

**Wisconsin Veterans Museum  
Research Center**

Transcript of an

Oral History Interview with

JAMES MOSEL

Scout Sniper/Reconnaissance, U.S. Marine Corps, Vietnam War

2012

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**Mosel, James.,** (b.1950). Oral History Interview, 2012.

Approximate length: 2 hours 3 minutes

*Contact WVM Research Center for access to original recording.*

**Abstract:**

James Mosel discusses his service with the Marine Corps during the Vietnam War, his time with Marine Barracks 8<sup>th</sup> and I, as well as his involvement with the Marine Corps Association. Mosel outlines his family history of military service and explains why he joined the Marine Corps. He explains his training at Camp Pendleton [California] and sniper school at Quantico [Virginia]. He describes serving in Vietnam with the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 7<sup>th</sup> Marine Regiment, 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division, including attending language school, Base Camp on Hill 10 with Bravo Company, and participating in Operation Mameluke Thrust on August 9<sup>th</sup> 1968. Mosel details the injury he sustained during the Thrust on Charlie Ridge and the medical care he received. He discusses his transfer to the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division, Reconnaissance Battalion based on Hill 325 PX and the reconnaissance operations he led in both Vietnam and Laos. Mosel explains how he was then moved to Marine Barracks 8<sup>th</sup> and I, Guard Company, 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon stationed in Washington D.C. after leaving Vietnam. He comments on participating in riot control and guarding the King of Ethiopia. Mosel also recalls his service at Camp David, and the interactions he had with President Nixon. Lastly he reflects on the importance of the Marine Corps on his life and describes his involvement with the Marine Corps Association.

**Biographical Sketch:**

James Mosel (b.1950) enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1967; he was deployed on a 13 month tour to Vietnam serving with the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion 7<sup>th</sup> Marine Regiment, 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division and the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division, Reconnaissance Battalion. Stateside, Mosel served with Marine Barracks 8<sup>th</sup> and I, Guard Company, 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon and then at Post 13 at Camp David.

Interviewed by Rick Berry, 2012.

Transcribed by the Audio Transcription Center, 2015.

Reviewed by Claire Steffen, 2015.

Abstract written by Claire Steffen, 2015.

## Interview Transcript:

[Tape 1, Side A]

Berry: This interview is with James Mosel, who served with the United States Marines during the Vietnam War. This interview is being conducted at the Wisconsin Veterans Museum at the following address, 30 W. Mifflin St., Madison, Wisconsin, 53703, on the following date, August 13, 2012. The interviewer is Rick Berry. Jim, thank you for agreeing to do this interview. Can you tell us something about your background and life circumstances before entering military service?

Mosel: Sure. I grew up in a middle class environment. My father was a civil servant with the city of Eau Claire. My father had served a very prestigious World War II career. His war started in November of 1942. He landed with Patton in North Africa, and he went all the way across North Africa and defeated Rommel in Tunisia, went on to land in Sicily, went to Palermo and Messina, again with Patton's Army--this was the 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division--and landed in Utah Beach and went all the way to our family's home in Munich, Germany, where he found our family. I grew up knowing that. My father got us very involved in Scouting; I was an Eagle Scout, as well as both of my brothers. Both of my brothers served as well, Army and Navy respectfully. I joined the Marine Corps when I was seventeen years old, and I dragged my parents down to the recruiter in 1967 thinking the Vietnam War was going to be over before I turned eighteen. Oops.

Berry: Had you completed high school at that time?

Mosel: Oh, yeah. Yeah. Well, I hadn't completed the high school, but when I went active I had completed. So technically I was seventeen years old when I joined the Marines.

Berry: Tell us about the induction process.

Mosel: Well, there were so many in the Marines. The Corps at the time had ratcheted up to almost three hundred thousand Marines. Currently Corps levels are down to 184,000. So it was a very arduous process, a lot of people, a lot of staff, a lot of battalions going through recruit training. I was in San Diego as a Hollywood Marine. Platoon 2074 was the honor platoon in the battalion. I still stay in touch with many of my boot camp brothers. Some are noted authors, some are just successful businessmen. But it was kind of your induction into the Marine Corps and the Marine Corps way of life, and it's your keycard to get into the club.

Berry: Tell us something about boot camp. What was it like and what was the training like?

Mosel: It was brutal. It was brutal. They claim in today's Marine Corps that your drill instructor is your mentor. Absolutely not true. He was--Marine Rivera is gone now, but he was a disciplinarian, a brutal guy. But what the Marine Corps was doing was training you to absolutely positively never second guess an order, especially in the battle space, and that's where it all begins. You don't get to appreciate all of that until--it was a thirteen-week program, and you don't really appreciate the level of brotherhood and what your drill instructors really did for you almost until they're putting the Eagle, Globe and Anchor in your collar. The first moment of the thirteen weeks of being called Miss Mosel, or other words, to be called Marine, it was a feeling that never leaves you the rest of your life.

Berry: You were not addressed as a Marine until you completed boot camp, is that correct?

Mosel: Not once. As a matter of fact, in the late summer, early autumn, in San Diego, if you can imagine with your utility shirt all the way down, sleeve buttoned, and your top button buttoned, you didn't get to open that top button up until you were a Marine. So there were little things, little rewards, along the way that gave you encouragement to feel more and more pride, but there was never a day off in those thirteen weeks. You learned how--I thought I was a pretty good marksman until I went to the range, and you were shooting five hundred meters open sights, and you had a reasonably phenomenal score. I was an expert on the range and proudly wore my expert badge, and it was the precursor of my getting in the sniper school.

Berry: What weapon did you qualify with?

Mosel: An M14, an M14, and it was the same weapon I carried in Vietnam. I'm very familiar with that weapon, and I also carried a sniper rifle in Vietnam, but the ammunition was the same, very important to me.

Berry: You mentioned you made some lasting friendships in boot camp.

Mosel: Oh, yeah. Yeah, as a matter of fact, one of my friends that I graduated in boot camp lives across the street from me in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, quite by accident, but Dale Cronkhite [sp?], a retired law enforcement man from Fairbanks, Alaska. Paul Olenski, the former chief information officer of the AT&T, Paul went on to graduate after he got out of Vietnam. He was a Silver Star winner, a Purple Heart award. Paul went to the university, went to Loyola, and at Loyola he graduated summa cum laude. He now has two

books authored, and one of the books is being looked at by Kevin Costner for a movie, again, about our Vietnam experiences.

Berry: Now you mentioned you really didn't have time for recreation at boot camp. Do you remember any pranks or other sorts of items different from the training that you were involved with, you know actions with your friends and so forth?

Mosel: No, it was--you learned from the very get-go that--these were very large platoons. They weren't the typical forty-man platoon that you have in combat. Well, I never had a forty-man platoon in combat. We were always under strength. But it was drilled into you from day one that 70 percent of the people in the platoon are going to be grunts, O311s, and you are going to be in Vietnam, and you will be there, and you will be there in four months, so you better pay attention. You had better keep your nose clean. They made a special--we marched in formation over to the brig, and those T.I.s wanted you to see how the guys in the brig were living. There was a platoon; there were that many guys in the brig. And then there was also the motivational platoon. So they wanted you to know about that right away, because it was dead serious, serious business. And your outcome in boot camp would translate into your outcome when you transitioned into a line company as a grunt. Again, Paul Olenski and I and Pete Wagner and Bill Carlson and some of these other fellows, Dale Cronkhite, we were in the armed platoon, and Cronkhite and I ended up as sniper partners at one time. We all shared the same attitude.

Berry: After you completed your basic training, did you have additional advanced training before you joined an operational unit?

Mosel: Yeah.

Berry: Tell us about that.

Mosel: Well, my MOS when I graduated--of course, in boot camp they ask you all these wonderful questions like "Do you like camping?" "Do you like the outdoors?" "Oh, you're an Eagle Scout. Oh, boy." So that's got grunt written all over it. You go to basic infantry training school. I was sent on a Friday to Camp Pendleton, which is the home of the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division. Then after that you went to an infantry training regiment, and then that was a five-week course. Both of those were about five weeks, as I recall. Then I went to sniper school, and that was a thirty-day course, three hundred rounds a day, through the Remington 700 BDL, three to nine range, with a Redfield three-to-nine power scope with a range finder in it, a wide-field scope, the same one you'd use in-country, and oddly enough it's one of the same weapons they use yet today. I had the opportunity of

hurtling about four hundred rounds through my old sniper rifle at Quantico. I had the range in Quantico.

Berry: This is that 30-caliber weapon, is that correct?

Mosel: Correct, .308, yeah, on a 7.62 millimeter, pretty much standard for snipers, elongated barrel, longer and then heavier, so that you could put more rounds through it, and it wouldn't get quite so hot.

Berry: Did you have further training in the States after sniper school?

Mosel: That's it. Staging battalion and I did kind of break the rules in the staging battalion. We were told not to leave the Los Angeles-San Diego area on your last liberty, which was seventy-two hours, and I immediately went to LAX. I flew home. My father was in the hospital, and of course my father had thirty-eight months in combat, and he had a bleeding ulcer. He knew what I was getting into. So I went and said goodbye to my father, and I said goodbye to my family.

