Bryan Bulloch

Cedar City, Utah

SP5

Army

General Supply Clerk

"Escalation"

Bryan Bulloch

But a general supply clerk, and a general supply clerk's supposed to know all facets of the military, whether it's Navy, Air Force, Marines, whatever. And I took my schooling at the Presidio in San Francisco.

Interviewer

Are you from Cedar City?

Bryan Bulloch

Yes, I am. Born and raised here. My great great-grandad was the first white boy ever here in Cedar City, so I got deep roots.

Interviewer

Tell us your full name.

Bryan Bulloch

My full name is Bryan Burt Bulloch.

Interviewer

And you're from where?

Bryan Bulloch

Cedar City, Utah.

Interviewer

Tell us about your life before you went into the military.

Bryan Bulloch

Before I went into the military my dad ran livestock, and he was a livestock man. And, of course, I went to high school. Graduated from high school. Got into my first year at college here and was taken outta college and drafted and put into the military.

Interviewer

What year was that?

Bryan Bulloch

1965 or '66.

Interviewer

Had you heard of Vietnam?

Bryan Bulloch

No, not really. I mean, there was little odds and ends in the paper. But back then, you were just kids and you didn't really pay much attention to that other than when the draft came around. You started paying attention to it because you had to go register for the draft and whatever.

Interviewer

When you got that draft notice, what did you think?

Bryan Bulloch

Well, I got the draft notice, but they asked me to go to Fort Douglas up in Salt Lake City, and that's where I took my physicals and all the induction stuff. And then they sent me down here. And then from that point on is where they drafted me and sent me on up the ladder.

Interviewer

How did your folks feel about it?

Bryan Bulloch

My dad was in World War II, so he really kinda had mixed emotions about it. He went through Africa and all over in World War II, Italy, Africa, all those places over there. So my dad had a good inclination, I think, into what may be possible or what was gonna happen.

Interviewer

So he was a bit worried?

Bryan Bulloch

Oh, I'm sure he was. I'm sure he was very worried. My mom was very worried about it all because it was all over the papers and everything like that.

Interviewer

You had a girl in Salt Lake?

Bryan Bulloch

Yeah. I was I going with a girl in Salt Lake at the time. Her name was Sharon Bolen. She's still in Salt Lake. She's been a really good friend and helped me out a whole bunch through all the time. She wrote me a lotta letters in Vietnam, and we seen each other a little bit when we came home, and she's been a real good friend, even today. I get Christmas cards from her and talk to her occasionally.

Interviewer

Tell us about going into the Army.

Bryan Bulloch

Okay. I left here and I went back to Salt Lake City. They put me on a plane and sent me to Fort Bliss, Texas for my basic training. And in Fort Bliss, of course they put you in and they give you all the basic training right on up, you know, shooting, whatever. And we did a lotta shooting out on the White Sands missile range. In fact, there was 44,000 of us on the firing line at one time in White Sands. And then they sent us into old Mexico and they dropped us off and they said, "You're on your own." And you was supposed to take care of your weapon, you know, and make your way back. Because they would try to steal your weapon at night when you was sleeping and stuff like that. I mean, they used all kinds of tactics. And then after training in Fort Bliss, and I got through basic training in Fort Bliss, they sent me to AIT training, which was in Presidio, San Francisco. And that's where I went into the general supply clerk school there and went through their process there. And out of all the people that was there, I don't remember just the exact number, but there was like, I don't know, 15 or 20 of us, I can't remember, that went through the school. Then Congress had to issue a command to the school for the general supply clerks to be distributed wherever they needed to go. And out of all those, five of us went to Vietnam and the rest went to Germany and all over the world. Germany, Europe, wherever they happened to go.

Interviewer

And so you got picked for Vietnam?

Bryan Bulloch

I know that it was my shooting abilities or what. I did have a good medal in shooting and did well there. Of course, I'm a country kid so country kids shoots rabbits out here. We used to have a lotta rabbit hunts and do a lotta shooting, so I could do really well at shooting.

Interviewer

How did you get to Vietnam?

Bryan Bulloch

They took us from Presidio. They sent me home for about a ten-day leave, and then I was to report back to Oakland, California. Of course, I had my orders by this time that said I was going to Vietnam. So there we went to Oakland and got on Braniff Airlines, a big four-engine jet. And they loaded us on the plane, full battle gear and the whole works. And they loaded us on the plane, and then we flew to Vietnam. And we flew from here to Hawaii, refueled. From Hawaii, crash-landed in the Philippines. Had electrical problems. Crash-landed in the Philippines for two days while they fixed the plane there. Then they took and flew us out of there and out over the ocean we ran into a typhoon. And we was close to the international dateline and the pilot came on and he told us, he says, "We do not have enough fuel to go back. We do not have enough fuel to go around. We are gonna go through." And it was quite a ride going through until you get into the eye of the typhoon and you look down, and here's all the big carriers. You can see the aircraft carriers, battleships, and it's just as blue and pretty and calm in the middle of that

as you can imagine. And they're all circling around inside the eye. And I guess eventually they wait to a certain point and then they turn their nose into the wind, and that's how they bust outta those typhoons. So anyway, as we came out of the typhoon and landed, we went into what they call Bien Hoa Air Base Camp, LBJ. Stood for Lyndon Baines Johnson, but it was Bien Hoa Air Base. And that's where we landed was there.

Interviewer

What did you see when you landed?

Bryan Bulloch

Well, there was F-100 jets, it was underneath both wings. It was straight from the jungle as we were coming in because they were firing up at the plane as we were coming up to land.

Interviewer

Firing up at the airliner?

