we really kind of felt safe enough that we could let down. We were sitting there on a several hour layover just slumped in our chairs. We had already talked about everything we could think of to talk about. And an airplane de-planed right there in front of us. And of course realize here are two West Texas boys. And a tall, what had to be a black basketball player, tall thin guy, got off the airplane. And a young girl, a white girl, probably 15 years old at the outside came running up, jumped up, and they embraced in each others arms. And just the culture shock of that, relative to what we were expecting. I can remember we both looked at each other and then the reality that we were home was there. Let me go down a list here and reflect on a few things that I've made notes on that I want to be sure get included. One of the things that I want to talk about was the clothing for the Vietnamese. Often depicted in movies and so forth was the typical black trousers and white blouses that the ladies all wore. And that's true, it's almost like a uniform. In fact, in Saigon, I got to see some of the little school uniforms, and they all dressed alike. All the ladies wore these black trousers, most of them wore white blouses. Some of them wore colored blouses and the little
pointy hats. Where I was in the Central Highlands we had the Montagnard Indians. The
Montagnards were indigenous to that area, and they were a little at odds with the
Vietnamese people. I'm not sure it would be unlike the American Indians segregated on
reservations as opposed to the people in the rest of the country. But the Montagnards
were a very backwards people, didn't even speak... they spoke no English, I'm not sure if
they spoke Vietnamese. One of the things that happened while I was that our five guys
picked up a Montagnard Indian and brought him in for questioning. And the man had a
loincloth wrapped around him and one of the guys (tape cuts out). All right, I was talking
about the Montagnard man that we picked up for questioning and we gave him his first
pair of trousers, and he didn't even know how to put them on. That's how backward these
people were. We used to drive down the roads and watch these people. They lived in huts
built up on stands. Somewhere I've got some pictures of that. Their houses weren't down
on the ground, they were elevated, even in the mountains, in the highlands. Kind of a
stilted little hut. They had a lot of crossbows. And I've got a crossbow that's a
Montagnard crossbow that I found in the attic of a but that we went into one time.
Another of the things I observed the Montagnards to do, the Montagnard men went out to
hunt during the day. The women were expected to go out and work the fields and the rice
areas. But what they would do, we would observe, they would go out and they would
have their babies in a little pouch in the front but on their backs they carried a big old
kind of a straw looking basket, that as they went out and came back they picked up wood
that they burned to do their cooking with. So in the evening you'd see these Montagnard
women coming back in with their babies strapped to their front and the wood on their
backs, and I've got some slides of all of that. It was really interesting to see. I don't guess
they've ever heard of women's liberation. One of the funnier things that I think I've ever
seen in my life. Occasionally, even at our firebase, we would have a local Vietnamese
music group come in to contract to play at like the Officers Club or the NCO Club. And,
at the time, rock and roll music was really the vogue. And if you've never seen a
Vietnamese guy, these little guys, small in stature with bright, flowery, bellbottom,
polyester britches. Hip huggers I think they used to call them. And these wild shirts,
standing up there trying to sing American rock and roll. Now that is a sight to see. But
that was something that was really popular at that time. I'll talk briefly. There's a couple
of buzzwords I need to get in here. In an effort to keep this rated at least PG. Those of us
who were assigned for duty at a firebase, the guys in the field, who slept out in the mud,
affectionately call us REMF's. The buzzword REMF it stood for Rear Echelon but I'll
have to let your vivid imagination fill in the rest. There's another job description that I'll
never forget. There were Vietnamese civilians hired to work in the fire bases even. I
always pondered the insanity of the fact that we hired Vietnamese civilians to come in
and work in those firebases because there never was a question that their intelligence was
so much better than ours because they were working for us during the daytime. One of
the jobs that the Vietnamese civilians did was to take care of the outhouses. Now the
outhouses that we had, and this was civilization. They were built up in wooden structures,
and we'd take 55 gallon drums and cut them off in about thirds. And then the ends were
slid in from the back with a little hinged door to catch the where-with-all. And these little
guys would come in, raise the doors, pull the buckets out, mix about 5 gallons of diesel
fuel and then burn the remains there. Now the job description for that was 'shit burner.'
Now if you've ever heard person of Vietnamese inflection try to describe that he was a
'shicka-burner.' Now that's one of those things that I've just never forgotten. At our
firebase we had a fire department, with red fire trucks, and they hired Vietnamese
civilians to operate that. And I know you've heard the term 'Chinese fire drill', but I
literally saw a Chinese fire drill because one day we had a helicopter that bounced off the
ground or some other such catastrophe. And they called out the fire trucks. Now at one