Berry: Did your family support your decision to enlist in the Marines?

Mosel: Yeah, my mom wasn't too happy, but that's just the way it is. It's a young man's business, as a colonel told me one day not too long ago out at Quantico, when I was there with the divisional unit. So even though you sit at home, thirty years later, sharpening your K-bar, waiting for the commandant to give you the call, to give you the nod, to go back into combat, that ain't ever going to happen. It's a young man's business. So at any rate, I was excited to go and ready to go.

Berry: You were looking forward to your turn yet.

Mosel: I was looking forward to it, to serve my country first and get that out of-- on your bucket list or whatever you want to call it. That was one of the items on my bucket list I had to get out of the way. Later on in this interview you'll discover how many doors that that had opened for me in my career, corporate career. But at any rate, I'd just about got bumped off the flight on the way back, in Las Vegas, and I just had to explain to the stewardess--stewardesses in those days--that if I missed my troop movement I'd go to the brig. So she covered me up and said, "Pretend you're sleeping," and they're doing the count and they just couldn't figure out how the count didn't work out right. Anyway, they bumped one of the persons that was one of the touristy kind of persons and left me on the airplane, and I guess the rest is history. Then we migrated from there to Okinawa. So--

Berry: Now did you travel overseas with any of your buddies from boot camp?

Mosel: Well, yeah. There were not many, because so many of them either went to radio schools or other artillery--

Berry: How about sniper school? Did any of your fellow--

Mosel: Yeah. Yeah. But you have to understand, when you get to Okinawa it's sort of another holding area, so you're there for a couple of days, and your tour doesn't really start until you land in Da Nang.

Berry: The tour for Marines in Vietnam was thirteen months as opposed to twelve, is that correct?

Mosel: Right. It was thirteen months. You were flown into combat on a Continental Airline, just like you were flying from one place to another in the US. Once you landed in Da Nang, you stepped out into 110 degree heat and 90 percent humidity, and you were--it was in your face, you were in a different place. Then of course you were put onto cattle cars and taken over to yet another staging area, but this one was just four or five hours, and that's where you were getting your orders cut. So the difference between today's combat Marine and Vietnam was we never went over as a unit. You'd never know who you were gonna serve with. Today you go over as a cohesive unit, and you know everyone, and the term FNG just doesn't apply to today's Marine Corps, unless you've been deployed solo, and that you're--

Berry: Now please explain for the listener the term you just used. FNG

Mosel: Well, that term was just called a fucking new guy. Everyone in the Marine Corps went through it, and it was an arduous thing to have to struggle through. However, it was a little easier for me, because my sniper partner, Bobby Weber, that just retired as the postmaster of Holcombe, Wisconsin, was indeed in my sniper school. Bobby and I joined the Marine Corps together. His service number is 2385234. He was standing in line just behind me. I didn't know him, he didn't know I, and he was every bit of five foot, two inches, and wrestled ninety-five pounds in high school, and he had to be at least 108 to get into the Marine Corps, 108 pounds, and he was sweating not being heavy enough. And as God is my witness, while the corpsman was checking his weight, I put my foot on the scale just enough to get him up to about 120 pounds. And his expression to me was, "Thanks, man." [laughs] As it turned out, I went home, and I said, "I met a kid named Weber, and his mom's name was Nordrum [sp??] and she was supposedly going to school in Eau Claire. As it turned out, my mother and his mother were on the same bridge club and went through high school together. Bobby and I have had a lifelong friendship. So here you are one digit apart in your service number. We went through sniper school

together. Actually we went through basic infantry training, infantry training regiment, sniper school, ended up in Vietnam the same division, regiment, battalion, company, squad, fire team. There's four guys in the fire team. We thought that that was so cool, right up until your first firefight, and then it wasn't so cool.

Berry: Tell us about joining your operational unit after in-processing, when you arrived in Vietnam.

Mosel: Well, you were shedding all of your stateside kind of utilities and boots. You had a complete uniform change into jungle utility, which was a very light fabric, resistant to rot, to a certain point, although the stuff did rot off of you when you were in the jungle for six or eight weeks at a time. Jungle boots were a bit lighter, the soles were reinforced for punji stakes, and there's a steel shank in there. You were issued weapons. Again, another weapon to memorize the serial number. That weapon and you were never separated, ever.

Berry: This was also an M14.

Mosel: I had an M14. Bobby had chosen to take an M16, simply because of his size. If you can imagine carrying two hundred to three hundred rounds of 308 ammunition, which was my usual fare. In recon, there's always 300 rounds. And the magazines were heavier, the weapon was heavier. But it had tremendous--the reach was much, much further, and when it hit something further out, it had more knockdown power, and that's the name of the game. You know, there's no tap dancing around it. We were there for one reason, and that was to kill the enemy. We weren't there to make friends and be sociable with the locals. We had the fear of God and just about everybody--we were kind, as kind as we could be, but our job was to kill the NVA.

Berry: What actual unit did you serve or went into operation with, right after your--

Mosel: I was initially assigned to headquarters company, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion 7<sup>th</sup> Marine Regiment, 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division. I was in Headquarters Company, so that I could be deployed with any company in the battalion as a sniper. And then I was chosen to go back to Okinawa for a two-week language school, and when the C-130 took off from Da Nang, wheels up, it was 4 April 1968, my birthday. I turned nineteen--twenty, I turned twenty years old. Let me stop and think about that. No, I turned nineteen years old. It was the day Martin Luther King was assassinated. Lieutenant General "Brute" Krulak was on that aircraft. General Krulak was one of the key, influential Marines and congressional people that actually saved the Marine Corps after the Korean War. Congress actually wanted to disband it, and Brute

Krulak's son, Charlie, went on to be I think the thirty-second or the thirty-third commandant at the Marine Corps. But Brute Krulak was indeed--the name is misleading. He was about five foot six and loved the enlisted rank and was brutal on the officer ranks. That gentleman took the time to go around that C130 and introduce himself to every Marine on board. I never forgot it. And someday I'll run into Charlie Krulak and I'll tell him the story. But after that language school, when I rotated back into country, and my time at that language school counted on my tour. When I got back I was assigned a Chiêu Hồi Scout. Chiêu Hồi means I surrender in Vietnamese, and my Chiêu Hồi scout's name was Wun Dao [sp??]. So now I had a kind of a different title. I was an S2, which is intelligence. An S2 intelligence scout sniper, whereupon I would go into villages and actually interrogate the village mama-sans or papa-sans. Usually the mama-san ran the village. And we would glean information about where the NVA would come into these villages, what routes they would take. They were pressing the young boys into service, so you'd find the friendly villages--they weren't all friendly--whereupon I'd report how they were coming in, where they were going out, and then an S2 at battalion level would set up the ambushes with the regular grunt platoons. A squad would go out and set up ambushes, et cetera. And we were moderately successful.

Berry: So the ambushes would be set up based on the intelligence that you gathered?

Mosel: Correct. I would also make more accurate maps of the villages than you would get from the national geographical service, the US oceanographic.

Berry: Where were these villages located in relation to Da Nang?

Mosel: Well, they were all southwest, near Hill 10. Hill 10, Hill 37, Delta Company was out on Hill 37. Hill 55 was quite a ways from us, almost nearly straight south of Da Nang, and Hill 55 to the south would have been Dodge City and Go Noi Island, two very treacherous places to be. Hill 10 sat at the mouth of Happy Valley, and you could see Charlie Ridge, Wert [sp??] Ridge, Hill 310, and Hill 270, both of those hills have had numerous brutal fights. So at any rate, as I moved forward, the Bravo Company commanding officer petitioned to get me out of headquarters and have me permanently assigned to Bravo Company.

Berry: As a sniper?

Mosel: As an S2 intelligence scout.

Berry: Oh, an S2 intelligence.

Mosel: So I did most of the intel work, but I was assigned to Bravo Company, so I had a little closer bond with that company, and that, again, Bobby Weber was in that company as well. Shortly after returning from the language school, we were at the edge of what was called the Rocket Belt. So the Tet Offensive in '68, 120 millimeter rockets would come very near our area at the very foothill of Charlie Ridge and Happy Valley, and those rockets were the ones that blew up the Da Nang Airport and hit the fuel depot and hit an ammo dump. Well, it was just a chip shot, ten clicks, eight clicks from where the rockets were being fired near Hill 10. And one night we had a hell of a rocket attack, and we were probably hit with fifteen 120-millimeter rockets. I was wounded the first time with a piece of shrapnel through my left foot, as I was diving into a bunker. We lost a lot of Marines that day, that night, and it was pitch black. One of the rockets landed into the CO's hooch and completely vaporized the commanding officer, the gentleman that had petitioned so hard to get me into Bravo Company was now gone. Lieutenant Randall took over as the XO moved into the CO's position, and my platoon commander was Captain Dan McCarthy. [inaudible] It was Lieutenant Dan McMurray [sp??], and Dan went on to win a Silver Star, which I'll tell you about in a little bit. But at any rate, while we were still doing patrols--

Berry: And was your base camp at this time located kind of on the top of the hill?

