



Delbert Douglas Hunt
Specialist E4
Army
APC Operations
Cedar City, Utah

Interviewer
Give us your full name.

Delbert Hunt
Delbert Douglas Hunt.

Interviewer
And where are you from?

Delbert Hunt
From Norwalk, California.

Interviewer
And you grew up there?

Delbert Hunt
Yep. Graduated from Santa Fe High School from Santa Fe Springs.

Interviewer
And what year did you graduate?

Delbert Hunt
'64.

Interviewer
What kind of student were you?

Delbert Hunt
Well, my last year I was a B+ student. Most of my times I was in the C's, lower B's but similar to that.

Interviewer

Were you an athlete or anything like that?

Delbert Hunt

No, not at all. I liked art.

Interviewer

Really? So how did you get into the military?

Delbert Hunt

I got drafted which was okay.

Interviewer

Tell us about being drafted.

Delbert Hunt

Well, I went on a building mission for the LDS church and while I was on my building mission they drafted me off. So I went in. I planned on going anyway. My family was all members of the Marine Corps but I didn't want to be a Marine really. But I went down there and they asked for Marines and my dad happened to be standing there so I raised my hand. But they counted about four people in front of me and stopped and that's all they wanted. I go, whew. I didn't really want to be a Marine even though most of my family had been Marines. I wanted to be in tanks and at that time they didn't have a Marine Corps unit that had tanks.

Interviewer

So you volunteered for tanks?

Delbert Hunt

Yes, I did. I wanted to be in tanks, armor. I always wanted to do that.

Interviewer

So what year is this?

Delbert Hunt

1965 is when I went into the military. '66 I went to Vietnam.

Interviewer

So you got your training where?

Delbert Hunt

When we left the recruiting office they took us to Fort Polk, Louisiana. When they took us off and put us on the bus there was no place to put us. The guy asked us, what are you guys doing here? So we didn't even have a place to go. So what they did is they said, "We'll have to keep you here until we find out where you're going." So they marched us down and we got some new Levi's and

some white shirts and that was our uniform for about two weeks because they didn't have uniforms for us or anything. So we were just cleaning up the barracks and painting and stuff like that until they took us to Fort Carson, Colorado, for basic training. That's where we took our basic training.

Interviewer

Is that an armor training unit?

Delbert Hunt

Yeah, it's mostly armor. I don't know what it is right now. I think it's still armor, but it's in Colorado Springs.

Interviewer

So you ended up there and you finished your training?

Delbert Hunt

I finished my basic training, part of my AIT, and then they re-did the 11th Cav and brought them back up into full status and stuff and they transferred a lot of us over to the 11th Cav which was in Camp Pickard, Virginia, Fort Mead, Maryland. And that's where we took training for that until we went to Vietnam.

Interviewer

Were you trained on tanks? Or personnel carriers?

Delbert Hunt

Both. I was trained on tanks in basic training and AIT and since they put me in the A troop, they were personnel carriers. D Company was the tanks in our unit.

Interviewer

So how do you get to Vietnam?

Delbert Hunt

We had 1st squadron, 2nd squadron and 3rd squadron by three ships. We left San Francisco and cruised us out over there.

Interviewer

Now did you have your equipment with you?

Delbert Hunt

We had just our clothes and some rifles. We didn't have all the other equipment yet.

Interviewer

So you went by boat. How long did it take you to get there?

Delbert Hunt

Well, if we wasn't fighting a typhoon, we would have got there in probably four days, but it took us almost 20 days. Then when we got there they landed us on the beach just like they landed us, but we didn't have any ammunition for our weapons or anything. We just kinda marched on. And I was lucky to be with the first colonel that went on for the 11th Cav, Colonel Cobb. He's passed away just not too long ago. But I got to meet him again at The Wall since Vietnam, before he passed away. They've got a big news article down at the museum down in Fort Irwin that has him coming off the landing craft, but you can't see me. I'm way back in the corner. You can see a little top of a helmet. But they marched us off that onto big parade ground and while we was standing there and they were telling us what we were doing, we started getting shot at. We had no weapons, I mean we had weapons, but no ammunition. So they hurried up and got us in trucks and took us where we was going which was to guard MACV headquarters to be part of their guard for right then.

Interviewer

Where is that?

Delbert Hunt

It's about the central part, it's by Long Binh. It's by Saigon, a few miles north of Saigon. What happened is we didn't have our vehicles and they had to put us somewhere so they took us there and they put us out on the perimeter guard. And the perimeter guard you just sit there in holes and tents and whatever and guard the perimeter and be like guards. You can only shoot in certain spots, but they had other perimeters out in front of us and we were like the inside three. Well they gave us ten rounds of ammunition. Each one of us had ten rounds of ammunition.

