

**This interview is being conducted on Thursday, May 12, 2022 at the home of Edwin R. Brookman. My name is Fran Prokop and I am speaking with Ed Brookman who served in the United States Marine Corps and is a veteran of the Viet Nam War. Mr. Brookman learned of the Veterans History Project through a mutual friend and he has kindly consented to participate in the National Archives Veterans' History Project. Here is his story:**

**Edwin, when and where were you born – city and state?**

I was born in Mount Vernon, Illinois, which is in southern Illinois, August 17, 1945.

**What were your parents' occupations?**

My Dad was a driver for Pepsi Cola at the time I was born; my Mom was a housewife.

**How many sisters and brothers did you have?**

I had two sisters and two brothers. I was nine years younger than them.

**So were you the baby of the family?**

I was the baby of the family.

**What did you do before entering the service? Did you graduate high school?**

I graduated high school; I graduated from Joliet Township High School. I was the last graduating class from Joliet Township. After that they went to Central, East and West.

**Oh, Joliet Central – uh-huh.**

While I was in – I was in the DE Program in high school and I worked at Barrett Hardware.

**What's the DE Program?**

Distributive Education.

**Never heard of that; is that a special program?**

Yes. What I did was – my Senior year I went to class for four hours and then I worked at Barrett Hardware for four hours. The work I was doing applied to my high school credits. After graduation I stayed there and I went in and I talked to the manager and I asked him about getting a raise. And he told me, He said, the only way I could get a raise was to be a counter man and he showed me the guys on the counter. He said, "How old do you think the youngest guy is there?" And I said "Forty years old." And he said, "When he retires, you got a chance."

**Ha, ha.**

And I said, "Well, in that case I need tomorrow off to go look for another job." And he said, "No problem."

**Ha, ha.**

So I went out to Caterpillar and I applied, and I went to work for Caterpillar.

**What did you do there? What was your job?**

I was in the Parts Department and I worked there for about five months and I joined the Marine Corps.

**What was your impetus? Why did you want to join the Marine Corps?**

Both my brothers were in the Marine Corps.

**Your two brothers. Did they talk you into it or did you just want to go?**

I just wanted to go because they had done it.

**So you enlisted.**

I enlisted, yes.

**What year was that?**

In October of 1964.

**Where did you go to enlist?**

I flew out to California and went to the MCRD which is the Marine Corps Training Depot in San Diego.

**Where did you have to go to enlist here in Illinois?**

Oh, I went down to the courthouse.

**In Joliet?**

In Joliet, that was the enlistment place.

**Wow, I didn't know that. Joliet Courthouse.**

When I enlisted, the recruiter told me that I'd scored high enough on the test that if I would sign up for four years instead of three years, he can make me "aviation guaranteed" which would mean that I'd work around airplanes all the time. So I said sure.

**How long after you signed up did they send you out to San Diego?**

I didn't go out to San Diego until November.

**That was pretty quick. Did you fly out to San Diego?**

Yes, we flew out by airplane.

**How were your early days of training? What did you do when you got to boot camp?**

From the airplane we boarded a bus that took us onto the base and once we got on the base drill instructors got on the bus and told us to get out and stand on the yellow footprints. We got out; stood

on the yellow footprints and then he told us to get back on the bus. He said, "When I tell you to move, I want you to move." And we went on the bus and off the bus four or five times.

**Ha, ha.**

After that, we were taken – they took us into a room and they had us pack everything in a box that we had on – all of our civilian clothes – anything that we had we packed in a box that was mailed home.

From there they took us and gave us some underwear to wear and then they gave us a haircut. And then they gave us showers. And then they kept us up most all night – and then –

**This is your first day?**

This is the first day; and then in the morning, about 5 o'clock in the morning, they sent us to where we would be doing our regular boot camp – so we started out tired. And you were tired thye whole time you were at boot camp.

**Tell me, what base was this? What's the name of this base?**

It's MCRD -- Marine Corps Training Depot in San Diego.

**That's what it was called; it had no regular base name, just MCRD – training depot?**

Right.

**How long were you there?**

18 weeks.