Mosel: Yeah, Hill 10, and that means ten meters above the sea level, and the ocean was only about thirty meters from--this was a pretty flat hill. Typically down in the rice paddy areas in the lowland, the high ground, you'll find a lot of cemeteries. Obviously the coffins would float and push out of the ground. But in the 4<sup>th</sup> of March, 1968, I was not wounded bad enough where I had to be medevaced out. I stayed in the battalion area.

Berry: This was a second wound?

Mosel: The first wound.

Berry: Oh, okay, this is still the foot wound.

Mosel: Yeah. So it was healed and ready for me to rock on the 4 of April. Actually it was a week before that, I mean, the 4 of May.

Berry: Were you medevaced by helicopter?

Mosel: I wasn't medevaced. I stayed in the battalion area and just went into the battalion aid station. The end of April was when we were deployed to what turned into Operation Mameluke Thrust, and that operation officially went to the 7<sup>th</sup> Marines, and it was concurrent with Operation Allen Brook. Allen Brook was in Go Noi Island in Dodge City. Mameluke

Thrust was Charlie Ridge and Go West [??], almost to the Laotian border. Four May, 1968, the operation began. My battalion, reinforced, went up onto Charlie Ridge, and we never came out until the 6<sup>th</sup> of July, in Phong Doc [sp??], which is about the middle of Vietnam, North Vietnam--of the northern part of South Vietnam, whereupon we were mortared and lost seven more Marines. In that period of time, from 4 May to 6 July, we lost 141 Marines, but we were credited with 1,084 killed NVA soldiers. We decimated the 368<sup>th</sup> Regiment. It was in concert with the 26<sup>th</sup> Marines on our northern flank, and we pushed nearly to the Laotian border. Mameluke Thrust did not end that day, it just ended for us. So after we were mortared on the 8<sup>th</sup> of July, we did finally move out of that area. We literally got rides out in trucks, with tank support, et cetera.

Berry: This was in the A Shau Valley area, is that correct?

Mosel: No, this was Charlie Ridge.

Berry: Okay.

Mosel: This was Charlie Ridge, and for that action we received a Meritorious Unit Citation.

Berry: When you say there were over 100 Marines killed--

Mosel: A hundred and forty-one.

Berry: A hundred and forty-one. How large was the unit?

Mosel: Well, a reinforced battalion, but you have to take into account that a typical company is 150 men--well, not in Vietnam. You were lucky if you had 100 men in your company. So you were talking about 450 men perhaps. One in four was killed. Dysentery, I had ten days of dysentery. We were not medevaced out for dysentery. You just crapped your pants.

[Tape 1, side B]

Berry: Okay, Jim, we were in July of '68, if you want to continue.

Mosel: We just kind of migrated back to, if you recall, Mameluke Thrust started on the 4<sup>th</sup> of May. On the 20<sup>th</sup> of May, earlier I said Bobby Weber and I in the same fire team we thought was kind of cool, right up until you get into a fight, and now you're really worried about one another. And in the first major engagement of Mameluke Thrust, which was mid-May, we had walked into a major resistance of NVA. These are not the black pajama guys. This is the professional North Vietnamese Army. We engaged, and the skipper said to me, "Shed everything but your cartridge belt, a couple

of frags, your weapon. Leave your helmet and get down to the river and get the tanks across.” So this was a moment out of Rambo or something, as you’re running down the rice paddies, taking the most direct route to the river, the machine gun rounds are going off in the water around you, and you don’t dare stop for a second. And your adrenaline kept you moving at a 100 percent. And when I got to the river and I knew that we were in a very tough spot, I didn’t even chuck my flak jacket; I went right into the river and was able to tread water through a very narrow portion. This is twelve feet maybe, of this conference room. My feet weren’t on the bottom, and it was lucky that it was just a short period of space, it was a short distance. But I did make the other bank, and I ran up that bank, and I got the tank commander, and I said, “I walked all the way across. Let’s go. Right here. Go, go, go!” And he said, “Grab a hold of that antenna,” and I was up on top of the turret. I grabbed the antenna and my bullet launcher over my shoulder, and that tank went right straight down and kept going down and going down. The turret was now covered with water, and I thought, “Oh, my God, what have I done? I have just killed a tank crew.” And as luck would have it, that tank, it touched the other bank and was on its way back up, and a wall of water went over the top of the turret. Had I not been told to hold onto the antenna, I would have been washed off the tank. The tank now had a clear path into the fight, and this whole process had taken--as you know, fire fights don’t last that long. You’re engaged for ten or fifteen minutes. Usually the outcome has been taken, and it’s either you got your ass kicked, or you’re mopping up and taking care of business on your end. So the tanks came in, and as we were going across the rice paddies, on the fly the tanks were firing and engaging the enemy, and the whole tank battalion came across in the same spot. As I jumped off the tank, near the rear area where the CO would be, to get my orders, and what do I do now, there were a row of body bags, eight or ten as I recall, and I immediately started unzipping body bags. Jerry Kirby, colorful character out of Texas, Kirb said to me, “Mos, what are you doing?” I said, “I’m looking for Weber. Where’s Weber?” and he said, “He’s not killed, he’s not killed. He’s been medevaced already. He’s out of here, and 34 picked him up.” And I went, “Oh, my God.” Hence, that having a close personal friend in a situation like that, and knowing him as much as you know about that person, is not a good thing. It was my lesson in life to know almost as little as possible about the men that you work that you work with so that you don’t go through that same scenario of loss, had he been killed. As it turned out, Bobby was shot three times. As you recall, he’s five feet two, barely 100 pounds, lower maybe. He was shot through the ear, and through the side, and a bullet went through his M16 and came out through his hand, and they took the seer and the spring out of his hand, and his days as a Marine were over, and he moved into the civilian Marine status, as soon as his hand could function, maybe a year later. He had a hard rehab. They were brutal injuries, and that round through his ear, that went literally an inch from his skull or less, went right

through the opening of his ear, right past it, and he lost 85 percent of his hearing in that ear. So at any rate, Mameluke Thrust was a brutal operation. Eight weeks in the jungle, water was a premium; nobody wasted the water brushing their teeth. If you did, you swallowed everything. Any water that you had had to be dropped into you. You were in triple canopy. So you would get into a fight and you're extracting wounded guys out through that canopy. They never went out on a stretcher. They'd always have to go up head first through an opening, through a hole, and the crew chief would have to manage that cable somehow.

Berry: These were evacuated by helicopter, I imagine.

Mosel: Correct. CH-46. They were either Sea Stallions--Seahorse. The aircraft was known as a Seahorse.

Berry: CH-34.

Mosel: CH-46 was the-- Purple Fox was the squadron that worked the most, but there was one that had a seahorse logo on it, and I'm not exactly sure what squadron that was, but they also worked in supporting us on these operations. It should be noted, during the operation, while I had dysentery, I was fully nine days into dysentery, and my pants hung on me like rags. At night it would get so cold, it would be seventy degrees maybe at night, but you were so used to that hot, humid, you'd get cold, and you'd just have a poncho on you. So at times you'd take insect repellent and put it in your armpits to warm you up, and another place. It would do the trick. But one night I said I'd had enough of this, and I put my poncho liner inside of my poncho and rolled up inside of it, just like a burrito, and didn't come out until morning. I unrolled, and I could tell my fever had broken, and I was drenched with sweat. And as I lay there, trying to reconnoiter what was going on, I could feel something on the top of my face and head, and I swiped at it, and I looked down, and it was a bamboo viper. A green, lime green bamboo viper was in that roll with me all night, deadly poisonous snake. I had a E tool right next, a trenching tool, right next to me, whereupon I ended the bamboo viper's life. [laughs]

Berry: How were you resupplied in the field? Were you resupplied by helicopter?

Mosel: Always by chopper, strictly C rats. Of course, I couldn't find enough ass wipe, because you were crapping in your pants all the time. It was pure water. You were so dehydrated. And I wasn't the only one, believe me. You just went. And the leeches, they were a reality in the jungle. And leeches could do some real damage. They were very infectious. They'd get anywhere. Insect repellent was so powerful you could put it in your cigarette lighter, and it worked. [laughs]

Berry: One hundred percent deet.

