



Bryant Jake

Cedar City, Utah

Sergeant

W-2 Army

Infantry

"Escalation"

Interviewer

Give us your full name.

Bryant Jake

Bryant Jake.

Interviewer

And how old are you?

Bryant Jake

I'm 64.

Interviewer

And where did you grow up?

Bryant Jake

Here. I was born here in Cedar, and this is where I grew up, too. I went to school here. And then just really when I got outta school they just, you know, draft, this and that.

Interviewer

You were drafted?

Bryant Jake

Yes.

Interviewer

What year were you drafted?

Bryant Jake

'67.

Interviewer

Tell us about your life before you were drafted.

Bryant Jake

Well, in high school I used to try to be an athlete for football and baseball. And the most thing I really liked was football 'cause we had all my friends playing football. And then every summer we used to build our muscle up just to go haul hay and all that. And that really brought us up to have a nice good body on us to play football. And then I think it was second practice one of our guys, our linesmen and that stepped on my hands. That was the end of my career. It was on the right side when they stepped on my hands, and it just shattered three places when he just stepped with the cleats.

And I tried out for basketball, but I couldn't play basketball. I just wanted to be a teenager. We done everything, what we did. Being a cowboy. My friends, they all had ranches, farms, and I used to cowboy with them. And used to ride horses a lot and then take the cattles up the mountain. And whoever needed help, we used to take all the sheep up and the cattles they used to take up the mountain on horses.

Interviewer

Where did you go to basic training?

Bryant Jake

I went to the one that's down here by El Paso. I can't remember the name there. But that's where I was from basic. I was the only Indian guy, a native in my company.

Interviewer

What was that like?

Bryant Jake

Everybody used to call me Chief. Chief was just brave now. And then one of the drill sergeants that came on just asked me if I wanted to be an active sergeant. I said, "What the heck you supposed to do with being an active sergeant?" I didn't know. That's the first time I ever got in. And he said, "Well, you just be a sergeant and tell the privates to do this and that." I said, "Well, okay. I'll do it."

And since then, I've been active sergeant all the way through AIT. I went to Fort Polk, Louisiana, and I was still an active sergeant. And we trained there. Gosh, it was just like summertime we were down there. It was humid and heat and just muggy. And then when we went to AIT, we knew where we was going and they were training us to go to Vietnam.

Interviewer

So you knew you were going to Vietnam?

Bryant Jake

Yeah, I did. And so it was just like you had to learn fast, and if you didn't learn, heck, when you get in Vietnam you do the wrong thing and that'll be the end of you. But it was just like all of us were just young.

Interviewer

So when did you get into Vietnam?

Bryant Jake

Okay. August 11th of '67.

Interviewer

And you were assigned to the 25th Infantry?

Bryant Jake

4th Infantry first.

Interviewer

And they had the big clover leaf?

Bryant Jake

Yeah. The four. And after four months I was transferred to 25th.

Interviewer

So when did you first see combat?

Bryant Jake

Oh, heck, when I first got there.

Interviewer

How many days after you got there?

Bryant Jake

It was maybe about three or four days. We were on helicopters. And I was sitting next to a radio man. Had a radio and he was telling us that we're going into hot LZ. And I didn't know what hot LZ was. And they said they were fighting, and then they just ran right into fire.

Interviewer

You could see out?

Bryant Jake

And then they told us just to jump out, where they couldn't land that fast, just slow down or just sit down. We had to jump out. And then they just took off on us, the helicopters.

Interviewer

How long did that first fight last?

Bryant Jake

It lasted two days. And we just hit a big VC camp, and they called all our artillery on that, too. And they had jets coming by and dropping napalm bombs on it. Even that.

Interviewer

How long did it take you to adjust?

Bryant Jake

The thing I was feeling, that I'd been there already fighting, like some dream. And I was already there fighting.

Young guys like we were, we were crying. We're crying like babies. And then we wanted to come back home. That was not our place to be there. It was just like you had to get to be strong in your mind, gotta be there, too, to shoot your weapons and that. And then I think I remember we hit the rice paddy dykes. And the thing was, it was like the rice, you know, they had lots of water in it, and so we laid in that water just all day. All day, just like the mud and in the heat.

Interviewer

Tell us about going from the desert to the jungle.