Bryan Bulloch

Oh, yeah. And you could see these F-100s. I was by a window, so I could kinda let go off the edge of the wing, and this F-100 popped up underneath my side and I could look right down the cockpit at the pilot, you know. And then I started noticing that they were peeling out on either side. They'd go down and make a strafing run and then they'd come back up. And went to Long Binh Junction. There they offloaded us, put us into different living quarters there while they reassigned us out. At the time they reassigned us out, we pulled guard duties, KP, whatever happened to come along at that point. While I was there, the Bien Hoa ammunition dump got hit, and it really got hit pretty bad. And it blew walls in, it blew stuff all over, and it made me wonder what am I into. I mean, you're always wondering what you're into anyway, but that really made it come to real life at that point. And then they put me on a C-130 and I flew out of there and landed in Qui Nhon at the air base there, and then I was assigned to, I believe it was the 629th. And it was stationed there. That supply yard was in Phu Thai just out of Qui Nhon barely. And then from there I went to I believe it was the 238th or something like that. And then I ended up in the 540th. And they were stationed out on the side of a jungle in the mountain. They just cleared a pad out on the side of a mountain just at the bottom. Or not quite the bottom. We were kinda up on the Mountain, An Khe Pass. And that's where our supply point was. And we'd go into Qui Nhon, get supplies, bring 'em to there and store 'em in our yards there as best we could. And then they would move 'em from there out to the different companies or units or whoever needed it, battalions or whatever.

Interviewer

What year is this?

Bryan Bulloch

'66 and '67. I got over there late in '66.

Interviewer

So this is pretty early in the war.

Bryan Bulloch

Oh, yeah. So it was into '67.

Interviewer

How did you end up driving convoys?

Bryan Bulloch

Well, I have a military driver's license that I could drive anything they have of any weight, shape or kind. And so they used the people on that. And what basically happened was they were losing so many people out on convoys because of attacks and roadside bombs and everything like that. And they were losing so many people that they started shifting people around. And in a convoy truck there used to be a driver and what you'd wanna call a door gunner on the other side and they could kinda watch what was going on on one side of you. Well, they got losing so many that pretty soon they just made a driver, so it was just one guy in each vehicle. Then they always overloaded you because they figured if you got ambushed and you lost five trucks and six trucks got through, then you got the same amount of supplies going through if you would have just the regular amount going through. And in an ambush, I've seen it up the road when the tracers going across the road in front of you. All you could see was tracers, one right after another just a straight line and you was driving right into it. And they always tried to line up on the stars on the doors because that got the drivers. And if they were shooting from above you, they always tried to shoot through the roof 'cause they all had canvas roofs with a star on the top. Later on, we started blacking out everything so that the stars were all blacked out and everything on the truck so they weren't quite as accurate that way. They had to judge a little bit. But you were always kind of a sitting duck, you know, and some of their bombs were really, really unreal. We moved some tanks once up to an armored division, and there was a brand new tank when I was there towards the last, and it was supposed to have all the angles on it so that if they shot it the bullet would ricochet off basically is what they figured, the military when they designed this thing. Well, we got up there on a convoy moving some tanks in, and it looked like they had taken an old steel pipe out of a ditch for a culvert, and they'd put a charge in there and they blew the whole turret right off the top of that thing. So that kinda didn't allow their thinking that maybe the shell couldn't penetrate the tank and it'd ricochet off. But they did a lotta things like that. They'd have bamboo bombs. They'd put a steel cap on one end and fill a charge with the other end and the fusing, and they could throw those or tie 'em on your trucks. And there towards the end, why, the outfit I was with, what they would do was they'd use claymore mines. If you was driving a five-ton truck and had a great big trailer on back and a load, they'd go down there and place claymore mines down the side and across the back and up the other side. And then they'd run the strings through the windows, and they were numbered, like one through twenty, whatever you had for the mine. And then if you happened to see a Vietnamese jump on your outfit, depending on what string you pulled, he jumped right off.

Interviewer

Explain what a claymore mine is.

Bryan Bulloch

A claymore mine is a mine that they used up there that they could actually put right in front of the bunkers and it only blew one direction.

Interviewer

So it was like a giant shotgun shell.

Bryan Bulloch

It blew outwards. Yeah. It'd blow chunks of steel and everything else it had in 'em, you know. But they would blow outwards. So there was no concussion in back of 'em. They only blew one direction.

Interviewer

So you would line each side of the truck with these things.

Bryan Bulloch

Yeah. You'd get on the sides and we'd line 'em up and then run strings 'cause they had, like, a little pull ring on 'em that you could pull like a trip string would be if you had one in the jungle set up across a trail or something like that.

Interviewer

And these were on your vehicles?

Bryan Bulloch

We'd put 'em on our vehicles, yeah.

Interviewer

If somebody would ambush you from the side what would happen?

Bryan Bulloch

Well, if they ambushed you from the side and they tried to get on your truck, then you had the capabilities of getting rid of 'em.

Interviewer

You'd pull the string and they'd fall?

Bryan Bulloch

Right. It'd depend on which one 'cause they were all numbered. So you knew about where the claymore was. So if you pulled number five, why, they would jump right back off. You had a .45 and you'd usually sit on it. And some of the trucks had 12-gauge shotguns with double-ought buck and everything in 'em that you'd sit between your knees while you were driving because when you're out there alone that's the only support you had. And we took everything from food, 175-millimeter barrels, JP-4. It just depended what convoy you was assigned to and which way you happened to be headed or to what unit needed what. And so we would take those in the unit in convoys.

Interviewer

What's JP-4?

Bryan Bulloch

JP-4 is a jet fuel. They use it in those choppers. It'd be 130 degrees in the daytime, and you could take it over there and you could put it in one of our grease guns with a fine nozzle and squirt it and it'd ignite coming out into the air. It was very volatile and highly explosive.

Interviewer

How would you deliver something like that?

Bryan Bulloch

Usually, you'd take it in five-ton trucks with a tanker on the back, 5,000 gallons of it and you'd haul it like that. And they would have you drive a hundred meters apart, which you're supposed to drive a hundred meters apart. Of course in between there you may have an armed personnel carrier up front. You may go two trucks, and then you'd have a deuce and a half with quad fifties on it. And you had a lotta Jeeps with M-60s on 'em spread out through the convoy. But if one of those trucks got hit it blew over a hundred meters. So if they hit the lead truck, it would just start coming down the line. And if you was a driver you just bailed out and took off running, and hopefully you could get far enough away from it before the explosion occurred because it'd just go down the line.

