

**Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center**

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
ROBERT MALEWSKI
Cavalry, Army, Vietnam War
2011

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Malewski, Robert. (b. 1948). Oral History Interview, 2011.

Approximate length: 1 hour 25 minutes

Contact WVM Research Center for access to original recording.

Abstract:

In this oral history interview, Robert Malewski discusses his Vietnam War service as a gas truck driver with the Army headquarters troop, First Squadron, 11th Armored Cavalry regiment, his time at basic training, his first combat experience, the living conditions at his base camp, and returning home. Malewski was drafted in 1968 and talks about his basic training at Fort Campbell (Kentucky) and a bit about Advanced Individual Training at Fort Leonard Wood (Missouri). Then he discusses his service overseas in Vietnam near Xuân Lộc and talks about the different experiences he had driving a gas truck for his regiment. He talks about the living conditions at base camp, the dog that stayed with his unit, and his R and R in Bangkok (Thailand). He ends the interview discussing his return home, being treated for malaria, his experience with Vietnam War protesters, and reunions he had with the 11th Cavalry.

Biographical Sketch:

Malewski (b.1948) served in the United States Army from 1968 to 1970 with the 11th Armored Cavalry, First Squadron. After being discharged he worked for Oscar J. Boldt Construction for thirty-five years.

Interviewed by Rick Berry, 2011.

Transcribed by Amy Williams, 2014, Connie Kottwitz, 2015.

Reviewed by Jennifer Kick, 2016.

Abstract by Jennifer Kick, 2016.

Interview Transcript

Berry: —served with the headquarters troop, First Squadron, Eleventh Armored Cavalry Regiment during the Vietnam War. This interview is being conducted at the Wisconsin Veterans Museum, at the following address: Thirty, West Mifflin Street, Madison, WI, on the following date. September 16, 2011. The interviewer is Rick Berry.

Berry: Okay, Bob, uh, can you tell us something about your background and your life circumstances prior to entering military service?

Malewski: Well, in 1948- February of 1948 - I was born in Chicago, Illinois. And I lived in Chicago until, I don't know what year it was, but until I was in third grade. And every year we'd come up here to Wisconsin to visit my grandmother-she lives in Shiocton. And we came up every year, and as we came up this certain, this certain year, my wife or--my mother came up and we, uh, decided to stay up here and she didn't want to go back to Chicago so we--my dad moved up here, he was a teamst--he drove for Stuart Trucking, and uh, he would come up every weekend, and finally got a job at John Strange and we lived in--a short time in Black Creek, and we moved to Shiocton, and we moved to Shiocton when I was in fourth grade, fifth grade, and, uh, we stayed there until I graduated at--out of Shiocton High School. And when I was eighteen, once you turned eighteen, you had to sign up for the draft, you had to go down to the post office and sign up for the draft. I signed up for it, and I graduated, and I tur--well, January fifth--just before--sometime in, uh, January I got was classified 1-A and then, uh, had to go down to Milwaukee for a physical--the fifteenth of, the fifteenth of uh, Jan--fifteenth of March I went down for, and uh—

Berry: What year was this?

Malewski: That was 1968, and I went down there and they, they said I passed my physical, so shortly after that--it was March twenty--twenty-eighth--I went down there for my last physical and at six-thirty in the morning I had to be down in Mil--at the courthouse in Appleton--went to Milwaukee, and they gave us a little quick physical, and I was on my way to the service. I ended up going to, uh, we left around four o'clock, about three o'clock in the afternoon, we all put our hand up in the air and they swore us into the Armed Forces, and we, we left, and uh, you know, four o'clock in the afternoon, when we headed for Fort Campbell, Kentucky, and they got down there about three o'clock in the morning. It was—

Berry: This is for your basic training?

Malewski: This is for my basic training.

Berry: When you, uh, when you were inducted and went through the physical process, did you do that with any of your friends from high school, or, you just went down there on your own, or--?

Malewski: I got--I got drafted, I was by myself.

Berry: Okay.

Malewski: And, uh, some of my friends did go, but we all went at different times. I left Milwaukee, I went down to Fort Campbell, got down there about three o'clock in the morning, in a bus. And, it was quite the experience, because I pulled into Fort Campbell, we were kind of tired, and the minute they opened the door on that bus there was a drill sergeant, and he was actually screaming and yelling, and I thought to myself, "What in the heck am I getting into?" We walked into a--they took us out--told us to get out of the bus, and we walked into a building, with light bulbs all over the place, we'd fill out our papers, and uh, shortly after I got, I got basic—like eight weeks of basic. I went in there as a truck driver, and uh, at basic, we left Fort Campbell, and I ended up going to Fort Leonard Wood for advanced—

Berry: Tell us a little bit about the camp and its facilities at--

Malewski: Fort Campbell?

Berry: --at Fort Campbell and your basic training.

Malewski: Well, we just--I got there, and the first time I had a [makes a tsst sound]--within a couple days we had our haircuts, and I had, not real long hair, but I had side-burns and I remember walking into, into the barber shop, and the guy said, "Would you like to keep your side burns?" I said, "Yes", and he said, "Well, just put your hand there." He had me put my hand under my chin and he shaved my side burns off, and he said, "Here, you got 'em." And, basically, basically we got through basic--all the time we were there-- well, not the rifle range and all that other stuff--but for eight weeks we were never allowed to walk on the outside. Any time we're outside of a building, we had to, uh, run, and this one morning we woke up--well, he woke us up about three o'clock--and all lights came on, and he said--the drill sergeant and some other lieutenant said--we were having a G.I. party, and as he walked by I said, "Well, it's kind of early to have a party." And he, he threw a can of Windex on my chest, and said, "You can start on the windows." And, we had—three o'clock in the morning--we gotta get up, clean, clean the whole

barracks, scrape all the wax off the floor, and then be ready by five o'clock or four-thirty, for, for training, or for breakfast, and uh--certain time--we had to be out in formation at a certain time. If we couldn't make it, we'd run out there--if we couldn't make it by the time, as fast as they wanted to, we'd have to go back to the barracks. And, we did that two, three times, and well, the third time, we got close to the door, thinking we were going to make it this time, and the whistle blew, and we all ran, and the guy forgot to open the door, and we actually tore the door right off the barracks. But we made it into formation on time. And, uh, we'd go for lunch-- if we went for lunch we had to do certain physical push-ups, or whatever it was. If you didn't--if you couldn't make it, you didn't eat.

Berry: How was the food?

Malewski: Uh, food wasn't too bad, because that's all, that's all you had to eat. As you walked in if the place, the room was full of G.I.'s that just stopped the line, threw the line out, so sometimes we had to walk quick to the garbage can to eat your food because you only had so many minutes to eat. But, uh--

Berry: What sort of weapon did you qualify with, in basic training?

Malewski: I qualified with an M-16.

Berry: M-16, okay.

Malewski: Yeah. I believe I was--marksman.

Berry: Do you have any, uh, memories of friends you made there, or---?

Malewski: Well, I knew guys there, but we were only there for eight weeks, and we all made friends, but we all split after that, pretty much--

Berry: Yeah.

Malewski: --except, there was one guy, that I did meet, and we ended up going through the whole--Jim Crosnell [sp??]. We went through basic and AIT [Advanced Individual Training] together. And, uh, basic--and we ended up going to Fort Benning, Georgia. And from Fort Benning, Georgia, I went home for three weeks and ended up going to Fort Dix, in Jersey, and flew to Vietnam together.

Berry: Hm.

Malewski: And then we ended up coming back, 3rd of January 1970 back together.

Berry: And have you maintained contact with him, so?

Malewski: I didn't see him for thirty years, thirty-five years, then I go on through [inaudible] and at the cabin we have our reunion. And uh after about thirty, thirty years, I met up with him at a reunion. I just saw him, here, about three weeks ago.

