



# **William Carr**

**Vietnam War  
U.S. Army**

**3rd Brigade  
9th Infantry Division**

**E-4 Specialist 4**

## **William Carr**

**Veterans  
History  
Project  
Transcript**

**Interview conducted  
October 22, 2018**

**Niles-Maine District Library  
Niles, Illinois**





Mr. Carr in the field in Viet Nam.

Niles-Maine District Library

**Veterans History Project Transcript**

Veteran: **William Carr** Rank: **Specialist**  
Branch of Service: **US Army** Theater: **Vietnam**  
Unit: **Army, 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade, 9<sup>th</sup> Division**

Interview Date: October 22, 2018

Place: Niles-Maine Public Library  
Board Room

Equipment: Philips Digital Pocket Memo Recorder

Interviewer: Neil O'Shea  
Transcriber: Neil O'Shea

*This Veterans History Project interview is being conducted here at the Niles-Maine District Library up on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor in the boardroom. Today is Monday, October the 22<sup>nd</sup>, in the year 2018. My name is Neil O'Shea and I'm a member of the reference staff, and I'm privileged to be speaking with Mr. William Carr. Mr. Carr was born in 1948 in Berwyn, and now- (Interviewer's words)*

I was actually born, I lived in the suburbs, I was born in Berwyn, Illinois. I grew up in Lyons. I live in Chicago now, but just to make sure, I was actually born in Berwyn, Illinois, I actually grew up in the suburbs when I was younger. (Mr. Carr)

*Thank you.*

I just want to make it-

*Absolutely clear. And Mr. Carr learned about the Veterans History Project through the group of veterans that meet in -*

In Morton Grove at the Dunkin' Donuts.

*Dunkin Donuts, year. And he has kindly consented to be interviewed for this project and here is his story. Mr. Carr do you recall when you entered the service?*

yes, March 1969.

*And where were you living at that time?*

Okay, I was living with my parents, we were living in the suburb of Lyons, Illinois.

*And what were you doing at the time you entered, before you entered the service? How was your life at that time?*

I was just a civilian, I worked in Cicero. There was a printing- it was actually called a bindery, we didn't actually print anything. We did the final work. One of my brothers eventually became a foreman, and after I graduated high school in 1966 he got me a job there. And then I was drafted in March 1969 and that's when I went in the service.

*So, what high school did you attend?*



Okay, I went Morton West High School. I lived in Lyons, but I went to school in Berwyn, Illinois and I graduated in 1966.

*Did you expect to be drafted at that time?*

yes, most of my friends and guys that I went to school with, either they had been enlisted or joined the service. I have a brother who is a year and a half older and he enlisted in the Army in 1966. And he was in for three years. So, he got out just when I went in, so he had been in for three years. When you, at that time, when you were drafted, if you were drafted you were on active duty for two years, or you're supposed to be in for two years in reserves and then two years in active reserves. But at that time when I got out, I actually got out, I was really only in for just a little over a year and a half. That's when the war was winding down. They were pulling back the troops, they were cutting back the services, so if you came back from Vietnam and you had less than six months of service, you could apply for an early discharge and I was going to go back to school. I was planning to go back to school, so I got an early discharge. So, I was only in, -

*So, the enlistment option that your brother exercised, that didn't interest, you didn't consider that?*

No, he was three years. He told me, he said he regretted that he didn't wait, that he could have volunteered for the draft or got drafted because he had to stay the full three years. So, when I was in I was actually in only about half the time he was in.

*You didn't have to make a decision of what service branch you were in or anything, you just waited until you got drafted?*

When you're drafted, well usually the Army was drafting, sometimes what happens is if someone was ready to go and was drafted into the Army, you could volunteer to go into the Marine Corps for two years, but most guys didn't want to, they figured it was a rougher outfit to go into and so-

*And then the fact that you, that your parents already had a son in the service, that didn't make any difference?*

No, well you know, they were kind of concerned because the war was still on but yes, I had an older brother that had been in after World War II he was in occupation in Germany, so we had, and plus my father he was an immigrant; he was never in the service. But two of my uncles had been in World War II so we had, there was a tradition of having military service.

*So, what were your first days like in the Army?*

Well it was a lot of confusion. Yes you were, they just tested you and they said you were going to do basic training. I remember the first few days, they seemed like all we did, we took a lot of tests. You know, they want to see, they wanted to test your background, your educational level and then they determined what your job would be, what you would do in the service.

*So, did you, were you inducted downtown then?*

Right, in Chicago, and then we were flown down to Fort Leonard Wood in Missouri and that's where I did basic training.

*So that was six weeks of basic training?*

No, I think it was eight weeks.



*Eight weeks. And then did you have advanced infantry training?*

No, what happened after, just when I finished up the basic training, they announced where your next training would be. And there was like myself and maybe four other guys and we were sent down to Fort Sam Houston down in Texas and I was trained as a medic. And then after I did my training as a medic at Fort Sam Houston. I got a leave and I came back home, and I had, they had given me orders to go to Vietnam. So, I flew to, well you go to Oakland, California. You wait there for a few days and then we were flown overseas to Vietnam.

*Did the Army had a reason for assigning you to the Medic Corp?*

They just told me, I didn't have any background or experience in it, they just, I got orders and there was like several of us and I think there were four other guys and they said you're going down to, we didn't get a leave, they just said you were going on a plane, you were going down to Fort Sam Houston outside San Antonio and you start medical training. You know when they set it up and we then we went to training for ten weeks.

