

**Wisconsin Veterans Museum  
Research Center**

Transcript of an

Oral History Interview with

**ROBERT E. CLAMPITT**

U.S. Army, Korean War, Cold War, and Vietnam War

2000

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**Clampitt, Robert E.**, (b.1928). Oral History Interview, 2000.

User: 2 sound cassettes (ca. 77 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master: 1 videorecording (ca. 77 min.); ½ inch, color.

**Abstract:**

Robert E. Clampitt, a Cross Plains, Wisconsin resident, discusses his career with the Army spanning the Korean, Cold, and Vietnam Wars. He discusses his service in Italy along the Isonzo River with the 88th Division, Company K, 350th Infantry after graduating from Intelligence School. He also describes the living conditions that Italian civilians faced after World War II. After a year in Italy, Clampitt reports being discharged and coming back to Madison where he joined the Army Reserve as part of the 84th Airborne Division. He then relates information about his service in Korea with the 24th Division where he served as Staff Sergeant and was assigned to guarding prisoners. Clampitt explains that he re-enlisted for six years in 1960 and was sent to Germany with the 24th Division. He describes his recon patrol along the Berlin Wall and recalls his impression of dealing with the East Germans. He recounts one particular experience of spotting a Russian soldier near the Brandenburg Gate. He states he was given orders to attend Special Warfare School to prepare for Vietnam in 1965, working at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Corps Tactical Operations Center as a Non-Commissioned Officer-In-Charge (NCOIO). He states that was re-assigned to the University of Wisconsin as an Operations Center Sergeant, where he describes being treated like a second-class citizen. Clampitt illustrates the atmosphere on campus during the Vietnam protests and riots, especially towards police officers and military personnel. He tells of his return to Vietnam in 1968. He states he served as an advisor to the Regional Forces Popular Forces (RFPF) and was sent to the Mekong Delta. Clampitt goes on to give his opinion of the North Vietnamese soldiers and recalls some of his observation missions. He details an incident where he found a 500-pound bomb. Clampitt also recalls encounters with the actor Jimmy Stewart and General Abrams. He describes the food and weather in Vietnam. Clampitt finished his tour in 1969.

### **Biographical Sketch:**

Clampitt [b. 1928] was born in Terre Haute, Indiana, and graduated high school in Madison, Wisconsin, in June 1946. He enlisted in the Army right after high school and had a twenty-year career in the Army with service in Italy just after World War II, in Korea during the Korean War, in West Germany during the Cold War, and two tours of Vietnam during the Vietnam War. He also served as an ROTC instructor at the University of Illinois-Chicago and as an Operations Center Sergeant at University of Wisconsin-Madison in between tours. Clampitt retired in 1971 as a 1<sup>st</sup> Sergeant. After the military, Clampitt settled in Cross Plain, Wisconsin, with his wife and children where he joined the local police force before retiring in 1991.

Interviewed by James McIntosh, 2000

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## **Interview Transcript:**

McIntosh: Off and running, talking to Bob Clampitt. It's the 1<sup>st</sup> of September, year 2000. Where were you born, Clampitt?

Clampitt: Terre Haute, Indiana.

McIntosh: H-A-U-T-E?

Clampitt: H-A-U-T-E.

McIntosh: And when?

Clampitt: April 22, 1928.

McIntosh: '28?

Clampitt: Mm-hmm.

McIntosh: And you entered military service—year, year and place?

Clampitt: Ah, Madison, Wisconsin, June of '46. I had enlisted in April, but they didn't want to take me till I was done with high school.

McIntosh: Six of '46.

Clampitt: Mm-hmm.

McIntosh: Okay. Then, tell me, how'd it go? Where'd you go first and so forth.

Clampitt: Ah, went to, ah, Fort McClellan, Alabama, Infantry Replacement Training Center.

McIntosh: You—were you an enlistee or a draftee?

Clampitt: I enlisted.

McIntosh: I see. You enlisted as a regular to go forth (??). I mean you'd planned on a career [unintelligible]—

Clampitt: I was just gonna—a couple of years. Get in on the GI Bill of Rights and go to college.

McIntosh: Okay. And, ah, you had your basic then in Alabama.

Clampitt: Yeah.

McIntosh: And after that did they try to make you into a specialist of some kind?

Clampitt: Uh, I was offered OCS [Officer Candidate School] and turned it down. I had a high Army General Classification Test score of 136 or something. You only need a 110 for OCS.

McIntosh: Right.

Clampitt: But that would've been five more years in the Army, and I wasn't going to do that at that time at eighteen years old.

McIntosh: Exactly.

Clampitt: So they made me to go to Intelligence School instead at Fort Riley, Kansas, ah, which at that time before they moved to [Fort] Holabird [Maryland] was under the Cavalry School. Went to Fort Riley, Kansas, and had an eight week class in order of battle of photo interpreting.

McIntosh: That was classroom—classroom work—

Clampitt: Yup, mm-hmm.

McIntosh: Okay.

Clampitt: Some field work, but mostly classroom.

McIntosh: Was it difficult particularly, or was there a big dropout rate?

Clampitt: Ah, I don't remember anybody droppin' out. It wasn't particularly hard. Of course, we all had to have a high AGC—

McIntosh: To begin with.

Clampitt: To get there. The only thing that bothered me, I joined the Army to get out of school, and here I'm right back in school [laughs].

McIntosh: Right. So at Kansas then at Fort Riley, ah, after you left, you left there, where to?

Clampitt: Italy. 88th Division.

McIntosh: In Italy.

Clampitt: Mm-hmm. Company K, 350<sup>th</sup> Infantry.

McIntosh: 88th Division?

Clampitt: Mm-hmm.

McIntosh: What was 88<sup>th</sup> Division doing in Italy at that time?

Clampitt: Ah, we were on along the Isonzo River, basically where the World War I fighting had taken place.

McIntosh: Oh.

Clampitt: And we were fighting actually on and off with Yugoslavs. They were, ah —

McIntosh: They didn't think the war was over?

Clampitt: They wanted all of the Venezia Giulia [region in N.E. Italy bordering Slovenia and Austria]. And we didn't want give it to 'em until, [McIntosh laughs] ah, the peace treaty was officially signed. They wanted Trieste, they wanted Gorizia—

McIntosh: The Italians wanted 'em, too.

Clampitt: Yeah, all the things that they had had when they were Austria-Hungary, they lost in World War I, they wanted 'em back.

McIntosh: They wanted it all back.

Clampitt: Istrian Peninsula, Pola, and we didn't want to give it back to 'em. And their feeling was, ah, "We were on your side."

McIntosh: Why don't we get this back?

Clampitt: And the Italians weren't until the last minute, and, ah, but then of course they became evil Communists [laughs].

McIntosh: That area is just a cauldron, isn't it?

Clampitt: Yeah.

McIntosh: There's no end to it. Everybody hates everybody else, and they're never gonna change.

Clampitt: I don't think—they've been doin' it for 700 years. I don't think they're gonna change in the next few months either. So, actually, we were under fire

several times, and our outpost had been fired on, and they shot down, ah, two C-46s [C-46 Commando transport aircraft]—

McIntosh: I'll be damned.

Clampitt: And, ah, we were almost on the verge of war there in '47, and when the peace treaty was finally signed, and the Italians got to keep Gorizia and Trieste, but they had to give up the whole Isonzo Valley which they didn't like because all the hydroelectric plants are there for one thing—

McIntosh: Oh.

Clampitt: And then they—the Italians lost the Istrian Peninsula and Pola.

McIntosh: Pola. Oh, yeah.

Clampitt: So, we're, ah—and the Yugoslavs, even then were threatening to cross the line. And they actually started over before the midnight deadline. So instead of staying there like we should've, we pulled out. And then the next day we had a big farewell parade in Gorizia, and we had, ah, loaded rifles and big clips in the cartridge belts.

McIntosh: And then what happened, nothing?

Clampitt: Nothin'.

McIntosh: But you were ready.

Clampitt: We were ready.

McIntosh: Was that a big outfit, the whole division was there?

Clampitt: Yeah, mm-hmm.

McIntosh: Or was there more than that?

Clampitt: The whole division. We were the only ones who got the Army of Occupation Medal 'cause the rest of Italy wasn't officially occupied 'cause they were a quote-quote "religion."

McIntosh: Yeah, right. They had to keep changing, make euphemistic terms for the Italians [unintelligible].

Clampitt: Yeah.

McIntosh: So how was life in Italy at that time? Pretty grim?

Clampitt: Uh, if you were an Italian it was. One of the things, you know, that, ah, quite a shock to see all the old ladies and kids linin' up with Number Ten cans at your chow line, just before the garbage cans, and ah, wondering what you were gonna throw away.

McIntosh: That's kinda sad.

Clampitt: Mm-hmm. So, ah, shows you what happens when you lose the war.

McIntosh: That's right.

Clampitt: Or pick the wrong side. And a lot of Italy was destroyed all along Arno River, Pisa, and—

McIntosh: It was bombed pretty extensively in certain areas.

Clampitt: Yeah, Verona—or not Verona, Pisa and Lavarone.

McIntosh: Right. So that duty there lasted how long?

Clampitt: Well, the peace treaty was signed in September of '50—of '47. That was the official end of the occupation, although we had a regiment in Trieste for many years. Trieste United States Troops, under United Nations Command. Until—I don't know just when they finally settled that. Probably ten years later.

McIntosh: Right. But you were there just for a few months—

Clampitt: A year.

McIntosh: Year.

Clampitt: Mm-hmm.

McIntosh: And then where?

Clampitt: And then I went home and got discharged, and, ah, was out for only a few months, joined the Army Reserve here in Madison. That's in the 84<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division, Reserve Unit, and then went to Madison Business College to take accounting. I was gonna—my plan then was to be an FBI agent.

McIntosh: Oh, okay.

Clampitt: And—met a good-lookin' woman, got married. And while in the Reserve, I, ah, they wanted people to go to Jump School because we were supposed to be



an airborne division. So I volunteered. I went to Fort Benning in '50—summer of '51.

McIntosh: As a reserve?

Clampitt: Mm-hmm.

McIntosh: Taking your summer duty?

Clampitt: Yeah, got my parachute wings.

McIntosh: Oh, you did?

Clampitt: Mm-hmm.

McIntosh: How long did that take?

Clampitt: Well, it was three weeks for the course, and, ah, about a week—and another week of air transportability because I was an NCO and had to take that. And a couple more weeks of dickin' around waitin' for orders to go back home. And, ah, we used to say, you know, that—only a three week course for jumping. You don't have to learn pack your own chutes anymore. Maybe they do now, but they didn't then. We used to say, "The first week we separate the men from the boys. Second week, we separate the boys from the idiots, or the men from the idiots. And the third week, the idiots jump outta airplanes." [laughs]

McIntosh: Ah, that's good [laughs].