Berry: Interesting. Okay, what did you do for, uh, recreation on your time off in basic training?

Malewski: Run and doing uh, grass--some grass trails. First time he told us to do a grass trail, he said we had to--he made us do the low-crawl, across parking lots. And, uh, we had phys--physical fitness week. The worst was when you had to put somebody on your back, and you have to carry them a hundred yards. And if you didn't make it, then you would have to do it over again. And if you picked a guy that wasn't your size, the sergeant would pick somebody for you. And you didn't want that to happen because most times he's fifty pounds heavier. That's how my physicals were—and we used to get up at like, four, five o'clock and run for miles, and at first it was rough but, after a while it didn't bother me, running.

Berry: Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about basic training?

Malewski: Mm. It was a quick eight weeks. Eight weeks was over, and we were on our way out, and I got to go to Fort Leonard Wood.

Berry: And did you get to choose where you would get to go for AIT, or the army just assigned you?

Malewski: They just, they just told us, we just had papers, "You're going there", and that's it.

Berry: Okay. So tell us about AIT, where that was, and--

Malewski: Well, Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. I do know one thing - we were there shortly, and then Bobby Kennedy got assassinated, and, uh, for two days, we weren't allowed to go anyplace but in the barracks. They didn't allow us out of the barracks. We had to stay there for--I don't know what the reason was for, but they told us that, uh, we couldn't. I started driving a Jeep, we got into five ton. After six weeks we were done with basic and they, and, uh, they gave us orders to go to Fort Campbell, Kentucky--Fort Benning, Georgia, and, uh, then--Fort Benning, Georgia--six weeks after that. When I first got there, they assigned me, to—I had, uh, field officer of the brigade. [Inaudible] Colonel, General--command the post. When he went home, at four o'clock, another officer would take his place, and I, I would drive him around at night to do guard checks. Anything that would happen, I went to a semi that burnt on base and I went to where this one young guy killed

his girlfriend and said he belonged to the army, but he didn't. It was almost vacation, because we only had to do it, like, uh—there was two of us, and one week we're on, and, one weekend we're on and one weekend, the next weekend we're off and you'd start at four—four o'clock in the afternoon, and we'd be off at six in the morning. It was, really, uh, I enjoyed it. It was nothing, just driving around in the jeep. Different facilities, like, uh, they had uh, where you put the prisoners. I don't know, but, uh, what do you call it—if you do something you've got to go to prison there—I forgot what they call it, but we'd go there, and he'd walk through and check everything out, and basically was just a—

Berry: So your military occupational specialty after AIT was as a truck driver?

Malewski: --was a truck driver.

Berry: Okay.

Malewski: They started us-- when we got to, uh, Fort Benning—they said “drive a truck”-- they needed this guy to drive a permanent one, so I got, I got the job driving around for--I don't know how many weeks I did it, but then, when I first got drafted, they asked me where I wanted to go, and I said “I didn't know where to” It was just a question of--they ask you to fill out papers, "Where would you like to go if you were transferred out, overseas, someplace. And I happened to look up, up, on the ceiling, or the roof, on the wall, I see Tokyo, Japan. I said, "Well, write down Tokyo, Japan." In the meantime, I was at Fort Benning, Georgia, maybe eight, ten weeks. And then they told me I had orders to go to Tokyo, Japan as an ambulance driver. Then First Cav - the 101st – was--they call them the Screaming Eagles--they did all their training there and when I get my orders and all the guys said that I wasn't going. I said, "Well, I had orders." We were starting to process out, and about three hours before I was going to process out, they cancelled my orders. So I had to process back into the service, or back into the unit again.

Berry: Do you remember the date that this happened? This would have been in '68 or -?

Malewski: This was—well, I was home for Christmas.

Berry: So it'd be like December of '68 you completed AIT?

Malewski: Yeah, AIT but '69 I was in uh, Fort, uh--I got orders to go to Vietnam--in November of '69.

Berry: '69, okay. At what unit was that that you received orders for?

Malewski: Well, we received orders--we just got orders just to go to--just to go to Vietnam. And you didn't get your orders or anything until you got there. I got a 30 day leave from Fort Benning, and as I got there--I left to go there the third of January '69 to go to Vietnam. I left Green Bay. We flew to Fort Dix, New Jersey and from there we flew from Fort Dix, New Jersey to Vietnam. From Fort Dix, New Jersey to Anchorage, Alaska and then we were supposed to go right from Anchorage, Alaska to Tokyo, Japan but the weather-wise--the weather was bad, see. We had to stay over in Anchorage and we were all in jungle fatigues and that and we were all nineteen and we got off the plane I remember, and it was freezing, and the next morning we left again, and we got to Tokyo, Japan, and it took us roughly twenty-one hours to get there.

Berry: Was this a military aircraft or commercial?

Malewski: It was a commercial.

Berry: Okay.

Malewski: It was--I got a picture- TWA I believe it was. It held roughly close to 250 of us.

Berry: Where did you land in Vietnam?

Malewski: We left--we got to Japan and filled up with gas and we ended up going to Biên Hòa. I remember looking out the window as we were coming to Vietnam and it looked like a resort because you could see the sand and the ocean and see the water it was blue. And so we landed at Biên Hòa, they took us to the facility where they kept all the guys that came in. We were there for roughly three days. Every day we had to be every—I believe it was—every three or four hours you had to be in formation because there was orders coming in all the time. You'd line up and then they'd read—if they read your name that's where—what's in the short time you had ahead of you. A jeep or I don't know, either they'd send you on a plane, or a helicopter. Something like that. I believe I was there for two days and this Jim Crowell [sp??] he was with me, and another guy. I don't know who the other guy was, but we got our orders to go to--they call it Blackhorse, Blackhorse Base Camp. The 11th Cav was called Blackhorse back then.

Berry: So that's a nickname for the 11th Cavalry?

Malewski: Yeah, Blackhorse. And I remember when we were in formation they gave us our orders, they said, "Get your bags packed." We pretty much had all of our bags packed, we just slept on a bunk and you knew you were going to go any minute. So you grabbed your bag and they put us on a—took us out to the airfield, and

they put us on a C130 cargo plane. And we took off and--I don't know how long we were flying, but all of a sudden the plane took a nose dive. I thought it was gonna crash, but it's just the way they fly over. They stayed so high up on the air then at the last minute they would—I thought my days were--I was trying to look out the window, but all I could see was jungle down there and I thought—but we landed this airfield and there was nobody around, and the gang or crew chief, some guy in the back said, “What are we supposed to do?” And he said, "Just take your bags, throw 'em out and sit on them. Someone will come pick you up." So we walked out and it was just like airfield, nobody around. Just jungle and that. And we threw our bags--we sat down on them, and we waited for maybe fifteen minutes and here comes a jeep. We jumped in the jeep. They took us to base camp--base camp was actually the air field itself. They took us right in there and took us to our barracks or building and they told us we were in the 11th Cav and gave us some patches--

Berry: What was the name of the base camp?

Malewski: Ah, we called it Blackhorse base camp.

Berry: Do you know the name of the airport or the airfield or--?

Malewski: It wasn't really an airfield, it was just a clearing in the jungle. And uh--

Berry: Do you know what part of Vietnam was this?

Malewski: This was in the 3rd corps and it was--I'd say roughly about--our base camp was very close to Xuân Lộc. Xuân Lộc was a little Vietnamese town. It was only like three or four miles away. So I know Xuân Lộc it was just a little town and it was just a little village, very shortly from our base camp and just before I was there--before I arrived they had a real big firefight there, six months before because the VC were in that area but when I got there it was pretty quiet. And, uh, when we first got there, you stuck around base camp and just kind of hung out. They put us in a truck and we were--we would send out all the convoys. We'd carry ammunition, and whatever, mostly ammunition and fuel. And some of the big tankers had water that they took out in the field for the guys. This went on for a few times, I felt kind of--I was only 19 years old and I had an M16 in my hand and I was sitting back in the seat with my feet up going--I don't know what--I believe it was on a Sunday--because we never kept any calendars, so—actually, we never knew if it was Monday or Tuesday or we didn't have a day, we just went by a number, and uh, when we first got over--first landed it was three sixty-five and from then on it was three sixty-four and kept going.

