

Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
TERRY MUSSER
Communications, Army, Vietnam War.

2002

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Musser, Terry M., (1947-). Oral History Interview, 2002.

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

Master Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 50 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Transcript: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

Military Papers: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

Abstract:

Musser, a native of Black River Falls, Wisconsin, discusses basic training and his two tours of duty during the Vietnam War. Musser tells of graduating from high school early and enlisting in the Army in 1965. He tells about his basic and advanced infantry training at Fort Leonard Wood (Missouri), jump school at Fort Benning (Georgia), and field communications training. Musser describes taking classes on weapons and first aid in basic training, having to make new friends at every phase of his training, and getting limited recreation opportunities. He explains his first assignment was to dye his clothes and patches green. Assigned to the 1st Cavalry Division's 1st Brigade, Musser describes spending thirty-two days aboard the *USNS Geiger*, a troop transport, on route to Vietnam. Musser relates his first impressions upon arrival in Vietnam: the smell at Qui Nhon and finding snakes in his tent at An Khe. He talks about his various duties in brigade headquarters working in communications and reflects on how the Army was unprepared for the war. He characterizes soldier life as "long lengths of sheer boredom interspaced with fire fights." Musser discusses ill-conceived military tactics, addresses the lack of continuity due to one-year enlistments, and highlights the downside of relying on on-the-job training. He says he still keeps in touch with some friends from his unit. Upon returning stateside, Musser relates training with the 6th Special Forces at Fort Bragg (North Carolina), despite being too young for Special Forces, and volunteering for a second tour in Vietnam because he did not like the "spit and polish" of stateside service. Returned to Vietnam in May 1967, he discusses assignment to the 173rd Airborne Brigade where he worked in an air conditioned office for the Headquarters Company, Signal Platoon. Musser states it was stressful that there was no safe place and "you were always at risk." He talks about being moved to Dak To and the casualties his battalion faced there. He criticizes the general quality of officers and the lack of reliance on small Special Forces units. Musser talks about the "short timer's calendar" and the psychology of not wanting to get too emotionally tied to anyone in country. He reflects on the difficulty veterans had getting acknowledgement and compensation from the government for post-traumatic stress disorder and Agent Orange. Musser addresses good-luck superstitions, being given busy work in base camp, stealing jeeps, "scrounging" food, and selling Vietnamese knives to rear echelon people. He mentions mail call and conditions in the field, including terrible dehydrated food. He criticizes the way the media portrayed the Tet Offensive as an American loss. Characterizing his Army discharge as quick, solitary, and with no decompression time, Musser describes his first meal in the U.S. and his homecoming to Wisconsin. He mentions filing for unemployment, being turned down for State Patrol because he was too young, attending the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse until his GI

Bill funding ran out, and returning to the farm. He speaks about how he got involved in politics and got elected as a senator in the Wisconsin legislature. Musser discusses joining veterans organizations, passing a bill to delete “era” from the phrase “Vietnam Era veterans,” and attending reunions.

Biographical Sketch:

Musser (b. Nov. 15, 1947), enlisted in the Army in February 1965 and served two tours of duty in Vietnam. After returning to the United States in February of 1968, Musser worked as a driving license examiner for the State of Wisconsin before his return to the farm in 1976. He served as a Republican legislator in the Wisconsin Assembly from 1984 until 2009.

Interviewed by Mike Hollander, 2002
Transcribed by Jim Erwin, 2008
Checked and corrected by Joan Bruggink, 2011
Abstract written by Susan Krueger, 2011

Interview Transcript:

- Mike: This is an interview with Terry Musser, who served with the Army during Vietnam. This interview is being conducted in his office in the State Capitol, and the date is June 5th, 2002. The interviewer is Mike Hollander. Terry, tell me about your background and life circumstances before entering military service.
- Musser: Man, you're asking me to go way back. Born and raised on a farm, went to Melrose High School, was not a distinguished scholar in school. Actually, in my senior year I reached an agreement with our principal; I agreed to leave high school and he agreed to let me go early, with the stipulation that if I took the GEDT test and Basic or AIT, passed it, the high school would issue me a diploma. So my class graduated in May and I technically graduated in July of 1965.
- Mike: Okay. When did you enter into military service?
- Musser: February 10th, 1965. I went from La Crosse to the Twin Cities, and from the Twin Cities went to Fort "Lost in the Woods," [laughs] Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri for basic training and AIT [Advanced Infantry Training], you know, February, March, April time-frame of 1965. And after AIT, then I went to Fort Benning for Jump School, and that was in July of 1965, at the peak of the heat in Georgia.
- Mike: What were you doing at the time when you entered into the service?
- Musser: I was working part time as a store clerk at the old grocery store in Melrose, general store, and we had forty acres on our farm and my grandma and grandpa had a bigger farm.
- Mike: Why did you enter the military service? Where you drafted or did you enlist and how did you feel about it?
- Musser: I enlisted in '65 when I got the early out of high school, because back then the military probably saved a lot of kids that were in trouble or were not good students or whatever. Then the Army gave me the second chance. Thank goodness for Uncle Sam.
- Mike: What service unit did you enter into?
- Musser: After Basic and AIT, then I went to Jump School in July—that was three weeks—and then was immediately assigned to the 1st Cav Division. That had formerly been the 11th Air Assault, but they changed the name to the 1st Cav, which everybody knew was on its way to the Republic of Vietnam. And we left, it was like in August, from Savannah, Georgia, for Vietnam.

The whole 1st Brigade, three thousand of us, were on the USS Geiger. We went from the East Coast and it took us thirty-two days and one hurricane to get to Vietnam, which included a twelve hour stop in Hawaii. Of course, I don't think I had ever been outside of Wisconsin, so for a farm kid it was a big world out there.

Mike: Okay, I just want backtrack a little bit. Can you tell me about your induction interview and the physical before you got into basic training, and why you chose to go into the Army as opposed any of the other services?

Musser: That's a good question. I guess the only thing I knew I wanted for sure was to jump out of airplanes, Airborne, and the Army was the logical choice for that. So when I enlisted, the only thing I asked for was to go to Jump School, and so I can actually say Uncle Sam fulfilled every promise to me that he made when I volunteered to join the Army. I never even thought about any other branches of service, except jumping out of airplanes. It helps to be young and foolish.

Mike: Okay, can you tell me a little bit about your basic training? Where it was, and maybe just describe the camp a little bit.

