

Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center

Transcript of an

Oral History Interview with

James R. Botts

M.P. (Military Police) Dog Handler, 212th M.P. (Military Police) Company, United States
Army, Vietnam

2001

OH
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Botts, James R., (1948-). Oral History Interview, 2001.

User Copy: 1 sound cassettes (ca. 50 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Recordings: 1 sound cassettes (ca. 50 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Video Recording: 1 videocassette (ca. 50 min.); ½ inch, color.

Abstract

Botts, a McComb, Ill. native, discusses his military career as a M.P. (Military Police) dog handler in the Army during the Vietnam War. Botts describes being drafted into the Army in 1969 shortly after leaving the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Undergoing basic training at Fort Bragg (Kentucky), Botts recounts receiving orders to attend M.P. training at Fort Gordon (Georgia) and volunteering to become a dog handler. Assigned to further training at Okinawa (Japan), Botts talks about meeting his dog and the training both handlers and dogs receive together. Botts details extensively dog training procedures, including a vivid and interesting description of how handlers taught dogs to attack enemy combatants and trail scents. Botts dispels some misconceptions concerning dog handling, most notably the fact that handlers do not use food to train dogs. Stationed at Binh Long (Vietnam) and Tay Ninh (Vietnam) with the 212th M.P. Company, Botts describes the primary responsibilities of dog handlers, including guarding ammunition dumps from enemy penetration and the P.X. (Post Exchange) from fellow soldiers stealing supplies. Social life at the base is touched upon briefly, as is drug use by soldiers, and the use of Agent Orange to clear foliage and the possible medical consequences for military dogs. Botts comments on the emotional difficulties handlers faced when leaving their dogs after completing their tour of duty. Discharged in November of 1970, Botts addresses his return to Madison (Wis.) where he used the G.I. Bill to learn auto mechanics and finding employment with the City of Madison. Botts refers to his membership in both the Middleton Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) and the Vietnam Dog Handler Association.

Biographical Sketch

Botts (b. November 28, 1948) entered the Army on April 10, 1969. He was honorably discharged, receiving an Army Commendation Medal, and settled in Madison (Wis.).

Interviewed by James McIntosh, 2001.

Transcribed by Lindy Burke-Fiferick, 2004.

Transcription edited by David Parker and Rachel Reynard, 2004.

Interview Transcript

- Macintosh: Talking to Jim Botts, and it is 5 May 2001. Where were you born Jim?
- Botts: I was born in McComb, Illinois on November of 1948.
- McIntosh: M-C—
- Botts: M-C-M-A-M-B or C-O-M-B, excuse me [laughs].
- McIntosh: C-O-M-B. When did you move to Madison?
- Botts: In 1959.
- McIntosh: And what were you doing before you went into the military?
- Botts: I went to college for two years after I graduated from high school.
- McIntosh: What Western Illinois?
- Botts: No. I went to U. W. Madison.
- McIntosh: Here.
- Botts: I was ten years, eleven years old when we moved to Madison.
- McIntosh: I see.
- Botts: So I graduated from Madison West in 1967.
- McIntosh: I went to West.
- Botts: [laughing]
- McIntosh: A little earlier. [laughing]
- Botts: Yeah. A little earlier.[laughing]
- McIntosh: [laughing] 1941.
- Botts: Yeah. You beat me there [laughing]. So and we---Dad still has his house out There. In the Hill Farms, where I basically grew up.
- McIntosh: Sure, and how did you get into the military? How did that happen?

- Botts: Well uh, I went to the U [University] for a couple of years--and I kind of was disappointed with what my major was and I just said "The Heck with it," and I quit---and it didn't take them very long to draft me. So I was drafted! I graduated from high school in 1967 and was drafted April of 1969.
- McIntosh: U.S. Army.
- Botts: Yep.
- McIntosh: So you took basic training where?
- Botts: At Fort Bragg, Kentucky.
- McIntosh: Hey, that is a tank outfit place isn't it? That is armor?
- Botts: Well, it was all basic training when I was there and we stayed in the old World War II barracks, and uh, got through that. It was an eight week course and then, I was, got my orders for Advanced Individual Training and--
- McIntosh: How'd that happen? How'd that come about? Did you apply for some—
- Botts: No, didn't apply, but then I got orders for uh, Fort Gordon, Georgia for Military Police Training.
- McIntosh: Well, how did you suddenly end up in the Military Police? I mean—
- Botts: Well that's where they told me--Well that's what they told me I was gonna do!
- McIntosh: Oh. They announced it?
- Botts: Yeah. I got my orders and that's what you are! [laughing] I could have been anything like a buddy of mine that I went through Basic with, uh, he got orders for Panama, and he was in Crypto.
- McIntosh: Well.
- Botts: So he spent all his time listening to radio messages and sending out coded information.
- McIntosh: At that time you assumed that you'd be in for two years? Is that what they told you?
- Botts: Yes. Right, two years.

McIntosh: Two year hitch!

Botts: Two year hitch!

McIntosh: And so, all of a sudden you're in the Military Police. Tell me about the training.

Botts: Ha! Well actually the Military Police Training was just like basic training; although you had more classroom stuff. On filling out all the different forms and basically training you in a lot of police.

McIntosh: Type work.

Botts: Type work.

McIntosh: Sure.

Botts: And then the dog situation came up as they were short of dog handlers and they were asking for volunteers.

McIntosh: Uh, now we get into it.

Botts: My dad always told me never volunteer for anything! But I fell short. [laughing] I decided I hated doing KP so bad and if you volunteered for dogs you didn't have to do KP so--

McIntosh: Great reason!

Botts: But there was the other bad part of it was; if you did volunteer for dogs you were going to Vietnam. There was, all the dog handlers were going over there.

McIntosh: Specifically trained, you too [laughing] were being trained to go to Vietnam.

Botts: Right. So then. When you volunteered for dogs at the end of my training which in August of 1969 they sent us all to Okinawa for eight weeks to train a dog.

McIntosh: Ok. Hold it. MP school, volunteer to, [laughs] do dogs and that training and the dogs, where was that at?

Botts: That was in Okinawa, an old Japanese Air Base.

McIntosh: So that was the first time you got your dog was it?

Botts: Right.

McIntosh: And so they just flew you over there.

Botts: Yeah. I had a month leave after that. Right during Woodstock; but I didn't go to Woodstock, decided I wanted to go home worse. [laughing] So I went home spent a month at home, and flew out of San--- let's see San Francisco probably and puddle jumped over to Okinawa

McIntosh: Wait a minute. Now we're not going to move any further than that now. So you got to Okinawa, and what size group were you with?

Botts: Class of twenty. Yep.

McIntosh: Twenty men, and so training was classroom first, dog second or what?

Botts: Well actually there was very little classroom with the dog, it was mainly you got your dog right away or you were introduced to your dog and they, you had to, or you were told by your trainer---there were several sergeants that did the dog training and they explained stuff to you first and then you had to work your way in with the dog you were assigned.

McIntosh: Ok. I've got a lot of questions here.

Botts: [Laughing]

McIntosh: Jump around! The dog you were assigned to is that your dog?

Botts: Yes. One dog, one man.

McIntosh: Always.

Botts: Always.

McIntosh: No other man just one on one.

Botts: The dogs were trained when you released them they didn't care what. When you released them, that's what they were gonna chew up! There was no command for come out. They had one command and that was to kill. So when you released your dog with a collar on it, it had one purpose--

McIntosh: With a collar on it?

Botts: Yes. You did a choke chain on him.

McIntosh: Yes.