*Well how did you feel about being assigned to medics?*

Well I didn't really have any medical background and it was, the only thing in my own opinion, and it's only my opinion, was that we ended up in Vietnam and I thought they kinda rushed us through the training. And I thought there were things they told you that during the training we realized that when you go over there that's when you talk to somebody that's been over there. There are some men, you know like I said I just got the basic training as a medic, but there are more advanced training you can get, but what you have to do is that you then have to enlist for a longer time. And I think there was a place, I think in Colorado, I can't remember the fort, but if you go there for like advanced training and it's almost year, then you have to enlist for another two years. So, there were some, some of the medics were, like I said, they had very good training, or if you've ever interviewed anybody who was a special forces medic, they get very good training. Very intense, it's very difficult.

*So, you weren't afraid of the sight of blood or anything?*

No, well they show you films and all that, you just kinda, I remember one time we saw a film and they were amputating a guy's leg and it was kinda bloody and people started looking away and the guy showing the film said, "Well you better get used to that because that's what you're going to see."

*Was that your first time being away from home for a lengthy period of time?*

Yes, well it was, I mean I had gone on trips with my family but yes.

*And then you're meeting different people from different parts of the country?*

Right, right.

*Was it a little big of an adjustment or were you-?*

Well it's kind of interesting, you meet people from, you know when you're in the service you meet people from all over. And I grew up in a working class, white area and then you meet people like blacks, Hispanics, people from different religions. I had gone to a Catholic elementary school. I went to a public high school, you know like I say you meet people from different backgrounds. When you're in the service you meet people from from all over.

*Were the living conditions particularly interesting or stressful?*

Yes, in Texas I'll tell you right now, I went down there I was in Texas I think it was June, July and August. I came home towards the end of August at the end of my leave. It was very hot down there, I can't believe, in Texas during the day when we were in training it would be like one hundred degrees and at night it would be like, in the barracks we were in, we had our own barracks, and we would have the radio on at nine o'clock at night, and it would be, it was still ninety degrees outside. And we didn't use any blankets, we slept in our underwear and we would maybe have a sheet on. It was very, we had to be very, they were very careful if anyone passed out in the heat. We didn't really do any a lot of physical exercise or anything. It was very, when people say it gets hot in Texas, I believe it, it gets really hot down there in the summer.

*But if, if you had been assigned to just the infantry or the automotive repair division, you would've accepted that assignment?*

Well when you're in the service you go where they tell you to go.

*And that's where they told you to go, the medics.*

They said you're a medic, so that's what I became.

*And were there any memorable drill instructors or captains?*

Well when I was in basic training there were some of the, by that time it was 1969, some of the drill instructors had been in Vietnam, so they would kind of talk about what was going on over there and so, it was kind of interesting to find out what they said about the war. But I'll just give you one example, this one guy, his name was Sergeant Walters, he's what they call the chief drill instructor, he made a point of always saying, well I served two tours in Vietnam and I was over there for two years and one time he had, he was talking about something and he said, he used the word beaucoup, and he said, "That's Vietnamese it means a lot." Well I didn't want to correct him, it's French, actually that's French. And because the French had control of Vietnam for a long time, when I went over there they still used some expressions from the French, but I wasn't about to correct him and say no that's not Vietnamese, it's a French word.

*Yes. So, March, it looks like March 24<sup>th</sup>-*

is when I went in.

*1969. And then when do you leave for Vietnam then?*

Okay I left in September. I think I landed on September 10<sup>th</sup>, 1969.

*So about six months after that?*

Right.

*So, after that did you go to San Francisco, Hawaii or?*

No, I think when we went, if I recall, ok we took off, because it's a long flight, it's almost twenty hours going there, it's a little less coming back. When we left I think we went up to Alaska, I think we landed in Okinawa and then we went into Vietnam. So, they land the plane, I guess they refuel or they change the crew or something. But it was a regular civilian aircraft, there were stewardesses on it, it wasn't a military plane when I went over.

*Do you remember the name of the airline?*

No, I don't remember. It was like a regular airline and there was like stewardesses on there you know. And like some guys that went over there, like when I talk to the veterans, some of the ones that went with the first units they sent over, they were sent over on ship and all their equipment and that. But see, by the time they had been, they had been established for a while, so when you went there and came home, you went on regular airlines.

*And then did you land somewhere near Saigon? Tan Son Nhut?*

I think we landed, if I remember, we landed in Long Binh and then they had what they call a replacement depot. You go, and you stay there for just a few days and then they tell you where you're going to be assigned.

*So, when you get off the plane in South Vietnam, what's your first sensation?*

Well, the first thing I remember was kind of warm. Kind of warm, it was a tropical climate you know, it was September, but it was still pretty warm there. The thing I always remember we were waiting in like the airport you know, and I went into what they call a washroom or latrine and there were signs by the taps, by the faucets and they said this water is non-potable. So, when I came back I sat next to this friend of mine and I said what does that mean? There was a sign and all these faucets on the latrine that said non-potable. And then all the sudden there was a guy, and he had been in Vietnam, a soldier that had been over there, and he said, "I'll tell you what that means, that means that you can't drink it. Don't drink the water, it has to be treated. You're taking a risk if you drink that water. You have to be very careful if you drink the water over here." So, that's one of the first things I remember.

And another thing I remember, when they put us on these buses to take us to these barracks, like I said it was very hot, kind of humid and we were on the buses and they had screens on the buses and one of the guys was trying to open one of the screens, the soldier was trying to open the window, he was pushing on the screen and the bus driver, that guy was in service he said, "Don't do that, don't move that screen. You know why those screens are on there? So, in case somebody tries to throw in a grenade on the bus." So, when I heard that I was like oh, you know? You're going to have to be careful over there. And when you go over by buildings, they have sandbags and have a guard in the front, so you know you're in a combat area, a combat zone.

*So, you're in the replacement depot at this time?*

Yes.