Musser: As in all Army camps, what you do is you have high-ranking officers looking around the country and the world for the worst spot in a particular state, and once they find that spot they put an Army base there. Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri was one of those spots. That's where I went to Basic there; I'm just glad I was a farm kid, just off the farm, so the physical stuff wasn't that overwhelming. Basic training is probably more mental, because they literally—I don't know if they acknowledge it, but what they wanted to do is break you down and build you back up mentally, you know, in the Army way. When you have been independent all your life and all of a sudden you're thrown into a platoon, a company, brigade or battalion, or whatever, you want, when somebody marches, you want them to all march together, so they train you as a unit.

Mike: And what were you trained for? You talked a little bit about being in Jump School. Exactly what training did that involve?

Musser: In basic training? Well, all Army people, the basic training is that it is basic infantry training, so number one, no matter what you end up actually doing, whether you're a cook or a clerk or whatever, you're still, when push comes to shove, you are still a basic infantryman and can be, ah, your job can change quickly if you're in combat, which whether it's World War II or Vietnam, a lot of the cooks and bottle washers ended up being infantry if they were pushed into service. If your camp was attacked, as I am sure it was in World War II when they had the Battle of the Bulge, you don't want to be sitting at your typewriter when the bad guys are coming through the

fence. So that was the basic, learn how to do that fun stuff: throw grenades, shoot various of the small arms that infantryman have, whether it be a rifle, M79 grenades; M79 is a grenade launcher. And then the physical training and, of course, then there was the classroom on first aid. If a person stopped breathing and is bleeding, what do you do first? First, you stop the bleeding, because a person can literally die quicker from bleeding to death than not breathing, which probably few people seventeen years old knew. Ah, how to do basic first aid in the field, very basic. You had your first aid kit; somebody gets shot, you just slap the bandage on it and stop the bleeding. They really stress, in Basic, individual skills and then working getting you to work as a team, whether it would be with your squad or your platoon or your company. So it's all new. It's a different world. No other job that I—no other job has the end result of you, on purpose, killing the bad guy. Policemen are trained to expect the worst, but their goal is to take them alive; that's not the Army's goal. If you are getting into war, your job is to inflict as many casualties as possible on the other guy, before they inflict them on you.

Mike: While you were in basic training, do you remember any of your instructors, and did you make any close friends or buddies?

Musser: Yeah, when I was in Basic there were quite a few, from, like Minnesota, Wisconsin, up in this area. Actually in Basic I had reached a compact with two other guys; the three of us, after Basic, AIT, we were going to go to Jump School. Of course, they chickened out, so I was the only one of the three that ended up going to Jump School. One's name was Lettner; the other one, I can't even remember his name any more. But after Basic and then AIT, I never did see them again. One of them doesn't live that far away, but I never took the time to even look him up. You know, from remembering back, geez, that's thirty-five years, forty years ago—a long time ago. When I enlisted I didn't go in with anybody from Melrose or back home, so you just had to make new friends as you were going, and unless you happened to be going to Jump School, they would have went with me, but they didn't, so then you go to AIT, which is Advanced Individual Training. Mine was in Field Communications: telephones, radios, all that good stuff. You meet people there, but again, none of them went to Jump School, either. So each phase, unless you happen to luck out with somebody that you'd met in Basic or AIT, usually you started all over again. So in one way it was good; the Army did force you to meet new people. Whether you wanted to or not, you had to get to know and acknowledge new friends, new buddies, every unit you went to.

Mike: What did you do for recreation when you weren't in training?

Musser: Oh, now you're really—what did we do? Go to movies. Of course in Basic and AIT at Fort Leonard Wood, you know they had the theaters, the EM

Clubs. In Basic you were pretty much locked into your Basic training area. AIT, your advanced training, you had your free time, I mean that was pretty much eight hours a day, five or six days a week, so we had more free time, which allowed us to go—probably the biggest pastime was, if you didn't drink beer, you had to go to the movies. I mean we had no wheels, and I suppose you could have taken a bus to town, but back then most of the towns outside of Army posts were not real reputable places to go, and the Army post had the basics. They had the movie theaters, if you wanted to go to the EM Club, you know to buy your toothpaste and tooth brush and if you wanted to buy your beer, whatever. So you could survive on post. During Basic and AIT I really didn't go off post, I bet, probably more than twice in that whole sixteen or twenty weeks.

Mike: Do you have any good stories from basic training?

Musser: Well, I guess every company always had the one person. Ours, the guy's name was, I think was Dolcie. Ah, he was just a—he could not walk and chew gum. It's funny he didn't kill himself. In Basic when you are on the firing range you stand in front of your shooting foxhole, a cement-lined hole in the ground where you're supposed to, you had to take three steps back, get down in the hole. He took three steps back and proceeded to fall into it. To this day it amazes me how he didn't hit his head or get killed or something like that. That's probably the—it's funny, but you had to feel sorry for the guy. I don't know how many times he was recycled. Other than that, it's such a learning experience and they keep you literally seven days a week; you really didn't have much free time, you know, at least for the initial eight weeks in basic training. So that was probably the highlight, the guy falling in the foxhole.

Mike: Can you tell me a little bit about your first assignment? How did you get there, and any stories or feelings?

Musser: Ah, like unit assignment? Probably going to Jump School, and there were probably a couple of hundred of us in our class. Once we graduated, I bet ninety per cent of 'em went to the 1st Cav Division, 'cause the 1st Brigade was Airborne, and so just about everybody that graduated in that Jump, from our class anyway, was immediately assigned to the 1st Cav to fill out the 1st Brigade for assignment to Vietnam. I remember there was one guy that was so happy he was going to the Special Forces, and it's kind of ironic; when I came back from Nam the first time I was with the 6th Special Forces at Bragg. I ran into him. He was just on his way to Vietnam, so the shoe was on the other foot, so to speak. I mean, he was happy he wasn't going directly to Vietnam back then. I don't think we knew what it was—this was in 1965. Ninety-five per cent of us didn't have a clue where Vietnam was and most of us also didn't know it was gonna last that long and that darn near everybody was going to end up there, if not once, more than one time. So it

