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**The Vietnam Archive
Oral History Project
Interview with Sgt. Floyd Miller
Conducted by Staff Sgt. Bob Vandewalker
Transcribed by Nicol Rincon**

1 Bob Vandewalker: From the El Toro Marine Corps Air Station this is Marine
2 Staff Sergeant Bob Vandewalker, and today we're going to be talking to Sgt. Floyd
3 Miller, a wounded Marine veteran who returned to the United States this past summer.
4 Floyd when did you go to Vietnam?

5 Floyd Miller: We left the States, we left El Toro here the 6th of December of '64
6 for Futema, Okinawa. We stayed there approximately two months, and then went to Da
7 Nang the 17th of February of '65.

8 BV: Did you leave here with a helicopter squadron?

9 FM: Yes, sir, we did. We went over via KC135 and two 15-man pickup aircraft
10 there.

11 BV: What was your job in this squadron?

12 FM: I was a helicopter crew chief.

13 BV: What squadron were you with?

14 FM: HMM163.

15 BV: Who was the commanding officer at that squadron?

16 FM: Lt. Col. Norman Ewers was the commanding officer.

17 BV: Now Floyd, how long did you actually spend in Vietnam?

18 FM: I spent approximately a month-and-a- half is all I spent before I was
19 wounded.

20 BV: Then you were air-evac'd out?

1 FM: Yes, sir, I was.

2 BV: Can you fill me in on the background of what happened when you were
3 wounded? Was it a regular flight you were out on or what happened?

4 FM: It was an assault. It happened on the 31st of March. It was a big 18-aircraft
5 helicopter assault delivering a Vietnamese assaulting force into a zone, a landing zone
6 that was known VC territory, Viet Cong territory. We expected pretty heavy resistance,
7 and we did find pretty heavy resistance this particular day.

8 BV: Now this particular day was there a helicopter shot down? How were you
9 wounded?

10 FM: No, sir. We were shot at, and shot up pretty bad but we weren't shot down.
11 We did manage to fly back to Da Nang.

12 BV: How many other people in the crew were wounded besides yourself?
13 Anybody?

14 FM: Yes, sir. My gunner was wounded, also. He was a staff sergeant who was in
15 the belly of the plane with me.

16 BV: Now, in your short time in Vietnam did you have the opportunity to meet the
17 Vietnamese people or meet the Viet Cong people, as far as seeing them?

18 FM: Yes sir, we did. We were not real close to them. We did a lot of work at
19 various outposts around Da Nang, anywhere from actually a few meters or a few miles
20 from Da Nang, clear up to probably a hundred or hundred fifty miles. We would land at
21 these outposts, be briefed, and go on an assault mission or a resupply mission from there
22 a lot of times. Sometimes when we were on the ground we met the Vietnamese civilians.
23 They would come and they would be inquisitive—the Orientals are very inquisitive. They
24 would come over and talk to us, and we would talk to them and we would trade C-rations
25 with them and give them C-rations and try to get to know a little bit of the Vietnamese
26 language, and learn a little bit.

27 BV: You mention these outposts. Were these manned by Marines or other
28 branches of services?

29 FM: No, sir. I was down there before the actual landing of the Marines in March
30 of last year. These outposts were manned by usually the Vietnamese ARVN troops, and
31 one or two American advisors, depending on the size of the outpost.

1 BV: Army advisors, these were?

2 FM: Yes, sir.

3 BV: Did you have the opportunity to talk to the advisors and have them say

4 whether the Vietnamese people understood what was happening, what we were trying to

5 do over there?

6 FM: We talked to some of them. They had a very, very big job over there, and

7 seemed to be doing it very well. They thought they were accomplishing their job. They

8 had a rough row to hoe, as you might say, really, because the language problem was bad.

9 The Vietnamese language is one of the hardest that I have ever heard. But I think that

10 they were getting their point across. The people themselves seemed to appreciate what

11 they were doing for them. The Vietnamese, in the majority of the cases, were very well

12 trained and stayed behind what the advisors said, and did what they said.

