

Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center

Transcript of an

Oral History Interview with

WILLIAM F. HUSTAD

Infantry, Co. D, 3rd Battalion (Airborne), 506th Infantry, 101st Airborne Division, Army

Vietnam War

2004

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Hustad, William F. (b.1945). Oral History Interview, 2004

User Copy: 2 sound cassettes (ca. 72 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy: 2 sound cassettes (ca. 72 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Transcript: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

Abstract:

William F. Hustad, a Mount Horeb, Wisconsin native, discusses his experiences in the Army during the Vietnam War and later as a veteran. In 1963, he graduated from New Glarus High School and, in 1968, from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, with a degree in chemical engineering. Even though he was married with a child, Hustad explains that he was drafted in October 1968 because he had already been deferred from the draft as a student. He states that he attended basic training at Fort Campbell (Kentucky) and declined NCO school because it would mean he would have to spend more time in the service. His AIT (Advanced Individual Training) was at Fort Lewis (Washington) where he trained as an infantryman. Hustad recalls that he returned home for a short leave after training and then flew to Vietnam on a civilian plane. He landed in Ben Wah with the 90th Replacement Company and trained for a week before being assigned to Company D, 3rd Battalion (Airborne), 506th Infantry of the 101st Airborne Division, even though he was not jump qualified. Hustad reports that his battalion was stationed in Phan Thiet at LZ Betty where they were placed first in tents, but then moved into new barracks with guard towers and bunkers around the guard perimeter. He relates a story of being left behind with another soldier he was talking to and having to catch up to his platoon without alarming them. Hustad discusses his duties and experiences on night position re-supply. He describes very hot weather, being out for about a month with re-supply every three or four days, carrying M16s, seven or eight canteens at a time and only having to shave and clean up if the battalion commander was coming. Hustad mentions different platoon leaders and becoming a squad leader. He explains the varied backgrounds of men in the platoons and reveals that men were separated into “drinkers” and “dopers.” Hustad describes his contact with the Vietnamese as minimal; he says that he saw some prostitution going on and would sometimes see children and give them candy. He says that he would have rather been out in the jungle away from people where he saw water buffalo, monkeys, snakes, spiders and biting ants. Hustad describes a typical morning consisting of waking with the sun, eating breakfast, pulling up claymore mines and trip wires, and getting ready to move out. At night they would set-up foxholes, cook, set up claymore mines and trip wires, and perform guard duty that would take up two of the eight hours they had available for sleep. Hustad states that they were not told on a day-to-day basis what they were doing, “They were just counting days. I don’t think anybody really cared that much that they knew what was going on.” He explains that he they had contact with VC (Viet Cong) a couple times a week and that the VC used AK-47s and mortar attacks when they were in the field. Hustad recalls spending a lot of time on helicopters for re-supply or to move somewhere else and describes what it was like coming into a hot LZ, “It was more hair-raising to be the first one in and not knowing if it

was going to be a hot LZ or not.” He illustrates night guard duty by describing the type of darkness that exists when there is no moonlight or city lights, “You felt like you had to be alert, you had to listen very carefully.” Hustad describes both noise and silence as scary--seeing people lighting cigarettes and worrying that it might reveal their location and setting off claymore mines if there was noise, then waiting. During the day, they had to follow existing trails because of dense jungle and Hustad says they worried about booby traps and being ambushed. He discusses getting back to base only for a couple of days at a time, eating warm meals, receiving beer rations, explains perimeter guard duty, and describes the bunkers. Hustad goes into detail about being wounded in October 1969. His platoon was in a free fire zone inside a triple canopy jungle and came upon a small village where there were fires burning and animals roaming about, which indicated that people were close. They saw someone leaving on a trail and Hustad, his friend Roger, and their lieutenant followed. Hustad says he was walking “slack” (second person walking periphery) and they were ambushed from all sides. He recounts that he returned fire and then noticed he was injured on his arm and knee, the lieutenant was dead, and Roger had a severe chest wound. Hustad tells that smoke grenades were used so the injured could be medevac’ed and brought up into the helicopter in a basket and says that it was a bouncy ride. There was no doctor at the base camp and they were taken to Long Bin for intensive care. Hustad relates that Roger was there for a couple days and then sent back to the U.S. and Hustad himself went to Cameron Bay for two months. Hustad reports that after healing he spent two months in Japan then went to Fort Hood and ended up at Fort Lewis in charge of a motor pool for the 2nd Armored Division. Attributing this to his time in Vietnam, Hustad relates how he contracted malaria while he was stationed at Fort Hood (Texas) with his family prior to his October 1970 discharge. Hustad remembers a girl from the Red Cross helping him write a letter to his wife to alert her to his injuries and discusses finding time to write letters in the field and trying to keep the paper dry. He speaks to the effects war protesters in San Francisco had on soldiers when they returned and says that he was treated fine when he returned home to Madison. Hustad explains that he worked for IBM after being discharged. He says he was pleased when he was approached by veterans in New Glarus (Wisconsin) to form a VFW. Hustad relates that he agreed to participate as long as Vietnam veterans were running it because it was mostly Vietnam veterans who were involved. In 1980, he was elected commander of the New Glarus VFW. He expresses that he found it personally therapeutic to talk to other veterans because the only person he had been able to bond with over his war experiences had been his grandfather who served in World War II. Hustad speaks to his experience visiting the Vietnam War Memorial Wall in 1982; he relates it as an emotional moment and recounts that he saw his lieutenant’s name and it reminded him of the picture “Reflections.” Hustad discusses his struggles with PTSD, counseling at the Madison Vets Center, and admiration for his wife who has stayed with him through it all. He explains that one reason he is involved with the VFW is his lieutenant, “I feel like an obligation and responsibility to not only do my part, but to do more than my part, because I have to do something for the lieutenant, and he’s not able to do it.”

Biographical Sketch:

Hustad (b.1945) is a New Glarus, Wisconsin native. Hustad served in Vietnam as a member of the 101st Airborne Division and was wounded in action in 1969. After returning to civilian life, Hustad worked for IBM and later established a computer consulting firm. He also owns and operates a family farm in Monticello, Wisconsin where he lives with his wife, Jackie. He has been very active in veteran's affairs in Wisconsin including, the Council of Veterans Programs for the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs, the Wisconsin Veterans Museum Foundation Board, the VFW, American Legion, Disabled American Veterans, Wisconsin Vietnam Veterans, and Military Order of the Purple Heart. In addition to his involvement with town government, Hustad also participates in various church and community organizations.

Interviewed by James Kurtz, 2004
Transcribed by Michael Chusid, 2006
Transcription edited by Christina M. Ballard, 2008.