Clampitt: So, ah, the Korean War was goin' on, and I, we kept thinkin' we were gonna be called up, we're gonna be called up, and finally I got tired of waiting. I went down and asked for a recall—

McIntosh: You re-upped.

Clampitt: A voluntary recall to active duty for two years. And then I went, ah—

McIntosh: Re-upped there, ah, on 1950, right?

Clampitt: That was '52. I asked for active duty actually as a reservist, took a two year commitment, and then, ah, I reenlisted. I enlisted back again Regular Army from there. They came out with a re-up bonus, something like \$1500 dollars, and that was all the money in the world then.

McIntosh: That's about—it's still a lot of money, but it was a great deal of money then.

Clampitt: Yeah.

McIntosh: So, in '52 where did you go?

Clampitt: Well, ah, went to Camp Atterbury [Edinburgh, Indiana] at first and from there to Korea with the 24<sup>th</sup> Division.

McIntosh: Yeah, 24<sup>th</sup>. Okay, now, where were you in the Army at this time? You were a sergeant, or a –

Clampitt: I was staff sergeant.

McIntosh: Staff sergeant. And what was your MOS [Military Occupation Specialty]?

Clampitt: Oh, “picket fence” [MOS 11 B; also means “No physical limitations” score on physical profile] 11 Bravo Infantry.

McIntosh: Infantry.

Clampitt: And I went to a rifle company, and there were only—but we weren't on the line, we were down in Koje-do [island off S. Korea], my regiment, and I was assigned to guarding prisoners. And when the big prisoner exchange was taking place they sent us up to, ah, Munsan-ni, right on the border just north of ah—

McIntosh: Seoul.

Clampitt: Seoul to handle the Chinese release. And we had trouble—

McIntosh: Now this was in '53 when there was—

Clampitt: Yeah, '53. And our allies in South Korea didn't want to let the Chinese go, and they were threatening to stop the whole thing, and for some reason I got stuck in ah, S2 [intelligence], S3 [training and operations] section, maybe 'cause I went to that school back awhile.

McIntosh: You're in intelligence now.

Clampitt: Just temporarily. And, ah, because they didn't have anybody, and I, ah, kept the situation map and everything at the regimental headquarters, and worked with the regimental S2 to—

McIntosh: Sure.

Clampitt: And froze my ass off while I was doing it [laughs]. It was cold.

McIntosh: [unintelligible]

Clampitt: Everything went off without a hitch. I think ah, Kim Duk-sam [a corrupt agent] was our big enemy, the head of the South Vietnamese [probably meant “South Korean”] Central Intelligence Agency, or whatever they called it, CIC [Counter Intelligence Corp].

McIntosh: He was a problem?

Clampitt: Yeah, he was, ah, well, the one we were most concerned with.

McIntosh: Sure.

Clampitt: So it went off pretty good, and then we went back to, ah, I got put back in the rifle company, and stayed there till I went home—actually, I didn’t go home. When I reenlisted I reenlisted for 25<sup>th</sup> Division ‘cause they were goin’ to Hawaii [laughs].

McIntosh: Ah!

Clampitt: And that seemed a better place than South Korea.

McIntosh: The 25<sup>th</sup> Division, that’s where all the black soldiers went.

Clampitt: Yeah, originally, yeah. The 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry, but we had integrated since then.

McIntosh: Yeah, okay.

Clampitt: So, I had, ah, two years in Hawaii which was quite nice at Schofield Barracks.

McIntosh: That was in ’54?

Clampitt: Fifty—yeah, went there October ’54 and went home in May of ’56.

McIntosh: And that was the 25<sup>th</sup> Division.

Clampitt: Yeah. “Wolfhounds.”

McIntosh: “Wolfhounds,” right.

Clampitt: 27<sup>th</sup> Infantry.

McIntosh: I just interviewed somebody in that division.

Clampitt: Had our second kid in Hawaii.

McIntosh: 1954, okay.

Clampitt: Then I went to the, what I like to prefer to call the worst infantry division and that the Army called the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division [laughs], the Big Red One, at Fort Riley.

McIntosh: The one that gets all the publicity.

Clampitt: Yeah. And they were so full of themselves there—

McIntosh: I suppose.

Clampitt: Paintin' "Big Red Ones" on everything, and the training I didn't think was any better. Thought the 88<sup>th</sup> and the 24<sup>th</sup> were both better.

McIntosh: Oh, really?

Clampitt: Yeah, they were more concerned with their public image than anything.

McIntosh: Essentially in Hawaii there really wasn't much to do except to train the new boys and—

Clampitt: Well, we did a lot of—we did a lot of training there. We went down to the Big Island [Hawaii], Pohakuloa [Training Area], up on the side of the volcano. And we did a—got in a movie there!

McIntosh: Ah!

Clampitt: It was originally titled, *The Day the Century Ended*, and then it was changed to, *Between Hell and Hell* [probably means *Between Heaven and Hell*, 1956 film]. Broderick Crawford was the captain, and, ah, Wagner, what was his name?

McIntosh: Robert. Robert Wagner.

Clampitt: Robert Wagner was the heroic staff sergeant and I was one of the guys in the background running around [McIntosh laughs]. The screen credits, you know, "Thanks to the United States Army."

McIntosh: Right. They volunteered you.

Clampitt: Yeah. So I can say I was in a movie.

McIntosh: Right.

Clampitt: And it laid an egg at the box office, and I finally saw it years later. It's a terrible movie [laughs].

McIntosh: Most of 'em—most of those kind of wars, movies right after the war were terrible.

Clampitt: Yeah, it was terrible [laughs].

McIntosh: And Broderick Crawford never was an actor—

Clampitt: No.

McIntosh: Of any consequence.

Clampitt: So, that's my claim to fame from Hawaii, being in a movie [laughs].

McIntosh: How was life in Hawaii? At that time it must have been pretty good.

Clampitt: Yeah, it was very good. We had—

McIntosh: [unintelligible]

Clampitt: Decent government quarters and no rain—a lot of rain, no snow. Warm. Waikiki Beach every time we had time off.

McIntosh: The Army was pretty good by this time about feeding and, you know, all the food and all the essentials were in pretty good shape at that time.

Clampitt: Well, I thought the 24<sup>th</sup> Division was well run. And also I, ah, they started an NCO [non-commissioned officer] academy there, and I had been through the 24<sup>th</sup> Division's NCO academy, so I applied, and I got a job there as an instructor in the division NCO academy until I went home.

McIntosh: What was that—what were you supposed to instruct in?

Clampitt: I instructed map reading and, ah, drill and ceremony.

McIntosh: Okay. Well, you got home every night there.

Clampitt: Yeah.

McIntosh: You didn't have any—well, I suppose you were in the field a couple days probably.

Clampitt: Three days a week. Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. Never varied except we were gonna have an IG [Inspector General] inspection on Monday so

we were in the field Thursday, Friday and Saturday. Came back and got ready for the IG on Sunday [laughs].

McIntosh: Where were you stationed in Hawaii?

Clampitt: Schofield Barracks.

McIntosh: Schofield. It had all been rebuilt by that time?

Clampitt: No. It was pretty much like it was in the movie.

McIntosh: Oh, really?

Clampitt: *From Here to Eternity*. Hawaii was nice then. There wasn't—I don't think there was a building over four stories tall in downtown Honolulu. Now it looks like Milwaukee.

McIntosh: Yeah. But I mean the Schofield Barracks was damaged during—at Pearl Harbor.

Clampitt: Ah, nothing serious.

McIntosh: Nothing serious. Okay ah, and so, you were there for a year, you said?

Clampitt: Year and a half.

McIntosh: Year and a half. Then where were off to?

Clampitt: 1<sup>st</sup> Division, Fort Riley.

McIntosh: Then you got to 1<sup>st</sup> Division.

Clampitt: Yeah. In 1960. I—oh, I missed a part. '57, I ah—company commander wanted me to go to OCS. It was Captain Curtis, an old 32<sup>nd</sup> Division World War II guy, and he, ah, had me do the paperwork, and I also had put in for a ROTC assignment [unintelligible]. And they both came down on the same day approved, and the captain called me in and said, "Which one do you want?" And he wanted me to go to OCS, and I said "I'll take ROTC." He was a little mad at me, but—

McIntosh: Where'd you go to in '57?

Clampitt: Ah, ROTC.

McIntosh: Where?

Clampitt: University of Illinois.

McIntosh: Oh.

Clampitt: Chicago branch. Well, the reason I turned down OCS mainly was, ah, I didn't want a six months separation from my wife and kids again. And I just had a three month separation in the 1<sup>st</sup> Division. I got sent to Mountain Warfare School.

McIntosh: I thought you went to Fort Riley.

Clampitt: From Fort Riley. I got sent TDY [temporary duty] to Mountain Warfare School at Fort Hale, or Camp Hale at that time.

McIntosh: In '58?

Clampitt: Ah, '58, yeah.

McIntosh: '58, tell me where now that—

Clampitt: Camp Hale, Colorado.

McIntosh: H-A-L-E?

Clampitt: Yep, H-A-L-E.

McIntosh: I didn't know that.

Clampitt: It's gone now.

McIntosh: Oh. Well, good. Then I won't try to remember it then.

Clampitt: Yeah. They sent the whole battalion.

McIntosh: To do what? What training?

Clampitt: Mountain warfare. Interesting training. I'm glad we went.

McIntosh: Mm-hmm. Okay.

Clampitt: They didn't want any NCOs [non-commissioned officers] taking cars 'cause they figured we'd get drunk and have an accident.

McIntosh: Runnin' off the road is easy to do in Colorado.

Clampitt: Yeah. They only let two NCOs in each company take a car, the ones they thought they could trust. And I was one of 'em, and the other one wrecked his car. He hit a rock one night [laughs].

McIntosh: Well, they were half right.

Clampitt: Yeah.

McIntosh: He didn't get his car back then.

Clampitt: Nope.

McIntosh: No.

Clampitt: Ah, he rolled and totaled it.

McIntosh: Right. So you were living in the bush then at that time in your—

Clampitt: Nah, we were living in Quonsets. Interesting training, though, we ah, learned ah—

McIntosh: Tell me about what the training was like. I don't really—

Clampitt: Mountain-walking.

McIntosh: Well, that's good.

Clampitt: And mountain climbing, basic mountain climbing, ah—

McIntosh: With ropes and—

Clampitt: Yeah, rappelling.

McIntosh: How'd you like that?

Clampitt: Oh, I liked it.

McIntosh: It wasn't hard?

