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The Vietnam Archive
Oral History Project
Interview with William Moore
Conducted by Steve Maxner
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Transcribed by Jennifer McIntyre

NOTE: Text included in brackets [] is information that was added by the narrator after reviewing the original transcript. Therefore, this information is not included in the audio version of the interview.

1 Steve Maxner: This is Steve Maxner conducting an interview with Mr. William
2 Moore on the 17th of December, year 2001 at approximately 3:40 Lubbock time. I am in
3 Lubbock, Texas and Mr. Moore is in Elkton, Maryland. Sir, why don't we begin with a
4 brief discussion of your early life and if you would, tell me when and where you were
5 born and where you grew up.

6 William Moore: Okay. I lived in the Philadelphia suburbs up until about age 23
7 or 24, 24 and had a fairly normal childhood. At ten years of age my father left and my
8 mother and father eventually got a divorce. I went to mostly Catholic schools, a few years
9 I was in public school system in the Philadelphia area. I was pretty lucky as a student. I
10 was, I guess, blessed, with maybe above normal intelligence, had an easy time in school,
11 did well in school, always had good grades and so forth. That was my early years, just a
12 typical kid. I have one brother, Bob, he's three years younger than me, he was born in
13 1946 and we were fairly close as brothers, just the two of us and my mother, so we were
14 a fairly close family. I came from, I guess you would categorize me as; we came from a
15 lower middle class or maybe middle lower class family. We didn't have much money but
16 we got by. During my high school years is when I got interested in music, got into shows
17 and so forth in school and I've always liked music. I started playing guitar at age sixteen,
18 played guitar all my life and kicked around with a lot of different bands, formed my first
19 band in 1965, just before I went in the Army. I was 23 at the time and played music in

1 the tri-State area Philadelphia, New Jersey and Delaware, just prior to going into the
2 service in 1966, no, excuse me, 1967. So, that was my life, from when I was born until
3 up to I was about 24.

4 SM: Was there anything in particular in school that you enjoyed as far as
5 subjects?

6 WM: Yes, I really enjoyed English, history, social studies, my weak subject was
7 mathematics, wasn't really interested in mathematics. I was more interested in geography
8 of the world and history and so forth. I studied in high school what they called the
9 academic studies, hoping to eventually go to college, but that didn't work out. Things
10 came along like getting married and then the war.

11 SM: When you graduated from high school, did you spend much time in school
12 after that, before going in the Army?

13 WM: Right after high school I went to work as a trainee in the electronics field
14 and started with a small outfit in Woodlyn, Pennsylvania. It was Columbia Research
15 Laboratories and they started training me and I picked it up pretty quick, worked there
16 about three, four years, got my training in electronics there and during that time is when I
17 also got married. So I was just recently married and then I had a son born two years after
18 I was married and then problems started with the marriage, the marriage eventually ended
19 and I was separated at the time that I got a draft notice. Well, I knew the draft notice was
20 coming, so I got like a pre-draft notice and that was during the real big build-up for the
21 Vietnam War in '66, '67 period. So I wanted to pursue my electronics field so I enlisted
22 and luckily I had a good score on the test they give you when you go in the Army and
23 they put me in the electronics field, radio, relay and carrier attendant they call it. Where
24 we took the phone lines and multiplexed them onto radio shots and shot them on down
25 the way. So that's, so then I was in the Army from August '67, did well in that school,
26 down at the signal school at Fort Gordon, that was in Georgia, Fort Gordon and I think I
27 finished as one of the honor graduates in that course and they asked me to stay over and
28 be an instructor because they had three shifts going at the time, 24 hour operation during
29 this big build up and they had to get a lot of guys trained, they were short instructors so
30 they would ask the honor graduates and some of the guys that knew the subject and
31 finished well to stay over and be instructors. So I said, sure I'll do that, so I did that for

1 awhile, did that for nine months and once we trained enough guys, they didn't need us
2 any more and in the mean time we had come down on, there was four different, what they
3 called levies for Vietnam and they kept kicking us off of that, we didn't have to go at
4 first, because they still needed us as instructors. But once we got enough students through
5 the course and the manpower requirement was less than they took 450 of us instructors
6 on one levy and shipped us off to Vietnam. So that's, I just sort of delayed going over
7 there by having this instructor course.

8 SM: Well, before you went into the Army, what did you know about Vietnam,
9 what did you know about what United States was doing over there?

10 WM: Well, I knew that early in the war, I knew we had what they called advisors
11 over there, which were I found out later mostly Special Forces guys, training the South
12 Vietnamese on how to fight, it was a civil war. From what I had heard in school and after
13 school when I was working, say from the age of 18 to 22 or 3, was that the main thing we
14 were trying to do over there was have the South win and set up their form of government
15 so that Communism would not take over the whole country. So there was a theory at the
16 time called the domino theory, which was a big phrase going around and they were
17 afraid, well we were told and from what I heard and what I've read, that if Vietnam fell,
18 it would be like a chain reaction and a lot of the countries in Southeast Asia and in the
19 Pacific Rim would fall to Communism. So when it was time for me to go to defend it, I
20 went for the country to stop the spread of Communism basically, that's why I went. That
21 was my motivation and it was the motivation of a lot of guys.

22 SM: Well, did you know many people, many men say from your neighborhood or
23 guys that you came to know before joining the Army that had gone to Vietnam and come
24 back?

25 WM: No, I didn't. I didn't know anybody that had been over there. Like I say, it
26 was from '63 to say '65, there wasn't too many of us over there. The big buildup started
27 in late '65 through '67 and a whole bunch of young guys either were drafted or enlisted,
28 went over and did their duty. I went over there with the intent to help United States stop
29 the spread of Communism, that was it.

30 SM: Well, why don't you go ahead and describe your introduction to military life
31 with regard to basic training, what day did you leave if you remember the day?

1 WM: I left on August, I believe it was 22nd, it might have been the 12th, I can't
2 remember. It was in August of '67, I left Media, Pennsylvania, on a bus, busloads of us
3 went to the processing center in North Philadelphia, Philadelphia, PA. They did some
4 processing there, swore us in and all the guys stepped forward, there were no
5 conscientious objectors or anything, they took that one step forward, swore our allegiance
6 to the Constitution and to the president and we were formally inducted into the U.S.
7 Army. From there we got on a train, and traveled to Fayetteville, North Carolina and the
8 only thing I remember about the train trip, we left late in the afternoon, it was all night
9 long and I looked out the window once in a while and you'd see the backwaters of some
10 town they'd stop at, or go real slow through, train tracks were always on the wrong side
11 of town, it wasn't a very nice trip down there. Got there early in the morning, and we
12 were met by the drill instructors at the train station and there was a lot of trains coming
13 every day full of guys, because basic training was really in full swing in August of '67,
14 there was a big build up in the military. There were so many guys, they put us in, the first
15 week was a holding week, there wasn't even room to put us into a company yet, to start
16 our basic training. So for a week, we basically did details, got yelled at a lot by the DIs
17 and got our initiation into the military, into the basic training part of it. They gave us the
18 battery of tests, they gave us our haircuts and gave us our uniforms, our basic issue and
19 that was all during that first week. I was to find out later on that the battery of tests they
20 gave us were very important at that time in the military. That's where they would select,
21 what you would be doing for your next two or three years. Luckily I did well in most of
22 the tests, I did well in the basic aptitude test. I did well in the electronics test and I did
23 well in the language test. In fact later on in my military career, they wanted to send me to
24 learn Russian but I turned that down because I didn't want to end up say in Berlin at
25 some embassy being a Russian translator sitting at a desk all day. I wanted to get in the
26 electronics part. Then basic training was condensed, they knocked it down from twelve
27 weeks to eight weeks and it was pretty hectic, it was eight weeks of go, go, go, they had
28 to get us through there to make room for the guys coming in behind us and it was at Fort
29 Bragg, North Carolina, just outside of Fayetteville, big post, big, a very large post. It was
30 home of the 82nd Airborne, I think it still is, a lot of airborne troops there and at that time
31 a lot of basic training. I was put in, I forget the name of the company, A, B, C company,

1 just some basic training company and they ran us through the twelve week course in eight
2 weeks. They condensed it down to get us through their quick. We just learned the basics.
3 We learned how to march, how to drill, how to shoot a rifle. We got to throw one live
4 grenade, that was our live fire was grenades. I think we had a day or two, a day and a
5 half of instruction of grenades and what to do with them and then they finally took us out
6 on the line and put us in these sand bagged little bunkers, about chest high, the sandbags,
7 you and your instructor, your drill Sergeant or one of the instructors and they would hand
8 you the grenade and you would pull the pin just the way they showed you and throw this
9 thing and duck down behind the sandbags. Rifle range was about, two weeks out there
10 zeroing our weapons, the weapon of choice then was the M-14 rifle, it was a very good
11 weapon, pretty accurate. I remember it being heavy, as opposed to the M-16 which I got
12 later. I scored sharpshooter which is like mid range on a rifle, I had never fired a rifle in
13 my life until basic training and of course you learn how to take it apart and put it together
14 in your sleep and during the qualification I shot well enough to get a sharpshooter
15 qualification. Later on down the road in my military career I qualified with the M-16 and
16 shot expert with it, it was a little easier to handle. It was just as accurate and a lot lighter.
17 So, basic training was a lot of physical exercise, a lot of running, everything was double
18 time, go, go, go. Meals were, three meals a day but before each meal you had to do the
19 low crawl on the mats out in front of the mess hall and I went through eight weeks of
20 basic training with skinned knees and elbows because I couldn't master the low crawl,
21 didn't do it right so I had sores on my knees and elbows the whole time through the eight
22 weeks and then the next day, every day crawling on them would just break them open
23 again, but it was something you had to put up with and you just put up with everything
24 they threw at you, just to get through it. So after the eight weeks we did have a graduation
25 parade with all the companies that were graduating that week and I didn't get to march in
26 the parade because they made me an usher. I was an usher for the VIPs and families that
27 were coming down to see these guys graduate. I didn't mind that, I got to meet lot of nice
28 people. It wasn't too bad, I saw my company march by but I didn't march with them. It
29 didn't really bother me that much. We got our orders right after basic, the next day. I
30 would say 90% of our company, this was four platoons, each platoon was about forty
31 guys, about 90% of them immediately got orders for infantry MOS, 11B. The remaining

1 10 or 12 % got orders for other MOSs, but right at that time, in October of '67, most of
2 the guys going through basic at Fort Bragg anyway, got 11B MOS, they went to infantry
3 training. I got 31M, which is a real long term they call radio relay and carrier attendant,
4 which was like I say multiplexing telephone circuits onto radio shots and shooting them
5 line of sight, thirty or forty miles and then at the other end, breaking them down back to
6 telephone lines. So that was basic, it was pretty hectic and real quick.

7 SM: How did they enforce discipline among you and your fellow trainees?

8 WM: Oh, it was, if one guy, to keep the teamwork up, I think that's why they did
9 it, later on I realized that to ensure that the teamwork was built up, if one guy messed up
10 the whole platoon paid for it and there was mass punishment. We'd have to do extra
11 running or, if somebody did something real serious of course, the UCMJ would come in
12 but petty stuff like, turning left face when you're supposed to go right face, we'd do extra
13 push-ups the whole platoon and then they would leave it up to the squad leaders or
14 platoon leaders, the guys in basic to get the guy aside and straighten him out for minor
15 offenses, anything serious of course the UCMJ took over.

16 SM: Did that happen, serious offenses?

17 WM: No, not in my platoon, didn't see anything in basic, serious. We had one
18 guy go AWOL, never saw him again, I don't know what happened to him. He just got
19 tired of it and left one night. They pushed us through, if he did come back he got
20 punished and then went into another basic company, had to do it all over but I don't ever
21 know what happened to him.

22 SM: Any punishments imposed by trainees, blanket parties, GI showers, that kind
23 of stuff?

24 WM: No, not in my eight weeks.

25 SM: How about, training specific for Vietnam, was there any of that for you yet in
26 basic?

27 WM: Yes, that was a real short course, I forget how many days it was, it wasn't
28 more than three, I think it was two or three days and they took us somewhere on post
29 there. No, this was at Fort Gordon they did it, after I reported for schooling, MOS
30 training. No, I take that back, it was after I came down on the levy, I was an instructor.
31 Once they knew I was going to Vietnam, they sent us to this short course on what to

1 expect over there, that was in Fort Gordon in about late summer, early fall of '68, just
2 before I went to Vietnam. It must have been in the fall because I went to Vietnam in
3 October. It wasn't anything special. Of course they had Sergeants who had been over
4 there giving the courses and of course there was an officer there too, but he didn't do
5 much. All I can remember was mostly talking to us, we'd sit in the bleachers and they'd
6 tell us about Vietnam. They didn't have at that time the simulated villages and the walk
7 through and stuff that they had later on down the road. It was mostly oral teaching and
8 war stories of what these Sergeants had experienced over there.

9 SM: Okay, that was my next question, did many of your drill instructors in basic
10 have Vietnam experience?

11 WM: In basic, I don't remember any of them. We had three drill Sergeants for
12 just our platoon and I don't think, I don't remember any of them talking about Vietnam.
13 They had been drill instructors for quite awhile, their like third, fourth year of it and they
14 knew their business, they knew how to do it, but no, they didn't talk about Vietnam that
15 much.