*And then did you know what division, brigade or division you were going to?*

Yes, they come by and tell you, you know. As a matter of fact, when I went over, because it was a big group of medics, what they did was, my name was Carr, so they started at the bottom of the country, I guess A to D we got sent there and if you were E-H or something you got sent higher up. I was down in the delta area in the south of the country and I was sent to what they call the ninth division and I was in the third brigade of the ninth division. So, they had a truck that takes you out to the base you report to. There's actually a doctor that's in charge there, and then they just tell you you're going to be assigned. It was an infantry outfit, company for about four and a half months.

*So that company, they're at a regular base?*

Yes.

*Sorry, so you're sleeping in a barracks at night then?*



Yes, well sometimes you were out in the field, when we had a base and there was a barracks that we stayed in, but then we would go out in the field or we would go on patrols and you would stay overnight. The thing is, like I said it's the delta and it's very wet down there and of course it was humid. It rained a lot, so they would rotate us in. So most of the time we would stay out there maybe four days and then they would have us go back in and then clean up, air out. And one of the big problems over there, was because I was a medic, a lot of the guys got skin disease. Ringworm was a big problem, and it was hard, we didn't have like, - the showers we had, we had showers, but we didn't have indoor plumbing, we didn't have hot water. So, it was kind of hard to keep real clean in that. So, it was kind of rough being out with the infantry, because those guys were out there for the whole year most of them. So they had, and like I said I consider myself lucky I was a medic because usually the medics would be assigned, like you would be a field medic for like six months and then you worked in what was called a clearing station, or you worked some place else and then you just stayed in a base the rest of the time basically. So, I was in four and a half months I got a replacement, so I was taken out, I was rotated out.

*Where were you rotated to?*

I was rotated to, it was a big base, well not a real big base, but it was called Tan An and it was in their area of where we had been in operation. And there it was just kinda, like I worked on the night shift, the way that casualties came in, they had, they came in on a helicopter, what they called a medevac and like I worked at night and you would get a call from the tower and they would say you know they're bringing some casualties in, there would be a doctor that would be on call that night, we would have to wake him up and then they would give you duties to like, like that's what I was doing that day, we would have to do extra things like we were putting a cement basketball court in, they told us to work on that for a while.

*Useful.*

Yes.

*So, so you're on duty, when you're at the base you're on duty from like nine to five or?*

Well, I worked like at night, in the evening. Yes they had, there was always somebody there you know there was like I said we had doctors that were assigned there and there would be like one doctor that would come in and they rotated in if there was casualties coming in they would say it was serious, get the doctor get set up for whatever you need, and somebody would go wake the doctor and they would come over.

*I remember they had that television series M\*A\*S\*H.*

yes, it was kinda something like that.

*Oh, was it?*

Similar. Well, I'll give you an example. I talked to my doctor, my family doctor when I came home in Lyons and I was explaining that casualties come in even if like somebody had passed out in the heat or whatever, they brought them in by helicopter. He said when they bring them in on the movie M\*A\*S\*H, or the TV show, only the serious ones came in by helicopter and they could only fly during the day, they didn't have all the radios and stuff. And I said "Oh I must tell him, oh yes, they had radios on them" and even if somebody got sick in the field they could just call a helicopter and take them out.

*Did you ever get sick there while you were over?*

Oh, nothing really serious, I mean you know sometimes I would get a sore throat or something and you would just go over to the doctor and they would tell you, and they had an area where some of the soldiers were sick or slightly wounded so I just stayed in bed for a few days.

*So, you never came down with malaria or anything?*

No, that was a big problem over there. You had to take pills; they made sure, that's one of the things I did as a medic they had the guys they had, in our area they had to take a big orange pill once a week and the doctors said make sure everybody takes that. It doesn't prevent malaria, it doesn't, I don't know what it was, what was in the pill, but if you take it and you get malaria then you respond to treatment better. And occasionally you got guys in that had malaria, and remember one time one of the American soldiers came in, and he had malaria and his temperature was so high it was off the end of the thermometer and they put him in a tub and they put ice in there and I mean yes if you got that it was pretty serious.

*Did he survive okay?*

Yes, from what I heard, I guess they got his temperature down.

*So, was there one, as a medic was there one procedure you did more than any other ones?*

No, basically just making sure everybody, like if they had skin disease, the big thing was ringworm. There was Tinactin, a lotion you would put on. I mean, you know just kinda making sure like if somebody had to get a shot or something or you would go tell the doctor, one of the things was, there was one guy that, of course was kind of stressful and people wanted to go home, so there were a few guys that wanted to go out of the service so they had, were having, they claimed to have psychological problems, what I used to do was I used to volunteer to take them into Saigon, they had a big huge hospital in Saigon, the 3rd Field, so I would take them to the hospital to see, you know they would talk to the psychiatrist and I remember one, the one I remember in particular, there was this farm, young kid, young guy he was from Georgia and I don't want to, I'm not making fun of him, but this guy I don't know how he made it in the service. He was, I mean you could see it, I don't know how he made it that far, how he made it over to Vietnam, kinda really slow, and he went out in the field with the infantry and the guys were telling me, this guy is, he's crazy, he doesn't pay attention, they said he was either going to kill himself or kill somebody else, he's a danger. It got so bad a guy threatened to kill him if he doesn't start to listen. So, finally I took him to the psychiatrist and when the psychiatrist comes to him, he comes right out and says, "Who brought this man up here?" And I say, "I did sir." He goes, "He shouldn't be over here, he shouldn't be in the Army." I said, "I know that sir, I says what is his problem?" And looked at me and he goes, "He's dumb. He's just plain dumb" He says, "We're were going to send him home. I know, they're going to give him a general discharge to get him out of the service." So, when we were going back to the base, his name was Gabe, that was his last name, so I said, "Gabe, what did you tell the psychiatrist?" "I went in there I only talked to him for say a minute." And I says, "Well what happened?" He says well when he went in to talk to him - when you landed in Vietnam you were guaranteed to go home exactly one year to the day you landed, and everybody knew when they landed. When did I land, I think it was September 10<sup>th</sup>, 1969, I know I was guaranteed to go home September 10<sup>th</sup>, 1970. So, I said, What did you say to the psychiatrist?" He said he was looking at the paper and he said, "Private Gabe, when did you land in Vietnam?" He says, "I don't rightly recall, I think it was back there in September or October." He says, "You don't remember when you landed in Vietnam? He says, Well I don't exactly remember." And when he heard that he said, "Send this guy home."