Berry: Yeah, how did you keep track of your days in Vietnam? Did you start a short timer's calendar or anything?

Malewski: No, I knew exactly right in my head every day [coughing] we didn't have no calendar, we just knew that every day was a certain day, and every day would be one day off. And uh, a certain day we had a convoy and that was going to Biên Hòa and I was supposed to--was for some reason it was a jeep and the guys on the unit would take turns driving this jeep to Xuân Lộc for some reason. I don't know what the reason was for but the day I was supposed to go and drive this jeep—they said I didn't have to because somebody else is gonna do it. So I was assigned to a truck and he was driving—he had ammo on it—we got to [inaudible] and the jeep came back, and we were supposed to switch but the lieutenant said to “Stay in”—I didn't have to—“just stay in the truck” So we drove off in a convoy. We got just about to Biên Hòa and it was a nice sunny day, and I was sitting up there and all of a sudden I heard some--a big bang—that was roughly about a month after I was in-country. There was a big bang and I looked up and I seen a puff of black smoke, and I thought--I didn't think too much of it. Then everybody kind of slowed down and it happened again, a big puff of black smoke and all of a sudden AK47's opened up on us. You could hear them hitting the side of the trucks and everything. The guy sitting next to me, I don't remember what his name was--I had an M16 in my hand and he kept yelling to me, "Shoot! Shoot!" I looked around and I couldn't see nothing to shoot at, and he said, "Shoot at anything, just stick it out the window and shoot.” On our clips we had two twenty rounds we had them taped together. The firing was coming from his side, so I stuck the M16 right under his chin then and I emptied, must have been sixty, eighty rounds out the window.

Berry: Fully automatic, or . . .

Malewski: It was fully automatic, and I couldn't hear for--I couldn't hear nothing for about a month after that. Top of the canvas was flapping but then the--they tried to—the convoy had just about stopped, but they, what they did was, they hit the--they blew the water pump—and all the firing. What they did at first was confined to the jeep. And they stopped the jeep and the lieutenant jumped out, and his driver and they started running down the road and the driver jumped down out the side of the running board of the truck, and the lieutenant ran down the road and kept the convoy going. And he was in the—I mean there was bullets flying and he was running down cause if you stop the convoy would stop and they'd be clear picking and—they called it a killing zone. They'd only fired in one area and try to stop the convoy and once the convoy stops and they've got— but this lieutenant ran down the road and he kept everybody going. We got out of it. We got about

two miles down the road and whenever we were traveling we always had to--we always had a unit, like we had A Troop, B Troop, C Troop, and one of the units would always be close by in case we had a problem. Well, they come converging on that area but we got out of the ambush and there was a village on the--it was a short distance away you could almost see it, and that's where the NVA had set up. They'd circled the village and they--we supported the 1st Division with armaments. And they, and the battle, that went on for, I think, for two days. And uh, the ARVNs [Army of the Republic of Vietnam], we were supporting the First Division, the ARVN. They fought there for two days, they had air—F-15 strikes come in and we were just—we diverted our supplies to Bien Hoa. It was a short distance away and we could see the jets coming in blowing the place--blowing the place out—hooches would fly, trees an' everything would fly up in the air. For a few minutes it'd be real quiet and a few minutes later they'd be shooting again. I didn't know the guy personally, but there was a one--he wasn't one of us, but we were stationed, there was a bird, and some of these guys would--this guy had a camera and was going to try to take a picture of it. And they had stray bullets coming in, but he stuck up and went to take a picture of the F18 coming in and he got shot. I believe he didn't make it and uh--well it's like I said, a couple of days and we left, went back to base camp and then--we got back to base camp and just, on the average, we just went on convoys for--off and on we'd go to Black Cave, Canyon City [sp??] go to--

Berry: Right after this combat that you experienced, what did you think and feel about the experience?

Malewski: Oh, when I --when he first told me to shoot, I couldn't picture myself shooting anybody, because I came from Wisconsin, went deer hunting, rabbit hunting and happily I never shot anybody. And uh, it wasn't bad, uh, it took me a few minutes to realize you was—to shoot at somebody but after a while, it was no problem. If you see they were trying to shoot you, it was not problem at all.

Berry: Did you ever see the enemy that you were shooting at, or -

Malewski: Very seldom we did. There was times we went through a couple of months--most of the roads that we went down, they had them--they called 'em Rome plows, and they'd plow the sides out, and uh, they'd have the roads swept so most of the time it was pretty secure. But there was times where they would shoot from the jungle and that.

Berry: Were you subjected to booby-traps in the road, also, or just small arms fire from the sides?

Malewski: Back then we didn't--well, we didn't call it thunder run, uh, everybody'd just jump in the truck, went down the convoy and they'd call it the--we'd just call it thunder run. We'd start shifting, first all, most time, the first thing we did you got in your truck--well I did, was I drove the gas truck. We always keep a roll of duct tape on the--and you'd tape your foot to the gas pump and uh, so you got going and most time when you started shifting, you just held it to the floor anyway, but if they started shooting you, or if somebody hit a mine or that, your leg would shake so much that you couldn't keep the truck going. But the duct tape mind, you'd take your hand and you'd press down on your leg and it kept the truck going.

Berry: Wow! And the object, I assume, was to try and get the vehicles out of the killing area and--

Malewski: Well, if you hit them, no matter what kind—most of the time when you're on a convoy you drove the [inaudible] quickly 'cause they always slitting it. We had canvas tops and there was a couple of times guys got blown out of it, out of the canvas, right out of the truck. They survived because they got thrown clear. But most of the time they seemed to give you roughly two to three seconds, two seconds--once you ran over the mine, they didn't have these mines like they have today. They had a--actually what they had was a bomb, a hundred or fifty pound bomb or something like that and then they had a det cord and then they had some bamboo wood with a blasting cap between it and you had to run over that piece of wood or that two slabs of wood and it would press that blasting cap. And it would set that det cord off and then the det cord would set the mine off.

Berry: So it was the weight of the vehicle that set--

Malewski: --the weight yeah, we didn't have to worry about the way they got 'em today.

Berry: Yeah. But what was the purpose of these convoys? Were you bringing supplies from Bien Hoa back to the base camp?

Malewski: Well, we were --wherever the troops are at we would take supplies to the--troops would have like base camps set up or little areas and most times we'd take them right to the--I would take gas right to the--to the unit. Moving in a certain area, and they'd be at a certain point.

Berry: So you were taking supplies from the 11th Cav base camp out to the field units of the 11th--

Malewski: Yes.

Berry: Okay.

Malewski: And uh, sometimes I would take gas out there even by myself, sometimes, and uh, they'd give us--like highway one that was out of Lai Khê they would send me - just me - alone and they'd give you so many minutes to get from one place to another place and I had one guy with me and a machine gun, M16, and we'd take off and all you did was hold your foot to the gas pedal and just go. And if you didn't make it there, then a lot of times, they'd check up on you. But most of the time we--

Berry: How large were these convoys from the standpoint of the number of vehicles involved?

Malewski: Well, we moved our unit one—most of the time they averaged around I would say roughly, fifteen. But we had—when our unit moved from Bien Hoa to Xuan Loc that was just a few miles from the Cambodia border--our whole regiment moved. And I would say our convoy—our convoy was roughly five miles long. That was counting the whole regiment. And it was as far as you could see. We had tanks, and -

Berry: Now, when you say regiment, you mean the 11th Cavalry regiment?

Malewski: Yes. Our whole unit, A, B Troops--I was in the First Squad, and the First Squad consisted of A, B, and C Troop.