16 SM: Did you have anybody drop out of basic besides the one AWOL?

17 WM: Well, besides the guy that went AWOL we had one kid, he didn't drop out,
18 he got set back and it seemed like every platoon had one, the big, heavy guy. He just
19 couldn't keep up with us and they kind of rode him pretty hard and they did everything
20 they could for him and the squad leaders and all but he just couldn't keep up so he got
21 washed back, he had to start over. I remember the kid trying hard but he just couldn't do
22 it, couldn't run, he couldn't keep up. But they had special education for those fellows,
23 had special training and sent them back a couple of weeks and they'd go with another
24 platoon, another company. I guess he eventually made it through. It seems like guys, the
25 little guys like me, we gained weight during basic and the big guys usually lost a lot of
26 weight because it was pretty rigorous, a lot of exercise. Besides low crawl, you're always
27 doing push-ups, you're almost doing knee high on the bars and running, everything was
28 double time for running. In fact the PT test at that time consisted of one mile run, how
29 many horizontal bars you could do in one minute, the low crawl, a thing called the run,
30 dodge and jump where you run around these barriers and jump over ditches and the fifth
31 event was push-ups. Besides that, you had what they called the daily dozen; you'd have

1 calisthenics every morning, twelve exercises, jumping jacks and squats, thrusts. When
2 we finally got our M-14s issued, you'd have to do these squat thrusts holding the rifle
3 over your head and it did toughen me up, a lot of exercise. They wanted to build you up,
4 build up your endurance, build up your muscle stretch. The food was high protein, a lot
5 of carbohydrates, like I said the little guys like me usually put on weight and the bigger
6 guys, they worked them so hard they lost weight. So basic was, just what they call it,
7 basic training. We learned just the basics of how to be a soldier.

8 SM: Well, what was it like going from your basic at Fort Bragg to your military
9 occupational specialty training there at Fort Gordon?

10 WM: It was as different as night and day. It was still pretty hectic, everything was
11 done in groups, you marched to school, well you got up and you had your breakfast and
12 then they marched you to class and then it would be four hours of class in the morning, if
13 you had the day shift and then they'd march you back for lunch and then march you back
14 to school and then four hours in the afternoon. I enjoyed it, it was twelve weeks, you
15 learned all the radio equipment, all the telephone equipment and all the multiplexing
16 equipment. Of course one week of the twelve was map reading and compass and how to
17 shoot azimuths because you had to set up antennas and you had to know about maps and
18 azimuths and so forth and it was pretty interesting. We were operators, the MOS didn't
19 actually fix the stuff, we were just operators so we only did operator maintenance and
20 operated the equipment. Later on I got into tinkering with the stuff and learned on my
21 own how to fix, if the radio broke, or the multiplexer broke, I could fix them but they
22 frowned on the guys who didn't know what they were doing. But I had already had some
23 electronic training so they didn't mind me touching the stuff too much. It was like I say
24 twelve weeks, I did well in the course, I was one of the five top graduates, I think I had a
25 95 average for all the testing and all. That was a big part of them asking me to stay over
26 to be an instructor. So we graduated from that and they held me over as what they call
27 permanent party at Fort Gordon. And before I could go out and start giving classes we
28 had to go to a condensed two-week course of how to be an Army instructor. It was
29 called, IMD, Instructor Methods Division, and we went to two more weeks of classes on
30 how to give classes and that was fun. I'd already had experience standing up in front of
31 people and I felt at ease. I wasn't nervous or anything, of course I had played music out

1 in clubs and stuff and was only entertaining people, talking to people and this was
2 something different and you had to learn the Army way of giving a class which is you
3 teach to the lowest level of the class. There's a lot of do's and don'ts on how to be an
4 instructor and they would video tape us giving classes as part of our training and we
5 would look at the tapes with the teachers and they would critique us and point out what
6 we're doing wrong, what we're doing right and there was a final test for that also, to
7 graduate from that. They would observe you actually giving classes, get your lesson
8 plan, lesson plans were pre-made, you'd go over your lesson plan, of course you had to
9 know your subject and you would go out on the floor and give a class to the students and
10 they would grade you on it. If they thought you were going to be a good instructor you
11 would pass, if not, they'd send you back for more training. But I got through that okay,
12 finished in two weeks and they made me an instructor on the second shift in the tenth
13 week, which was of course the map-reading week. Any of the other eleven weeks is what
14 I wanted, I got the tenth week, so I ended up for eight or nine months teaching map
15 reading, how to use a compass, so forth. I was permanent party, the family came down
16 and stayed with me, we lived in a trailer off post and at that time, it was an eight hour day
17 but all us instructors got together and instead of doing two hours on the floor in the
18 morning and two in the afternoon, where you had to be there all eight hours, we would
19 rearrange the schedule and do four hours in the morning and have the afternoon off, so
20 that was pretty good duty. We'd get our four hours of teaching time in half a day and
21 then the rest of the time was free and they didn't seem to care as long as we okayed it
22 with the higher ups and the teaching got done, I didn't mind spending my four straight
23 hours on the floor, well I call it four hours, it was 45 minute class with a 15 minute break,
24 so we would get our four hours in and then have half a day off, free time to do whatever
25 we wanted, go back home or back to our trailer, be with the family, so forth, so that
26 wasn't too bad. I enjoyed my time as an instructor and I was in a company of instructors,
27 there was 900 in the company and that's a large company, most battalion don't have that
28 many people, but there was so many instructors at the Southeastern Signal School at the
29 time that that particular company was 900 people. I don't know how the 1st Sergeant kept
30 up with everybody. I was a private E-2 when I finished MOS training and here I was a
31 private E-2 teaching classes on the floor to a lot of PFCs and Spec-4s coming through

1 there, National Guard and guys that had been in the Army longer than I had and I always
2 thought that was kind of funny. Here is a private E-2 teaching Spec-4s and Sergeants
3 about radios. But we just, there was a lot of us private E-2s doing this, there was no slots
4 open to promote us. It was such a large company, they just couldn't promote us, in fact I
5 didn't make PFC until I got to Vietnam. So I went over there a private E-2 and made PFC
6 almost immediately and I think within three months I had made Spec-4 and I had made
7 acting E-5, acting Jack E-5, but they needed an NCO at one of the out sites and I think
8 within four months I had gone from E-2 to E-5, so what I didn't get in that nine months at
9 Fort Gordon made up for it when I got to Vietnam, I got promoted real fast through the
10 ranks.

11 SM: Now what MOSs would covered there at the signal school at Fort Gordon,
12 was it just yours or all signal MOSs?

13 WM: It was all signal MOSs, it was a huge operation. The course I was with was
14 just 31M, 31 Mike and it was hectic, three classes a day, eight hours, it was a 24 hour
15 operation. Anytime day or night, you'd hear the troops marching through Fort Gordon
16 going to and from class and chow, the mess halls were open 24 hours, everything was 24
17 hours. It was really hectic. They just needed so many guys, they just need so many signal
18 people to support the guys in Vietnam, there was a huge signal presence in Vietnam.
19 They were all over the place. In fact, I've seen numbers and I believe it from being over
20 there, for every guy in the boonies, for every infantryman there was eight or nine support
21 personnel over there. That's why in 1969, late '68 to early '69, the highest troop strength
22 was I think 580,000 American troops over there. Like I say, 85 to 90% of them were
23 what they call support troops. That was including the offshore Navy, everything.

24 SM: While you were in signal training, and then while you were an instructor
25 there at Fort Gordon, how much did you hear about Vietnam, did you start meeting other
26 veterans that were coming back from tours of duty?

27 WM: No, I didn't. Like I say, the only people I saw were the students and the guys
28 in my company. I don't know where these guys coming back from Vietnam were going;
29 they weren't going to Fort Gordon. They were going to permanent duty stations
30 elsewhere. A lot of guys would come back to the States and they'd get orders for

1 Germany or something, or Korea. I ended up in both of those places during my ten years,
2 but no I didn't meet many Vietnam veterans at all.

3 SM: And would you give me the dates that you were at Fort Gordon?

4 WM: Yes, let me think now. I was there, August, September, October, I was at
5 basic, so from say November and then nine months, whatever nine months is, that would
6 be late summer of, no it would be early fall '68 so I was at Fort Gordon, say January
7 through October of '68.

8 SM: Well, then you were there when Tet '68 took place; did you hear much about
9 that?

10 WM: Didn't hear much about it, just what I saw on the six o'clock news, basically
11 that's all I remember of that. The one thing I do remember when I was at Fort Gordon
12 was I was going to work one morning at 6:30 in the morning and the previous night,
13 Kennedy got shot at in California, that sticks out in my mind. I didn't even hear about
14 that until about eight or nine hours after it happened.

15 SM: This is Robert Kennedy?

16 WM: Yes, Robert Kennedy. That was, of course that shocked everybody, but like
17 I say I didn't hear about it until eight or nine hours later because I had been sleeping all
18 night. I heard it on the car radio going in to teach.

19 SM: Well, how about other events while you were there, for instance Johnson's
20 decision not to run for re-election, did that affect you at all, what did you think when he
21 said he just wanted to quit?

22 WM: Was that in '68, he did that?

23 SM: Yes, sir just after Tet.

24 WM: Now all I remember of that is what I'd seen since then. I've seen the clip a
25 hundred times on TV, but I didn't see the speech, I don't know why, maybe we just won
26 it.

27 SM: Well, you're busy.

28 WM: At the time no, I don't recall that at all.

29 SM: Did you, in terms of your training, as a signal person and I guess in terms of
30 your specific MOS dealing with relays and things of that nature, was there anything

1 special that they trained you in concerning doing what you would have to do in the jungle
2 versus say, your job would vary I imagine depending on the environment, no?

3 WM: Right, well we always used the high ground so I didn't see a jungle the
4 whole time I was over there. I was outside of Nha Trang with the Koreans for six months
5 up on a hill. We always had to have the high ground, if we had line of sight antennas.

6 SM: So you had to technically be able to see, you weren't?

7 WM: you had to have a clear shot of forty miles; there could be nothing higher
8 than your antenna between you. Well, there was ways around that too, you could bounce
9 them off mountains sometimes if the conditions were right but it was called line of sight.

10 SM: How about bouncing off the ionosphere, things like that or the atmosphere?

11 WM: No, we didn't get into that. That was HF band and other radio, Teletype,
12 stuff like that. Our frequencies were small frequency range and it was strictly line of
13 sight.

14 SM: Okay, so being in a specific type of environment doesn't affect your job as
15 long as you're at the highest terrain?

16 WM: Right.

17 SM: How about foul weather though?

18 WM: I saw it all in my career; everything from German blizzards in the middle of
19 winter, field exercises to, the one thing I remember about Vietnam was the dust. It was so
20 dry during the dry season and then some of these choppers blowing up dust all the time
21 and trucks and stuff. It was very dusty; it was a red, red kind of a dirt, soil, the area I was
22 in. It got impregnated into your pores because you're always taking cold showers and
23 stuff, rarely had hot water. From what I remember, during the monsoon, the wet season it
24 would rain every afternoon but during the dry season it was really dry. A lot of dust, we
25 had a lot of problems with filters, equipment and filters, generators and so forth.

26 SM: Well, we should talk about that when we talk about your time in Vietnam.
27 But I would assume they talked about strategies and ways of dealing with those types of
28 environmental issues during your training?

29 WM: Yes, what to do in all conditions, the Army covered everything, desert to
30 jungle to Arctic and the equipment is built to withstand that. Just as an aside, when I first
31 started working in Aberdeen Proving Ground here, we were testing a new generation of

1 generators for the Army. They were changing from gasoline to diesel and I was amazed
2 at the battery of tests that they put this stuff through before they even go into production,
3 before the Army will buy it, it's amazing, but anyway that's another story. We'll get
4 back there.

5 SM: Well, was there anything else that you wanted to discuss in terms of training
6 and your preparation for Vietnam?

7 WM: The training in the MOS was more than adequate. The training for what to
8 expect in Vietnam was inadequate, like I say it was just two days of guys telling us what
9 it was like over there. We didn't know what to expect once we got there, really. It was
10 like culture shock once you got there.

11 SM: Well, I wanted to ask you something else about the media, you mentioned
12 that you obviously saw the news a lot and saw the film footage and heard the news stories
13 concerning the Vietnam War, how did that television coverage that you saw mesh with
14 the reality that you witnessed when you got on the ground in Vietnam and did you find
15 that the reporting that you had been exposed to prior to going to Vietnam was accurate or
16 inaccurate?

17 WM: What we saw in Georgia at that time during my training and during my stay
18 as an instructor, you'd see the clips of the body bags and hear the reporters talk about
19 how many U.S. troops were killed that day, everybody saw that. Once I got to Vietnam, I
20 didn't see much of that. I wasn't with the front line troops, didn't see a lot of gore and
21 death like a lot of the grunts did. I don't know if I was just young, I was young at the
22 time, early 20s and just like most people that age, we're invincible, there is no fear going
23 over there. A little apprehension on what to expect, what the country was like and all but
24 the reports didn't really bother me that much. I knew eventually I'd be going over there
25 and I just faced the fact and waited until the time came. It was, I wasn't afraid to go.

26 SM: Well, when you got your orders for Vietnam, you communicated that I'm
27 sure with your family, what was their response?

28 WM: My mother was upset but she knew it was coming too or probably would.
29 Some guys lucked out and got orders to Germany, but I'd say maybe 85% of the guys
30 went to Vietnam. Of course we still had the NATO presence in Germany, a lot of guys
31 had to go over there, but '67, '68 was the big buildup in Vietnam and most of the guys

1 and most of their families knew they would be going sooner or later, if they were in
2 training. Like I say, I wasn't really upset, my mother was upset of course. At the time, I
3 was separated from my wife and wasn't communicating with her much; I don't really
4 know what she felt. I know I had made out an allotment for her and my son so they would
5 have some money but I don't know what her real feelings were.