**Could you tell me what did your training consist of – not only physical but was it classroom education too?**

Yes, classroom education; we studied the history of the Marine Corps and we studied the terminology of different things – they gave us a rifle and we had to strip it down and clean it and we had three weeks of the rifle range and on the rifle range you did what they called "snapping in" – which means you were laying down and just aiming. We did that for about a week or so before we ever fired a round.

**Okay.**

And then we fired rounds off and on for the next two weeks. The last day was our qualifying. We fired from 200 yards, 300 yards and 500 yards, and I qualified as a sharp shooter.

**Very good. Besides rifle range and classroom what other kind of training did you have in boot camp?**

We had pugi sticks – a lot of physical training.

**What's that – how do you spell that?**

P-U-G-I sticks.

**What are they?**

They were a stick that you held that had a cushion on both ends and you fought each other.

**Oh, I've seen that; they're pretty long, aren't they, about six feet long?**

Yes, yeah. And you did that several times. And then they had various obstacle courses. We never walked anywhere, we always ran. Except when we were on the Drill Field. When we were on the Drill Field we would do marching in formation and learning how to march as a team. One of the other things they did were – you had a telephone pole and it had marks on it – around the telephone pole – and each person would stand by the mark and you'd pick up the telephone pole. Needless to say you couldn't pick it up by yourself, but when you had 6 or 8 guys picking up a telephone pole, you could do it.

**Wow.**

A lot of things they did to teach the fact that you were part of a team.

**And all this was during the 18 weeks that you were there?**

Yes.

**Now, during that time or afterwards, after boot camp, did you receive any specialized training?**

We went to ITR – which is advanced military training – that was at Camp Pendleton.

**What did that consist of?**

That was four weeks; that consisted of being out in the field and living out in the field and it was interesting, to say the least. And then after that I went to Memphis, Tennessee to the – it was a Naval Air Station – Naval Training Reserve –

**You had advanced training there?**

What we did there was – you took tests to see what kind of aviation you would get into and they said that Parachute Rigger School was in Lakehurst, New Jersey. That's not too far from New York City and on the weekend you could go to New York City and they also said you'd jump out of an airplane. So I thought that was a good idea.

**So, all in all, with 18 weeks of boot camp and four weeks further, how did you adapt to military life – you yourself – how did you adapt, like the physical regimen, the barracks, the food, the social life, the food – how did you adjust?**

I did okay as far as the – the food was fine, actually; the food was good. I didn't mind the mess hall at all. Learning to live with people was a challenge, but because of when I was younger we moved a lot and I was – I made friends easy. So it didn't bother me about being in new places.

**And you didn't mind the physical regimen and all that?**

No; the physical stuff was just physical. It didn't hurt at all.

**After Memphis – did you go to Lakehurst, New Jersey?**

Yes. I went to Lakehurst, New Jersey.

**And is that where you got your specialized training?**

Yes, I got a Class A Rigger's Training.

**How long was that training?**

That was – I want to say 16 weeks, but I'm not sure.

**Did they follow through with the promise – when you were at Lakehurst were you able to go to New York and do the things –**

Yes.

**Was your training like Monday to Friday and you were free on the weekend?**

Right. Right. While we were there, there were some of us that volunteered to – we were on the Marine Honor Guard – and we – actually I got a letter for that. And we did – we marched – carried the flag on different occasions, there at Lakehurst and also in town. We carried it for a couple of parades. But the – being in school at Lakehurst was very enjoyable because there was so much to do.

**Were there quite a few parachute riggers along with you in class?**

Yes, well, there was – yes, mostly Navy – but there was Navy and Marine Corps both.

**They go together really.**

Not only did we pack chutes, we also learned how to sew and how to time sewing machines. We also worked with oxygen a little bit. And also with CO2 for blowing up life rafts.

**How many times did you jump while you were there?**

Just the once.

**And was it the chute you packed or someone else packed.**

It was the chute that I packed –

**So you had to pack your own chute and jump.**

Yes, and I also packed the reserve that I was wearing.

**And evidently it worked well.**

Yes, yes.