Interviewer

Talk about the adjustment from the desert to the jungle.

Bryan Bulloch

It was quite an adjustment. Rain was the worst because you'd have your monsoons over there. Well, you was wet all the time. You never did dry out. You'd put clothes on and you'd wear 'em 'til they'd rot off from you. And then you'd take a new one out of the package. Because it didn't take you any good to take the clothes out 'cause you could never dry 'em. The humidity was so high over there. And so you'd just wear your clothes 'til you couldn't stand 'em anymore, and then you'd take 'em off and give 'em a chuck and open up a new package and put new clothes on and wear those 'til you did that. And the jungles were really dense. I mean, you could probably walk up and put your hand in 'em and you wouldn't be able to see 'em. You get up around An Khe or Pleiku and you'd stop at a unit. Once a convoy started it never stopped. The only time the convoy stopped was if you had a secure area. And a secure area meant another company, Army Company, Marine Corps, whatever. But you never stopped rolling. And if somebody happened to fall down in front of that convoy, a Vietnamese or something, you just kept running over him, all the trucks so there would be nothing left except basically kind of a grease spot. And the reason they did that was is if a convoy every stopped you was very vulnerable to ambushes and stuff like that. And so they couldn't stop once they started. Once you was loaded and once they started, why, you went 'til you got to a secure area. When you got to the secure area, 90 percent of the time you would pull the duties of whoever you was there with, whether it was guard duty, KP, it didn't matter. You pulled the same duties their unit was pulling while you was in there trying to get a few hours rest before you got back in your convoy and started off again.

Interviewer

How far would you drive in a typical convoy?

Bryan Bulloch

I don't know. One time I was probably out in the jungle up there 250 miles. I don't know. By the time you take all the little dirt roads and stuff trying to get into a unit, why, you know, if they're off the main beaten path, why, you can go quite a ways.

Interviewer

And you're in a soft-skinned vehicle.

Bryan Bulloch

You're in a soft-skinned vehicle.

Interviewer

So how are feeling now?

Bryan Bulloch

Well, I feel pretty lucky because I seen a lotta guys get hit and not come back for the same things that I seen happen. So you might say you had somebody riding on your shoulder with you taking care of you.

Interviewer

Was there a particular bad day?

Bryan Bulloch

In 1967 we had taken some JP-4 and we had gone, I believe it was to Pleiku. And when we got to Pleiku, that was one entity they would not dump. And when we got to Pleiku, why, all the baffles they had for storing fuel for their helicopters and stuff were full. So they turned us around and sent us back to An Khe. And when we got to An Khe, they were all filled up because they're probably the closest to where our area is anyway. So they sent us back down. And it was Christmas Eve in 1967, which is the day before Christmas here because they're a day ahead of us. We were coming down An Khe Pass, me and another kid. We had 10,000 on between the two of us. Enough to do a lot of damage if we were hit. And we got down the middle of An Khe Pass. It's very steep, very rugged, really lots of bad turns in it and I snapped a drive line on the truck. And I managed to get it stopped. And shortly after that, an MP Jeep coming through trying to clear the pass out because Charlie was on the other end attacking it and he was on the bottom end attacking it and we were in the middle. And this MP Jeep came through trying to find out what happened, and when he seen what we were carrying, they called in Puff the Magic Dragon with a rotary gun and he hovered over us up there giving us fire support while they went to an engineering group and got a mechanic to come out and fix the truck. And then they escorted us. When you hit the bottom of An Khe Pass, you go right out into the rice paddies. It's just a big long straight run, and all there is is rice paddies on either side. So it's a pretty open area as far as open in Vietnam, being out in the jungle. It's still deadly, but it's very, very open area. And I told the MP driver with M-60 in front of me as we came down the pass, I said, "Now, if I start taking fire, I'm gonna pass you up and leaving you because," I said, "We've gotta be moving with this stuff." So anyway, about three-quarters of the way down the pass we started taking incoming bullets into the truck and stuff. And at that point, I waived him off and went around him, and then I just kicked it into neutral, and probably when we hit the bottom of the pass we

was probably doing about 80 miles an hour. I mean, we weren't even in gear, you know, other than just steering and driving. You couldn't have stopped it if I wanted to. It took quite a ways after I was there to stop it. But rather than blow the pass up, because the damage that would've been done to the pass would have taken them days to repair. And over there on supplies, supplies from the United States came over basically on ship. And so they had a rotation, and if they didn't get the ships offloaded in the South China Sea, they would take bulldozers out on the deck and shove the trucks, jeeps, tanks, whatever into the ocean because they were on a set time. And it took 'em so long to come from the United States to deliver supplies to Vietnam that the military had to keep the supply route open all the time. So that's how they did it. And once they were in country, of course we could move stuff around a little bit better in country that way. But they had a set supply route, and those ships had a designated time. They had so long to offload 'em. If they didn't get offload or something happened, then they basically cleared the decks on a lot of stuff. And there's a lot of stuff, I'll tell you, in the South China Sea over there I'd like to have today out here on the farm.

Bryan Bulloch

Yeah, I did. I have one that's in Las Vegas right now. His name is Danny Trueworthy. He was in my unit when I left. And I seen him about two months after I came home, was home here in the United States. Why, he walked into a restaurant down here in Cedar City 'cause he was going to school here at the college. And that's how I got to know him. But he was in my tent, and there was another guy that's in California that I know that made it out. But they were one of the lucky 37. They spent six days in the jungle trying to get back to a safe haven after we were overrun by a division of North Vietnamese regulars.

Interviewer

Were you there when that happened?