- Botts: All the time except when you were out on post you put a collar on him; and the reason--
- McIntosh: Just a regular dog collar?
- Botts: A leather collar. And the reason for that is you had to choke your dog off of whatever you put him on. You had to straddle your dog. You put one hand underneath the collar and give it a half twist, and the other hand you had to slide down their throat and you actually had to cut their air off of--
- McIntosh: Whatever.
- Botts: Whatever. Yes.
- McIntosh: Had the dogs received any training before they got there?
- Botts: Some had, most hadn't. I know when we got--I was there when they got a shipment of dogs in. One hundred green dogs, and first we had to taunt them and see if they were aggressive at all, [coughing] and only seventy-five—
- McIntosh: This hadn't been determined before that.
- Botts: No. Actually twenty-five percent--
- McIntosh: Failed.
- Botts: Of them one hundred dogs were failed and those were all euthanized because they were too nice.
- McIntosh: These dogs, were they purchased or are these dogs--
- Botts: These were all, most of them were all donated dogs.
- McIntosh: That's what I thought. And were they all German Shepherds?
- Botts: They're German Shepherds and Collies and mixtures.
- McIntosh: Collies?
- Botts: Yes. And mixtures in between.
- McIntosh: Collies.
- Botts: Yes.
- McIntosh: I just can't imagine a Collie being an attack dog!

- Botts: Yeah. Well some of them were pretty nasty and then the German Shepherd, Collie mixtures--
- McIntosh: Yeah. Well that's all right; but the German Shepherd is sort of a standard Attack--
- Botts: See I had a dog I trained in Okinawa and then that dog failed. It's long range attack, they had, you had to be able to release them on attack, onto a track, onto a scent. You'd cross a scent track and you'd have to be able--- before they could go to Vietnam you had to release that dog and that dog had to go and follow the scent track three hundred yards, which is quite a ways, and then attack the perpetrator and stay on him until you got up to him. Well that dog can cover three hundred yards faster than you can--
- McIntosh: Than you can.
- Botts: [Laughing] And so the dog that I had in Okinawa when I got up there, just before I got up there he come off which would give the guy a chance to get a weapon or get away. So he failed and then he will be re-trained in the next cycle by another handler. I did not. No. They'll give him one more chance because he did almost make it except for just this one, he just come off a little too soon.
- McIntosh: I see.
- Botts: Before I got up there. So they were gonna give him one more and I don't know what happened to him, that dog, but I got a new dog when I got to Vietnam of a guy who was going home. So--
- McIntosh: He was new to you?
- Botts: Yeah. He was new to me.
- McIntosh: But he'd been trained by--
- Botts: He'd been trained in Okinawa and then he had or---I know he had the one previous handler, who I met; by the way at a reunion. [laughing]
- McIntosh: Was that difficult for the dog to change owners?
- Botts: Well, this is a deal where they isolate the dog for a period of time and usually the Vets or their assistants will just kind of slide food in and there will be no human contact with this dog for a period of time.
- McIntosh: They kind of lose his memory. [laughing]

- Botts: Right. And then--
- McIntosh: How long?
- Botts: Oh, I want to say about a month. And then when you had to try to work your way into the new dog you would first of all just start talking to him through the fence and try to make friends with him and feed him and this. And then you'd slowly work your way in with the dog and hopefully he didn't chew you up. [laughing] You know I, I don't know.
- McIntosh: You don't know. Surely they'd want a fairly young dog.
- Botts: The German Shepherd that I, I got a pure breed German Shepherd from Germany, that was donated by a German couple, and he was a very nice dog. I got in on him pretty fast; but about two weeks later he decided he was gonna bite me. He was just gonna check and see how good I was.
- McIntosh: That's in territory?
- Botts: Well, I wasn't out on Post, fortunately he wasn't thinking too good because he had his choke chain on when he tried it so he got choked pretty good.
- McIntosh: What were you doing that suddenly made him turn on you?
- Botts: I was just giving him commands to do this and do that in training.
- McIntosh: You were training then?
- Botts: Yeah. We were just doing our regular training exercise. We trained the dogs at least three times a week and sometimes five times a week. Where we would train them a guy would get dressed up in one of those suits to keep them up to snuff on their attack process.
- McIntosh: Geez! I've got so many questions I don't know how to put them out. Did you teach them they would be on lead? That they would be on lead with you? Or they didn't--
- Botts: Right. When they--
- McIntosh: Or they didn't have any other obedience training? Obedience training other than the chain?
- Botts: Yeah. They had---we had a strict regimen of obedience training and that's on or off the leash. We could take them off the leash and make them stay and we

could advance or retreat and keep the dog there. We also trained them with hand signals so you didn't have to speak to them.

McIntosh: That's important.

Botts: Right. Cuz' especially all the dogs worked at night. There were two shifts, 6 P.M. to midnight, and midnight to 6 A.M. Cuz' the dogs got pretty tired after six hours of walking

McIntosh: All right. We're not out of training yet.

Botts: Ok. We're still back in training. (laughing)

McIntosh: And when you had your dog would you always feed them then? Will you be only feeder?

Botts: No. Once you got in with, and worked with your dog then the vets and the vet techs took care of feeding your dog.

McIntosh: Did they purposely try to avoid any close contact?

Botts: Right. They don't, they wouldn't try to make friends with them or nothing.

McIntosh: You were the dog's only friend.

Botts: Right. Exactly.

McIntosh: That was important.

Botts: Very important.

McIntosh: Got it. And--

Botts: [laughing] Cuz' you couldn't have anyone else giving them orders.

McIntosh: That's right. And they responded readily to this?

Botts: Yes, yes.

McIntosh: They seemed to enjoy this?

Botts: Oh, yeah. That was their payment. Dogs are pretty loving animals.

McIntosh: And they trade love for food.

Botts: No. Actually you never fed them any treats. They trade love for a pet, and a good word.

McIntosh: I see.

Botts: (Laughing)

McIntosh: I see. Ok. Well so you begin with the dog by---What was the first thing that you taught the dog?

Botts: The first thing you did was intense obedience training. That was sit, come, stay, uh--

McIntosh: So they would hold their position.

Botts: And hold their position. You taught them all the hand signals.

McIntosh: Hand signals roughly; come, sit, stay, all that.

Botts: Right. Yeah. This would be stay [demonstrating with hand signals], come, and whatever else, down [demonstrating with hand signals].

McIntosh: You taught them that.

Botts: Right. Yes.

McIntosh: Had to know if they'd received any training before you got them.

Botts: Well, the dog was already trained like the one I picked up in Vietnam. But the dog I had in Okinawa had not been trained before.

McIntosh: I see. Was it difficult to teach the hand signals?

Botts: No, no. It wasn't, they figured them out in about three days, I would say.

McIntosh: Even though it was important you didn't utter a word.

Botts: Right. But see, first of all, you taught them verbally, then you got them doing it good verbally; and then you went to the hand signals, and what you did you started using hand signals with the verbal command.

McIntosh: Right.

Botts: And then you just dropped the verbal command, and--

McIntosh: But about three days they picked that up?

Botts: Oh yeah. They're pretty good, but you're working your dog six hours a day; that's pretty intense.

McIntosh: That's what I'm coming down to. How much were you with that dog in training?

Botts: Yes. Approximately six hours.

McIntosh: Three hours on and you give them a rest?

Botts: Three hours in the morning and three in the afternoon.

McIntosh: Then the dogs didn't have to do anything or you, or you didn't have to do anymore again after that.

Botts: No. After that you might give them a bath or it was not work time it was--

McIntosh: Right.

Botts: It was kind of playtime (laughing).

McIntosh: You did have some playtime then with your dog.

Botts: Well, it wasn't like throwing a ball or a stick, just spending some time with them and you know watching them and grooming them, and stuff like that. That was in addition to training.

McIntosh: Right. Most of the dogs you said were German Shepherds.

Botts: I'd say probably a third of the dogs were German Shepherds and three quarters of those were mixes, and then there was--

McIntosh: Was what?

Botts: Mixes. A mix between a Collie and a German Shepherd.

McIntosh: Between a Doberman.

Botts: No, no Doberman. They claimed it was too hot for them over there. That's what I heard. I don't know if it's true, true or not.