*So, Gabe really was a little slow?*

Oh yes, this guy to be honest I don't know how he made it in the service, how he got that far. And they used to have, I don't know if you've ever heard of this, but they had a program one time where, Robert McNamara was the Secretary of Defense, did you ever hear of the One Hundred Thousand Project?

*No.*

Okay, they started that in the late 60s. They let in men, the One Hundred Thousand Project I think it was the name of it. They let in men that had lower scores that they normally wouldn't let in and they brought them into the service and they figured they would get some training, or you know would help them and they would get out and get benefits. So, he probably got in under some program like that, and like I said, some of these guys, a lot of these guys were kinda nervous being over there or you know they were kinda, it was hard for them to be separated from their families. But like this guy, as soon as the psychiatrist talked to him right away he says we're sending him back home.

*You know, I'm just thinking about the medics, in terms of personality it would be better if you were kind of a kind, sympathetic person if you were a medic.*

Well, some of the medics, okay I don't know if you're familiar with this, I wasn't one, some were what you call conscientious objectors. They would not carry weapons. And I would say in our outfit, if you had fifty medics, you would have maybe five or six would be COs. And if you, you know the guys they asked me if you were a CO and I said no, no, I had an M16, but they said don't worry about, you're keeping an eye on us, we don't expect you to, I didn't have to carry any machine gun bullets or grenades you know. If you didn't wanna, they said you're a medic don't worry about fighting, just take care of us. I never heard anybody make any comment about anybody that was a CO, they were over there, and they were willing to be in the service-

*So, you never had to fire a gun in defense over there?*

Well, you carried a round. Sometimes they would say to just send warning shots out. I mean I never-

*When you were out in the field-*

Yes, I carried a rifle, an M16.

*Were there any casualties at that time?*

Yes, yes. We had guys that were killed.

*Was that rifle fire, claymore mines?*

Well we had one time, they found some guys in a bunker and we went in and it was booby trapped and the booby trap went off, one soldier was killed, and two guys were wounded really bad. And that's what a lot of the casualties were. And then after I was getting ready to be taken out of the field, I was waiting to get out of the field, and there was some guys in our, that I lived with in the barracks, they had, they caught a guy in a bunker and he started firing back and he killed two of the guys I knew. And there was this one guy, I will never forget his name, his name was Bob Willet, Robert Willet, he was from Springfield. He was from Illinois.

*W I-?*

I don't remember, it was W I L L E T. He was married he was from Springfield. But the other guy I didn't really know him that well, I think his name was Harrison and he was from Tennessee. He just came in. But the other guy I had known pretty well, so we had, when I was there the fighting in our area had died



down a lot. The only time there was a big increase in fighting, and it only happened for a month, was when they went into Cambodia. By that time, I was out of the field, but a lot of the guys I had been with before they were in Cambodia.

*So, you were in the field for a few months?*

Four and a half months.

*Four and a half months. And when you're in the field, you're sleeping up there in the field. So, are you in tents or no?*

No, on the ground, you might go with the Vietnamese people there and ask can I stay in the hut. Coming in, and these armed guys come in there, they had big bunkers that they slept in. Inside their house they built big like bunker, I don't know if you want to call it a bunker, but they had a mud thing they went in there at night, they took a honey pot in there and they stayed in there at night and then they came out there during the day.

*And the honey pot was?*

to go to the washroom, because they wouldn't go outside at night if they were walking around they could get shot, so at night they would just stay in the huts.

*So, you would get your water from the wells in the villages then?*

No, in Vietnam they had these huge jars that kept the rain water and it was clear, it was a huge jar if you wanted water you just say nuoc which was how they say water in Vietnamese, you would just go and put your canteen in there and it was cool water, it was good water.

*So, did you have c-rations out there in the field?*

Yes you could have food or sometimes they would even, with like the helicopters once in a while they would bring hot meals to you. They would set up a kitchen out in the field and you'd eat out there. And then of course we would have, there was a mess hall in the base when you got back you could go eat.

*And you would go back to the base-*

Yes, they would say-

*That was after the four months or various times?*

No, no. When you would get back and like clean up, you'd be in the barracks and you could just go down, they had mess call and you could go down for like lunch or dinner or breakfast or whatever.

*And then you would go back in the field then?*

Right.

*So, you would recharge at the-*

Yes. We would stay in for a few days and then they would, you know, tell you to go out again.

*Did you lose weight while you were there?*

Well I think, I was always pretty thin, I mean yes if you see in the picture there, I was never really that heavy.

*Yes. How did you stay in touch with your family?*

Well we just wrote. You could, if you went to Saigon, they had like this real big hospital, there were people I remember we went in, and I used to go in the library and they had some guys who could call home, or they had one thing is they had those ham radio operators, some of them volunteered. You could call, they would call in Vietnam, and they would call some guy in Alaska or someplace and he would call up, you give me your number and your families number in Chicago or New York or whatever and they would call them on the phones, but it was kinda like, they had to switch back and forth. But the phone lines, from what I understand, the phone lines in Saigon were pretty good. But I never called when I was over there, it was kinda hard to stay in touch.