Bryan Bulloch

No. I'd just left. They'd been hitting us for about four days or five days. They'd been hitting our compound, our perimeter. They'd hit one side one night and they'd hit another side the next night. And they were trying to find the weak spot that we had in the perimeter and if we had any. The perimeters you had, you usually had the compound. Then you'd have guard towers with sandbags in 'em or whatever that gave you some altitude to look around. And then you went out a little ways and you had constantan wire. All this area was clear, what they call a kill zone. And then on the outside of that you had guards and bunkers that laid way outside on the edge of the jungle, so you'd get warning about anything coming in. And they had quite a big kill area. And we had what we called free fire. And every night, not any given time, it wasn't the same time of night, any given time they'd lock and load two or three hundred rounds and dump it into the kill zone. So if anybody was there trying to sneak in, you kinda caught 'em off guard. Some of the units we went to up there when you was pulling guard duty on some of the other military units that have platoons that were out in the jungle doing things. But they came in after dark and they had these little clickers like you see in these dolls today, and they had a certain percent of clicker. You know, they'd click twice,

you'd click at 'em, you'd hear 'em or something and they'd click before they crossed the fire zones or whatever to come back in the companies. And one particular night I was with some. And, of course, you go out with one of their persons. They don't send, like, two of you out. They have somebody from the company that's there with you. And this kid with me said, "We've changed our click for tonight." He says, "It's no longer three clicks." See, and they'd told me in there it was three clicks. He says, "We've changed our clicks for tonight, so we've got some platoons out there and they'll be coming in after dark, and the click is not three clicks anymore. It's only a click, one click." So anyway, we were there and it was probably, oh, I would say way early in the morning, still nighttime, real black over there. Why, we came in and they did the three clicks. And this kid got on the phone and he called back and he said, "Charlie's coming in." So they gave him three clicks back. And, of course, they approached then and then they'd come into the kill zone and then they'd throw the flares and light her up and unload.

Interviewer

What's it like to see something like that?

Bryan Bulloch

Now, I've shot enough weapons, okay. I know that if I shoot you, I've shot you, you're gonna die. You know what I mean? And you'd wake up the next morning, everything was settled down, quieted down, it's just get quiet as could be. You could hear a pin drop. Next morning, you'd wake up and there wouldn't be a body out there. They'd remove 'em all. And the reason they did that was they didn't want you to know how many you were actually killing. Our unit, we figured out for every Vietnamese or Viet Cong that killed one of our guys, we killed ten of theirs. So it was a ten-to-one ratio and that's what we kinda figured out.

Interviewer

Did you ever drive convoy at night?

Bryan Bulloch

And it is spooky. Got them little bitty lights and you can't see very good and you learn to track real well. You follow the tracks of the guy right in front of you. If you're on a main road it's not so bad, but once you got on the jungle roads, why, you learned to track real well because if you didn't learn to track real well, there was a chance of hitting a mine. This way, the guy in front of you usually hit the mine before it got to you. And a lotta your armored division, guys that ran armored personnel carriers and stuff that were out in the jungles, they tracked. And I still find myself doing it today in a snowstorm down here. I'll catch myself tracking the car in front of me if the snow's on the road and hadn't been cleaned off.

Interviewer

How long were you there?

Bryan Bulloch

I was actually there for 13 months and it was kind of interesting. What came about on the deal was I ran into a kid that I'd gone over there with, and he was from Boston. And he was a clerk in Qui Nhon. And I went into the PX one

day because convoys, you really get hammered. I mean, your back hurts, your leg hurts. I mean, those trucks don't have the best seats in the world and you're on rough roads and you really get hammered. And I'd gone in there to buy some Deep Heat to put on my back. And I ran into him in the PX and he knew me 'cause he'd gone over on the plane with me. He'd actually flew over on the Braniff Airlines, and he'd ended up there being a clerk in Qui Nhon. And anyway, he said, "God," he said, "I thought you'd already gone home." He said, "I've cut orders on you three times to go home." He said, "I have the third set of orders sitting on my desk." And I says, "Oh, you do?" And he said, "Yeah." We was both in the PX and I says, "Let's go look." So we went over there and went into his tent, kind of a tent with sandbag bunkers around it and stuff like that for mortar attacks. And we went over there and he shuffled around the desk there and he said, "Oh, they're right here," and he handed 'em to me. It was my orders for coming back to the United States at that time. And I said, "Do you mind me asking you what happened to my other two sets of orders?" And he said, "I don't know. Let's dig around here and see." And he started digging around and found out. He said, "Well, your first set of orders was denied because of a valuable MOS," see, because I had that general supply clerk rating, which I never really did do because I ended up on convoys right out of there. So I never was really in a supply point where I was a supply clerk or had anything to do with clerking. So anyway, and then he found the other set of orders and it was denied because of lack of manpower in the unit. So anyway, I had the third set in my hand and I went back and I told this Danny Trueworthy, I says, "I have my orders here in my hand. What would you do?" And he says, "If I was you," and he says everything, and he says, "You've been over here a long time." He said, "I'd go home." He said, "I'd just get up in the morning, I'd go turn everything in that I needed to turn in in my unit." We had a warrant officer that officered our unit because we'd had two lieutenants there. One had came over there and thought we were still in the United States, and he lined everybody up for guard duty one night and went to check their weapons, and a sniper took him out right in front of everybody, right between the eyes. And the officers over there told you, "Whatever you do, do not salute us." Nobody wore any insignias. It was all black. Don't salute us, do anything. If you didn't like somebody, all you had to do was salute him. If it was a private he was gone. There was always somebody watching. I mean, that's bad to say, but that's kinda the way it was. And anyway, so the next morning, I got up and I went and turned my stuff in except two bandoleers of ammunition and my M-16 a little bit that I put in my duffle bag. And I walked in and I told the lieutenant, I said, "Sir, I'm going to the United States." He says, "You can't go to the United States. You haven't got your orders." And I says, "Yes, I have," and I laid 'em on the table. And I said, "I'm gonna ride with the mail guy going in for mail. I'm gonna ride shotgun for him this morning going into Qui Nhon to get the mail." 'Cause it was an hour drive. I mean, we were out there probably about 50 miles, maybe. Thirty miles outta Qui Nhon to where our base camp was. And so I laid the orders down on the desk and went and got in the mail truck and said goodbye to everybody, and cried a little bit 'cause you hate to leave guys that you're with there all the time not knowing what could happen. And it was an emotional thing to do, and gotten there and went to Qui Nhon and got on the plane in Qui Nhon and flew. A C-130, I flew it out and we went up through Pleiku and Chu Lai and back down to Cam Ranh Bay and got in Cam Ranh Bay and turned my