6 SM: Well, how about your brother, he was younger than you right?

7 WM: Yes.

8 SM: How old was he?

9 WM: Well, let's see. He was of the age where, eighteen, nineteen at the time. He
10 was just finishing high school. He knew he wouldn't be getting drafted. He had a history
11 of epilepsy so he was 4F, he came down with these seizures in high school, junior, senior
12 year and to this day I think his hard work that he was doing at the time, I was away in the
13 Army and he was home with mom, going to school and working, he was working at a
14 butcher shop and he was pushing himself too hard and he had a slight case of epilepsy
15 and it grabbed a hold of him from being tired all the time, he started having these
16 seizures. Well, they got it under control with medication and to this day he takes that one
17 pill a day and he's okay, but he knew he wouldn't be drafted and he went ahead and, he
18 lived in Chester, Pennsylvania with my mother, when he finished St. James high school
19 he went immediately into college, which was Widener College, it used to be
20 Pennsylvania Military College when he went. So he worked his way through college in
21 liberal arts courses and some accounting and he ended up getting into the banking
22 industry, training. He did well; he got himself through college, got his degree and has
23 done well ever since. Like I say, he knew he wouldn't be drafted and he pursued his own
24 career at his own speed.

25 SM: Well, why don't you go ahead and describe what it was like going over what
26 was your route and I assume you flew over and what was that flight like?

27 WM: We left Fort Lewis Washington and we flew the great circle route, stopped
28 in Anchorage, Alaska, refueled. I remember it being a long flight; it was like fifteen hours
29 total. We hit Anchorage and we hit somewhere in Japan and then Vietnam. All I
30 remember of the flight, it was a Boeing 707 which held about 220 people, three seats, an
31 aisle and three seats, a great big plane and it was all service people. We got to Vietnam,

1 of course we crossed the International Date Line, we lost a day somewhere along the
2 way. We left on one day, got there two days later, got to the processing center, that's
3 where they assign you to a company or a battalion. I wasn't there too long, I was there
4 two days I believe, parts of two days. The second day I was there, while they were getting
5 my assignment and all squared away, they put you on detail, sandbagging details or doing
6 something, just to keep you busy. The immediate thing I remember of that first full day
7 was the heat and the humidity and the sandbag detail. Luckily I was a wiry little guy at
8 that time and didn't bother me too much, but the guys that weren't used to the heat and
9 stuff like that, they had a problem, the first couple of days, from the heat and the
10 humidity and then working hard out in the sun and so forth. I do remember on the sand
11 bag detail, a couple guys got, not heat stroke but they got weak in the knees from the
12 heat, some kind of heat problem and they had to take them off. But it's like anything
13 else, you get acclimated in a couple of weeks, you get acclimated to the weather. That's
14 basically what I remember of the processing center was the heat and then toward the late
15 afternoon of the second day I got my orders to report to a signal company in Nha Trang,
16 Camp McDermott. They flew us down to Nha Trang in some kind of cargo plane, I think
17 it was a C-130 and I remember it was a short flight, like twenty minutes is all it was and I
18 remember, the only thing I remember of the flight was the landing, that cargo plane
19 landed and came to a full stop I think within two or three hundred yards, I mean that
20 plane could just drop down out of the sky, hit a runway and stop on a dime. So, they got
21 us off the plane and there was trucks there waiting for us to take us from the Nha Trang
22 airport to Camp McDermott which was only like a mile or so away.

23 SM: Okay, what date, do you remember that you arrived in Vietnam?

24 WM: It must have been on or about the first of November, either the last day of
25 October or the 1st of November. I think I got to my company on the 1st or 2nd of
26 November, in '68.

27 SM: That was the company A, the 459th Signal Battalion?

28 WM: Right. At Camp McDermott they had their main communications center
29 there, that was like the hub of that battalion and they had their outlying sites that they
30 shot their radio shots to, there was one in what was called north Nha Trang, which was of
31 course north of the city and there was one called west Nha Trang, which was twenty-two

1 miles west of the city out in the boonies and there was a shot to Hon Tre island which
2 was out in the Bay of Nha Trang. I worked the midnight to noon shift, it was twelve
3 hours a day, seven days a week and I worked the night shift, like I say I was an E-2 at the
4 time and we'd report to the site just before midnight and they had eight or nine, might
5 even have been ten vans of equipment with the different shots in them and of course they
6 had like a little compound built around it. They had this PVC, they called it, it was like
7 metal grating that they would put up against the van and sandbags, a whole bunch of
8 sandbags around everything. It was like a bunker built around the vans. Of course a little
9 further out in the yard they had all their antennas, their array of antennas and it was a
10 permanent signal site and it was already well established when I got there, it was just a
11 matter of reporting for work, keeping the radios running. We had commercial power most
12 of the time. We did have these big hundred KW generators as backup, but we didn't even
13 have to mess with them because they had Vietnamese contractors who were in charge of
14 those. They maintained them and kept them ready to go online as soon as a power outage
15 happened. So, they were Vietnamese nationals. So basically it was just doing our circuit
16 checks every hour and keeping the radios aligned, keeping the circuits clear, that's what
17 we did. We had all kinds of different circuits. We had voice, we had facsimile circuits,
18 we had teletype circuits and we had a lot of the circuits that were secure circuits, we had
19 secure equipment on them and we had, not only radio shots that would relay these circuits
20 around, we also had hard wire land line shots into Nha Trang and their comm. center in
21 Nha Trang, they would go all over the country by land line, so it was a pretty big signal
22 site, a lot of different kinds of circuits.

23 SM: How effective were the facsimile circuits and the facsimile capabilities at
24 that time?

25 WM: They were pretty effective. It was hard to keep them online; there were a lot
26 of problems with them, so much that could go wrong with them. The equipment was very
27 touchy and it was all tube technology. Nothing was digital yet, so you were forever, not
28 forever but a lot of nights you were working on circuits all night long because you had to
29 keep them up. It was a lot of babying the circuits, working with other operators down the
30 line and switching equipment here and there, just to keep these things on line. It's a lot of
31 work. You'd have your slow times, but you were hustling pretty well. Then you'd get on

1 the phone circuits and you might be talking to a Korean down in Long Binh or Saigon,
2 you don't know what he's saying and he doesn't know what you are saying, so you'd
3 have to get an interpreter on there to work the circuits out with him. There was a lot of
4 Australians in Vietnam. I never got to deal with too many of them, but once in a while
5 you'd get some Australians on there, they were always fun to talk to. Basically, a lot of
6 working on the circuits, changing bad equipment or trouble shooting, so it kept you pretty
7 busy for twelve hours and in that twelve hours you had two meal breaks, relieve each
8 other to go, we had a mess hall, go get something to eat and so it was this twelve hours,
9 you were working. Luckily I had the night shift, it wasn't too hot. The nights were fairly
10 cool, pretty nice, except during the rainy season, then it was a mess. Camp McDermott
11 was a big mud holes for like three months, you got used to that too.

12 SM: Well, let me go ahead and pause this for a moment sir. This will end
13 interview number one with Mr. William Moore.

14 Steve Maxner: This is Steve Maxner continuing the interview with Mr. William
15 Moore on the 20th of December, year 2001 at approximately 3:40 Lubbock time. I am in
16 Lubbock, Texas and Mr. Moore is in Elkton, Maryland. Sir, why don't we go ahead and
17 talk a little bit about some of your first experiences upon arriving in Vietnam and if you
18 would could you describe any kind of briefings that you received that you remember?

19 William Moore: On arrival?

20 SM: Yes, sir.

21 WM: No, no briefings. We arrived at a processing center and we were assigned
22 to a unit by someone, by MOS, which is our Military Occupational Specialty, and then
23 after two days there at the processing center we were flown to our destination, mine was
24 only a ten-minute flight through to Nha Trang. I was assigned to the 459th Signal
25 battalion and the battalion trucks picked us up, took us to the battalion area, Camp
26 McDermott which was just on the south end of Nha Trang by the airfield and I was
27 subsequently assigned by the battalion to company A. There was four companies in that
28 battalion. I think I mentioned on part of the last hour we did that I worked at the Commo
29 site, communications site there, it was a permanent site, well established site, it had been
30 there quite a few years, so everything was already in place when I got there. We were
31 just relieving the guys that were leaving. It was a one-year tour, so once your tour was up

1 somebody replaced you and that's how that worked. So, I was assigned to the midnight
2 to twelve noon shift, seven days a week and we had to keep the circuits and all the radio
3 shots up on the air, we had commercial power at that site, commercial electric power with
4 back up generators that were manned and kept in good working condition by Vietnamese
5 nationals who were hired to do that job, so we didn't have anything to do with the
6 generators. If we lost commercial power, they had us back on the air within minutes; they
7 were pretty good at it.

8 SM: Just out of curiosity, what was the morale of the unit like, and what were
9 your impressions of the 459th Signal Battalion and then Company Alpha?

10 WM: Well, 459th Signal Battalion was a typical signal outfit. They had many
11 different signal MOSs, they had radio Teletype, they had circuit controllers, they had
12 mobile equipment, it was mounted on trucks and they had permanent installations. In fact
13 this battalion had three, one at Camp McDermott where I was and one at a place called
14 north Nha Trang and one at a place called west Nha Trang and it was like a round robin
15 relay shots to support the American and Korean units that were in that immediate area.
16 They did have long range radio shots and circuits that would go through us and be sent on
17 down, further down country, down to Saigon, Long Binh and places like that, so some of
18 our circuits weren't local, they went all over the country through relays and so forth. So
19 the morale was good at Camp McDermott. We were so busy all the time; you really
20 didn't have time to have bad morale. You were either working or sleeping, or you did
21 have twelve hours off, seven or eight of those were spent sleeping. During our free time,
22 we were allowed to leave post, leave the camp and we could go down to the beach. Nha
23 Trang Bay was right there, the water was only like a half a mile away and they had what
24 was called the American beach there and it was just for American soldiers, so you could
25 go enjoy yourself at the beach. They had things to do there besides swimming and
26 sunning. They had a little miniature golf course. They had horseshoes and something to
27 keep you entertained during your off time. On the camp itself, they had their EM club,
28 Enlisted Men's Club, and of course they had a little officer's club and you could go there
29 and enjoy a beverage of your choice and watch some of the shows that would come in
30 from Saigon. They had Vietnamese nationals that had all these little bands and all and
31 they would sing the popular American songs and entertain the troops. Of course they

1 would sing in phonetic English, they would memorize the record, they didn't really know
2 the language but you could figure out what they were saying. So that's what we did in our
3 spare time, it was either beach or go to the club or sit in your barracks. They had two
4 story wood frame buildings that were wood in the room, waist high and then the rest was
5 screening and they were kind of open air. They were divided off into rooms and then
6 those were the barracks. The NCO would have a one or a two-man room and the lower
7 ranks would have four to a room, so it wasn't too bad. It wasn't like you were sleeping in
8 a sleeping bag out in the swamps somewhere like a lot of the guys.

9 SM: Now, just to keep on the theme of entertainment, did you see any major USO
10 shows come through?

11 WM: No, I never had the opportunity to see any of the USO shows. They were
12 more or less targeted either towards Saigon or really going out and into the boonies and
13 to some camp somewhere where the infantry guys were, or the Marines. They didn't have
14 time to hit every support unit, so no I never did see a USO show.

15 SM: Where there any doughnut dollies or Army services, they ran a bunch of
16 libraries and things?

17 WM: There were a few on Camp McDermott. You may see an Army nurse once
18 in a while. They had a medical facility. I don't remember any kind of doughnut dollies.
19 They didn't have a USO club or anything like that.

20 SM: Were there any women in the Signal Corps at this point?

21 WM: No, there wasn't. If there were, they weren't in this part of Vietnam. I think
22 the only women in the service that I ran into over there were Lieutenant nurses in the
23 medical corps. The big buildup of women troopers came later down the road, after the
24 war. In fact when I was in Germany in a signal battalion I think thirty percent of them
25 were women by then and that was in '73 to '76. Vietnam, no, like I say the only women
26 I saw were an occasional nurse here or there, down at the medical facility. They had a lot
27 of nurses at the hospitals in the bigger cities, but I said medical facilities they may have
28 one or two assisting the doctors there.

29 SM: Now, you spent how much time in Nha Trang?

30 WM: I spent my whole year in the Nha Trang area. I spent a total of six months at
31 Camp McDermott, the first three and the last three months. The middle six months I

1 spent at West Nha Trang signal site which is about twenty to twenty-five miles west of
2 the city limits.

3 SM: Which site did you prefer working at?

4 WM: Actually I preferred the relay site, the west Nha Trang site because there
5 was only four of us there, I was in charge, we had our own schedule and as long as we
6 kept the radios up there was no Army hassle at all. There was no formations and no extra
7 duties. What happened was the E-5 who was in charge of that site was being rotated back
8 to the States, his time was up, the CO asked me if I would go up and be his relief and I
9 said how long am I going to be up there. He said probably around six months. So I was a
10 Spec-4 and they promoted me to, well they put the paperwork in to promote me to
11 Sergeant but they put the stripes on me early, they made me acting Sergeant, so they sent
12 me up there and I relieved that fellow and like I say there were other people up there, two
13 signal MOS fellows and one generator mechanic and that was his job, keep the generator
14 going and my job was keep the site running, so we split the time up, two twelve hour
15 shifts, two men on a shift, seven days a week.

16 SM: So it sounds like it was a very similar work regimen.

17 WM: Similar work, different living conditions.

18 SM: Well, let's talk about your time first at Camp McDermott in that respect then,
19 what was it like living there, how frequently did you have to deal with enemy contact in
20 the form of mortaring or shelling, that kind of stuff?