McIntosh: And no other kind of attack dogs. You said Collies too?

Botts: Yeah. And they were all trained for sentry dogs; which is basically attack. Attack dogs so--

- McIntosh: Ok. I'll get around to what you do after I finish getting all the questions asked about training. So how did you know your dog was doing well?
- Botts: He would respond to you at all times and then do---complete the exercises one hundred percent.
- McIntosh: He did have to work till you got the collar on him?
- Botts: Yes. The choke chain was a training tool; and when that leather was on that's when he knew it was business time. So you didn't put that leather collar on him until you were actually like out in the field doing what he's supposed to do.
- McIntosh: Even though it was training.
- Botts: Even though it was training you had a guy out there with pads on and stuff and he was the agitator.
- McIntosh: Is this the main thing that you trained him on after you got through the basics was to train him to attack that--
- Botts: Right. You, basically what it was, was a guy would go out into the fields--
- McIntosh: Fifty yard away?
- Botts: Well he started out short and worked up to three hundred yards; and that would be laying a scent trail, just where he'd walk by, then you would cross his path, and if the dog didn't pick it up then he wasn't doing too good. But if he would pick it up and then he would alert; you know get excited--
- McIntosh: How would that dog know to pick up that scent? That you wanted that scent.
- Botts: That's something that you have to pick up yourself because when he hits that scent for the first time he doesn't know exactly what it is; but he's curious about it. You have to praise him up and encourage him because you know, when you first start training him you know where that scent line is. So you're watching him and when he hits that scent line. So you're watching him and when he hits that scent line for the first time and he's curious about it, you praise him up "good boy", "Let's go find him, let's go find him." Encourage him to follow the scent mark in the correct direction. You don't want to go the other way. You want to go the freshest way.
- McIntosh: Isn't that hard for them at first to follow the scent?

- Botts: I think every dog's different just like people. Some of them pick it up (Botts snaps his finger) just like that than other ones.
- McIntosh: Better noses than others.
- Botts: Yeah. Or intelligence wise. I'm not sure but some dogs will pick it up immediately and other dogs take a long time.
- McIntosh: So at first you just sent them to follow that scent and then take to point of origin where the scent came from.
- Botts: Right, exactly. Once they got doing that good. Ok, you're doing that say in the morning, then in the afternoon you've got a guy dressing up in a full suit while you've got the dog muzzled to start with, you muzzle him so nobody gets hurt.
- McIntosh: That doesn't mean anything to the dog.
- Botts: No. That doesn't mean anything to the dog. Then you're holding him and encouraging the dog. No, you put a collar on for this. As a matter of fact, when you start training him on scent you have a collar on him.
- McIntosh: You're not attached to the collar?
- Botts: Yes, you are. You've got a five foot leash. You're holding onto the leash and the guy with the suit on comes and starts stopping the dog up a little bit.
- McIntosh: To make him angry.
- Botts: To make him angry, I mean not hurting him just agitating him is what we called it. Yelling at him and then you try to get all pumped up to get the dog fired up and then--
- McIntosh: Any words you particularly say to him to make him want to--
- Botts: You say "Get him or chew him up" whatever you want to say to--
- McIntosh: You have to be constant and say the same words though don't you?
- Botts: Right. You kind of want to say the stuff but usually when you get agitated, they more or less, I think respond on the inflection of your voice and how you're responding to the situation more than a particular word. Except for their command. When you release them to go that was one command. That was kill.
- McIntosh: Well, we're not there yet.

- Botts: Ok, we'll back track.
- McIntosh: We're still going after the guy in the suit.
- Botts: So then it starts out in the training where you keep a hold of the leash and you get the dog wanting to bite this guy.
- McIntosh: Is that a natural instinct?
- Botts: Natural instinct. They naturally go for the throat. Almost every dog except there are, was a few special dogs that would go for the crotch. Almost all of them would naturally go for the throat.
- McIntosh: Because they were standing up.
- Botts: Right. So you would put your hand up so they'd get them chewing on their arm, and then if they can't get your arm, they'll drop off your arm and start chewing on your leg.
- McIntosh: So you drop your arm and they go--
- Botts: (laughing) So then after you get the dog working good on the leash, well then you'll have the guy agitate your dog, get him all mad and then the guy will run, you'll release your dog and say kill and get them to attack the guy and the dog will literally knock the guy on his behind and then start chewing on him all over and usually when the guy hits the ground, he's like this. [Botts showing the position.] You get there as soon as possible. Cuz' every once and a while them dogs knew that they had that impediment on their mouth, you know the muzzle and they got to as they could skip that canine out and they would rake the guy [laughing].
- McIntosh: With a tooth?
- Botts: With one tooth, [laughing] but the gut was pretty well protected.
- McIntosh: I would think so.
- Botts: So when you would get that guy going further and further out and then after a period of time, after probably a month, it would probably take to get to this point; then you get where combine the follow, and the track out in the field and the agitator. Then you start short and do that working it out for three hundred yards; so then you'd combine the two where you'd cross a track. You've got the dog trained where he will follow the track and then you give him the command and then all of a sudden here's this guy, the agitator guy. When he sees this guy he puts it in overdrive and nails him--.

McIntosh: When he crossed the scent, when the dog starts you say “kill” at this point?

Botts: Right. Cuz you’re out on post where nobody’s supposed to be.

McIntosh: So you can give “kill” the moment he picks up the scent and away he goes.

Botts: Yeah. You will go with the dog on the scent for a little while to make sure it’s a strong scent.

McIntosh: How can you tell?

Botts: You can’t except the dog gets more excited. The dog keeps getting more excited, pulling on you more and wanting. Because he knows he gets a good “atta boy” when he gets the guy. When he gets the guy. When he gets pulling really strong and you know he’s on a good track and you can’t see anybody yet then you release your dog.

McIntosh: How do they put down a scent in training?

Botts: They don’t put down a scent, it’s just there.

McIntosh: All they do is walk?

Botts: Yep.

McIntosh: The only smelling is their shoe?

Botts: Yep.

McIntosh: Footprints?

Botts; Yep.

McIntosh: Jesus Christ!

Botts; Yeah! He was very handy to have around. [laughing]

McIntosh: I just can’t believe that would be a strong enough scent for a dog. Just a guy walking on--

Botts: Oh yeah.

McIntosh: Was all that was tracking the ground was the bottom of his shoes?

Botts: The reasons they used the three hundred yard rule is that’s how far a dog can probably pick up a scent of a man being. That’s three hundred yards--

McIntosh: Any time involved here? In other words the scent was good for a--

Botts: It depends on weather conditions. It depends on how much wind...

McIntosh; It will last longer if it's wet?

Botts: Yea. If it's damp and not raining it will last a very long time. If it's extremely dry then it's really tough.

McIntosh: So you are charging up, no matter who it was. What is it you want the dog to do ?

Botts: The dog is supposed to stay chewing on this guy until you get up there and physically remove them.

McIntosh: You can't get him off by just hollering a command?

Botts: There is no command [laughing]. You gotta grab him with your left hand--if you're right handed, you put your left hand underneath the collar up the collar, do a half twist. You slide it in backwards a half twist and there--cuz he'll bite you too when he's in the midst of this.

McIntosh: Because you're part of the enemy.

Botts: Yeah. He gets too excited and he's on what he's doing and then you slide your other hand down his throat and you grab him by the throat.

McIntosh: I thought that's what you're doing with the choke collar?

Botts: That isn't enough. [laughing]

McIntosh: You've got both hands on his throat.

Botts: Right. One on the collar to control him and then put a twist in it, and then grab him with the other and squeeze for all you're worth. Cuz he is so intent on chewing this person up that you basically have to cut his air off to get him.

McIntosh: I know that's in obedience training when a dog misbehaves just raise that choke chain up and lift him off the ground until he stops hollering and gradually--

Botts: [laughing] But with the work collar you don't have that option.