weapon in and everything there that I had that needed to be turned in there. And they check your shot records for coming back to the United States. And then I got on the plane to come home. And it was kinda funny. I went around the world one way, and we came back through Tokyo, Japan the other way. And, I mean, here we are, we're in short-sleeve khaki shirts. It's 130 degrees in the shade over there in Vietnam. You fly into Tokyo, it's dead winter and 20 below zero. We only had to walk just a little ways. But we went to Anchorage, Alaska, too, and that was the coldest one right there. You only had to walk 20 feet to get into the underground bunker in Anchorage, and the stewardess would stand up there and give you a shove out the door 'cause, I mean, that cold hair would just hit you, just a little khaki shirt and used to all that heat. You just froze. So anyway, and then I came back here, went to Fort Lewis, Washington. They took me in Fort Lewis, Washington and had me strip down to basically my underwear and a T-shirt, and they put me on a conveyor belt. And I went down the conveyor belt and they took and measured your crotch and all that kind of stuff. And they measured you up. And when you come off, you had a tailor-made suit at the end with all your ribbons and everything on it. And then they told me most of the people that came back in-country got to stay a night in Fort Lewis and they had a steak dinner and some medical stuff. And they came to me and they said, "What do you wanna do? Do you wanna spend two more days in Fort Lewis or do you wanna go home?" And I said, "Well, I'd really love to go home." They said, "Well, the only commercial flight we can get out for you is leaving in 15 minutes." So they threw me in an MP Jeep. I went to the airport in Fort Lewis. Hadn't even called my folks yet. They had no idea I was in-country or where I was. And went to Fort Lewis, got on a plane, bumped a two-star general off that was riding standby, and he was really quite upset over the whole thing. Bumped him off and they put me on a plane and flew me from Fort Lewis. In a roundabout way, I went out to someplace in Colorado, back into Salt Lake City and got on a plane for coming down here to Cedar City from Salt Lake. And the stewardess on the plane, I told her that I hadn't had a chance to call my folks, they didn't even know I was coming, and they said, "Well, we'll make the call for you." So they called my folks while I was in the air between here and Salt Lake and told 'em I was on my way home. And I got here and I was just here with my duffle bag on my shoulder, so I started walking up the highway out here. And a guy by the name of Pete Peterson that delivered cars for Avis was taking a car out there for a guy, and he picked me up and drove me back home. And I pulled up in front of the driveway just as my folks were getting in the car to come get me. And that's how I got home, that way. And then, like I say, it was probably two months later when I ran into this Danny Trueworthy, and Danny was the one that was telling me what happened to everybody in our unit. He said, "There's not anybody hardly left." He said there was only 37 of us that came home out of 223. So you can call it luck. Of course, a lot of it is luck. 'Cause you see guys get a lotta things and they don't come home for the same errors you made. And if anybody thinks they can go through a combat zone and not make an error, they're dead wrong. You're just dead wrong. Whether it's booby traps, firefights or whatever.

Interviewer

Were the roads booby trapped?

Bryan Bulloch

Booby traps. They'd put charges in the road that would go over. Some of 'em would detonate when you stepped on 'em or weight would roll over 'em, like the trucks. Some of 'em, they'd come right outta the jungle and throw 'em at you. I mean, they'd be in bamboo and explosives and everything else. There's that way. It was a little different than the people who were out in the jungle 'cause you didn't have to worry about punji sticks and all kinds of traps like that for the platoons that was working the jungle. You didn't have to worry about that. But on convoys, you did have to worry about ambushes, 'cause they'd throw everything they had at you in the first 30 seconds. And you did have to worry about ambushes and you did have to worry about bombs that were placed in the road. They call 'em IUDs now in Iraq and stuff like that. But basically they were the same thing over there. Charges. They'd get a shell or a mortar head or whatever, and they'd set that up so that when you went over it, it would explode. They were very frugal in what they used. I mean, they used everything they could lay their hands on, basically.

Interviewer

What did you think of the Vietnamese people?

Bryan Bulloch

Well, you know, the Vietnamese people, you never knew because Charlie was all around you. And they were the people. They'd be nice to you at daylight and blow you apart at night. One of the yards we had, why, we had a mortar round attack one night that about wiped our place right out. And the reason was was he had a bunch of little kids that were out there playing, and they were out by the front gate, just off the front gate playing. And, of course, kids come around and play. They played around those places. I mean, the guards would watch 'em and everything like that. But the next day after this mortar round attack had hit us that night, and they'd hit every specific thing we had in there. And we couldn't figure out how they would've ever have done that. How they would've hit each one of these pads or whatever we had, just hit it so direct. And the next day when we got out investigating, these kids had stuck little sticks up in the ground and they pointed out everything in the compound. And, of course, that night when they came in and used mortars on us they had the range and the distance and whatever else.

Interviewer

You came early in the war.

Bryan Bulloch

When I left, the Tet was going pretty good. The Tet had already started in the end of 1967. The Tet Offensive had already started. And things were getting pretty heated in the last part of '67 and '68.

Interviewer

Were you aware of the protests going on back at home?

Bryan Bulloch

No, I was not. I wasn't aware of any protesting going on back here. And you'd write letters, and of course if you was going out on a convoy and you wrote a letter saying something about anything you was gonna do or where you was going they censored it. So they'd read your mail basically before it went out. But no, you really didn't have an idea

that the protests were going on 'til I actually got home and found out about it.

Interviewer

Talk about your experience with protestors.