Interview Transcript:

Jim: Today is May 17, 2004. My name is Jim Kurtz. I'm interviewing William Hustad of Monticello, Wisconsin. Bill, where and when were you born?

Bill: I was born in the New Glarus area. My address was actually Mt. Horeb which is on the other side of New Glarus, but in the New Glarus school district.

Jim: Ok, and when?

Bill: August 17, 1945. I was born in a hospital in Monroe.

Jim: And where did you go to high school?

Bill: New Glarus.

Jim: Ok, and what year did you graduate in?

Bill: 1963.

Jim: 1963, and after you completed high school, what did you do?

Bill: I went to the University of Wisconsin-Platteville for two years and then for two to Madison and graduated Madison in January 1968 in chemical engineering.

Jim: And what happened after that?

Bill: Well first of all I got married in January of 1967 so when I graduated from college I got a job at IBM and started working in Rochester, Minnesota in July of 1968. My daughter Peggy was born. In October 1968, I was drafted into the U.S. Army.

Jim: Ok, why were you drafted when you were married and had a daughter?

Bill: Well I got a student deferment while I was going to college so I guess this was a matter of catching up for when I was deferred so they treated me like I was right out of high school in 1963 because I had a deferment from that time on.

Jim: And when you were drafted, where did you take your basic training?

Bill: Fort Campbell, Kentucky.

Jim: Ok, and at Fort Campbell, did you have any unique experiences being a college graduate?

Bill: No, the only experience I guess was of course they give you all kinds of entrance exams and finding out I was a college graduate and had lots of training and that

kind of thing they wanted me to be – wanted to send me to officer’s training school, but I would have to sign up for more years. They wanted me to go to NCO school which would require more years so I declined all those opportunities and basically went through the training like the rest of the people and it was unusual for a college graduate and for somebody married and a child to be there, but I was older than the rest I guess and maybe a little bit more mature, but it was very interesting. There were people from all over the country which in a lot of cases I hadn’t really been exposed to that yet because I grew up on a farm in a small community, so.

Jim: Were there any other college graduates in your basic training, company, unit that you know of?

Bill: Yeah, there was one guy that I remember who was a college graduate – he’s the only one that I remember.

Jim: So it was pretty much of a mix, but not so many college-educated.

Bill: Right.

Jim: And most of them were fairly much younger than you?

Bill: Right. Most of them were 18 and 19.

Jim: Okay. After Fort Campbell, where did you take your AIT?

Bill: Fort Lewis, Washington. ‘Cause they assigned me as a MOS of 11-Bravo, so then went to Fort Lewis for advanced infantry training. I think it rained every day I was there [laughs].

Jim: And what time of year was it that you were at Fort Lewis?

Bill: February through April.

Jim: And it was a cold rain too, I bet. After AIT, what happened to you?

Bill: I came home for a short leave. And then, of course, I had orders to go to Vietnam.

Jim: Okay.

Bill: So I went back to Fort Lewis, Washington, and I was shipped off from there.

Jim: And when you went to Vietnam, how did you get there?

Bill: Airplane.

Jim: Airplane. Was it military or civilian?

Bill: You know, I really don't remember, but I believe it was civilian. We went through Alaska and stopped in Hawaii and eventually got to Vietnam.

Jim: Alaska-Hawaii – that's kind of an interesting –

Bill: Yeah.

Jim: Okay, where did you land in Vietnam?

Bill: In – I think it was Cameron Bay.

Jim: Cameron Bay, okay. And how long –

Bill: Excuse me. It was Ben Wah.

Jim: Ben Wah. Okay. Because it could have been both places. So then you went to the 90th Replacement Company from there.

Bill: I guess.

Jim: And how long were you in Ben Wah?

Bill: Maybe a week.

Jim: A week. And did they have you doing anything when you were in Ben Wah?

Bill: Well, they gave us a little bit of training on booby traps and that kind of thing, but of course they were basically processing our papers and figuring out what unit we should be assigned to, and I got assigned to 101st Air Replacement.

Jim: You got assigned to the 101st, and were you jump qualified?

Bill: No.

Jim: Did that make any difference to them?

Bill: It didn't seem to. Most of the people that I was – In my particular unit, there were very few people who were jump qualified.

Jim: Okay. And you were in a rifle company. When you got to the 101st, did you get any training beyond what you got when you were in Ben Wah at the replacement.

Bill: No, no.

Jim: So describe what happened when you – how you from Ben Wah to where the 101st was, and did you know where in Vietnam they were at the time?

Bill: Well, our battalion was in a place called Fantheat.

Jim: Okay, do you know how to spell that?

Bill: P-H-A-N-T-I-E-T. So landed there – our base was actually called Else Betty, but it was right outside the village of Phantiet. So I arrive there, 'cause that's where I was assigned, and I met a couple of other people that were brand new also, and one of the people I met turned out to be my best buddy the entire time I was there. He came in the same day. His name was Roger Leonnig.

Jim: And how do you spell his last name?

Bill: L-E-O-N-N-I-G. Roger. He was from the Portland, Oregon area. And so I think there was three of us who were kind of at the same time there. And we went out on resupply day and got put into a platoon..

Jim: So Betty was kind of the rear area for your battalion?

Bill: It was the base camp for our battalion. And our battalion was kind of a separate group altogether. So we had a battalion commander, and we were all at LZ Betty – there was nobody else – well, there was some artillery unit there.

Jim: Okay, and how many people were back at LZ Betty? Did they keep a platoon back there? Or a company there?

Bill: I think there was a company there at a time.

Jim: And what kind of buildings did they have, if any?

Bill: At that time – they had been there for a while. When they came there, I understand, they were all in tents. But when I was there, we were in a tent for like a month, and then we moved into a brand new, just built barracks. That was a wooden structure with a roof on it and cots in it.

Jim: Did you have trenches for rocket attacks and mortar attacks?

Bill: Not really trenches, but we were in these –

Jim: Bunkers?

Bill: There were bunkers all the way around the perimeter.

Jim: And of course guard towers.

Bill: And there was some bunkers at the CP. But I don't recall any bunkers – well, I guess there were some bunkers close to these barracks as well.

Jim: Did you have to go out on any patrols before you were assigned to your platoon?

Bill: No, not at LZ.

Jim: Okay. Describe what happened when you arrived out in the field to meet your company and be assigned to a platoon.