Clampitt: Nope. Not for me. I was in pretty good shape then.

McIntosh: Yeah, I guess so. You had to be in pretty good shape to do that stuff.

Clampitt: I don't know. I found out one thing, coming down a mountain was just as hard as goin' up.



McIntosh: Oh, really? Jeez, I thought with gravity on your side—

Clampitt: Well, ah, it's harder going up physically, I think, but it's harder comin' down—well, it's hard too, when you're rappelling down.

McIntosh: Considered your (??) [unintelligible], I'm sure.

Clampitt: Yeah, it's a—

McIntosh: You don't just kick off and let loose in the rope—

Clampitt: No, it's harder going down, I think, on your leg muscles. And it's harder goin' up on your—

McIntosh: Your arm.

Clampitt: Cardiovascular ah, system.

McIntosh: Oh.

Clampitt: Especially in that thin air there.

McIntosh: Sure.

Clampitt: And I learned how to skin mules, too, how to unpack mules.

McIntosh: Skin mules?

Clampitt: Well, kind of—

McIntosh: Right, that's the term.

Clampitt: Term. We didn't "skin" 'em literally [laughs].

McIntosh: What does that mean? Mule skinning?

Clampitt: Ah, running the mule train, packing mules, loadin' the packs, and puttin' the harness on.

McIntosh: That's the kind expression for managing mules.

Clampitt: Mm-hmm.

McIntosh: Now tell me, how was it managing a mule? Had you done any on any horses before?

Clampitt: [coughs] I had ridden horses at Fort Riley one day, a couple times. Ah, they had a, part of our intelligence school, we had a couple days off. They said if you want to you can sign up for horseman. Two days of horsemanship.

McIntosh: Oh.

Clampitt: So I did.

McIntosh: Right, mules are different thought.

Clampitt: Oh, yeah.

McIntosh: What is the business that you can lead a horse but you can't lead a mule, or?

Clampitt: You can work a horse to death. You can work a soldier to death. But mules are smarter than both; you can't work 'em to death [McIntosh laughs]. When they've done their day's work, they quit.

McIntosh: You mean they literally will not move?

Clampitt: They will not move again, no. They'll buck off their load and go back to the stable [laughs].

McIntosh: No kiddin'? You mean you that's almost universal?

Clampitt: Yeah. They—

McIntosh: You can't fool 'em?

Clampitt: Well, they'll work—they'll give you a day's work, but when they figure they've done it, they don't go anymore [laughs].

McIntosh: Until the next day?

Clampitt: Yeah.

McIntosh: Interesting. Well, I suppose maybe managing them, it takes a little more brains then.

Clampitt: Yeah, it does. You gotta—it's interesting. And, ah, they're not easy to ride.

McIntosh: Because?

Clampitt: They buck you off. They don't like people to ride 'em.

McIntosh: They on general principles buck?

Clampitt: Yeah, I guess so. They just don't like people I think, sometimes, because they tell me never—when you're putting your back strap you have to lift up the tail, but you got to remember to stand to the side [laughs].

McIntosh: Right, otherwise they're gonna get you?

Clampitt: Yup.

McIntosh: They'd kick you.

Clampitt: The old sergeant running the trains said they'll wait ten years for you to line up just right so they could kick ya [both laugh].

McIntosh: They were patient. Oh, that's funny (??).

Clampitt: And that was the end of the mules after we—we had the last any active use of 'em because they—

McIntosh: As far as you know, the Army was through with mules?

Clampitt: Yeah, after that they had—they would start 'em up on for a mountain in line with breakfast, and by the time mules got there, it was supper. And a helicopter can be up there in five minutes.

McIntosh: I've interviewed a couple guys who were in the cavalry, when it was cavalry and talkin' about dealing with their horses Very interesting. Where they were camped at—they were at Fort Leavenworth. The 10<sup>th</sup> Cavalry was in Fort Leavenworth.

Clampitt: Yeah, the black regiment.

McIntosh: Yeah, the Buffalo Soldiers. You know Clampitt Wallace here in Madison, the last of the Buffalo Soldiers, I've interviewed him.

Clampitt: Oh, uh huh.

McIntosh: And he's about the only one alive that I know about. He doesn't know anybody else. Really fascinating story.

Clampitt: Yeah.

McIntosh: He said each of those guys had two horses, each man had two horses to maintain, and that was their job, to keep 'em in shape. Interesting.

Clampitt: One other interesting thing we did on that didn't get in on my notes. We made a helicopter assault on Pikes Peak. And this was higher than what helicopter—

McIntosh: I was just gonna say—

Clampitt: Service ceilings were supposed to be.

McIntosh: I think their ceiling was 14,000—

Clampitt: Yeah, and so we were beatin' air, but we went up in these old Sikorskys, the old two story ones, and ah, we had our rifles, and, ah, but no steel helmets. Had the helmet liner with a camouflaged cover so it looked like we had a steel helmet, and our packs had a air mattress blown up in it and our rucksacks. So, ah, we got up there and set up a perimeter, and I thought, "Gee, now they'll let us go to the souvenir stand, and all of the tourists [McIntosh laughs], and impress the women," and they made us get right back on the chopper."

McIntosh: You scooted back down?

Clampitt: Yeah, but it was interesting when we went off. We just went just like that, and down [laughs].

McIntosh: The helicopter [unintelligible].

Clampitt: Almost windmillin' till we got down and get in the heavier air.

McIntosh: Different air, right [laughs].

Clampitt: I got a newspaper clippin' of that somewhere at home.

McIntosh: Is that right?

Clampitt: Yeah.

McIntosh: Whatever possessed them to dream up that adventure?

Clampitt: I don't know. Well, that's when helicopters were first coming in, and they wanted to see what they could do—

McIntosh: Was this at company strength or division strength?

Clampitt: Company.

McIntosh: Company. Close to a 130, 140 guys.

Clampitt: Yeah. They didn't have enough helicopters for the whole battalion.

McIntosh: Right. Okay. So, then from Colorado, where were you off to?

Clampitt: Then back to Fort Riley again, so, ah, I had intended to put in for ROTC duty and went to the University of Illinois—

McIntosh: Mm-hmm.

Clampitt: And I taught in Chicago, under a graduate branch on Navy Pier.

McIntosh: What was that like?

Clampitt: That was nice. I, ah, I enjoyed it.

McIntosh: It felt like an office job>

Clampitt: Yeah, well, I was instructor. I taught American military history.

McIntosh: Oh.

Clampitt: And, ah—

McIntosh: Now, where'd you have this background for that? You'd agreed ahead—

Clampitt: Ah, they had lesson plans and plus I'm a history buff, and, you know, I did a lot more reading than was required.

McIntosh: Sure.

Clampitt: And that was very interesting.

McIntosh: I didn't know whether you'd done your history reading before this experience or whether that was—

Clampitt: Oh yeah, I've always been a history nut.

McIntosh: I see.

Clampitt: So, and individual weapons of marksmanship, too. Close to the rifle team, and it was an interesting assignment. The University of Illinois, ah, treated us like we were human beings, unlike the University of Wisconsin. 'Cause I was also with the ROTC there once.

McIntosh: Oh, I see.

Clampitt: One of my downers.

McIntosh: Oh, you didn't get on here?

Clampitt: Yeah, I didn't get on.

McIntosh: So, you didn't get on with the folks here as well as you did at Illinois?

Clampitt: No. Illinois, you were part of the faculty. I was listed as an instructor in the faculty handbook, and, ah, an officer in charge was listed as PMS&T, Professor in Military Science and Tactics. We were invited to all the faculty teas, and, ah, I belonged to the engineering society 'cause I was faculty advisor for the Society of American Military Engineers. All three years I was there, we won "Best Engineering Society on Campus."

McIntosh: Hey, very nice.

Clampitt: And, ah, I had a very good friend I made there, one of the professors that ran the library, and, ah, reason we got to talkin', I got in his car [laughs] one day by mistake. We each had a car of the same kind, and I couldn't figure out who was pushing my seat back and why my key wouldn't fit [both laugh].

McIntosh: Oh, that's funny.

Clampitt: I wish I could remember his name. He and I had a great—we certainly enjoyed each other's company.

McIntosh: Sure.

Clampitt: But then when I later on, kind of getting out of sequence, came to University of Wisconsin, couldn't teach because I didn't have a bachelor's degree. Even if I was a—I was the operations sergeant. We weren't invited to anything, faculty-wise. Maybe the colonel was, but none of the rest of us were.

McIntosh: Maybe that's why (??).

Clampitt: And, ah, oh, the students liked us. They were all giving us the same pie for invasion (??) [laughs], and calling you names, and trying to burn the building down.

McIntosh: Well, this is in the 60s when you were there.

Clampitt: Yeah, that was between my two 'Nam tours.

McIntosh: Well, maybe at Illinois it wasn't as good as it was the first time.

Clampitt: I don't—well, they were a lot more encouraging there in Illinois. They wanted people to take ROTC. They didn't want to give up branch training [interest areas]. They wanted to maintain their engineering cavalry branch, their armor branch, and the faculty advisors told the engineering students “You're crazy if you don't take ROTC 'cause you can learn military engineering, and get paid for it.”

McIntosh: Good deal (??).

Clampitt: And, ah, Wisconsin it was always, “Off campus, off campus.” And of course, you know, years ago it used to be two years mandatory.

McIntosh: Right. I know. I was in it.

Clampitt: And that got down to just a orientation [laughs].

McIntosh: Yeah, now it's nothin'.

Clampitt: Probably.

McIntosh: Right. It's very voluntary now.

Clampitt: Yeah, so—

McIntosh: So, anyway, ah, where are we off to then?

Clampitt: Oh, after I left the—

McIntosh: '58, '59, where are we at?

Clampitt: Ah, '60 I went to Germany. Reenlisted for another six years, and for picking an assignment I wanted to back to Hawaii, and then the Army said “No, you can't go back to someplace you just came from.” And I said, “Why is that?” and they said, “Policy.” And I guess the idea was they figured, “Well, he must have liked it if he wants to go back, and we don't want that.” [laughs].

McIntosh: It's a “Catch-22.”

Clampitt: Yeah, so, I enlisted for Germany, and I was with 24<sup>th</sup> Division again. “You're now—since—goin' to Germany.” And I was in what they call Combat Support Company a recon platoon, and—

McIntosh: Lot of training towards the real thing there.

Clampitt: Yep.

McIntosh: You're always worried about something happening.

Clampitt: Yeah. We were down at Augsburg, and we'd go up to Hohenfels twice a year; once in summer, once in the winter, a big training area.

McIntosh: Did you have a border to patrol?

