Interviewer: Are you aware that our conversation is being recorded and that the tape and transcription will be placed in the library? Do I have your permission?

Veteran: Yes.

Interviewer: What war were you active in?
Veteran: Vietnam.

Interviewer: What years were you involved with the war?

Interviewer: What branch of service were you in?
Veteran: United States Army.

Interviewer: How old were you at this time?
Veteran: I went into the service at 19 and got out just before I turned 22.

Interviewer: Where were located at?
Veteran: I took boot camp at Fort Polk, Louisiana. From there I went to AIT, which is advanced infantry training, at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, where I was studying to work on the Pershing missile system. From there I went to Fort Benning, Georgia, and there I joined the airborne group—paratroopers—and from there we shipped out to Vietnam, and I was there for thirteen months.
Interviewer: Did you enlist voluntarily?
Veteran: No, I was drafted.

Interviewer: In your opinion, how did the U.S. get involved with this war?
Veteran: I believe it started in late 1961 when they were sending advisors over to Vietnam, and from there it escalated and finally they were sending troops over there to assist the Vietnamese government in their battle with the North Vietnamese.

Interviewer: What kinds of supplies were you given in combat and so forth?
Veteran: When we were over there we were issued fatigues, and we were issued weapons, of course. I was qualified in several weapons. I carried an M-14/M2, which was a fully-automatic M-14, which was a rifle. I was qualified with the M-79 grenade launcher, the 3.5 rocket launcher, and like I said, I worked on the Pershing missile system.

Interviewer: What was your shelter like?
Veteran: We had at our first compound like a sandbag bunker that was kind of built on the ground level, and then after that we moved to another location which was actually behind the combat zone way far away—I guess you’d call them logistics areas—and we actually lived in barracks that we constructed our own.

Interviewer: What kind of food were you fed? Was it good or bad?
Veteran: It depended on where you were. If you were out in the field, you ate C-rations that they issued to you. If you were back in the compound, you ate pretty good. When we were living in our barracks, we had a mess hall and we were fed regular hot meals. If you were in a fire zone, then they would fly you in meals at times. If not, you ate C-rations.

Interviewer: What were your duties?
Veteran: I was a squad leader when I was in Vietnam, and we went on reconnaissance patrols missions—things like that. As I said, I also worked in the Pershing missile system and later we moved into an engineering group, and we actually worked on compressors, generators, and things like that.
Interviewer: Do you remember any specific events that arose during the war that stick out in your mind?

Veteran: I got to see Bob Hope—that’s one thing that really stuck out in my mind. He did a Christmas show in a place called Quinyon, which was about 19 miles from our main base. I got to meet Nancy Sinatra. I was her driver for two weeks while she was there. So those are two memorable, I guess you’d say, events that stuck out—meeting celebrities.

Interviewer: When you met Bob Hope, where were you?

Veteran: I didn’t meet Bob Hope, I just saw his show. I was stationed at Cha Rang Valley, and like I said we were 19 miles from the show he did at the Quinyon airbase, and I got to go to his show, and I was about maybe ten rows from the center stage.

Interviewer: Were you ever wounded? If so, what kind of treatment did you receive?

Veteran: Twice—I was wounded twice. First time I was wounded it was shrapnel, and the second time I received a bullet wound in the leg.

Interviewer: Did you receive good medical treatment for this?

Veteran: Yes. I received treatment at the 81st Evac Hospital. Over here we have what’s called Life Flight. Over there it was called Dust Off, and they would send the helicopters in and transport you back to the hospital. I was treated there and then later released.

Interviewer: How long were you not allowed to be in combat while you were wounded?

Veteran: The first time I was wounded in the leg, and it wasn’t really bad. I think I was there maybe six weeks. The second time that I was wounded I was hospitalized for about two months, and I didn’t go back to combat. I was actually released, and I came back stateside, and then out of the service.
Interviewer: What was the highest rank you achieved?
Veteran: I became a sergeant, an E-5—just a plain old buck sergeant—three stripes.