21 WM: Okay, in my total six months at Camp McDermott, our particular area of
22 Camp McDermott, it was a big camp, pretty spread out, in fact the 5th Special Forces, the
23 Green Berets had their headquarters at Camp McDermott but they were across post on the
24 other side. In my six months there, we only had two attacks that were in our immediate
25 area. One was a mortar attack and one was a rocket attack and that did not happen until
26 my last three months at Camp McDermott, after I had done my six months up on the hill
27 at west Nha Trang. They were both in the middle of the night, like two o'clock in the
28 morning. The closest one was the mortar attack, was right in the company area. In fact I
29 think you sent you a story about that, I wrote a story about it.

30 SM: Yes, sir you did and I do have it.

1 WM: And the rocket attack, the closest rocket hit the chaplain's office right next
2 to the commo site and totally wiped it out. I remember going down there the next day and
3 the chaplain was down there trying to recover something out of his files and all but it did
4 a pretty good job on the building he was using for an office. The chapel itself survived
5 the attack, but that was the only two actual hostile fire I encountered at Camp McDermott
6 there.

7 SM: What were there general living conditions like as far as the barracks, the
8 food, things like that?

9 WM: The barracks were, like I mentioned two story wood framed, screen halfway
10 up, little cubbyhole rooms, broken off into rooms. The food was typical Army A ration
11 food, it was some of the best food you could buy but prepared real bad, you know what I
12 mean. They didn't take many pains. They had too many guys to feed, it was twenty-four
13 hour operation, they had to get this food out on the line for the guys. Like I say it was
14 good food, in fact some of the food was bought locally, especially the bread, it was
15 bought from a Vietnamese source and you got used to the little flour bugs in there. The
16 country was so humid, the bread was all full of bugs and you hold the bread up to the
17 light and see all these little things in there, but they weren't alive, they'd been cooked so
18 you got used to that and you just ate them after awhile, something you had to do if you
19 wanted to eat some bread. The milk was mostly powdered milk, the eggs were powdered
20 eggs. They did get some good meat once in a while but like I say the preparation wasn't
21 that great. They had canned vegetables, some local vegetables, plenty of Kool-Aid, they
22 always had tubs and tubs of Kool-Aid, if you didn't like the powered milk, your other
23 choice was Kool-Aid. Now there was plenty of beer, they had a place where you could
24 buy beer, you had a ration card, so you could buy, I think it was six cases of beer a month
25 and the guys that drank a lot of beer would use their allocation up and the guys that didn't
26 drink beer would go buy them the beer or give them their ration card. We were allowed
27 six cases of beer a month and I think two bottles of whiskey, controlled ration card and
28 they did have a place on post we could get that. It was all government controlled. You
29 signed for and each bottle of whiskey had a, it wasn't a bar code, it was a number on it so
30 they could track it to stop the black market activity. That's the reason they marked them
31 like that. So if you went and bought a bottle of whiskey and it ended up being found say

1 in Nha Trang in someone else's possession, some bar down there, you were in big
2 trouble.

3 SM: Do you know of anybody who actually got in trouble for that?

4 WM: Yes, there was a lot of illegal black market activity over here and there was
5 a lot of guys involved with it, not just enlisted men, a lot of officers and higher ranking
6 officers and once in awhile they would get caught and then the UCMJ would move in and
7 they would be court martialled. I guess it was worth the chance to them because it was
8 big money. In fact, if I could, a little aside here, when I was up on the hill, every other
9 Sunday, two of us would have a Sunday off, go into Nha Trang, drive one of the vehicles
10 into Nha Trang and go to the officers club or the EM club for a decent meal because all
11 we had up on the hill was C-rations and rice. Maybe stop in a bar now and then. Well, I
12 was in this bar one night and the lights went out, a commercial power failure which they
13 had all the time over there. A couple minutes later the lights come on and they flickered a
14 little bit and I hear these generators running so I walked out the back door and there in the
15 alley on a trailer was two brand new Army generators didn't have three or four hours
16 each, so the Vietnamese national, the owner of the bar somehow on the black market got
17 this generator set for his backup power and we're up on the hill there with these old
18 generators with a thousand hours on them, trying to keep them running, that's the kind of
19 stuff that would make me angry. But anyway, back to Camp McDermott.

20 SM: Well, if I could a follow-up question on that particular incident, wasn't there
21 somewhere you could go to report that kind of stuff, I mean obviously this person had no
22 right owning that and they got it illegally so why didn't the, or did the Army not have a
23 system set up where?

24 WM: Yes, they had the CID, but.

25 SM: Where they would go and confiscate that equipment and bring it back and
26 give it to whoever needs it in the military.

27 WM: Right.

28 SM: They were supposed to do that but it didn't happen?

29 WM: Well, a lot of times it didn't happen. Everybody knew this stuff was going
30 on but it was just so big that you're just a little peon, who's going to listen to me.

31 SM: It must have been very frustrating at many levels.

1 WM: It was, after a while, you just get the attitude I want to get my year in and
2 get out of here. But in the meantime you still had to do your job, and you were in the
3 military, you still had to keep your nose clean, just try to get through it.

4 SM: Well, while you were there at Camp McDermott, just to clarify, is this Camp
5 McDermott or Camp Crockett or both?

6 WM: What was I calling it, Camp McDermott.

7 SM: Yes, her today you called it Camp McDermott but I was curious in some of
8 the things that you wrote that you sent to me, you refer it to it.

9 WM: No, it was Camp McDermott, that's a made up name in the story.

10 SM: Oh, got you. Camp McDermott, while you were there, who were you
11 primarily supporting there?

12 WM: We were, of I forget what brigade it was, some Army brigade level, had all
13 their control circuits so that their officers could talk to other officers. Mostly circuits for
14 say Majors on up, control circuits so that the units could talk to each other. Then of
15 course they would make the decision and then pass the stuff on down to their units. We
16 also had some Korean circuits came though Camp McDermott, west Nha Trang, they
17 shot on down to a place called Cholon ROK, that was a Korean outfit down near Saigon.

18 SM: That's when you were in west Nha Trang?

19 WM: Yes, but we would shoot to Camp McDermott and then they would shoot
20 them on down the line, it's only like forty mile hops, it was line of sight, so they'd just
21 keep relaying the stuff.

22 SM: I assume that there were as many relays as were necessary to go from the
23 northern tip of South Vietnam down to the very southernmost tip, or no?

24 WM: You would have relays, you'd go forty miles to a relay and he'd shot it
25 forty miles, but the circuits were multiplexed on to telephone lines, landlines.

26 SM: Okay, so the landlines would also carry stuff.

27 WM: Besides the land lines you'd have the teletypes and facsimile circuits on
28 your shots. We had all three.

29 SM: Now the facsimiles, could you explain, is that the same?

30 WM: Same as today, except it wasn't digital it was analog. It was all tube
31 equipment, antiquated stuff but it worked.

1 SM: But it was the same thing as far as you put in paper on one end and it would
2 come out on the piece of paper at the other end.

3 WM: Right. And they call them telex, different name for them. We called them
4 facsimile circuits.

5 SM: How clear were they on the other end?

6 WM: The voice circuits?

7 SM: No, the facsimile?

8 WM: Oh, pretty good, readable, wasn't the quality you have today but it was
9 legible, that's all they wanted, all they needed.

10 SM: What was the voice quality?

11 WM: The voice quality, if the circuits were tuned up and at their peak it was jut
12 like we're talking here, but it wasn't that way all the time. You were continually working
13 in the circuits, all kinds of things could go wrong, there were so many places they went
14 through and you'd have ringers and the ringers would go bad and you'd have to work on
15 that and find out whose end was bad and switch the equipment out or you'd get static or
16 crossover, you had to watch where your line ran, you couldn't be getting near any high
17 voltage lines or anything like that. You had your hourly checks, you ran out down every
18 circuit, every hour, that you were assigned and the operator on the other end, he would
19 check them out, keep them as clean as you could, because like I say they were all
20 command and control circuits mostly.

21 SM: So as far as what you would do, your primary responsibility was to maintain
22 the?

23 WM: Operate and maintain the circuits and the radio shots.

24 SM: And you never really interjected, like you never got on and actually
25 answered?

26 WM: Oh, no.

27 SM: On a radio call?

28 WM: You could listen in but you had so many to check, you'd just them whistle
29 them down, there I go again, whistle them down. The ringers would break; somebody
30 would bring their filed phone thing. Well, it's 1600 hertz, well you could get on there and

1 whistle at 1600 hertz and whistle the other end down, that's how you would get the other
2 operator on to check the circuits, it would break the ringer at a 1600 frequency.

3 SM: So, you'd whistle?

4 WM: Yes, you'd just go, [makes whistling noise] until you hit 1600-Hertz and
5 the other end of the phone would ring.

6 SM: Well, that's amazing.

7 WM: That's how the ringers were designed to trip or ring at 1600 hertz, back then
8 they called them cycles per second, now they're hertz. Yes, all the operators did that.
9 You were in the middle, you weren't at the end where the phone was where you crank the
10 handle and it sends ninety volts into the ringer and trips the ringer. You just get on there
11 and whistle it down. We had the ringers in our rigs, but there was no button to push or
12 anything to make them break. It needed ninety volts.

13 SM: Well, let's see, do you recall any particular high peak times as far as the
14 traffic coming through your station there at Nha Trang, maybe during major operations?

15 WM: High peak times were when there were attacks somewhere, one of the units
16 was getting hit or the day shift had a lot of, like eight to five, when everybody, all the
17 officers and all were up and about, during their duty hours. That was the high peak time
18 was the day shift, that's why I enjoyed the night shift so much, there wasn't peak traffic
19 normally and you had more time, you weren't as go, go, go and as hectic as the day shift.

20 SM: Was it ever possible that the circuits became overloaded?

21 WM: Overloaded, no. No, they were individual circuits, two wire circuits for each
22 one. No, there were no overload problems at all.

23 SM: Or, not maybe overload is the wrong expression; just all the circuits are busy.
24 You know like we get now with sometimes really high peak?

25 WM: Yes, well they were sole user circuits; one end would be say a Major talking
26 to the other end say a General or something. They were sole user circuits so they were
27 only busy when those two particular people were using them. Well, I take that back,
28 some of the circuits would go into a command center somewhere and there may be three
29 or four officers doing it. They would get pretty busy during an attack or something,
30 where they would have to direct their units where to go and what to do and stuff. It

1 wasn't like a whole lot of different people had access to these individual circuits. No,
2 there was no problem with that.

3 SM: So how many simultaneous communications could you have coming through
4 your station?

5 WM: Okay, through one rig you would have forty-eight channels, two twenty-
6 four channel sets and we had about twelve rigs at a the big commo site. So, twelve times
7 forty-eight, that's over five hundred circuits coming through that signal site. Constantly,
8 it was twenty-four hours; you had to keep them up. That was our mission, keep those
9 circuits up. You had to keep the radio shots up or you'd lose all forty-eight circuits
10 because they were all modulated on the radio frequency passed down the line, so if a
11 radio went down, those forty-eight channels were out until you got it back up.

12 SM: Did that ever happen?

13 WM: Oh, yes, it happened all the time. Yes, ratings went down. If you were out
14 on one of the out sites like west Nha Trang or north Nha Trang and the generator went
15 down, you'd be down ten, fifteen minutes until you got out there and got the other
16 generator fired up and switched the load over to that generator. They kept track of that
17 too, they meaning the signal officers in the unit, they kept track of that down time. Part of
18 your performance was the less down time you had, the better a performance rating you
19 would get. They had a thing back in those days called superior performance, above your
20 combat pay, you could get, oh I forget what it was, thirty-five or fifty dollars a month
21 extra if you were rated as a superior performance signalmen for that year. You were like
22 evaluated every year with a written test, operational test and evaluation of your superior
23 officer, your signal officer and if you passed all three of those you were entitled to this
24 extra pay. So, yes they kept track of all that stuff.

25 SM: Did you ever pick up transmissions that were not of American origin, that
26 you weren't supposed to?

27 WM: Yes, you could get cross talk on the circuits, you could pick up on your
28 radio shots, especially at dusk and dawn when the ionosphere is changing, you could get
29 interference and in that case you would just go into your SSI, which was the standing
30 signal instructions and go to an alternate frequency or something for that phase,

1 frequencies would change quite often, just about every day, you would have to re-tune
2 the radios to different frequencies.

3 SM: Do you know if you ever accidentally picked up enemy transmissions?

4 WM: No, not at the frequency range we worked at. The enemy had mostly FM
5 range, small radios, like field radios so no, we never got any kind of interference of their
6 stuff. Of course couldn't pick them up either because we weren't even near the same
7 frequency band.

8 SM: Were there any measures taken to prevent eavesdropping onto that
9 communications system?

10 WM: Yes, for the real important circuits, they called them crypto circuits. We
11 had encryption equipment built in on the line which would scramble the stuff, so if
12 anybody did happen to tap in, they wouldn't know what was going on anyway, they were
13 coded. It would be encrypted at one end, sent through our stuff and deciphered at the
14 other end with the encryption equipment. We did have a small percentage of those kinds
15 of circuits too, this was to the higher level, like Corps level where the Generals are and
16 everything, we had some of those.

17 SM: So do you remember any offensives that occurred while you were there at
18 Camp McDermott where the traffic was real heavy and you guys were real busy?