time when the big Cav was in at An Khe, we had parallel runways, but we only utilized
one runway, and the other parallel down at the end of that was where the fire station was.
And I literally saw the fire trucks, sirens, lights, and everything, take off in the wrong
direction. And I always wondered if they were really such fools or if they were laughing
at us so hard because here they were, the Vietnamese people having infiltrated our
security, and we were depending on them to take care of our emergencies. Now, I will,
share something with you right now. I've used the term 'Vietnamese civilian', but in my
mind I am not satisfied that there is such a thing as a Vietnamese civilian. I am convinced
there were no innocent people, other than children. Whether they were sympathizers with
one of the causes or another, remained to be seen. But what my observation is was that
the Vietnamese people were favorable to whoever was going to give them the best deal
that day. I'll talk briefly about the bunker line stories at night. One of the things that I've
often looked back on, having had the good fortune to be raised as a Christian and have
my faith to lean on. I don't think I've ever prayed as much in my entire life as I did the
year I was in Vietnam. But I was married, I had a daughter, I had a purpose, and I was a
grandfatherly 24 years old. A lot of my troops were 16, 17, some of them had lied about
their age to get in, some of them were in a situation where six months prior to that time
there biggest worry was whether they could con mom out of the car for a date for
Saturday night, and if they had enough money to put gas in it. All of the sudden here they
were, they were forced immediately to choose between drugs or alcohol. I'll never forget
how foolish I felt as a senior, about to leave country Lieutenant, mounting the guard, and
being the Officer of the Guard and giving the rules of engagement. And our rules of
engagement were that you could not fire your weapon unless you were being fired upon,
unless there was someone in the wire, or unless you could positively identify that they
were wearing or carrying a Communist made weapon. And I'll never forget how foolish
that sounded coming out of my mouth, and thinking of how that had to sound to some 17
year old who was here with a loaded gun about to be put up in a lonely guard tower to
stay awake all night. But some of the things we did to try to make that a more livable
situation, we would go take a five gallon GI pot and fill it with water and boil it and take
about a two pound can of coffee and open it up with our P38 and dump it in there and
boil it for about five minutes. It made a very strong cup of coffee such that you had to
take a canteen cup and rake the grounds away to dip the coffee out. We put those in the
containers that had lids and put them in a jeep and drive up to the guard towers with our
lights on, so that there was no question that we were coming up to check that guard
tower. I didn't want to surprise these guys, I didn't want to wake them up with loaded
guns. And I didn't want to catch them smoking dope, I wanted them to stay awake. So we
would do this on purpose, and I'd always take a driver, we'd both always have loaded
weapons because we never knew if we were going to be shot at from the wire or from the
guard tower. But we'd go out there, and we'd take these guys coffee and try to keep them
awake. And I'll never forget some of the interesting stories that I've heard at two or three
o’ clock in the morning from a 17 year old who got his first Dear John letter. I talked
earlier about the military payment certificates, they were a predominant color. One time it
might be blue, the next time it might be red. On a given day, those of us who were
military pay officers qualified, unannounced they'd call us in, we'd have a monetary
exchange day. All of the sudden one day blue money was no good, and we had to re-issue
red money. So we'd set up a pay station, and you'd come turn in $50 worth of blue
money, we'd give you $50 worth of red money. This was to dissuade the black market.
There was a serious black market. One of the things I would like to talk about briefly, we
sit here in our country right now with everybody driving what we consider down-sized
automobiles. Thinking back on the cars that were in vogue at this time, they were huge
luxurious automobiles. All over Vietnam, if those people were in the lap of luxury they
had a Honda 50. And there would be sometimes five or six people stuffed on to a Honda
50 motorcycle. An industrial truck to them was a little motorcycle engined vehicle with
four wheels, not as big as a golf cart sometimes. I'll never forget this little Vietnamese gas
station we used to go by up in our area in the Central Highlands. And it was a little...
what I would call an apple crate with a gallon glass jug of gasoline up there. And this guy
would go buy his gasoline in the village and go out here and he sell on that gallon of
gasoline all day long. Quite a change from the things that we've known as normalcy. I
talked about, a minute ago, about the Chinese fire drill and the Vietnamese civilians
quote unquote, working in, that they had good intelligence. I'd like to talk briefly about
one of the things that happened while I was as An Khe back the second time. We had a
big air movement one day where many air wings came in, Air Cavalry, to support a
ground infantry maneuver up north of our firebase. They were going to come from the
coast and they were going to have to re-supply, refuel at our firebase and then go o’n to
their activity. Now to support this we'd had truck convoys coming in for days bringing in
fuel to fill up fuel blivets. Now a fuel blivet is a large, rubberized, bag, a bladder if you