Bryant Jake

You've got crickets and then you had frogs. And one of these big lizards used to make the noise and that was like a voice. The thing is, I hate to say it, but you used to use that foul language, "F." And we used to go, "Damn, somebody's saying that out there," and one of the sergeants told us that it's one of those big lizards making noise and that. Like I said, I fought like my people here before we went over, and I had learned already about our American Indians before any war started with rifles and things and that.

Interviewer

Did your Indian community prepare you?

Bryant Jake

Yeah. I came home during July, stayed for one month, then I had to go to -- . But my dad and my grandfather and grandmother, they told me there's sacred things going on. And we had to go up Northern Utah to a sun dance there. And we stayed there for a week. And then, it's one of our relation, he was one of the chiefs doing the sun dance. And he was praying on me the whole time. The thing is, a bullet or anything won't hurt you, and you'll come back and a big person you'll be again. And I didn't believe 'em. Didn't believe the Indian way, but I do a lot now. I believe the Indians' way a lotta time. It was just like I fought like the Sioux's and everything, like we knew what was going to happen before things over in Vietnam.

Interviewer

So this helped you?

Bryant Jake

It helped me and it protected me. And the people up there, my people, too, and they said, "You'll be coming back home."

Interviewer

Did any of your relatives serve in the military?

Bryant Jake

My dad, he served in the Second War, but he was on the State side. And he taught me lots of things that American

Native people, how they think a lot. And that when something ever gonna happen to you, before that it'll come to you, see what you're doing over there. And I didn't know. I didn't believe it. But it was just like every five minutes I was praying. Praying all the time. I was like, "Gosh, I'll probably be a bishop when I get back." 'Cause I lived spiritually out there. And everybody was praying, too. And you're just like what thing was gonna happen.

We used to pray like heck, even when we were just ready to go out on ambush and that and getting in helicopters where they was taking us to. And then maybe three, four months I was a sergeant, the regular E-5 and like I knew what I was doing. And everybody in there said, "Gosh, you know what, you know what's going on over here." And I saved lots of guys who was under me. They always wanted to go with me on ambush and that. And I said, "Well, I want volunteers." I'd just take 'em out and bring 'em back.

Interviewer

So your fellow soldiers sensed something about you.

Bryant Jake

It was, and I didn't think like that at all. So maybe you just have to go through being a sergeant, an active sergeant and that, until I got in Vietnam. And one of my friends, we went down there and gosh, he was with me all the time, all the way to Vietnam. And we used to tease each other. I used to be Tonto and he used to be Kemosabe.

Interviewer

What's his name?

Bryant Jake

It was Dennis Butcher from Burley, Idaho.

Interviewer

Did he make it through?

Bryant Jake

Yeah. I think he did 'cause maybe two months later that I got outta the field.

Interviewer

Other than praying, what else helped you along?

Bryant Jake

I think you've gotta be crazy to be over there fighting. You've gotta do crazy things. And that's how I went through. And I used to tell my guys under me, too, I said, "You've gotta be crazy if you wanna stay alive." And I guess they followed me along and said they were crazy and I was crazy. There was crazy thing I used to do, but it was just like I brought my boys back.

Interviewer

Can you give me an example of what you call crazy?

Bryant Jake

Drinking, and then smoking pot. And, oh, gosh, there'd be lots of crazy things I used to do. I always wanted to go out by myself a lot, too, and I used to do that, too, go out on ambush by myself. And that's how crazy I was. But I had about 12 guys under me, and then three guys got killed, and that's when I kinda went outta my mind. They were just like my brothers, man. They'd been with me for a long time, too. And then it was just like I blamed myself for that, what happened in Vietnam with them. And they stepped on a booby trap where I was going through, and I don't know how I missed it. Just walked right over and the guys were right behind me.

Interviewer

How long did you serve?

Bryant Jake

I spent a whole year in Vietnam just like I was fighting all the time.

Interviewer

When in your tour did you lose guys?

Bryant Jake

I was there with a Tet. They put us in front at what they call the 25th Lightning's 'cause we hit and ran. They followed us. 'Cause the craziest thing we used to do is tear off our patches and put it in their mouth, that we were there.

Interviewer

You'd do this to the dead Viet Cong?

Bryant Jake

Yeah. And some guys, I guess they went out of it and they'd start scalping 'em. And that was not my idea of doing that. We just left our patches with 'em.

Interviewer

Tell us about the Tet Offensive.