Clampitt: No, the armored cavalry regiment did that, but we were, ah, would have been one of the backups. And, a lot of stuff was classified, but, ah, bein' in the recon patrol, and I got sent out just by myself with a jeep and me and a driver to do our whole sector route, all the way from where we first were assigned all the way to where our battle position was and report on the roads and, everything, and ah, it felt pretty nice lettin' a sergeant do that, sergeant first class then.

McIntosh: You were a first class sergeant?

Clampitt: Mm-hmm. So ah, and then we got a—

McIntosh: Was the duty in Germany then okay?

Clampitt: Yeah, I liked it.

McIntosh: [unintelligible]

Clampitt: Yup. And then I went to German language school, and ah, also we were called up to Berlin in—after the wall was built. They had this 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion from the 18<sup>th</sup> Infantry went up, and when they came back after three months they sent us up for three months, and the recon patrol, and we patrolled the wall almost daily.

McIntosh: At Checkpoint Charlie?

Clampitt: Yeah. We did the American sector, but I also expanded and went up through the French sector, toured on my own, see what it all was.

McIntosh: Learn something, right.

Clampitt: And Bernauer Strasse where they had the windows burned up—

McIntosh: Sure.

Clampitt: Boarded up. Got a lot of pictures from there. And quite interesting—

McIntosh: What was your impression of the situation with the East Germans? Who were you dealing with—East Germans or Russians? Or could you tell?



Clampitt: East Germans.

McIntosh: As far as you could tell. It was all East Germans?

Clampitt: Yeah, Russians weren't supposed to be in East Berlin, but they were.

McIntosh: Yeah, well, they were behind the scenes, right?

Clampitt: Yeah.

McIntosh: Your direct contact was just with the polizei [police].

Clampitt: In fact, when I was, ah, lookin' over the wall with my binoculars near the Brandenburg Gate I spotted a Russian. Not only did I spot him, but what I recognized what he was from. He was a cadet from the Suvorov Military Academy, and we were havin', ah, our West Pointers come over and look, too, go out on patrols with us and look. Ah, I think I confirmed the fact that there were ah, Russians in East Berlin.

McIntosh: I don't think there was any secret.

Clampitt: No. But also that they were bringin' their cadets up.

McIntosh: What about living in Berlin?

Clampitt: We lived in the Lichterfelde Kadetten Baracke, and as I said, I've always been interested in history, and I said, "This place has got a ring to it." This was where the SS [paramilitary organization under Hitler and the Nazi party] took the SA [original storm troopers of the Nazi party; the "Brownshirts"] to kill 'em in the Night of the Long Knives, at the Lichterfelde Barracks.

McIntosh: In Berlin?

Clampitt: Yeah.

McIntosh: And what was that, a two-story structure, or—

Clampitt: Yeah, it's three stories. Three stories ah, a typical German barracks, three stories, a kaserne, triple (??) kaserne. I bet, I would, I think, I bet even the colonel didn't know where he was at as well.

McIntosh: Mm-hmm.

Clampitt: As this is where the SS did their executions of the SA. And I would ask some of the Germans that worked around there, you know, they don't know anything about that, never heard of it.

McIntosh: They were afraid to say, probably.

Clampitt: Yeah. No Nazis here! [laughs]

McIntosh: No, never was, right?

Clampitt: No. [laughs]

McIntosh: Did you ever talk—

Clampitt: I wanted to pin down just where they were doing it, exactly—

McIntosh: That's just what they didn't want.

Clampitt: In the area, but, ah, yeah.

McIntosh: Yeah, I suppose at that time the Germans were very careful about saying anything, weren't they?

Clampitt: Mm-hmm.

McIntosh: Even if they were opposed to the Nazis they were fearful of saying anything.

Clampitt: I had an early patrol one morning, real early, wasn't even light yet, and I was on the far south part of the wall, where it goes into East Germany proper and to the East German defense right at the end of the Berlin city limits, and there's a—East German border guards, they thought nothin' of pointing their weapons at anything. You'd look at them, they'd turn around and point their burp gun at you.

McIntosh: [unintelligible]

Clampitt: When I was first learning the the ropes here and I had a old sergeant from Berlin Brigade show me the patrol routes and everything, and one did it to us, and he said, "Go ahead and shoot, motherfucker!" [laughs] I wouldn't, I don't think I would talk to a guy with a loaded gun like that, but—

McIntosh: Yeah, if you made a mistake, then he's dead [Clampitt laughs].

Clampitt: But, ah, years later we found out that they were under orders that if American troops would come and cut that first barbed wire, and said, “No way”, they had orders to pull back. They just bluffed us.

McIntosh: They never had any intention of shooting at all.

McIntosh: I don’t think so [McIntosh laughs].

Clampitt: Almost twenty years.

McIntosh: Tell me about the escapees. You must have encountered some of that.

Clampitt: Ah, I didn’t see any come across. There was a lot just before we got there. But when I came up on this one checkpoint, way ah, early in the morning, there was only one guard. There was usually two ’cause they gotta watch each other, and he didn’t even see me there. And they hate to have you look at them with binoculars or point a camera at them. They immediately do an about-face, and I asked one German, “Why do they do that?” and he said, “They’re ashamed of what they’re doing.” But anyhow, I leaned right on the wall. It wasn’t that high where we were. Here they hadn’t made it so high. I had the binoculars right on him, you know, and he turned around [laughs], looked up and over, and he turned around and saw me, you know. We really surprised him. We got up there without no, without him knowing we were coming. He was probably half asleep. But I knew enough German at that time, and I talked to him a little bit, and I told him, “Why don’t you come over the wall?”, you know, the “mauer” [German for hill]—

McIntosh: [unintelligible]

Clampitt: Yeah, “Kommen sie der uber (??),” you know, over the “mauer,” and “Nien, nien!”, you know. But only—finally find out the other guard would shoot him, and I said, “Bring him along, too!” [McIntosh laughs] And he said, “I can’t, I don’t know him.” So I got a whole lot of intelligence information out of this one guy that these guys are not from East Germany.

McIntosh: Oh, really?

Clampitt: They’re from East Germany but not from East Berlin. They’re from way back in the country so their wives and families are still at home, and—

McIntosh: Which put the pressure on them to behave—

Clampitt: Yeah. Oh, he let me know that, and he said they change, “We never know till we go on guard who we are going to be with so can’t make plans. We don’t know if the guy is gonna turn us in or not.” So I got an awful lot of information

out of that one guy. We talked for quite awhile before that other guy woke up and came out of the house, and then he wouldn't say a word after that.

McIntosh: Well, that's a method of controlling those guys.

Clampitt: Mm-hmm.

McIntosh: Yeah. Huh. Did you ever have a chance to talk to any of those folks after the wall came down?

Clampitt: No, I wish I could have been there to see it go down. I wish I could have seen that.

McIntosh: Yeah. Did you watch any of the people tryin' to escape from their side of the wall, who got shot?

Clampitt: Ah, we'd hear shots back sometimes **[End of Tape 1, Side A]**— watchtowers up higher, and then they'd build the wall higher, and we put another floor on it, and the German police were patrolling it as well as the Americans.

McIntosh: I was there in '71 as a visitor. I was impressed crawling up the top of that thing, the ground glass that was cemented into the top of that wall, with chards sticking up—

Clampitt: It kept getting bigger and bigger and bigger, and, ah, like I had told the border guard I was telling you about, "If that's to keep the spies out, how come everything's on your side?" [laughs]

McIntosh: Right.

Clampitt: "Why don't you have all these things on our side, you know, and build a wall back there and then bring those out to your border to keep the spies out, and have the wall last and then all these obstacles first." [laughs]

McIntosh: Right.

Clampitt: That was an interesting tour.

McIntosh: Mm-hmm. And then what? How long were you there in Europe?

Clampitt: Ah, four years in Germany.

McIntosh: Four years in Germany?

Clampitt: Mm-hmm. A total of three years and I extended a year.

McIntosh: To stay there.

Clampitt: Mm-hmm.

McIntosh: Did your wife like it?

Clampitt: Yeah.

McIntosh: Did you get along with the German nationals okay?

Clampitt: Very good. I still write some German friends.

McIntosh: You do?

Clampitt: Mm-hmm.

McIntosh: Have they come to visit you, or—

Clampitt: No. Letters have been falling off lately, but for many years we kept up with them. It's interesting how we met. We had, ah, went to a beer— Oktoberfest type thing, and Joyce and I were looking for a place to sit and young German couple here and a couple empty seats, and I asked them in German if we could sit there, you know. They said, "Sure, nach sie. Nehmen sie platz," "take a seat." We got to talking and they spoke English fairly good, and he owned a big store in downtown Augsburg, and they used to take us all kinds of places that we Americans would have never seen otherwise, down to the Andechs where the monks made beer and all kinds of places that every German wouldn't have got. Watched the Fasching Parade from their window—

McIntosh: Ah! How nice.

McIntosh: Good. Fantastic. Food was pretty plentiful by that time?

Clampitt: Yeah, yeah. Mm-hmm.

McIntosh: They were not so needy as they were—

Clampitt: And on my mother's side of the family were Germans anyhow so had a German grand—my mother's last name was German, her maiden name. So that helped.

McIntosh: Yeah, well, that was a pleasant four years then.

Clampitt: Oh yeah, yeah.

McIntosh: So how did you happen to leave it then?

Clampitt: Well, ah, I figured it was time to go back to the States 'cause they weren't getting promoted. We weren't getting any promotions over there, promoting everybody in the States. So I—

McIntosh: Were you still a staff sergeant?

Clampitt: I was a sergeant first class by now. I went back E-6, and I went back to, ah, Fort Ord in California. I thought I'd like to see California, and Joyce had a brother in Los Angeles.

McIntosh: What year was that?

Clampitt: That was '64 and, ah, it was basic training facility, and I was a platoon sergeant givin' in basic training. But then they started the Drill Sergeant Program, and I went to Drill Sergeant School to find out what I'd been doing [laughs]. And, ah, got our campaign hats and everything, and I went back training troops. And then I volunteered, I had volunteered several times in Germany for Vietnam, and nothing ever came from it, and so I volunteered again for Vietnam for—as an advisor. I wanted—they didn't have any, ah, American units as such yet. So in '65 I got my orders, ah, “Go to Special Warfare School at Fort Bragg.”

McIntosh: '65?

Clampitt: Yeah. Fall of '65. So I went to Fort Bragg for six weeks of Special Warfare School for advisors in the Special Forces. Good training.

McIntosh: What did they teach you that you didn't know before, Bob?

Clampitt: Ah, a little on the Vietnamese, how they did things and also had a Vietnamese language course, and a lot of ah, ambush drills, immediate action drills for ambushes, and, ah, map reading, and compass courses which I excelled at anyhow.