**Anything else memorable about your time there at Lakehurst?**

From Lakehurst I went to NAS Twin Cities, which was in Minneapolis. I didn't even know they had Marines in Minnesota. I went up there in October of '65.

**So you were in the service one year now and doing all this training, the whole year. So what were your duties in the Twin Cities?**

At Twin Cities we taught Reserves.

**Oh, you taught – you were teaching?**

Yeah. We had – the Reserves would come in on the weekend and we would have things set up for them to do.

**What did you teach them?**

Well, you're basically going over packing chutes and stuff.

**Oh, so you were teaching them the basics of chutes.**

Yeah.

**So how long did you stay in the Twin Cities?**

From October '65 till January of '68.

**Over two years, huh?**

Yeah. While I was in, they had normal – normal was year and a half, but they had a mix up whereby there was several of us were stationed someplace in the States didn't get any orders for – actually there were guys that came up with me, that came up to Minnesota at the same time and never left; served out their four years there.

**Did you get higher ranks as you were there – get your PFC?**

I got – in Tennessee I got PFC; in Minnesota I made Lance Corporal and Corporal.

**What does that mean, Lance Corporal? Is it distinct from Corporal?**

The difference being – a PFC is just one stripe, and then you have crossed rifles, that will be a Lance Corporal. A Corporal will be two stripes. When you first come in you're an E-1; a PFC is an E-2; A Lance Corporal is an E-3 and a Corporal is an E-4.

**They have their own system, really.**

Yeah.

**So during all that time you were in Minnesota – how about leaves going home – did you have breaks in service?**

Yes. I had – when I left boot camp I had ten days' leave. When I left Nashville or Memphis, rather, I had 3 days travel time to get to Lakehurst and from Lakehurst to Minnesota I had 15 days, 5 days travel and 10 days leave. So I got to go home between then.

**Did you have your car with you since you were in the States?**

Once I got to Minnesota I bought a car.

**Did you live on the base?**

I lived on the base.

**What base was that? Does it have a name? You said Naval Air Station.**

Yeah, it was the Naval Air Station – NAS Twin Cities.

**Did you ever go abroad or was all your service in the States?**

No, I went from – in January '68 I went to Japan and I was there for three months. And then I went to Viet Nam.

**How did you get to Japan?**

I flew from San Francisco – actually we flew to Japan and refueled, and then we went to Okinawa. And from Okinawa I went back to Japan.

**Why did you go to Okinawa?**

That's where they processed everybody.

**Oh, so just temporarily you were there.**

Yeah, and when I went back to Japan I was stationed at Iwakuma, Japan.

**Can you spell that? That's a regular U.S. Base there?**

Yes, it is.

**A Marine Corps base?**

Yes. Here's a spelling -- I-W-A-K-U-M-A, Japan.

**What did you do there, in Japan?**

I was in the Paraloft.

**What's that?**

That's where we took care of all the flight equipment. What you do with the flight equipment is – you take care of harnesses for the parachutes and also take care of the parachutes themselves, packing them; also if there's anything needs to be done to them, you have to sew them up, repair 'em --

**Maintenance –**

And if the officers have – if the pilots need something sewn onto their vest, you sew it on to the vest for them.

**How long were you in Japan?**

Around three months, maybe four.

**How did you find the mail service when you were overseas?**

Japan was not bad at all.

**So you were able to get letters and stay in touch with family and friends?**

Yes.

**How long would you estimate it would take for a letter to get from the U. S. To Japan?**

About five days.

**That's pretty good service – five days. I meant to ask you this earlier – when you were in Lakehurst what were your recreational activities or off-duty pursuits?**

In Lakehurst they had a very large gym that we could do different things in – lift weights or whatever we wanted to do.

**Individual.**

Yes.

**Did they have any team sports?**

They didn't have – while I was in Lakehurst we didn't have team sports because of the time frame. Everybody was there for training and stuff. Your off hours – lots of time on the off-hours we were studying stuff because we would have tests on different things – yeah, there was a lot of studying done. On the weekends we did – I went to New York. I went to several spots in New Jersey – they had parades and stuff going on. I had a very enjoyable –

**That was Lakehurst – how about Japan?**

Japan – Japan – I went to – I took a weekend and went to Iwakuma – where the bomb was dropped.