was like all wars; I mean, Vietnam became a household name. Korea has its places and its battles that became household names, just like every war. So— you learn geography, or at least parts of geography and different places in the world. But going from Jump School to the 1st Cav, and while everybody knew the 1st Cav was en route to Vietnam, it was the first division going to be assigned over there. I got there like the end of July, and it was in early August when I remember LBJ announced that the 1st Cav Division was going to Vietnam. Of course we knew, we had everything packed and we had T-shirts we had to dye, T-shirts and shorts, Army white, had to dye ‘em green. All our patches we had to, ah—the 1st Cav had huge patches, yellow, so then we had to color code those. Way back then was before they had the subdued patches, what they call ‘em now, which are—they’re all green. You can make out the unit patches and things like that, but back then they were just a regular color, so we had to literally dye everything to make us invisible in the jungle, so to speak. It didn’t work, but it gave us something to do. So that was our first assignment. We knew where we were going. Like I said, in our 1st Brigade there were three thousand of us and we all got on one ship. I pulled KP once on that ship; it was like about eight hours. I mean, you feed three thousand guys and it is almost like you’re feeding constantly, so you didn’t want to get on KP. Of course, the hardest job for the Army is to keep people from getting bored, I mean, so they make work, whether it’s—and that was at thirty-two days on that ship, they had to really keep us busy. I mean you’re in limited quarters, so it’s PT and they give you busy work, just to keep you out of trouble. Well, that’s always hard to do, so—But that was our first assignment. We got seven days leave, I remember, just before we shipped out, the whole Division. It would have been in August. Fifty per cent of ‘em had one seven day block and they had to be back, and the other fifty per cent had seven days. Of course, seven days is not much time to get from Fort Benning back to Melrose, Wisconsin, so I may have been home probably four and a half, five days. And it was tough, knowing where you were going.

Mike: Your first assignment was Vietnam. Where exactly in Vietnam did you arrive, and what was your first impression?

Musser: Ah, USS Geiger. We disembarked at Qui Nhon; it's on the coast. Went in by landing craft and I think the initial reaction to every American that ever went there is the smell. I mean, you had the heat, the humidity—ah, I guess I try to envision if you put—threw a bunch of food and human waste in a trash can, set it outside for week in ninety-five degree heat and then lift the cover off, that’s the smell that’s constant over there, because no sanitary facilities, the heat, the humidity, the garbage is wherever they wanted to throw it. So that was probably the biggest reaction that you talk to any Vietnam vet, it’s getting used to the initial smell and the heat and humidity. We got off in Qui Nhon and then we took a convoy to An Khe, which was about fifty miles inland, I think, in the Central Highlands. We had some

advance party that had flown over, so they had been there like three weeks or so before we got there. Their job was to try and make it, get the place ready for us. So the basics, there were tents up, but it's like when you move into a base camp; the facilities, needless to say, were fairly austere. It is probably your first time getting used to starting with nothing. So you're digging latrines or building buildings, or, back then, just being able to get into the tent. I remember the first time we got there, GP Medium for, I suppose, our platoon. Vietnam, notorious poisonous snakes; they always said if you see one, kill it, don't care what kind. Well, we rolled up the sides of the tents and there were two of them in there. So we got initial cultural shock to the reptiles in Southeast Asia.

Mike: What were your duties when you first got there?

Musser: When I first got there I was with the brigade headquarters, field communications, which again, is basically telephones and land lines. You lay the wire and you operate the switchboard and the Army telephones, but then in the signal platoon, or the signal company, you also had radios. We had the message center, which really routed all the mail for the brigade and if it was going to the division. So anything doing with the communications, that's what we did. I worked in the message center for awhile, I strung wire for telephones for awhile, switchboard operator for awhile, RTO, radio operator, where you go out in the field and carry the radio, 'cause every unit's got a radio operator. So we had pretty much a jack of all trades, master of none. And so much of what we had to do in Vietnam was OJT, "On the Job Training." I mean, again, it was '65. The conflict, whatever they called it, had just started. No way did we have the training that our troops have today, or the weapons that the troops have today. We were ill prepared for that war because there were too many tactics carried over from, I suppose Korea and World War II, and they were just simply different wars. In this one there was no front lines. At least in Korea and World War II you usually figured the bad guys were there, but in Vietnam, the only place the bad guys weren't was inside your perimeter. And if you moved perimeters every day, you always had to treat every one of the indigenous—is that the word?—personnel as a potential enemy, because a lot of them were and you just didn't know.

Mike: Did you see any combat during your first assignment? And if you did, how did you feel and what did you think?

Musser: Yeah. Shell shock, cultural shock. Um, when people ask me to describe Vietnam, I guess it's great long lengths of sheer boredom interspaced with fire fights. I mean, so that's what always is hard to tell people. We weren't in combat constantly. Sometimes doing nothing or being back at base camp was worse than being out in the field, because of Army rules and regulations, spit and polish, chain of command, details, all that stuff. At

least if you were in the field, it was not fun, but if at any point in time you weren't constantly harassed by REMFs—rear echelon—well you better have the Army interpreters do that one. To this day, my—the Army was not well led back then. There were a few good officers, but darn few. One of the things that hurt the 1st Cav was when we first got to Vietnam we had so many guys in the whole division that were short timers when they got into the unit, so if they went to Nam by ship, like two and three weeks after they got to the Republic of, their time in the service was done and they had to send them back. So there was no continuity. We lost probably half of our guys in each company before we even got, ah, going into combat. So right away, whatever continuity your unit had, whether the little training we had back at Benning, or on ship, or when we first got to Nam, was just, we were getting replacements immediately, and that's even before we started getting casualties in the battle, and it was not a way to run a war. I mean, all of us were there for a year; Marines, I think, were there for thirteen months. The year was great for us, but for the unit and to win a war, that's not the way to do it; you can't put a year's time limit on. And also the units, you didn't—you kept having so many new people, you didn't know the new people. They would come in green; I mean, there was no jungle training. So like I say, everything was OJT. Well, if you're goin' out in the bushes, you don't want a new guy in front of you or behind you. But it's, it's—if you're going to get shot, you want to get shot by the bad guys, not the guy behind you that screws up, has his safety off when he's supposed to have it on, or unpins a grenade and—so, again, the year was good for us, but it was bad. We lost all those, especially the NCOs. That's the ones that were really—one thing I really noticed in the first part of that war was NCOs with like eight, ten years' experience were literally getting out, because I think they had been around long enough they read the handwriting on the wall, they knew it was going to be a screwed up war [phone rings] and they just wanted to get out, and that's what too many of 'em did. And, of course, that's really the leadership that you have and need once you're in the field, because we actually had World War II and Korea veterans with us. So this was their third one and it's like—you know, some of the older ones, they were probably going to stay; but like I say, it was the E5 and E6s, they figured enough was enough. It was—tactics were awful. Even then we knew we couldn't win a guerrilla war with our tactics. Ah, that was part of the mess of the first tour.

Mike: Did you have any memorable experiences or memorable people on your first assignment?