Bryant Jake

I guess they were all gathering up north of Vietnam, and then they were coming through Cambodia border and following the trails all over. The thing, they just had weapons, all things already be there. And they hit every town, big villages.

Interviewer

Where was your unit when they hit?

Bryant Jake

We were in our base, and we were there and that's what they called us. So we had to get on helicopters. They were coming in, so we had to get in. We were going to Saigon. They had a big Tet there. And man, they were just dropping us into rice paddies where they were fighting. So we were fighting door to door.

Interviewer

So you were street fighting at that point?

Bryant Jake

Yeah, street fighting. We were doing that, and gosh, we had artilleries and jets coming in just dropping 'em. And we got most of 'em outta there.

Interviewer

How long did that battle last?

Bryant Jake

Gosh, maybe about four days. The embassy down there, they took that, and even figure out radio things, where it was, too.

Interviewer

Were you getting letters from home?

Bryant Jake

I was getting letters from my mother and my dad and my sister. And the thing of that used to be when I'd get a letter I was just happy just to see it from them and see that the family was doing a lot here. And my mother said, "We're praying for you all the time." And even my aunts, they said, "They're always praying for you, too."

Interviewer

What does it mean when you're short?

Bryant Jake

Short is how many months and how many days and how many minutes do you have 'til you'll be coming home. And then the thing I did, I was counting my days. And gosh, when they come picked me outta the field I had ten more days to go. And they told me, "You're dropped. You're ready to go home," and gave me the papers and, "You better get going." And that made me feel good. But I just didn't wanna leave my friends. I wanted to stay another year again over there with my friends and that. And one of my friends says, "We'll be all right." He says, "We learned things from you as to how you're gonna be protected from getting killed and that."

Interviewer

What did they learn from you?

Bryant Jake

It was like walking down through a trail, you gotta look at everything, what moves. Or if a trail is messed up or you seen a wire or anything on where it's going and that, and you got all kinds of booby traps and that. And I was just like a lead point dog, they call it. We had a German Shepherd. It was the point. Be up there in front of us and smell out everything. But for me, I always volunteered to be up front. And I knew things I'd see what I'd hear. And I was more trained as a dog and that.

Interviewer

Why would you volunteer so much?

Bryant Jake

Like I said, you gotta be crazy. But when I lost my three guys and that, that's when I just wanted to get out front all the time just to fight or get myself killed. And that's how crazy I was. And I used to volunteer everything. Volunteer for going out a lot. And the thing is, too, is I hear things what other person couldn't hear, or you can smell 'em.

Interviewer

Was this because you're Paiute?

Bryant Jake

Yeah. Like, my great-grandfathers when they fought. It was like I can hear things. And even with my sergeants and my captain, I used to tell 'em, "You can hear what's gonna happen, not even about five or ten minutes what's gonna be coming." And I said, "We're gonna get hit tonight." They'd say, "Okay." I used to tell 'em, "Do you hear anything? You don't hear the crickets, you don't hear the frogs or you don't hear the bird chirping." And not even five minutes, we got hit. And I said, "We better get into our bunker."

Interviewer

Tell us about the things you sensed.

Bryant Jake

Yeah. My sergeant came up to me and I told him, "You hear things and this and that." I said, "I fought like my grandfathers or other tribe was there," you know, what was gonna happen. And even a bad person. You couldn't trust no ARVNs over there, too. You just can't trust 'em 'cause they'll turn right against you when we get over in or get shot at and that. The things was, too, we used to walk into a big ambush and I knew what was gonna happen. And we walked into an LV-shaped ambush, and I was trying to tell my captain. I says, "We're gonna get hit and I think we're gonna run right into it." And sure enough, we did. It was just like that movie Platoon. That was my division and my company. All things I seen, it was just some were true, some were not. We were the lowest totem pole, low-income persons, like, we're having a hard time. We wasn't rich and that. So that's how we came out this way, the family.

Interviewer

Were you ever wounded?

Bryant Jake

No. I wasn't wounded. The only thing, I had a lung collapse in Vietnam. That's all. And then I had malaria. And all the way through it, never been wounded. The only thing, the bullets used to hit right on top of me right behind a dead tree. I can just feel it. And then the hot bullets would just land right on top of you. And nothing. And our own guys in artillery hit a round right by me. I was just barely going to walk over to the dyke, and I can hear the artillery coming. And I thought it was over us, but it hit right by me and just threw me about 20 feet back. And my ears just

popped, and my eyes, they was just bleeding. And then my friends, they came back running, thought I was dead. But I just got up and I could just feel that heat on my face when it hit. And my guy said, "Damn, you could have been dead." And I said, "Something's guarding me." And I'm not fear of anything like that. But that's what happened to me.