And I saw Peace Park.



**The bomb was dropped on Nagasaki and Hiroshima.**

Nagasaki, yeah.

**So you went to Nagasaki, okay.**

No Hiroshima.

**Oh, Hiroshima. So you went to Hiroshima and saw the site where the atomic bomb was dropped.**

Yes. Peace Park, yes. And it really gives you a different perspective. You understand why the Japanese were not friendly to the Marines – or the Americans. And while I was in Japan, Iwakuma is a samurai – they have a Samurai Museum. I visited the Samurai Museum more than once. In the Samurai Museum they have a samurai warrior, his outfit, not just like 100 years old; it's over 500 years old. Their history goes a lot further back than ours.

**Of course, of course; every other country's does. Very interesting**

Yes. I really enjoyed Japan. The other thing in Japan, it was 360 yen to a dollar; even getting paid as little as I was, I was a rich man.

**What was your pay back then, now that you mention it?**

About – a little over \$90.

**A month?**

Yeah.

**You're kidding! Ha, ha. \$90 – of course you got it for extra expenses because you got all your food, housing and everything else; you just got paid for incidentals.**

Right.

**How about the friendships you formed and the camaraderie of service – are you still friendly with people you met in the service – or have they passed away?**

The man that was my best man in my wedding, he was my roommate in Minnesota – Jack Rehr – and we still call each other on the phone and on facebook I'm friends with three guys who were in service with me.

**Wow – that's good. You're the first guy talking about facebook. No one else has ever said anything about that.**

And we actually – the guys that were in service with me, we exchange pictures once in awhile – find old pictures –

**You have copies made and send them old pictures. You ended up in Japan, you said you ended up in Viet Nam. How did that come about?**

I went to Viet Nam with 542 which was the Flying Tigers. When I went to Viet Nam I went with a squadron, but once I got into Japan I was put in the Marine Air Wing and it was the – I was at the Paraloft. I didn't work at the squadron level; I worked at the Paraloft.

**What is the Paraloft?**

Well, that's where we pack parachutes and stuff.

**So that was in Japan and Viet Nam, you were in the Paraloft?**

Yeah.

**So what was your job in Viet Nam?**

In Viet Nam I was in charge of the night shift; we worked from 6 p.m. till 6 a.m. And we took care of anything – any of the officers came in wanting something, we took care of 'em.

**How long did you remain in Viet Nam?**

I was there until November of '68. While we were there – while I was in Minnesota I was on Blues Detail burying Marines that came back from Viet Nam.

**Oh – what did you call it Blues Detail?**

Yeah – burying Marines returning from Viet Nam. So when you went to Viet Nam you're expecting to come back the same way. That's part of the problem I have with as much PTSD as I do. When we left Viet Nam we flew into Okinawa; they have you take your sea bag and empty it out and they go through it so you don't have anything like grenades or stuff like that, then from Okinawa, I flew to El Toro, which is a marine base in California. We left Okinawa at 1:30 in the afternoon; we landed in El Toro at 7:30 the same day and they started processing us out.

**Wow.**

Needless to say, we were not in good shape; we were jet lagged real bad and they had us sign a lot of things – I have no idea what all I signed.

**Wow.**

They told us if we didn't sign we weren't gonna get out of the Marine Corps.

**My God, and you just signed whatever they put in front of you.**

Yeah.

**Sign anything, huh? Well, tell me, when you were in Viet Nam did you come in contact with some of the pilots that you packed for and they died? What were your feelings about matters like that?**

I actually had two pilots – the custom for a pilot that uses a chute is for him – in the chute there's a card that you sign and put in the chute and you put a date on that, so every three months the chute is unpacked and then repacked.

**So it's checked every three months.**

Yeah, yeah, and it's hung up to dry in the drying tower. And I actually had two pilots come in and bring a bottle in and set it on the table. The reason they do that is because they used my chutes and because they worked and they came back, they brought a bottle in and set it on the table.

**Wow. If they used your chutes, that means they had to go out of the plane –**

Yes.