Bryan Bulloch

When I came home I had about, like, three months left to do. And they sent me to Fort Belvoir, Virginia and that's where I was stationed. And they put us in an ADM platoon. ADM stands for Atomic Demolition Munitions and we played with all the warheads. And we'd go down into underground silos. We would take the warheads and they would set the timers on 'em. And they were all in a climatized thing at a certain level, the warheads did and they'd slide 'em out in front of you. And they would take the warheads and they would set the timers for 'em or whatever needed to go off. And then what you would do, they'd say, "Okay. Now, you disarm 'em." I mean, this is right here in Maryland. I mean, there's lots of people above ground. Don't think there isn't. Everything had to be done in a specific order. And if you got down within a minute, then they would take and jerk you back and some guy would jump in and do it for you. I mean, they had their boundaries, okay. They'd let you do that. And then we'd take 'em out on convoys and move 'em around the city in the middle of the night just to be moving 'em around and everything like that. And anyway, at this place our compound was away from everybody else in Fort Belvoir, Virginia. We was out there by ourselves with 18-foot fence around us. Most of the guys, if they were AWAL, if they'd go out on the town in Washington, D.C. and they turned up AWAL in eight hours then they'd go looking for 'em. Us, if we were AWAL three hours they had the National Guard out looking for us and everybody else. And they wanted to know if anybody stopped and talked to you about anything, you know, because they were worried about security of anybody learning about the warheads and the underground stuff and whatever.

Bryan Bulloch

Yeah. And I had $100,000 security clearance at one time with the military. But anyway, during that period of time the riots started in Washington, D.C. And the order came to the military that we were gonna go take D.C. back. So they loaded all the battalions, companies, whatever. I mean, it was a huge place, a lotta military staff. In fact, when I went across the Potomac River, I looked back across the bridge and I could still see the outfits coming outta Belvoir. And they took us back to Washington, D.C., and they took us underground in the catacombs. And they took us down there with all our military equipment. We took everything down there with us and we sat down there for about two days with our backs against the wall, and you could see the senators go through and congressman and whatever else on their little train cars going between Congress and whatever else. And then one night about midnight they said, "We're gonna go take Washington, D.C. back." And they opened up the doors and we came outta there and started taking D.C. back. And it was very interesting because we formed wedges to go down the street to push the colored people back to the edge of the streets because they were rioting, breaking the windows out, setting stores on fire. People was probably helping 'em as they were burning out and doing everything, too. And even there was a little bit of shooting going on, so they started using teargas in front of us, and pretty soon

here come the National Guard, here come the Washington, D.C. Police, here come anybody that was trying to secure things inside 'cause nobody had gas masks except us. So they didn't have any gas masks and the Guard didn't have any live rounds. But we had live rounds, live ammunition. I mean, we were there to take D.C. back, and they meant take D.C. back. So anyway, we started down one street and here come a wall of colored people. I can't even imagine. And we had federal Marshals in back of us, and we were in the wedge out front. And the lieutenant told us, he says, "Lock and load the 100-round magazine." And of course on the M-14 you can actually see the daylight clothes and the bullets going to if you're on the other end of it. And then we had one sniper that took a shot at us down there as we were trying to keep peace and order, and they just took the top of the building out with an M-79 grenade launcher. And that ended that. We never seen anymore about that.

Interviewer

What did you think of these protestors?

Bryan Bulloch

Well, I couldn't believe it. It's just like you're back basically in Vietnam. I mean, everybody around you is your enemy basically. But anyway, we took Washington, D.C. back, and then after they got curfews going and everything our company's job was to guard every liquor store in Washington, D.C. I was an E-5 and a sergeant, Spec-5 Sergeant. They would put three or four guys in front of the liquor stores because they didn't want 'em getting in and getting all hooched up and then causing more problems. So they'd put the Army at every liquor store in Washington, D.C., and that's what our deal was. And I'll tell you what, there's a lotta liquor stores in Washington, D.C. They started a sergeant out every two hours following one another so we could check it and make sure everybody was okay and intact. And I never got back in 'til 6:00 that morning, and I'd never gone by the same liquor store again. So it was pretty interesting after they got it all calmed down and shut off.

Interviewer

What were your feelings about all that?

Bryan Bulloch

Oh, yeah. And basically you're coming back here and they're wanting you to take care of your own people. But anyway, they're wanting you to take care of your own people, and if that meant shoot 'em then you shoot 'em. And that is a pretty rough thing to do. They have a national police force or national army or whatever it is. Well, those people come over here, and if you have a riot they could gun everybody done. It wouldn't bother them. But you take the National Guard out here in Cedar City and say, "Okay. You got a riot here I Cedar City. We want you to go take care of it," you'd be just a little bit lenient because everyone is your cousin or your brother or some family or friend or something else like that. And basically, that's kinda the impression I get. You're right here in your own country on a disturbance. It's quite bothering.

Interviewer

Vietnam was a helicopter war at that time, right?

Bryan Bulloch

They used helicopters quite a bit in Vietnam. They used a lotta aircraft bombers, jets, everything like that. But it became a helicopter war and they used a lotta helicopters in Vietnam.

Interviewer

What would you think when you'd hear helicopter blades?

Bryan Bulloch

I still hear 'em today. Don't think I'm not looking around and looking up. And I can hear 'em coming when they come over all the time. They draw my attention immediately.

Interviewer

What do you think when you hear 'em?

Bryan Bulloch

Because it takes me right back to Vietnam because they were using a lotta helicopters then. A lotta helicopters get the wounded out. A lotta helicopters transported platoons into the jungles and drop off points and everything like that.

Interviewer

What are you feelings when you hear them?

Bryan Bulloch

Oh, yeah. They bring it right up inside me immediately. Another thing is, is I seen a guy once that burned totally to death. And he got diesel fuel on him and it ignited him. And before we got to him, we didn't have anything to basically put the fire out, so we just threw dirt on him to put the fire out. But diesel, once it ignites, it ignites at such a high, volatile rate. We took our shirts off, tried to roll him over on our shirts. But the meat just fell off his bones like a well-cooked roast. And the only thing we had around there to even put him in to even get any medical 'til we could get medical in to him was a 55-gallon drum of grease. And they just shoved him in that 55-gallon drum of grease trying to keep the skin or whatever was left. But he did die after two days. Yeah.

Interviewer

Do certain things bring it back?

Bryan Bulloch

When they start drilling on my teeth does it come back? Yes, it does. That drilling on your teeth, that smell.

Interviewer

The burnt flesh.

