

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAME: Richard C. Brown

COLLECTION: 4700.0940

IDENTIFICATION: Vietnam veteran

INTERVIEWER: Paul K. Moore

SERIES: Americans in Vietnam

INTERVIEW DATES: 3/26/74, 4/3/74

FOCUS DATES: Nov. 1966-Feb. 1972, April 1970-April 1971

ABSTRACT:

Tape 1372

Family background; education in Richmond, Indiana; married Louisiana girl after service in Vietnam; didn't mind getting drafted, wasn't doing well in school; basic training was Vietnam-oriented; getting soldiers psychologically motivated; trained as tank driver; sent to Korea; made a clerk because he could type; transferred to tank company; transferred back to office; Officers' Candidate School at Fort Benning, GA; training oriented to Vietnam; very modern facilities for tactics class; mock battles; bombing Georgia in Vietnam simulation; graduated from Officers' Candidate School and assigned to train officer candidates; attended helicopter flight school; time commitment to Army; sent to Vietnam as assistant platoon leader of a reconnaissance aircraft platoon; helicopter strategy; flew missions daily; became platoon leader when former leader shot down; frightening and bewildering first mission; getting shot down twice; losing radio communication; left many aircrafts where they went down; scout work as intelligence work; getting supplies to combat troops; NVA supply dumps; exploding hutches where ammunition was stored; scout training; significance of rice and marijuana fields; burning fields from helicopters; bombing by radar; Air Force missing targets; counting bodies; killing 500 inexperienced NVA soldiers; guard duty; feelings of disorientation and fear; stayed drunk a lot; description of base; Brown in charge of 275 men; success of his unit; amount of time spent flying; description of his typical day; recreational activities; relations between officers and enlisted men; trouble with commanding officer; chaplains; movies; drinking; reading; not much to spend money on; visited Australia and Hong Kong on R&R; interaction with Vietnamese, corruption in nightclubs; prostitution; Donut Dollies; nurses; Red Cross; medical facilities; prevalence of marijuana; marijuana and soldiers' effectiveness; punishment for marijuana use; pulling on gun on menacing soldiers; fragging a commanding officer; drub supply route; uppers and downers available over the counter; marijuana legal, grown openly.

Tape 1373

Flight training in Mineral Wells, Texas; flight instructors from Southern Airways; flight aptitude test; ranked in middle of class; more advanced flight training in Savannah; Bell helicopters;

instrument training; people kicked out of flight school for moral deficiency; flying Hueys; different types of advanced helicopter training; how helicopters got their names; refueling; turbine-powered helicopters; density-altitude ratings; places they could refuel; could get court-martialed for running out of fuel; destroying rice fields; capturing vs. Shooting people; contact with montagnards; relations between montagnards and South Vietnamese; three groups of Vietnamese -- farmers, ARVNs, bureaucrats; attitudes toward ARVN, ARVNs bringing their families to battle, Vietnamese special ranger unit, poor leadership of US Army; importance of separation between officers and denlisted men; men didn't like having to cut their hair short; race relations in Army; Blacks and whites found common enemy in The Establishment; seniority in the Army; rift between lifers and short timers; marijuana fields in mountains; cost of marijuana; marijuana available on base; cost of prostitutes; steam baths in compound where Vietnamese women masturbated soldiers; businesses and economics on base; graft; correspondence with home; ideological differences with fiancée; married Louisiana school teacher instead; radio in Vietnam; newspapers and magazines; acquaintance with reporters; ARVN pilots; NVA beating ARVNs terribly in Laos; ARVNs hanging off wings of helicopters trying to escape; ARVNs falling off helicopters; US government cooperation with journalists covering war; befriending reporters in Quant Tri; Vietnamization and names of Vietnamese towns; journalists and soldiers had same interests; adapting to US after Vietnam; adjusting to being in Army but not in war; became chief of processing control and testing at Fort Polk induction station; closeness of Army buddies; accepts need for Army but would not go to war again; all-volunteer Army gets lower caliber recruits; recruiters who mislead recruits; changes in his attitude toward Vietnam war; attitude toward war protestors; doesn't bear malice toward North Vietnamese.

TAPES: 2 (T1372, T1373)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 3 hours

PAGES TRANSCRIPT: 62 pages

RESTRICTIONS: None