Musser: Oh yeah. I mean, it's like where do you start? I'm actually still in contact—just the last few years, getting in contact with some of the guys I was with, with the 1st Cav. Thank goodness for surfing the World-Wide Net, the Internet. Otherwise there's probably a lot of us would never have found friends and buddies you had been with, except for the modern

communications. So it's good that way. Ah, I am trying to, let me—McCormick from California, Parker from California, Swearingen from California; we had a lot of guys from California. Most of them were "RAs," that means they had volunteered, they were not drafted, and of course back in '65 when it just started, I mean, that was before the Army really relied on the draft, but as it got longer, then you started getting more draftees. But I think just about everybody there in our unit was RA, volunteered. I mean, so you had to volunteer to go in the Army, volunteer to go to Jump School. We didn't volunteer to go to Vietnam, but that was the road map; we were assigned to that one. Oh, I remember 1st Sergeant Geren. G-e-r-g-e-n. I just met—three years ago I ran into one of the guys of our company and he told me that he had died a long time ago from, he thought it was a heart attack. And I always kept—I'm in a lot of veteran's organizations so you always go through and look at names to see if any name rings a bell. One of the problems we always had with trying to associate, looking at a name, was like if somebody had a nickname you may actually not even know the first name or the last name, so it really makes it hard if you're looking for "Mac"—Mac what?—when you go through the list. And with the turnover of people, it got worse trying to get to know these people and actually you probably didn't want to get to know a lot of 'em because you didn't know how long they were gonna live. We were comrades, but also you kept your distance from them. You didn't want to get close to too many people.

Mike: Did you have a nickname?

Musser: Actually, no. No. I've been called a lot of things, but I never had any—you know, of course, to everybody above the rank of PFC, I was "Hey private," so I guess that was probably my nickname. And, no, I lucked out. Some of 'em got some pretty God-awful nicknames. But I wasn't a "Mac" or a "Doc" or any of those things.

Mike: You said that was your first tour of duty. Could you talk a little bit about subsequent tours?

Musser: Yeah, I went back to the Republic of Vietnam the second time with the 173rd Airborne Brigade Separate. It was a brigade by itself. Kind of like, if you are familiar with the Wisconsin National Guard, they have the 32nd Brigade; they just became the 32nd Brigade Separate. The "separate" means they're self supporting. They're assigned artillery; they got everything that is needed for them to support themselves. But I was a lot smarter when I went back. I went back to Bien Hoa, it's outside of Saigon, like ten, fifteen miles from Saigon. Our base camp was right at the Bien Hoa Air Base. The best thing about that is every time they got mortared, Charlie mortared tents, he always went after the airfields, so we always had spectacular fireworks displays and they weren't firing them towards us. That's one of those times I was really glad that I was not in the Air Force. And that was also one of the

downsides of Vietnam. There was really no safe place; I don't care what unit you were with, you were always at risk. Even the ones in Saigon, you would think the big city they're safe, well then you had the Tet Offensive of '68 where Charlie took control of Cholon temporarily and even took control of the US Embassy. So there was—and again, the frustration on our part, there was no front lines. Actually, I don't care if you were male or female, you were always at risk, whether it would be Sappers, mortar attack, the Tet Offensive where they hit every city there was, so there was really no safe haven. The only safe haven was to get out of the country. But when I went back the second time, I came back from the Cav, I went to the 82nd Airborne, and I was assigned to the 82nd Airborne. I knew I didn't want to go to the 82nd because I was fairly certain all of them, they were all gonna be in Vietnam before too long, and I was right on that one. So that's when the Special Forces recruiter came around looking for volunteers. Okay, well, I'll try this. I mean, I'm, what, eighteen then. Ah, the trouble was, I found out then that to get into Special Forces you had to be twenty, and so I'm destined to be assigned to the 82nd. But then when he had the Special Forces volunteers fall out, I just fell out with them, and we went over to Smoke Bomb Hill, Fort Bragg. Of course he remembered me. He said, "Well, as long as you're here, we'll keep you here." So that's when I was with the 6th [Special Forces] for awhile at Bragg. That's when I discovered I was not a stateside warrior; I mean, the spit shine, Brasso, the polish brass, the details, too many officers. We call it chicken shit and stuff that you had to do. I wasn't there very long; that's when I volunteered to go back to Vietnam.

So I went to, I got to the 6th like about August of '66 and I went back to Vietnam with the 173rd in May of '67. And when I went the second time back, see, my ETS was February 9th of '68, so when I got to the country that tour was only gonna be nine months, but I was still glad I went back, because I couldn't have handled—that's why I didn't stay in the military. I never could've handled that for twenty years. But I remember going to the Reception Center with the 173rd and I was assigned to Signal—it was Headquarters Company, Signal Platoon at that time, and I was walking in the company area and the private, or the PFC or E4 that worked in the Signal office—I mean, most of the company was out in the field, gone—wanted to know if I wanted to work in the Signal office. "It's air conditioned," he told me. "Okay, I'll do that." So I got back to Vietnam and I worked in an air-conditioned Signal office; I thought I had died and went to heaven. And it was a brigade Signal Office, so, I mean, we were in charge of the SOIs, SSIs that we had to type up. Back in those days it was all hunt and peck, peck and seek, whatever you call it on the typewriters, to make SOIs, which tells every unit in the brigade what frequency they have on their radio, encrypted messages, you know how you send secret messages and all that stuff. But it was in air conditioning; that was great. But it didn't last, 'cause then we went to—ironically at that time, the 1st Cav was still at An Khe, which I had been with a year and a half earlier. We were at Bien

Hoa. We flip-flopped; the 1st Cav Headquarters became Bien Hoa, so the brigade went back to An Khe. I kinda wanted to go back to see what difference there was there, so we ended up back in the Central Highlands, and actually for the weather, except for the mud and rain, actually in the Central Highlands you could get cold. It's almost hard for people to fathom, but if you get in the mountains and you get wet and you're laying out in the rain all night, you actually got cold. You didn't have that problem in the delta, so if I'm going to serve in Vietnam, I would rather have been where I was in the Central Highlands than down in the delta. Anyway, our base camp became An Khe, and I think we were there, it wasn't very long, less than a week, and we ended up at Dak To; that's in the Central Highlands. That's when there were Special Forces camps there—I didn't know this then, it is reading history since then. The NVA, North Vietnamese Army, and Charlie were attacking the Special Forces camp. Their goal was to split Vietnam and the Central Highlands in two, and so that's why so many of the units ended up in the Central Highlands, Dak To, up in that area. And that's where we ran into literally NVA regulars, divisions, regiments, or whatever they call them. Well trained, well trained. And they were good fighters, 'cause the 173rd, we lost, it would have been in—I think it was November of '67, one of our battalions—actually the campaign was from like May to November. One of the battalions got chewed up bad when they first got to Dak To, up in that area. And then they went back in and, well, they never really left, but then they got—one of the battalions ran into reinforced bunkers and they ran into a helluva a spot, and almost wiped out that battalion, and another battalion comin' in got chewed up real bad during that week-long action. So, I mean, to me that was a cluster. I mean, it was a mountain. What we should have did, pull the troops back, use B-52s and drop two thousand pound bombs or whatever. In my opinion, we just needlessly lost. [pause]