Berry: And you were assigned to the headquarters?

Malewski: Well, I was assigned to headquarters troop--headquarters troop was more or less uh, connected with the--was with headquarters but, we --we had a different branch. It was a different branch--we were in charge of transportation mostly. and supplying the troops, and that. And A Troop--A Troop, that was just a unit of tanks with their--and then B Troop had so many tanks in there. So many tanks and sheridans. And uh, each unit . . .

Berry: Okay, can you tell us something about the living conditions in the base camp where--?

Malewski: Our living conditions, they weren't the best--uh, but the worst I can remember is during the rainy season. We used to have a tent--just a little tent with a hole and uh, it had holes all through the top and when it was raining, it would leak so you had to actually build a tent inside of another tent. This one time it was pouring--and during the rainy season it was another thing--during the rainy season there was--we had a lot of rats. The biggest rats you ever saw, and uh, and in order to lay your--we had a little cot--and in order to lay or sit in the cot, you would

always grab some kind of ammo or some wood--some wood so your legs wouldn't sink in the mud. And during the rainy season, uh, the rats and they would get inside of these skids or under your cot and they screw up --

[break in recording][00:31:37]

Berry: Okay Robert, we were talking about uh, living conditions in your base camp. And you were telling us about the tents that you lived in?

Malewski: Oh, most of the time, uh we had tents, with sand bags around it. And it wasn't the cleanest, it was livable-- but during the rainy season it was really a handicap because rainy season was hard to stay dry and uh, we used to put cots--we had just a little cot that we had and then uh, you'd stick something under the legs so that we wouldn't sink in the mud and uh, the rats we used to at night--

Berry: How large were these tents?

Malewski: Sometimes we didn't have a tent. Sometimes--the tents were sometimes uh, twenty by twenty. And everybody--you could stick your other bed in--your other cot in--it had so many holes in it that you had to throw the poncho over the top of it to stay dry because the ceiling--the, the tents weren't very uh, very good--they had holes in.

Berry: And how many guys would live in these tents?

Malewski: I would say roughly--sometimes you can make your own. You can make one out of your poncho. This was when we were out in the field. Most times we were like in base camp--they had your own tents--they had nice tents. But out in the field--if you're out in the field lot of times you had to make your own. We made them out of poncho liners or uh--

Berry: Okay, tell us about the field and the main conditions. Where did you guys spend the night and that sort of thing?

Malewski: Well, I when I went to--I'd be delivering out to the troops, a lot of times I wouldn't make it back the night before, so I had to stay out there, but if you didn't have a place to sleep, you just--I just slept on the ground. And uh, the next morning--at that time, you slept good because you were tired, so no matter where you slept, you slept. You could sleep any place and uh, you'd sleep on the ground or else--a couple of times during the rainy season, I went out to--I believe it was--I can't remember was it A Troop or B Troop, and uh--deliver gas to them to a tanker chief out there, and uh when I pulled in, I'd just tell them, "Fill what you need" And then take the truck and pull it away from the--in case we get hit by

something. They don't want it to sit in the middle of the--so I pull it a hundred feet out or so, park it. And it wasn't a very good place to spend the night. So I'd come back and all the--all the--we had tanks and personnel carriers, but most of the guys that were assigned just had nothing to sleep--just crawling in and sleep their self. So I got to walk around and you'd sleep on the ground, but one--a couple of times if they had a bridge, a bridge is like a big tank. If you went across a creek or stream they'd put this bridge. I'd sleep on the--I'd crawl up and sleep on the fender. But you never wanted to fall off--fall off the fender because it was a eight, or six, eight foot drop to the ground. And uh, the--basically it was just trying to sleep where ever you could. And, uh-

Berry: How about the food in the field? What was that like?

Malewski: Well, most time we had, uh, one hot meal a day--they'd fly in it with a helicopter--a Chinook. So we had--I can't--it was okay. We just had--we had C Rations and the first time I ate C Rations I didn't think I was ever going to make--I didn't like to eat my food cold, but after a while. The only thing I didn't want to eat was chocolate. We had chocolate candy bars and uh, on convoys we were on we'd throw them out the windows to the kids. The Vietnamese kids, and the kids that were standing along the side, they'd pick them up and throw them back at you.

Berry: Did--did you have a particular C Ration that you didn't like all that much? Ham and lima beans has a tendency to uh, brings back memories for most people?

Malewski: I had lots--I like spaghetti and meatballs. I could eat them all the time. But uh--

Berry: And when you were out in the field, uh, the night time security was provided by the unit you were supplying, is that the way it worked?

Malewski: Nope. You are on guard duty, pretty much--when I was out with A Troop, or something like that, most time, they just paroled--they took their tanks and they made like a--like cowboys used to do, make a big circle. And then one guy would stay on top, all the tanks, and pulled guard duty. When I went to our regular main base camp, like Blackhorse--when we moved to uh, the unit, that was toward end of 7--or '69 we moved to Lai Khê [inaudible]. We pulled guard duty, for every night just about. Every night, we were on guard duty. We--there was two guys on top and two guys in the--most times it was like three guys, and you just--some of the base--some of the places we went, they had bunkers set up and we--they'd tell you're on guard duty, you're on bunker so and so. We'd go out there, but you never went down inside the bunker, because the rats used to be in there. And if you fell asleep you had to sleep--you had guys that were so tired they'd go down in the bunker and all they had was a--a piece of plywood and I know of two

people that the rats would bitten them in the neck or some like that, so we never went inside the bunker. We slept up on top, just sat up and slept that way. And then, sometimes you didn't get very much sleep back then, what we would do the next morning you'd have to go out on the convoys and they'd talk and they'd tell you about drugs and stuff, but my unit, the 11th Cav, we didn't. We had some marijuana but it wasn't nothing like it was portrayed on T.V. And I watched--when I first came home about all these guys on drugs and coke--you could buy a lot of that stuff. You could buy a three pound bag of marijuana for two dollars. You could buy cocaine and all that other stuff, but the guys I was with--I knew a few that smoked marijuana but I never--I had chances but I never--I never smoked marijuana because I knew if you stayed away from that certain bunch of guys that did, they never bothered you, but if you smoked it once, they were all "Let's try it again". And I never—to this day, I never, never uh, smoked marijuana or did any drugs in Vietnam. You'd come home and you'd watch T.V. programs for [inaudible] made up these movies. But they portrayed it that everybody was on drugs.

Berry: Were there some individuals in your unit that did regularly use drugs, or-?

Malewski: Uh um, marijuana was a bit--and there were drug, you know there were [inaudible] a couple of cigarettes and there was something like--and some guys that did guard duty or something like that knew that you shouldn't do that, but they were scared, so they figured if they smoked a little--one guy he was in a bunker--he was quite a ways away and he told three or four guys that if he was smoking--what you'd call a joint or something--but if you lit up a cigarette when you was on guard duty, you could see that cigarette a mile away. And when we told him, a couple of times, and finally one night he--one shot was fired and um, he must have—they cup it in their hand when they smoke it, and he got shot in the shoulder. He sur-he lived and that, they busted him out. I don't know where he went afterwards. As far as drugs and stuff, I never witnessed--I seen some--there was some stuff that I saw where in other outfits, [inaudible] tunnel rats and stuff [inaudible] I didn't know if you want to--take a patch and they put on their forehead and they'd tell them to--what we called 'em a "gook" a VC to make sure that they knew who killed their fellow. They'd take a Blackhorse patch, they'd put it on their forehead take the butt of their gun with an empty shell and then the body would rot with our patch still hang on their forehead. And uh, after a while they had prisoners that they captured and they made everybody take all of their patches off. [inaudible] there were no patches on when we were out in the field at all because in case you were ever captured, or caught, they'd recognize--we stayed in the Third Corps. Third Corps is mostly--the main job was to protect Saigon.