McIntosh: Sure. So what was your assignment when you went to Vietnam?

Clampitt: Ah, my first assignment I went to a Vietnamese ranger battalion in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Corps, in a place called Xuan Loc, just east of Bien Hoa. And I went out on a few operations with them, and then, ah,—

McIntosh: As to what—what was your duty, your specific duty?

Clampitt: Ah, just battalion advisory team, two NCOs and two officers.

McIntosh: With no intelligence work?

Clampitt: No. Basically I just, ah, carried a radio and called in air strikes if they were needed, and usually one advisory team would go up with the lead element, and the other one was back with battalion headquarters. And when you talk about a ranger, the Vietnamese battalion is much smaller than ours. They weren't much bigger than one of our rifle companies. So, then after awhile I got transferred back, ah—the procedure was you were so long in the boonies, and then went back to a rear area job. I went back to the 3rd Corps Tactical Operations Center at, ah, G3 Air NCOIC [Non-Commissioned Officer-In-Charge]. And that was an interesting job, a joint building, Americans and Vietnamese, and I had to keep track of the situation map here, and we'd get these, ah, messages in, "Hot Rods" they called 'em, telling who was what. And then we had to okay—and I had an Air Force guy I worked with. So we had to clear every flight, not only with other flights but artillery flying through the air, and, ah, when people wanted to shoot we had to get their vector and how high the rounds would be going so you'd keep airplanes out of the area. Pretty interesting. And one day a guy, ah—then we also allocated the helicopter units, LZ [landing zone] units. They needed them, and assigned them through the Air Force controller, and I had got one message that "No bombing in this fourth mid-square or anything" because the Vietnamese were doing a revolutionary development cadre training in there. This is under the new CORDS [Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support] program, and they wore black pajamas and straw hats, and some pilot in a helicopter got all excited. He saw a bunch of guys in black pajamas and straw hats, all armed with carbines. Well, this was these guys, but he was all ready for an air strike, and they were getting ready to call it in, and I kept telling the major "No, no, no! Those are friendlies." I said, "That's the Revolutionary Development Cadre." He didn't want to believe me. Finally he—

McIntosh: Were you calling for somebody to confirm it?

Clampitt: I said, "Look at, right here on the map!"

McIntosh: Oh.

Clampitt: And I said, "Well, how—" "Who said 'Put that up'?" I said, "When the 'Hot Rod' came in with it on, I put it up." "Well, where is it now?" I said "I threw it away!" [laughs]. Can't save everything. So finally they got it straight, and I figured I saved somebody's life that day.

McIntosh: I guess so.

Clampitt: And another day, it was kind of interesting. The Vietnamese, they leave everything on the noon hour. They take two hours off.

McIntosh: Do they drop whatever they had in their hand?

Clampitt: Yeah, they drop everything. One or two will stay in the TOC [Tactical Operations Center], and take a two hour lunch. You know, mad dogs and Englishmen, only mad dogs and Englishmen and advisors go out in the noon day sun.

McIntosh: They were were advised by the Frenchmen, and the Frenchmen don't do that. I'm surprised.

Clampitt: I don't know, but they took the two-hour lunch; they took the siesta. So all of a sudden, ah, all the Vietnamese phones over here start ringing. So I go over and pick one up and trying to understand what they're saying. They're all excited and finally got an American, and there's a 1<sup>st</sup> Division unit here that been ambushed and under attack. So, ah—

McIntosh: Bad timing.

Clampitt: Yeah, there's nobody here so, ah, I started calling the helicopter companies and the alert units, and I'm really busy. These phones are all going, and I'm talkin' and writin', and the Colonel comes in, and, ah, "What's going on?" I explain to him what I'm doing and everything, and when I was all caught up and done I thought I'd done a really really good job here.

McIntosh: Sure.

Clampitt: And the major called me over for 'cause he was out on his siesta, too. He says, "The Colonel's not happy with the way you handled that." And I must—"What'd I do wrong?" "You didn't stand up when he came into the room."  
[laughs]

McIntosh: Jesus Christ.

Clampitt: Yeah.

McIntosh: And you're busy here on the job.

Clampitt: Yeah, the important thing, you know. [laughs]

McIntosh: Chickenshit.

Clampitt: That's always there somewhere. There's always the nit-pickers, and there's always the don't-give-a-shitters. And the nit-pickers screw everything up, and don't-give-a-shitters who's win the wars.

McIntosh: That's—unfortunately. Right. So you did that for how long?



Clampitt: Well, ah, I was only there for six months on my first tour, 'cause of my wife got involved in a very serious auto accident—

McIntosh: Oh.

Clampitt: Got a broken neck out of it—

McIntosh: Oh.

Clampitt: And was in the hospital for six months and two of the kids were here so I got a compassionate reassignment. She was living in Fennimore [Wisconsin] then, and I got re-assigned to University of Wisconsin, operations center sergeant. Then it was, ah, an interesting job except for all the second-class citizen that—

McIntosh: On the streets?

Clampitt: The UW thought you should be.

McIntosh: Yeah, those were not good times to be around the campus.

Clampitt: No. No, I was there for the riots and—

McIntosh: Did you have anything to do particularly?

Clampitt: No. I set up a security plan for our officers, how we would—

McIntosh: To defend 'em to the last man? (??)

Clampitt: No, just—

McIntosh: Were you worried about bombing?

Clampitt: Yeah, we were.

McIntosh: When that one bad explosion happened—

Clampitt: I wasn't there then.

McIntosh: Oh, you weren't.

Clampitt: I was out in Sun Prairie. I was home on leave from Fort Riley. I was back out there again.

McIntosh: I assumed—it was mostly right after—2:00 or 4:00 in the morning. Woke me right up, and I assumed they were bombing the draft center, you know, the draft office on Monroe Street then.

Clampitt: Yeah, that was interesting.

McIntosh: Yeah, one of my—my oldest daughter was tear-gassed on the campus in the Econ building. [unintelligible] made me laugh. She said, “I had nothin’ to do with this, and, you know, everybody had us in this one room, and they said you had to stay there, and so we started to leave, and then with everything you know there’s tear gas in there.”

Clampitt: And of course everybody saw an ulterior, ulterior motive in anything the police did. And they’d takin’ their badges off. Well, everybody still knew they were cops, you know. “They did that so we can’t get the badge numbers when they do something terrible to us.” And it was so the badge wouldn’t get stolen and somebody walkin’ around with a stolen badge.

McIntosh: Right. Good reason.

Clampitt: And also they would just pull them off and then rake you with the clip, with the pin. That’s why they took them off, but, you know, “No, no, no, no, that’s because you’re gonna beat up poor innocent students, and don’t want to identify them.” One cop I knew that was working there, I became a police officer after I retired, a whole bunch of cops in a bus, a city bus, and some guy ah, with, ah, had a sign here and was calling them all kinds of names, you know—

McIntosh: All vulgar names—

Clampitt: All the vulgar names and, ah, the bus stopped because it was a stop light, and the front door opened, a big colored cop grabbed the guy up, pulled him into the bus [laughs] and they drove off, and they—

McIntosh: That’s one of the protesters on the bus?

Clampitt: Yeah [laughs], and just passing up and down the line and givin’ him expressions of their displeasure at what he was doin’.

McIntosh: They just dumped him off at the end?

Clampitt: Yeah [laughs].

McIntosh: That’s pretty good [laughs].

Clampitt: Very good.

McIntosh: After—your wife got settled in?

Clampitt: Yeah, my second, ah, I went back after my UW thing there. I, ah, went back to Vietnam again, fall of '68. My wife got to say here in Sun Prairie in the government housing.

McIntosh: Returned to Vietnam.

Clampitt: Mm-hmm. Went all the way down to the Delta, in IV Corps [an ARVN corps in the Mekong Delta] as far south as you could go.

McIntosh: Oh, a different outfit?

Clampitt: Yeah.

McIntosh: What was that?

Clampitt: I was still as an advisor. This was a Regional Forces Popular Forces, RFPF it was called, and I had told my wife before I left, I said “If I write back and tell you I’m in the Delta,” I said, “call the insurance man and tell him to start the paperwork and just wait for the date” [both laugh] ’cause that wasn’t considered a good place to be. And I just knew they were going to send me to the Delta this time. Sure enough, it was the Delta.

McIntosh: Because it was overrun by—

Clampitt: Yeah, it was eighty-five percent controlled by the VC [Vietcong]. So, ah, I made—

McIntosh: How, how did they deal with you there? I mean, you’d be in a village, and then they would attack at night?

Clampitt: Yeah, usually at night, mm-hmm, or ambush you. And it was just—and I was only out with my, ah, unit, regional or popular forces, not even a week, and I was supposed to replace the sergeant that was going home, and he extended, and so they said—well, they were gonna send me to another district where another sergeant was going home. Then all of a sudden I get this order to report to Province Headquarters, “bag and baggage,” on the next flight out. So I packed up everything and thought, “My God, what did I do wrong now?”, you know. “Where, where am I going and what for?” and nobody knew anything, and so I got up there, and I reported in. They said “Oh, you’re taking over the S2 section.” And I said, “Why me?” I said, “I’d just as soon stay out of the district.” I said, “I don’t know anything about warfare intelligence.” And they said, “You’re school trained!” That was 1946 and this is 1968, that’s 22 years! [laughs]

McIntosh: They said, “Didn’t you keep the books?” Right.

Clampitt: They said, “Oh, you’ll pick it up!” So they put me in a, in actually an MI slot, Military Intelligence slot, got switched to a different branch. My secondary MOS all these years had been Operations and Intelligence, and I had worked Operations a couple times.

McIntosh: Now what was your specific task here?

Clampitt: Well, ah, the captain that showed me his office which was a shambles, and his filing system which looked like my wastebasket at home, and he said, “I want you to straighten out filing system first.” Apparently he’d never heard of functional filing, and I looked at that filing cabinet, and I went back to the PSA. I said, “I want to move out to the district [laughs].” “No, no you gotta stay here.” And ah, so I brought a little order into the chaos there, and that was just chaos. And this captain, he was a dud, and he was passed over, and all his contemporaries were colonels, and he was on his way out. So he—

McIntosh: He’d risen to his level of—

Clampitt: Yeah, he didn’t give a damn. So, I had another officer there with a brand new “butter bar,” [insignia for a 2<sup>nd</sup> lieutenant] 2<sup>nd</sup> lieutenant right out of college and he didn’t know too much either, ROTC, and then a course at Hollenberg [Kansas]. So before long I’m running the whole shop here. I’m doing everything. And, ah, then my duties kept expanding, you know, and you might as well say I was the S2. It was quite interesting. I, ah, did a little bit of everything. I had to write it all down, all the things I did here.