will, that we would dig holes in the ground and then build a berm up outside and lay the
blivet down inside and fill it up with fuel, so that it was protected from the sides from
small arms fire but it was open on the top. That way evaporation and so forth, we didn't
have any highly explosive leaks, as dangerous as it sounds, it was as safe as we could
make it. We had a fuel point that we had abandoned because it had a bunch of old leaky
blivets in it. We had established a new fuel point with all new bags, and that's where all
the new fuel had gone. At any rate the little village, civilian village of An Khe, right
down the river from where we were was an area where there was a know VC sapper company. And sappers were Vietnamese people who would get through the wire and come in to our firebases and with satchel charges, blow up anything that would be beneficial to us, just wreak havoc frankly. That night, before this helicopter operation, to tell you how good their intelligence was, we had a sapper attack. They got in through the wire and they went out there and they blew up fuel blivets. Strangely enough, they had missed the intelligence that the new fuel point was where the fuel was, and what they blew up were the old leaky fuel blivets. So needless to say, the next morning at dawn when the sky turned green with helicopters it was a surprise to them, but only through some blundering on the part of their sappers. I will tell you a story about a rat hunt. There are things that we had to do to keep our sanity and when I was back at the unit at An Khe the second time. It was the first time that I had not been the commanding officer and standing out there by myself as the sole target of all the guys. And when I was back the second time as XO I was given officers quarters, now officers quarters for us was an old tin barn there at An Khe. Our headquarters was an old building that had been the headquarters of an old French cattle ranch. There's an old tin barn out back, and we had put some plywood partitions in it, that was our officers’ quarters. And there would be about four of us to a bay partitioned off in plywood. And one night, like three or four of us who slept in my bay, or three or four of us were in the bay, I don't know if we all lived there. But we had a time where we weren't responsible for anything else and we decided that we needed a diversion. And the rats were relatively rampant in that area, and there was a big ol’ rat, probably a foot long that was always coming through our area. So we decided that we were going to have a rat hunt. We were going to get the rat. So the three of us went in there, four of us, I don't remember now, seems like maybe three, went in there and stuffed blankets, sleeping bags, whatever we could in every available hole to trap the rat in the room with us. And we started with brooms, and we'd bat that rat around and that soon got old. And finally the rat got pretty cagey and was hiding from us, and we were having trouble getting him to come out. So we decided that the time had come to do away with the rat. So I had my .38 still, and it was the last weapon I turned in to the arms room before I left in-country, and I had, my goodness, I must have had a square foot in my foot. locker of .38 rounds, so I had plenty of ammunition. I took the brass and I held it
and I pulled the bullet out of the shell, and dumped about half of the powder out. And then I took a bar of Ivory soap and made a soap plug for the end of that bullet, thinking that this would be a perfect rat round. So I put it in the revolver and I ran it around there. So we went back in the room, plugged all the holes and waited for the rat to come out, and the rat came out in a corner, and looked up at me. And I cocked that pistol and laid down on that rat, and when I pulled the trigger was the first time that the reality of the fact that we had fired off a live round inside the compound came to us. Here we were senior first lieutenants and captains causing a problem that we didn't have before. Now the worst part of it was that we didn't even get the rat. The cotton picking rat escaped, but the next guy we saw and heard was the Officer of the Guard wanting to know what in the world all of the shooting was about. So that's the rat hunt story. When I talk about, and hear about the casualties of that war, I reflect on a lot of thoughts. We're told that the number of casualties that the United States forces suffered in Vietnam was roughly equal to what we lose in traffic accidents in a year's time. What I've got to add to that is the number of casualties, guys who even earn Purple Hearts that were totally unnecessary. We had one young, green, second lieutenant, hadn't even made first lieutenant, in our outfit, who we sent home with a Purple Heart. They were playing with a grenade. They'd found an old out of date white phosphorous hand grenade, and they decided it would be great fun to pull the pin, and throw it out there and watch it go off. And they pulled the pin and threw it, and it didn't go off. And this guy wandered out there and picked it up, to see what was wrong with it, about the time that it went off and nearly burned his hand off. That kind of injuries are hard to take. I had a very good friend, senior to me, went home before I did. In fact, if I recall, this took place during the ten days that I was with the 10th Cav the first time. And he was about to go home, I was just getting there. And I'd known him somewhere in the states. His job in his last two weeks among his jobs, was to go everyday and check the transit quarters. One morning he was going through there on inspection, having been Officer of the Guard or whatever. And he found a young soldier in his bunk. And the soldier was dead. And this young man was in transit billets heading home, within five days of going home from the war. And he had celebrated the night before and had gotten high on dope and had thrown up in his bunk and had suffocated in his own vomit. And that Lieutenant had to write a letter home to that young man's