Bill: Well, of course, everybody is curious about what's going on, 'cause you're thrown into a whole different environment, so one of my most interesting experiences in Vietnam happened that first day. And that is: I sat down, I was talking to this other fellow who was in the same squad as I was assigned. So we were visiting – I was asking and he was telling me a lot of information and we were so busy talking that we looked up, and everybody else was gone. So our platoon had taken off without us. And we were kind of on a hilltop, and so we looked out and we could see our platoon leaving – they were about a mile away.

Jim: Oh, my –

Bill: And so we were sitting there – just the two of us. And he had been there maybe a couple of months. And I was brand new. And so we were, like, what? How're we going to get there without their shooting at us, or whatever. So we decided our best chance was just to take off and run for them and holler at them and not try to sneak up on them or anything.

Jim: Yup.

Bill: So that's what we did – we went running at them and said; "GIs! GIs!" You know, and "We're U.S.!" and that kind of stuff. And we could see them all come at the ready when they heard us, you know, and they were pointing their guns at us and stuff. And we just keep on coming at them and waving our arms and that kind of thing. Well, nobody shot at us – we were lucky.

Jim: That was good –

Bill: Later on, much later on, during the tour I asked my buddy about it, 'cause he was -- he was in the same squad as me, but he was – that fire team had one on without us. And he said they were all ready to shoot us, 'cause they didn't know what to expect. And they held out til the last minute, and then they found out it was us. My squad leader really got chewed, 'cause the squad leader is supposed to make sure of all his people before they leave the base or stopping point.. So he really got chewed on it.

Jim: Did they say anything to you guys about it?

Bill: No, no. Just that we were lucky.

Jim: Yes. So you were inserted into a platoon night position and went on a resupply, and then you were just out there, humping in the boonies. That's it.

Bill: And our typical routine was to be out there for about a month. We'd be resupplied every three or four days.

Jim: And what would you get during the resupply?

Bill: More ammunition, sometimes clean clothes, sometimes a warm meal – not every time: in fact it was rare to get a warm meal. Typically just bring you some more food and ammo and water.

Jim: And the food was C-rations, I take it?

Bill: Right. Yeah.

Jim: What was your favorite and least favorite C-ration?

Bill: Well, I think everybody's favorite was the fruit. You know, peaches and pears. So that was the favorite. I liked scrambled eggs and ham. I didn't like the lima beans.

Jim: Nobody did.

Bill: And I never got into smoking. And of course there were cigarettes in the resupply packages. So I always traded those. And I liked hot chocolate – I didn't like coffee either. So I usually traded and got more hot chocolate. 'Cause the water didn't taste all that well, and if we took water out of the streams, that didn't taste – well, it tasted a little bit better, but we always had to put iodine in, and of course that didn't taste very good, so we always added Kool-Aid or hot chocolate or something.

Jim: What were the temperature conditions like?

Bill: It was very hot all of the time the entire time I was there, and I got there in April.

Jim: When did the rainy season start then?

Bill: Oh, I can't really remember when the rainy season was, but it was -- we were in the rainy season in October when I left, when I got wounded.

Jim: Okay. And roughly what part of Vietnam were you in?

Bill: It was north of Cameron Bay.

Jim: Okay. So it was probably in the Tuquon [?] area.

Bill: I would think so.

Jim: Okay. Roughly Cameron. What would you carry with you as your basic load when you out in the –

Bill: Well, I came in as a rifleman. So I carried a rifle –

Jim: M-16?

Bill: M-16, and, I don't know, maybe twenty magazines of ammo. And then, of course, we had to carry a hundred rounds for the M-60, for the machine gunner. And then all our food and water had to be carried.

Jim: How many canteens did you carry?

Bill: I recall having about seven or eight. And of course that sometimes didn't last you that three or four days. So whenever you ran into a stream, you'd have to fill them with water. 'Cause you really had to be prepared to last that full four days, and sometimes if the conditions weren't right, you didn't get resupplied on that day, so you had to go an extra day. So you tended to try to skimp on it, but always tried to – every time you ran into water you'd fill up to the max. Get everything –

Jim: Were you required to shave every day?

Bill: No. That was – we – That was kind of lax, but, of course, if the battalion commander or the company commander was going to be there, for whatever reason, then they would tell everybody they had to shave and clean up a little bit. Especially if the battalion commander was coming.

Jim: Did you have a platoon leader, or was the sergeant in -- ?

Bill: No, we had a platoon leader and a platoon sergeant.

Jim: Okay. And how experienced were they?

Bill: Typically, the platoon sergeant was pretty experienced. Platoon leaders were generally pretty raw. Right out of ROTC or right out of school.

Jim: Kind of like you.

Bill: And a lot of them didn't have any infantry training – none at all. And so typically the platoon sergeant did most of the compass work, and where are we? And most of the telephone work was done by the platoon sergeant, typically.

Jim: In your time in the battalion how many platoon leaders did you have?

Bill: At least three or four. And I was there six months.

Jim: Okay. Were they wounded or did they just screw up?

Bill: You know, I'm not sure why some of them were there just a short time. I got there, and the first one I had I barely knew at all, because I don't know whether it was his time to rotate out or whatever, but he left. We got another one, and he was only there a month or so, and then he was back in the rear doing something else. We had another one. The one I most vividly remember was the last one I had, because I'd been a rifleman and I kind of liked the things the radio guys were doing, so I kind of volunteered to do that. We got a new lieutenant, and he was looking for a radio person, so I volunteered to be a RTO, and so I was doing that for a number of months for that particular lieutenant. So I got to know him pretty good. And then – the only reason I quit that is because they wanted me to become a squad leader. So I became a squad leader.

Jim: Did money come with that or just the responsibility?

Bill: Well, they promoted me to Spec 4, so there was a little money involved. So it was – And I enjoyed doing that, I enjoyed responsibility, I liked being an RTO, I liked being a squad leader.

Jim: What kind of people were in your platoon, demographically?

Bill: That really varied all over. We had some people from the midwest like myself. And there were some people from California who were a little more adverse to following orders, you might say. Some people from the south who really didn't want to be in a hurry to do anything. And then there were the people from out east that were kind of hyper about things. So it was very interesting, okay? We of course had blacks in our platoon and stuff too, and I really never noticed anything that was – racial tension of any kind. Everybody kind of worked together and everybody was treated as part of the team. And I really didn't have any, I didn't think, racial overtones.

Jim: Were there any drug problems?

Bill: There was a lot of drugs being used – I never got into that, but people were usually divided between into the dopers and the drinkers. And I really or was more one of people who drank beer. And of course you really didn't have that

out in the field. They made sure you didn't have any, but of course the dope was easy to have out in the field. So a lot of the time there was tension between people who didn't do drugs and people who did do drugs, because you couldn't depend on them on guard duty. They might fall asleep or something like that. So there was some tension there. For the most part, they didn't do drugs except back at the base camp. Which was for a very short time each month. But there was drug use definitely.