McIntosh: The work collar is about how wide, an inch?

- Botts: About this thick or wide, and it's double-thick leather. It's a heavy duty collar with a big O-ring on. It's a pretty substantial collar.
- McIntosh: So how did it go with the dog? The dog you had trained well--
- Botts: He trained well right up to until the last few days of training and that's when he didn't want to stay on a three hundred yard attack.
- McIntosh: He got to the point--
- Botts: He attacked the guy. Knocked him down and bit on him, but he's supposed to stay chewing on him until I get up there and physically remove him.
- McIntosh: You don't say anything to the dog when you remove him?
- Botts: No, nothing.
- McIntosh: No command then?
- Botts: No.
- McIntosh: How does he know to stop struggling?
- Botts: When he can't breathe. (laughing)
- McIntosh: But he knows then he should stop.
- Botts: Once you pull him off and give him his air back, then you immediately pet him, tell him what a good boy he is.
- McIntosh: Yeah. But this guy may want to shoot this guy. This guy may be an enemy. You aren't going to be petting that dog if this guy's an enemy.
- Botts: Oh, no. You have to do something about that: but yes as soon as possible you've got to praise your dog, cuz that's your only reward he gets. You don't walk around with goodies and stuff in your pocket. The only praise he gets is verbal or petting.
- McIntosh: How do the dogs behave after that? Do they seem to be calm? They can turn it off as rapidly as they turn it on or not?
- Botts: It takes them a little bit ot settle down but not all that long, a few minutes.
- McIntosh: So, that when the, guy, trainee gets up, he's not immediately attacked again.
- Botts: No, you can hold the dog then. He already did his job.

McIntosh: Does he know this is over now, and this guy no longer represents a threat.

Botts: Oh, no. He's keeping his eyeballs on him (laughing). Usually what you do is the guy stays there and then you take the dog away.

McIntosh: That's the point I was making.

Botts: He just doesn't get up where the dog can see him.

McIntosh: Otherwise he would be right on his back.

Botts: He would want to get him again.

McIntosh: But then these dogs when they would come back home are back in their pen are they quiet and--

Botts: Yes, back to the kennel.

McIntosh: Now did you purposefully not want anyone else to pet the dog?

Botts: The dog wouldn't let anyone else pet him.

McIntosh: In other words back in his home cage--

Botts: It's his--

McIntosh: It's his perimeter. In other words a stranger walks into the cage might get attacked.

Botts: Would get attacked.

McIntosh: That was without any orders.

Botts: Exactly. Yeah, he would.

McIntosh: Just on a defensive posture.

Botts: Right. Exactly. Matter of fact, we had a guy, when I was in Long Binh, walked into the kennel next to his dog. He wasn't paying attention.

McIntosh: Walked into the wrong pen?

Botts: He almost killed him. They ended up having to fly him to Tokyo, cuz he was chewed up so bad. He got in the kennel and could not get out in time. He had like two hundred, three hundred stitches, but he had a bunch of tendon

damage and stuff like that. I never did see him again. He might have been hurt bad enough that they let him out.

McIntosh: Now you've got a problem. If you want to get these dogs back into civilization--

Botts: They don't. I guess in World War II they used to let the guys keep their dogs; but in Vietnam—now this is the story I heard. I guess there had been some cases where the government got sued because guys had brought their dogs home and the dogs had attacked the neighbors. All of a sudden they find out that they're a war dog. Then the military gets sued. In Vietnam, none of the dogs were allowed to come home with their handlers. They were military property. If they couldn't be worked in with the new situation they were put down.

McIntosh: There must have been a fair turnover in dogs then.

Botts: The new dogs kept arriving from Okinawa with the new handlers all the time. Then you get new dogs available, like when I went over, new dogs available because you had guys going home every twelve months. So then that would release the dog.

McIntosh: That meant, you said this before, that meant the dog would try to get another handler.

Botts: Yes, you would.

McIntosh: There's so much trouble training the dog. I would think it's easier to get a trained dog.

Botts: Exactly.

McIntosh: These dogs range about sixty, eighty pounds.

Botts: I had a smaller collie when I was in Okinawa. That dog weighed about fifty pounds. Then the pure bred German Shepherd I had when I was in Vietnam. That dog probably weighed eighty-five, ninety pounds. Then there were some German Shepherds that weighed upwards to a hundred and twenty, hundred and thirty pounds.

McIntosh: They couldn't have been pure bred to weigh that much.

Botts: Well, supposedly they were. They might have had some Malamute in them (laughing).

McIntosh: Tell me was there any difference, from what the guys say, about Collie versus Shepherds? Cuz the Collie's a smaller dog and basically is not--

Botts: The Collie is a faster dog.

McIntosh: Oh, yeah.

Botts: The German Shepherd maybe chews on you once. The Collie nails you three or four times in the same space of time. The Collie is just a faster moving dog. The German Shepherd is kind of a lumbering thing and the Collie is zip!

McIntosh: Any Rottweilers on?

Botts: No.

McIntosh: I had a couple of Rottweilers.

Botts: Those are nice dogs.

McIntosh: Lovely dogs. I really enjoyed them.

Botts: Now when you get into the other dog uses like scout dogs, most of the scout dogs I seen were black Labs that would go out with the long range patrols, they would be up with the Point Man.

McIntosh: They had different duty?

Botts: Right. And those dogs were friendly, because they had to live with the squad. They were there just to detect scent, mines, trip wires, whatever. They had completely different jobs then. My job was to protect ammo dumps and perimeters, basically.

McIntosh: I'm trying to get all this down before we get into work. This is what you've learned from the other guys? Were they in your group?

Botts: When I was—I didn't run into any of them till I was up in Tay Ninh--actually over in Tay Ninh. Then there were the, I think the 41st Scout dogs. They had a kennel set up, larger than ours. There were a lot of patrols and stuff going out of Tain Yin.

McIntosh: But mainly they were looking for explosives, those dogs. Is that correct?

Botts: I think their main duty was to detect the enemy before they got into an ambush situation, but then they were also trained to detect mines, trip wires, anything out of the normal. The dog would start fussing over it. We call it

“alert.” They would get interested in it. But I think their main duty as far as scout dogs was to detect the enemy, before the enemy detected you.

McIntosh: A worthwhile project, if ever I heard.

Botts: Oh yeah. Them guys loved them scout dogs (laughing).

McIntosh: I bet they did. I talked to two guys who were in Vietnam; Dennis Whitener and Tim McQ both from Madison; they were on the trail and one of them used dogs and the other didn't.

Botts: There just wasn't enough dogs to go around for everybody unfortunately.

McIntosh: Well now tell me about going to work. They gave you a perimeter you were supposed to guard--

Botts: When I first got to Vietnam, we were first sent to Long Binh and that was the big central hub. Then we had satellites out maybe eight to ten satellites.

McIntosh: What was in a satellite?

Botts: Satellites were basically base camps where you send like a few--

McIntosh: Artillery camps?

Botts: Tay Ninh had artillery and it also was the 1st Cav where they had a lot of helicopters, Cobras in there, like another one was Bear Cat. Ammo Dumps we guarded the big Ammo Dump in Long Binh of course; but then at these little satellites they all had their own separate little ammo dumps. We guarded those ammo dumps to keep them guys from sneaking in with their satchel charges and blowing up the dumps.

McIntosh: So how big of an area would one dog patrol?

Botts: Probably about a couple of hundred yards.

McIntosh: And in each direction.

Botts: Yeah, and then the post would meet. You might have one post here along the perimeter and then another post, and then another post. There'd be like three dogs and three dog handlers. You would cover this area, this dog would cover this area, and that dog would cover that area.

McIntosh: Got it. You worked twelve hours on and twelve hours off?

Botts: No, it was six hours.

McIntosh: Six hours.