parents, as officers we had to do those things. I'll never forget the feeling of sympathy
that I had to this lieutenant, having to write that mom to explain how she lost her son. I
talked a while ago I think, about, those of us who were lieutenants we all were called one
thing, it was LT. A buzzword. The captains, the Vietnamese word for captain is Dai-wi.
My captain was a little short guy, he was ti-ti-dai-wi. One of the things that was really
popular at that time was fragging the old man. I'll never forget one night, the captain and I
were called, I was XO at this time. We were called down to the village of An Khe. One of
the soldiers, one of the sergeants had gone down there, and he drank too much and he was
up in a attic of a village hut shooting off his military weapon. And the Vietnamese
civilian police called us to come get him. And of course I was probably overly cautious
and I grabbed my steel pot, my flak vest, my M-16 and my .38 and I was armed to the hilt
and I was going to go. And the captain, my little short captain, grabbed his helmet liner,
fiberglass, he grabbed not his flak vest but the helicopter crew had these little fabric vests
and he had an M-79, it was a little hand held grenade launcher, basically a 40mm sawed
off shotgun, and sewn to this little fabric vest were places for M-79 rounds. And he had
every kind of M-79 round known to man. But this short stocky little tanker, with this
helmet liner and this M-79 and we went waltzing down there after dark into the village to
get this guy. And I'll never forget, at what I thought was an insanity, and when the
Captain walked in that room that sergeant threw that weapon down and held up his hands
and all was over. One of the things that I mentioned earlier, on R&R and having come
home and sit in LA airport feeling safe for the first time irregardless of your assignment
in Vietnam, my feeling has always been that there truly were no safe places. Whether it
was from the bad guys or the good guys there was always some kind of threat. And the
one common denominator I think that most of us felt was some level of fear. I've got a
few pet peeves, and I want to talk briefly about those, and then I'll try to bring this thing
to a close. I had a young man who came to work for me about four years after the
Vietnam Conflict was over. He was a guy who claimed to have been a victim of Agent
Orange. And he really was kind of out of his mind. I always felt like he was probably a
doper. Our buzzword for him was Agent Orange. I tell that to reflect this thought: my
opinion of a lot of the problems that a lot of the Vietnam veterans have had through the
years, have been reflected in movies and the burden that some of them carry to this day
comes from the fact that there are weak people and there are strong people. And my impression of that is the people who suffered a lot from that, the traumas of Vietnam are people who are weak people and would have had troubles had they been here in the United States. Now I will not say that the level of drug abuse that we have today would be what it was had we not that because the Vietnamese people quickly learned that the poppy fields were an easier way to control the United States Army then bullets. And I believe that with my heart. I also feel that those people who went through Vietnam, who've come home and led relatively normal lives, and that's assuming that any of us would realize what normal is if it went by, are people who would have handled any situation in the United States. The last thing I want to mention that's a pet peeve of mine, and it happened to me the other day, I really probably would not have thought to mention it, and it happened after you and I had the first interview session. I pulled in to a service station one night, to gas up the car, and it was a service station out near the airport, and the guy recognized my name that I worked at the airport and he knew that Marshal Gene Harrison had written the book *A Lonely Kind of War*, and for some reason Gene had been through there and mentioned to him that he kept his airplane at our place. And he made a comment about Gene having been a Vietnam veteran and keeping his airplane at our place and how much he enjoyed that book. And I mentioned that I was a Vietnam veteran, and he said, ‘Oh really, I'm a Vietnam veteran.’ but as the story went on it came to light that he was a Vietnam era veteran and had spent his entire time in Thailand. Now, not that I want to take anything away from those guys but, in my mind I differentiate between the Vietnam veterans who did time on the soil of Vietnam, and those guys who were stationed in the Philippines, in Thailand or wherever else and I think a lot of times some of the bad stories come from people who didn't know simply because they weren't there. The closest some of those people, who were Vietnam era veterans, ever came to Vietnam was 30,000 feet over. And I'm not trying to take away from the Air Force people who supported us. Without that we'd have never done as well as we had but to hear some of those guys try to take credit for being Vietnam veterans when in fact they weren't, is something that is kind of grating. But it's taken us 25 years to come to a time that we can even speak about our experiences in Vietnam and hold our heads up without being criticized is kind of a strange thing to me. Our fathers having come through World War II
came home heroes. We came home and almost had to sneak back in to civilian life.