Bryan Bulloch

Yeah, that burnt flesh. It's something you just never get over and you'll recognize it any time that way. And as far as people being shot, yeah, you seen people get shot. You shot people. At home in, seemed like to me it was January of '68, something like that.

Interviewer

How had the country changed?

Bryan Bulloch

Oh, it had changed a whole bunch. Stores on Main Street had changed here. Everything had changed a whole bunch here, being here. People didn't like Vietnam veterans very much. When I came home, they really didn't care for veterans very much. They called you baby killers, they did all things like that. You didn't get a welcome home and a fanfare and a parade and everything like that. Even on the plane trip coming from Fort Lewis, you had people saying stuff about you on the plane.

Interviewer

What things?

Bryan Bulloch

That you were baby killers and stuff like that. But what they don't realize is the Viet Cong used every asset they had, okay. If it was to take a five or an eight-year-old child and handcuff him to a machine gun, and they'd tell him, "Kill every American troop you can kill, because if you don't kill 'em we're gonna kill your folks or we're gonna kill your sister." So those kids were out there behind a machine gun killing as many American troops as they could possibly kill, and yeah, you had to take 'em out. You didn't have a choice. And that's really a sad deal, but that's the way the Viet Cong and the Vietnamese people who were with the Viet Cong worked. And they'd go into these hamlets and they'd kill the chief of the hamlet. Hang him up on the outside so the rest would know. There was lots of things in Vietnam. Those people over there didn't have a way of life. Basically, they bought food for one day. They went to the grocery store every day, or to wherever they got their supplies from. They'd go there every day because they never knew whether they was gonna be there, I guess, for the next day or not. And the people over there, yeah, I'm sure there's a lotta good ones. Don't get me wrong. But I kept my distance from 'em. You couldn't trust 'em. You didn't know whether they were friend or foe. And you stuck with the guys in your unit that you knew would be on your back if you needed it. Yeah, anyway, you stuck with the guys in your unit that you knew was gonna back you up. You was there for each other, and you always made sure you had somebody that would back you up, watch out.

Interviewer

What did you do in-country for recreation?

Bryan Bulloch

There was some drinking going on, but really the only recreation we had in our unit was when we took our R and R. They either went to Hawaii or Bangkok or they went somewhere, but they went to R and R and that's where they went. I took my R and R and went to Hawaii is where I went.

Interviewer

Was that two weeks?

Bryan Bulloch

Well, yeah, I went there for about ten days. We went to Hawaii, and the reason I went there was I wanted to see some round-eyed girls instead of slant-eyed people all the time. So that's basically why we went to Hawaii.

Interviewer

Say that again saying American girls.

Bryan Bulloch

Yeah, I wanted to see some American girls. Something with round eyes instead of the slanted eyes. I mean, all of your Asian people have quite slanty eyes. And I wanted to see some round-eyed stuff so we went to Hawaii. A lot of the guys went to Bangkok. Some of 'em may have even made it to Australia. I don't know. They had different areas you could go to over there for R and R.

Interviewer

What's that like to go from in country to R and R?

Bryan Bulloch

You find yourself looking over your shoulder. You find yourself doing the same thing you did in-country other than you probably don't have a weapon or any way to react. And you're not there long enough to really get adapted to the Civilian life before you're sent back.

Interviewer

Did you listen to any music in country?

Bryan Bulloch

Oh, there was music over there. They played a lotta music over there.

Interviewer

What were you listening to?

Bryan Bulloch

Oh, we was listening to things like "Run Through the Jungle" and all kinds of music like that. It was basically '70s music.

Interviewer

Are you a country western fan?

Bryan Bulloch

Well, I didn't listen to much country western. I had one tape over there that had country western on it. We'd put it on and the guys in my tent told me not to put it on anymore. They'd had enough of it.

Interviewer

What did you think when we evacuated Saigon?

Bryan Bulloch

The thing about Vietnam, there was never a fight there we ever lost, okay, and there were so many restrictions set

on what we could do. When you'd go to some of these companies they'd have a sign up in there. You can't shoot back unless a bullet falls within this area. And they'd actually have it chalked out. And stuff like that. And the worst thing about it was the United States, we were gonna look bad no matter what we did. We were gonna look bad if we won it and we were gonna look bad if we lost it. And we left. But the thing of it is the United States, if they'd have given the okay, in 24 hours they'd have been right downtown.

Interviewer

Down Hanoi?

Bryan Bulloch

Mm-hmm. Oh, yeah. We had people up there and we had 'em close. I have a friend here and he crossed that Cambodian border quite a bit. But we were never supposed to be in Cambodia. You know what I mean?

Interviewer

How did you feel when we evacuated Saigon?

Bryan Bulloch

I made me feel a little disgraced in my eyes because I was there and seen what was going on firsthand and knew that the war could have been won. And for us just to get up and leave, and then leave the people that supported us over there, which they couldn't get 'em all outta there. They may have got a few out. But there was a lotta Vietnamese that really supported the military over there, and just kinda turned 'em loose. You don't know what happened to those people. I don't even know if they're alive today. There could've been a very good cleansing going on after we walked out and left everything over there.

Interviewer

What did you think of the enemy?

Bryan Bulloch

Well, you have two types of VC. You have the Vietnamese that was kinda VC, and then you have the North Vietnamese Regulars. Now, the North Vietnamese Regulars had everything we had, bulletproof vests, helmets. You name it they had it. Fine weaponry. Russia supplied all that. And so they were as well-equipped as we were.

Interviewer

What did you think of them?

Bryan Bulloch

The North Vietnamese Regulars, they were really good fighters. The Vietnamese were really good fighters. But they didn't fight like coming in a straight line. It was all guerrilla warfare. You know what I mean? It'd be like you coming after me and I'm here in Cedar City, and I know the area and I know all the hills up here. It would be a guerrilla warfare.

Interviewer

So you'd have a great advantage on me.

Bryan Bulloch

Oh, yeah. You'd have the advantage. Mm-hmm. And a lot of stuff was moved underground through tunnels and whatever around you. They used a lotta elephants to move stuff, too.

Interviewer

Tell us about that.