13 BV: Would you want to switch jobs with these advisers? In other words, what

14 I'm trying to say, is theirs job a pretty rough job?

15 FM: Yes, sir, I don't believe I would want to change jobs with them.

16 BV: They're out there all by themselves?

17 FM: Yes, sir, they are.

18 BV: Do you ever have the opportunity--I'm sure it's not an "opportunity"—to

19 run into a Viet Cong?

20 FM: Not very close. I did, a couple of times I brought back prisoners that were,

21 of course, bound and gagged, and weren't in too much of a fighting mood then, but I was

22 never actually too close to one in a fighting situation.

23 BV: I've talked to several people returning from Vietnam. Do you find that a lot

24 of these Viet Cong are real young boys?

25 FM: Yes sir, they are. I've seen, one prisoner that I brought back one particular

26 day, I'd swear that he probably wasn't more than fourteen or fifteen years old.

27 BV: Have you any idea why they were this young? Were you ever told why this

28 particular boy would have joined the Viet Cong?

29 FM: I don't, I can't exactly say that, find a reason for why they're so young. I

30 suppose they were probably scraping the bottom of the barrel, and getting everybody that

1 they possibly could. And I suppose, also, being that they are so young, they're probably
2 very easily swayed by whoever is trying to recruit them.

3 BV: At this particular time were the Viet Cong using any type of a fear program
4 on appearance?

5 FM: I never actually saw any. I had heard rumors, of course, of things going on,
6 about the Viet Cong coming into villages and terrorizing the village to get their recruits,
7 and trying to get the people to do what they wanted them to do and give them their rice
8 and so and so forth, but never actually first hand did I see anything like this.

9 BV: Sgt. Miller, how old are you?

10 FM: Twenty-three years old.

11 BV: The particular time that you were in Vietnam, how was the morale feeling
12 with the young Marines like yourself?

13 FM: Oh, I think it was very fabulous, myself. In my particular outfit, and in the
14 majority of outfits, I feel that a Marine is trained, and he's trained for years and years and
15 years, and he wants to put this training to work sometime. I think it's, the majority of
16 them felt this was it, and this is where they were actually putting their training to work,
17 and they enjoyed being there.

18 BV: Do you feel that the Vietnam War affected you personally when you
19 returned to the States?

20 FM: Yes, it did, and in more ways than I can possibly imagine, I know.

21 BV: For example, what are some of the ways?

22 FM: My feelings toward the war over there... Before I went over, I, of course,
23 had read a lot about it. But actually reading the newspaper, and all the various
24 publications, you can't imagine what's it like over there. Why are we over there? What
25 are we doing? Are we actually doing any good? You get over there and see what's doing,
26 do your job, do your little part in it, and you come back to the States and you read (about
27 it) in the newspapers. (You know) what the people over there are going through, the
28 people that are fighting the war. You appreciate that much more, you appreciate
29 everything that you do have here, the little luxuries that you have here.

30 BV: Were you in Vietnam last Christmas?

31 FM: No, sir, I was in Okinawa in Christmas.

1 BV: What type of Christmas did you have last year in Okinawa?

2 FM: I had duty NCO Christmas Day.

3 BV: As a young man in America and the military, do you feel your sense of

4 values have also changed, coming back from the war?

5 FM: Oh, yes, so much. I think values—as far as the American democracy—the

6 freedoms that we do have, if you want to consider them values, which you have to. Our

7 little freedoms, the freedom of speech and everything that we do have that they don't

8 have over there.

9 BV: Things that we take for granted?

10 FM: Actually take for granted, yes, sir.

11 BV: While you were in Vietnam was there any one particular material thing that

12 you would rather have than anything else on any particular day?

13 FM: I've heard this over and over, and I believe I've even heard it today. I think

14 a hot shower was the thing I wanted the most and appreciated the most when we did have

15 them.

16 BV: Really, there are no hot showers? At the time that you were there, what was

17 the weather like?

18 FM: It was very warm during the day. In the evenings it would cool down and it

19 was actually almost cold in the evenings. Very great ranges in temperatures. You were

20 used to 90 and 100 degrees, maybe even higher temperatures during the day, and the

21 evenings it would cool down say to 50 and 60 and this temperature range was kind of bad

22 on your system, I guess.