What we did, we just kept going around Saigon. The crew chief came in [inaudible] and Lai Khê and it was like deer hunting. You'd go in there and in certain areas chase 'em out, kill a few, and three months later, you'd go back do the same thing. It was just keeping Saigon secure. And uh, lot of times we just uh--I remember going through rubber plantations and they were kind of a eerie place to go through rubber plantations, because it was like going through a forest and uh, it was dark, it was kind of sunny, but you had the sun shining through you. Lot of guys, I never had this problem, but guys that had uh, rode in tanks sometimes, and they'd fire at us through trees and stuff. Sometimes they'd fire at us and guys with personal carriers would go up a tree and fire, fall, they'd stop and jump off. But uh—and if they shot any kind of rockets in on you and uh, they blew off above the trees. So it was nice and shady and then, it was kind of nice. And uh, one mountain, we saw—one mountain, it was the Black Virgin Mountain and uh, it was in the 3rd Corps and it was the biggest mountain that I've ever seen. It was just about, just before dark and we were moving along the road and the unit was moving and I looked up and seen, and that's one mountain that most of the guys in the 11th Cav knew about. Black Virgin Mountain, it was a huge mountain and it was pretty and it was--seemed like it should be in some other country. It was, uh—

Berry: Did you make any lasting friendships while you were in Vietnam?

Malewski: With the people?

Berry: Yes, sir.

Malewski: No. We didn't, we didn't, I dunno we didn't socialize with the people. Most times, we had on these convoys, seemed like they were always, you didn't know if they were good or bad, and uh, we had--they looked nice and friendly. The kids, well the kids--you couldn't help to like the kids. And uh, [voice breaks-long pause]

Berry: Just take your time, Robert.

Malewski: [Long pause] At one time we're—we're going on this highway--one little girl run out. Guys were throwing stuff out of their truck and the little girl picked up, I believe--she came over and picked up this candy or--she musta only been like three, four years old and as she stood up, a jeep come over the hill at a high rate of speed. Most of your vehicles that were moving, were going pretty fast and uh, I remember standing--she stood up and the jeep hit her and she ricocheted off the wall about three times. And then our convoy was going down the road we had to pull over--and she was only like five feet from their truck, and we never stopped.

They kept right on going. And uh, we got about fifty yards [voice breaks] and uh, they called her mammasan [sp??]--she went out and picked her up and I looked in the mirror and I could see her –

But you also seen kids over there--if you ever asked any of them how old they were, you ask them some kid three times --he gives you three different ages because I don't think they knew how old they were. They never had birthdays or nothing. And then, uh, we--sometimes we'd be driving down the road and uh, we had a pole for security reasons because we had a low loadage[??] and uh, they'd climb out ahead of us and uh, check the road out and we'd wait until the road was clean and then we kept on going. The little kids would come up and they'd beg for your cigarettes and I got pictures -- the kids were maybe eight, nine -- some of the guys -- during the raining season, it would be real muddy and they'd throw a package of cigarettes in the ditch. The little kids used to go in mud up to their waist just to get--get them cigarettes. But uh, and then sometimes -- on the road, too-- we'd pull over and they'd holler at ya--I don't know where they would come from, but these um, they'd walk right up and they'd try to sell you a Coke-coca cola, bottles of pop, switch blades, just about anything and uh, we were always told not to buy nothing to drink because they'd drill 'em. I only heard it happened one time, but they'd drill a hole in the bottom of the bottle and [inaudible] fill it with glass and then plug the bottom hole up and then they'd sell the guys a bottle of coke and I think back, you'd had to be crazy to buy it. Sometimes you were thirsty, and an ice cold Coke or a bottle of pop--

Berry: Did anybody brief you on the notion that it probably wasn't a wise thing to buy these sorts of things?

Malewski: They told us never to--yeah--not to do it, and none of my friends or any of us did it. But somebody in my unit that we heard did it and he survived. He had real severe--he had real severe stomach pains, but so when you look at them, you don't—they act friendly but you don't know if they're friendly or not. And some of our ground packs[??]--I was in ground packs[??] but I was always about a hundred yards back. Our main troops were up in front, then they had the, the back up in case they got through there and they had the back up. You could see--you could see, I was only in two of them and they weren't that big of a deal because we had the fire power and everything. Uh, they call them--what they tried to do is "Sappers"--they'd call them "Sappers" -- they'd try to come through. You didn't uh, [inaudible] and what they'd try to do they'd head for the airfields and they'd try to blow up your planes and helicopters and that. They--there was kids--like they were thirteen, fourteen years old and they're all blown up because

they were trying to get through the wires and try to kill you. But you couldn't really build a friendship with them, you didn't know if they were good or bad.

Berry: How about friendships with the guys you served with. Did you make any lasting friendships with your buddies that --?

Malewski: Well, as I said that Jim Crosswell[sp??] but when you're in Vietnam -- at that time I wished I'd have kept every name and I took a picture of everybody that have been good. And uh--

Berry: When you were driving one of these trucks or serving as--riding shotgun on the truck did you work with the same person all of the time, or you would --?

Malewski: We were in the same group, yeah pretty much. Most of the time, we drove-- unless he was a new guy, most of the time there was only one of us. One time I can recall, that uh, we was stationed at uh, Củ Chi and uh, ten, eleven o'clock at night, it was pitch dark, and we was there--I don't know who the guys were. But uh, we had a--they got me and another guy and we mounted a machine gun above us and uh, we left Củ Chi and they had me and they put--our unit was moving just outside Củ Chi and I don't know how many miles or nothing, but we had to go there and meet this unit. B Troop, or one of the troops. They had a tank retriever that needed gas. A tank retriever, I believe held close to three hundred gallons of gas. So it was like ten o'clock at night, the lieutenant or somebody got us and said we had to go out there, so we loaded up the truck with three hundred gallons of gasoline and when we left we had a jeep with a machine gun in front, and a jeep in back of us with a machine gun. And they told us that when we got to this base--some of the villages over there, they--they had a village and they had a fencing around it. Then we had big towers with actually with the Sheridan tank light that we, that we used on our tanks they had mounted up there. So they told us that when we get to the village, there's going to be a great big light shining on you. Get out of the truck with your hands up. So you were driving but with all your driving--all your driving was with little red lights on the truck so that you couldn't--you could just barely see the jeep, because the jeep had the red lights. And we'd come out there and we all of a sudden somebody stops and maybe ten minutes--and we stopped and all of a sudden, this great big--it was like a prison light came on and uh, put the light on you and yelled at us to get out and put your hands up. Started walking out, with our hands up. A little kid about, I don't know he must have been--he looked like twelve years old or--he had an M16 pointed at ya. We shining--we kept saying, "G.I, American G.I." Finally the other guy walked by and opened the gates and let us go through the village and the troops didn't--the tank retriever, he was--we didn't go through it. So we had to sit up on

the--it was a nice night, so we sat up on top, not on the top--there's a top certainly, it was like a canvas on the side where the gas tank was. They had these old hootchess[sp??], these old houses and on the street, they had a--it looked like they had a mayonnaise jar with a candle in it. And uh, I thought this was a good time to get rid of my C-Rations that—the one's you didn't like. We always had them under the seat and all over the truck, so we took them out and gathered them up and flipped them suckers out--right out from the window. We had fifty-nine gallon drums with a lid on it on [inaudible]. I guess that was their drinking water or were -- there were small candles in the mayonnaise jar and we threw all this stuff out and that chocolate and everything and we had to be--these rats came from nowhere and they were like three feet from us eating all of this candy and chocolate and stuff. There was rats all over the place. They ate pretty much everything in just a few minutes and then they were all gone. And uh, the candles were burning and all them rats all over the ground. And the rats were -- they were just about a medium size cat. And uh, the other thing I was going to say was, too, we had our unit, we had a dog named Rebel and he was this friendship that everybody--I got pictures of him and that.