But I mean the loss of personnel, I guess even to this day, I think officers now are better trained, but we had too many back then who were literally ticket punchers. To get promoted, if you were a lifer, gonna stay in, you had to have your—command a combat unit. We had some good ones, but we had some God-awful ones, and as you can tell, I was enlisted, so I have always been paranoid about officers. Hopefully they're better now. I think they're better trained. I think, I think back then we did not adapt to the combat situation We tried to maintain what it was in Korea and World War II; it wasn't the same war. We fought the war entirely wrong. Vietnam should have been small unit actions, it should have been more LRRPs, Long Range Reconnaissance, should have had more Ranger, small units. Fight a guerrilla war, that's how you do it. You don't fight a guerrilla war with a brigade or a division. I mean, you send in four hundred or a thousand men, well, they hear you comin' from thirty miles away. They just melt back into civilization. We needed—the most effective units we had in Nam were the small units, the ones that went out and played Charlie's game. You

know, the ambushes, setting up; that's how we should have—if we were going to be there, that's how we should have conducted that war instead of the large scale units, because Charlie got—like I said, you don't move a division quietly, and if you were smart, and Charlie was smart, he just disappeared back into civilization, or they went back across the border to Laos, Cambodia, or any one of those other havens, 'cause, you don't, God forbid, cross into the wrong country when you're chasing the bad guys. It was just a—it was a mess. I think that's why, even to this day, so many people are—they associate everything we do, whether it's the War on Terror or whatever, with Vietnam, maybe to a degree that we don't want to end up in a war like we did in Vietnam, but at some point in time I think Desert Storm showed that at least our military's adaptable. Also, I think Desert Storm, to a degree, showed that you can't—I firmly believe, there is a saying: "War is much too serious to let the military run it." See, I don't believe that. To me, a politician's job is to keep us out of the war. If they can't, then you let the military run it and win it, which did not happen in Vietnam. And as a consequence we were there ten years, twelve years, and it ended up it was all a disaster. I mean, so hopefully this country never gets into a predicament like that again.

Musser: Can you describe your life in the military?

Mike: I was in two years, eleven months and twenty days; if you want to know the hours, I can probably tell you that, too. I guess to me the military was, like I had mentioned before, long periods of pure, unadulterated boredom, interspersed with moments of the adrenaline, the fire fight, or whatever, when something—

[End of Tape 1 Side A]

—and that was, especially back that era, anybody that joined the military you knew where you were going. It wasn't a real popular place to go. Well, that's one of the reasons I got out. I mean, I thought once, make it a career, but, eh, once that ETS date, estimated time of separation date starts looking better and better after—you know, when you join up for three years, by then it's like, yeah, I think I'll just get out of here and go home. And back then there really wasn't—for the enlisted, lowly enlisted people, the options were very few, the pay was lousy, it was not a place for a family. You know, they're still having problems in the military, paying them enough to support a family. It was not a family-friendly situation. I mean, 'cause it's like the Army had that stupid policy; even if you went stateside, you could only be at a post for what, a year, two years, then they moved you someplace else. I am sure in their ultimate wisdom, but I think that's even changed so now they're trying to get it more family friendly, but back then it was a mess. I mean, how is that saying? "I wouldn't take a million to do it again," which is probably right. Just the experience, I am glad I did it, but I am glad I am

here looking back at it. And if I knew I had to do the same, I probably would do it, but it's not something you would look forward to.

Mike: So what kept you going through all of this?

Musser: ETS; estimated time of separation. Once you got in, that was your goal: looking at the time when you were going to get out. You literally counted the days. It was just like everybody had that "short timers" calendar. Oh, that was fun doing that, when you could finally start to—I think mine started at ninety days, and every day it was a ritual; you just crossed out one of those little squares and then you were down to eighty-nine. When you were in Nam it was always, eleven and days; eleven months and some days. As soon as you got past that eleven, it was ten months. It could have been twenty-nine days, but it was ten months and days. And that's how you literally—everybody did the same thing, and when you got to be a short timer, actually it was probably worse then, because then you knew what could happen to ya and you really didn't want it to happen then; the shorter you got, you just wanted to get out of there. One of the ironies of war is there—how much you had a huge, like the 173rd did, you got a couple units overrun. Most casualties were newbies. Just get there, hadn't figured out what the hell to do to survive, and we were fatalistic. It was like, "Well, it's better to go then than if you had two weeks left." You felt sorry for people, but it was still better you than me. So it was you had your friends, but that friendship only went so far. And it gets to being fatalistic, looking out for number one. Horrendous losses, you know, your friends and that, but you survive and I think that is one of the problems; you have so many with survivor's guilt. You know, "Why them, not me?" things like that. And then PTSD. I mean Agent Orange. They didn't know what the hell PTSD was. Now I was just readin' in the paper, what'd they say, a couple million New Yorkers have PTSD. Well when we got out of Nam, we were trying to tell people that there was something wrong with us. Well, they said it was head; actually that's where it is, is in your head, but it's directly related to any traumatic experience that you have. And I think that was probably a bigger battle than the war in Vietnam was: once we got out, getting the government to acknowledge their part of the contract. We went, we did what we were supposed to do. Now it is time for the government to fulfill their part of the contract, which is service-connected disabilities, so on and so forth, and that literally took years. I mean, look how long it took 'em to acknowledge Agent Orange. PTSD, it was like kicking and screaming before the government—and it took decades for them to acknowledge that there was a problem. I mean, the same thing, you look at the Gulf War: over a decade, and, you know, the Gulf War Syndrome. I mean, the VA and the government is fighting that tooth and nails. Well, there's something wrong with these people, and I think that second fight is worse than the first one. You would think that the government would do the responsible thing, but too often we feel like once you're out of the Army, it's like, "Just get out of

here, don't come back to see us," and I think there is too much of that, even in this day and age there is, and that's a lot of resentment on the part of veterans, ah, towards our federal government.