Mosel: As we moved ahead, now Weber has been wounded, and Mameluke Thrust is done. We're continuing patrols in a place, a location called the Bo Ban, which is a village, a series of villages near Cobb Bridge. Cobb Bridge was manned by the 7<sup>th</sup> Engineers, and Cobb Bridge had been overrun on several occasions by the NVA, very vulnerable. So we would sweep the Bo Bans, where they would kind of group prior to these attacks. And while in the Bo Ban, you're in the heart of the South Vietnamese rural community. And as I was going through and we took a break from our patrol in the village, I had one of the little Vietnamese kids come up to me, and I asked him if there was any cold Coke, and he said, "Yes, there's Coke." So I gave him a couple of bucks, military currency, dollars, and he brought back, I don't know, three or four Cokes, and I gave him one, and we kind of visited a little bit, because of my language skills. The next thing I know he comes back with some rice and fish in a little dish. I didn't want to be rude and not eat it, so I began to eat it. To my surprise, it was the spiciest food, and I like spicy food. This was the hottest food I ever put in my mouth in my life. The kid was hysterical. [laughs] I'm pounding water. All of my buddies are hysterical. It was all in good fun. So the times weren't always brutal and life and death. As you tried to relate to the villagers and their plight and their trials, and the challenges that they had in everyday life, and not ten minutes after we left that situation and moved our patrol out, I could clearly see a woman at a full dead run going across the rice paddies, running away from me on a rice paddy dike at an angle. I said, "McMurray, Lieutenant, you got somebody there that's clearly not scared." And he just said, "Shoot her, Mosel." And she was about two hundred meters out, and this is back to boot camp. You do what you're told to do, what you're ordered to do. You don't think about it. I'm a sniper, that's my job, that's what I do, and I was good at it. So I pulled out my M14. Again, these are iron sights, just a peep sight; you got a target two hundred meters away, running away at an angle. I was foolish enough to think that I could do it. I let one round fly, and she stopped in her tracks. I must have been so close that she was terrified. She stopped. She didn't want another round. When we got to her, and we turned her around, and we checked the titty purse, and we checked the crotch purse, and in the crotch purse she had tens of thousands of piastres in paper currency, and the pay list for the NVA, for the Viet Cong that were working in the area. Whereupon she was stripped naked, a bag put over her head, with her own clothing, so she could have it later on. Now she's blindfolded and humiliated, and we have her doing whatever we want her to do. We put her into a jeep and off she went. So in the long run, perhaps God was guiding my bullet, and we gleaned more information from her alive than we would have obviously from just the list and the money. So those types of day-to-day activities continued to go on. August

proved to be the most trying month for me. Again, I said earlier that Mameluke Thrust was not finished in July. Actually it did not finish until October of 1968, where Mameluke Thrust was credited with over 2500 kills. In the middle of the night on the 9<sup>th</sup> of August, the sergeant major, or the first sergeant of Bravo Company was going through the area banging a bayonet on a garbage can cover in the middle of the night. "Get up, get your gear, and get into the trucks" that were waiting, "as fast as you can." So all that was going through my head is there was a recon team that's in trouble someplace, and we have to get to them. At any rate, we assembled. No one had proper amounts, numbers of canteens of water. You only had the ammunition that you had in your possession. For me that would have only been 150 rounds or so. You only had a half a dozen frags, frag grenades. You had no food. And you were in those trucks, and in the dark of night the trucks took you as close to Hill 37, which was maybe six clicks south of us--a click is 1000 meters--whereupon we got out and started humping, and the destination was Hill 310. Hill 310 was a hump until about two o'clock in the afternoon. When we were nearly to the top of Hill 310 and we engaged a fortified dug-in NVA company. We had perhaps a half a dozen FNGs that hadn't even been in-country long enough to get their jungle uniforms, jungle boots. They were still in their state-side utilities. Nobody knew their names. I was with Dan McMurray's platoon. We were the lead platoon. There were eighteen Marines in my platoon. A typical platoon is forty-one Marines. That includes one corpsman. We were the lead platoon on that on-line assault. Not one person from my platoon made it, either killed or wounded. That day, that fight, we had twelve killed, and forty-two wounded. We took that goddamned hill. We didn't know that the 5<sup>th</sup> Marines had two companies on the other side of the hill, in case the NVA decided to bolt, but they stood their ground. It was a brutal day. So as the day transpired, because of the lack of water, you can imagine in that heat, the heat stroke and heat exhaustion that was starting to take its toll. The company was--the number of fighting Marines, when you're caught in a situation like that, we took the hill. Indeed we took the hill, but we didn't know that there weren't more elements around. So the first thing that you do is you stack the deck pile, and the deck pile, that's the last stand. So we had twelve guys laying in a pile with ponchos over them, and there were two or three men in that pile we didn't even know who they were. I was in the next fighting ring, because I had an AK round through my hip. But prior to it hitting my flesh, it went through my M14 magazine, on the cap end of the rounds, and it exploded two or three rounds, so I had a hole in my hip that you could have put a tennis ball or a baseball into, and it touched my femur, and it was quite a hole, something to see. I remember being within ten yards of the top of the hill, of the fighting trenches, and we were throwing grenades back and forth at each other. I was a little ahead of the rest of the crew. I didn't realize it. But when I got shot, I went down, and I was laying on my back with the blood gushing to it, and my crotch, and then

down between my shoulder blades, and you can imagine being a nineteen-year-old kid, and you've been hit in the hip, and your crotch is bleeding. The first thing that you're going to do is stick your hand down your belt, even though the rounds are inches above your body, because they're trying to shoot you again. I had to check to see that I had my boys. My junk was in place, and it was at that point that I tipped my toes so I was pigeon toed so I didn't get a bullet through the bottom of my feet. It wasn't until Jerry Kirby came up to my position, and he asked me if I was all right, and the kind of the shock of the injury had worn off, and the rounds had stopped now. Because we were putting more firepower onto them than they were us. That's always the turn of the fight, and that's the job when you get on line and you attack a position, is to overpower their--you want to overpower them with your firepower, and then you keep moving forward and then take measures to get into their fighting trenches and kill as many of them as you can as fast as you can. So at any rate, under my own power, I just crawled out of that situation, seventy-five meters or so into an area where I knew the dead pile was. At that point I don't even know what happened to my M14. I couldn't find it. So I had broken the code, but they did find it. I know that I was not charged with losing a weapon. I actually had my head on the dead pile as a pillow, and I had somebody else's weapon. And then there was a circle of Marines that weren't wounded outside of us. Probably about seven o'clock that night the first medevac chopper came in. You have to understand that that was a long time to be laying there wounded, and it wasn't just me. There were forty-one other guys lying there, and some of them could fire a weapon, some of them couldn't. As the CH-46 came in, there was a very steep incline on the mountain, but it was the only open spot, and the 46 had to come in at an angle. It couldn't get the back end up and come in with the nose down, it had to settle the landing gear first, and then drop the nose. Well, the rotor blades, he was so close to the dead pile that I had to crawl backwards up onto the dead pile, thinking the rear rotor blades were going to hit me. As luck would have it, they obviously didn't. It was further away from me than I thought they were. Then when the nose went down and the ramp hit the ground, I was on my stomach, using my elbows to propel myself, and I'm going up this ramp. There were Marines coming off this helicopter, and one of the Marines coming off this helicopter was Second Lieutenant Mike Hegarty. Mike Hegarty and I are on the board of governors of the United States Marine Corps Association. We didn't know one another from Jesus until we were on the board forty-two years later, that the two of us passed one another in a firefight on a hill in Vietnam at that moment. I continued to crawl on, and the Marine next to me was carried on. We had no stretchers or any of that business, and this young Marine had been gut shot, so his intestines were laying on his chest, and the corpsman gave me the job of keeping the towel wet that was on his intestines, whereupon we were sharing a cigarette, bullshitting about how it all went down or whatever the hell it is we were talking about. We were the first of the

medevaced Marines that went off that particular mountain that day. It should be noted that *Leatherneck* magazine did a three-page article, so that would have been I think seven pages. It was called "Hill 310: A Tough Nut to Crack." It was covered in detail and Colonel Walton Ford [??], the publisher of *Leatherneck* magazine is a dear friend of mine, also part of the Marine Corps Association, and I asked him, I said, "Colonel, if I go back to Vietnam to Hill 310, to assess just how close I had got to those fighting trenches, and take photographs of Hill 310 today, versus 1968, and then tie in the story with Mike Hegarty, would you think that might be fodder for *Leatherneck* magazine?" And he said, "You get the photos, you get the copy, I'll edit it, and we'll put in *Leatherneck* magazine." So the next spring--

Berry: And did that happen?

Mosel: The next spring, I'm going back to, I'm hoping to go back with my surgery buddies, orthopedic surgeons. They go every year and spend ten days showing these young physicians the techniques, their orthopedic surgery techniques, et cetera, and I'm going to go back and do that.

Berry: What kept you going through this intense combat situation?

Mosel: Fear was a big one. Fear keeps you alive. Fear keeps you present. But don't confuse fear with being afraid in the sense that you lose your thought process. You are aware of what's going on around you and what your job is and how intense your training was. That's what you did. When I went through both basic infantry training and the infantry training regiment, we did on-line assaults. We practiced it. And I thought to myself, while I was doing that, what suicidal lunatic would ever do this? It is utter bullshit, and it's going to be brutal. And hitting--the top of Hill 310 had been hit with so much artillery and so much air, with the--no napalm that I could tell, but with the HE rounds they were dropping, it was a moonscape. So here you have a dug-in, entrenched enemy shooting at a fully exposed body, and your only ace in the hole was that you were going to throw more firepower at them, keeping them in those fighting trenches. But it ain't like John Wayne. You have to reload. You have to let up on your firepower. So there are those breaks that make you extremely vulnerable. But--

Berry: Do you remember thinking about anything during this process besides doing your job?