Even when I was in the hospital in Cu Chi, I was lying in a bed, and then we got hit and rockets were coming in and mortars were coming in. And they told us, "If you can walk then crawl to the bunker." So I crawled. And then a big fragment just hit the pillow where I was laying. I said, "Gosh, if I was still laying there I'd be dead." I have so many people still like that. I say, "Keep on praying." The thing that I was doing a lot, I used to pray in the morning time. And then I used to put dirt all over myself. And I used to smoke a lot, too, and I used to pray with the smoke towards the sun, morning time. And then when the sun goes down, I used to do the same thing and pray toward the sun when it was going down. The thing was for me to do that all the time.

And I was the only Indian guy, too. And later, there was a Sioux Indian that came along, too. Then he had the same feeling and same things we used to do together. And there was another guy came along, too, Navajo kid. But the person I seen then, he wasn't gonna last that long. I looked at him and then I told him, "I see the thing in you," and I said, "You've gotta be crazy to do things to stay alive." And I guess he had the feeling, too, he wasn't gonna make it. Not even two months, he got killed. But for me and that Sioux boy, we helped each other. Even there was a Puerto Rican friend of mine, too, and he got with us, too. What he believed in his people was just about the same, too. And the thing we always have, you know, in the morning time, we pray. And I used to tell him just, "When you get up first thing in the morning time, look towards the sun and pray."

Interviewer

Tell us about the rainy season.

Bryant Jake

Monsoon season, it was just like gosh, every day it just rained. And we still had to crawl through it, walk through it, sleep in it. And there was so much things that was crawling around you all the time.

Interviewer

Bugs and things?

Bryant Jake

Snakes and bugs, mosquitoes. Mosquitoes were the ones that I just couldn't stand anymore. And just buzzing all the way into your brains. And gosh, sometimes we used to go through a darned kinda valley of death, and we were just like cattle walking, just clear up to our neck. And the water was running, but it was running off the mountains and making big lakes.

Interviewer

Did you ever have to go into any tunnels?

Bryant Jake

Yes, I did.

Interviewer

Tell us about that.

Bryant Jake

I was a skinny person and I can go through holes. So I volunteered. They said, "Well, go in there. See what you could find." So I used to take a flashlight and a pistol and that's it and crawl through there. And gosh, I never seen so much spiders. And then snakes, I just hated snakes, too. And then things you find in there. Gosh, I found weapons that were all just piled up in there in those tunnels. And the people that were cooking, they had a little fire going in there just like they were ready to eat. And I couldn't find nobody. And then I guess they took off and went to other foxholes and tunnels.

Interviewer

What did you think about the enemy?

Bryant Jake

For me, the first time I ever seen Vietnamese I kind of feel sorry really for what were they doing, what we were there for. There were not good things in that, just how they lived and how they plant their food and things. What I seen over there, like, I feel really bad when they used to bomb their village or burn it. And sometimes, I guess the VCs, it was to get their food from them. And we used to bomb it and put smoke bombs in their food so they won't feed the VCs.

But for me, I feel really bad about the kids, the little kids as they were growing. I started feeding 'em. I used to give 'em a case of C-rations just to help those kids. And then I'd give 'em all the smokes. We used to get those little package of smokes and I used to pile 'em into candies and that, too, used to hand it out to the young kids out there. And then there was two young kids, and they used to be always with me there like they didn't have no parents. And I guess they just lived with people, whoever wants to take care of 'em. And for me, I took care of 'em and fed 'em. But they couldn't come across into the base. And I used to go out to the gate and give 'em food. And they really stuck with me a lot when I used to go out and guard the bridge. They would be there. And I just gave 'em anything, what they wanted to eat.

Interviewer

Tell me about when you hear the sound of a helicopter.

Bryant Jake

I used to be so darned happy to get on that darned thing. You can hear 'em a long ways coming. And that's when

the VCs were waiting for them. But we used to have the LZ really covered good so they can come in and help us and pick us up and take us to another place again. And most of 'em said, "Gosh, I think they're gonna take us to base so we can rest." But they took us to another LZ.