So when we got in a fire fight, which was every day or every night, at least one, if we didn't pick up the brass that we used, they wouldn't give us any more ammunition. So if we shot ten rounds and found one piece of brass, we'd only get one more round. That happened until one day when some of us got to go back into MACV headquarters behind the big gates, the Big Safe Place, we called it, God's Place. General Westmoreland was the general and we went into the PX for a change and they had a big jeep that had a lot of stuff in it from the MP's, a lot of ammunition and stuff so we stole all the brass we could find. And we put it all in our pockets; filled our pockets. So then if we shot one round, we'd turn in ten rounds of brass. But if they found the stuff they took it away from us so we had to hide it. So we hid it everywhere we could, but we had ammunition. Then when we got our vehicles, which was about two weeks later, we had all the ammunition we needed. They loaded us down. We had anything we needed.

Interviewer

What were you shooting at while you were on guard duty?

Delbert Hunt

We couldn't see. We got a round shot in at us, we started shooting. We had perimeters that they'd shoot. They put a stake here and a stake here and you don't shoot anywhere past that. So you're not hitting anyone out in front of you except for where your area is.

Interviewer

So you're taking fire?

Delbert Hunt

Yeah. Mortar rounds, fire, anything. One round shot in, he'd get 2,000 rounds shot out. I only seen three people anytime I was ever in a fire fight.

Interviewer

So this is pretty early in the war.

Delbert Hunt

Yes. The 11th Cav was '66 and that was pretty early in the war, actually. We kind of was the first ones there; the first ones in the Cav anyway, and a lot of vehicles.

Interviewer

So this is brand new, track vehicles?

Delbert Hunt

Yeah, well we was convoy escort mostly. So we went up Highway 1 and Highway 13, but they used us a lot just to go through the jungle, just to poke holes. Big tunnels, 'cause as you'd go through there you'd leave tunnels 'cause it would pull the vines and everything else all through the thing and just rip them right down through. You'd look back and there's this big tunnel there.

Interviewer

What were the duties of your job?

Delbert Hunt

Over in Vietnam? Well, when we was there, we got our weapons. But as soon as we went out past MACV headquarters and going out to what was supposed to be our base camp, to set up a little base camp, we were shot at on the road going out. We had really no idea what to do except shoot back.

Interviewer

Were you in trucks?

Delbert Hunt

No, we were in personnel carriers when we left. We never went anywhere out of MACV headquarters until we got our vehicles. We went on ambush patrols and things like that, but we walked out on those.

Interviewer

What kind of vehicles?

Delbert Hunt

We'd have a number of APCs which is the personnel carriers and then a tank. And then whatever was convoying: jeeps, trucks, whatever. And then more APCs and tanks and we'd have two or three platoons sometimes, depends on how big the convoy was.

Interviewer

So you'd be convoying off these roads. How far would you go in a convoy?

Delbert Hunt

Sometimes 50 miles, 60 miles. We got in a firefight every day. We got shot at every single day.

Interviewer

So tell us exactly what you would do when you got hit by fire.

Delbert Hunt

We'd be going down the road and if they said we're in a fire fight or they gave us the right code or whatever it was, we already knew which ones were going to stay and which ones were going to go because the convoy still has to go through. So they already assigned that to whoever. So when we get in a fight, the ones who are assigned, pulled off to the side of the road. They call it a herringbone because they're kind of staggered like this so they can cover all around everybody and then the other ones go straight on through. So it has some armored personnel carriers, a couple tanks, but the rest go through. And if you get twice like up the road another 20 miles they stop some more, you hope you're done there so you can catch up with the other ones. So that's how they do it. Our whole thing was just shoot whatever we hear. If they're shooting at us, keep shooting until they stop.

Interviewer

So what are you doing?

Delbert Hunt

Mostly I'm sitting down inside of a--I mean we drive chest high. We don't drive down inside.

Interviewer

So you're sticking out of that?

Delbert Hunt

Yeah. Yeah, but when we get in a fire fight, I drop down. The reason you drop down is you got to be protected 'cause they got a .50 caliber right above your head. But it's basically so if they tell us to move out, we're gone. We've got periscopes and stuff so we can see, but we can go. If we get killed, we can't go. When the .50 caliber jammed one time, I had to stand up out of mine and keep some people from shooting an RPG at us and that was really hard. I got decoration for that. It was really hard because the kid was only 15, 16 years old.