Mosel: Well, you were so thirsty. A young black Marine by the name of Morris, last name Morris, found me, and he--I just said, "I've got to get my feet up, get my legs up on something," and he opened up, he had a can of C ration pineapples, and he opened it up so I could suck the juice out of the

can of pineapples, and I want to thank that Morris, who was the supply guy. That's how desperate we were for bodies. I want to think that that young black man really did save my life.

Berry: Good thing he didn't have ham and lima beans.

Mosel: [laughs] No, those were ham and motherfuckers. [laughter] Beans and balls, beans and dicks, ham and motherfuckers, chopped eggs and ham. Nobody ate those. So at any rate, by the time we were medevaced, we went to Marble Mountain, the hospital at Marble Mountain.

Berry: And where is Marble Mountain located?

Mosel: Marble Mountain is near the airstrip in Da Nang. It's both a helicopter rear, rear area, and also a medical base hospital. We overwhelmed them, the forty-two wounded. As I recall, finally on a stretcher, not on the stretcher until you landed at Marble Mountain, and then they would take you out of the helicopters on stretchers if you needed one. As it was deduced, as the triage was going along, and that hospital was overwhelmed, First Med, which was closer to the 327 PX and Camp Reasoner, our first recons were there, I was put on a CH-34 along with the half a dozen other Marines, and we were flown to that hospital to receive medical care. But I distinctly remember chaplains of all denominations and faiths, especially the Catholics, giving last rites as your stretcher was on a pair of sawhorses, and the triage was going on, and the cries and the pain and blood was--I can't imagine what the bottom of that helicopter looked like after we got out of there. It had to be just power washed to get the blood out of it. But at any rate, a priest came up to me and wanted to know where I was wounded. I kind of told him, and he said, "Well, there's one wound you won't be showing your girlfriend." I said, "I don't know about that, Father." [laughs] So I went into First Med. You're taken from 100 degree temperature with 95 degree humidity into a, I don't even want to say an operating room. It was a row of operating tables separated by a cloth, so there were numerous operating tables there, and it's now 68 degrees, and you're given a spinal anesthesia so you are conscious while they are making a hole in your hip three times the size, and going in--

[Tape 2, Side A]

Berry: Okay, Jim, we kind of left off with you in surgery. Would you continue that?

Mosel: Yeah. Well, at any rate, you come out of that real hot, humid environment into a 68, 69-degree operating room. You're in shock, and there are numerous tables. You are literally--you've been given a spinal anesthesia,

so you have absolutely no feeling from your chest down. You're being taped to the operating table, on your side, and you can literally feel the physician pulling and tugging on your body as he's taking countless pieces of shrapnel and the round out of your hip. I was so lucky that the round missed my femur, and even luckier that it missed my femoral artery. I still have shrapnel in my hip today, and that shrapnel was brass from .308 rounds. It was the steel from the M14 magazine, and then also the projectile itself. So at one point, a corpsman asked me to stop shaking, stop shivering, so he could get my blood pressure, and if I ever wanted to grab somebody by the throat, it was that guy. But as it turned out, that was the first of numerous surgeries, but I was--from there I went to an Air Force hospital, and from the Air Force hospital you were stacked seven high on a C-141, where nurses literally crawled up and down the stretchers, as they were giving you care on your trip to Japan. I happened to go to the 249<sup>th</sup> General Army Hospital, which was an orthopedic hospital. Some were burn hospitals; some specialized in nerve damage, et cetera. But at any rate, I spent my time at the hospital, and recovery was quite rapid I think. The Navy and Army medical people are to be commended. They're very top notch. I went--from the hospital they rotated me back into Okinawa, from Okinawa I was reassigned, sent back into country, and when I received my orders in Da Nang, near the airport, I couldn't believe what I saw. I had been reassigned to the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division, Reconnaissance Battalion. And I'm looking at this. I'm now a E4 corporal. No recon training. I'm just a sniper with language skills. I'm saying to the guy, "I'm not going to 1st recon. I'm not going to recon." The guy said, "You either go to recon, or you go to the brig. Make your mind up." I think I'll go to recon. So I showed up at 1<sup>st</sup> Recon, and I tried to point out to Captain Wilson the mistake that had been made.

Berry: Where was 1<sup>st</sup> Recon located?

Mosel: The 1<sup>st</sup> Reconnaissance Battalion was located near the 325, Hill 325 PX, and I first met Camp Reasoner was northwest of Da Nang.

Berry: So after your recovery from your wound in Okinawa you went back to Vietnam, is that correct?

Mosel: Correct. Correct. I was going to finish out tours.

Berry: How much time was left in your thirteen months?

Mosel: Probably five months. I tried to point out to Captain Wilson the error on the way, and he said, "No, you're the guy I wanted. I need a language skill guy here in the company." And I'm going, "Okay." And he said, "I'm going to train you to take a team. You'll get your own team." And now I'm really nervous, because running a recon team involves map and

compass skills that there cannot be a single mistake. You need to know exactly where you are on this planet. You're going to be calling in fire missions from fast movers, so you're going to have Phantoms coming in, or Crusaders are going to be coming in and dropping their armament. You're going to have to talk with gun batteries. And I had a crash course in how you do that. I actually went out a few times. Patrols were generally ten days. So I had a chance to go out on three patrols and get broken in and actually do the math work, actually do the artillery work, as far as the coordinates go. I got a crash course in pre-plotting artillery. The day before you go out, you are given your playground, it was called, and that's nine 1000-meter grid squares, and you have to be in every one of those grids on your patrol. This was intensely steep terrain and triple canopy jungle. This is the land where the elephants and tigers really do live.

Berry: How large a team was this?

Mosel: Seven, sometimes eight, if you could take and pimp a corpsman to come with you. Usually you would never have a corpsman. They would have to volunteer for this, and a lot of them shared the apprehension that I had. If you can imagine going out into the mouth of the beast and spend ten days trying to find them, you were looking for trouble, but yet not to engage. That's a hard thing to do. But at any rate, you would know where you're going the day before you go out. So you go to the artillery liaison and you, with his guidance, you pick the places that you want for your pre-plotted artillery. That just simply means that when I'm on my patrol, if point alpha is closest to me, I can look at alpha and say, "Up 115, right 123, fire, fire, fire." Now I've got fifteen rounds coming, just like that, and we'll go in the other direction. It was very effective, and it kept you focused on where you were at every minute when you're on your patrol. It's important that you do that. And, of course, our maps were always covered with that film, and you used a grease pencil. So if you were captured you'd wipe that off so that the gooks wouldn't know where you'd been. But reconnaissance was very dangerous, but I'd never been more in control in my entire life, and I'd never been more powerful. I was a corporal that could unload as many jets with their armaments as I thought necessary. I could talk to the aerial observer and tell him which jets carrying what munitions I wanted first. You had a bunker complex. You didn't want a napalm right away. You wanted to drop 8G in there and get them in their holes. Then you wanted to suffocate them with the napalm. Now you had a defined area that you wanted to concentrate on with many, many napalm runs. Napalm sucks the oxygen out of the holes, and they suffocated, which is kind of the point. But at any rate, my recon crew, I still talk regularly with Junie Keener [??]. Jimmy Lovitt [??], was my A team leader. And we kind of help one another out from time to time. One of my greatest accomplishments in life--now we used to do OPs, observation posts, not always in the jungle. That was kind of our R and R,

to go down to Go Noi Island, where we know there's a dug-in regiment, underground, so eighteen Marines are right in the middle of all of that. That's for your rest. [laughs] So we would go out on these ten-day patrols, and it got to be kind of rudimentary up until one day my team--my call sign for my team was Grim Reaper and I kind of liked that.

Berry: Say again, your call sign, please?

Mosel: Grim Reaper. I was kind of proud of that, and we lived up to that. While we didn't engage the enemy with small arms, we engaged the enemy with artillery but more so air strikes, because we were so far into the bush that the fire bases were too far away for the artillery to be effective. At any rate, I walked into the briefing shack one of these days, and it wasn't anything sophisticated. It was just a plywood shack, was maybe eight feet by twelve feet. And sitting at the little table there with two people; there was Colonel Drumright, the commanding officer of 1<sup>st</sup> Recon Battalion, and some captain in a white t-shirt with khaki pants and a black baseball hat on, and he's doing all the talking. And he said, "Mosel, I want you to volunteer your team to go into Laos. It's a covert op, and this is a CIA spook." And I'm going--and he's going on to say that "If you're captured, your mother and family will never know what happened to you. You'll be an MIA. We will never admit that we were in Laos. The rest of your life, nobody will know what happened to you." Then he went on to explain other downside things, and I just looked at him, and I said, "Hell, no. I'm not going to do that." That's when Colonel Drumright started talking. [laughs] Whereupon I said to this spook, "What the fuck did you even ask me for?" And then Drumright had to kind of straighten me out again, because of rank and the inequities there. As it turned out, Junie Keener, the corpsman, volunteered for this patrol. He thought he was not going to carry a weapon. I said, "No, that's just in the movies, buddy." So he had a 45 and an M16 and the claymores and the frags and everything else, just like everyone else. We did endeavor to go on that patrol, and that patrol we did, through a series of events, and a number of days into the patrol we did have a tiger come into our harbor sights.