**Were they captured? They had to evacuate the plane –**

They had to eject because they were shot down. But they were recovered – so

**By Americans?**

Yes.

**So They were lucky.**

Yes, yes. I did know several pilots that are considered missing in action. And one guy I was talking to on the radio and I was in the radio shack, we were talking about some things that he wanted, and the radio buzzed – there was just a buzzing sound – and I asked the guy in there – “what's that buzzing sound”? And he said, “that's the radio burning up.” So he got hit with a heat-seeking rocket; he is considered an MIA because the plane exploded and they'll never find him.

**Wow – I'm sure that left an impression on you.**

Oh yeah, oh yes.

**Did you have nightmares and stuff about it?**

Oh, yeah. Oh yes. That plus the fact that during the – we would get rocket attacks at the base quite a bit and I actually – I was – I had a friend that got hit by shrapnel from the rocket and I grabbed a hold of him and I carried him to sick bay for first aid. They took me and had me get on a gurney because they thought – there was so much blood on me they thought I was hurt. And I wasn't hurt.

**So you carried him in and he was so bloody that they thought you were injured too.**

Yes.

**What happened to that guy?**

He was flown from Da Nang to the Philippines and I'm not sure what happened after that.

**Did you tell me the name of the base that you were at I Viet Nam.**

I was stationed me in Da Nang Air Force Base the whole time. Air Force was on one side; Marine Corps was on the other side.

**So you were there about nine months until you were ready to leave.**

Right.

**That was pretty upsetting. So, you're back in the States and you've signed all your papers**

**So you can get out.**

Yes. When I left, in order to fly home and to get a military rate, you had to wear your uniform. And I left San Francisco – I was at the San Francisco Airport -- and there was a little white-haired woman came up to me and spit on me and said, "You baby killer!"

**Wow.**

And that hurt me more than anything else.

**That was terrible – at that time – yes – really.**

When we flew into El Toro coming in from Okinawa, we flew in and the plane landed and it taxied in to where it parked on the tarmac and there was nobody there. We had to wait for somebody come out and push the stairs over to the plane so we can get off. I felt like they were sneaking us into the country.

**Wow – yeah, the veterans were not welcomed back when they came from Viet Nam. It was a bad time in 1968 – so much stuff – it was terrible.**

The Honor Flight meant more to me – when we landed in Dulles Airport in DC – they had people there cheering and saying welcome home. Then when we came back to Midway, that meant more to me than the whole day did.

**Right, well, they had bands and parades and people. My brother-in-law came back on the Honor Flight at Midway it was great – really nice.**

**So you had to fly back home from El Toro to Chicago.**

Yes, we flew to Chicago and my Mon and Dad picked me up.

**How was your reception by family and friends when you got home. (turn tape)**

They didn't understand me. The family was good. The friends – I had problems relating to them. When we got back – I got back in November and then on December 7<sup>th</sup> I married my wife.

**Oh. You were communicating with her the whole time –**

Oh, yes.

**You got married on December 7<sup>th</sup> –**

Yeah, '68.

**You had it planned all along or did it just happen –**

Well, it was planned because I knew I'd be out in November.

**Was that a Saturday?**

Yeah; that was the first Saturday in December.

**Well, that sort of took your mind off things – with all the other stuff, you had plans for a wedding and things like that. How was your wedding reception?**

The wedding was good. I was married in my uniform, in dress blues.

**And what is your wife's name?**

Nancy.

**In general, how was your adjustment to civilian life?**

The best way I can explain that is – ten years after I was back, my wife and I were at a party and another Viet Nam vet and I started talking. And her friend asked her, she said, "Did you know he did that?" And Nan said "that's the first time I heard him talking about it."

**Right. They didn't talk about it. I'm glad you're talking about it now too. You do need to talk to another vet about stuff like that.**

I belong to a PTSD group that we meet every Wednesday. The VA has offered psychiatrists and social workers, but I get more out of the PTSD group than I do any of them.

**So the group is very helpful.**

Yes, yes.

**Are you a member of any veterans' organizations today?**

I'm a member of the VFW, American Legion, DAV, let's see – that's all.