Berry: Was this a mascot of the group of guys that you served with, or?

Malewski: The dog was--somebody got him as a pup over there. And uh, it was our--as long as he--guys were--we couldn't get him home. We could have got him home--we were trying to get him home, but over there, you couldn't bring him home. And uh, I always wonder what happened to him. He was like whenever we moved, or anybody--there was always somebody in charge of of him. He was only a small dog and he--he'd always jump, he knew exactly -- [inaudible] he'd go with anybody. And he was--his name was Rebel, and uh, matter-of-fact, when I first came back from the service, after three, four years, and I had a dog named "Rebel", and she got ran over by the ice cream guy or something like that. It was a beagle, I believe it was a beagle—but, I had her for a couple of years and it got ran over and I never--I never had another dog after that. But, uh --

Berry: What kept you going while all this was happening?

Malewski: At night--I tell you, when you're—you're only nineteen, twenty, I think, you're scared for a little while, but if you stay in that atmosphere long enough, uh, you uh, you get used to it. And you just, uh--

Berry: It just becomes your normal activity--

Malewski: It just--

Berry: What did you guys do to entertain yourself--you and your buddies? Did you have access to radios or anything or-?

Malewski: Well, we, in the morning, we had a--we had uh Saigon radio station. And it always had songs on--always Good Morning. And we had one guy that's all, and he didn't want to have him on the radio. And uh, I came out one morning, Good Morning Vietnam was like that, and he told me [inaudible] the whole radio. So every morning, they'd say, "Good Morning" and then he--I don't know what happened to the radio, but he smashed it. But uh, we pretty [inaudible], but we never really had -- in the 1st Cav, I believe it was [inaudible] and they had like a little kiosk and we could get beer and that, but most times it—they didn't let other units come in because they only had so much for their self. I remember one time uh, it was Christmas before I left--it must have been around the first of December, two months --

Berry: So it would have been Christmas '69?

Malewski: '69, yeah. Uh, we were going to--we were stationed at _____??. and we were going to have a little Christmas party, so about two months before that, two months before that, everybody started sending from home, sending all our [inaudible], it took us about two months, and we had just uh, a variety of stuff, brandy and the beer over there was pretty good beer, but very seldom because you were out in the field, you was always so hot, and the cans, and this certain Christmas, was just before I left, we had a little Christmas party, and uh, we were stationed at—well, we were stationed at _____??. and we needed some 7-Up and we had three, four cans of 7-Up and we never had any, we didn't have no ice. So we had to--the day before we had to scrounge up some ice and then we had to try preserve a little bit of it that so you could have some [inaudible] but you if you got--the way the Vietnamese would serve it--they'd but it in these hootches, and uh, as we went through the village, the day before that we went through a village and we uh, [inaudible] in the meantime the kids were--somebody had to stand up on the floor—on the floor board because on these trucks they had there--this little box where you stuck your jacks and stuff, and uh, the kids and that were all-- would run along side the truck and then they would uh, open up and throw everything out and the other kids would pick up and take off running. They, it happened that one-- the day before that, and was--we jumped out to retrieve it and the convoy stopped for some reason. So they asked us this one Papasan[??], "We need some ice." So he comes in with a little chunk of ice, and we would have never made it back to our base camp with. So we said, "No, we need more." So he seen him take off, so we watched him, and we all took off after him. We opened--we opened up like a bamboo building and it looked like boats in there.

We started digging around in there, and sure there was blocks of ice, and so we helped ourself. We had all the ice that we wanted. And got back and only had about half of it left, and that night we used that ice and uh, cooked Jiffy-Pop. I remember cooking some Jiffy-Pop. And then there was [inaudible] and the handle you pull out and C-4, the plastic explosive, but uh, you just took a little tiny piece and you put it on the Jiffy-Pop and it--we were having a good time. And uh, we didn't have no guard duty or nothing that night. It was about eight of us and uh, I don't know what time it was but these--our cots were like--we didn't have a tent, it was just break your cot out, and you just slept like that right out in the open. It was nice, we weren't completely drunk, but we were buzzed up—sitting there, laying down on the cot and you could see the stars out and all of a sudden, they started shooting rockets at us. And everybody's yelling, "Incoming! Incoming!" And few minutes later, we felt like getting up, and we went down to uh, we had to go down to a underground bunker, it was pitch dark and I, most of the time, they only shot maybe three, four rockets—or maybe two rockets. And then they'd be gone because they didn't wanna get caught before we were shooting them. The helicopters [inaudible] So it was--must of been--it was pitch dark and we went underground, in this bunker and about three of them, and after a while, it was clear—so we starting coming up and we, I don't know--we sit there for a few minutes and soon everybody took off and we could--rats started jumping on us. It was [inaudible] down in this bunker and I was--I was up and out of that bunker so fast--it was about fifteen steps to get out of there and you could hear it squeaking, and everybody--there, we got out and uh, we never--we slept on the ground that night. That was a good place to sleep and when we woke up and it was--the sun was out, and we got up and that was our Christmas party. It was --

Berry: Did you have a chance to go out on R and R while you were in Vietnam?

Malewski: Yes, I ended up going to uh, Bangkok, Thailand.

Berry: Now, did you get to choose Bangkok or --?

Malewski: Well, we wanted, we really wanted to go to Bangkok. [Inaudible] I got [inaudible] pretty close to the end--it was short. They told you you could have R and R and uh, I just happened to pick out Bangkok, Thailand. And I, I wanted to go to Australia, but I couldn't find no--the Australians were, they were your friends. We'd seen Australians that were hitch-hiking and everything, we always picked them up on the truck or something, because they were always the-- they were always the, a good time to be with. I went to R and R and met about six of them or so and I was with them for an hour and it seemed like I knew them from my whole life. They'd take their fathers and their mothers and their sisters and

show them all the pictures and they'd party all night. And I had to leave the next morning at seven o'clock and I got back to the barracks about two and then I woke up around six and they were just coming in. They never slept all night. And I can always remember, they always had plenty of this and plenty of that and they were always a good group. For--

Berry: For--

Malewski: You know, for other foreigners--they were not foreigners, but they were a good bunch of people.

Berry: Okay, is there anything else you'd like to tell us about your experience in Vietnam?

Malewski: Uh, I know that uh, the third of January, I came home. I left Vietnam, at that time, I left --I left about the third and uh, I got home the third of January back to the States. But, uh, cleared out of Vietnam about a day before that. I went to Biên Hòa and we to Biên Hòa I got--it was kind of hard, missing all the guys, and that. But --

Berry: When did you actually leave Vietnam, this would be like January of '70?

Malewski: Yeah, sixty-- '69 - '70. It was the first of the year, I think. It was January, first, we left. I got home the third of January. We got to Fort Dix, New Jersey, and uh, it was kind of a--you know, where I got in there, when I left for Vietnam, got over to Fort Dix, New Jersey and uh, the guys that were there, the army guys, I can remember [inaudible] and we got in about two o'clock in the morning, and all these army guys from Germany, different--they actually stepped, stepped to the side, and if we were processed--we could either process out, or sleep that night. They told us, "If you want to process, you can probably be out of here by four o'clock in the afternoon." These guys from Germany, they'd see us coming and they'd always step out, and shook our hands and let us go ahead of them.

Berry: So they respected the fact that you were returning from Vietnam? Now were you assigned to another unit after you left Vietnam?

Malewski: No, when I left Vietnam, I got to Fort Dix, New Jersey and got home, and uh, I had less than five months left in the service—in the service, so anytime you had less than five months, you could [inaudible] out of there. And after I left, I got home the third of January--fourth--I was home a month--I took quinine pills for malaria and uh, because you had to sign a piece of paper saying that you would take them. That you would take quinine for thirty days and that--actually, I had

malaria. I got it March 16, I went in with malaria in the hospital. And uh, I was in--I had malaria for uh, couple of years--even though I gave blood.