Berry: Did you walk into Laos? How did you get into Laos?

Mosel: We were dropped off as close to the border as 100 yards.

Berry: By helicopter?

Mosel: By CH-46. We humped into Laos, and we would connect with the Ho Chi Minh Trail, and it is a real deal. It is a trail that is certainly wider than any tow road that you'd see in the woods, but there wasn't a speck of grass growing on it, there was so much traffic. And there were a lot of spurs that went off the Ho Chi Minh Trail, and the spur we were concentrating on

led to the very northwest end of the A Shau Valley, where Hamburger Hill took place. So we knew, from these patrols, how the NVA were moving and what they were taking in, and we actually did do body counts, but we counted traffic. So we knew where they moved in and moved out, and that was very important, because an Arc Light mission shut that all down. An Arc Light mission is a B-52 mission that dropped their ordinance right along the Vietnam-Laotian border, and what they did was kind of clear an open area through that triple canopy, so when they were in that area they were exposed to helicopter gunships and fast movers. They could literally cut off the escape route for the NVA, and I think that's why Hamburger Hill was such a brutal fight. They had nowhere to go. But we did have a tiger come into one of them, the harbor sights. His head, I estimate, was eighteen inches from the corpsman's foot when I shot him. Now you have a conundrum. You've just given away your location, and you are in a country you're not supposed to be in. The mantra of a Grim Reaper was we will never go anywhere a white-tail buck wouldn't go, and we would never do anything that a white-tail buck wouldn't do. So we didn't move a muscle. I'm thinking the bad guys were waiting for us to move and make some noise, so that they could zero in on us. But we didn't move. We picked our claymores up the next day, the next morning. That tiger had bitten a chunk out of one of the claymores. We made it safely out of that trip, that particular patrol, whereupon I had a subsequent patrol, the same ten days in Laos, and we confirmed a couple of things, which is quite interesting. You might note that my orders were to look for potable water, look for roads that are overgrown and not on maps; look for terrain a tank can traverse. That's an end run. That's a go around the DMZ and invade the north. That's my speculation. But those patrols revealed that it was almost impossible for a tank to traverse that kind of country. We did see how the Laotian people lived. We did see the communal huts. There wasn't a person in any of the villages that we came across, but it was crawling with the enemy. And that consequently was my last long-range reconnaissance patrol, and I'm very proud to say, at the age of twenty years old, I had thirteen long-range reconnaissance patrols, and I never had a man killed or wounded. That was the most success I've ever had in my entire life. Not to say that we didn't suffer casualties on these observation posts. It was indeed my honor to be able to say that, and I left in May, I left that on the 20<sup>th</sup> of April, and in May Jimmy Lovitt had been shot up. Doc Keener [??] had been shot up, Oscar Enis [sp??] had been shot up, and I say to these guys, [inaudible] they're all alive.

Berry: And you had been shot up.

Mosel: Before I got to recon that night, I had to mention, tongue in cheek, I said, "Guys, you forgot the mantra, didn't you?" [laughs] So at any rate, I had a great experience. Skipper said, "Mos, how short are you?" By that I mean that was the measurement of days left in-country. Everybody had a short-

timers calendar. And I said, "Skipper, I'm so short I can sit on a dime and my feet dangle." "Well, how many days?" And I said, "Three." He said, "Ah, I wanted to send you out one more time to Laos. Dang it, you know." And I'm going--he said, "Have you ever been to China Beach, Mosel?" and I said, "Never heard of it." So I had an arduous journey down to China Beach, whereupon I was dropped off and saw a young Marine, I'm assuming he was a Marine, had a surfboard under one arm and a case of beer under the other, and he was walking to the beach. I asked him where he got that, and he pointed me in the right direction, and I went in there and, of course, I'm wearing what I wear to work. And I said, "I need a case of beer and a surfboard. How do I do that?" and the guy said, "First you've got to give me your weaponry." And I'm going, "I don't think so." And he said, "Believe me, the NVA aren't going to attack China Beach." "I don't think so." He says, "No surfboard and no beer then." I says, "Oh, crap." So there you are taking out a 45, an M14, two hundred rounds for your M14, six frags, a flak jacket, a helmet, cartridge belts and canteens, and the guy's exclamation to me, he shook his head as he's taking all this stuff and putting it in a locker, he goes, "Grunts!" [laughs] "I don't believe you guys." So I did walk out with my case of beer and I had a surfboard, whereupon I looked up at the truck going by, and there was Richard Freitag, the young boy that received his Eagle badge with me in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, who was now a Navy Seabee, driving by in a Deuce and a half. Long story short, Freitag had three days in-country, and he had a surfboard and a case of beer. [laughs] And my Vietnam was over, and I went home with my green teeth and my short hair, and I was just happy to be alive.

Berry: Did you have an opportunity to take an R and R while you were in-country?

Mosel: I did. I did.

Berry: Tell us about that.

Mosel: I went to--I wanted to go to Australia, and Captain Wilson said, "I'll send you to Australia, no problem. Just re-up for six more months." "You know, the third time could be the charm in some things, Skipper, but, you know, when it comes to bullets and shrapnel, you might not be so lucky, so I'm not going to do it." So I went to Hong Kong with Randall Scott Wayne [??], III, a guy I went through boot camp with. Randy Wayne and Paul Olenski were also reconners, and Paul was in our boot camp platoon as well, so we went to Hong Kong, spent \$600, six hundred 1969 dollars, in I'm thinking four days, I can't remember how long an R and R was. It wasn't very long. But all I had was a pair of shoes that were too small, and I had to borrow fifty bucks to get back. So needless to say I had a great time.

Berry: I take it you enjoyed yourself.

Mosel: Oh, yeah.

Berry: Okay, tell us about your assignment after your tour in Vietnam.

Mosel: Well, this is where my *Forrest Gump* kind of experience started to bloom. Going through Okinawa, there were representatives from Marine Barracks 8<sup>th</sup> and I. And they were watching you as you were, you know, you were in your crappy utilities and your jungle boots were orange from the clay, and like I said earlier, your teeth were green, because you didn't--you lived in the bush twenty-eight days a month, and water was so precious, you just, you say, well, there's streams everywhere in the jungle. You're right, but you never went near the streams. That was a very dangerous place to be. That's where the white-tail bucks don't go, because that's where the dinks are. So you stay away from the streams. And that's where the booby traps are. So at any rate, you're rotating out, and you've got a complexion that looks like you've had face camo twenty-eight days in a row. And there are--these representatives were looking for guys that had to be six feet tall and were reasonably good looking, I was told. I don't know what that means. But they were from 8<sup>th</sup> and I, Marine Barracks 8<sup>th</sup> and I. Pride of the Marine Corps. It's the home of the commandant. And they were looking for people that wanted to go to 8<sup>th</sup> and I and be part of Guard Company, which in those days was a marching platoon, but also provided security for pretty high ranking dignitaries. I said, "Sure, why not?" Right in the middle of Washington, DC, 8<sup>th</sup> and I Street, SE, oldest post in the Marine Corps, established in 1803. The site was chosen by Thomas Jefferson and the first commandant of the Marine Corps, actually in 1801 it was selected. The barracks was up and running in 1803, and the home of the commandant was established in 1806, where it has the privilege of carrying the oldest continuous and lived-in home in metropolitan Washington, DC. It was the only major home that wasn't burned to the ground by the British when they attacked in 1812. So I showed up. I was assigned to Guard Company. We lived in the Navy Yard down on 58<sup>th</sup>.

Berry: What sort of training was involved for this assignment?

Mosel: Well, first of all, during the spring, summer, and early autumn months there are two parades. There's an evening--there's a sunset parade at the Iwo War Memorial, the Iwo Jima War Memorial every Tuesday. Every Friday night there was a parade at dark at 8<sup>th</sup> and I, where five thousand people would crowd themselves into the bleachers to watch a full-blown, in-review, dress parade, including the Marine Corps Band, the Marine Corps Drum Corps, the Marine Silent Drill Team, and two companies of Marines. Guard Company, of course, had the Silent Drill Team. That was