That'll always be a kind of strange thing to me. I brought something I want to show you because I've always thought that one of the things that helped me the most was that back home I had family. And when I got home, and got off the airplane at Lubbock, Texas. I had about 35 of my friends standing out there at the terminal with this sign. It's a big welcome sign. It's about two feet tall and about 15 feet long that says ‘Welcome Home Mike’ and I will always have this sign because it makes all the difference in the world. And this is a lot of the difference I think I see between the guys who successfully transitioned and the guys who talked about always having trouble was the support you had from friends and family (unfolding sign to look at). I just found that and thought you might find it interesting.

MAH: So right after you returned back through SEATAC and then LAX you just came back here to Lubbock and then you were basically out-processed from the Army?

MH: I was a civilian from the time I left SEATAC. I traveled in uniform, stayed in the same uniform for 36 hours. When I got off the airplane at Lubbock coming home to friends and family, I was a civilian. I did come home to attend graduate school at Tech. Within three days after I got off that airplane I had enrolled in the Business Graduate Program. So I went from school, to the war, and back to school.

MAH: Just some questions I've jotted down along the way. Going way back to your Tech days in ’64 to ’68. You've mentioned that there was a lot of anti war feeling on campus. Was it strong in the fact that everybody felt that way or was it just a strong, loud few?

MH: Let me answer that, and I don't know if we got this on tape, we had trouble with the tape, and I don't know if we told the story about the hippies and the graffiti fence.

MAH: Yes, you did.

MH: The way I would say that, and of course Texas Tech, being a state supported school, then as now. Tech became kind of a gathering place from all directions. There were elements at Tech from every walk. We had hippies with peace signs on their back, we had the rodeo cowboys who could care less one way or the other, those of us who were in ROTC. I would say that it was probably a demonstrative, loud few, especially up
here in West Texas which is a very conservative part of the country. In fact an awful lot of the people, because they didn't understand what was going on. Believe it or not there were a lot of people who lived through every minute of that time who when the news came on at 6:00 turned the television off. They just got tired of hearing it. And because of that level of complacency, I would say that most of the noise came from a loud few.

MAH: You were basically, your first MOS was armor. Do you feel that armor had any place being over there in Vietnam, did it serve a useful purpose or pretty much stuck in the jungle?