Interviewer

So what comes to your mind today when you hear a helicopter?

Bryant Jake

The way I seen it when I was in Vietnam, I can hear 'em coming. And I thought gosh, you know, that helicopter sound. It's just like they come to pick us up. And it's a wonderful feeling. And it was just a like a magnet. It will draw anything in just to knock it down. For us, we just hopped on it and just take off. And we were shooting, too, putting our weapons on automatic to get out of that place. Helicopters, I guess they were coming in so fast and they can't see 'cause it was so dusty, and they hit into each other where they couldn't see at all. And it's just dust. And we just couldn't do nothing. The darned thing just blew up. And that's how fast they were getting out of there. They tried to get out of there fast, but they couldn't see.

Interviewer

Tell us about coming home.

Bryant Jake

I feel happy coming home. I was so happy to come home. And then when I got into Hawaii, we landed there for about two, three hours waiting around. And we bought bottled whiskey and we had party on a plane. And then when we got to Oakland, out of the airport, gosh, and we got onto a bus. And the darned thing, it was tinted and they had cages in 'em where I thought we were in where they haul prisoners. It was like that and I said, "Gosh, what are we doing?" And when we got into the street, the people were there and they were throwing tomatoes and eggs and things at us. And they called us a baby killer. And gosh, you know, I don't know what we ever done.

We went over there as young kids and we didn't know what we were doing and who we're killing. Things happened over there, like, gosh, a village was getting hit by our own guys, too. It was from artillery, it was from rockets, you know, the gunships come in. And I guess they called the fire on the village. And the thing is, it was just like I didn't pull my weapon against any little kids. But it was not our fault what was happening from an artillery hit. And that's just like our artillery hit our guys, too, even the rockets and gunships. They done the same thing to us, too. And for me, the first time it happened like that over there I got so darned mad because they threw a rocket at us. And the darned thing was just exploding right in the middle of us. And then I told my guys to turn around, lay on your back and start shooting at 'em too, shooting at the gunships. And I said that's bad for us getting killed down here where they just fly over us. The same thing happened to us, and so we shot back.

Interviewer

What did you think of the protestors?

Bryant Jake

I was angry and I was scared of our own American people, how they treated us. And all of us, we're just looking at it like gosh, we didn't do nothing bad. We was ordered to just go over there and fight over there. We were just ordered. We done it. But the way I felt, it was just like where I didn't wanna pull any trigger, but we had to to keep ourselves alive.

Interviewer

When you came home was your family happy for you?

Bryant Jake

Oh, I had a big parade for me. No. No. Nobody knew I was coming home. Nobody knew. And nobody didn't know I was gone. And the only ones that knew was my parents and my relations. They're the only ones. And not even my friends. Only one friend I had was just, like, he knew my dad and my mother, and he kept tabs on me to see what I was doing and where, if I was still alive. And then I caught a plane from Oakland to Salt Lake, and I was just sitting there and this one guy just came up and got to my face, "You're a baby killer." That's what he told me, "You're a baby killer." I said, "I done what the service told me to do and ordered to do. It's not my fault." And I said, "I wish you was there." And then air stewardess came along and told him to go sit down. And it kinda burned me up. And then I was really hot head.

And after that, when we got into Salt Lake that night, I followed him out. I told him, I said, "You're the first one ever to say that I was a baby killer. And I'm back. I'm not gonna fight anymore. I don't want to have a weapon pulled at anybody I didn't like." And I told him, "I did it, but I'm home." And then after that I was waiting for a bus to come down here. Then I had a lot to think about, thinking how everything changed. Gosh, things have changed and I feel like I've been gone for a long time. And then when I got down here, got off the bus, and then nobody was there, not even my family. Nobody, nothing. The street was clear. Gosh, maybe I got there about eight o'clock in the morning time and nothing, no vehicle.