the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon. I was in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon, and then there was the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon. It was precision marching, to say the least. Every swinging dick in Guard Company was an E5, a sergeant, three stripes. We had, in the two companies, over two hundred personal combat decorations, 192 of them were Purple Hearts. So everybody had at least one, most had two. We had decorations up to Navy Crosses, and I was very proud of that. One of my executive officers of the Guard Company was Captain Jim Jones, who later on went on to become I think the thirty-fourth commandant in the Marine Corps. The platoon commander of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon, the Silent Drill Team, and the Color Guard and the Body Bearers, Peter Pace. Pete Pace went on to be the first Marine Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. I'm on the board of governors with General Pace. I see Pete regularly. The 1<sup>st</sup> Sergeant of Guard Company in those days was Leland D. "Crow" Crawford, and Crow went on to be the 9th sergeant major in the Marine Corps. When I tell the Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps, former Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps, Carlton Kent, that "You'll never have a Guard Company like we had. You will never have a Guard Company." I would explain to all E5s, "The left chest, you know what goes on the left chest on your blues. Those are all your personal decorations, as an individual Marine. The right, those are unit decorations." I said, "You will never have a left chest like we had. You will never have them all, E5s, and you will never take the great commandants and chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and sergeants major in the Marine Corps out of one small company." And we still stay close, and you can look at the businessmen that have come out of Guard Company, it's amazing. There was one young man, Larry Dahl [??], and he has his Purple Hearts. Larry decided to start his service-disabled-veterans-owned small businesses, and was extremely successful. He's one of the most revered businessmen in Washington, DC. General Pace is on one of his boards. So he, too, had no college education, as with I. We kind of came up the hard way. I don't recommend it. There are easier ways to do it. But throughout the course of events in Guard Company, I had received another Meritorious Unit Citation for the actions during the summer of 1970. The hippies decided that they were going to march on Washington, DC, and if in the years to come *Forrest Gump* is still a movie that people see, Tom Hanks, et cetera, this was my *Forrest Gump* day. It went kind of like this. Prior, the evening prior to my *Forrest Gump* day, maybe I should begin there, Colonel Graham, the CO of Marine Barracks 8<sup>th</sup> and I, had Guard Company lined up, where we were being issued helmets, flak jackets, M14s, bayonets, and scabbards. He went on to say that "I want to make sure that every one of you Marines gets one of these Eagle, Globe and Anchors and USMC logos, and you get it ironed onto that flak jacket. I don't these hippies thinking they're dealing with the National Guard." So we did that. The next morning it was zero dark thirty, and we couldn't risk the transportation, because these arteries were clogged, so we humped in pretty much ready-to-go-to-battle gear, with

everything but ammunition, from 8<sup>th</sup> and I to the 14<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge. At the 14<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge we shut that baby down, because the Park Police didn't have the capability to do it. That's when we took the scabbards off our bayonets and we just did a typical lunge step, lunge step, lunge step, and we didn't stop. After we poked a few hippies, they just kept backing off and backing up and backing up and backing up, where the barricades could be set. And they also barricaded the Memorial Bridge, Roosevelt Bridge, so in essence everything from Virginia coming into the city was shut down. You could get out, but you couldn't get in. From that point, we then humped to the subbasement of the Capitol whereupon we were issued ammunition. There was no way that we were going to let a mob take over the Capitol. And--

[Tape 2, Side B]

Berry: Okay, Jim, if you would continue with your *Forrest Gump* day.

Mosel: As I said, we were down in the subbasement of the Capitol. It was in a hallway, kind of narrow, maybe six feet wide. We have our backs against the walls, and I'm looking at Tommy Hull--Tommy was the inspecting sergeant of the infamous, or famous I should say, Silent Drill Team in the Marine Corps, and he was also a Body Bearer, a great big dude. And I said, "Tommy, I'm not going to kill my countryman." And he said, "Mos, I'm not going to kill them either, but let's fuck 'em up a little bit." As it turned out, as it turned out, cooler heads had prevailed in front of the Capitol, and the Park Police gained control, as well as the National Guard, and we were excused from the basement of the Capitol and we were bused back to 8<sup>th</sup> and I, where I had orders to get my Guard together, which included the dress blue uniform, and draw 45s. I was the sergeant of the Guard of Vice President Agnew's home, the Blair mansion, Blair House, kitty-cornered from the White House next to Lafayette Park, and the resident dignitary that we were going to look after was King Selassi, Emperor Haile Selassie from Ethiopia. So after arriving and posting my guards at the home and making sure that we had the front of the building secured, because the candlelight vigil marches were going on right across the street, past the Executive Office Buildings and then across the street again, going east would be the White House, we were particularly concerned that we wouldn't have them blocking the front of Blair House. Of course, there's a guard at the base of the steps to the front door at Blair House, and then there's another Marine on the top. And the fourth step from the top is white, if an unidentified person hits that step, you shoot him. It's kind of brutal, but we just came out of that environment. It wasn't a big deal to us. I think that's why the president kind of liked us around, President Nixon. We would not hesitate to carry out that order. But I had my front detail posted. I was posting the rear detail, and on my way back subsequently there is the King of Ethiopia sitting at one of the

tables out in the courtyard with his interpreter. And, of course, you have to understand that our orders are never, ever to talk to these people, other than “Yes sir,” “No sir,” and be courteous. The interpreter came over to me and said, “The King would like to ask you some questions.” I said, “You don’t understand. I can’t talk with these dignitaries. I am forbidden to do that.” And he says, “No, you don’t understand. This is the King of Ethiopia, and he wants to ask you some questions.” So he did. And I answered them, and I told him just exactly what I thought, and I have never shared that with anybody, and I’m not going to do it now, but needless to say I defended my country’s position. It just so happens that that evening, at the state dinner, had concluded, the state meeting were over with, and Emperor Selassie was leaving, and in those days the garage was down below. It’s not the same today. But the limousine has backed down in, and as soon as the limousine hit the street and was on its way to Andrews Air Force Base, a gentleman from the State Department came into my guard shack and said, “Sergeant, assemble your guard in the dining room.” I said, “No, you don’t understand. The only one that can relieve me of my command is the commanding officer of the Guard Company,” [inaudible]. “No, you don’t understand. For the second time, the Vice President of the United States of America wants you and your guard in the dining room right now.” I’m going, oh, my God. So here we are. I’m taking all the 45s, putting them into the locker in the guard shack. The guys have to maintain their holsters, because we have web belts, so we’re still under arms, so you have to take the holsters off, and you’re not really in uniform with just a web belt with no pistol on it. But anyway, that’s the way we went into the dining room. I told these guys, “Any one of you takes an alcoholic cocktail or beverage; I’ll have you on report. You go in there. We’re going to have a glass of soda, a canapé, and we’re out.” And that’s just exactly what we did. The Vice President was not in attendance, but I think what I said kind of must have pleased him. I think the King passed it on, because that never had happened since. So there you are, all those experiences that happened in one day, that you had been in the vice president’s home, you had spoken with a revered, a prophet, many people think, as King Selassie is a Christian, even though he comes from a Muslim country in Ethiopia, and then to be in the basement of the Capitol, and then out there on the street shutting something down with your own countrymen acting like crazy people. It was truly one of my *Forrest Gump* days, and subsequently I had Post 13 at Camp David. I saw President Nixon regularly. My clearance was White House access, as was nearly every Marine in the Guard Company. So even to this day, whenever you hear the president is visiting Camp David, rest assured that that Guard Company, or a contingency Light Guard Company is at Camp David providing the security. It’s declassified now, but Camp David has enough space underground, five story, to house two companies of Marines and the entire cabinet of the United States of America, and that was the point where the president can visit with every nuclear submarine on the face of

this planet, with that extremely low frequency [inaudible] antenna system that actually went through Northern Wisconsin.

Berry: ELP [??].

Mosel: Project ELP. So there were numerous details where you would meet dignitaries. I did have some conversations from time to time with President Nixon. It's kind of funny. He put his pants on just like you and I did. He was a family man. He had an insane daughter in Tricia, with a propensity for fits. She was pitching a fit up there at Camp David one day with the helicopter. The white tops, we called them, was warming up, ready to go, and she didn't want to leave, and he's going, "Tricia, we must go back to Washington," and she's screaming and carrying on, and off she stomps onto the elevator. Sergeant Ellabrock [??] is on one side of the president, and I'm on the other side of him, and he looks at me, nose to nose, and he goes, "Women," and off he goes onto the helicopter. So some of the--you know, it's not all pomp and circumstance when you get into that situation. It's a lot of everyday things. One of your earlier questions had to do with how did the Marine Corps, my involvement in the Marine Corps, affect my later life. My business has taken me to Washington, D.C. under our federal GSA, General Services Administration, contracts, whereupon I became very active at attending the dinners that the Marine Corps Association had put on. The gentleman, the executive director, of the Marine Corps Association, Major General Les Palm, kept kind of seeing me at these multiple dinners, and General Palm was a cannon cocker, and spent all seventy-seven days on Que Son, survived the siege. He was the senior ranking artillery officer after the siege or the second lieutenant butter bar [??]. Les Palm asked me if I would consider joining the board of governors of the Marine Corps Association, whereupon I was absolutely flattered. Throughout that process, the chief operations officer, Tom Eslinger [??], was actually my platoon commander at Guard Company; Marine Barracks 8<sup>th</sup> and I, and Tom was a survivor of Hill 881 South.

Berry: At Que Son?