Interviewer

So tell us about how this whole thing happened.

Delbert Hunt

Well, we come out of it and we was taking a convoy escort of, I don't know what it was 'cause we were never told, just some trucks and jeeps and a bunch of other units going somewhere that needed a convoy escort. We were just going down Highway 1 and we was about 20 miles out. In fact, maybe not even that far because we could see where the camp was if they had shot up a smoke grenade or something, you could see it because it would be close enough to see. But we went out on the road and they just started shooting at us. We couldn't see a thing. It was just jungle on both sides of the road, just as thick as could be. So the only thing we do is pull off as far as we can to let the convoy through and just start shooting the jungle up. And when we start shooting, we would start with our rifles or guns--our machines guns straight down to the ground and just move up like this and back down like this so it covers the whole area. 'Cause we don't know where they're at, you never see them. So you have to get where you're at closest to the furthest away. Then we do that until they stop shooting. Until we're told to stop.

Interviewer

So the noise must be terrible.

Delbert Hunt

Horrible. Horrible, horrible.

Interviewer

How many weapons are going off at one time?

Delbert Hunt

Well, there's a .50 caliber machine gun when I'm driving, right above my head. There's two .30 calibers on each side. And whoever's got the M-16s and the grenade launchers and all the other vehicles have got the same thing, shooting off. And if the tanks are going off and if you're getting mortar rounds in, and if you're getting aircraft dropping stuff, then we got a lot of noise. If we didn't have helmets or radios, we'd never hear because you can't hear a thing.

Interviewer

So what are the orders coming over the radio at that point?

Delbert Hunt

The only thing I hear--'cause I don't hear anything except what the tank commander says. I don't hear what's going on.

Interviewer

What's he telling you?

Delbert Hunt

He's telling me to turn right, turn left or pivot right, pivot left. Or go forward, go back. He's telling me where to go. That's all he's telling me. He doesn't tell me what's out there, who's out there or anything. He just tells me where to go. I can't hear all the other noise, as far as there's enemy over here, there's enemy over there. All I hear is turn left, turn right, back up, go forward. Run over that guy, don't run over him. Whatever. But I can't hear anything else.

Interviewer

So you're seeing everything through a periscope?

Delbert Hunt

I'm seeing everything through a periscope. Yep.

Interviewer

What's that like?

Delbert Hunt

It's scary. Especially when you see somebody with an RPG at you, right in front of you.

Interviewer

Slow down and tell us what RPG means and what that's going to do.

Delbert Hunt

Rocket Propel Grenade.

Interviewer

And when you say "somebody," what do you mean?

Delbert Hunt

It was a Viet Cong. I don't care who it was, it was somebody and they had it aimed at us. It was the only thing that would kill us.

Interviewer

Inside?

Delbert Hunt

Yes.

Interviewer

Through your periscope?

Delbert Hunt

Mm-hmm.

Interviewer

What happened?

Delbert Hunt

Well the .50 caliber machine gun was jammed so I had to stand up and shoot that person.

Interviewer

What did you have?

Delbert Hunt

With my M-16.

Interviewer

So you had to come out of your hole?

Delbert Hunt

Yep. I stood straight up. It was more important to save my crew than anything else.

Interviewer

You said you felt kind of bad about it.

Delbert Hunt

I did.

Interviewer

Why?

Delbert Hunt

'Cause he was only 16 years old or less. He was just a kid.

Interviewer

So what did you learn about the enemy by that time?

Delbert Hunt

Well it didn't bother me too much until after I got home, but that was one of my biggest problems of coping with it was doing that. Because the other ones I never saw. I could have killed maybe 10,000 people and wouldn't know it.

Interviewer

So Viet Cong could be anybody?

Delbert Hunt

Yeah. They could walk up one time and give you a piece of candy or something or want some candy and send somebody up there with a grenade and drop it right inside you. So we had to keep them kind of away. There was good times over there, too, though.

Interviewer

Tell me about those.