Jim: How much contact did you have with the Vietnamese people?

Bill: A fair amount, 'cause we were in an area that was fairly populated, so we'd be going through villages, and sometimes we'd set up our camp either on the outside of the village or a little bit away, so that we could keep track of it. Watch it in the evening for infiltrators and that kind of thing. So we had quite a bit of contact, but nothing very personal, I wouldn't say. I really didn't have time. I didn't speak Vietnamese, and so you interact with the kids, get a little bit and give them some of your candy and stuff like that.

Jim: In the evening did you have trouble with women coming up and selling drugs and selling themselves or anything like that?

Bill: There was some of that, but not really very often. 'Cause you didn't want a whole lot of people knowing exactly where you were, so you tended to move out of the village at a time when you could set up your base camp and it was still light enough to do something but dark enough that everybody would know where you did it. Personally, I didn't like that – being close to the village. I would sooner be out in the jungles where there wasn't that much contact.

Jim: When you say "jungles," was that basically the terrain you were in, was jungles, as opposed to agricultural land?

Bill: Well, it varied a lot. We covered a very large area. Supposedly there wasn't any NVA in our area. It was mostly VC. So we covered a huge area. So right around our immediate base camp, 'cause we were right around the South China Sea. So that was all flat – pretty much plains. But it didn't take going too far away, and you were into the jungles. So we were in the jungles more than we were in the plains.

Jim: Did you see any wildlife when you were in the jungles?

Bill: Oh, yeah. Saw a lot of water buffalo, saw a lot of monkeys, and of course a lot of snakes and spiders and tarantulas and that kind of stuff.

Jim: Did you have any experiences with snakes?

Bill: I didn't personally have any. I always shook my sleeping bag every night to make sure things weren't in there when I got in there. But I did see other people with snakes, playing with them and stuff like that, but I didn't know if [laugh] – but I intended to stay away from them.

Jim: Did you have any experience – Were there ants in your area?

Bill: Yeah, and sometimes you'd sit down and all of a sudden you're covered with ants.

Jim: Did they bite?

Bill: Yeah, they'd bite. [Laugh.]

Jim: Could you describe a typical day for you in Vietnam?

Bill: Well, we'd get up in the morning – I guess I'll start with the morning. We'd get up in the morning.

Jim: What time was about was that? By the sun?

Bill: By the sun, kind of. We'd get up when it got daylight. And of course if we had to move out early, somebody would be around to get everybody up. So we'd get up and make our breakfast and that kind of stuff and get ready kind of for the day. And then we'd go out and pull up our claymore mines and trip wires and that kind of stuff. Get that all gathered up. And then we'd be ready to move out.

Jim: How did you police the area you spent the night? Was there –

Bill: Well, we would – Of course, we would have to dig a foxhole the previous evening, so you'd have to fill that in. And of course if you had some C-ration kind of stuff, you'd bury that in there. Didn't want to leave too much of that around, I guess, more or less for people to follow your trail or whatever. So you'd try to clean it up fairly good. So then we'd move out, and typically we'd walk for a couple miles and then we'd take a break, then walk. And of course you were going to wherever your company commander had given you directions. And of course we were almost always in a platoon – we were seldom in a company formation: we were almost always in a platoon formation.

Jim: How many people were out in the field in your platoon, on the average?

Bill: I think we had three squads, and each one was about eight. And then of course there was an RTO for the platoon leader and there was another RTO for some of the squads. And so it was maybe 30 or 35 people altogether in a platoon.

Jim: Was that typical?

Bill: Yep. Sometimes we were short, and it would be even less.

Jim: Yeah, 'cause there are supposed to be forty-four.

Bill: I would say we were usually closer to thirty-five or forty.

Jim: Was it ever explained to you what you were doing on a daily basis?

Bill: No.

Jim: Just going to go on this azimuth this far, and then we're –

Bill: Yeah, well that's only when I became a squad leader at the RTO level. When I was a regular rifleman, we had no clue. It was – You know, you get up in the morning and you follow the leader type of thing. Or if you the point part – You know, they told you to follow this path or to keep on that and you had the compass with you and you tried to go in that direction. But otherwise, until I became an RTO, I really didn't know what was going on.

Jim: How did people feel about that, not knowing what was happening? Or were they just counting days.

Bill: They were just counting days. I don't think anybody really cared that much that they knew what was going on.

Jim: How often did you have contact with the VC? You said it was basically it was VC that you were dealing with.

Bill: I wouldn't describe it as daily. So there would be lulls, where you wouldn't have contact for a few days, And then you'd run into abandoned base camps or tunnels, and of course the you'd run into VC in the evening. We'd either be on patrol and they'd be trying to ambush us or we were trying to set up a base camp and then they – we'd see them infiltrating in the village and try to make contact with them. So I wouldn't describe it as daily, but it was a couple times a week probably.

Jim: What kind of weapons did they use against you?

Bill: AK-47s.

Jim: Ever any mortars?

Bill: Yeah, we had mortar attacks, but not very much out in the field, because they very seldom knew enough – we were usually in remote enough areas that I'm not even

- sure they had mortars out there. When we were back in the base camp, we'd get mortared quite a bit.
- Jim: Did they use rocket-propelled grenades out there?
- Bill: I never had any experience with those.
- Jim: When you were on your daily routine, did you have much occasion be on helicopters?
- Bill: Oh. Of course we always went from place to – Sometimes they'd have us set up in a camp, 'cause it was resupply day or even if they wanted to move us somewhere else, we'd get into a secured LZ [landing zone], they called it. Helicopters would come in and they'd pick us all up and take us somewhere else. Or they'd pick us up and take us back to the base camp, and we'd all be back there for a couple of days, and then they'd pick us up with helicopters again and take us somewhere else. And then of course the Med-Evacs were all run by helicopters – resupply days: helicopters – visits by battalion commander or those kind of things: by helicopter. So we were on helicopters a lot.
- Jim: Did you have any occasion to come into a hot LZ?
- Bill: Yes.
- Jim: Could you describe that type of experience?
- Bill: I guess it was the most hairy if you were one of the first ones in. Because after the first ones are in and the contact had been made, everybody kind of knew what going on, and you knew it was going to be hot. It was more hair-raising to be the first one in and not know if it was going to be a hot LZ or not. But the bullets a would usually be flying right away, if it was a hot one, and sometimes they'd wait until people got there too, I guess, to make contact, trying to get everybody on the ground before they did it.
- Jim: So most of the time you came in by platoon. Did they have enough helicopters to get your platoon to a position.
- Bill: Yep. I forget how many people were on a helicopter – maybe six.
- Jim: Yeah.
- Bill: So they'd come in with, you know, a half dozen, and pick up a bunch, and maybe they'd have to make two trips, but usually there five or six helicopters all the time.