Mosel: South of Que Son, south of Que Son. That was a horrific place to be. Then whereupon Mike Hegarty and I discovered we couldn't place each other from Bravo Company until one day I just said, "Well, hey, when did you show up?" and he said, "10 August, 1968," and I said, "I was busy that day." And he explained how he arrived. We're just, the other board members, which consist of a dozen Marine Corps generals, either active or retired, and half a dozen sergeants majors, or master gunnery sergeants, et cetera, on down the line, and there were five civilian Marines on this board that were all same era Vietnam. As we share our stories with one another, we'd catch these guys off guard. We find out how truly brutal

what we did was compared to what's going on today. I want to tell you that the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Peter Pace, sits on that board, and it's indeed a pleasure to be able to visit with Pete and chuckle on things that happened in the NCO Club after the Friday night parades and the horseplay and the women, the wives, that you could relate to that you'd meet later on in life. And not only that, it opened up the doors to today's Marines. I pity the enemy that has to deal with the Marine Corps today. They're huge. They're well equipped. They have technology beyond belief. I mentioned a PRC-25 radio to the boys down south at the dinner cruise on the Chicago River, the Wounded Warriors that we hosted.

Berry: You might describe PRC-25 for the listener, backpack radio.

Mosel: PRC-25, aka a Prick-25, was a heavy, cumbersome energy-sucking; carry a lot of batteries, piece of crap radio that could transmit maybe ten miles. So you had to have all of these relay stations, x-rays, you know, or Yankee or whatever the relay station might be, so if you wanted to call in a fast mover for a fire mission, you prayed that they got the coordinates right, as they were passed onto the next relay and then the next relay, that you needed to get somebody out there so that they could get the spotter aircraft in the right area, and now the Prick-25 was powerful enough to talk with that guy, because the mountains weren't in the way. So the young Marines, sergeant major and the gunnery sergeant, were talking about how antique the Prick-75 was, and they didn't believe that there was even a Prick-25 in existence, and so we all had a chuckle about that. But we had antiquated equipment compared with today's marines, and the mantra of the Marine Corps Association and Foundation, our newly found mantra, is "We help Marines win battles". That's our job. We help make and contribute to the grey matter, what stays between the ears of the Marines of today. We provide over 250 libraries to FOBs, forward operating bases, throughout the battlefield, battle space, in the engagements that we're in. We provide all of the awards for the entire Marine Corps, whether it's a plaque or whether it's an NCO sword that go out to the tune of \$600 apiece, or whether it's these incredibly sculpted bronze likenesses of Chesty Puller or the Eagle, Globe and Anchor in three dimensions, Marine Medal of Honor winners that are depicted going over the wall in Inchon, awards that are really top shelf. We provide all of the awards to the top recruits in boot camp, going through Parris Island or San Diego. We're engaged with the Marines of today. Our dinners that are coming up now, right now Jake Leinkugel, from the Leinkugel Brewing Company, Marine officer, my friend, and John Lowry, colonel, retired, a smart guy, MBA from Harvard University, is the general manager for Harley Davidson's drive train division. He's got nearly a million square feet of facility in Milwaukee, and eleven hundred employees, the three of us are planning our foundation fundraising meeting, dinner. It's going to take place in May of 2013. We are going to bring in all of the top private corporations

that are currently doing business with the United States Marine Corps, such as Oshkosh Trucks, Marinette Marine, Rayovac Battery, Johnson Controls, and it's going to be a fundraiser, black tie. I'm thinking it will be six to eight thousand dollars a table. The title of the event is going to be "We help Marines win battles." And as a team, we want to bring all of these contractors together to show them how their contributions truly do help Marines win battles, whether it's on the technology side, whether it's on the flotilla, the naval side, getting our Marines in these fast-track frigates that are out there, like the *USS New York*, and so on. Harley Davidson is going to be one of the sponsors, and we're going to have it at the Harley Museum next to the Iron Horse Hotel as part of the venue. So what is my involvement in the Marine Corps done? It has introduced me to the commandant of the Marine Corps, Jim Amos. I've been in his home. I have been in General Conway's home, the home of the commandant, as a guest for dinner. I told General Conway that "General, I never thought that I'd get on this side of the hedgerow." At 8<sup>th</sup> and I, the mansion is at the one end, at the north end of Marine Barracks, and there was, in my day, a hedgerow there. It's not there any longer. They leave it open so that the people at the parade can clearly see the mansion. But I never dreamed I'd get on this side, let alone be in your house and have a conversation with you and your wife, and it's the same with Jim Amos and his wife, Bonnie. I had conversations, of "Oh, my God." Earl Hailston, the three-star lieutenant general. Earl ran recon patrol, and he was a platoon commander down in Echo Company for his recon. He's the only general I don't address as general. He was a grunt, just like me, before he passed his flight school exam and ended up his career flying Phantoms. So it's a little world in the Marine Corps. I just don't know how to explain it any better than saying if it were February of 1967, and I'm standing there, with Master Sergeant Leery [sp??], Ed Leery, my recruiter, and my mom and dad, and I'm signing myself into the United States Marine Corps, I wouldn't do it any different. I would lay it all on the line again, because the other side, the discipline that I had as a Marine, the attention to detail at Marine Barracks 8<sup>th</sup> and I, highly spit and polished, seemingly little things, that you would blow off if you were not an 8<sup>th</sup> and I guy, helped me structure my five businesses in such a manner that every single one of them was a success. Some I chose to close, just simply because of the economic impact, but the attention to detail, the focus on the objective, the how you gonna do this, the, you know, give it everything that you have, expect more--you give more than your employers, and you show them, and you get on the line with them, you set the bar, you know, you're the benchmark. And in the words of Colin Powell, I just finished reading his second book, *It Worked For Me*, you share the success and you take 100 percent of the blame for the failure. And I think that's the way I've run my life, and you like to think that the people that you had with you, you chose because they were winners, but you also, it was fun at teaching them how to do it, how to be a winner. Things that I seem to think that are seemingly

taken for granted, talking with the former commandant, having a cocktail with him, I tell my buddies that, and they just kind of blink. But if the commandant was in the room with my buddy, that buddy would be treated with the same respect. It's a--the United States Marine Corps is more than just a cool looking uniform. It is absolutely the most prestigious club out there, in my opinion, and I'm happy that I can wear the Eagle, Globe and Anchor with pride.

Berry: Well, on behalf of the museum, we certainly thank you for your service. One last question for you.

Mosel: Okay.

Berry: And that is why was it important for you to do this interview? We are certainly pleased that you did, but wondering why you personally decided to do it?

Mosel: Well, during the dinner cruise with these nine, wonderful Wounded Warriors that were hosted, two, Gunnery Sergeant Mike--uh, Gil, Gil, Gil, Gill--Gillitzer--forgive me for stumbling there, Mike Gillitzer, an awesome Marine gunnery sergeant, is part of the Wounded Warrior Regiment of the United States Marine Corps. We have a regiment, a battalion at Quantico, and a battalion at Camp Pendleton. And Gunny's job is to monitor the Wounded Warriors, Wounded Marine Warriors, that are at our hospitals in Tomah, Heinz [??], Milwaukee, et cetera, and support them. Well, you know, you can't get, inevitably with eleven Marines, you can't get eleven Marines together and have cocktails involved, that the old yarns don't start coming out. I was sharing--of course, I shared a lot more with you than I did with Gunny Gillitzer, but he just kind of stopped me in midstream and just said, "You got to get [inaudible]." And he got me the contact information. He said, "You just--you need to share this so that it's there for somebody that might be doing research or somebody years and years and years from now that might just say, 'Well, I'm a high schooler, and I've got to do a paper,'" and maybe use that, as something I may have said or done, as reference. And I've been asked to do this several times before, many, many years ago, and I've always kind of shied away from it. But maybe the older you get, you come to appreciate--I can't--maybe when I'm absolutely bored and there's nothing else to think about, to take and add up the number of days that were spent in the jungle, in the period of time that I was in that country. I think that, in my own mind, it just might rival Guadalcanal. It might rival Peleliu or Okinawa. But I think it was many more times that. I think, just my time in the recon was 100, you know, and then you throw in eight weeks on Mameluke Thrust and then you throw in--do you understand what I'm saying? But--and I'm also understanding that the Marines of today are calling me old Corps.

Berry: Does that bother you?

Mosel: No. No. Because it's--I remember when I would go to my first Marine Division, in the Marines, and 1<sup>st</sup> Recon has got the best association. We have over eleven hundred members, and we're always there in force, at least 100 of us at every reunion. And we would get a chance to sit down and talk with Marines that actually were on Peleliu or Okinawa, or Iwo Jima, and you would just--your mouths would be agape. The men were killed just as dead in Vietnam as they were in Iwo, however, you say to yourself, I would have went in Iwo, I would have landed on Guadalcanal, I would have gone to Peleliu, because that's the job that had to be done. So that goes back to why in the hell did I join in the first place. I wanted to serve, and I got it out of the way. And when that wall went up, God bless President Reagan. When that wall went up, and I have a lot of orthopedic surgeons and a lot of businessmen that are my peers that chose not to serve their country, and I gave every single doc out there a break. You're saving people every day, buddy. But, there was a whole bunch of humble pie being eaten. And I had people apologizing. And I just thought I did it the right way. I choose to believe that, and that's the story I'm sticking with. You can succeed in business, and you can serve your country, and I didn't go to college because I just chose not to go. I was too busy making dough.  
[inaudible]

Berry: Well, thank you, Jim.

Mosel: You're welcome.

[end of interview]