[Break in recording][01:03:25]

Berry: Okay, this is Tape Two, Side A. We are continuing the interview with Bob. And Bob, you were talking uh about leaving Fort Dix, when you were uh discharged from the army and then returning home. Can you tell us something about how that went?

Malewski: Well, I left the third of January and like I said, we got in there--we flew back from Vietnam, got in about two o'clock in the afternoon--two o'clock in the morning and uh, the guys from Germany and that, and uh the army guys and that--I can remember they treated us--they'd step to the side and let us go ahead of them and process out. And I--it was like four o'clock and uh, I think there was four of us, and got our flight to go home. We had this guy--this taxi guy pull up with a station wagon and uh, we all had like a couple of bags--couple of bags full of army stuff. And uh, we all went to get into the station wagon and uh, we couldn't get your duffle bags in. There wasn't enough room for the guys and their duffle bags. So we took out our duffle bags and [inaudible] place right there by Fort Dix. We left our duffle bags. We took what we needed, and we left the bags sitting right there at a place next to the wall where you could leave your belongings. We left everything there, there must of been five bags and got into the [inaudible]. He kind of waited for us and we came back and jumped back in the station wagon and took us out to the airport and we gave him. We were a little--we were running late and uh, we offered him some extra money--if he got us there on time because we were afraid our plane was gonna-- and he got us to the airport. We were alive when we got there, and he got his extra money and we got home.

Berry: And you were in uniform when you flew back home?

Malewski: Yeah. All we had was, we weren't just--we just had a uniform on, we didn't -- ribbons, we just basically [inaudible] and uh, I get back to Green Bay and uh -- I don't know, it must of been--it was dark outside and uh, we were with this other guy. Two army guys and I don't know where they were from, I don't--I don't think they were from this Vietnam or anything. I don't. But they--but as you got off the plane, the stewardess were shaking your hand and you know. I just walked right by them. I walked out and got home--my mother and my dad was there. We got home and there [inaudible] from Vietnam and I was talking about the guys and --

Berry: Did your parents meet you at the airport?

Malewski: Yes they did. Uh, it was dark out but, I don't know what time it was. It was fairly late at night--I got home and I got home and just started uh going out every night. And then uh, right after, 'bout maybe a week later--it was always on the news, Vietnam. It was always on the TV. And [inaudible] on the TV, there was actually guys that I knew from [inaudible]. We had met in Cambodia. And uh, you could actually see them. [Inaudible] and I recognized a few, but you couldn't really recognize them, 'cause they [inaudible] I thought that--my unit--the tank--11th Cav was one of the tank units in Cambodia. And uh, it was kind of --we hoped to be there so uh, I went home. Well, I was at home and I started going out a lot, but I met uh, I met uh Jim Canoor [sp??], Bill Moore [sp??], Jerry Osley [sp??] were all back from Vietnam.

Berry: These were friends in high school?

Malewski: Well, kids I--people I know. Mostly from high school. They all came back and we all started going out every night. And uh, I remember one night I stayed home and my mother thought I was sick. She made me go to the hospital. She thought something was wrong with me, and uh, I just --I just came home and I heard the [inaudible] and uh, I think it was--and uh, we'd go out every night and then the sixteenth of March, I went to a birthday party at-- I think it was at my brother's. He lived in an apartment and uh, I got home that next morning, quite late and uh, I wasn't--I thought it was a hangover, but it ended up I had 106.7 temperature. And my mother come up there--she was—she worked at Schweiger's and uh, for some reason she wasn't working that day and she come home about noon, about twelve o'clock and she said she came to see how I was and she said that I didn't look very good. And I said, "Well, it's just a hangover." And uh, finally she took me to the doctors, and the doctor was Dr. [inaudible] and he took my temperature and uh, the next thing I knew, I was in the hospital. They put me in the hospital and they put me in a stainless steel bed, it was kind of a tub. They packed with ice. I was only in the hospital for maybe, I recall maybe three days. I was back pretty normal. I had -- I came home and then I had to go the VA and uh, fill out papers and I had to go down to Milwaukee for physicals and that. And I went to the Appleton courthouse on one occasion and I walked in and they were protesting--college kids from uh, Lawrence College. They were out in front of--out in front of the courthouse, they had signs that protested. So I walked--I parked and I kind of walked over--I didn't go by them, I walked to the—to the courthouse and I knew--I knew some of the county cops back then and--the county cops [inaudible] and that, we were all good friends. It wasn't like today--like they's always out to arrest you—to arrest you for something. These guys would pull you over and that and just give you a match for your cigarette and shoot the shit with you or

something like that. And uh, they seen me coming so one was over by the door and I walked in. They said "hi" to me and everything. I walked back out, they knew I just come back from Vietnam. And I went to the VA, because I had to go and get a VA Card or something like that. I had to go to Milwaukee for that because I had malaria. I walked back out and uh, I see the guys protesting and so I figured I'll walk over and see what they're up to. So I walked over and the minute I started walking over there the room, I saw the police officer--walk--I seen him coming from behind and uh, I walked up to the guys and they must of thought I was going to--uh, I kind of--to this day, I wish I would took [inaudible], but I would have got arrested but I didn't. But I asked them, I said, "You're walking with these signs. What are you guys doing?" And they said, "We're protesting the Vietnam War." They said we heard you guys are going to [inaudible] I must of mentioned that I was--that I came back from Vietnam. [Inaudible] We were stationed at _____(??) and every night for a year, you could always hear one or two rockets every night. And it was --you know--it dind't always hurt--sometime it didn't hurt nothing, but it [inaudible]. But these guys were in college, college, they're protesting. I said, "What are you protesting about?" And they didn't actually give me a reason. They told me that they were protesting because they didn't have no classes that, in the morning.

Berry: Did they know you were a Vietnam veteran?

Malewski: Uh, I think they did. I don't remember if I told them or not, but then, they could tell. I think, now that you said it, I think I told them that actually, I'm not sure, but somehow they did. But their only reason for protesting was because they didn't have no classes and I think the people--one person I despise to this day is Jane Fonda. And I can't even watch, it makes me sick to even watch her on TV to this day. When she made the film of Hanoi and [inaudible] and probably have a few words with her. But I'm looking forward to that day.

Berry: How did your action with the uh, Veteran's Association go?

Malewski: Uh--

Berry: The VA, the Veteran's Affairs.

Malewski: Well, I went up there and uh, a few times and to this day I could still remember, I--at that time I had malaria and I think it's a good deal. And uh, I went to the VA--there was guys in uh, they're probably dead now, but they were in a gurney and another guy in a wheel chair that I talked to. He didn't, had no arms and legs, he had a stick in his mouth mounted to his chin that ran his wheel chair. And another guy, he was on a gurney, but I don't remember if [inaudible] but two guys I

remember and uh, now that I'm think of, I had malaria, because it was like havin' the flu I didn't think it was no big deal. These guys was sitting, especially--you take your arms and legs off, its remarkable and [inaudible] and I walked out of there and uh, these guys spent-spent their whole life in that hospital. And people probably never--just forgot about them.

Berry: Were you assigned a disability by the VA?

Malewski: I was for--I believe at that time I got—it wasn't very much, it was seventy-five dollars a month or something like that. And I did it for a couple of years, but then they cancelled it because—they told me I would have to have a attack at least once every six months or something like that. So they discontinued it. I haven't had any—I give blood and all that—it's so [inaudible].

Berry: So you're--you're no longer receiving a disability payment from the VA—

Malewski: No, I--I only received it for a couple of years.

Berry: Did you have any injuries at all when you were in Vietnam besides the illness?

Malewski: Scratches, no big deal.

Berry: Okay. What did you do after you returned from Vietnam and came back home and kind of settled down? What did you—did you go back to school or begin working or?