Jim: Did you ever have any experience where there were two trips when they were relieving an LZ? Because that's pretty hairy when you're the last people to go.

Bill: Yeah, we had that experience too. I don't really remember us having the experience where we left a hot LZ. I mean if it was hot – If it was not cooled down by the time that we really had to leave the area. So I've never had the experience of a hot LZ, leaving.

Jim: Did you have any exposure to NVA soldiers?

Bill: Not that we know of.

Jim: Okay. I'm going to turn the tape over.

END OF SIDE A, TAPE 1.

Jim: But after that, after you left the night base camp or night defense position, you'd go out and go for a walk in the woods for a while. What happened towards the end of the day then?

Bill: Well, usually, depending on how close we were to a village and that type of thing, but typically we would quit well before dusk, because we had to dig our foxholes we needed to cook, we needed to set up our claymores, we needed to set up the trip wires, so there was quite a bit of work to be done. And of course the radio work had to be handled, you had to set up your tent if you had a tent. So there was a lot of things to do. So that a lot of that – it might have taken a couple of hours to do all that, depending how hard the ground was and that type of thing. So typically we'd stop and do all those kind of things at the end of the day. Then of course, there were two people to a foxhole, and there was four people to a position, so there would be two foxholes and of those four people, one person had to be on guard duty all night long. So of the eight hours that you'd be sleeping, perhaps there's only six hours you really slept, because two hours you had to be on guard duty. You know, of course, you always wanted to be either the first one or the last one, so you wouldn't have to do this in the middle, but you had to rotate around, and of course you sometimes got the –

Jim: Can you describe what it was like at night, looking out into the darkness and the jungle, when you were on guard?

Bill: Well, I guess it's a lot darker than it is at home here, because there're lights in nearby cities and neighborhoods and that kind of stuff, so it's really kind of light out. But if the moon wasn't out, it was really dark, because there wasn't any light from any place else. 'Cause even if you were close to a village, they didn't have lights. So it was very dark. So it was kind of scary. You felt like you had to be alert, you had to be listening very carefully.

Jim: Can you describe the noises?

Bill: Well, there'd be these monkey noises, I guess. A lot of time you weren't sure what was making the noises. That's why you had the trip wires out there, I guess you hopefully – If somebody was coming in your area, they'd be tripped off. So you tried to set them in the right places so that would happen. So that was very nerve-wracking, because it was kind of boring at the same time. It was boring to sit there and not – a lot of the time it was extremely quiet, and you, like, what's going on, and trying to stay awake, and the really scary part was sometimes you'd wake up in the morning, and of course you were supposed to be woke up, and you hadn't been woke up. And it was like: what happened? Who didn't wake me up? So then you'd try to find out, and then some guy would say, you know, well, I decided to pull your shift for you too. Well, you knew what happened: the guy had fallen asleep and didn't wake you up. And that was kind of scary, thinking, wow, somebody could have come into our position and we wouldn't have even known it.

Jim: Did you ever have a situation where you were on guard and then all of a sudden it got quiet?

Bill: Oh. I guess I can't remember that as an experience.

Jim: Okay.

Bill: You know there was, I guess – When you starting pulling guard duty and it wasn't quite dark yet, there'd still be some noise from the perimeter. People putting their canteens away or taking their last drink or that kind of thing. So I guess sometimes it did. I don't remember that as a specific experience. Things I do remember though is sometimes in the evening, you'd be looking around at the rest of the perimeter to see what's going on. 'Cause a lot of times you were supposed to be in visual contact with the foxholes next to you and on this side. So visually you'd look over to the sides to make sure somebody was pulling guard duty over there as well. So sometimes you'd see this flicker of light, and of course somebody was lighting a cigarette. And they would put their poncho up over them and they would do that. But a lot of times they didn't do a very good job of that, and you'd see this flicker of light, and you'd say, "Oh, my gosh!" Now if somebody else is out there a distance away, they saw that and now they know where we are. Those kind of things were not very comforting.

Jim: Did your positions ever get probed at night when you were on guard?

Bill: Yeah. But most of the time – You know, the trip fire would go off, and then we really didn't wait a whole lot of time for something else to happen. We would usually open up. We'd blow the claymores, and then it would get quiet. And then we would wait to see what would happen next. And a lot of times nothing

would happen next. The times when we really had the most contact was when we were moving.

Jim: So was your SOP to stay off trail roads, or what was your SOP [Standard Operating Procedure]?

Bill: That was the standard, but in a lot of cases, it was really significant jungle, so if you did not follow the path, I don't know where -- you'd spend days getting a few hundred yards, so you almost had to follow the trails, and that was scary, because you didn't know if they were booby trapped, you didn't know if there was an ambush waiting for you or what. So it was kind of scary, but there wasn't a whole lot of things to do besides follow the trails. We were in a lot of mountains also from time to time, and there were a lot of times no trails. You basically climbed up the rock and went up wherever you could. I didn't really like to be on the trails myself.

Jim: And they weren't good at all. Could you describe what happened when you went back to base camp?

Bill: Well, we'd get our warm meals then. And typically we'd only be back for a couple of days.

Jim: What kind of beer ration did you get?

Bill: You know, I don't remember. I know it was quite a bit.

Jim: And do you remember what kinds they'd give you?

Bill: Black Label and Ballentine. Ballentine ale and Black Label beer. I really don't remember anything else than that, really.

Jim: Okay. What did you do when you were in base camp? Did you have to pull any perimeter guard duty?

Bill: Oh, yes. Typically you had to pull something every night, but usually it was like this -- like we did out in the field. You'd pull a couple hours. What we'd do was we'd go out to a bunker. And the bunker'd have a bottom part to it, and a top part to it. The top part would be kind of open, where you'd supposed to be looking out. And you had a kind of place to shoot through a hole, if you wanted to. And the bottom part had a couple holes in it as well, but that's where people slept. So when you pulled guard duty, you had to be watching out there, and then you'd have to go downstairs and get your relief, and then you'd sleep downstairs and they'd go up. So you really weren't going back to your barracks or anything like that -- you spent that whole night in the bunker. Then of course -- I don't know if it was every hour or two hours -- there'd be somebody from the CP [Command Post] who'd come out to every single bunker and make sure that there was

somebody out there and that they were awake. And it was not pleasant if they found somebody asleep, 'cause it was a no-no back at the base camp. Because out in the field, people really didn't rat on each other, but there, there was this guy who had to go around, and they were pretty rigid about it. If somebody was asleep, they'd –

Jim: Would they be walking or riding around?