McIntosh: Sure. [Approx. 12 sec. pause]

Clampitt: I took over the S Section. There was a [unintelligible], okay. I ran the section, did a daily intelligence summary, the information hard to learn, write it up and send it out to everybody.

McIntosh: Did you do it (??) by radio?

Clampitt: Radio and helicopter flights. Ah, I ran the section. I was also the classified documents control officer. So I’d to receive all the secret documents and number ’em and file ’em and lock them up, keep a log on them. I had to coordinate with the ARVN [Army of the Republic of Vietnam] S2 and, ah, ARVN Military Secret Service, the National Police Field Force, and Central Intelligence Agency and, ah, Naval and Air Force Intelligence. Ah, I was a member of the Phoenix Committee, put on the Phoenix Committee—

McIntosh: What was that?

Clampitt: The same—

McIntosh: What's Phoenix?

Clampitt: The elimination of Viet Cong infrastructure program. We did, ah, I was doing intelligence work.

McIntosh: How was that supposed to happen?

Clampitt: Well, we had these DIOCCs, District Intelligence [and] Operations Centers [Coordination] out in all the districts. Usually a lieutenant in charge and sergeant, and they would screen intelligence that the ARVN brought in and bring it back to us, and then we would figure out an operation where we thought we could pluck somebody, and, ah, I went out on a few of those. Our operational unit was the National Police Field Force. They weren't "the white mice" [derogatory term for South Vietnamese police who wore white helmets and gloves] that you saw in Saigon. They were combat trained. They wore fatigues, camouflage, and I went out with them. I got one picture of me just coming back from when I got stuck in a rice paddy and I'm in mud up to "here" [laughs], and they're running right off without me. "Hey, hey, come back!" These guys, these guys can almost walk on the water, they're so light, but I weighed a whole 150 pounds, and I sunk right down into the crap right up to my waist.

McIntosh: Tell me about the ARVN soldiers, generally good?

Clampitt: Ah, I always used to liken them to "The little girl that had a little curl in the, right down the middle of her forehead. When they were good, they were very, very good, and when they were bad they were horrid."

McIntosh: When things got hot, they might run?

Clampitt: Some did, some wouldn't. In our district we had the 508 Regional Force Company. These guys were great soldiers. Something like a national guard on active duty, they only worked in their own province, and they were good, really good. And some of these RFs, we went out one night with a night ambush with a PF, Popular Force, captain and I, the S3 captain, and I tell you we were never so scared in our lives. We thought—

McIntosh: They were suddenly gone?

Clampitt: No, that happened another time.

McIntosh: Oh.

Clampitt: We thought they were finally going to shoot us before the night was over and turn us over to the VC. These guys stole the captain's pistol. Somehow they managed that, and, ah, I think what saved them there was a "Spooky" gunship [Douglas AC-47] doing a "close by" shooting, and, ah, I pretended on the radio that I was calling them. So this was a hairy operation, and I told, we both of us, went to the colonel the next day, the province senior advisor and said "We recommend that no more Americans go to this, to help with this platoon," and I said, "And furthermore, we both refuse to go out." He said "What if I order you to go out?" I said "We will both refuse."

McIntosh: Right, 'cause they would have killed you if you hadn't—

Clampitt: Yep. So, ah—

McIntosh: What did they want? What was the purpose?

Clampitt: Get your weapons, ah, get a medal, who knows? They, ah—

McIntosh: These guys were ill trained to begin with.

Clampitt: Yeah, these were bad news, some of these PFs; some were good, some weren't. I can give you another example. The day I left, we had had a big operation. I had been doing the S2, and ah, they were going to bring in an ARVN division, the 21<sup>st</sup> ARVN Division, one of the horrid ones, down in the Delta, and they had the helicopter lift for two battalions, and what they were going after was a Finance and Economy [a provincial subsection of COSVN, Central Office for South Vietnam] that we had spotted and found, and ah, they asked for recommendations and of course I was the only EM [enlisted man] on the panel. They all wanted to go up and capture guys and shoot people, and I said, "Why don't we put an air strike on them?" "No, no, no, no. We want to get documents and everything." I said, "There's an NVA battalion operating in that area. Put an air strike on it." They went up there, they got pinned down, the 21<sup>st</sup>, ah, they only had one, ah, company up there, and they had a whole battalion sitting on our airstrip with helicopters, and the 508, the one I told you—so good they were getting the shit kicked out of them, and really fighting for their lives, and the ARVN battalion commander would not launch his troops and would not go up there! He said it was almost 5:00 o'clock and "We're going to quit at 5:00." Again, war by the clock. And that was the last thing I saw in Vietnam before I left.

McIntosh: Unbelievable.

Clampitt: Yup.

McIntosh: And you're defending their country.

Clampitt: Mm-hmm. He's gonna live a—hedge his bet—he don't care if he gets killed, he doesn't want to get killed. He might get killed, you know. He doesn't want to fight NVAs, they're too good.

McIntosh: That was another question I was going to ask you. Tell me about the North Vietnamese soldiers.

Clampitt: They were a well trained army, well equipped, and in fact up north they even had tanks and artillery. They had, ah, good weapons systems. They had uniforms—

McIntosh: Inspire discipline?

Clampitt: Good discipline, and, ah, our TV announcers back here always wanted to give the idea that everybody was a rice burner, farmer, and, ah, a soldier by day and we were losing to farmers. These guys weren't farmers; they were professional soldiers, and they were good. One thing I, ah, interesting, I started flying almost every other day with either FACs [Forward Air Control] or visual, what they call a visual reconnaissance, with Army Cessnas and, ah, and Air Force Cessnas with the forward air controllers who do more targeting. So they put me in charge of all the air strikes. They took it away from—they absolutely gave it to me. So not only I was doing everything else; I did all the air strikes for the whole province.

McIntosh: You get shot at if you go up there in a Piper Cub.

Clampitt: Oh yeah, we got shot at every time we went up.

McIntosh: It was just small arms fire.

Clampitt: Mm-hmm. We stayed above those, we stayed above effective [range].

McIntosh: What's effective?

Clampitt: Ah, five hundred yards at the most.

McIntosh: Up?

Clampitt: Mm-hmm.

McIntosh: You were up to a thousand yards there up in the air you ride on (??).

Clampitt: Yeah. We stayed usually over a thousand feet, two thousand, flew around, looked for helicopters—

McIntosh: I imagine the small arms fire couldn't reach you?

Clampitt: No. .50—.50 calibers could, or .51, but they didn't have too many of those. One of ours got shot down. He managed to get all the way back on a dead engine. And we lost a fighter plane, too. It was shot down, a 51 [P-51 Mustang], and we went up to rescue the pilot, but he was dead.

McIntosh: Mm-hmm.

Clampitt: His parachute—his ejection seat worked, his parachute opened, but his canopy didn't open.

McIntosh: Whoops!

Clampitt: And he had just been ejected right into the canopy and was dead of course, all tangled up in his parachute, and just brought the whole ball back. So, I wish I had the guy's name. I'd look him up on the Wall. We lost one good captain too, on an ambush, ah, Captain Henn, Norbert [Norville] Henn, Jr. from St. Louis. And maybe the highlight of my career there, not my career, but my time on my second tour of Vietnam, I got to meet two important people. James Stewart came down just to talk to the troops. It was no USO show or anything like Bob Hope—

McIntosh: By himself?

Clampitt: Yeah, he had his wife. No thousand MPs guardin' him like Bob Hope had, you know. He was down there, and he—we sat on adjoining barstools, and he bought me a beer, and I bought him a beer—

McIntosh: How nice.

Clampitt: And talked back and forth, yeah. I was telling a buy back in Cross Plains about that, you know, and he says, "Well, do you think he remembers you?" And I said "I don't know why not, I remember him!"

McIntosh: [laughs]

Clampitt: And then the other, ah, two other things that stick in my mind ah, well, three things. I don't know how long we can go on here.

McIntosh: Forever.

Clampitt: Ah, I got woke up in the middle of the night once, and we all crawled up to the colonel's office, and this colonel was kind of, when he—I had two different colonels. The first colonel I had was a Lt. Colonel Nagata, a Nisei [a person of Japanese descent born in the U.S. or Canada], and we got along just fine. He could see the work I was doing, and ah, I went to all the staff meetings



and everything. The next colonel couldn't, wasn't so sure a sergeant ought to be comin' to staff meetings, and, ah, then he found out what a dud the captain was. So pretty soon I'm back there again. And we got word in the middle of the night that there was a big buildup at Song Ong Doc. Planes would go out at night with radar and spot them, but there was no, ah, fire teams in the way to come in and overhaul these—ah, gunships were all tied up somewhere else, and this Song Ong Doc had lost their 105 [Howitzer] because it had broken, and it was in for repairs, and all they had was a "Four Deuce" mortar [4.2 mortar; also known as the "Goon Gun"] to take its place. And it looked like we could lose them, and we were trying to think "What can we do, what can we do?" and they said, "Can we get them, can we get them?" So I came up with a great idea. I said "Let's call for Naval gunfire. Let's get ahold of the Navy and see if there's, ah, any Naval ships out there and we'll ask for Naval gun fire." "Yeah, that's a good idea!" And then they find out we didn't have any Navy codes. Even the Naval officers didn't have any way of getting ahold—on the team had any way of getting ahold of any of the ships. They didn't know what to do then, and I, ah, showed off my French. I said, "Let's just send a message 'en claire' [in plain language; not in code] requesting Naval gunfire, and see if anybody answers!" [laughs] So—and if they don't, they said, "Well, the VC will hear that." "Fine, let them hear it."

McIntosh: That's the whole point.

Clampitt: Yeah, that was my point, let them hear and think we got a ship out there. And it turned out a Coast Guard cutter answered us. They were out there with 5-inch guns.

McIntosh: A five incher!

Clampitt: Mm-hmm. So—

McIntosh: How far off shore?

Clampitt: Ah, well, the Coast Guard's got a pretty shallow draft. They could come in—

McIntosh: I was gonna say. If you [unintelligible] on a 5-inch gun all you need is about six—

Clampitt: Yeah, it would have done the job, though. So ah, they all melted back into the brush, and we didn't have the attack.

McIntosh: You scared them away.

Clampitt: Yep.

McIntosh: That's pretty nice.

Clampitt: Yeah. I thought so. Yeah, I thought of it [laughs].

McIntosh: That was really very good. They should have given you a medal for that.