Malewski: When I first came back, I think the first--I left off when I—I left Vietnam, I left off because back at that time, you could party a little bit because you were eighteen years old. They had eighteen year old bars. And [inaudible] like I was saying, [inaudible] there was like a dozen of us, kind of screwed around--kind of hung together and every night we'd go out together. And when I came out of the service, we kind of--lot of guys I knew, things changed. And after a year and nine months, I came back and all the ones were married or gone. You know. There was a group of us and we used to go out and uh, well, just about every night and uh, I didn't have a car or anything. I bought uh, I bought a motorcycle and when I first got—this was because you really had no money. And uh, it turned out that there was like three, four of us. And what we would do on a Friday night, back then, you could go to a car dealer. And uh tell him you were interested in buying a car, and they'd give you a car for a weekend. So, I'd go down there, there was this one car dealer—[inaudible]—and tell him I was interested in this car, and I'd like to drive it for the weekend, and see if I want it. And he'd say, "Yeah, take it for a weekend." So they'd give you a car for Friday, Saturday and I'd have it back on

Monday. Then someone else would do it, he'd always go to some other dealer. We'd do that for--off and on— [inaudible]. I didn't have enough money, so had to save up the following year and buy a car and uh, meantime I met my wife. She was from London. And uh, she was like nineteen years old or something like that. And uh, [inaudible] something like that. And uh, ended up getting married, before that, when I first got--when I first come out, I was looking for a job and I couldn't really find a job. And then I put my name in for a—I signed up for a [inaudible] in Appleton—construction. And I put my name in and application papers. Before that, before you went in the service, you never --you couldn't get a job because nobody wanted to give you a job because they knew you was going in the service. When you came back you had to keep all your seniority. So you couldn't get a job before--before I went in the service, I got with this uh, uncle of mine. He was paving with blacktop. He started a new business and he had all of us that were going to Vietnam, he hired us all. We'd do blacktop but, he was one of the guys, too and uh, so that's what I did before. I did blacktop before I went in the service. But I got out, and I--right in Appleton, and I went to college [inaudible] they had my name in. I kept checking trying to get a job. Finally, one day they told me that I--that they had a--that they had a job opening if I wanted. And I said, "Yeah." So I went in there, and I ended up workin' for Oscar J. Boldt [sp??] construction. And I worked before, I worked for a couple of small [inaudible] but then, they called me up and said if I would do construction, I had a job at a [inaudible], it was at KC Headquarters in Appleton. Big building [inaudible] and they said that they had a job for me for three weeks. I said, maybe that was in '73 and uh, they said uh--was I interested and I said, "Yeah, I'll take it for three weeks." So I went down there and uh, a three week job turned into thirty-five years. And uh, I retired here about—about going on seven now. Retired from Oscar Boldt [sp??] and ah, our pensions and everything is all based on hours that you worked. The more hours that you worked, the more your pension is. And I had just over sixty-thousand hours. So I retired about going on seven years now and I uh, and right now I'm working for my-- part-time for my son now. He owns uh [inaudible]. He lives in uh, he lives in a nice town near where I live right now. And uh, he owns three businesses. He owns [inaudible] Plastics, and he owns [inaudible] Thermo Factory [inaudible]. He makes snow plows[inaudible] and different farm parts for [inaudible]. Does a lot of work for Oshkosh Truck and makes a lot of parts and just--I work for him maybe three, four days a week. He gives me --he lets me kind of put down the hours I want to work, so I just, so right now I just take it easy.

Berry: [throat clearing] Did you, Bob, did you join and become active in any Veteran's organizations after you left the service?

Malewski: I—I started and then I, I don't know. For some reason I dropped out, [recording repeats]and now I kept wanting to go, and wanting to join but I never did. And here roughly, uh, this summer, I made up my mind I was going to do it and I never did it. And time would go by and I joined the Legion in uh [inaudible] and matter of fact, during the process [inaudible] and uh it's just on the outskirts of uh, [inaudible] are in the process of trying to build uh --

Berry: Now is this the VFW? What sort of Veterans --?

Malewski: It's a Veterans--Veterans right—yeah it's a VFW right now off of [inaudible]. And one of our projects right now is uh, we're--the DNR and all that stuff but. [Inaudible] We're in the process of trying to build a memorial for-- kind of because the memorial is going to be for anybody that serviced in the service. And my dad was in the second war and my father-in-law was in the second war and uh, we would build it with bricks and stuff and we was [inaudible]

Berry: How about the reunions? Have you attended the reunions with your former outfit?

Malewski: Uh, I believe it's like fourteen/fifteen years ago, uh, my dad was at home and I was --and he called me up and one day and he said uh, "All your buddies are in Appleton." And I said, "Buddies?" He said, "Yeah, the 11th Cav they're havin' big party and all [inaudible] in Appleton." He said, "Why don't you go down and see them?" And what he saw it was on TV on Channel Eleven News. And I thought, "Well." I was only about maybe a half an hour, maybe twenty minutes from Appleton. I thought—it was about five o'clock—five-thirty, six o'clock and I took a ride down to Appleton and I could see lot of the guys were [inaudible] were patches on their unit, but I didn't know nobody. And uh, I told them I was with the Cav and they started--guys starting talkin' to me and everything. I joined the unit, or the organization. Right now, it's one of the biggest like Cav, Black Horse--of course at the time, it was one of the biggest organizations. We've got roughly 70,000 members.

Berry: Wow.

Malewski: And we have a banquet or uh, every year. This year it was in --I just came back from St. Louis just a couple weeks ago. And we said next year, it's going to be in Florida at the museum and resort.

Berry: Do you plan on attending that?

Malewski: I—I attended many of them. That's—all fifteen so far. We had a—I went to probably nine of them. I go just about every year. And that's great, you know, all the guys—I met few guys that now they—who are sixty, and were nineteen. We start talking and they bring a picture and show it and you recognize the guy and [inaudible] but--

Berry: Have you been able to hook up with some of the guys you served with in Vietnam?

Malewski: Yes I have and uh, Jim Crosswell [sp??] and uh Dave [inaudible]. Some of the guys, what we do--lot of the guys, we go there for-for four days and you don't know anybody. I mean you got your nametag on and I got names of guys I met a few guys from Michigan and uh, they were there the same time I was and uh, they—I filled up their tank. And uh, there's Jerry, from—he works at the casino in Michigan and uh we showed him a picture and I remember he looked a lot different then you'd never recognize[inaudible] it was probably in nineteen sixty

Berry: People changed don't they?

Malewski: Yeah.

Berry: Let's see, looking back on your military experience and your experience in combat in Vietnam, how do you feel about it generally?

Malewski: Well, I tell ya if I had to do it all over again, I'd do the same thing. I was--I'm proud of it and uh, these guys that back then you could run to Canada, they--if you had money you could go to college and that stuff, but. These guys that run to Canada and they let them come back, I don't think they should of let them come back. And uh, we--they way I look at it I wouldn't want somebody else to do it. And uh, you know you live here and everything, and I feel I supported all the veterans right now. I feel uh, like I said, when one of the guys' grandsons just died in Iraq here about two years ago, and my and my buddies, we buried him[inaudible] -- cemeteries and that. And that was the reason I came here [inaudible] and uh I think, you want to know what I think, I think today in Iraq, they got --they got it a lot worse than what we had in Vietnam because we weren't among the people. You could, if somebody shot at you, you could just use firepower. Now, these people are [inaudible] blow 'em up [inaudible]. And you--they're fighting a lot different than--in the Iraq war, and I think maybe we had more G.I.s killed in Vietnam but [inaudible] I think they [inaudible].

Berry: Any other comments you'd like to make, Bob?

Malewski: Uh, not right off hand, no I don't think so.

Berry: Okay, well on behalf of the museum, we're certainly pleased and thank you for sharing your experiences with us.

Malewski: Thank you.

[End of Interview]