*So, did you feel more pressure, more stress when you were out in the field as opposed to being in the base?*

Oh yes, yes. It's 'cause you never know. I mean, like I said, I wasn't really in a lot of fighting or anything, but when you're out in the field, you really have to be careful. The main thing we were kind of worried about was like booby traps and things like that. That's where a lot of-

*So, was that a platoon size group you were with?*

Yes, well you were in a company, you were the medic for the platoon and you would go out and-

*And the platoon was like fifteen, twenty?*

Let's see, it was about twenty-five to thirty guys.

*Back in the states sometimes you would see the entertainers would be at some bases giving shows for the USO performances. Did you have any of that?*

Some came out. There were some once in a while. They came, they had, the one thing they did have, did ever hear of the Donut Dollies?

*Yes.*

Yes, they would come to the bases sometimes, like around Christmas or you know they were just young girls. They had like one time when I was, Bob Hope was there for Christmas and when he goes there, he goes all day. When they show that on tv they only show it in clips, the show that he puts on in each base. So, they asked if some guys wanted to go see him, so they had the truck, usually from what I understand they tried to get the guys that were wounded, or they would have the nurses. And if you see like, if you ever see the reruns, they have it on the Internet, like the guys up on the front, a lot of them were guys that were wounded. So, they would go to the big bases where they had the big hospitals. Yes, they did have, they tried to have entertainment over there, but I mean you know. And they did have for the Americans they had their own tv network for the military. And they had a WAC, the Women's Army Corps, she gave the weather. And all the guys that were giving the news were guys in the Army that had uniforms on, or the Air Force. As a matter of fact, there was a big scandal one time when I first went over there, one of the guys that was doing the news, after he gave his report and he says, "I want you to know that the news is censored over here." So, after that he wasn't on the news anymore.

*Wow.*

Yes, that happened.

*So, this was like a TV studio in Saigon?*

Yes, it was live tv and it came right at the end of his report. I forget what his name was, you know it's on the internet. But right after his report he says, "I want you to know all the news you're seeing over here is censored." And then they had a guy, another guy followed he was giving sports and he was like, "Thanks Bob Jones, in more ways than one." And he wasn't on there anymore either. So, people were saying yes, the news over there like I said was all controlled by the military. But you could get newspapers and stuff, magazines, they didn't censor any of that.

*So, did you, were you allowed any leave or R&R?*

Yes, I went to, I took a leave to, I went to Bangkok for a week one time and then I went to Taipei in Taiwan just to kind of get away. And you know it was the tourist things, you know. Like in Bangkok they have a lot of these temples, so Bangkok's got a wild reputation even now, I don't know if you know anybody who goes there. After that, well they had, there was a lot of Air Force there that was staying, I guess it was fifty thousand Air Force that was in Thailand over there. And I was just going to say, one of the sergeants I had, he was a medic, he had a lot more training he had been assigned in Thailand before he came to Vietnam and he was saying when he was there he didn't wear his uniform because they didn't go by sergeant, they went by just like Mr. Smith. He had to have a passport, but he was assigned in Thailand and I think what he was doing, and they were going around what they call MEDCAPS, and they would give medical help to villages and I think what they were using them for was going around and getting intelligence which they would use in the military to find out what was going on. But yes, he said when he was there he said they never called him by his rank. It was kinda like, I mean he was still in the service, but it was almost like he was a civilian.

*And that was in?*

Thailand.

*In Thailand.*

In Thailand. There were a lotta, there were like I said the Air Force, there were a lot of, like I said, fifty thousand Air Force. The Thais, they were, you know where there wasn't any war on, they liked Americans, a lot of the, a lot of the Thai girls were very pretty by the way, a lot, there was a lot of soldiers or guys in the Air Force married Thai women. For you know, even now, there's people go there if you want to have a good time or something.

*yes it seems like it attracts all kinds of people.*

yes well, it's, you know, kinda like Las Vegas or something. People go out there just to spend a lot of money and have a good time.

*So, do you recall any particularly humorous or unusual events?*

No, just sometimes well I'll give you something, like when I worked at this one base, we had like this, we had Vietnamese that worked there, one woman was kinda like an interpreter and she would help out with some of the medical things and she was telling me one time, she says, she asked if you go on R&R, like a leave, she asked this one guy if he was going to go on leave. And she told me she says, "Oh he told me he was injured." and I said, "He was injured? And I says well why do you say that, why do you think that?" And she goes, "I asked him if he was going on R&R and he says I can't go, I'm broken." And I says, Well he meant he was broke, he didn't have any money. It doesn't mean he's injured or have a broken arm. He says he's broke, that means I don't have the money to go on leave." So, they would sometimes hear Americans talk or something and they would, you know.



*So, the leave wasn't all expenses paid, you had to-*

No, well, if you had enough money you could go and check, you could go and get money you saved because you don't have a lot to spend it on. What you would do is go to finance, and you would you know, take money out and go there and you know you would just, people want to have a good time. A lot of times guys just wanted to drink and chase women around or whatever it was.

*Did you, so when you're in Taiwan and Thailand, did you sample any new food, or did you really enjoy-*

No, they had like the Thai food or something, I mean the thing I remember was I went to a movie and they had all American movies, and it was in English and they had it all subtitled. So, if you wanted to go, like I said, I think I saw *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* over there, you know. And I remember one thing, as they told us, they gave us a briefing before you went in there, and they said if you go to a movie they say, that before the movie starts, or maybe I think it was before it started or ended, they're going to show the King of Thailand and you have to stand up, and then they said don't try to leave the theater because they lock the doors and they warned us, they said you have to be very respectful, you know you're visitors here, don't pet the kids on the head or anything, I don't know it's kind of bad luck or something. But you know the Thais were very friendly to the Americans, like I said there wasn't a war on it, and they liked the tourists and that's...