19 WM: Yes. The 5th Special Forces which was there, got hit with a rocket and
20 mortar attack one night and that was across post but you could still see the rockets
21 coming in and hear the explosions over there. It was only maybe half a mile away and we
22 were real busy that night. I've got to tell you a funny story about that. One of the rockets
23 made a direct hit on the 5th Special Forces ice cream parlor which was the one and only
24 real ice cream parlor in country. The 5th Special Forces Green Berets had had it and they
25 would have real ice cream, I don't know how they did it. Their commanding officer or
26 somebody had some connections, flown in from the United States and you could go over
27 there and sit down and have a real milkshake and the rockets came from the mountains
28 immediately behind Camp McDermott there and those mountains had caves in them. The
29 enemy would use them sporadically for storing equipment for a short time and moving it
30 further down the line, wherever they wanted to move it in the province. Well, the next
31 couple of days the 5th Special Forces went out en masse and cleaned out those caves once

1 and for all and I think it was because they blew up their ice cream parlor, it really pissed
2 them off. Well, the immediate next day the jets came in, and did the bombing and stuff
3 and the Special Forces guys went out there on foot and took care of the matter
4 themselves.

5 SM: Did they ever replace it?

6 WM: Yes, within a week they were up and running again. I guess they figured
7 you've got to do something to make it like home so they had the ice cream parlor.

8 SM: Did that help with morale much?

9 WM: Sure, you go in there and have an ice cream soda. Not just 5th Special
10 Forces, anybody was welcome and you paid for it, there was a charge for it but it was
11 great.

12 SM: Well, what kind of communication did you have with home, did you get a lot
13 of letters, were you able to make calls or anything like that?

14 WM: I called one time, believe it or not. I got all the way through; the phone was
15 ringing here in Chester, Pennsylvania when somebody broke the circuit. I called from the
16 mountain down to Nha Trang, got on the long line down to Long Binh, then they got me
17 down to Bangkok and Bangkok got me to the Philippines. This was in the middle of the
18 night, which was I don't know what time it was in Philadelphia, I had no idea, all I knew
19 is they were a day behind us. I was on the other side of the world so I didn't even know
20 what day or time it was. I finally got to Hawaii and then to California, I got an AT&T
21 operator in California who called my mother's number and I think on the third ring we
22 lost the connection somewhere, but I got all the way through. I just wanted to see if I
23 could do it, if it worked.

24 SM: Did you ever talk to your mom about that afterwards to see if she
25 remembered?

26 WM: Yes, I told her about it, in fact I wrote her about it. I said I had your phone
27 ringing, sometime, I don't know what time it was but the third ring I got disconnected.

28 SM: Do you know if she remembers hearing it?

29 WM: No, it must have been in the middle of the night, she might have been
30 asleep.

1 SM: Well, you mentioned earlier the mortar attack and I assume that's the same
2 mortar attack that?

3 WM: Yes, that's real vivid and I put it down in a short story there for you.

4 SM: And there was a basketball court and basketball goals.

5 WM: Right, they had poured a concrete court, our company, of course all the
6 companies around would use it and they even installed lights so they could play after
7 dark. When they finished playing around ten or eleven o'clock, whenever it was they left
8 the lights on, which really stood out. It wasn't really blackout conditions at Camp
9 McDermott, but you know at night, after nine o'clock it was lights out. Nobody picked
10 up on it and I guess that's what they zeroed in on, because they were right in the
11 company area, twenty or so rounds landed right in, not too big a cluster, maybe fifty
12 yards in diameter.

13 SM: Was anybody seriously injured?

14 WM: Yes, there was two guys that got very serious shrapnel wounds but they
15 survived, no one was killed that night.

16 SM: Did the mortar attack take out the basketball court?

17 WM: Well, see no it didn't. Mortars are funny, as soon as they touch the ground,
18 they go off. They don't leave a hole or a crater or anything, they blow up and out at
19 forty-five degrees as shrapnel, so no it didn't really damage the concrete at all.

20 SM: Well, what about during the mortar attack that took out the ice cream parlor
21 that Special Forces had?

22 WM: That was a rocket attack, those five-inch diameter rockets they had. They
23 were Russian made.

24 SM: Did that cause many casualties?

25 WM: Yes, the 5th Special Forces lost some guys that night.

26 SM: Killed or just wounded?

27 WM: Yes, killed and wounded, it was pretty serious. It was a dozen or so rockets
28 right in their area.

29 SM: So perhaps that might have also added to the motivation to go out to the
30 caves?

1 WM: Yes, sure. They're a pretty tight outfit, they still are. They always have
2 been. In fact it was amazing, during the war, when I was in Vietnam at Camp
3 McDermott there I saw 22 year old E-6s, 25 year old E-7s, so they made rank so fast over
4 there during war time. Normally it would take a person twelve to fifteen years to make
5 E-6 or E-7, but not during Vietnam. In fact I had made hard stripe E-5, I went from E-2
6 to E-5 in about four months after I got in country. I got in country as an E-2, which is a
7 private. I made PFC, Spec-4 and Sergeant within four months. The one good thing about
8 it was it was easy to make rank and you could move up pretty quick.

9 SM: What were the rules about your personal activities and especially with
10 regard to interacting with the Vietnamese civilians around Camp McDermott, were there
11 any rules?

12 WM: Not really, no. Like I say you were free to go off post, and we weren't in –
13 Nha Trang itself was not what we called a free fire zone, only when you got outside of
14 the city. There was a curfew in free fire zones; you couldn't go in certain areas after
15 dark, even if we wanted to. In fact we had quite a contingent of civilian Vietnamese
16 working on the post. You had the women doing the laundry and the guys doing the,
17 whatever job the Army had for them, the contractors and so forth digging ditches,
18 building buildings, so they had quite a force of Vietnamese people working hand in hand
19 with us on post there, doing their job, not working hand in hand with the signal or
20 anything, doing their job right on post, and they were supposedly cleared, they all had ID
21 cards and so forth. I'm sure there was some VC spies in there. You couldn't really tell
22 who was VC though. There were occasions when a lot of them wouldn't come to work,
23 we knew something might be up; they knew something was up, a pending attack or
24 something. The whole time I was at Camp McDermott there was never a ground force
25 assault on Camp McDermott, just harassment with rockets and mortars.

26 SM: What was the primary source of news for you?

27 WM: The Army newspaper, what the heck did they call it?

28 SM: The *Pacific Stars and Stripes*?

29 WM: Yes, *Stars and Stripes*, right, that was it. Once in a while you could catch
30 some news on TV, but that was generated in country by the Army too, and televisions
31 that worked. Of course they had Armed Forces radio, that was it. In fact I didn't know

1 we had landed on the moon until about a week after it happened. My mother sent me the
2 front page of the Chester Times; you know it was pretty remote.

3 SM: Well, is there anything else you want to talk about with regard to your first
4 six months there at Camp McDermott?

5 WM: No, that about covers Camp McDermott I think. Yes, I covered what we
6 did in our off time, like I say it was twelve hours working a day. Yes, that's all I can
7 think of right off hand.

8 SM: Oh, one last question, in terms of other recreational activities, was it mostly
9 drinking or where there other ways of altering?

10 WM: There was other things. They had a library there. Well, I explained about
11 the beach, you could go down there and play putt-putt golf or play horseshoes or play
12 volleyball. But other than the clubs, that's where the live entertainment was, and the
13 library, that was about it. There was no entertainment center they called them, that they
14 have on all the posts now, where you could go check out some instruments and play your
15 own music or go listen to music, they had nothing like that there.

16 SM: How about drug use?

17 WM: It was pretty rampant through the lower ranks. My experience at Camp
18 McDermott most of the NCOs were more into the beer and the whiskey, not drug abuse
19 and that was pretty rampant too. It was a war zone, it was an escape, whether it be the
20 drugs or the booze, when you were off duty escape just to get through.

21 SM: What was included in the drugs as opposed to alcohol?

22 WM: The big things in the drugs was marijuana, plenty of that, it would come in
23 from Cambodia, that's where they'd get in from, the good stuff. Vietnamese marijuana
24 wasn't that great they said. There was opium which is the hard drug, that's what they
25 make heroin out of eventually and that was pretty rampant and then there was the
26 mixture. They would put opium in with the marijuana and smoke it, so that's mostly
27 what it was, opium and well, heroin was pretty big too, but a lot of guys died from heroin
28 overdoses over there, because it was so pure. It wasn't like in the States where it might be
29 ten percent; over there it was like ninety percent so if they weren't careful they could OD
30 very easily. I would say the year I was there it was pretty bad, it might have been at it's
31 peak. Well, it had to be at its peak because that's when they had the peak troops there,

1 we had 550,000 troops in country and it was so easy to get. It was all over the place,
2 amazing. It's amazing, you either abstained completely or you were a druggie or a drunk,
3 or maybe not a drunk but you abused alcohol.

4 SM: Was anybody ever caught and prosecuted for drug use?

5 WM: Yes, for selling it. They had undercover people, CID had undercover. You
6 never knew who in the unit was a CID man, could be the Spec-4 working next to you.
7 There's people coming and going all the time, they rotate out, and the new guy might be
8 a narc, there was plenty of CID undercover. They had to watch themselves if they were
9 into it heavy, especially in the selling. They would probably eventually get caught and
10 then all they would do is court martial them and kick them out of the Army with a
11 dishonorable.

12 SM: Well, when you were offered that position as NCO-IC of west Nha Trang,
13 did you hesitate at all or did you figure well, why not?

14 WM: No, it was a bit of a promotion, immediate promotion coming up in the next
15 month or so and it was really kind of boring, spending twelve hours down at this commo
16 site every day, not much to do on your off time. So, I said yes, I'll do it, six months isn't
17 bad. So I did my six months, in fact it had been six months and three days and I called the
18 CO on the land line after I was over three days and I said hey, remember six months ago
19 you said you were going to get some relief up here for me. By then I was tired of it up
20 there. Mainly because of the food situation and being dirty all the time, I wanted to get
21 out of there by then. He said, oh, that's right Sergeant Moore, I'll have somebody up
22 there in a couple of days, sure enough he had an E-6 in fact come up and relieve me.

23 SM: At that point it was time for you to rotate back home?

24 WM: No, it was time to go back to Camp McDermott for my last three months.
25 In fact it was time for my R & R, I decided to wait until I was there nine months before I
26 took my R & R and you get a five day R & R and then when I came back in country I only
27 had like 88 days left in country. My short timer calendar was getting way down there.

28 SM: Well, when you worked up at west Nha Trang, that was when you were
29 working a lot with Koreans, is that right?

30 WM: Yes, we were four Americans; we had all Korean controlled artillery and
31 control and command circuits going through our site, twenty-four channels only, two

1 shots, two twelve-channel shots. Oh, wait we did have one relay shot from north Nha
2 Trang that went through us back to Nha Trang, Camp McDermott, but then we had two
3 terminal shots, we were the terminal for the Korean circuits.

4 SM: Anything encrypted?

5 WM: No, nothing encrypted up there.

6 SM: Now, so basically you were doing the same?

7 WM: Didn't have to be, they were all talking Korean; nobody knew what they
8 were saying anyway. That was the problem working on the circuits. I had a Korean
9 Army ROK troop that lived with us, this was his fourth year and he knew five languages
10 and he lived in our hooch and he was our interpreter on the circuits, because Korean is
11 really hard to learn. I couldn't learn their language in that short a time, so he would get on
12 there and work the circuits with us, interpreting. In fact, he's another whole story
13 himself, his name was Jung Go and I'll tell you about him the next time. We called him
14 "Jungle" for short and he knew everything about Vietnam. He'd been there four years,
15 the reason he stayed so long, he was big time in the black market, he was making all
16 kinds of money, plus he was getting the Korean Army, their combat pay is equivalent of
17 about three times the normal Army pay and he was sending his money back to his family.
18 He was Korean, his mother was Korean, his father was Japanese and he was sending his
19 money back home and they were saving it for him because he wanted to start a business.
20 So he made a lot of money and saved it. When I left he was still there. I don't know how
21 long he ended up staying there. If you needed anything, he could get it. He was great, he
22 knew the country inside out, he knew the language. He knew Japanese, Vietnamese,
23 English, of course Korean and he even knew some French, the guy was amazing, but he's
24 another whole story.

25 SM: Well, did you need to leave now?

26 WM: In a couple minutes, I've got to get on up to the bowling alley, can't leave
27 my guys down.

28 SM: That's right, that's right. Tonight's bowling night.

29 WM: In fact I think we're fighting for first place tonight.

30 SM: Okay, well maybe we should go ahead and stop now. Let me put an end on
31 this. This will end interview number two with Mr. Bill Moore, thank you sir.

1 Steve Maxner: This is Steve Maxner continuing the interview with Mr. William
2 Moore on the 11th of January 2002 at approximately 9:05 Lubbock time. I am in
3 Lubbock, Texas and Mr. Moore is in Elkton, Maryland. Sir, why don't we go ahead and
4 pick up with a discussion of your time at west Nha Trang and also we were going to talk
5 about the Korean interpreter, so if you want to address those two in whatever way you
6 want, we'll talk about them.

7 William Moore: Okay, all right I was promoted to acting Buck Sergeant, E-5 and
8 assigned to the West Nha Trang relay radio site. It was 22 miles inland from the Bay of
9 Nha Trang, it was a small hill and we had a commo site up there, consisting of two shots,
10 one relay shot, and one terminal shot for the Korean headquarters battalion that was
11 stationed there. They were control and artillery circuits. So I arrived in late February at
12 the site. I had three American Army Signal Corps people with me, or they were already
13 there, I relieved the NCO in charge because he was rotating back to the States, so I took
14 over as site chief as an acting Sergeant and most of our circuits were Korean circuits so
15 we had an interpreter who lived with us and was stationed with us and he belonged to the
16 headquarters company of the battalion of White horse ROK, that's Republic of Korea
17 troops. His name was Jung Go, of course everybody called him Jungle, that was his
18 nickname, he was a very learned man, about, I'd say, about thirty years old. He'd been in
19 the Korean army quite awhile, a career man in the Korean ROK Army. He was well
20 versed in four or five languages, of course he knew English and Korean and he knew
21 Japanese and I think his mother was Japanese and he knew Vietnamese and he knew
22 some French. He was very helpful as a liaison between us four Americans and the
23 Koreans there. He also helped a lot on working on the circuits. He was saving his money
24 and sending it home, he wanted to start a business after the war. He had been in Korea,
25 this was his fourth tour, four years, and he knew everybody around the Nha Trang area. If
26 we ever needed anything, he knew where to get it and he had a lot of contacts. He also
27 helped us in learning about the area. He knew where to go, where not to go and what to
28 do and what not to do. He had, like I say he had a lot of contacts in the ARVN, South
29 Vietnamese Army, and the Korean and in the Americans. That's about all about Jung
30 Go, what else would you like to know?