Delbert Hunt

Well, there was a lot of fun times. One time I remember, we had a couple of people from Mexico that was trying to get their citizenship. To get their citizenship they went in the military. Well they would get stuff from there that was really hot from Mexico. Shipped over to them like peppers and stuff like that in care packages. Well these little Vietnamese kids are coming up and they always want C-rations and all that kind of stuff from us. So this guy thought oh, I'll give them one of these hot peppers. So they gave him a hot pepper and this little kid put it in his mouth and he takes off running. So the Mexican kid thought, oh that was pretty cool. So about 20 minutes later this little kid comes back and he's eating these little berries, he's just popping them in his mouth. He's eating them so the guy reached out to get one so he handed it to him. He put it in his mouth and his mouth blistered. His tongue blistered. Then he goes like this and then he rubs his eyes and his eyes blistered. The little kid started laughing, I mean just really ripped out laughing. The hottest peppers in the world are over there. So he thought he was getting the little guy but it was him getting the Mexican kid. I mean it blistered his lip and his tongue. He couldn't hardly talk for almost three or four hours. So it was fun.

Interviewer

So what else would you guys do to relax?

Delbert Hunt

Not much. We went on R&R if we could. But that wasn't always relaxing either. It was to get away from some of the stuff, but that was all. Otherwise we never had a day where we really relaxed very much. We was always out in the jungle. I mean we had a base camp and never saw it. The only time we ever saw it is if we came back to pick something up, spend a couple hours there. Maybe a night, if it was late. But we'd be up before it got dark and be out. I never even know

what base camp looked like that well when I was finished. I got pictures of it on the stuff of when it was being built, but I was never in it.

Interviewer

So you were constantly rolling across Vietnam.

Delbert Hunt

Yeah. Slept on the decks of our personnel carriers. Never slept inside. Never slept on the ground.

Interviewer

Tell us what you're seeing and what your controls look like.

Delbert Hunt

Well the APC, you're sitting in a spot just like I'm sitting in a chair right now. On this side is where your motor's at and it goes back, there's a big wall there, but the motor's inside there. And the other side has all your gauges and things like that to where you turn it on and all the gauges for your power. You drive it by laterals. It's like some of the old tractors and stuff, you pull one, it locks that brake and that's the way it will turn. Pull the other one, it will lock that brake. If you want to stop you pull them both back. So that's how you do it. You can actually pivot right on one thing and turn right around. You don't have to go like a tank has to go, around and you just hit it like that and it will just pivot right on itself. So that was kind of fun to do.

When I was in Camp Pickard, Virginia, my sergeant, I seen him last year in Washington, D.C., and he reminded me, he said, "You're the one that tried to kill me." I said, "What do you mean?" He said in Camp Pickard, Virginia, before we went to Vietnam they had worked on my vehicle and I was going on a training thing and I pulled back on the laterals and one of them, the universal joy broke. So that automatically turned the other way and it went off a big ditch, hit the other side of the ditch, I busted my teeth and he went out of the hatch and the other kid in the back broke both his legs. He was joking about it but it wasn't my fault but it was still kinda sad.

Interviewer

So you're sitting in a seat --

Delbert Hunt

Okay, when I'm driving I'm sitting right chest high. So I can see everything around. We have the big helmet on with the ear things so I can look and see everywhere from side to side. I can't see behind me because the turret's there. I can look up and see the .50 caliber machine gun sitting right above me and his turret's right behind me. They have a big shield type thing. So that's what I get to see. I get to see everything I'm driving on, pulling and stuff, until we get in a

fire fight. Then I have to drop down. But other than that I can see just about everything.

Interviewer

What's the heat and smell and the noise like?

Delbert Hunt

The noise is horrible. It's really loud. The smell, sometimes if you get kerosene in there or cleaning fluid or just some of the stink from the jungle or some of the rotten stuff from people's feet, either way it stinks pretty bad in there sometimes. Every time we had a chance we'd clean it out and stuff, but that was far and few between.

Interviewer

What about the heat?

Delbert Hunt

The heat was horrible. It was bad.

Interviewer

You've got an engine next to you.

Delbert Hunt

Yeah. Well, it's insulated. The heat from that didn't bother me. The heat from the outside because you're in a little tiny place just big enough for a skinny guy to fit. Not me now. I could probably fit, but it would hurt. But it's tight and it's hot. And then you get all the noise. If you get in a fire fight it just rattles like crazy and the whole thing shakes and when you're going down the road you can hear all the little tiny noises of the track going across the road. You're quite aware of where you're at. Once you get going you can tell what you're doing and what type of surface you're on, even if you're inside. You could be buttoned clear up and know what you're on just by the noise.

Interviewer

So when you had to stop for the night, what would you do?