23 BV: How many missions did you have in your short time in Vietnam?

24 FM: I had seventy-nine.

25 BV: And how many air medals did you have?

26 FM: I had three, and a partial another one.

27 BV: Now, on what day did this particular day happen were you wounded? When

28 did this happen?

29 FM: This was the 31st of March of '65.

30 BV: And then where were you evacuated to?

1 FM: I was evacuated—well, we flew back to Nha Trang, and they had a field
2 hospital set up in Da Nang. I was there approximately two hours and was immediately
3 shipped by an Air Force C-123 to Na Trang, which is about 250 miles south of Da Nang.

4 BV: Do you have any personal experiences that you might want to tell me about,
5 outstanding personal experiences?

6 FM: No, not really. There were several comical instances that went on. I don't
7 know that any of them were mine personally. Some of the mascots and things that were
8 picked up over there, pigs and goats and various things, and on some of the re-supply
9 missions that we flew. One very good friend of mine was a crew chief on another plane.
10 One day his re-supply mission involved carrying a bunch of chickens to one of the
11 Vietnamese outposts, and during the process of the flight, one of the chickens laid an egg.
12 We classified this as, in the aircraft, as one of 163's first, was an egg being laid in the
13 helicopter in a re-supply mission.

14 BV: In other words, everything was more humorous than serious.

15 FM: You tried to make everything as humorous as possible because you were
16 constantly kind of keyed up, wondering what was going to happen next. So you tried to
17 make everything as humorous as possible.

18 BV: What is your feeling about going back to Vietnam?

19 FM: I would go back if I have to. I don't particularly want it to be too soon, but I
20 will go back.

21 BV: Sgt. Miller, where is your hometown?

22 FM: Billings, Montana.

23 BV: And who are your folks and where do they live there?

24 FM: Mr. and Mrs. F. W. Miller. They live at 3115 10th Avenue North, Billings.

25 BV: You are single right?

26 FM: Yes, I am.

27 BV: After being in Vietnam and now being back in the States, what is your
28 feeling about the anti-Vietnam protests that are happening here in the United States
29 today?

30 FM: I think it's actually pitiful to see the American public, and a minority of the
31 American public—I don't think the majority of the American people feel this way—but

1 it's actually revolting to me to see the people demonstrating like this. They don't actually
2 know what is going on over there. They don't know the job that we are doing. They
3 should have some respect for their country, I believe. I feel we have so many freedoms
4 that they don't have over there, and the communist bloc nations don't have either. I
5 cannot see why they are at all revolting and demonstrating. It's revolting, is all I can say.

6 BV: Sgt. Miller, what awards did you obtain while you were in Vietnam?

7 FM: I received three air medals and just recently received this Distinguished
8 Flying Cross.

9 BV: What was the Distinguished Flying Cross for?

10 FM: This came through the 31st of March incident, when I was wounded and my
11 buddy was wounded. We stayed and manned our positions and during the assault phase
12 of the landings, and tried to do our jobs is basically all we were doing.

13 BV: What did this consist of? In other words, you were on the ground?

14 FM: We were on the ground. We were bringing in the troops. Just as we came in
15 to the landing zone, we encountered very, very heavy fire. We were hit multiple times.
16 The aircraft was hit. I was wounded, my buddy was wounded, and before we could get
17 the Vietnamese troops out of the plane on the ground, a couple of them were actually
18 wounded inside the aircraft. We continued to fire, and I continued to fire from my gun
19 until we did lift back out of the zone. We lifted out of the zone without disembarking all
20 of our troops because two of them were wounded and the two other just couldn't walk out
21 into a hail of fire. They would have been completely annihilated.

22 BV: You were talking about this buddy. Who was he?

23 FM: This was Staff Sergeant Dilly. He was my gunner in the plane. He was
24 wounded pretty seriously.

25 BV: Well, Sgt. Miller, I want to thank very much for coming down and talking to
26 us today, and I want to wish you an awful lot of luck.

27 FM: Thank you.