Bill: I remember it as walking. Because just because we were a battalion size, it was not a really big base camp. So it was fairly easy to walk around the whole camp.

Jim: Have we missed anything about the day-to-day experience that you had in Vietnam, Bill?

Bill: No, I don't think so.

Jim: Then what I'd like to go it is that you indicated that you were wounded in October of '69?

Bill: October 28, 1969.

Jim: Okay. And could you relate what happened then, if you could?

Bill: Well, first of all, it's kind of a coincidence, because October 28, 1968 is the date that I was inducted into the service.

Jim: Oh, my -- First year anniversary.

Bill: So it was my first year anniversary. So I was out in the field, and we were in Triple Canopy Jungle. And we were in what they called the free fire zone, which meant there wasn't supposed to be any good people out there. Everybody and anybody was an enemy. So we were going through this jungle, and we came upon a small -- very small village, like two or three huts. And the fires were still kind of going, and there were some animals around there, so we knew that there was people around very close. And they had probably just left, because they heard us coming or saw us coming or whatever. And out of the corner of our eye, one of the people saw -- one of our people saw somebody leaving on a trail. So our lieutenant said, "Well, I think we better go down there and follow that. See what's going on." And so a couple of us, our squad leader said, "Well, I think we ought to call the captain and make sure, because I don't think we should do that -- that's too dangerous." And he said, "Well, I'll call the captain then." And he called the captain, captain says, "Yep. Better follow them up." So the lieutenant said -- Roger, he was my best buddy. He was also squad leader of a different squad at that time. And he said, "Roger, you're the one who's going to go down there." And Roger had -- Everybody who he had in his squad was a brand new person. They had been there less than a month. Everyone in his squad was less

than a month. And of course we had been there six months, so we were the old guys at that point. We were the leadership. And so he assigned Roger to go down there, and I said to the lieutenant, "Well, I'm going to go too, because there're too many new people. And Roger – This is not good for Roger." So I volunteered to go. And then I said to the lieutenant, "You're going to come too. You made this decision. You can't sit back here and send somebody out there yourself."

Jim: How did he react to that?

Bill: He didn't really argue at all. Now this is the same lieutenant that I was an RTO for. So I had built up a good relationship with this lieutenant. And I felt pretty strongly about this, and I think he sensed that. And I think if somebody else would have told him that, he probably would have said, "I'm the one who gives the orders around here and you've got nothing to say about it. So the hell with you." But he didn't. Because I had been his friend, so to speak, and that kind of thing, he maybe respected my point of view. So he said, okay. So we went down this trail. And my best friend was walking point, I was walking slack.

Jim: Tell us, for "slack" – what does that mean?

Bill: "Slack" means you're the second person. You're kind of watching out the periphery, and that's your job. The point guy is watching the exactly, watching for boobie traps, watching for someone exactly in front of him. Right behind me was the lieutenant, and of course right behind him was the radio guy. And so we were walking down this trail, and we really just barely had gotten out of eyesight of the village where the rest of the platoon was – we just kind of get out of that range, and all of a sudden we get ambushed from all sides. And of course the first thing to do is fall right to the ground. I did that and started returning fire, and there was other people returning fire. And then it got quiet. And of course we waited for things to start up again, and it didn't. It got very, very quiet. And so we started talking to each other then. And so at this time I noticed – I felt a stinging, 'cause I really hadn't noticed it before, but I felt a stinging. So I looked down at my arm, and blood was just squirting out of my arm – just a huge amount of blood was just coming out. And I felt it on my leg as well, and so I looked down at my leg, and it was all hamburger down by my knee.

Jim: So was it a boobie trap?

Bill: No, it was gunshots. So I must have been hit before I even went to the ground. And so I'm talking to Roger, who was in front of me, and I said, "Roger, how are you doing?" And I could just barely hear him. He says, "I think I'm hit in my chest – I can't hardly breathe." And so I called back to the rear, and I said, "Roger's really bad." And I said, "I've got a couple of wounds too. You need to get up here right away." And the medic was with us. And the guy who was right

behind me, which was not the lieutenant, but the platoon sergeant who was with us also --

Jim: So the whole leadership of the platoon was there.

Bill: Yep. – who was really a fill-in for the – He was really the third in line, ‘cause our platoon sergeant, our regular platoon sergeant was back in the rear for some reason – I don’t remember exactly what.. But the guy who was second to be a platoon leader, a platoon sergeant, he got sick, so he was gone. So he was really the third in line, as far as our platoon sergeant. And he was just a buck sergeant, was his rank. So usually it’s an E-7 – this guy was a E-5. So he comes up, and he says to me, “We can’t – the lieutenant is really bad, so we got to tend to him first.” So pretty soon they worked their way up, and I said, “Go to Roger first.” So they went up to Roger. And they said, “Well, we can, we can – we’ve got him patched up. He’s got a severe chest wound.” So then they kind of bandaged me up, and then they said, “The lieutenant is dead.” He died right away. Of course, they didn’t tell me this until after after I was kind of patched up. And then of course we had to be medevac’ed. So we were in Triple Canopy Jungle, so it was not pitch dark, but it was fairly dark – couldn’t see a whole lot. So the way that they bring the medevac in is we throw out the smoke grenades, and we say, Well we popped a yellow one. This was when we heard the helicopters above, so they knew about where we were, because of our compass readings or whatever. So we’d throw a yellow, and then they’d say, Okay, we see the yellow. And then, because it was Triple Canopy, we really could hear the helicopters, but couldn’t see them. So then they dropped down this basket, down through the jungle, and they put me in first. And of course this is a really eery feeling, ‘cause here you are in this basket. And you’re going up slowly to the helicopter, and you’re thinking: If those guys are still around, they’re going to be shooting at me. And so they didn’t. They must have left the area right away.

Jim: Were they able to clear the trees, I mean the branches?

Bill: No.

Jim: I mean, did your basket hit branches and stuff?