Mike: Was there something that you did for good luck or anybody around you, something in particular, that somebody did for good luck?

Musser: No, I was never—everybody, a lot of people had—they would wear some kind of a medallion; ah, they'd dress a certain way. I never had any of those superstitions. Sometimes the older you get, maybe they're not all superstitions. But a lot of the people had all their—well, we're all individuals, we all have our strange quirks. Maybe mine was making sure I had a crew-cut hair cut, back when I had hair. It's like I would get it cut every week; back then it even grew. But guys, you know, if they lost a certain knife or a certain weapon, or a certain item of clothing, I mean, they would just go bonkers, 'cause that was their good luck charm. And it's like, who am I to doubt, you know, their good luck charm. And of course then you always had the people that were bound determined that they were going to get killed on that operation, and some of them did, and some of them did not. So premonitions, I guess, maybe some of them did have the correct premonition, but I think a lot of that just goes back to being fatalistic. I mean, we didn't look—we wanted to get out of there, but there was no sense in dwelling on how God-awful it was; just one day at a time, get it over with, and hope the hell you can get back to the world. So I had my—for a while I had a medal, it's the patron saint of the Airborne, but somewhere I lost that or somebody stole it somewhere along the way. And I never did get another one. If I had anything, that would have been my lucky charm, and luckily I did not lose it until my second tour was almost over, so I was getting out of the Army then. Who knows, maybe that would have changed my luck.

Mike: Can you describe a typical day?

Musser: No. Again, going back to—if you are in base camp you had to have busy work, stuff to keep you out of—they made up stuff. I remember we had walkways, 105 mm casings. We had to pound them in the ground for sidewalks so people would walk between them. I mean, that's busy work. We were in the middle of Vietnam, BFE, we don't need pretty sidewalks. And what we had to do was they even had colored stone in there. They found white rocks someplace and we had to paint them, I remember, blue, all the shell casings, and they were probably every foot. It took a lot of time; well, it was busy work, and that's all it was. Out in the field was an entirely different world. That's why really there was no typical day. There may have been typical groups of days, like you are either at base camp or you are out in the field, which is almost two different worlds. Again going back to—ah, except for the fear of getting killed, out in the field was better because you

didn't have the chicken shit. Whereas back at base camp, again my paranoia of officers and them finding us something to do. So for better or worse, I still liked to be in the field more than back at base camp. I guess I preferred Vietnam over stateside, so I guess that's why I didn't stay in for twenty years.

Mike: You talked a little bit about how much boredom there was. How did you and your friends entertain yourselves?

Musser: We drank too much, gambled too much, smoked too much. I remember I never smoked or drank beer until I went in the Army. And both of those—I started those good habits in Vietnam. And that was the problem. If you were at base camp, if it wasn't doing some detail—I mean like battalions and brigades did have a outdoor theater.

Mike: Do you remember any pranks? Did you pull any pranks or did any of your friends pull any pranks, or any memorable experiences like that?

Musser: Actually there is a retired reporter here, used to work for the Green Bay paper; I don't remember the name of the paper. We're trying to get him to write a book on humorous stuff from Vietnam. Actually we're hoping he can still do that. Ah, pranks? When we were with the 173rd in Bien Hoa, outside of Saigon, I swear everybody in the 173rd had their own jeep. We would literally go to Saigon and steal jeeps; every guy did have a jeep. Of course we always had MPs, always had to hide 'em. The MPs were always around, looking. And that was probably the biggest thing, was scrounging; that's what we called it. Come out of the field, you took anything that wasn't nailed down, 'cause you didn't have anything. You moved into a base camp, I mean, you had your military stuff, you didn't have any of the amenities of home, whether it be simple things like a steak, fresh bread. I mean, if we couldn't trade something for it, we got to be good scroungers. That was probably—and we were good at it, we were really good at it. Or else telling tall tales. I remember coming in out of the field, we would all buy knives from the Vietnamese; I mean, they just made 'em. We would buy all we could carry, take them back to the base camp and trade 'em to the rear echelon mother—the people in the rear. You know the kind of stories they told. But we would get steak, anything we wanted for those knives, and I am sure they got—it was kinda like a fish story. The fish never got smaller, so I am sure they had some good stories. But I guess between, you know, trying to make your life more comfortable, I think everything revolved around that, whether it be trading for stuff, stealing stuff, borrowing jeeps. You figure, well, it's all Army property, we are part of the Army, for our own transportation. So that was probably the biggest prank. You know, back in the world, this is back in the world, that's what we called it, we would still be in jail, but then you could get away with it.

- Mike: Can you describe your sleeping and eating facilities?
- Musser: Ah, C-rations come in little bitty square boxes, “B1, B2 and B3.” You had such exotic things as ham and lima beans, canned ham; that was out in the field. Actually if we were back and got hot food, and actually when you look at the C-rations versus some of the dehydrated food we had, a lot of us preferred C-rations, especially if you had enough of the hot sauce. Just dump everything in a steel pot or a container and add hot sauce. To this day, I still like C-rations. The dehydrated was pretty God-awful stuff. A lot of our C-Rats were holdovers from Korea and World War II, so they had been around for awhile, a lot of the dehydrated stuff. I can remember back at base camp they would have eggs that, God, I don’t know were they ever regular eggs; they would break them and they would come out literally black, so I don’t know how long they could possibly store eggs, but these had to be forever. The food was pretty God-awful. Ah, sleeping was anywhere from bunks—we had the two, versus if you were out in the field, if you were—air mattress or sleep on the ground. So we had quite a variety, or quite a range of food. In the field you carried whatever. If you wanted to eat, you carried your own food. If you wanted to carry an air mattress, if you had time to blow it up in the field. Back at base camp the food at least was hot and we had bunks back there. So that’s why to this day to me camping, roughing it, camping is about like the Holiday Lodge, Holiday Inn. I had enough of camping.
- Mike: How did you keep in touch with your family and relatives back home in the US?
- Musser: Back then it was good old snail mail. But we got free—all we had to do to send a letter, we had to write free up on the upper right corner where the stamp would go. A lot of letter writing; that was probably one of the highlights of your life there, was whenever they had mail call. And invariably there was somebody that never got any mail and you really felt sorry for those people, but it was overshadowed if you got mail. It’s like that’s their problem; I got mail. Also back then there were limited, we called them MARS stations, portable. I never did call home on those, because you had to go through the radios and so on and so forth, but it’s like if I can’t see them, I don’t even want to talk to them. Probably to me it would have been too hard not to be able to see ‘em, so it’s like, okay, I’ll write—I could handle writing the letters, but when I talk to them, I want to be able to see them, so I’ll wait until I get back.
- Mike: Did you have any sense of the atmosphere that was occurring here in the US at the time?
- Musser: No. In one way, I always tell people I was lucky I was in at the right time; we actually were winning the war. My ETS date, the date I got out of the