31 SM: Well, why don't you go ahead and describe the site there at west Nha Trang?

1 WM: Okay, the site, it almost at the top of the hill, it was down from the very top
2 of the hill, by elevation of maybe fifteen feet, but we were high enough where our
3 antennas could make line of sight with our terminal that we were shooting to. At the very
4 top of the hill was the command bunker for the headquarters and, headquarters company
5 of that particular Korean battalion. Around the perimeter of the top of the hill, there were
6 36 bunkers, two man bunkers, where they would post their guards and once in a rare
7 while we would have to pull some guard shifts at night. They would send out half of their
8 company at a time at what we call recon patrol and they would be out for three or four
9 days, down in the valley. Now, down in the valley there were three other companies that
10 the ROK surrounding that mountain and they were any where from five to ten miles out.
11 They were the outposts of the Korean battalion, so we were pretty well protected because
12 we were right in the middle with the hill there, with the outlying companies surrounding
13 our long distance perimeter. The perimeter of our particular mountain had three different
14 strands or barbed wire about ten to fifteen meters between the strands. They had all kinds
15 of things hanging on the barbed wire cans and things that would make noise. They had
16 flares stationed out there that they could ignite. They also had up to 36 bunkers, there
17 was a device in each bunker that could trigger eight claymore mines, so our perimeter
18 was very well protected and well armed. However, when they would send half the
19 company out, that would leave them of course with about maybe, forty people left there
20 and of course the Korean officers didn't pull guard, so they would have maybe twenty-
21 five Koreans to man those bunkers, so they would only man about half of them, every
22 other one. The check guard they'd call them would come around every hour and check
23 the bunkers and he would walk around the perimeter of the top of the hill, make sure
24 nobody was sleeping and so forth. We were pretty well guarded. At the very bottom,
25 base of the hill was the Korean artillery battery which consisted of five, 105 millimeter
26 guns and they would always be, they would have fire orders called in and just about
27 every day they'd be shooting somewhere in the area. It was kind of noisy, sometimes
28 they would fire an azimuth, right over the top of the hill and we were just the right
29 distance away where the retort of the gun and the round passing overhead would happen
30 at the same time. So it was pretty noisy sometimes. Of course we were supplied by
31 helicopter and truck. They would bring our fuel from Camp McDermott, they had a POL

1 point down there and they would truck our fuel to us for our generators in fifty-five
2 gallon drums of gasoline. A couple of times I had to go down and pick up gas in our five-
3 ton truck that we had. We had a five-ton truck, a ton and a quarter truck and a Jeep. And
4 eighteen 55 gallon drums would fit on a five ton truck, the bed of a truck, so after a
5 couple of trips down through Nha Trang to get gas on our own me and one of my signal
6 operators would drive down, to the POL, they'd fill up the eighteen 55 gallon drums with
7 gasoline and of course you always had spillage and slopping around and there was gas all
8 over the truck, so driving back through Nha Trang and through the outlying villages, I got
9 a little paranoid, so I called the CO and I said look, how about convoying that stuff up
10 there, it's really dangerous, one match or one grenade or one thing would just wipe out
11 that truck with the gas fumes and so forth. So, after a couple of trips of that, he did
12 convoy the fuel up to us, we didn't have to go get it. Of course the shots that we had had
13 to be 24-hour operation so two of us would pull day shift, twelve hours and two of us
14 would pull night shift, around the clock operation. The six months I was up there, it was
15 only I think three instances where Charlie or the VC tried to get either to the guns down
16 at the bottom of the hill and one particular time, it must have been just a suicide guy, he
17 somehow got through the perimeter at the top of the hill and he had a satchel charge on a
18 pack on his chest and he ran in, he was trying to get into the command post at the very
19 top of the hill and he did manage to get in there in the middle of the night and set that off.
20 A bunch of the officers on duty and the sapper were killed. But that was an isolated
21 incident. Another time they tried to get into the 105s at the bottom of the hill, with the
22 sappers also to try to blow up the guns. I don't know how many of them there were,
23 there was more than a couple, there was maybe three or four and one of them set off a trip
24 flare with a trip wire. Of course that alerted the Koreans and they immediately came
25 running out to the guns and lowered one of the guns to zero elevation and set the fuse a
26 hundred meters and fired one round that had what were called flechette rounds, it's like a
27 barbed, something like a straight fish hook with a band over it, it was full of those. So
28 the one flechette round annihilated the sappers that were trying to sneak through the wire
29 and blow up the gun. They had all kinds of sophisticated weaponry in Vietnam and the
30 flechette round was one of the nastier ones. The recon patrols like I say would go out for
31 two or three days at a time, half the company and they would come back and the other

1 half would go out. The whole six months I was there, they only brought back one
2 prisoner. Koreans did not like the Vietnamese at all and they would take no prisoners.
3 The reason they brought this one prisoner back, he happened to be a higher-ranking
4 officer that they had captured. I think he was a Major, he was an NVA, North Vietnam
5 regular troop, a Major in intelligence so he had a lot of information, had papers and
6 information in his head that they wanted to get out of him, so they did bring him back. It
7 was about a two day interrogation at the top of the hill there, which I wasn't involved in,
8 but the Korean officers and Jung Go went up there to interview that person. From what I
9 understand they did get a lot of information about troops in the area, enemy troops in the
10 area and so forth. But it was interesting to me that they didn't take prisoners, except that
11 one fellow they brought back. Let me see, the hill, there was so much going on up there.
12 C-rations was our basic subsistence. We tired everything we could to liven them up,
13 we'd mix them and make stews and we'd add some peppers to them or the Koreans
14 would give us some rice. We tired making rice with it and the Koreans subsisted on rice,
15 kim chi and bacon, that's all they had so we would trade them some C-rations for some
16 rice and bacon. Water was trucked in, in a water dolly. It was potable water, we had
17 plenty of water. We had a 55-gallon drum that was on a raised platform with a stick in
18 the nozzle, that was our shower, so it was cold showers for six months. We were pretty
19 dirty all the time from all the dust blowing around from the choppers, it was kind of a real
20 fine red clay type dirt that would, you just couldn't keep clean without hot water. It
21 would get into your pours; you'd have like a little red tinge to you, until you finally got
22 somewhere to get a hot shower. Let's see I covered the food. Recreation, there was
23 hardly any recreation because we were on duty all the time, however every other Sunday
24 two of us, or every Sunday two of us could go down, drive to Nha Trang and see the sites
25 in Nha Trang, maybe do a little bar hopping or go to the officer's club. The officer's club
26 did let the enlisted men in. The officer's club was on a third floor of a hotel in Nha Trang.
27 It was pretty nice; they had all the amenities of a stateside officer's club. They had nice
28 furniture and they had games and they had good food, good whiskey, they got all this
29 stuff from the States. One particular instance, me Mike Canterbury, one of my
30 operators, it was our Sunday to go in, we went to a hotel on the top floor of the, it was a
31 four story hotel, I think the highest building was five stories in Nha Trang, there weren't

1 any skyscrapers but there was a nice Vietnamese club up there, we went up there for
2 lunch had drinks and talked with the girls, the hostesses and so forth. Mike he liked to
3 drink a lot, he got pretty well drunk and caused a scene and on the way out he kicked the
4 glass panel out of the door, the double swinging door and immediately the manager
5 started chasing us down the steps. We hit the street and I went one way and Mike went
6 the other, of course they chased him and they finally caught up to Mike. He ran down
7 some alley, into somebody's house and told them MPs, MPs and hide me, hide me, so
8 they hid him in a closet and the MPs found him and they dragged him in, back to the
9 club. He told me all this later because I went, had to be back to the hill by six, I knew the
10 MPs would probably catch him so I had to be back before dark so I got back to the hill
11 and he called me on the land line about nine o'clock at night, and said, "Well I'm finally
12 out of here. I settled up with the people and they let me go with no charge," so he took a
13 taxi from Nha Trang, at ten o'clock at night out to the base of the hill and of course it was
14 curfew and he was taking a chance there, but he called me from the bottom of the hill and
15 I went down to pick him up. Then he told me the whole story that they took him back to
16 the club and the manager says if you pay for the window, I won't press any charges, so he
17 says, well I don't have any cash will you take a check. And the guys says, yes. There
18 was American Express bank in country there and Nha Trang had a branch, so he had an
19 account there so he wrote him a check. The next morning was Monday; he says can I
20 borrow the Jeep. I said why, he said I'm going to drive to Nha Trang and stop payment
21 on the check, so he did. So anyway the manager was out his money. I still remember
22 that incident, it's real clear in my mind and it was so funny. So that was about our
23 recreation. We did have a small basketball court up there on a flat area, where the
24 Koreans would do their Tae Kwon Do exercises in the morning. The Army has the daily
25 dozen, calisthenics, the Korean infantry troops do what's called Tae Kwon Do, a martial
26 arts and it's a very offensive type martial arts. They were all real good at, included not
27 only the hands and feet, there was a lot of knife throwing, things like that. We did have a
28 weight lift bench that we made and we had a small set of weights and we'd get some
29 exercise by lifting weights. Of course, eating C-rations which are very high in protein
30 and carbohydrates, we were all in pretty good shape. We ran around with no shirts most
31 of the time, it was hot. We were suntanned, and we all built our muscles up with the

1 weights and we were all in pretty good shape. Weaponry, we only had the basic M-16,
2 we had some grenades that were issued to us. I did manage to get a Thompson 45 sub-
3 machine gun, 45-caliber sub-machine gun. We really liked that weapon, Jungle got that
4 for me, traded, I think it was eight cases of C-rations for it and I had that the whole six
5 months I was up on the hill. When I finally did the leave the hill I left it there with one of
6 the other guys, because it was a non-issue item, I couldn't take it back to Camp
7 McDermott. It was a good weapon though. It held a straight thirty round clip and it
8 would chug pretty good. One story I've got to tell you though is they day we went
9 fishing. Jungle says let's go fishing, I said what do you mean fishing? Well, down in the
10 valley there was a river that ran though there, so he went and got a case of outdated
11 grenades, went down to the river and there was a cemetery there, right of the edge of the
12 back of the river. And me and Jungle and it was five or six of his Korean buddies rode
13 down here in a Jeep and a truck and I'm trying to figure out what he's got in my mind.
14 Well, In Vietnam they bury their dead and they cover the gravesite with mounds and the
15 mounds are like four or five feet high and along the edge of the river there was this bunch
16 of mounds. He said come here, I'll show you how we fish, but the Koreans loved fish,
17 they were looking to get any food they could get because they didn't get much food
18 except rice and bacon and a thing called Kim Chi, a peppered cabbage. So we sat down
19 with our backs to the mound and he started lobbing grenades into the river and of course
20 they would go off and the Koreans would run out there with their nets and scoop up the
21 fish. Then they would take them back to the hill and then have a big fish fry, so they
22 were ecstatic. That's the only time I ever went fishing with hand grenades and it was
23 different and it was fun. Another time he took us hunting in that same area down there in
24 the valley. So we went hunting, they had a type of bird over there that's something like
25 our pheasant. We didn't have shotguns, we went hunting with our M-16, of course we
26 didn't hit anything, but we did flush up a lot of birds and have a lot of fun trying to shoot
27 them. Anything we could do for recreation, to break the boredom. Jungle had a lot of
28 ideas, he kept us entertained.

29 SM: You mentioned Sunday activities earlier, I was curious if there were any
30 church services that you could attend or you did attend?

1 WM: No, we didn't have them. We could have if we drove all the way back
2 through Nha Trang and to the south end of town where Camp McDermott was and they
3 had church services on the main base camp there on Sunday. None of the four of us were
4 very religious; we just didn't go to church.

5 SM: How about other security issues and other attacks, were you mortared or
6 attacked much at west Nha Trang?

7 WM: Not at west Nha Trang.

8 SM: Right, we already.

9 WM: Like I say, we were pretty secure where we were, we were surrounded by
10 the other three companies. Just the isolated incidents I explained, hit and run things.

11 SM: Right, with the sappers.

12 WM: Right, because those guns did raise a lot of heck. They were trying to get
13 those guns.

14 SM: What about civic action, you mention in the questionnaire that your unit
15 supported an orphanage?

16 WM: Yes.

17 SM: Did you yourself get there very much, did you do any kind of physical labor
18 to build the orphanage or what was that like?

19 WM: No, the orphanage was already built and well established when the 459th
20 Signal Battalion took over sponsorship of it. Over the years that the 459th was in country
21 they supported that orphanage in Nha Trang the whole time. Of course it was war
22 orphans and they did everything they could, money wise and with supplies and make sure
23 the kids were well fed, well clothed and it was run by Vietnamese nuns, they were
24 actually Catholic nuns who took care of the children. I only got to go there twice, that's
25 when I was stationed back at Camp McDermott and involved in two trips out there taking
26 stuff out. One time we had a party for a kid, they were always doing something, the
27 orphanage, the guys really chipped in on it, that orphanage. They were always eager to go
28 out there and help the kids and everything, so it was a good experience.