MH: I will say this about armor. And we laughingly and affectionately called our branch school ‘Tank College.’ In those days, those of us who were armor officers were either 1204's or 1203's. 1203's were tank commanders, 1204's were armored cav but they made it very plain from the first, even if our MOS read 1203, which mine did, we were considered cross trained for 1204. What they didn't tell us out loud was when we got to Vietnam we'd all be Cav whether our experience stateside was heavy armor or not. Being in the Central Highlands in a mountainous area, we didn't have the terrain for armor. We did have one tank in the whole Central Highlands, and it was a minesweeper. A Korean War vintage M-48 tank that had a big ol’ outfit on the front that was full of water, a heavy thing, with spikes on it. And their mission was to drive down the roads and blow up the land mines that the VC and NVA put in there to blow up our tracks. Aside from that tank all our armor was Armored Personnel Carriers made of aluminum relatively speaking were very light such that they could travel in the terrain and the mountains, and I will say that there definitely was a place for those PC's because we could cover more ground in a short time. I don't know if I told the story of a friend of mine, Dane Frazer, one of the eight men I went in-country with, who had a PC blown up under him. They went around a little curve in the road that they'd traveled hundreds of times and the VC used to always mine the curve in the road. So they got to where they'd go a little wide out into the mud and go around it and that day they put the land mine out in the bypass and when they went over it, it was such a hot muggy day that none of them were down in the track, they were up on the outside. And the driver even was sitting on the top driving with his feet. And when that land mine went off it literally blew that aluminum hull track into two pieces, bounced them out and they had a little bit of rock bruises and so forth but no
injuries. But to that extent, yes., there was a lot of mobility that we had from... from the
tracks that we'd not have had otherwise.

MAH: This tape's fixing to die so I'll just go ahead and put another one in. This is
tape three of the interview with Mike Horton. You emphasize a lot the letters from your
family, and the welcome home sign and things like that. Do you feel that's an integral part
that maybe some vets didn't get that would have helped them?

MH: Yes. In fact, the most direct I know how to answer your question. I attribute
my successful tour in Vietnam, and by successful I mean I went, I did my job, I came
home to the responsibilities of my family and that was what I intended to do when I went
over. I attribute that to the fact that I was supported by my family. When I got letters
from home I got letters from my wife, not that I got them everyday, but when I got mail I
had a letter from every day of her life, with pictures of my daughter, with verbal
descriptions of her first steps and so forth. From my parents, my dad used to send me
pictures of the airplanes in the shop just kind of a reminder of what normalcy was. My
brother would, who was younger than I was, a student at Tech when I was in Vietnam,
would kind of keep me posted on what was going on back at school, back at home, you
know kind of...one day there came a flyer from the drag race in Amarillo, just anything
from home. The girl he married, he was just dating her at the time, I can... I'll never
forget one day I got a shoe box in the mail. We called them care packages. In that shoe
box, two weeks old, it was full of chocolate chip cookies. And I can't tell you how long
we hoarded those chocolate chip cookies. And I shared those with the guys that slept in
my area and we savored things like that. There was one guy, our aerial rifle platoon
leader, who went to University of Texas at Austin. And he used to have his mom send
him a care package and he'd always get Lone Star beer and Fritos. Now you can't imagine
how precious Fritos can be in the Republic of Vietnam. But yes, the support from friends
and family, on things like that, the welcome home sign, the guys who didn't have that not
only did they have the absence of that but there was this drastic culture shock of coming
home, not only not the hero, but in a situation where it was just a totally unaccepted job
to have done.
MAH: You mentioned once they changed the Military Pay Currency, the MPC every so often, different colors to cut down on the black market. Do you think that even worked or was it a waste of time and effort?

MH: Like a lot of other things in a situation like that. It was an effort that had to be made and it dissuaded the black market. No it was not totally effective, but it was something that had to help. And the black market was not just in the Military Payment Certificates and that sort of thing. The barter system was alive and well. We had one lieutenant in our air cav outfit that his only job, now he was given an OH-58 turbine engined helicopter to run his little errands on, was to run around and see what he could trade for. Anything that we acquired in our unit was bartered for. Plywood was precious. If you had a pallet of plywood you could buy anything. A friend of mine, from Lubbock, who was an enlisted soldier, a sergeant was an air traffic controller at a fire base in Vietnam. He was raised in Texas as a hunter. He used to go out with a helicopter crew and take his M-16 and there were deer in their area and he'd shoot the deer and they'd bring the carcasses back and he'd field dress it and they'd trade the meat for whatever. They traded two deer, dressed deer for a 3/4 ton truck. So nobody's hand receipt but they had transportation the whole time they were there. My .38 pistol was not on anybody's hand receipt. We'd confiscated it from, we took it off of a guy in transit quarters. Now the difference was, when I left I turned it in to the Armory, a lot of that sort of stuff, guys tried to smuggle M-16's home. I can't tell you the kind of things that the drug dogs sniffed out that had nothing to do with drugs.