Botts: There were two hour shifts. Six til midnight or midnight to six in the morning. They figured a dog could only work six hours.

McIntosh: One stretch?

Botts: In one stretch.

McIntosh: Nighttime was the only time they were utilized then?

Botts: Right.

McIntosh: They figured they didn't need them in the daytime?

Botts: No, cuz you can see what was going on. Basically to keep these guys from sneaking up at night--

McIntosh: That was the main purpose?

Botts: And sneaking in. Yes.

McIntosh: So you had six hour shifts. The dog moved constantly? You and the dog are walking constantly?

Botts: You constantly walk back and forth.

McIntosh: On your beat.

Botts: The way most of the base camps are set up there was a mound of dirt and then on the berm about every hundred yards there would be a bunker on the berm. There would be four or five guys with their M-16's. Then probably every, I don't know, three hundred yards there'd be a tower and on that tower was usually a fifty caliber machine gun. So you would walk out in front of the berm next to the first string of concertina wire which was probably seventy-five yards away from the berm.

McIntosh: The wire?

Botts: The wire, and then there would be three strands of wire out from the first strand.

McIntosh: So someone coming in would have to go through three levels of concertina wire.

Botts: Exactly. So it did give you some time.

McIntosh: Well, the dog wouldn't pick them up until they got inside that wire.

Botts: No, the dog a lot of times would pick them up out in the wire.

McIntosh: You can't send the dog out there, he would never make it.

Botts: Oh, no. You shoot them out there; but they're out in the wire. The dog alerts on them out there.

McIntosh: He might pick up their scent?

Botts: Yeah. Even though he hasn't crossed a track, he can pick up their scent.

McIntosh: If the wind is in the right direction.

Botts: Correct.

McIntosh: He suddenly turns and looks in that way.

Botts: Yep.

McIntosh: But it's still at night now.

Botts: Right. And I have thrown hand grenades and stuff out there until he decided it might have been a snake or monkey, I don't know, but sometimes I throw grenades until he's not excited anymore (laughing).

McIntosh: When he got excited would he bark?

Botts: No barking. Oh, no. Barking is a no-no.

McIntosh: How do you discourage barking? You just say no? Right off the bat.

Botts: Right. It seems to be something that happens in the training. When that collar goes on there's no barking. When the choke chain is on they'll bark.

McIntosh: But there's no specific way you--

Botts: You discourage them from barking.

McIntosh: With the collar on.

Botts: With the collar on and if the dog is a habitual barker with the collar on and you can't break him of it, well, he's not going to be any good to you.

McIntosh: Is that right?

Botts: Yeah. But it doesn't seem to me like we really had any major problems with that. They seemed like they knew what was going on or something.

McIntosh: Even when they were attacking, being violent and vicious, no barking.

Botts: That was what was so deadly about them. The enemy didn't even know what was happening to them until it was too late. Cuz they couldn't see the dog coming at night.

McIntosh: That's a scary thing.

Botts: Yea. Scared the heck out of them (laughing).

McIntosh: Ok. You trot the line for six hours just walking slowly then both you got a rest?

Botts: Then we'd go back to where our hooch was.

McIntosh: What did you do for the next twelve hours?

Botts: Let's see if you had the early shift you got up in the morning and then usually the guys who worked the early shift had different jobs to do, clean up the Company Area--

McIntosh: The dog did nothing?

Botts: No. The dog does nothing. Except that in the afternoon you'd have a training session. Maybe one hour.

McIntosh: Review?

Botts: A review. Maybe one day all you'll do is basic obedience. Basic commands and just to spend more time with your dog and work him.

McIntosh: On the collar or off the collar?

Botts: That would be a choke chain deal, on obedience. But then two or three hours a week you would work them on attacking a person with a--

McIntosh: Who were these guys they were attacking?

Botts: Us guys (laughing). Everybody had to take a turn (laughing). Kind of went in a rotation, like burning the crap!

- McIntosh: What would you think when the dog was coming at you?
- Botts: You wanted to make sure that you waved your arms, so that he would bite the arms first or go for the arm. We always trained them with a muzzle on usually. We did some off muzzle training in Okinawa. You're always taking a chance when you take that muzzle off that he'll come off of here (showing on himself) and get you somewhere you don't want to get nailed. Some would train with the muzzle on almost all the time.
- McIntosh: Get bit?
- Botts: I got raked a couple of times. I was telling you before with the tooth. Cuz usually when they have the muzzle on and we're just training them and it's hot out and stuff you don't want to put that whole darn suit on. You'll just put the sleeve on.
- McIntosh: That sleeve is what?
- Botts: It's like a real heavy-duty canvas with padding underneath it. Yeah, they're hot.
- McIntosh: But the dog can't bite through that?
- Botts: No. Usually not except for the thin spots and they might find places; but where he rakes you is whenever you're running away, then he knocks you down. They literally knock you right off your feet. They run right into you; into your feet, knock you down then they go for your throat.

[End of Side A of Tape 1.]

- McIntosh: You don't have to teach them that?
- Botts: No, they naturally figure that out. Then if you're running away they can't get to your throat so they naturally run right into your legs, and when you fall down then they're working on you up here (indicating throat).
- McIntosh: Just like a lion does to ganus out in the field.
- Botts: Right. You would probably get taken in the throat right away if you were, say, coming into an area and you had released your dog after dark and you weren't running away and the dog was coming at you. He would knock you down and they'd go right for your throat.
- McIntosh: Anyone get killed in that business? In the training?

- Botts: Not in dog training. Lost a couple of guys in basic training.
- McIntosh: How?
- Botts: We had a bout of meningitis and I think we lost one guy to that. There was another company there where they were in formation and some guy was toasted (?). Some sergeant and ran into formation killed two or three guys. That's the only guys I know were killed. They had that wet ball breeding in basic and whatever that was and if it was too hot then they couldn't exercise you til you about died (laughing).
- McIntosh: The dogs took the heat very well?
- Botts: Yes. I think that's why they used Collies and shepherds cuz they seemed to take it. That's why nights it was cooler you know. It wasn't like you were out there in the heat of the day so that helped.
- McIntosh: Did you use many flashlights or were you completely in the dark?
- Botts: No lights.
- McIntosh: That was a no-no.
- Botts: There were flood lights going out into the wire so you were working behind the flood lights. Anybody coming through the wire couldn't see anything.
- McIntosh: Cuz the light would be in their face.
- Botts: That was the only light you had.
- McIntosh: Did you have any interesting experiences with that dog on the field?
- Botts: In Long Binh there was nothing. That was like guarding Forest Hill Cemetery; there was (laughing) nothing going on. When we got to Tay Ninh, they were sneaking in and blowing the--
- McIntosh: Ammo dumps.
- Botts: All the time there was like twelve of us went up to Tay Ninh. I never had any personal experience with the dogs; as far as releasing the dog on a person. There was a situation where some of them did penetrate the wire. Not where I was at. What I heard there also was they didn't like to be killed by animals. Apparently it was something to do with their religion.
- McIntosh: Not in my religion, but I wouldn't want one either.