*Is there anything that stands out in your memory overall?*

Uh, there's one thing, one incident I remember. And the reason I bring this up, like I said I used to go to this real big hospital in Saigon. I was in there one time there was an American lieutenant and myself and there was an older Vietnamese woman and she was talking to us and she mentioned this thing, 'cause I said the French had been over there, most people don't remember they had been involved there for a long time and they'd been fighting and she made a comment to me that I never forgot. She said, "Oh you Americans and the French, you're very much alike." And she even said, "You're going to leave the country, you're gonna eventually leave. But she said the difference between you and the French is when they left they took their babies with them. And the Americans don't." So the lieutenant thought that she was trying to be funny and started laughing, and this woman was serious. Neil, if a French soldier had a child with a Vietnamese woman, even if they weren't married, if it was illegitimate or they were not legally married, the child was considered a French citizen. If a Vietnamese woman had a child with an American soldier, they didn't, I think they did eventually bring some over, I think that's what she was saying, it's kinda like the French when they were here, when something happened, they took care of the children that were here. The Americans just kinda forgot about them because they didn't want to deal with that.

*Mr. Carr, you attained the rank of an E-4, specialist 4. Is that a sergeant?*

No, no. Sergeant would be, okay sergeant would be like, okay lowest rank is an E-1 when you first go in and then you're like an E-2 is one stripe, E-3 is private first class, E-4 is you're a specialist. If you're a Sergeant you're E-5 or if you're a Specialist 5. But usually to become like an E-5 you probably have to be in at least two years. See I was only in a year and a half.

*So, I don't even know if this is helpful, but is that the equivalent of a corporal?*

Yes, corporal usually corporal you don't see when I was in, you don't really see, I don't know if they have that now. Cause they, if you look on my uniform there, that's what that is, that patch there. Now if it has a stripe above it, that means you're an E-5 or specialist 5.

*So, you did get a promotion though?*

Oh yes, you get promoted when you're, if you you've been in like when you go in and you're a recruit and you're E-1 then you get one stripe, that's E-2, private first class is E-3, and then your specialist when you're a specialist you're E-4 and then you can get like another stripe, then you're an E-5. And yes when you're like that, you're like an equivalent to a sergeant. But usually, but that'll take a couple years to probably get.

*So, as your time in Vietnam was coming to an end, you're not inclined to extend your service or reenlist?*

I did stay for one month extra, okay, the reason why was as I said, at that time they were cutting back, they were doing what they called the withdrawals, they were cutting back the service. So, if you came back from Vietnam and you had less than six months of active service left, you could put in for what they call an early discharge. So, I said well I have my benefits, I can go to school, you know on the GI Bill, in Illinois they had Illinois state scholarship, so I said well this is my change to go back to school. So, I said well I'll stay an extra month, I didn't come back until October instead of September. And then I came home, that's when I got my discharge. And at that time there were so many guys leaving the service that they put you in a reserve unit, but I never went to any meetings or anything.

*You never thought of making a career of the Army?*

No, no. I didn't want to.

*And then being a medic, you didn't think of going into the health services or something?*

I don't know, I mean, there was yes, we did get training in the end but like I said, I thought they kinda rushed us through. I mean if somebody had stayed in for like two or three years or they worked or worked in the emergency room or something like that. yes, some of the guys did, some if they stayed in for a while.

*So, it sounds like when you say they were cutting back on the number, it sounds like they were drawing down troops at that time.*

Yes, they were. When Nixon came in, that started, as a matter of fact the unit, the first unit that he pulled out, I think that was August 1969, that was the outfit that I was in. He pulled most of the Ninth Division out, there was only like part of it that was left and that was where I was assigned. And some of the guys had been almost, like I guess they had seven or eight months they could've gone home early, but if they had less they still had to stay for the rest of the tour, so some of the guys they almost were able to go home but they hadn't been there long enough.

*So, this area where the Ninth Division was, and they're being drawn down, are they being replaced by anybody else?*

Well the South Vietnamese were supposed to take the fighting over. And they had, I never went to it, they had a really big base, a lot of the guys used to talk about, it was called Dong Tam, that was like further south and they said they had turned the base over to them. So, they had built a huge base there and then they removed most of the Ninth Division so they turned it over to the South Vietnamese.

*So, I wonder if any of you guys had any thoughts about what might happen if the American forces were drawn down?*

Well, that was the thing that they said, that Nixon, his big strategy was Vietnamization. He was going to have the South Vietnamese they were going to take over the brunt of the fighting, they were going to do most of the fighting. He would give them support, they would have the Air Force there, and that was it. They were given more equipment, more training. Eventually I mean I don't know, I don't have to tell you what happened. Eventually when all the American troops left, they weren't able to hold off the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong, and they eventually won.

*Were you surprised to hear that or to learn that or?*

Well, it was very upsetting because you figure we got all these guys who were killed over there, all that effort and that, you know. But I think people just figured they didn't want to, how long were we going to stay in there? I mean by that time Ford was president, he just announced you know, we spent all this money, we you know, we had given them more equipment, if they couldn't hold off, it's just the other side I don't know. I guess they were just determined to win. I felt sorry for those that had supported the Americans, and I think there was even after they took over, there was a lot that tried to flee or escaped. I feel sorry for them, the Vietnamese that helped the Americans cause I know there was repercussions against that. Or like I said, these ones that if they had their father, if they were fathered by an American soldier, I heard that they're kinda looked down on, they're not accepted. We talked with some of the veterans that had gone back over there, the ones we meet with the coffee, and they say, well the younger people now they've forgotten about the war. The younger ones that are living there now, the young people they don't have any memories of it, so they said they don't think there's any strong hostility against Americans or the United States.