And the friend of mine, I guess he was going to work, and I was standing there with my duffle bag and my uniform on. And he went up the street and turned around and came back and said, "You need a ride home, Bryant?" And I looked at him and I said, "Oh, yeah. It's you." And he said, "I've been keeping with your parents, been telling me how you been doing, and now I see you made it." It was my schoolmate. Since then, we've been good friends. And everybody didn't know where I was. There wasn't no parade or nothing. And my parents were all at work. And I said, "What am I gonna do?" And nobody wasn't there. I went by my grandmother's place, and my grandfather and grandmother and my aunts were there, and they just didn't know who I was. I was so skinny and they didn't know who I was. And then my grandmother didn't know and said, "Who are you?" I said, "Don't you know me?" And my grandfather came around the corner and he looked and he started bawling. And my aunt, the same thing, too, and she was back there cleaning things. And then she came up and heard somebody crying and they said, "Whoa,

what happened?" I said, "Your nephew's back." And my grandmother still didn't know who I was. And she couldn't hear.

So they finally told 'em who I was, and she started hugging me. And I told 'em, "I wonder where my mom and dad is?" They said, "Dad's working. He's probably out in the mountain, took the cattle up there," and my mother was working for Coleman Company doing sleeping bags and tents. So I told the manager who I was and I'd just got back from Vietnam, just got off and I was just looking for my mother. And a friend of hers took me back to my mother, and my mother was just sewing and didn't pay attention. And then it was just like everything went quiet. And just only you heard her machine going. And she was looking around to see what was happening, and said, "Gosh, everybody's looking over this way." And I was standing right behind her. And then she had a feeling, and turned around as she started bawling. And everybody was just bawling in that workshop. And one of my friends said, "I didn't know you went to service." He was one of the bosses there, too. And I said, "Yeah."

The only place he went to was National Guard. And then after that day, my mother just walked off at work. Never went back to work and said, "I'm gonna take care of my son." And she never did work. She was just happy I was home all the time. Then they took me to same place I went to be blessed up there, the sun dance. They took me up there and the same sun dance chief, they fanned me and he was telling me, "I know you was coming back and I know you was gonna make something big of yourself, and now you're a sergeant." And he said, "You see those medals too on you." And I told him I was happy to come up here, do it again, do the sun dance. And the people up there, they're like my family up there. And they knew you were gonna come back. They said, "We sensed you were in Vietnam."

The thing I seen over there when I got into a helicopter over there, I was looking east in the morning time when I was in a helicopter and I looked at the clouds. And then I seen a warrior. And I had a camera. I looked at it and we were going toward it. And I told one of the guys who were getting out too, I said, "Look at that. Look at the cloud. Doesn't it look like a chief with big bonnet on it?" And he said, "Yeah." He said, "It does look like a chief, a warrior." And that kinda made my mind like I made it, I'm going home.

Interviewer

Did you watch as we left Saigon?

Bryant Jake

Yeah.

Interviewer

What were your feelings?

Bryant Jake

Something came through me and I said, "We lost the war. We lost it." And the thing is that gosh, we could've won it, but I don't know what we're over here for. To lose it? Like, Johnson, when he was in there, too, and Nixon. Gosh, we could have won that. They could have kept on bombing, but they're bombing the wrong place. And they were telling us the whole time, "We're winning. We're winning." Every fight we ever had, too, "We're winning." They're counting all the dead.

Interviewer

Did the sun dance give you closure?

Bryant Jake

Yep. Yeah. I came home. My dad, too, I surprised him. I surprised my sister 'cause my sister was still in high school. And that one whole month I was here, I had to go to another duty station, I became an alcoholic. I drank. And I was raised good. I never smoked, I never drank. And then when I got to the next duty station, it was just like every weekend. Every weekend I used to drink. And I would drink just like I was just being an alcoholic.

When I first got into service, they asked us doing the paperwork what do you wanna be, what do you wanna do when you get in service? So I wrote what I wanted to be, I said I wanted to be a military policeman, and then I wanna get into a tank division, then I wanna go to Germany. And then I got in to be a tank division, Second Armor Division, Fort Hood. Then through maybe another several months I got in to be a military police. And after that when I was ready to get out they asked me if I wanted to reenlist again, and they said, "We'll send you to Germany." I said, "No. I've had enough of it." I don't know how many guys used to go to the meet, how we felt about Vietnam. How we felt, how we have anger. And we had that class we went to, and we cried. I cried. I said, "Gosh, we lost our friends, like our brothers."

I seen so many guys killing each other, too, in service. That's when I became a military police and I'd seen 'em. And then these guys were just young guys, came from Vietnam and life, I guess, wasn't how they felt. And for me, gosh, just like I seen 'em in Vietnam. I was just about ready to end it over there. But just like I put a .45 to my head loaded, and I just got so darned tired and I didn't wanna go back out there in the field. And like I said, I just went crazy.