- Botts: If they were killed by animals they didn't go to what their heaven was.
- McIntosh: Particularly frightened of dogs.
- Botts: Right. I don't know if it was the Hindu religion or probably the Buddhist religion maybe. I don't know. After we started walking dogs in Tay Ninh there was not one attempt to blow the ammo dump. They kept mortaring and rocketing all the time and they weren't all that accurate. We had next door-- Well, one morning about eleven o'clock we had a 122 attack; and those are the big long range rockets. There was three guys killed next door. I had bought a Panasonic Stereo and had it sitting on my sand bags from the P.X. that got blowed off and I wasn't too happy about that (laughing), and a couple of big holes in our company area. Fortunately nobody was out in the Company area. We had an Engineering Company next to us and there were two or three guys killed right next to us. As far as penetrating the wire, when I was there, once they started walking the dogs on it they stayed away.
- McIntosh: What was your outfit again?
- Botts: The 212th M.P. Company.
- McIntosh: Company. It was part of what?
- Botts: It was part of the 720th M.P. Battalion. That was part of the 18th M.P. Brigade. The 18th M.P. Brigade is what covered all of Vietnam. I think all of the M.P.'s in Vietnam were part of the 18th M.P. Brigade.
- McIntosh: How many dogs would you say were involved?
- Botts: I think, if I remember correctly, there was--I want to say like thirty-five hundred dogs during the whole stance of Vietnam.
- McIntosh: Thirty-five hundred, that's a lot.
- Botts: Yeah. I'm not sure if that number's correct. That's a ballpark figure.
- McIntosh: How many dogs in your company?
- Botts: In Long Binh, which supplied all the dogs for all the satellites and stuff, there was probably one hundred and twenty-five to one hundred and fifty dogs. Then we guarded the Long Binh ammo dump and that took fifteen dogs a night--let's see, double that, probably thirty dogs. Then we guarded the P.X. yard, because our own guys you know are pretty slippery (laughing). So they were in there stealing out of the P.X. yard.
- McIntosh: I'm sure that dog would discourage that.

- Botts: Oh yeah. And when we guarded, this is kind of funny because when we were guarding the food yard they give us an old Model 97 shotgun which is World War I vintage. I never fired it but I don't know if I ever would itralled (?).
- McIntosh: For show?
- Botts: Yeah, was just for show. They didn't give us a whole lot of bullets neither. They give us three bullets (laughing). We were in the food yard so--
- McIntosh: That's another question. What weapon did you carry when you were out patrolling with this dog?
- Botts: In Long Binh I carried one weapon and that's the M-16; but in Tay Nihn we were getting periodic ground attacks and stuff. The M-16 at night is not a good weapon.
- McIntosh: Because?
- Botts: Because you'd run out of bullets too fast. Cuz you can't see what you're doing. So in Tay Nihn we carried hand grenades, M-79 grenade launchers, handguns and a knife (laughing).
- McIntosh: Just like those pictures you see.
- Botts: That was taken in Long Binh, the pictures, the only weapon I have in that picture is an M-16. At the time when I was in Long Binh there was no activity there. They just weren't attacking that situation. In Tay Nihn we were getting mortared every other night, rocketed, and they kept testing the wire in different places all the time. The first situation I got into they hand you a bandolier, where you've got 7 clips of 20 rounds each for the M-16. You can't see what you're doing, you need a little more spatter situations. The first time I got into a situation, shoot! I was out of ammo and didn't have nothing except for my dog. I decided that was going to have to change. We would keep our stuff, we weren't supposed to have this stuff but we'd keep it out on post since we were guarding the ammo yard, we had a ready supply hand grenades, M-79 ammo.
- McIntosh: That's a grenade, launched grenade.
- Botts: That has the bullets that's that big around and that long, it kind of goes "poff" when you shoot it and it shoots a projectile that big around and that long. You can get them in all kinds of configurations, high explosives, shot gun type pattern, I thing they had a flare. They had a whole bunch of configurations. I just used H.E.

McIntosh: High explosive.

Botts: Yeah. High explosive carried two bandoliers of five rounds each or six rounds don't remember now.

McIntosh: For that.

Botts: For that and carried four to six hand grenades, a handgun and a knife (laughing) and a dog. I didn't like the fact of shooting all my bullets off and having nothing left. At least when you're with a dog and there is a ground attack you always move off the wire and go up over the berm and let the guards that are in the bunkers try and take care of everything.

McIntosh: The dog?

Botts: The dog is with me, and I had my hand in his collar so he doesn't--

McIntosh: The enemy's coming at you, so he's not exactly knows what to attack, right?

Botts: No, you want to make sure he knows who he's going for. Yea.

McIntosh: Not one of the guys on top of the--

Botts: No, you don't want him to get misconstrued. Plus the fact there's a lot of shooting out there and you don't want to loose your dog. Yeah, you don't send him out into a firefight.

McIntosh: When you're out there, then those other guys do they specifically know not to touch your dog?

Botts: Oh yeah. They figure it out pretty quick. Usually these guys that are in the bunkers most of them were guys who had just come in from long range patrols, so--

McIntosh: They're dog handlers themselves?

Botts: No. They are lurps (LLRP) They're the infantry guys out on patrol for say a week or three days depending on what their tour was. When they come in, they put them on bunker-duty. These guys are pretty tired. I'd usually go up and introduce myself cuz they can't see me out there either.

McIntosh: If it moves it gets shot!

Botts: Yeah. I was fired on. The guys that were firing on me I think were doing a lot of drugs (laughing) they weren't quite in their right mind until I figured out I was going to let my dog loose. The dog wanted to go after them (laughing).

McIntosh: (laughing)

Botts: Then I gets up there and they're all toast (laughing).

McIntosh: They look at the dog and know enough not to fool with him.

Botts: I have taken a break in the middle of the night with the tower guys, not the tower guys, the bunker guys. One guy stays awake and the other guys will sleep. We'll sit out in front of the bunker.

McIntosh: Where is the dog now?

Botts: I'll be settin' here and the dog will be settin' here and the he will be settin' here. I'll have the dog lay down, take a break, we'll set and bullshit for awhile and then continue on.

McIntosh: The man could not pet the dog?

Botts: Oh no. Shouldn't even talk to him. Just ignore him, but he even exists.

McIntosh: Must be hard to learn; people who like dogs.

Botts: Yeah. (laughing) It is but they figure out right away because they don't want to get bit either.

McIntosh: If he accidentally reached over to pet him the dog might turn and bite him?

Botts: Oh yeah. Good chance of it.

McIntosh: Without a word being said?

Botts: Without a word being said.

McIntosh: The guy could just reach over at him?

Botts: Yep.

McIntosh: Put his hand in front of his face he'd get bit?

Botts: Good chance of it.

McIntosh: Jesus!

Botts: Yeah. They're--

McIntosh: Well, you've got to keep those dogs under careful careful control.

Botts: Yeah. One time I came up on a bunker and there was nobody, they were all passed out (laughing).

McIntosh: On guard duty?

Botts: On guard duty! (laughing). So then here comes the Sergeant of the Guard in his jeep, and I kicked a couple of 'em to get them stirred.

McIntosh: Right.

Botts: Then I walked down toward the jeep, and when they pulled up, the sergeant yelled up and he didn't get a response right away and he started to get out of his jeep. I had my dog at full leash, the dog started growling at him (laughing). So he got back in his jeep, so then one of them guys finally yelled at him. So the sergeant knew he was awake then the sergeant headed on down the line. I walked back up to the bunker; they owed me one for that.

McIntosh: They sure did!

Botts: They'd all got busted (laughing).

McIntosh: They would have.

Botts: Yes, they would have. Probably one of the most dangerous times of walking your post there was during lightning storms. Cuz they have electronically detonated claymore mines out there. You know what those are?

McIntosh: Yes.

Botts: The claymores, and then they have a switch board in the bunker, so when you're walking, when I was walking my dog them would be out by and I was actually walking slightly in front of them or slightly behind them. But during a lightning storm every once and a while those things would go off. During a lightning storm I usually walked my dog back by the berm (laughing).

McIntosh: We don't need to patrol now.

Botts: No. We're not doing that.

McIntosh: But that was a dangerous time?

Botts: Yeah. During lightning storms was bad; because you had a lot of electronically detonated ordinance that could go off.