Bill: Yeah. It was kind of a bouncy little ride, but I made it up to the helicopter, and then they lowered it down and picked Roger up. And then they said, “We going. Gotta get you guys back to the base camp right away.” So they sent a second helicopter for the K.I.A. [Killed in Action] – our lieutenant. So we went back to the base camp, and they patched us up as best they could. ‘Cause there was no doctor there – just medics. So then we went to Long Bin – took us by helicopter to Long Bin. We were in intensive care there then – Roger and I both. And I was there about a week, I think Roger was only there a couple days – they medevac’ed him right back to the United States. ‘Cause he had a punctured lung, and his wound was more severe. So I spent about a week in Long Bin in intensive

care. Then they sent me to Cameron Bay for two months. I don't know if that's the maximum that they can keep you there or whatever, but then they sent me to Japan. And then I spent two more months in Japan. By then I had ten months in the service. And they said, "Well, we can't send you back to Vietnam any more – we're going to send you back to the United States. Because there's no reason for us to keep you here any more." So then they sent me back to the United States, because I didn't have enough time to go back to Vietnam, but I still had enough time that I had to –

Jim: -- to stay in the service.

Bill: So then I went to Fort Hood in Texas.

Jim: And what were your duties down there?

Bill: Well, I was in charge of a motor pool. And so I had – I was like a squad leader of some people that had to do motor pools kind of stuff. We were in an armor unit - - I was in the 2nd Armor Division. And so we had to change oil and we had to take people out on -- I forget what they call them now: it's been so many years. But when they send people out for like a week of training out in the field. I forget what they call that. But anyway, we'd have to truck people out, you know, and then we'd have to go back and pick them up. We had to maintain the vehicles and that kind of thing. So it wasn't too bad. The thing was that because I was still really recuperating, I had to go to physical therapy in the hospital there. And I was on – I forget what they call that now too – I was on profile. Which means I really couldn't participate in calisthenics and those kind of things. But I still had to be there for revelry. My wife moved down to Texas with me. And our daughter. So we lived out of the – outside in Coleen, Texas in a small trailer, mobile home trailer court. Lived there at night, went to the base every day, and then I got malaria. Which was due to Vietnam, but I got it in Texas. And so that was another setback really. But I got over that. So then on October 28, 1970, I got out of the military. [Laugh.]

Jim: When you were wounded, when was the first time you were able to communicate with your wife and family?

Bill: Well, that's kind of an interesting story. Because when I got to the hospital – when I got out of Long Bin, I said to the Red Cross girl – well, the nurse, I guess, to start with – I said, "You know, I was due to go on R&R. And I'm supposed to meet my wife. And I think it's about – I'm not sure what exact day it is, but I think I'm supposed to meet her in about a week. So we need to get a hold of my wife, so that she doesn't go to Hawaii. I'm supposed to meet her in Hawaii. So she's going to be leaving soon." She says, "Well, we'll take care of it. You're in no shape to do anything – we'll notify your wife." I says, "Okay." So a couple days later, a Red Cross girl came around and said, "Would you like to write a letter?" And I says, "Well, you know I'm wounded in my right arm. I'm right-

handed. Can I just tell you what I want to say and can you write the letter?" And she says, "Yeah. I can do that." And I says, "Well, I think I'm up to signing it. So you write the letter and I'll sign it." So I told her what I wanted to say. And so it got sent off. And I signed it. And only later on did I find out that that was the first time my wife knew.

Jim: That you were injured?

Bill: That I was injured. So that the army never did tell her, and she just barely got this letter before she left for Hawaii.

Jim: Oh, boy!

Bill: So she could have went to Hawaii, expecting to see me, and wondered why in the world I wasn't there. So –

Jim: That would have been terrible.

Bill: But I was glad that I was able to sign the letter, because my wife said later, she says, you know, it says you were wounded and all this kind of thing, and she says it was very comforting to her to see I could at least sign my name. That it wasn't something made up by somebody or whatever, so –

Jim: Yeah.

Bill: That was very comforting to her. But of course she – I wrote to her probably everyday, but of course letters didn't go out except on resupply days. So she was used to getting letters maybe once a week. So it had been a few weeks since she had gotten a letter, and she was really concerned. So when she got that letter and it was signed by me, even though she knew I was in the hospital wounded and stuff, she was very comforted that, number one, she got a letter at all, and number two, that I was able to sign it. Because she was so concerned, 'cause she was used to getting these letters once a week, you know. And all of a sudden no letter for a couple of weeks.

Jim: Sure. Just speaking of letters, was it difficult to write letters in the field? Physically, I mean?

Bill: No really. I mean, typically you didn't have time in the morning really, 'cause everybody was kind of anxious to get going. They were anxious to get out of this. You always felt kind of vulnerable, being in any one place too long. So we tended to want to get up and get going, so you didn't have time to do that. But in the evening, once you got your foxhole dug and everything was kind of settled in, you got things settled, maybe there was still a half an hour or an hour of sunlight yet. So people would be kind of visiting and doing this and that, and that was your time when you could write.

Jim: Now how'd you keep the paper dry?

Bill: It was difficult. What I usually did was I carried around one of those small ammo cans. They were heavy, but it was really the only thing you could depend on to keep things dry. So my camera was in there, pictures that had been sent from home, letters from her, my writing paper, the stuff that I had ready to be sent out, when resupply day came, I had in that ammo can. And some guys didn't do that, and things got wet. And of course then they lost the letters that had been written, so -- It was an extra burden and it was heavy, but I thought it was worth the extra weight.

Jim: Let's see where we are. You mentioned sunlight at the night defense positions. Did you notice that it got dark pretty quick in Vietnam, as compared to Wisconsin?

Bill: Yeah. Again, I think, it was because there was no light in the surrounding areas, so when the sun went down, it was dark. It seemed like it got darker quicker, but --

Jim: I going to put another tape --

NOT END OF SIDE B, TAPE 1: Pause.

Jim: -- 2004 with Bill Husted. Bill, you said you got out of the army of October 28, 1969. How did you and your family return to Wisconsin, if that's what you did?

Bill: Okay, I got wounded in '69. I got out in 1970.

Jim: '70. I'm sorry.

Bill: So, first of all, let's go back to -- I'd like to relate the story, I guess, of really coming home.

Jim: Oh yeah, please do.

Bill: When I -- Well, first of all, getting off the plane coming from Vietnam, landing in San Francisco, Port Orbeck, I believe, was the place. You know, trying to get to the airplanes to get us home, there was a lot of protesters there. And it was not a very pleasant experience. And I was a little prepared for it, because I was at the University of Wisconsin in -- up to 1968, and there was protests going on on the campus at the time when I was there. So I knew that this was in the background while I was in Vietnam. And I kind of expected it a little bit when I got home. There was a lot of people that, when it was over in Vietnam, they had been there for a while -- they didn't know what was going back in the United States. And they were concerned about what they had been reading in the papers and stuff like

that. But anyway, it was hard coming through there with those people shouting things at you and throwing things and, in some cases, even spitting on the people in uniform. So everybody almost immediately, as soon as you could get to a restroom, got out of your military uniform and put on civilian clothes, so nobody knew – of course, in a lot of cases you were still carrying this duffel bag. But as soon as you got that check and that kind of thing, you looked like another civilian. And so you really had to blend in and not show that you were military.