29 SM: You mentioned some of the other recreation, how about USO shows, did
30 you see any while you were in country?

1 WM: No, I never did. They never got to Camp McDermott the six months I was
2 there. They would have Vietnamese bands come in. Most of the USO shows were, to one
3 extreme they'd go out to the front lines where the Marines and the camps out in the
4 boonies were, or to the major cities like Saigon. They didn't have bases like ours too
5 much, they didn't come there to much, so I never did see a USO show.

6 SM: Did you go on R & R?

7 WM: Yes, I did. I waited until I had about three months left in country. I went on
8 an R & R to Bangkok, Thailand.

9 SM: How was that?

10 WM: It was five days of rest and relaxation. I had a good time. It was a short
11 flight from Nha Trang to Bangkok, Thailand. Bangkok, Thailand wasn't too far from; it
12 is west of South Vietnam. The next country over was Thailand. It was a major Asian
13 city. I was really impressed with how clean it was. Compared to Nha Trang it was
14 beautiful. You couldn't find a cigarette butt in the streets over there, really clean.
15 Couldn't find trash anywhere, even in the slums, they were even decent. I don't know
16 what it was about Bangkok; it was just a super clean city. They had crews all the time,
17 cleaning up the street. I guess they wanted to make a good impression on the Americans.
18 Like I say I got to Bangkok and the custom there was your room was booked for you, you
19 had to pay for it up front. They wanted to make sure they got their money; you didn't
20 pay when you left because most of the times when the GIs left, they didn't have any
21 money left anyway. That first order of business was pay for the room and they had
22 special hotels set up just for the Americans, they were Thai hotels under contract to the
23 U.S. government and with names like Isolec, I stayed at the Miami Hotel, they would
24 have American names. So first order of business was pay your bill and second order of
25 business was get me a taxi driver. Taxi drivers were for hire and they would be your sole
26 taxi driver for the whole five days you were there. So I got a taxi driver, I forget his Thai
27 name, he went by Joe, it was his English name and he was available to me, he didn't stay
28 with me, he was available to only me for five days. I forget what it cost, it was some
29 ridiculously low sum, twenty dollars a day or something like that and he would take you
30 anywhere you wanted to go. Of course he knew the city, he knew all the sights, he knew
31 all the bars. He knew the city real well. So, the first order of business was for me to get

1 clean after I got my taxi driver so I went to, I forget what they call it, it was a public bath
2 where you would go in and have hot water and a sunken tub and get clean. About an
3 hour and a half in there, I finally deemed myself clean enough, got a lot of the red dirt out
4 of my pores. Of course, on R & R you just want to have fun, you want to eat good, you
5 want to have some companionship. Of course that was readily available also and you
6 wanted to see the sights, so I saw a lot of sights, that's all. I was really busy touring
7 Thailand, Bangkok, saw temples; I saw a nine-foot tall sitting Buddha made out of solid
8 gold. That was amazing. It was in a large temple there. They had found this Buddha
9 back in the jungles in one of the old cities in Thailand. The story behind it, it was covered
10 in some kind of concrete or plaster and they started chipping away at it, underneath is this
11 gold, so they brought it to Bangkok, put it on display in the temple there. Of course they
12 had two or three guards with machine guns standing around it, it was fenced off and it
13 was one of the sights I saw when I was there. So, five days went real fast, then I was
14 down I think to 88 days in country when I went back. The night I got back to Camp
15 McDermott was the night of the rocket attack. The night I came back from the hill, it was
16 early August, was the night of the mortar attack so when I came back from R & R, they
17 said Sergeant Moore every time you come back from somewhere we get hit, so I was a
18 bad luck charm, I guess, but it just was coincidence. Now, back from R & R, I've got 88
19 days left in country and the story I sent you was the actual story of the mortar attack, that
20 was the night I got back from the hill. That was quite an experience.

21 SM: Well, why don't you go ahead and relate what you remember about that.

22 WM: Okay, I was asleep. It was about two o'clock in the morning, I was
23 dreaming about back home. I was dreaming about a parade in my hometown. A truck in
24 the parade, a vehicle in the parade was backfiring and that's what woke me up, trying to
25 figure out what was that noise, the retort of the mortars going off and it woke me up and
26 the fellow who was in the room with me, I remember his first name was Pete, he was just
27 doing his last three days, he came back to process out and there's not much you can do.
28 Mortars are coming right in your area, they said get down on the floor and cover yourself
29 up. So we did. It was only a matter of a couple of minutes and it stopped and luckily we
30 weren't wounded or anything. There was a couple of guys seriously wounded that were
31 out in the open and got hit by the shrapnel. But I had never seen the effects of mortars. Of

1 course when daylight came I went down into the company area and looked around, I
2 didn't see anything. Mortars I found out later go off the instant they touch something.
3 And the shrapnel flies up and out, so there was no craters or indentations anywhere. That
4 was a real surprise. As loud as they were, I'm out there looking for big holes in the
5 ground. So, needless to say that was an exciting thing. What else?

6 SM: Well, anything else happen that you recall of significance before you left
7 after your R & R?

8 WM: I started spending a lot of time sleeping in the bunker outside at Camp
9 McDermott those last two and a half months I was there. Like I say the barracks were real
10 flimsy. We had another rocket attack later on, not directly in the company area, it hit
11 down near the commo site, wiped out a few buildings down there, hit the chaplain's
12 officer. It took a direct hit. I was getting the short timer's attitude and I was getting a
13 little paranoid, so I took my sleeping bag out into the bunker so I'd be ready, I'd already
14 be there if anything happened. I got down to five days left in country and got a surprise at
15 the morning formation. 1st Sergeant said I was leaving today; I got a five-day drop.

16 SM: Wow, did that happen very often?

17 WM: Yes, guys would get drops, some of the guys that were, some of the guys
18 would volunteer to go to Vietnam, they had an early release problem, so they could get
19 even six months off of their enlistment tour if they volunteered and drops of five, ten
20 days were not uncommon. So, as soon as the 1st Sergeant said I was leaving that day, you
21 had to get your affairs in order. This was eight o'clock in the morning, by ten o'clock I
22 had cleared the medical and finance, got my records, I was ready to go. I threw about a
23 third of a bag full of stuff into the duffle bag and that's all I left with, left everything else
24 there. I got a short hop from Nha Trang to, a ten-minute flight back to Cam Ranh Bay,
25 that's where the big airport was. So, by eleven o'clock I was in Cam Ranh Bay and that's
26 where they had a processing center there that you had to go through, which didn't take
27 long, they had it down to a science. There were so many guys coming and going, didn't
28 take long to process through that and get my flight assignment and at five o'clock that
29 afternoon I boarded a Boeing 707 with 220 other guys, we were out there. They called
30 them the freedom bird.

31 SM: Now, when was this?

1 WM: This was the end of October '69.

2 SM: October '69. All right, sir let me go ahead and pause this for a moment
3 please. This will end CD number one of the interview with Mr. William Moore.

4 Steve Maxner: This is Steve Maxner continuing the interview with Mr. William
5 Moore on the 11th of January 2002, at approximately ten minutes to ten, Lubbock time. I
6 am in Lubbock, Texas and Mr. Moore is in Elkton, Maryland. This is CD number two of
7 the interview. Sir, why don't we go ahead and continue discussing your trip home. What
8 was the atmosphere like on the aircraft as you guys were leaving Vietnam?

9 William Moore: Joyous. I imagine all the flights were like that. As soon as we
10 left the ground, a big cheer and clapping, a sense of overall relief, it was quite an
11 experience. Like I say it was 225 GIs on there, all ranks, all served in, the greatest
12 majority of us were happy to be out of Vietnam, it was really nice. Of course the guys
13 were all excited to see some round-eyed women, the stewardesses were all very
14 attractive. It was a change. Then the flight was a long flight but it didn't seem long,
15 coming back, but going over it took forever, it took us about thirteen hours to get back to
16 the States. I can't remember the route we took; I think it was the northern route, the way
17 we went. We ended up in Seattle, Washington and were bussed to Fort Lewis,
18 Washington where we processed for our, either out of the Army or our leave, we were
19 entitled to a thirty day leave. We got to Fort Lewis in the middle of night, of course that
20 was in 24 hour operation also, processing returnees and the first thing they did was invite
21 us into their mess hall for a meal and it was an enlisted mess hall but it was set up very
22 nice. I remember tablecloths on the tables, nice silverware and a steak dinner to order,
23 which they brought to the table, you didn't have to go through a line and we all enjoyed a
24 meal while they were fixing up our class A uniforms. In the two hours that we were in the
25 mess hall they got our uniforms all ready to wear with all the patches and insignia sewn
26 on and tailored to size. We went and got our uniforms, went back to the barracks they
27 assigned us to and changed clothes. Well, got cleaned up, changed clothes hot showers.
28 While this was going on they were processing our paperwork to get us flights, get us our
29 plane tickets, commercial flights, so by mid-morning of the day we were ready to leave
30 there. Of course all the guys went to the four winds, wherever they were going in the
31 States. We went to the Seattle-Tacoma airport and got a flight to terminate in

1 Philadelphia, flew to San Francisco first, changed planes there. At San Francisco airport,
2 well my mom knew I was coming home somewhere around, early that next week. I didn't
3 have a chance to let her know that I got a five day drop so as soon as I got to the airport
4 in San Francisco I called her and of course she was ecstatic, she was really relived that I
5 was home. I said well, I'll be home soon so I got a little plane in San Francisco, flew to
6 Chicago, stopped there shortly and I don't know if I changed planes or refueled or
7 something and then I went into Pittsburgh and into Philadelphia. So, in a matter of a day
8 and a half I was out of Vietnam and back in civilian life, or I was still in the Army but
9 back in the United States on a thirty-day leave.

10 SM: Did you encounter any kind of hostility during that trip home?

11 WM: No, none at all. I was in uniform, nobody really came up and talked to me
12 or welcome home or anything like that but nobody bothered me. People at the airport
13 were either busy or indifferent or what.

14 SM: Did you have any problems adjusting during a rapid transition like that, in
15 country one day and at home a day and a half later?

16 WM: No, I'm lucky. I must have the kind of temperament, laidback, breezy. I had
17 no problems at all. I did have a sense of relief of being out of there, like I say I was still in
18 the Army, I still had time to go. I just wanted to enjoy my leave, in fact I didn't have an
19 assignment then, I didn't get my assignment until sometime in that thirty-day leave they
20 sent me some orders. They assigned me to Fort Bliss, Texas.

21 SM: How much time did you have left in service?

22 WM: Let me see, I re-enlisted, I had about a year when I got to Fort Bliss about a
23 year left.

24 SM: Now, I forgot to ask you, during the bulk of your time at west Nha Trang,
25 there was of course major battle over in the Pleiku area for Hamburger Hill and I didn't
26 know if your station received a significant amount of traffic during that battle and in the
27 days that followed and if you noticed?

28 WM: Do you know what month that was?

29 SM: Yes, that was May of '69.

30 WM: No, all of our circuits were Korean circuits and I didn't even know about
31 Hamburger Hill until I saw the movie.

1 SM: Oh, really?

2 WM: Yes.

3 SM: Well, just out of curiosity did you notice any change in attitude or any
4 change in the atmosphere in the last three or four months that you were in country, did
5 you receive any orders or was there anything, did you notice any difference say in the last
6 three months compared to your first three months?

7 WM: Overall attitude?

8 SM: Of American forces and of the American commanders?

9 WM: No, like I say, I was with the 459th and our particular mission was just to
10 keep those circuits open. We didn't get much information what was going on, the big
11 picture.

12 SM: Okay, well what was the, were you at all surprised at the atmosphere of the
13 United States when you came back?

14 WM: Yes.

15 SM: What surprised you most?

16 WM: Well, in late '69 there was all kinds of things going on, the war protest was
17 at its peak. College campuses, the young people were almost up in arms, the general
18 feeling of the American public, when I found out after I got back to the States is get those
19 guys out of there. I'm convinced to this day that if we didn't get out of there, we'd still
20 be there because the enemy was not going to give up, however long it took they were
21 going to be there so it was wise for us to get out of there. Of course the process they
22 went through to get us out of there was long and protracted, the Peace Accords, the peace
23 talks in Paris, they went on forever. They could have went through much earlier, but I
24 don't know, to save face or whatever, they went through these talked, finally did get
25 everybody out of there, but it took too long. The average Joe could see where we were
26 fighting a losing cause there.

27 SM: Well, when you were back in the States, you spent your last year in the Army
28 at Fort Bliss, from like November of '69.

29 WM: Well, I re-enlisted at Fort Bliss.

30 SM: Okay, you re-enlisted.

31 WM: Yes, I re-enlisted for six years.

1 SM: Well what was the atmosphere like in the military where you were stationed
2 in say 1973 when the Paris Peace Accords were signed?

3 WM: The military in '73 just before and immediately after the Peace Accords
4 were signed, we became a peacetime Army and of course I think the draft stopped about
5 that time. And McNamara came up with this idea, I think it was him of, they call it
6 McNamara's hundred thousand program, to fill the slots they were accepting just about
7 anybody, they were recruiting just about anybody they could get to fill the slots and keep
8 the Army up to strength and from '73 to '77, when I got out, the standards were lowered
9 and the Army got a lot of unmotivated, uneducated people who didn't want to work,
10 discipline took a nose dive. A lot of the officers wouldn't back up their NCOs, they were
11 just worried about their careers, either extending their careers or they were getting short
12 and they want to get out anyway. Overall the military really took a nosedive between '73
13 and '77 as far as discipline and morale. The war was over, everybody looked at it as a
14 defeat, first war we ever lost, Vietnam, stuff like that.