Bryan Bulloch

Up at An Khe Pass where we were stationed, we were looking to cross a pass. And we'd been noticing for about maybe ten days every night in the middle of the night we would see this big white elephant, and he would come down this trail across the canyon from us. And in through the jungle you could see this. And there may have been more elephants, but the white one really kinda stood out. 'Cause we had infrared on all these armored personnel carriers so you could see stuff. And he would come down through the jungle and he would go down to this area where there was a cave. And then you would see a light come on in the cave kinda like a candle in the cave. And we knew they were transporting supplies that way. So we watched it, and they asked us to report it and we reported it and kept reporting it. And they were setting up probably a timeframe on how often they were transporting across this certain trail. And one night this commander called us, and he says, "Do you think that you could put a .50 caliber tracer round inside that cave when the candle comes on?" And I said, "Well, yeah, I could probably do that," 'cause a .50 shoots a long ways. You got about a 99.9 percent accuracy at a mile with a .50-caliber gun now. And so I broke the clip off so that only one tracer round would go into the gun, into the .50. And we fired it and you could see the tracer streaming across the valley. And all at once it goes into the cave and you could see it bouncing off the walls. And pretty soon the light went out. So I don't know if they went over later on and checked it all out or not, but we never did see the elephant again, so I'm guessing that they changed their route.

Bryan Bulloch

We were willing to go over there. I mean, you take an oath. And you're willing to go over there. And basically the sentiment was, was you was going over there to give people a chance at life. And that was basically the sentiment at that time. The French were in there before we were. And let me get back to mines in the roads. A lotta their stuff they'd dug up from French. French had laid mines all over that country. But like I say, they were very frugal. They used what they could find. In fact, the French were blowing us up. We never knew where their mines were at or anything like that. And so the French actually were in there, and we went in and took it over from the French.

Interviewer

So you were aware of all this.

Bryan Bulloch

Yeah, we're aware of all that.

Interviewer

In those two years, what was the GI's evolution of thinking?

Bryan Bulloch

You shouldn't say this, but you get to a point over there where it's either kill or be killed. And up in our area, we didn't take any prisoners and they didn't take any prisoners. And that's just the way it was. And it was very well known between both sides. So you get hardened to it, you know what I mean. You really get hardened. Yeah. You get really hardened to it. And you get hardened to the fact that you see your friends die, you see things happen. I mean, it really does harden you to the fact that it does not bother you seeing a Vietnamese drop or anything else because you do get hardened to it.

Interviewer

So you were in a transition point in the war.

Bryan Bulloch

Yeah. I was in a transition point, and actually, I was there at the first part of Tet when they were really moving. But it was later on in about '70 or something like that when we left. '72 I think is when we left. I can't remember. But anyway, Tet really did move on. Now, when I was there we knew that Qui Nhon had two battalions and VC in it. They just didn't show themselves.

Interviewer

It was really escalating, too.

Bryan Bulloch

Yeah. And there's no trust. There's no trust at all because they're all around you. I mean, you couldn't trust 'em because they were all around you.

Interviewer

What are you thinking watching the war escalate?

Bryan Bulloch

Well, you keep thinking they're gonna win and it's gonna be over with. But it didn't appear to do that. But when I came home, you weren't honored. I mean, there was no praise, no fanfare, no nothing. And it surprises you today how there's still a little bit of that animosity around, even today. You wouldn't think it would, but there is. We built the memorial here. We built that for everybody and for healing for all the Vietnam veterans, regardless of whether you was from Cedar City or wherever. And there's still a little animosity here.

Interviewer

So even in Cedar City there were comments?

Bryan Bulloch

Yeah, there were. I don't wanna say who or what, but there were comments, yeah. I had a law enforcement officer here tell me I was nothing but a druggie and he'd have me in jail within three weeks. And there was a lot of things like that, you know, off-the-wall comments made that should've have been made. Yeah, there were.

Interviewer

Is there anything you would like to add?

Bryan Bulloch

The VC had a way of well, really not trying to scare you. They did scare you. There's no doubt about it. But they had what they called Hanoi Hattie, and she was outta Hanoi. And they would broadcast their radio station all down through that country. And they used to play American music so we used to listen to her. They knew the troops were listening to her. Well, just before I left to come home, we were all listening to her radio station and she took the 540th supply company, named everybody in the company, told 'em where they were from in the United States, how many people were in their families, who their mom and dads were and they were coming to get us. Now, that was about the time I was leaving 'cause they had been hitting us every night. Now, see they had a pretty good source of knowing everybody's name and who was in that company and whatever else. And normally when they did that, you better be ready for a tremendous firefight because they were coming. You just never knew when, but they were coming. Well, they happened to come just after I left, and like I said, we had 223 guys in my company when I left and come home. And I ran into this Danny Trueworthy that's a really fine friend of mine, lives down in Las Vegas. There was only 37 actually out of the 540th that come outta there.

Interviewer

Do you ever have any feelings that you should've stayed?

Bryan Bulloch

Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. There was an emotional there. It was an emotional that day. You knew you was leaving your best friends and was just like losing another arm. I mean, you had no idea. But it was also them trying to push you out the door and say, "You know, you need to go. You should go. You got the chance. You need to go."

Interviewer

How did you feel when you heard they were more or less wiped out?

Bryan Bulloch

Yeah. But I didn't hear that out, see, for a while until after I was home. I mean, it was months after that. That's when he told me the story about what'd happened, and they had been overrun and what they'd done. They had gone through the yards just before they got overrun, and they'd threw their grenade. But what they do is they're so hot that they'll fuse an engine block solid. So they went through the yards and any trucks or anything they left there or had to leave during the battle, they seized it right up so there was nothing they could use. And then he told me how they spent six days out in the jungle trying to get back to Qui Nhon is where they actually ended up, was Qui Nhon before they got back to a safe haven.

Interviewer

Tell me again who Hanoi Hattie is.

Bryan Bulloch

Yeah, that's what they called her was Hanoi Hattie. She used her name, and she was out of Hanoi and she was a radio broadcaster for the Viet Cong. I'm sure there's other people that's heard her, too, over there, other veterans.