- McIntosh: So you spent a year doing this?
- Botts: I was in, actually I was in Tay Ninh. I was only there for a few months. I actually spent a longer time in Long Binh. In Tay Ninh at the time I was there.
- McIntosh: How do you spell that by the way?
- Botts: T-a-y-n N-i-h-n.
- McIntosh: That was a fire base?
- Botts: Yeah. That was—there was a little city—there was a little town outside but we had—there was a big base camp there. That was a pretty good-sized base camp.
- McIntosh: Yeah. You said the helicopter--
- Botts: Yeah. The 1st Cav was in there, the 41st Scout Dogs. See whenever there would be an attack them Cobra Gunships were right up in the air, they'd be out there instantly. Even during mortar attack, even when they fired mortars, they usually could only get five or six mortars off before the Cobras were in the air and they had a sense of where they were at. They would mini-gun the hell out the them. There was enough Cobra Gunships that after the one dropped all of his ordinance he could fly back and get re-equipped before the last one had made his run. They had enough that they could keep a constant circle of fire.
- McIntosh: You know the guy that runs this veterans thing, Ray Boland (Secretary of Veterans Affairs) that's what he did.
- Botts: Yeah, we liked them guys (laughing).
- McIntosh: Right? Because they gave you instant protection didn't they?
- Botts: Oh yeah. It was nice having them guys. They'd run different artillery units through there. We were close to Nui Ba Den, the Black Virgin Mountain. We kind of owned the top and the bottom and they owned the middle. I guess it was all full of tunnels and stuff. They were constantly shelling the hell out of it all the time. They'd bring in different guns all the time. I don't know one didn't work they'd bring in them big howitzers.
- McIntosh: We would be shelling this or they--
- Botts: Our artillery units in Tay Ninh.

- McIntosh: Using different ordinance.
- Botts: Using different artillery pieces. Cuz they would try them big fat stubby jobs for awhile. Yeah. And then one time they came in and I wondered “what the hell is that.” They brought in I think some 155’s, them big long guns. That basically shook the ground when them babies--They were just shootin’ all the time at Nui Ba Den. Having a good time I—may be just blowing off rounds (laughing).
- McIntosh: So when it got time to leave how did you separate from your dog?
- Botts: Well, it wasn’t that much fun, it was hard to do.
- McIntosh: I’ll bet.
- Botts: You basically, well, you had two emotions; one is you had the opportunity to go home “I’m lucky enough to be still sucking air and I want to get the Hell out of here,” but then again you don’t want to leave your dog. It’s really a bad situation, a lot of guys really lost it.
- McIntosh: Not just having tears I mean emotionally distraught. Ooh wee!
- Botts: Yeah.
- McIntosh: Ooh wee!
- Botts: It’s bad. I mean that dog served you well, you know, the whole time you’re there. He didn’t drink, he didn’t fall asleep on the job.
- McIntosh: (laughing)
- Botts: (laughing)
- McIntosh: No smoking pot.
- Botts: No smoking pot; he didn’t. He didn’t do none of that shit! Maybe you fell asleep once in awhile; but you knew the dog wasn’t going to fall asleep. You know so.
- McIntosh: Were you impressed by their reliability?
- Botts: Oh yes.
- McIntosh: Like you said when you fall asleep they’re always alert they never fall asleep.
- Botts: Yep. Nobody ever caught me falling asleep when on post (laughing).

McIntosh: If somebody came up the dog would start stirring?

Botts: Oh yeah. I'd have the leash wrapped around my arm.

McIntosh: Right.

Botts: You'd be settin' there and you didn't intend on dozing off--

McIntosh: Right.

Botts: If you're tired and stuff every once and awhile it happens.

McIntosh: Yea.

Botts: and you knows (?).

McIntosh: So how would it play out there then?

Botts: Oh! The dog would start pullin' on ya. He would come to an alert position.

McIntosh: That's when he would sit up?

Botts: Yeah, he would stand up.

McIntosh: Stand up?

Botts: Yeah, he would stand up start pull—well, you would wake up instantly cuz you're kind of—it's not like you're laid out on the ground with a bed there and everything you know. You're kind of set down to take a break, and every once and a while it happens (laughing).

McIntosh: Did you have trouble with dog illnesses? Did they seem to get sick very often?

Botts: My dog got very sick and they called it--

McIntosh: Gastro-intestinal.

Botts: They thought it was a tick disease.

McIntosh: Oh.

Botts: And we had to dip our dogs in a malathion; and that was always interesting cuz you would strip down to your underwear, cuz you couldn't let your dog loose. We had a big dip tank.

- McIntosh: So you got dipped too?
- Botts: And you got dipped too because, well what would happen was, you were on a five-foot leash and that wasn't long enough (laughing).
- McIntosh: (laughing)
- Botts: And you'd take this grease put it in their eyes, so they wouldn't let the malathion in their eyes. Malathion is what they used around here when they first—when I was a kid to spray mosquitos. It's a white—it looks like milk when it's mixed up with water, so then you'd grab your dog like this and you took him over to the dip tank. They didn't like it much (laughing). You'd have the muzzle on because they might bite you too. Cuz they didn't like it at all.
- McIntosh: They'd growl then.
- Botts: Yeah! Hell, yeah! They were pissed. You would just pick 'em up and they knew they were gonna get dipped. Cuz they had their ears down flat (laughing) and you just picked them up and dropped them in this and as they hit the water you'd grab the back of their neck and by the pelvis and you'd just submerge them right in this stuff.
- McIntosh: Total?
- Botts: Total! And then you'd pick them up right out of the dip tank. Well, you've still got your leash on your arm and then they would go like (showing motion) and you would get soaked; so then you would hurry up and take your dog back to the kennel, and then you would run over to the blister bag where they had, we had all canvas type showers set up. You'd run over there and take a shower as soon as you could.
- McIntosh: Still attached to the dog?
- Botts: And what?
- McIntosh: Still attached to the dog?
- Botts: Oh, no. You had to get your dog back to the kennel.
- McIntosh: Ok.
- Botts: And then you had to get yourself to the shower.
- McIntosh: Get the hell over there.

Botts: (laughing) Yes!

McIntosh: Did that—what'd you call it?

Botts: Malathion.

McIntosh: Did that bother your skin?

Botts: I don't think that did. I had some skin problems around my groin area and stuff.

McIntosh: That was the heat.

Botts: I think that was the heat and I went to the V.A. and within I think five or six months of outpatient treatment. I have never been back.

McIntosh: And the dog you said became ill. How did it affect the dog?

Botts: We had to feed him lots of Tetracycline pills. I almost lost him one time when I was in Long Binh.

McIntosh: You mean they became--

Botts: The blood would get real thin.

McIntosh: Became weak.

Botts: Became weak, very weak and lethargic.

McIntosh: That's how you know.

Botts: And if you couldn't get it turned the other way, well then they would die. But I always kind of had the opinion that it might have been pesticide poisoning.

McIntosh: Oops.

Botts: But they don't like to tell about that.

McIntosh: Agent Orange.

Botts: Yea.

McIntosh: Uh huh.

Botts: Cuz we walked in that, well we walked in it and there's jungle just across the-

McIntosh: Right.

Botts: The thing and you'd see these guys in three-quarter ton trucks with the prayer spraying anything that's green between the berm and probably two-hundred yards out past the third strand of corner turn a wire. Cuz they had about five hundred yards that you cleared before you got to the berm so you had a good field of fire. Yeah, I kind of more suspected it was chemical poisoning more than some tick disease that they dreamed up; but ain't gonna prove that (laughing).

McIntosh: So anyway when you got—after you finished your time, put the dog in the kennel and away you went. Did you introduce the—no, it's not your job to deal with the next.

Botts: No, and a matter of fact, that German Shepherd that I picked up belonged; the guy made Sergeant then so he went to staff duty then walking a post and I got his dog when I got to Vietnam and then hopefully, and I never ran into the guy after me to see if my dog was trained. But I did meet this Sergeant after I got back from Vietnam when I went to a doghandlers reunion. There's a Vietnam Dog Handlers Association.

McIntosh: Oh.

Botts: And they have a reunion every other year.

McIntosh: Did you have a name for the dog?