*So, do you remember the day that your service in the Army ended?*

Oh yes, it was October 10<sup>th</sup>, 1970. It was when I came home, and I got my papers, flew home and-

*So, did you fly to-*

We landed in Oakland and-

*Was that in a commercial carrier then too?*

Right. yes and I just went back to Chicago and I was home. I was out.

*Did you have any difficulty adjusting to life in civilian life?*

I don't think so, my wife sometimes, she doesn't- the only thing is-

*Does your wife know you at that time?*

Pardon?

*Did your wife know you at this time?*

No, no, no. We didn't get married until years later. But I was saying the thing I kinda remember was people didn't really want to hear about. I never detected anybody who criticized me personally when I told them I was in the service, especially if I told them I was a medic. They go, "Well you weren't killing people, you weren't fighting." Well I was a soldier, but I said no, when I was in, when I went to university, I went to Northern and got a teaching degree-

*Was that using the GI benefits?*



Yes, I remember my roommate, the guy was very against being in the military, he said he never would've went in if they drafted him. He didn't have to go in, and I said, "Well that's the choice you would've had to make. He says he wouldn't, he would've refused to go in the service all together. And if somebody didn't want to go in or they avoided the service, well that's the decision they made. I don't, if they thought that was the right thing to do, you know they have to decide what they thought was right.

*Did you stay in contact with any of your war buddies?*

When I first came home there was one guy that, he was from Milwaukee and he moved down to Chicago and he had an apartment in the Gold Coast so I used to go see him, but it wasn't until I started meeting the veterans now, like how we meet over at the Dunkin Donuts in Morton Grove. But, like my brother, he's not interested in any of that either, he doesn't really like to talk about that.

*The American Legion, or the VFW or?*

No, no, we were never involved. We did do an interview, there was a young girl that, he lives in Mount Prospect, this girl was doing a project for high school, so she interviewed him, and she interviewed me and then they published it in a book. But the only thing is, when I saw what they published they had some of the things, I think they kinda confused my brother and myself, like they said he was drafted. Well he wasn't; he enlisted. You know, so they said like this other thing, they said we grew up in Chicago. Actually, we grew up in the suburbs, you know. So, I like, I mean it wasn't anything really, it was, I don't know, maybe somebody else rewrote it up for her, they kinda, some of the things weren't completely accurate.

*So, there were no reunions that you attended?*

No, no I never did any of those.

*Well, I sense that we are coming to the end of the interview*

Okay.

*There's always two questions that we ask as recommended by the Library of Congress. How do you think your experience in the service affected your life?*

I think it was, in a way, I think it was very - you learned a lot. You get a chance to go see another country, another culture, you meet all different kinds of people. I think you appreciate, like in our country you appreciate what you have, you know. You realize what's the benefits, like why do people want to come to the United States. What do we have? What opportunities do we have? And I think there's one thing when I said, when I got out I said, well now I have a chance, I'm going to go back to school and see if I can finish my education. And that's what I did. So, in a way, and plus like I said I got back with the GI Bill, there was an Illinois State Scholarship that paid for most of my education, and there are benefits to being a veteran. So, I can't complain, I mean I was in a year and a half, they paid for, I got four years of schooling. So, I think for me it was beneficial. I can say yes there were some things that you know, that when I think about, there were sad things or tragic things that happened but compared to what other people had to deal with I can't really say I- you know like my brother he was over there for a year too. He wasn't, neither one of us was wounded, you know. We had friends that, unfortunately they were in the service, that died or guys we were in the service with. But no, I think in a way I learned a lot and I think, you know now when I'm older now I can look back on it. I feel sorry for the guys in the service now, they're in danger or their families. You know, it's upsetting when you hear about the young guys that killed whether it's Afghanistan or Iraq. And I think now that the ones in the service, they're treated a lot

better. I think people appreciate what they're doing, and it's hard on their families when they're away. My wife and I were just, our family, we were coming back from Ireland, there was a young woman that was on the plane and her husband's in the Army now, he's in Poland. And she went over there, he got leave and they were traveling in Ireland and she got a chance to see him. Now she was coming back by herself, she was going back down to Texas again, and he was still overseas, he's still over in Poland.

*As you were speaking, I was thinking, as a medic did you see any early indications of the Agent Orange?*

No, that was, the thing is, that's one reason I'm glad I got involved with these veterans. I, my own opinion, I always thought I was never affected by it. They didn't, as far as I knew, I never saw them spray it in the delta in our area. I don't think I was affected by it. Now I was talking to, I don't know if you know Roger McGill, he's the one that's in charge of the, for our chapter, and he said you were affected by it. Everybody over there he says, you have it in your system. Now maybe some people obviously have serious health problems. Now when I was training as a medic, when I was over there, I never heard any talk about that. It was one of the issues we heard at the Heritage Center event. One of the nurses said she was a nurse in Vietnam, same thing, never any talk about what this dioxide or Agent Orange did. And it wasn't until years later that it came out, and I think, in it was definitely, now they're saying now it's affecting not only the veterans but their children and their grandchildren. So that has been a really sad legacy.

*So, when you got assigned to your area of the country on the basis of the alphabet, you were in the south. If you had been maybe a little further in the alphabet, maybe you would've been assigned to another geographic band where there was more Agent Orange.*

Well, no, a lot of places they did use it, like in the jungle. They sprayed it, or guys would have it sprayed. I'll give you a perfect example. When some of the veterans were showing us, okay I know you probably know the reason why it's called that. It's colorless but it's in big barrels and they had an orange stripe on it. But guys were showing us pictures when I met with the veterans. They had these fifty-five gallon drums, when they were done, after they used it they cut them in half and were cooking in it, and they didn't know that. I mean, they thought okay, and they were barbequing and cooking in there and eating the food that was in there. Now, I saw I never, in our area I never saw that, I never remember anybody doing that. But, right, that was another thing, I didn't realize. I heard they were using it in the States, but it wasn't as toxic or something. There was a lot of, and now not only did they use it in Vietnam, they used it in Thailand, they used it in the Philippines, they used it by the DMZ in Korea. There were military bases that used it. Some were saying there's a town in Missouri that is completely abandoned now because they were doing something with Agent Orange there.