Clampitt: I think I should have had half a dozen medals that I didn't get. And another time they had found a bomb under the bridge, going into the main island of Ca Mau, and if they had dropped this it would ruined our armored car unit and some other units and the headquarters and the Vietnamese sent in skin divers every day [unintelligible] for it, and they pulled this 500 pound aerial bomb out, but nobody had ever designed one before. So we finally roped it off and got a guy to come down all the way from Can Tho, flew him down to disarm it. So I stood there with my, ah, camera taking pictures. I had a Polaroid, and he was supposed to know how to disarm it. So he got the fuse off and everything, pulled the fuse assembly off, and they had a cheap wrist watch in there to set it off. It was already past the time it was supposed to go off, but apparently the watch had got water in it and quit.

McIntosh: [unintelligible]

Clampitt: So I got pictures of that, and, ah, I went back to another one, ah, another time, de-armin' one, and we carried the whole thing out to the airstrip and blew it up there. So I thought I shoulda had at least ah—

McIntosh: Somethin'.

Clampitt: Somethin' there, an "Attaboy" if nothing else, but ah—but they didn't.

McIntosh: Right.

Clampitt: I thought was kind of a little interesting day, too.

McIntosh: The command structure of the United States then was [unintelligible]. Was it very good or very bad or something in between?

Clampitt: Ah, we had a dual command system, actually, some ARVN. And we're supposedly advising ARVN, and all our officers and the whole thing were supposed to an advisor to a comparable Vietnamese, like in Can Tho our—what would have a corps commander, Lt. general, he's advising, ah, the major heneral was advising an ARVN Lt. general. You had to advise a guy one rank higher than you so he wouldn't lose face, you know. And, ah, in S2, we had a million bosses. I was under the MI detachment in Can Tho, I was under a province senior advisor, and I was under CORDS [Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support] as well. John Paul Vann was running 4<sup>th</sup> Corps CORDS

then, and CORDS, ah, was set up by Komer [Ambassador, Robert W.], something they should have done early in the war.

McIntosh: Komer?

Clampitt: Komer, that was his name.

McIntosh: Oh.

Clampitt: Komer, from, ah, CIA, and became Westmorland's deputy.

McIntosh: Ah, yeah.

Clampitt: And he set up the CORDS program, whereby all intelligence gathering agencies were all under CORDS, as well as the, ah, the sole it was called CORDS just for, ah, Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support. So we were, ah, had all intelligence agencies, ah, American, Vietnamese, CIA, Navy, all under CORDS.

McIntosh: Right. How are you gonna make any sense otherwise?

Clampitt: Yeah, so, I think if we'd of done that first of all—we were winning down in the Delta finally. We were takin' it away from them, after we got the CORDS and the DIOCCs goin'.

McIntosh: DIOCCs?

Clampitt: Ah, District Intelligence and Operations [Coordination] Center. Well, I thought we were doing a pretty good job there, and, ah, one day we had some other reports coming in that it looked like another big offensive coming up from the VC. It looked like they were going to try and hit all the, all our districts at once in somethin', maybe another repeat of Tet. So, ah, the colonel called me in and ordered a LOH [light observation] helicopter for *me*, light observation and wanted me to fly each sub-sector, each sector rather, and talk to the officer in charge and see what their situation was and bring back any recommendations and recon the whole province. So I had just gotten on a helicopter and this captain told me—came up and said, "I'll do it, I'll do it" and made me get off. He said, "I'll take it." So I walked back over to the compound, and the colonel said, "What are you doing here?" I said "Captain Kitchen is doin' the recon." He said, "No, he isn't." The guy went to the radio shack, called him back. The Navy captain "unassed" [slang for "to get off of"] the helicopter and put me back on—

McIntosh: The helicopter had already left?

Clampitt: Yeah.

McIntosh: They put him back down.

Clampitt: Brought 'em back.

McIntosh: How embarrassing for him.

Clampitt: Yeah, I think so [laughs]. So, I went ahead and did what I was supposed to do in the first place.

McIntosh: I don't see why they didn't send this guy back home.

Clampitt: Well, he was gonna be—when his tour was up, he was on—

McIntosh: Oh, they're just lettin' him—

Clampitt: Yeah.

McIntosh: Finish it.

Clampitt: And, ah, later on, I was the only enlisted man ever got to invited to the province chief's house for dinner.

McIntosh: Oh! What was that like?

Clampitt: Oh, it was fun. They had all the other wheels, you know—

McIntosh: Sure.

Clampitt: Right from the provinces. And—

McIntosh: They serve you any food that you hadn't seen before?

Clampitt: No, no. I like Vietnamese food.

McIntosh: Mm-hmm.

Clampitt: I'd go downtown to the restaurant. They only part I didn't like was them scrapin' the garbage off the floor for the dog.

McIntosh: Was that standard in—

Clampitt: Yeah.

McIntosh: The Vietnamese home.

Clampitt: No, this in the restaurants, not in the home.

McIntosh: Oh, the restaurants. In the restaurants they would do this?

Clampitt: Oh, yeah.

McIntosh: That's not very appetizing.

Clampitt: Nope [laughs]. Dirt floor, anyhow, most of 'em, but some of them were a little better where they had a tile floor they usually [coughs]—usually didn't have a dog runnin' around.

McIntosh: Okay.

Clampitt: Oh, seems I had one other story I was going to tell. Somethin' about—oh, ah, after Westmoreland went home and Creighton Abrams took over, he did something Westmoreland did. He was going to go to every province headquarters for a briefing, to see what we were doing, and so, well, who's gonna give the S2 briefing? Can't let Capt. Kitchen do it, or Lieutenant, so they had me do it. So I was the briefing officer for S2 for a four-star general, Creighton Abrams himself.

McIntosh: He tolerated you—he was very nice to you?

Clampitt: Yeah. Well, Abrams was a—you ever read Colin Powell's book?

McIntosh: No.

Clampitt: And he had to give a briefing to Abrams and he was a major then, and he was all uptight about it and tellin' the charts he made and how he—I just made mine on paper. We didn't have anything fancy like a division G2 had with overhead projections and everything. Oh, I had all intelligence stuff up there, and Abrams came and sittin' there smoking his cigar and all. Abrams was a funny guy. He doesn't give compliments. He says, "You're paid to do a good job." That's his philosophy according to Powell. You don't, "Why should I give you a compliment when you're doing what you're supposed to do?" And they said if he didn't like your briefings, you were fired on the spot.

McIntosh: Jeezus.

Clampitt: Yeah, so. So he didn't fire me, so I guess it was okay. He grunted once. They said if he grunts it's good. [laughs]

McIntosh: You got one grunt?

Clampitt: Yeah.

McIntosh: Right [laughs].

Clampitt: Well, I thought was—I think for an enlisted man I had a lot of interesting experiences and did a lot of things most—

McIntosh: Incredible.

Clampitt: Peons don't get to do.

McIntosh: No. Yeah, that's a real tribute.

Clampitt: I had an interesting career I thought.

McIntosh: Right. No medals of any kind?

Clampitt: A Bronze Star, ah, and an Army Commendation Medal.

McIntosh: The Bronze Star was specifically for what? **[End of Tape 1, Side B]**

Clampitt: Meritorious Service in connection with ground operations in the Republic of Vietnam.

McIntosh: I see, just a general [unintelligible].

Clampitt: Yeah.

McIntosh: Okay.

Clampitt: My last Vietnam story, ah, I had my orders, a bunch of money to go home, got back and we were having a short-timers party, and us guys that were goin' home were wearin' civilian clothes which wasn't allowed in the Delta, but we did it anyhow. Nobody—all the people who put out those orders were afraid to come down and see if anybody was doin'. I had on shorts and sandals and an aloha shirt, and we were grillin' shrimp on the bar-b and drinking beer. I was pretty well crocked, and this major shows up from Can Tho in a helicopter to pin my medal on me, and he's all starched fatigues and everything [McIntosh laughs], and he comes back—somebody told him where we were, and he said, "Sergeant Bob here?" "Uh, I don't know." [laughs]

McIntosh: Right. You were [unintelligible].

Clampitt: And then he said, "Well, I'm supposed to pin a medal on him." Oh, go ahead, and I came up to attention in my shorts and that. He pinned it on. He said, "You know, in twenty years in the Army I've never pinned a medal

[laughs] on anyone dressed like this.” [McIntosh laughs] I told him to sit down, have a beer. So he sat down and joined the party [laughs].

McIntosh: It’s over, right.

Clampitt: Yeah.

McIntosh: So, generally your experience in Vietnam with food was pretty—the Army food was worth—it was okay?

Clampitt: It’s kind of interesting when you were with the, ah, an observer group. Ah, you get money to eat, and you have to give it back to the mess hall some because, ah, the rations and kind aren’t always available, and sometimes they use Vietnamese food. We had Vietnamese KPs who didn’t stand next to the table and work on it like we would. They squatted on it and worked on the table [laughs].

McIntosh: Oh, really?

Clampitt: That’s the Vietnamese: They squat for everything, you know.

McIntosh: You mean they squat on a table?

Clampitt: Oh, right on the table.

McIntosh: And work at—

Clampitt: Yeah.

McIntosh: And put the paper right next to ’em—

Clampitt: Not the paper, the food they were preparin’.

McIntosh: [unintelligible] food.

Clampitt: For the KPs.

McIntosh: That gets real [unintelligible]. [Clampitt laughs]. Do they take care of your mess—your tent, too?

Clampitt: Yeah, they swept ’em. We had maids. And then we made a deal with the CIA ah, about halfway through my tour here and then got—see, we had these regular crap (??) huts, you know. They’re wood, plywood, and screens at the bottom and at the top so to circulate air supposedly, and ceiling fans, and, ah, I don’t know how we did it. We got a deal with the CIA, and, ah, we got 9 millimeter Brownings and, ah, air conditioners from them.

McIntosh: Gee.

Clampitt: So, we boarded up the rest of the buildings, you know, and had air conditioning and—

McIntosh: Well, that was nice.

Clampitt: Yeah. And we were probably the only, ah, district that had flush toilets. It was an old French compound. They only flushed the outside wall into the marsh [laughs] outside.

McIntosh: There really was no sanitary—

Clampitt: [laughs] Yeah, didn't go to the sewerage plant or anything. Just went to the rice paddies next door (??).

McIntosh: How did you deal with the heat? The heat must have been like yesterday here in Madison.

Clampitt: Yeah, it was terrible.

McIntosh: It was so humid and so hot—

Clampitt: You get used to it.

McIntosh: But it was that way all the time.

Clampitt: Yeah. I'd take salt tablets and drink plenty of water.

McIntosh: Did you get sick anytime?

Clampitt: I never did, no. I only got drunk my last day there. It wasn't safe. You could be hit any time in the compound. They could start shelling—

McIntosh: What do you mean? They could—oh, the mortars could come in, they'd sneak in with mortars?