Delbert Hunt

Well, most of the time we would go back to a place that was already a base camp for somewhere. Not always. Or they would clear out a clearing and that's where we'd go. And we'd call it logging. Logging. And they would go and they would be in a big circle, just like they used to do with the old cowboy stuff, and then they would put tanks and stuff in there and then they'd put the big control right in the middle, the headquarters' track. Then they would send us out on ambush listening patrols. They'd take one guy from each thing and send them out in the middle of the jungle. We called them monkeys on a string 'cause they'd give us a little string so if we seen something we'd yank that string.

Interviewer

Did you have to go out and do that?

Delbert Hunt

A number of times, yeah.

Interviewer

So you go out on a listening post?

Delbert Hunt

Yeah. And I can tell you one a little later about what happened just before I was ready to come home and that was scary. But just before I was ready to come home, three days before I was ready to come home, they sent me back away from the regular thing back to this place where I was going to be processed out and this place where they kind of talked to us a little bit and set us down to get ready to leave. Well, that night, the first night I was there they sent some people out on an ambush patrol, it was called a listening post, same thing. But they started a little fire fight of their own and called them so they could be brought back in. And these are mixtures of all kinds of people. Not 11th Cav guys and just all kinds of people.

So the next night it was my turn to go and me and this other guy was in charge because we was highest ranking at the time. And most of the other guys were just going in so we had a little scare there. But I had a couple friends that I knew that was going back so that was nice, too. But we went out on the ambush patrol. It was about a mile and a half away from where they were at and it was in a place where they've already knocked down all the trees. This was after they used Agent Orange on that stuff. And they were back a hundred yards or so and all the trees from the road were knocked down so they had a lot of stumps and logs and stuff everywhere. You'd go and dig down underneath those and cover yourself really good inside there so you can't be seen and hide, basically and listen for what's going on. Well, that particular night we heard some stuff and heard a tingle, tingle, tingle so we called it in. We hear something we just let them know. Well, just sit there. So we sit there and we hear clink, clink, clink. We could hear stuff cracking so we called in and they said just sit there, we know.

Well they said what do you think is there and I said, "Well, it's gotta be people 'cause they're smoking marijuana." You can smell it. And I said, "Animals don't smoke marijuana." And you could tell that they were Viet Cong or somebody out there so they said, "Okay, we'll bring a tank down."

So they brought two tanks down. They ride with cat eyes, just little tiny lights and they can just barely see right down in front of them. They go down the road and so it's really hard to see the tanks. But they have these big, huge lights on them

that will just light up the whole night to daytime. They got down to where we were and we told them we can hear it out on the road, you're right at us. So you could hear the turrets turn around and turn those big lights on and there was more people there than I'd ever seen in my life.

Interviewer

The enemy?

Delbert Hunt

Yeah, and they started shooting canister rounds. They didn't even care if we were there or not, they just started shooting canister rounds out there.

Interviewer

The tanks?

Delbert Hunt

Mm-hmm. They weren't our tanks. They weren't 11th Cav tanks, but they were tanks that were around the area. I'm lucky we were all covered up. We was down underneath logs and stuff, but it was scary when the people start falling down right next to you. It gets really scary when you know that they're there. So after they got done doing what they were doing, they went back and we called in and said we need help to get back. They said no, you can't come. So I walked them back anyway.

Interviewer

Why did they say you can't come back?

Delbert Hunt

'Cause of the other guys the night before. And it was just one of those kinds of things. They played games with us a lot.

Interviewer

This is with only three days to go?

Delbert Hunt

Three days go to. So they told me I had to go out the next day and I came back and said, "No way." They threatened me a court-martial. I says, "No way." I said, "I come in as a private, I'll go back as a private, I don't care." As long as I didn't get a dishonorable discharge I didn't care if I went back as a private. But I just went and sat inside and even got shot at that night.

Interviewer

So you were way short?

Delbert Hunt

Yeah, I wasn't gonna go back out there. Not when they didn't come get me when I needed to be gotten. We didn't lose anybody. I had one guy get a little pellet in his toe. The canister rounds are like big shotgun rounds.

Interviewer

In a tank?

Delbert Hunt

In a tank, yeah. And it just scatters just like a shotgun does. And it shoots these big huge pellet things out there and it just shreds everything that's there. So if we had have just been in a hole instead of behind things and hiding--that's our whole thing is we're supposed to be listening so we wanted to be hidden so they couldn't see us. It was dark anyway, but when they turned the lights on we was hidden good enough they couldn't see us. They were so surprised about the lights anyway that they ain't gonna be looking for us, they're looking to run so they're running. And we just had one guy get hit in the foot and a little tiny scratch on one of the guy's fingers and that was it. So we was lucky there. But that was a spooky night.