Army and out of Vietnam, was February 1st of '68, which is when Tet of '68 started, February 1st of '68, and I think the war really took a bad turn then. That was—it's frustrating that that was one of the few times that they came out of the jungles and we kicked their ass, but the media turned it around as if we had had lost that one. Actually that was the only time we did what they—they did what we wanted them to do; we decimated in that Tet Offensive, the Viet Cong, the VC, and for the rest of that war, they were literally not a factor, because the North Vietnamese took it over. Ah, again, the politicians, the government, the people back here, the only—the biggest victory we ever had was at Tet, but the media turned it around back here and from that point on I was glad I was out of the military because things were goin' downhill then. Ah, you can't fight a war there and be trying to fight one here. I am a firm believer that protesters prolonged the war, because North Vietnam, China, all, they read the papers, too. They knew the resentment in this country and they were right. They were confident that if they could drag this out long enough they would sacrifice all of their people because they knew in the end, if they sacrificed all their people, we would have casualties and sooner or later we'd pull out of the country, out of Vietnam, and we did. And that—that's where the protesters did prolong the war. As a consequence the casualties really grew the longer we stayed there, and so it could have been over with much sooner.

Mike: Can you talk a little bit about your discharge from the military? You weren't discharged at the end of the war, you were discharged, like you were just talking about, right at the Tet Offensive. Just talk about the discharge.

Musser: We left the Republic of Vietnam on February 1st of 1968. Of course with the International Dateline, I got back to Fort Lewis, Washington on February 1st of 1968. So the day I left Vietnam, that same day I got my discharge papers. It's only because of the International Dateline. But I can remember when we got back, the Army's wisdom; I mean, we came back in moldy clothes that had been dress uniforms. We get back, they gave us brand new dress uniforms. It was about 11:00 o'clock at night we landed at Fort Lewis; the mess hall was open. We were just out of Vietnam, and they had steak and French fries and corn. Every one of us—I mean in the Army there are trays. We filled those trays up, and we could eat maybe a tenth. I mean, we weren't used to eating that much food. But I can remember, oh God, that steak was good. It could've been the toughest piece of meat in the country, but it was stateside and it was all you wanted to eat. Probably the happiest meal I ever had, was that one, happy meals. But that's also one of the downsides of Vietnam; there was no—what do they call it?—decompression when you leave a war the same day they turn you loose in the States, and say, "Now, be a good boy. Forget everything you were trained to do." I mean, you can't be taking the law into your own hands. I always felt they should have sent us back by ship; at least that would have been probably ten

days to two weeks to have at least have some kind of a phase out. But when you left the country and you're back in the world the same day, the potential for problems was huge. And there were problems, simply because, at least if you have come back with the unit—I mean, when you came back, you'd have come back, odds are, with nobody you knew. There were just people from every unit in Vietnam, so you didn't have any friends coming back with. That to me was not good. It's always better to come back with units so you can step down, not alone. [sirens in background]

Mike: What was your homecoming like?

Musser: Again, I was lucky. At that time the war was popular; I mean, it was not an unpopular war at that time. And also being from the Midwest, the homecoming was positive. Besides coming home by yourself; again, it was better to come home as a unit, but we didn't have that luxury. We were still respected back here, and that—so I did not have, thank God, the homecoming that some of them did when they came back. Also it was later, it was after '68, before the long slide downhill. And I remember catching a plane from Seattle Tacoma Airport, I think it's the one outside of Fort Lewis, to Chicago, then I had to wait for hours to catch the one to La Crosse. I remember I called a classmate of mine when I got to La Crosse, asked him to come down and pick me up. I went into a store and I was in uniform, downtown La Crosse to get some civilian clothes, and I was looking around, surprised everybody by coming home. Finally I got thinking as I got—I am sure everyone in those people in the store thought I was a thief going to steal something, so I went up and told them what I was doing, just so they wouldn't call the cops. And at that time Sears, or whatever, it was a clothing store. Lots of probably ladies my mother's age back then, so I was an immediate hero. So my homecomings were good. When you first got home you were really lost. Even when you came home on leave there was—well, people were working or they were in school. You're home, weekends were great, but what do you do Monday through Friday? And when you first get out, of course you're looking for a job, and trying to figure out what do you do now? What do you do with the rest of your life? It was different, coming back after three years of not having to worry about what tomorrow was, because that was going to be taken care of; somebody was gonna tell you what to do. Well, you didn't have an NCO or an officer tellin' you what to do; you had to start doing things for yourself and thinking for yourself, and that takes some adjustment. Freedom is great, but if you haven't had it for three years, you kind of forget that you have to make decisions for yourself.

Mike: So what did you do after you left the Service? Did you go to work or did you go back to school at all?

Musser: First thing I did was file unemployment. I think we could get forty-eight dollars a week, something like that. But I got out in February and it was like a month later, checking in with the job service or whatever it was called then, that's when the State of Wisconsin was hiring a bunch of State Patrol Inspectors and Driver's License Examiners. I took the test; the test was for all three, and I still have that letter. I had passed the test for State Patrol, but I was too young. I had been in Vietnam twice and I get a letter from the State, from DOT, saying I am too young to be in State Patrol because I got out when I was twenty; you had to be twenty one. Talk about ironic. But Driver's License Examiner, at that time they hired like thirty-six, the biggest class ever, and I was one of those. So I was a Driver's License Examiner for five years. A year in Milwaukee, a year in Richland Center, and then three years in Tomah. And then in the mean time, I was pretty sure I didn't want to do that for thirty years. I had the G.I. Bill, and at that time on the G.I. Bill you had ten years to use it or lose it; well, that would have left me about five years, and so I resigned from the State, went to school. I'm literally still a senior at UW La Crosse; I have about thirty credits left to get. I always tell everybody I never knew what I wanted to do when I grew up, so I didn't go back and ran out of G.I. Bill senior year, so that's when we started farming. And we're still on that farm. We started farming in 1976.

Mike: So what made you want to become a legislator? Do you think there was anything from your military service that translates into being a legislator or influenced you in wanting to be a legislator?