And then one of my friends came, talked to me and said, "Don't do that, Sergeant Jake. We want you to live and take care of us." And I guess all of us became an alcoholic. We drank. And that's what kinda messed my mind up, too. The thing is, like I said, we come home, like, they say we were heroes. I say, "No, we're not heroes. We're not. We just done what we had to do." But I wasn't over there to be a hero person. I had to do what I promised my squad. I would take care of 'em, and I did. I took care of 'em.

Interviewer

Did you ever keep in touch with them?

Bryant Jake

I haven't. Never did. Never did. There's a few in Salt Lake, but I just didn't. I came back and I looked for 'em and I found one. But he told me, too, he said, "I'm an alcohol, too." He said, "I can't do nothing." But his dad had a company, but he just drank himself. And I had another one down there in Hurricane down there, too. Same thing happened to him. I got out in February of '69. When I got out that's how I became, too. And I traveled and I just drank.

And then my dad was always calling everybody to see where I was, and called all the family and they'd say, "Yeah, we seen him here for a while. He was not all there." It was like he was a person you'd never met and how he used to be a kid and always be helping, talking, having fun and do anything for family. And they'd say, "Yeah, he was here." Never see him after that.

Interviewer

Is there anything that you would like to add that we haven't talked about?

Bryant Jake

Let me tell you how I got in. I was a sole surviving son. And when I got to Fort Douglas and I told 'em my dad had done the same thing. I was a sole surviving son. They didn't care. They said, "You're in the Army. You're a military man." And then I said, "I don't know how the military works of sole surviving son." And I really thought they would think about it, but they didn't. But they just took me. And the thing I said, too, I just didn't like Vietnam fighting. I didn't like it. It was not for us. Every tribe in the United States, they have a treaty, "Thou shall not pick any weapon against any enemy." And then we had a treaty that said the same thing in it. But just how we felt, how I felt being out there. It's like something went wrong. Didn't even think about who I was.

Interviewer

How did being Native American help you or hurt you?

Bryant Jake

They didn't have any discrimination at all. It was just like we're here, all brothers to be brothers, to help each other any way. And I just didn't have that feeling at all. And I've met so many veterans that came from Vietnam, and they told me they were on the front line to be a point man, and they always have the Indians always be the point man.

Interviewer

Do the Paiute believe you can't really be a full person until you've seen combat?

Bryant Jake

No, I don't think. Like my dad said, "You're warrior," and that's all he said to me. He said, "You're great to us." And I just don't like my boys to get into service 'cause it's just not our thing. It's not the Indian's thing. It's not ours at all.

We are here just to live here now, and that's why I told my kids, "No. I don't want you guys to go to service. I done it for you already." And like my nephew, he wants to go to service, too. He'll be graduating this year and he wants to go to service, too. And I told him, "Don't do it." I said, "It's all volunteer now. And it's not our place to be. But if you want to be in service, I give you good wish, but tell you how it is. But when the war comes, seriously, you're going to fight." And there's no answers, you gotta go. You're in service.

Interviewer

How many children do you have now?

Bryant Jake

I have four.

Interviewer

And how many grandchildren?

Bryant Jake

I got seven. And then I got, about the same age as my granddaughter, is my grandson. He's always, "Grandpa, Grandpa. Are you gonna go put your uniform on when you go pow-wow time?" I says, "If they ask me, I'll go." But we are in the Color Guard for the Southern Paiute and we do that all over. Then over here at Veteran Park, I was one of the committees that did it, when they did it, and with all of my friends who went to service in Vietnam. And right now, we put everything, you know, whoever went from the high school here. Anybody who has been in service who was born here in Cedar. So that's Iron County for the Veteran memorial thing. And then I got two of my brothers on there that got killed in Vietnam. There was Kennard Kanosh and Wilbert Kanosh. Well, Wilburt Kanosh was the first one. He was the same age as I was. And the other one, he was older. They both got killed. And they got killed in '69 and '70.

Interviewer

They were Indian brothers?

Bryant Jake

They were my dad's nephews. But I was raised with those boys, and we always been calling each other brothers. And they went to service. One went to Marines when I seen him, and then he got killed. And the other one here later got killed in Vietnam, too. So they're on that Vietnam.