**Did you ever utilize the GI Bill when you came back home?**

I used the GI Bill – at Caterpillar they had a training program. I went into the training program; the wage was less than your normal wage would be and I used the GI Bill for that. It helped. In Illinois I can go to any state school for free. I did that. I went to Joliet Junior College and I went there until we had an English teacher that was talking against the war in Viet Nam and I just couldn't handle it anymore. I was actually one of the ones in '69 and '70 we formed a Vet Club at Joliet Junior College – we didn't call it a club –

**A group.**

Yes, a group of vets and that was helpful.

**That was like the beginning of a PTSD group.**

Yeah.

**An unofficial group.**

Yes, yes – before we had a name for it.

**When you came back home you went back to Caterpillar – they held a job for you?**

Caterpillar held a job for me. So when I came back and went back to work at Caterpillar in January of '69, I had four years' seniority –

**Right, they give that to you –**

And that applied to my retirement.

**Did you go back to the Parts Department?**

Yes, I did. And then Parts – they closed the Parts Department and I went into training at Caterpillar.

**How do you think your military experience affected your life?**

It changed me, the way I look at things. It caused me to meet my wife in Minnesota.

**You didn't mention that before. What life lessons did you learn – would you do it again?**

**Would you go back in the service again?**

Yes, I'd do it again.

**So what life lessons did you take from that experience?**

Once you're in service you have a brotherhood and there's no good way to explain that other than the fact that they've been there and they've done it. Whenever I talk to a psychiatrist, the one psychiatrist, I told him, you may have read the book, you may have even seen the movie, but I was there, and I lived it. And there's no way that you can understand it the way I do.

**You lived it. True.**

And the only way you can understand it is for someone else that has been there. I can tell you in a matter of five minutes whether or not a person has been to Viet Nam or if he's just a wanna be – saying that he was there. And I don't say anything to 'em. I told my wife more than once about different guys that were talking about it, and I said he's never been there.

And she'll say how do you know? And I says I just know.

**So, going back to Minnesota, you were there for three years and you met her during that time.**

Yes. She picked me up in a bar.

**Ha, ha, she picked you up. You never did tell that story. Ha, ha. Did you meet her at the beginning of your deployment or toward the end?**

I'd say about half way through.

**So you knew her over a year at least before you went to Japan –**

Oh, yes, yes.

**Did you know you were going to go to Japan and Viet Nam?**

I knew I had orders to go to Viet Nam. I didn't know I was going to Japan. I thought I was just going to Viet Nam.

**But you went to Japan first.**

Yes.

**Fortunately you only had nine months left, but I'm sure it was nine months of hell – really to be in Viet Nam.**

And we had planned on getting married but the priest would not marry us before – he said once I had orders he wouldn't marry us until I got back.

**Really? Did you get married in Minnesota?**

Yes, we did. And he said war changes people.

**He's right. Did you get married in a Catholic church?**

Yes, got married in a Catholic church. Her family is Catholic, I'm not. I'm a Baptist, but Baptists recognize marriage in any church. I had taken lessons and stuff for –

**I understand that – I think that basically we're finished unless there's anything else that you want to add to the story.**

Not that I can think of.

**Ok. You told a very interesting story and I'm happy that we got together. As I said you are my first interviewee since COVID so I will type up this interview and send you a copy via email. I do have to print out a hard copy and send this recording tape to Washington DC along with the papers that you signed. But I will send you a copy first so you can read it and make any changes necessary. So I thank you for this interview and thank you for your service to our country.**

Thank you.

**We're going back on the record because as I'm talking to Ed he told me that he did see combat in Viet Nam and he's going to explain that now.**

In the Paraloft we have a drying tower; in the drying tower you hang chutes up; it's 70 feet high. Monsoons were coming so the Lieutenant on day shift asked me if I would go up on the drying tower and put tar on – tar all of the bolts up on the drying tower to make sure it didn't leak during monsoon. During the summer and stuff the sun just bakes on it. So we went up on the drying tower; I went up and I took a guy named Pete – don't remember his last name.