Interviewer: Do you remember your daily schedule—eat, sleep, whenever you fought?
Veteran: You were in the main base, and it was just like a regular workday. You got up before the crack of dawn, of course, and you went to your work. Some people had to pull guard duty, some people had to do K.P., others worked in the painting. Different types of work—just like a regular day. But when you were in the field there were no set hours. Sometimes you were up twenty-four hours a day. It all depended where you were and what you were doing. There was no set schedule.

Interviewer: Do you ever feel like articles or writings misinform readers about what really happened?
Veteran: Being over there, we had heard all the stuff that was going on back in the states about the protests about the Vietnam War and stuff, and we were just over there doing what we were told, and it was kind of scary because you didn’t know what to expect. I read a lot of articles about the Vietnam War after I got out—some I agreed with, some I did not agree with. I even read a book that was called *Welcome Home*, and it was about events that happened to G.I.s that had returned home and how they were treated, and it was not a very welcome greeting I should say.

Interviewer: How did this war end?
Veteran: I got out of the service in 1967, and of course I followed it because it was part of my history—part of my life, I guess you’d say. I followed it until it ended in 1975, I believe, when they shipped the last of the folks out of the Vietnam embassy. In my opinion, it ended but it wasn’t finished. We were sent there to do a job, and we didn’t do what we wanted to do—or couldn’t do what we wanted to do. It was a political war in my opinion, and in a lot of other people’s opinion, too.

Interviewer: How was it returning to your family?
Veteran: It was a great feeling coming home. Coming back from Vietnam I remember I flew in from Vietnam and went through all the processing out and everything, and then I left Seattle, Washington, and flew to Houston. I think what made me feel the greatest was that when I got to Hobby Airport (we didn’t have Intercontinental at the time) I walked outside and there was a limousine outside which was actually going to Galveston, and I walked up and asked the guy how much it would cost to ride home, and he said, “Nothing, because I’m going that way, and I’ll give you a ride for free.” He actually had a son that was in Vietnam, and his son had just went to Vietnam as I was coming home. He dropped me off right at my parent’s house. Nobody was home—of course, my mom and dad were working, so I went around to the back of the house and let myself in. I went in and took a shower, got dressed and everything, and went downtown. My mother owned a little small restaurant, and I remember walking in and surprising everybody, because nobody knew I was coming home, and it was just like the business shut down. It was really a great feeling.

Interviewer: Did you keep any of your articles or equipment from the war?
Veteran: I have a few things that I kept. I kept some medals and some shoulder patches that I gave my son and he put them in a shadow box. But no weapons, no uniforms, anything like that—no.

Interviewer: Was it difficult finding jobs when you returned?
Veteran: Actually, no. The company I worked for when I left, I went back to work for when I got back. Had a different job, of course, and it was like old home week. Everybody was talking to me and stuff, and it was good to be back among friends.

Interviewer: Was the economy any different from the time you left?
Veteran: I left as a teenager, and like I said I had just started working steady as a teenager, and I really couldn’t tell if there was any difference, because I had been out—not in this world, I guess you would say—and there was some difference. I knew gas prices had gone up some, but not a whole lot, and clothing. Different things were higher, but it didn’t seem like it was much of a change.
Interviewer: Did you need any medical treatment after the war?
Veteran: When you came home from Vietnam, everybody was required to take these malaria pills, because there was a malaria presence over there, so I had to take these malaria pills every day for 21 days after I got home. As far as medical treatment, no, I didn’t ever need any of that.

Interviewer: And finally, did you receive any benefits from this war?
Veteran: No. No pension, no nothing from the war. Like I said, I was wounded over there. I do have the option that I can go to the V.A. hospital if I want to. I did purchase my house using the G.I. Bill, and I completed by education using the G.I. Bill, and so those are the benefits that I did use. But as far as any other monetary value, no.

Interviewer: Alright. Thanks a lot.

{END OF INTERVIEW}