Clampitt: Yeah, they could hit you any time they wanted to, just about, at first. Later we got 'em—we started doing a little better counter battery and finding out who the people were through our Phoenix Program, and usually at least once a week. First week there I, ah, watched 50,000 gallons of aviation gas go up. Or five—50,000 or 500,000? It was a hell of a fire. I could see it forty miles away. The week before I got there they got the ammunition dump. And the gun they were usin', was a United—made in the USA, 75 millimeter Pack Howitzer, that they had apparently got from the Chinese whom we'd given for



Lend-Lease in World War II. And they would move it around because it broke down into mule loads. And they would break it down into sampan loads, and they would, ah, sink it in the canal, different places, and when they wanted to fire they'd pick it up, take the four sampans somewhere, put it together, usually, ah, some poor farmer. If he was one of the richer ones and had a cement floor, they'd rather fire off of that than out of the marsh—

McIntosh: Sure.

Clampitt: Knock his roof off, fire about six rounds, pack up, and they're all gone. By the time we get counter battery we're back there, ah, killing more innocent Vietnamese and winning hearts and minds.

McIntosh: What's your impression about the whole operation being in Vietnam mean for the United States?

Clampitt: Ah, I'm still, I'm still fightin' it out. Some days I think we should have won; some days I think we shouldn't have been there, and some days I think we shoulda had a better idea of what we were trying to do when we went there.

McIntosh: That's my impression. That they weren't there to win.

Clampitt: Yeah. It just seems like, ah—what was that old story “Flopsy, it just grew”?

McIntosh: It just grew.

Clampitt: Or “Topsy” I guess it was.

McIntosh: Yeah, at least the higher command, I think, lost control when they let Johnson and McNamara make decisions about air strikes and things like that—

Clampitt: I think so.

McIntosh: I think they just lost control, put it in the hands of ignorant people. That was a shame. Yeah. So after you came home from Vietnam, when was that? The second time.

Clampitt: '69. Fall of '69, I went to, ah, Fort Riley again. I always hated Fort Riley, and they were always sending me there. [McIntosh laughs] Actually it wasn't Fort Riley I hated, it was Kansas.

McIntosh: Oh, really?

Clampitt: Ah, dry, you can't hardly buy a beer, and hot and humid and—

McIntosh: [unintelligible] terrible place.

Clampitt: But I, ah, this time I was—according to the book I read, ah, Heckberg, Heckworth. Did you ever read his book?

McIntosh: I know—

Clampitt: And he mentioned—

McIntosh: I know the book, but I didn't read it.

Clampitt: Oh, he mentioned that they had screened records to get exceptional NCOs to run this correctional training facility, to take guys out of stockades and return them to duty, and I got assigned to that. I said, "Gee, I was handpicked." But he said it was handpicked NCOs, but I don't know if they were looking for the best or the worst, they didn't say, but I assume it was the best.

McIntosh: What was your duty?

Clampitt: Ah, I had a platoon, and then I was promoted to 1<sup>st</sup> sergeant and then took over a company. We ran it just like a regular company, and there was a barbed wire fence around, but they could go out. We marched 'em out in the daytime. They went out and did the training including marksmanship.

McIntosh: In other words you just had a bunch of bad actors that you were training normally.

Clampitt: Trying to, yes. Trying to, ah, and then they had a clerk—we had our own personnel section because some of these guys records were so screwed up. Some of 'em never even knew they were supposed to pay tax before they came into the Army, income tax—

McIntosh: [unintelligible]

Clampitt: Yeah, ah—well, they—rednecks [laughs].

McIntosh: Yeah, right.

Clampitt: Ah, we got those in Wisconsin, too. You don't have to go to Tennessee to find 'em [laughs].

McIntosh: Oh, no, out in the country is a little different.

Clampitt: So we had about a fifty percent return to duty rate.

McIntosh: That's pretty good.

Clampitt: Mm-hmm. And our colonel, ah, I always got a kick—he said, “We, we get the cream of the crap, here.” [both laugh] They selected ’em from all different stockades—including some from Disciplinary Barracks at Leavenworth. But I really liked that “cream of the crap.” [laughs] So that’s where I retired from in ’71.

McIntosh: From Riley.

Clampitt: Mm-hmm.

McIntosh: Did they offer you to stay in longer?

Clampitt: I could have. But they were starting to send, ah, regulars back for a third tour in ‘Nam.

McIntosh: Ah, yeah.

Clampitt: And I said, “No way, no way.”

McIntosh: Yeah, I’m sure you—

Clampitt: My wife always thought I’d—

McIntosh: She probably vetoed that anyway.

Clampitt: Yeah, she wanted me to go thirty years, too, and I said, “No,” I said, “First of all, you’re working for half pay. You retire at half pay. If you stay for another, you get two thirds pay, you’re actually working for half pay ’cause you’d had half of that for *not* workin’.”

McIntosh: Right.

Clampitt: So I said, “No,” I said “I’m still young enough to get a job in the civilian economy. I stay another ten years, I won’t be.”

McIntosh: Right.

Clampitt: I’ll, I’ll won’t get a good job.

McIntosh: So you retired at twenty.

Clampitt: Mm-hmm.

McIntosh: At half pay?

Clampitt: Yeah.

McIntosh: They—they pay you that the rest of your life?

Clampitt: Yup.

McIntosh: May I ask how much that is?

Clampitt: Ah, it's a little over a thousand a month right now, almost what I was getting on active duty.

McIntosh: Do you have a COLA [cost of living adjustment] thing attached to it?

Clampitt: Yeah, there's a COLA.

McIntosh: So every year you get a little more.

Clampitt: Yeah, and plus I get my, ah, Social Security and my Wisconsin retirement.

McIntosh: Oh, for working for the State?

Clampitt: For a police department.

McIntosh: For the police department.

Clampitt: Yeah, we were under Wisconsin Retirement—

McIntosh: That's right, when you came back you went into police work.

Clampitt: Yeah. So I'm making almost four thousand a month in retirement.

McIntosh: That's super.

Clampitt: And when I retired from the Army, I was makin' eleven thousand a year [laughs]. But that was considered pretty good money at the time.

McIntosh: Exactly. Now, so what did you do when you came back to civilian life?

Clampitt: Well, I ah, went to Sun Prairie first, 'cause that's where we had lived before. Tried to get on their police force and couldn't, and I went up and got on the Dells, Lake Delton, and then there was an opening in Cross Plains for the Chief of Police, and I went down and interviewed and got that and stayed there for seventeen years.

McIntosh: Mm-hmm.

Clampitt: Retired from there.

McIntosh: So you retired from the police force when?

Clampitt: Ah, 1990.

McIntosh: 1990. So you've been retired ten years.

Clampitt: Yup.

McIntosh: Ah, we talked about medals, plus all the campaign stuff. Tell me about people you kept in contact with.

Clampitt: Well, I've got a friend that we were sergeants with, and he went to OCS and became a major. We keep in contact with him. He lives in Florida and went down to see him a couple times. And this other guy from Germany when we down in—this summer we went down to, ah, Georgia, and Myrtle Beach [S.C.] and Florida, and we saw some friends there. And, ah, got friends in South Carolina. We've been there a couple times—

McIntosh: Most of these were when you became friends in the four years in Germany probably.

Clampitt: Some were Germany, some of 'em were Korea, some of 'em were States.

McIntosh: And about Korea—what about Korea? We didn't talk about that.

Clampitt: Ah, I don't—yeah, one of 'em—we were in Korea, but in different units. We were both in the 25<sup>th</sup> Division but in different companies.

McIntosh: Ah.

Clampitt: And then we went to, ah—and I saw him again in Vietnam. He was a—when I was in the Ranger, or when I was in the G3 [operations], he, ah, came over there and took—got assigned to a Vietnamese battalion [unintelligible] the captain. And also in Germany. We were in the same company in Germany.

McIntosh: Oh, good. And veterans organizations, the VFW, you've been very active in that.

Clampitt: Not as much as I—American Legion I'm very active in.

McIntosh: Oh yeah? The American Legion is disappearing from view here.

Clampitt: VFW is closer to disappearing.

McIntosh: They are? What's the reason there?

Clampitt: There's, ah—

McIntosh: The younger folks—

Clampitt: Younger folks don't seem to be joining, and the older guys are all dying off.

McIntosh: Right. I understand with the old farts, but I didn't understand about the new kids.

Clampitt: I don't know. They don't seem to, I don't know, they're too busy going to soccer games or whatever, whatever it is young people do. They just don't seem—we got quite a few, ah, Korean vets in my VFW Post, ah, I mean my, ah—

McIntosh: Which is in Middleton, I see.

Clampitt: Yeah, my Legion Post, too, we got a lot of, ah, Korean vets and Vietnam vets. But I don't know—the Vietnam vets—they weren't well received by some of the older Legionnaires. They believe this crap from the movies and television that we were raping women and taking dope and killing civilians, and, ah, that, ah, we didn't salute as well as they did or something, or that we weren't patriotic. And television and the movies put a heck of a distorted view of what Vietnam veterans were like. We were supposed to be all killers—

McIntosh: Terribly unfair, I think.

Clampitt: I don't know how all these guys got to bring their machine guns and rifles and grenades home with them. I had to leave mine there! [laughs] But they've all got them in the—*This Park is Mine* type movies, you know, and one guy—this guy had—I've forgotten the movie. He's playin' a discharged Special Forces man. He goes in—and he's workin'—of course he's always wearing a field jacket, and he goes into McDonald's and orders a raw, a hamburger raw, doesn't want it cooked and takes it outside and sits on the curb and throws the bun away and sits down eats the raw hamburger, and he's sleepin' in a tree at night, and dear God!

McIntosh: Yeah that's pretty—really bizarre. Now you mentioned meeting two famous people. One of 'em was Jimmy Stewart.

Clampitt: Jimmy Stewart and Creighton Abrams.

McIntosh: Oh, Abrams was the other. Okay. All right. I can't think of any more to ask you. I'm running out of soap here.

Clampitt: Okay.

McIntosh: Any stories you forgot to tell me?

Clampitt: Well, I don't know, you know, that'd five years in reserve and twenty active duty, I probably forgot a few things. Some people said, "How come you got tattoos?" I said, "It's a souvenir of two outstanding periods of intoxication on Hotel Street in Honolulu" [both laugh].

McIntosh: That was in Honolulu you got—

Clampitt: Yeah [laughs], before my wife got over there.

McIntosh: That's right [both laugh].

Clampitt: Ah, I guess that's pretty much, ah—covered most of my notes here.

McIntosh: Okay. Super. Thanks, very much, Bob.

Clampitt: Yeah.

**[End of interview]**