MAH: You were stationed both at An Khe and An Son, what were each of the living conditions like, were they tent cities?

MH: No. At An Khe, which is here in the Central Highlands, I brought a book with a map in it. In the middle of II Corps. An Khe was a firebase that just in the TET offensive of ’68 was a relatively hot spot. The big cav had been in there and they had a 25-mile perimeter. When we got there, even by the time I got there, the cav had gone, and just our squadron of the 10th Cav was in there to run a mission where we were supposed to make everybody think the whole cav was still there but we still had the 25-mile perimeter. Needless to say, there were enough facilities in there as an established long time fire base that we had plenty of buildings for living quarters, buildings for
headquarters, there were buildings available to use for NCO and Officer clubs, space and facilities was not a problem there at all. There were, because it was along time, it had been there for years. We had good shower facilities, a lot of water tanks and so forth. We lived, relatively, in the lap of luxury. Now the time I came back to An Khe after my time at An Son we had pulled it back in to a 5-mile perimeter or they had in my absence. At that point we did have a good PSP runway, long enough for Caribou's to come in to. We had the Quonset hut that we used for an airline terminal. We did have the main building that we set up our headquarters and it was a, it was an old French cattle headquarters, I think I mentioned before. But the walls of this place were about four feet thick, it kinds reminds you of going through the Alamo. We had the tin barn that were our officers quarters. We had kind of isolated ourselves somewhat form the other facilities to have the use of that runway. So that we were a lot more remote the second time that I was at An Khe that when I was there the first time. One of our perimeters was right along the river's edge, and we had about a 30 to 40 foot area with triple strand concertina wire and claymore mines exposed to the river, and the rest of it we had guard towers around and so forth but it was a lot more remote then. Now at An Son that was a relatively well established fire base. In fact we were so undermanned as late in the war as I was there we really had more than adequate building facilities. I lived in one building where I was the only guy living in the building. Now that's a lonely kind of feeling when you are in a combat zone drawing combat pay to be the only man in a building. But, no, we were in very adequate housing.

MAH: You mentioned several times the officer NCO relations, were they pretty good on the ones that weren't druggers or alcoholics or was it always a tension?

MH: I will tell you that those of us with the competence to know that we had a job to do and that to do so and to get home we had to stay straight it didn't matter. You might have a buck sergeant, an E-6, a captain and a lieutenant who were the only competent people in a unit, and those people had to carry the rest of them. I had one young private that I was real fond of that guy. He was an ol' kid right off of the farm and just, he wasn't going to... he wasn't even going to smoke a cigarette, now this kid was straight as an arrow. He was dependable. It didn't matter what you had to have him do he would do it. Now you quickly learn those people you can depend on. There might be somebody who
outranked him by three to five times but you just, you didn't dare give them any responsibility because they weren't going to accept it and they'd let you down. Those people got other people hurt.

MAH: Were there any activities that were, not R&R, but would serve to help release tension? Football on the firebase or football teams going around or things like that?

MH: Well, not when I was there. We were there late enough in the war, we were the army of occupation and by saying that there were units standing down all around us. That talk was that everybody was getting' ready to go home. Every unit was working understaffed, we all had full time jobs in the day times. Now the troopey do's, and that's just a buzz word, those guys basically had seven in the morning to six o’clock at night hours, and then we let them go. Those of us who were officers, especially when I was a company commander, it was not uncommon to have 20 hour days. I look back on that and I understand now why young men have to go to war. You've got to have the physical stamina to go until two and three and four in the morning and be back out there at dawn. So we were so busy we didn't think about that. Now we did occasionally, like on the 4th of July, we'd always swap around and get boxes of steaks and have company parties or something like that, but that was a three or four or five hour reprieve, the rest of the time it was pretty well business as usual.

MAH: You mentioned a lot the drug and alcohol problem. Was there an extensive racial problem in addition to that or was it a lighter issue?