Musser: I was always interested in—well, I was a history buff, always interested in politics, but had I never run for any office. And in 1979 I remember George Bush Senior running for president, against, what's his name? Reagan? Of course, I supported Bush. So that was really my—I was active in his campaign and that was my first really active part in our electoral process. And in 1980 there was an Assembly seat, it was part of Jackson County and La Crosse County. I am a Republican; a Democrat was in it, but the Republican running, I really didn't get along with him well and I kept trying to talk other people into running in the primary on the Republican side. I couldn't, so I decided to put up or shut up. So that was my first taste of politics, and either you love it or you hate it. And it got in my blood, because I ran three times before I won. I ran in the Assembly in '80 and lost the primary. In '82, reapportionment, there was an open Senate seat; that's when I ran against Rod Moen and I lost in the recount. And then in '84, the incumbent from Jackson and Monroe County, that area, retired, so there was an open seat. Then I ran there and won. And I guess a carryover maybe from the military is the discipline, the persistence. I mean a lot of people run once, and, like, "That's it." Just try and try again, and I am sure that was part of that military training. Keep doin' it until you get it right. Always be interested in it and the—I always thought the greatest asset was if you're back home, you are one of five million Wisconsinites. At least down here

I've cut down the odds: I am one vote out of ninety-nine, and if you like your job that's best the best part about it, being able to help people back home. And we do affect people's lives with our votes, so it makes you think when issues come up for a vote. But also, it's a good feeling that you're representing people back home, and this is, what, my eighth term, ninth term, whatever. The confidence in the people back home keeps electing me, so I'm happy to do this. You just have to remember where you came from; I mean it would be awful easy when you get down here to forget where you come from. It's the people back home elect you, not the ones down here. So I enjoy it and I really thank the people in the district for their confidence that keeps sending me down here.

Mike: After you left the service, or actually while you were in the service, did you get any medals or citations?

Musser: I got busted once. I tell everybody I made E4 twice. Ah well, the wings, that's a medal I guess; the CIB, the Combat Infantryman's Badge, you get that for being in a war; but the best medal I ever got would have been the Army Commendation Medal. Other than that, I never even got the Good Conduct Medal, because I did get busted. I was always still mad at the Army for that, but that would be the list of my medals.

Mike: Did you join and become involved in any veteran's organizations afterwards?

Musser: Yeah. When I was still in the Army, the Melrose Legion. I think technically you had to be out of the military, completed your tour of duty, but they paid my first year's membership. I mean in Melrose we only had the Legion, we didn't have the VFW or the DAV, so that would have been back in '66 and I was active in that. Of course, that's all we had in Melrose; you had to go to Black River to find a VFW. And then later on, I think I am in all of them now: the Legion, the VFW, the DAV, VVA and so on and so forth. It's like down here I'm Chair of the Veterans and Military Affairs Committee. It's fun, especially when you can actually do good things for people in the service or that were in the military. You see, I'm a firm believer—okay, the first bill I ever got passed was to delete the word “Era” out of “Vietnam Era Veterans”; it always galled me. We don't have World War II Era Veterans, Korean War Era Veterans, so that's when I was in the minority, so I was quite proud of that. I remember the former Chair, Dale Wolley[?], a Democrat; that's when they were in the majority in the Assembly. He was my mentor. He despised naming roads after veterans or for war or giving a license plate to a group of veterans because he thought it gave politicians too much of an easy out to do substantial good things for Veterans, 'cause they could go back and say, “Well, look, we named a road after you.” That doesn't help a damn veteran. He was a good teacher, and to this day, I despise naming roads, because to help veterans, it's too easy for politicians

to say, “Look what we did for you; we named this the Korean War Veteran’s Highway.” Well, let’s get some veteran’s benefits. I mean, that is where the rubber meets the road, and it’s a great group of people to help. I am a firm believer that if you love your freedom, thank a vet.

Mike: Have you attended any of the reunions that any of the organizations hold?

Musser: You mean the military?

Mike: The military or the VFW.

Musser: Yeah. Well usually I go to state conventions for all of them, if I can. I have been to the 173rd Association annual meeting. This year it’s in Chicago; I’m hoping to be able to get down to that. The 173rd, way back in ‘65, was adopted by the city of Rochester in Minnesota, so they’ve had two reunions there, and they’re great fun. I went to one of the 1st Cav Division reunions; that’s when my son was stationed at Fort Hood. The 1st Cav was there, too, after Vietnam, and they had one of their reunions there, so I got to go to one of their reunions and visit our son when he was down there. But like the 173rd, that’s all Vietnam, because it wasn’t in any other war. The 1st Cav, of course they have served since World War II, so when you go to those reunions there are a lot of veterans there from World War II and Korea. Actually it’s too many people; you don’t get a chance to look up your friends. I mean, they’re fun, but at least at the 173rd you know that they were all in the country at some point in time so you have more of a common bond with groups like that. So hopefully I am going to go to Chicago. They have theirs—well, I have a parade the morning of the 4th of July. I’m bugging out right after that parade and going to Chicago for their reunion down there.

Mike: Looking back, how do you feel about your military and war experiences?

Musser: Wouldn’t want to do it again, but I wouldn’t give it up for anything. I guess that—you know, my daughter is in the Guard. She has been in ten years. In this day and age, who knows when you’re ever going to get called up. I guess that you never—once you’re a veteran, nobody can ever take that away from ya, and that’s something that they can’t take away from you, and that’s why it’s hell to go to war, but when you become a veteran, it is a badge of honor. That’s why I am glad people for the most part are proud of it. For too long, too many Vietnam vets were closet Vietnam vets. I mean, it was—actually, now it’s almost, it’s the vogue to do, now, is to be a Vietnam vet, and one of the problems we’re having are fakes. You run into them all the time. Now it’s like everybody wants to be a Vietnam vet, and they’re not. I don’t care what you do, but don’t lie to me about that.

Mike: Do you have anything else that you would like to add?

Musser: No. Just a comment on this program. I think it's great, because I'm a firm believer that veterans are our history and that to record something like this, which is great and also it's always stressed to veterans, veteran's organizations, the importance of making yourself available to visit schools to educate our kids. We can't—war is too horrific to be forgotten. We have to remember it so we are not, how is that saying?—so we are not doomed to repeat ourselves. There is a time and a place to get into a war, but if there's a time and a place, let's get into the war and let's win it. And let's, like Vietnam, let's learn from it. Korea, let's learn from it. That if you want to—war is much too serious. If you want to go to war, the government has to have the will to let the warriors win the war.

Mike: Thank you.

[End of interview]