15 SM: Where were you in 1973?

16 WM: In '73, I was at, I left Bliss, went to Korea, came back, I was at Fort Hood,
17 Texas for two years which was the worst two years I spent in the Army.

18 SM: Really, why?

19 WM: Fort Hood, Texas is out in the middle of cow country in Texas and its like
20 an isolated base, there's not much around for entertainment. We had to either go to San
21 Antonio or Houston or Dallas/Fort Worth to actually see some civilization. I was with a
22 signal company there and spent about half the time in field exercises. I do remember one
23 occasion; they sent us out to LBJ's ranch as back up communications of some kind in
24 case the telephone lines went down. They were having some big summit or meeting
25 there and we spent three or four days in a cow pasture out there on standby for
26 communications, they never did need us though. I finally got orders to Germany and
27 spent my last three years in Germany and I enjoyed that tour because I was getting short
28 then. I had decided at my eight-year mark to get out when this enlistment was over. So I
29 went over there with three years left, I had a reconciliation with my wife, brought her and
30 the son over, two of those last three years and I ETS'd the Army from Germany, went
31 back to civilian life.

1 SM: Now was there much change, you mentioned that there were significant
2 problems in the Army when you came back in terms of discipline, you didn't mention
3 drug use, was that also a problem?

4 WM: Drug use in Germany and Fort Hood, that period of time was pretty high; I
5 would say it was rampant.

6 SM: So it was the same in Germany as it was in the United States?

7 WM: Yes, especially among the enlisted lower ranks. Drugs were readily
8 available; you could go into a German drug store and buy drugs. You could buy them
9 over the counter. It was illegal for the American GIs but stuff was available right in the
10 stores.

11 SM: What kind of drugs do you mean?

12 WM: Uppers, downers, they had liquid stuff that the guys would pour in their
13 Cokes, the uppers, guys were buzzing all the time. One particular occasion we had an IG
14 inspection coming up, I was in charge of one floor of the barracks, I was an E-6 by this
15 time and my platoon, I was a squad leader, my platoon, a lot of the young guys, to get
16 ready for the inspection they would take this liquid speed I called it and it would just fire
17 them up, they could go for hours and hours, working, with a lot of energy and they had
18 this place looking spotless. I mean you couldn't find a trace of dirt anywhere on that
19 whole floor, in the bathrooms and washrooms and rooms. They were here to pass the
20 inspection but they really went overboard. They came up with all kinds of ideas. They
21 had a team that would lay out everybody's field display and they were all exactly the
22 same. They had another team cleaning the showers where the washers and dryers were,
23 that place was gleaming because they were climbing the walls scrubbing and shining the
24 pipes. We got one gig, we got a 99%, the only gig we got was in the dryer, the lint filter
25 was made out of fine mesh wire and there was a hole in it and the inspecting officer
26 pulled out the lint filter and saw the hole and that was a gig, the only gig we got, couldn't
27 find anything else anywhere. The floors were so shiny you could see your face in them.
28 Of course we knew that the hole in the screen, that somebody had cut a piece out to use in
29 their hash pipe. That was the only gig we got, and we got a day off, the whole platoon
30 got a day off for scoring highest on the IG inspection that year.

31 SM: So they got high?

1 WM: They got a reward for it.

2 SM: Cleaned the barracks really well and got a reward for it, that's interesting.

3 WM: Yes, it was the same all over. The IG Inspection is a complete battalion
4 inspection, motor pool, records, we did real well.

5 SM: Well, that's interesting because even though there was drug use, there also
6 seemed to be, not so much the benefit but motivation to perform well and in order to do
7 that some discipline.

8 WM: Well, the guys more or less took it on their own. You didn't have to prod
9 them or push them. That particular inspection they just wanted to do well I guess, they
10 got self-motivated. But the rest of the time was either out in the field, out in field
11 exercises or we were on what was called a Kaserne, a closed kaserne and we had a big
12 motor pool for all our trucks and everything. We'd be pulling motor stables; your daily
13 training consisted of exercise in the morning, pulling motor stables and then just
14 maintenance. You'd go out on the line and fire up your rig, fire up the generators, put a
15 dummy load on it, test things, stuff like that. Just the same thing everyday, except when
16 you were out in the field for exercises and that was a lot of going to a site and setting up,
17 tearing down, jumping in the middle of night. Every October had the big Reforger
18 exercise in Germany, we were out there for three weeks, a massive countrywide field
19 exercise. We were on call to go down to what was called the Fulda Gap, that was our
20 area; the Fulda Gap was the point where the Russians would come over, that's where they
21 thought they would come over. We had thirteen divisions in Germany and they had
22 thirty-nine. The American force was there during the Cold War to delay the advance long
23 enough to get support over there. That was on our mission to hold the gap.

24 SM: Now, while you were there, did you have any special training, for the entire
25 time you were in the Army, did you receive training on dealing with equipment that had
26 been damaged due to electromagnetic pulse, the result of an atomic detonation or a
27 nuclear detonation?

28 WM: No, just in the class they covered that, in various schools I went to. When I
29 wasn't in Vietnam, my other nine years in the Army I was more or less a professional
30 student. I would sign up for any class they were giving because in my MOS, they had a
31 cutoff score that was so high to get promoted from E-5 to E-6, it was almost unreachable,

1 slots weren't available for almost five years so I did everything I could to build up my
2 points because I wanted to make E-6. I went to two NCO academies, I went to CBR
3 School, I went to generator school. I always did well in the courses so they looked at my
4 record and they would send me again if there'd be a slot to the school. I finally got as
5 high as I could in points and I still didn't have enough, so my next to last year in
6 Germany, they dropped the cutoff score fifty points, first it was a thousand, they dropped
7 it to 851 and I had 855 and I finally got promoted to E-6, some E-6 slots came available.
8 So I went to all kinds of schools and then of course getting all that education, like I went
9 to CBR school, about midway through my ten years, they saw that on my record, every
10 unit I went to, as an additional duty I would be the CBR NCO, keeping track of all the
11 radiation monitoring equipment, the gas masks, keeping everything calibrated, and up to
12 date, so that was my extra duty.

13 SM: Well, you were in Germany in 1975 then, correct?

14 WM: Yes.

15 SM: Do you remember the atmosphere in your unit when Saigon fell in April
16 of '75?

17 WM: Yes, there was a lot of Vietnam veterans there and it was kind of a low point
18 for everybody, because officially we had lost the war and the big thing was then, well up
19 to now we had never lost a major war that we had engaged in. Yes, it was kind of a low
20 point for a lot of guys. But life goes on, you know, in my case life went on. I wasn't
21 overly worried about it.

22 SM: Well, did you know any guys over there, well not just in Germany but also
23 here in the U.S., when you were still active duty, did you meet any guys that were having
24 a hard time coping with their Vietnam experiences that were still on active duty?

25 WM: No, I didn't run into that until years later. I joined the Vietnam Veterans of
26 America and had occasion to work with our vet center here in town and Perryville, MD
27 VVA hospital is right down the road and with a contingent some of our chapter would go
28 and visit the guys or have a party for them at the hospital, then I actually saw how messed
29 up a lot of the guys were. They have a psychological ward down at Perryville that is not
30 a nice place to visit. We went down there. There are still guys in there to this day that
31 just couldn't get over it, so we try to do anything we can here locally to ease the burden a

1 little bit for them. In fact, just this Christmas we went down to the rehabilitation ward
2 and had a party and took gifts. A lot of the guys, most of the guys were really glad to see
3 us because it's really boring in there doing the same thing every day. Anything out of the
4 ordinary like a party or somebody bringing gifts or even just going in and visiting, they
5 really enjoy that. The ward we did this year was the rehab ward. There were guys, I
6 think they've had strokes or had operations, some of them in therapy and so forth.
7 Eventually those fellows will be out of there, get to go back to their homes, but a lot of
8 guys, the floor above in the psychological ward, some of them will never get out. We try
9 to do what we can for them.

10 SM: When you came back to the United States initially, in your questionnaire
11 you indicated that a friend of the family took you down to the local VFW post, I guess
12 where you lived.

13 WM: Right, in his town in Folcroft, Pennsylvania. He was an older man, he was a
14 real good friend of my mother's side of the family for years, I forget how they got
15 together, but he was like a surrogate grandfather to us. In fact we called him Pop pop
16 when we were kids. It was just my mother and me and my brother and no father figure in
17 the household, so he was sort of like a father and a grandfather to me. And he had been
18 in the 2nd World War and he was in the Coast Guard, Coast Guard Auxiliary or
19 something, he was too old to go into the service so he volunteered for the Coast Guard
20 Auxiliary patrolling the East Coast here. They had some kind of a, in fact it wasn't
21 military people was in this, some kind of civilian group attached to the Coast Guard. And
22 it qualified him to join the VFW after the war, been a member of it ever since, all the way
23 up to when he took me over there in '69.

24 SM: When you first joined, was there any kind of resistance or, how were you
25 treated by the other VFW members?

26 WM: Well, I remember going there with him and sitting at the bar and he asked
27 the bar person for an application and of course he bought the first round of drinks and we
28 filled out the application and he paid for it and gave it back to the person and it was
29 processed there. But nobody in the bar at the time came up and talked to us or anything.
30 It was mostly World War II vets and even to this day I feel, I'm a life member of the

1 VFW here, even to this day, it's getting a little better but I still feel uncomfortable going
2 to the VFW.

3 SM: Why is that?

4 WM: Well, the general consensus of World War II vets is that Vietnam wasn't
5 really a war; World War II was the war. I can't give you a percentage but the majority of
6 World War II vets at that time didn't really consider us veterans of foreign war and didn't
7 welcome us openly to their clubs. I've seen that over the years, I've talked to other
8 Vietnam veterans throughout the country when I go to conventions and stuff, this is all
9 over the United States, we weren't really welcome with open arms at the VFW.
10 American Legion on the other hand was a little different. I belong to that too and we were
11 more welcome there than at the VFW. Now, the attitude has changed with some of the
12 World War II vets, I'd say the change occurred in the mid to late '80s, after the Vietnam
13 Memorial Wall was dedicated. The VFW, the World War II guys looked into it a little
14 more and some of them realized, yes it was a war and these guys put their life on the line
15 just like we did and the attitude changed a little bit. Some of the hard-core guys to this
16 day are still saying, they'll never change their attitude.

17 SM: Well, what are your personal feelings about your service in Southeast Asia?

18 WM: Well, I went over there with the thought of preserving democracy, got
19 caught up in the Kennedy thing, what can you do for your country, let's stop the spread
20 of Communism and so forth. Going over there with the attitude of doing my duty and I
21 did the year over there, I was really relieved to get out of there. I saw the in country big
22 picture and then when I got back to the States and saw all the protests going on, so I was
23 really out of touch for that year, kind of isolated, got the *Army Times* newspaper once in
24 awhile and radio broadcasting. We didn't really know what was going on back in the
25 States where we were. When I got back to the States I saw the overall attitude of the
26 populace, getting out of there, my attitude changed a little bit. Like I say, at the time I
27 went over there to do my thing for the country. Luckily I managed to get through it.

28 SM: Well, do you think that our goals were justified by the costs?

29 WM: Yes, I do. The goal was I perceived to stop the advance of Communism, we
30 didn't want Southeast Asia falling into Communist hands and then the alleged domino
31 effect, from there into Malaysia and maybe into the Philippines and so forth. So, the

1 basic idea was okay for me, to stop the spread of Communism before it blossoms. Now,
2 Cuba, that's a whole another subject, I don't know why the heck they didn't bounce them
3 out of Cuba long ago, that's another whole story. I don't know what the heck is going on
4 down there for the last thirty years.

5 SM: Well, what do you think about U.S. normalizing relations with Vietnam?

6 WM: Well, our VVA national president went to Vietnam on a trip with Clinton
7 and boy, I'll tell you what, the majority of the members didn't go for that at all. They
8 don't have a lot of respect for him even though in his six years in office he did an awful
9 lot of good for the VVA, he really stepped on his own toes with the Clinton party, when
10 Clinton went over there. Most of the VVA members aren't for normalizing relations with
11 Vietnam and I'm not either. Let's not sink any more money into that country than we
12 already have. They can get along by themselves. They don't really need us, that's they
13 way I feel.

14 SM: Well, what are the most important things you took away from your Vietnam
15 War experience personally?

16 WM: The main thing is more of a respect for life. We are all human beings and
17 some of the things I saw and heard about over there, war is not the way to do it. The
18 main thing, I've got more of a respect for life and more of a thankfulness that my life is
19 continuing and has over the years. I really have more of a respect for life as a whole.
20 Another thing I learned is nothing is ever as bad as it seems. A lot of bad things can
21 happen, but there is always a way out, you can get over it, nothings so bad you can't
22 handle it. That's the main two things.

23 SM: What do you think we should take away from the experience as a nation
24 collectively?

25 WM: Main thing is don't get into a guerilla war. We proved over there that
26 you're fighting a losing battle and it was proven to the Russians in Afghanistan, they
27 were in there ten years, you're not going to beat a determined guerilla force in their own
28 country no matter what, no matter how many bombs you drop, bombing them is not the
29 answer. You can bomb all you want but the spirit of the civilian force is just not going to
30 give in. That's the main thing I learned.

31 SM: Well, is there anything else you'd like to discuss today?

1 WM: No, that's about it for me, I just wanted to ask you a few questions.

2 SM: Okay, let me go ahead and put an end to this interview real quick. This will
3 end the interview with Mr. William Moore, thank you very much sir.

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