MH: Very much so. And I say that very carefully. When I was at Ft. Hood, Texas before I went to Vietnam we had regretful circumstances in my opinion in that there were some Vietnam returnees sent to Ft. Hood, guys who had two or four months left in service and instead of giving them early releases and letting them our of the Army, they brought them back to a stateside post, and it was a very ineffective thing to do because basically their attitude was, ‘What are they going to do to me, send me to Vietnam?’ The had already been, they knew they weren't going to go back, they were such short timers that all we had was trouble. At Ft. Hood, Texas when we had guard mount, those of us who were Officer of the Guard, we'd have two Officer of the Guard, double duty. NCO's double duty NCO's. We would have an Officer of the Guard and a Sergeant of the Guard
at the headquarters building, to man a radio. We'd have a second Officer and Sergeant of
the Guard roaming, a jeep, out in the company areas, with radios, with loaded weapons at
a state side military post because of the racial problems. We literally had some black guys
try to burn down the 2nd Armored Division Headquarters while I was at Ft. Hood, and
they used mattresses up in the attic of some old building that were built during World
War II that by nature of the way they were built were so airtight that they wouldn't
support combustion. So from that to Vietnam where there is even less motivation to not
go along with those things we very definitely had a racial problem I mentioned the black
drug abusers shooting the West Point white captain. Racially oriented with drug
overtones or undertones, what ever word you choose to use. The black sergeant who
thought that the black drug pushers were an embarrassment to his race, an embarrassment
to his chosen profession, he was a dedicated professional soldier. Those things we had on
a relatively ongoing basis. The shame of it is my war was one of drugs and racial
problems. I was probably one of the most highly paid full time baby sitters in history.

MAH: One last statement. A lot of vets have expressed a little bit of dislike for the
way that the United States returned personnel. They were actually in-country Vietnam
combat veterans back to the states without any... World War II vets had a month long
shipping across the seas to settle down and relax and get out of the wartime mind set. Do
you feel a little upset at the fact that you were thrown from 24 hours from a combat zone
to here back in Lubbock, Texas?

MH: Reflecting back on that 36 hours, which, as well as I can remember was the
time consumptions. In the first place, from the time they released me, had they not gotten
me home on a airplane I'd have been sadly disappointed. I was ready to come home to see
my family, to meet my year old daughter, who was 9 days old when I left. I have no
regret to that end. Frankly, I think more than that the disappointment was the mind set of
the people when the veterans came home. And I say that cautiously because I think that
the American people were so torn. The political tide had turned by the end of that war to
the extent that there was a very widespread, in my opinion, misunderstanding of the
whole thing and that a lot of the American people rather than make a statement just made
no statement. So the veterans returning sometimes I think, were faced with a kind of a
mystery. They didn't know what people thought.
MAH: You went over in December 1970 and returned about November of 1971?

MH: No, I came home in August because of my deal to go to jungle school my
time started in October and I got credit for basically nearly three months of in-country
time before I went in-country. The guy really did me a favor. And of course then the
other thing that happened I applied for, and was granted an early release, to come back to
graduate school. So that fixed my ETS time. Now other guys in my category later got
involuntary early releases and came home short of their full shore tour. And in our ROTC
programs, if we didn't have a certain number of active duty days to qualify for the two
year active duty satisfaction of our contractual agreement, then they had to come home
and do active duty or active reserve time. A lot of those guys who were given involuntary
early releases found themselves in a situation where they went in active duty, they went
to Vietnam, came home and had to do reserve time. Oddly enough, the way my early
release was done, when I came home I had enough time by like one or two days that I
never served in active reserves. And my mind set at the time I think that's a good thing. I
think I'd have had trouble coming from a combat zone, combat pay situation to a reserve
setting. I believe I would have had a little difficulty serving in a peace time military.

MAH: I believe that's all the questions that I had to follow up. And that concludes
the interview.

NOTE: Several weeks after the last interview session Mr. Horton called and asked that at
the end of this transcription I note that Vietnam 'it was a situation that was discussed
between the veterans who had been there, almost as if there were an inner circle. But it
was such an unpopular situation when we all came home that it was just something you
didn't speak about openly, in an open public forum. And the interesting thing now with
the passage of 20 years and how it has become a socially acceptable thing to discuss. And
you know the stories are the same it is just that for some reason now, the people are not
only willing to listen but seem to be almost curious and interested.'

Mike Horton 10 April 1990