*And then, one of the final questions here, is recommended us to consider. How do you think your military experience influenced your opinion about war, or about the military in general?*

Well one thing is like I say, it's easy, here's the way I look at it, it's easy to get into a war, it's hard to get out. Like now, I mean, North Korea, Iran, I mean yes, these countries are causing trouble or are dangerous, but if you start a war, once you start it, how do you get out of it? And that was the trouble in Vietnam, once we got in, how do we get out? I mean, our people can talk about Nixon or how he should've ended the war earlier, I remember, we talked about that when I was there, there was a black GI that said this. We were talking about, well like Nixon why doesn't he end the war and what's he doing? And this one black guy made a comment that I never forget, he said, "Well he's the only one that's ever been pulling troops out." He started pulling the troops out. Now he did get the troops out, he got the prisoners home, people say maybe he should've done it earlier, it meant that it was a bad agreement. He got us out, that was the bottom line. Now, once the Americans were out, the thing didn't last very long,

the government collapsed there, people say it was a big mistake, a failure. Alright, well it was like, I watched that program, what's his name, the one they had on Vietnam?

*Ken Burns?*

Ken Burns. And it was actually a North Vietnamese lieutenant that I think made the comment. He said when there's a war on, when there's a war no one is a winner. And I think that's a very precise comment, a very concise comment. Nobody wins. You could say, well, military victories, but the people suffer, it's just terrible. And when there's a war on, like I say, there's a, it affects everybody, it affects the whole country and some people more than others. I mean there are some guys that are never going to get over what happened over there. I consider myself lucky, I came back, I think I made a pretty good adjustment, I don't think I have any problems.

*Mr. Carr, did you become a history teacher then with your?*

Well, when I first came home that was my major, and it wasn't a very good major to be in. I worked as a substitute teacher in the suburbs, so I was taking Spanish in night school. So, I figured Chicago always needed teachers. So when I went in, my background was secondary, high school, so when I went in they found out I took Spanish they said, "Well go to elementary school, you'll get picked up right away." So that's what happened, I started working with young children in elementary schools. That's where I met my wife. So, I worked almost twenty-five years in the Chicago Public Schools and I was working for the Hispanic kids.

*Were you in Pilsen or?*

Yes, I started out in Pilsen, that's around 18th street. And then my wife, I worked near 26th and California or 26th street. I worked over there for like twenty years. So, I worked, and the kids I worked with I always worked with young children. The school I worked in was a regular public school, but it was kinda of a special school. It was only from preschool to third grade, so I always worked with young children. And I was bigger than they were anyways.

*Mr. Carr do you think there's anything that we haven't covered?*

No, no, unless you would like to ask me anything else or if you're curious? No, but I think it was, I hope you enjoyed it.

*I did, I learned, I've got a wonderful opportunity working with the veterans to learn-*

I was just curious; did you ever meet anybody or talk to anybody that was a prisoner?

*I interviewed, not in Vietnam, I interviewed a gentleman, Richard Rogala who was on the Pueblo.*

Oh really?

Yes.

Oh, that must've been interesting.

It was, and he donated his uniform to us and we gave his uniform to the Niles Historical Society. And every year about this time they send more petitions to Washington or obtain signatures from congressmen because they want the United States to get the Pueblo ship back and they want it to go back to Pueblo, Colorado.

I remember when that happened. And there was another thing I remembered. There was this thing when I went in the Army, there was like a reconnaissance plane with some, I know there were some Marines and some soldiers on it, the North Koreans shot it down and they killed all the guys on it. And I had, I don't think I have any prejudice, but I know that the Koreans, even the Korean troops in Vietnam, they, well, maybe that's how they fight, they are very brutal. And I'll give you an example, I met this one guy he was in the Army, he was in Vietnam. He was in payroll, so he wasn't in the field and near the base where he was, they were further up north, he said the South Koreans, they called them ROK (Republic of Korea) Troops, they had their base there, he said they had a POW compound. He said all the whole time he was there, for the whole year Neil, there was only one prisoner there and even he didn't survive. They didn't take any prisoners, they were very brutal, very brutal.

*Yes, I met a Vietnamese War veteran that was a ROK, I think he was Green Beret or special forces. He said the Viet Cong were afraid of them.*

They were, well like I said, they didn't take any prisoners. Very brutal, I mean, you know they supported the Americans, I heard they fought really hard, but you know, like I said, they were very brutal. But that's how they fight over there, a lot of people don't want to realize that. I don't mean to say that Americans didn't, unfortunately there were bad things on the American side, but the Koreans, terrible, terrible. And this guy Kim Jong-un or whatever his name is, I can't imagine. I mean he killed his own half-brother, I mean that is, yes. If you capture anybody today, they fight, and Trump, I don't know if he's. I don't know if he's, and this is a little bit of trivia, I don't know if you heard this, my wife doesn't like me to bring it up. You know where Donald Trump's mother was born?

*Scotland.*

Yes, you're right. Hebrides Islands.

*Yes.*

He owns two golf courses in Scotland. He owns one in Ireland too by the way.

*Yes.*

That's not too far from where my wife's family is from. yes, he's a piece of work, right? Were you a history teacher or major?

*No. Well Mr. Carr I would like to thank you for a very enlightening interview, it was very generous.*

Well I'm glad you enjoyed it.