We did it at night because if you did it during the day you're 70 feet up in the air and kind of a big target. But at night we shouldn't be seen. So, We were up there putting tar on the bolts and rockets started coming into the base. Whenever rockets come in you yell "Incoming" and everybody goes to the bunker. Well, when they go to the bunker they turn out all the lights as they go. So they went to the bunker; Pete and I were up on top of the drying tower, 70 feet in the air, rockets were coming in; shrapnel actually hit the drying tower because the rocket was that close. After the attack, after the rockets stopped, the people came back in the Paraloft and they turned lights on but they didn't turn lights on in the tower. So Pete and I are up there trying to get their attention to get the lights turned back on. They finally turned the lights on and when you drop down the little – there's a little box that you raise up and crawl out of – whenever you drop down there's a little catwalk that's only a foot wide, and you gotta step on that I order to walk to the side of the drying tower and climb down the ladder. I've never been able to do heights since then.

**Oh, since that time. right, too upsetting.**

And it took us about half an hour to bang on the thing until they turned the lights on – to come and get us.

**So you were able to do it and get down safely.**

Yeah.

**So when all the lights were shut off did that mean that nobody could see you up there?**



Well, they couldn't see us up there anyway because the lights were inside the building; we didn't have any outside lights.

**But you were inside of a tower.**

Yes, we were on top; we were on the roof.

**How did you see to paint the bolts?**

It was light enough that you see the tops of the bolts. We didn't have a problem doing that but our problem came in – we saw the first rocket attach hit monkey mountain. And Pete said, "Look at that; it's just like watching fireworks on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July." Well, once we stopped and started looking at that, that's when the rockets started coming in and they started walking right up the flight line – yeah --

The other thing we did was, we were told that they were gonna overrun the base and whenever they told us that what you did was we would go down and then we had, on the outside perimeter, we had trenches cut in and we stayed in those trenches and we just slept there. And while we were there they sent in a water buffalo to go through the field that was out – that we were watching. And they sent the water buffalo in hoping that if there was any land mines, the water buffalo would hit them.

**You mean an actual live animal – a water buffalo?**

Yes. And the water buffalo hit a trip flare and it went off – and you can hear a trip flare when it fires off it makes the sound of a rocket like – and it just shoots up in the air. And then when it opens up you can see because it's bright as day when it opens up. Whenever the sound of that rocket went off, everybody that was in the trenches fired their weapons, including the towers that had M-50 machine guns, fired their weapons out into the field. Whenever there was two or three guys that threw grenades, when the trip flare went off, the water buffalo had been blown up and there was nothing in the field. You couldn't see anything in the field at all. The next day they told us the reason they didn't come in was that they didn't realize how much fire power we had out there – so they said that the Viet Cong were coming in but they saw how much fire power we had and they didn't do it.

**So they backed down.**

Yeah. Whew! That's scary.

**So you guys were lucky.**

Yes.

**So after nine months of that I can see anybody coming down with PTSD – going through that. Those are interesting stories. Anything else you can think of that happened while you were there? You had the tower and the trenches.**

Because I worked nights a lot while I was in DaNang we would go down to China Beach. Pete and I would go down to China Beach. The one time we were down there -- China Beach was an R and R spot for guys coming in and out of the field. And they would go down there and swim.

The China Sea there is real warm – nice and warm; they had Marines assigned as life guards on the beach itself; and they were sitting in towers. As I'm walking by this one tower the guy is laughing. And I said, "What's so funny?" And he said, "Well, you see those guys out there, they just got in back out of the fields. See that thing out there by them?" I said, "What is that?" He said, "That's a sea snake; they're gonna get killed by a sea snake and not get killed out in the field."

**Oh, my God.**

And I said "Well, why aren't you telling them?" He said, "Why?"

**So what happened to those guys?**

I yelled at them.

**So they were okay. But this guy was just gonna let them –**

Yeah, yeah, because

**Why?**

After you're there for a little while, your mind is a little warped.

**Wow! I'd say so. Jaded. Okay. Those were good stories, very interesting. Well, you came out okay and I'm glad that you're feeling okay today – as well as can be expected.**

Thank you.

**You're functioning and you seem like a decent man. Again, thank you very much for your time.**

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