Botts: His name was Roland and his serial number was OH82 and they're all printed on the under of his lip. They're all tattooed.

McIntosh: Their number.

Botts: Yes. As in their ear somewhere in the lip, but most of them were in their ear, excuse me.

McIntosh: But I mean when you called the dog did it have a name, the dog.

Botts: Yeah, Roland.

McIntosh: Oh, Roland. It's two syllables, that's unusual for most.

Botts: Yeah.

McIntosh: One syllable because it's easier.

Botts: Right. Yep (?) isn't it about. They kept the same name; that was his name in Germany (laughing).

McIntosh: Roland.

Botts: Yep.

McIntosh: Was that the signal that we're getting the collar put on or not.

Botts: No. Usually there was no command. When you had your collar in your hand, he'd automatically sit. You'd take the choke chain, well, you'd put the collar on and then--

McIntosh: Did he seem to look forward to that. He liked that?

Botts: Oh yeah. He liked to work. He liked doing what he was doing. That means he got out of the kennel.

McIntosh: Yep. But no extra food or anything.

Botts: Nope, they were fed.

McIntosh: On a schedule of some kind?

Botts: Three pounds of food they were given.

McIntosh: You didn't do any of that?

Botts: Nope. I didn't have to do. Nope. The Vet. Techo took care of all that.

McIntosh: What they did was impersonal. They just put it in the cage and so they didn't touch the dog or anything.

Botts: Right. Yep. They slid it, the bottom of the cage gate was far enough that the dishes just slid right underneath that.

McIntosh: Was that once a day?

Botts: Yes. Once a day they were fed half meat, half dried dog food mixed together.

McIntosh: What about the water.

Botts: H2O was available at all times.

McIntosh: How about in the field?

Botts: You carried a canteen.

McIntosh: For them?

Botts: Well, for both of us.

McIntosh: Both of us.

Botts: And usually a quart of water well, whatever one held was enough for six hour stint and as I said you was king at night, it isn't like you're not in ops during the day where it's really--

McIntosh: That would be different then you'd need more in the canteen.

Botts: And then during monsoons when it's raining and stuff you didn't need to carry any water cuz most of the time you're cold (laughing).

McIntosh: Ok, I'm running out of questions. So after you left Vietnam they flew you home ?

Botts: Yep. I uh, I flew home and then ah', I think it's Travis Air Force Base flew into, and uh, you went through well, before I left, you had about three days to sit around in this disembarkment station and they give you some information there and this and that then when we got back to Travis you had to make your decision whether you were leaving. Because I had extended fifty-four days in Vietnam so I could get—and I got a five month early out, so I only spent nineteen months in the Army. That's my whole military career. So I stayed an extra fifty-four days extra in Vietnam so I could get five months out early.

McIntosh: I see.

Botts: So then when I got there, then I went through the mustering out station and then got on an airplane and that plane flew to Chicago, got on another plane and flew to Madison and--

McIntosh: That was it.

Botts: Met my parents, off to home (laughing).

McIntosh: We get any medals?

Botts: Just the Good Conduct Medal and the Army Commendation Medal.

McIntosh: No Unit Citations?

- Botts: They got the Red one and the Blue one. I think it's the Presidential Citation.
- McIntosh: Yea, you got one of those? Your unit did?
- Botts: Yeah, well, they give you all your medals when you leave cuz they give you a brand-new uniform, a dress uniform, I didn't even know the unit had those two things but they said they did so--
- McIntosh: You found them on your uniform?
- Botts: I found them on my uniform (laughing).
- McIntosh: (laughing) Did you use your G.I. Bill when you got out?
- Botts: That I did, I took a correspondence course in auto-mechanics that was for my own use. I figured on going back to school then my Dad was tired of me laying around the house; and he kept looking at the job section of the newspaper.
- McIntosh: Trying to help.
- Botts: And he found—there was an opening at the zoo. I got back in November of 1970 and I started at the zoo in February of 1971 and I've been working for the city ever since. I just completed my thirtieth year last February.
- McIntosh: Thirtieth year.
- Botts: Yeah with the City of Madison. I worked at the zoo til 1984 so when the zoo went county I transferred over to the—I was a foreman and I lost some money so I did a lateral transfer to the City of Madison. Traffic Engineering and I work in the sign-shop.
- McIntosh: Did you get married.
- Botts: Got married in 1974. Still married to the same person (laughing). Got two kids: two girls, twenty-two and eighteen; the eighteen-year-old graduated this year. The twenty-two-year-old, it's her fourth year at the U.W. Madison).
- McIntosh: Bout time for grandchildren.
- Botts: Well! We're not in too much hurry (laughing).
- McIntosh: Ok.
- Botts: Maybe. Mom is (laughing).

McIntosh: Makes you feel old.

Botts: Oh yeah. I'm 52. So, yep! Startin' to get there.

McIntosh: Veterans organizations?

Botts: I belong to the Middleton VFW.

McIntosh: Your father told me that.

Botts: And I belong to the Vietnam Doghandler Association.

McIntosh: Oh.

Botts: They have newsletter and as I said a reunion every other year.

McIntosh: Well attended?

Botts: It's a well-attended meeting, I haven't been, I was there, well, they're having another this year in St. Louis which I'll probably make and I haven't been there for six years. Six years ago they were down in San Antonio, Texas and then sometimes they'll meet in Washington D.C.

McIntosh: Good question—do you have a dog?

Botts: When I first got out of the service I got a Chesapeake Bay Retriever and--

McIntosh: Good dog.

Botts: And when he was seven years old, he died of leukemia.

McIntosh: I had a golden that did the same thing.

Botts: Right in the prime of their life. I didn't get another dog. My daughter got a German Shepherd/Finnish/Spitz mix. Weighs about fifty, fifty-five pounds. There's a dog in the house (laughing).

McIntosh: You showed her how to handle that dog I'll bet.

Botts: Yeah! No! Not much, you can't tell them kids nothin' (laughing). She does what she wants. It is a very nice dog, very intelligent.

McIntosh: Well that's good. Well, I've run out of soap. I can't think of anything else. Did you forget any stories that you didn't talk about.

- Botts: When I was in Tay Nihn, we had a hooch dog, a little pet dog, that ran round. We had a chicken, then one of the guys sent a swimming pool, we got of four of us we could get in the swimming pool at a time.
- McIntosh: With the chicken and the dog.
- Botts: With the chicken, the dog and a beer (laughing).
- McIntosh: The dog didn't fuss with that chicken.
- Botts: No, chicken and the dog got along.
- McIntosh: The chicken probably scared the dog.
- Botts: Yeah. Well, the dog was just a little bitty thing.
- McIntosh: So the chicken stood tall.
- Botts: We saved the dog from getting eaten. Oh, speaking of getting eaten. When we left Tay Nihn, it was turned over to the ARVN's and we gave them a bunch of dogs and later we found out they ate the dogs.
- McIntosh: Oh! I'm sure!
- Botts: Yep! (laughing)
- McIntosh: That's the way it was in Korea. There were no dogs. I said "where are all the dogs?" They said they ate them.
- Botts: Yep, that's right.
- McIntosh: Cut down all the trees for firewood and ate all the dogs.
- Botts: Yep. That's why we saved this little dog we found him wandering around; he would have been on somebody's plate. (laughing)
- McIntosh: Oh! My God! As far as you know, when we left Vietnam what did the United States do? Just eliminated the dogs or--?
- Botts: I think that all the dogs were all euthanized. I really do.
- McIntosh: There'd be no place for them.
- Botts: All the dogs were pulled out in 1973, would have been pulled out in 1973. You know at the end of the war except that the war was still going on in 1975.

Except that nobody was admitting that the war was going on (laughing). Cuz there was a cease-fire supposedly in 1973, the bullets were still flying in 1975.

McIntosh: All right. Good job.

[End of Interview.]