Jim: You said the military gave you no inclination [sic] this was going to happen.

Bill: No. No. And we went right from getting off the plane from Vietnam, and we got on a plane – well, in my case I got on the plane in Japan. Went right to the United States. You got off the plane, and I think it was a day later I was on my way home. There was no decompress time. Though I had some in Japan. But a lot of people came right back from Vietnam, and there was no decompression time at all. Where nowadays they bring people back and they spend a couple weeks or a month before they even see their families, so to speak. But when I got back eventually to Madison, you know, there was my daughter that I hadn't seen for a year. And of course she was walking and talking and she didn't know who the heck I was. So it was a very emotional thing to come home to – Of course, my wife was very glad to see me, and I was glad to be home. And of course, I weighed a lot less than when I had left the states. 'Cause I had been in the hospital, and the hospital food – no matter how good the food is [laugh], you lost weight. So I was very, very thin.

Jim: You bet. How were you greeted by the community in Madison?

Bill: Because I was basically dressed like a civilian and that kind of thing, it wasn't protesters there. And because we came back so interspersed – I mean, in San Francisco a lot of people came through there, so I think the protesters were poised there, so to speak. Where in Madison, I really didn't run into anything at all. And in my home community, I mean, I immediately blended in. You know, as far as my home community, they treated me just fine. But I think they didn't even know that I was in Vietnam, so to speak. Except the few people who maybe read it in the paper and that type of thing.

Jim: So nobody ever asked you about it or –

Bill: No.

Jim: Did you speak to any service clubs or anything like that?

Bill: No. So that was my experience coming home, and then of course I got assigned to Fort Lewis, Texas – I took my family down there. But when I got out of the service, I could go back to work in Rochester for IBM again. And I did that. And eventually through transfers within IBM, I got transferred back to Madison.

END OF SIDE B, TAPE 1

- Bill: And so when I got back here, it was quite a few years, and I had never been in a military or veterans organization. Never had anything to do with it, really. Well, in 1980, I was out here on this very farm where we're at right now. 'Cause we had moved here – this is my wife's family farm. And the people with VFW caps came by. And they said, "We're going to start our local VFW post right here in New Glarus, and we'd like to know whether you'd join or not." And I said, "Well, I'll join. But only under one condition. And that is if most of the veterans in that organization are going to be Vietnam veterans, and the Vietnam veterans are going to run the organization." 'Cause I said I've had limited contact with other veterans organizations, but the ones I have had, have been run by the older generation veterans, and they're still wanting to be in control, and I don't think they're treating us right, so I want to be in a Vietnam veterans group. They said, "Fine. That's what we're doing. We're out getting people your age. So it'll be a Vietnam veterans group." And I said, "Fine. I'll belong then." So I went to the first meeting and I was elected commander. [Laugh.]
- Jim: And in 2004, you're a commander again.
- Bill: I'm a commander again – I'm recycled. So I've been active in that post for all these years. So that was my first experience in getting back into a veterans service organization. And I've enjoyed it. We've been, I think, instrumental in the community. I think we've been trying to put a good base of the veteran to the community, so they understand what veterans are about, that type of thing. So I've made it a goal of mine to educate people on Vietnam and veterans issues in the community. And the VFW has been an outlet for me to do that.
- Jim: Did you find it personally therapeutic to be talking to people with comparable experiences too?
- Bill: Yes. Really the defining moment – I mean, that was the start of my getting back into the veterans community and interacting with other veterans, because until that time – I mean, other than – I had a brother-in-law that had been in Vietnam also. So him and I would talk about it. My grandfather was in World War I. And I had a couple of heart-to-heart talks with him. And he told me about things that he'd not told any of his family or probably no other person ever, but he told me because I was a veteran. And he knew that what I had gone through, so I understand what he went through. So he told me stuff that later on, after he died, I found out he had not told any of his children or his wife. So it was things that he told me that I was not relating to other people that they were finding it out for the first time. So other than that, there was really no interaction with other veterans until the VFW. But in 1982, they dedicated the wall up in Washington, D.C. And I went out there for that. And my wife and – well, my wife and family were with me. And so for the first time when I walked along the wall, it was tremendously

emotional. I could hardly walk through there. It was just so overwhelming to see all those things for the first time. You know, you read about it and see pictures, but until you were there, it was just -- And really that helped me tremendously. I don't know what I would have done without the wall. I mean, it really seemed to lift some burdens from me. And I found my lieutenant's name on the wall. And you see the picture -- I think it's called reflections. But you know, I felt just like that -- I put my hand up there, and my fingers were on his name. And looking into the wall, I could see myself, but at the same time I didn't see myself. I saw the lieutenant, I saw myself, and I saw Roger, and we looked just like we did in Vietnam. It just put me right back there. And it made me feel close to the lieutenant again. And that has been something that has been a hard experience for me to deal with to this day. The losing of a very good friend. And somebody that I felt responsible for. So one of the reasons I'm active in veterans organizations is because of the lieutenant. I feel like an obligation and a responsibility to not only do my part, but to do more than my part, because I have to do something for the lieutenant. And he's not able to do it. I know he was an only child, and I know where he was born and raised, but I've never raised up enough courage to go visit his family. I don't even know whether they're alive yet or not. I know they would probably like to hear from somebody who was right there with the lieutenant. But I just haven't been able to get the courage. One of these days, maybe after I'm retired, I'll try -- hopefully somebody will still be alive and I can visit them. So that's something I'm still trying to deal with. And that's one of the reasons I go to the Vet Center and work with Tom. I know Tom -- Tom counsels me. And I've really only been in counseling for less than a year.

Jim: I guess that makes two of us.

Bill: You know, all these years, I had the nightmares when I first came back, and my wife had to deal with all the struggles at night when I thought I was in Vietnam and waking up at night and hollering. My wife had to deal with all of that, and she stuck through it with me. I'm still married to the same woman I married before I went to Vietnam.

Jim: Oh, that's terrific.

Bill: So it's -- Some of the stuff I do for veterans organizations is really because of the lieutenant. It's in his name that I do this stuff.

Jim: Well, that's a high note, I guess. Is there anything else we haven't covered, Bill, that we should?

Bill: I can't think of anything.

Jim: Because I think this was really good.

[END OF INTERVIEW]