Interviewer

Now I read you had an interesting story about what you thought were Viet Cong. Tell me the details.

Delbert Hunt

Okay. Well the same thing, we was on perimeter of what was supposed to be our base camp. This is one of the first times we was there when they were just kinda digging out the outside areas. They didn't have any tents in there or anything yet, so we're still in our vehicles. They have six layers of concertina wire and wire and booby traps and flares and tin cans with strings stretched so you could hear them rattle if they're going to rattle. Just everything you could think of out there, just to protect coming in.

So we're on our PC and we're out of our PC sitting around and we always have one guy in the coop low on the 50 all the time. If that vehicle is sitting there, there's somebody on that .50 caliber machine gun. The other guy sometimes can move around, they can get off a little bit, but there's got to be somebody on the vehicle and usually the driver's got to be around close. But they all can drive.

But we were sitting there and it's the darkest night I'd ever seen there. I mean it was so dark you couldn't see if you put your finger right there in front of your eyes. You just couldn't see. Well, we heard this tinkle, tinkle, tinkle and the cans started rattling. So we was listening and the cans started rattling again so me and the sergeant that was up there in the thing said we need to see what's going on. So we said let's get one of the tanks over. This is similar to the other.

So they come over with the little lights. They're coming down, you can hear them come down. They're only that far away from us. They're that close with their vehicle to us. If they had mud between it would have been hitting us. And the turned that turret around with that big light and they turned it on. When the turned it on the wire took off, the trip flares went, the hand grenades went, everything went and it was an orangutan that had its fur caught on one of the pieces of the barbed wire and he was trying to take it off. And when he was trying to get the fur out, he was making those cans rattle. When he took off he just drug the wire out there and just popped everything. So it was kind of funny.

Interviewer

There were other nights with animals, too.

Delbert Hunt

Yeah, there was a couple nights. Yeah. Well there was daytime. It was getting kind of evening, but you must have read something. But it was getting kind of evening and the rubber trees over there spaced just big enough for the APCs to go through without knocking them over. And the rubber trees were part of the rubber plantation from the French when they were there. So some of the plantations are still working a little bit, not really a whole bunch, but the trees were there. And the canopy over the top of the trees, some of them have jungle growing over them and some of them are just really thick anyway. So you can't see there and it's like going through a tunnel. And it was getting dark and you can't see the other side because it crested over a hill, so you couldn't see the tunnel with the light at the end.

And we was driving through and I'm usually first track because of my number on the track. So we was going through and we was going through at probably five-, ten miles an hour. Then all of the sudden—pow—and this thing went over my face and wrapped around my head and I didn't know what it was and I yanked it off and it was a huge spider. That spider was that big around. It had legs about that long. I'm not lying. But the leg was only about that thick. It had these little spiny things that made it look bigger. And it wrapped around my face. I ripped it off and threw it and stuff like that. I find out the Vietnamese people break the legs off and eat the spiders. But I've been afraid of spiders ever since. It was really scary.

Interviewer

So can you describe the width of the spider legs?

Delbert Hunt

The spider legs are probably 10 to 12 inches long and the real part of the leg is probably about the size of a little finger, the thickness around. But they look like they're about the size of three or four inches because of the little hairy stuff on it. So it looks really big, like a huge, huge tarantula. It's really big. The body's good sized, bigger than a watermelon. Some small watermelon. It was really big.

Anyway it just scared the heck out of me. And then I found out the Vietnamese were mad because I threw it down on the ground and they couldn't find it.

Interviewer

So tell us about the jungle. What is it like being in a jungle?

Delbert Hunt

There's been a couple times in there we actually what we call breaking the jungle and we'd go in in a fresh spot--this is before they had Agent Orange and defoliated everything. We was in that, too, but since we were there first, they didn't have that yet. So they'd take us off the road and the road would have jungle right up to the road and they'd take us off the road and we'd call it tearing the jungle down and we'd make tunnels through it. We'd be going through the jungle ripping out the stuff and sometimes we'd catch a vine that would probably go 500 feet before it got to the end of it and I'd just push it until it fell off. But they were that long.

And sometimes you'd catch one that just went forever, it would be the same vine as you go through it would just keep peeling it off. But we'd go through these jungles and one of our worst enemies is the big red ants. The big red ants, the build a nest in the jungle and they build them out of the leaves of the jungle and make huge nests. I don't know how many ants are in there, but there are more ants than I'd ever want to imagine. But when you hit one of those, which was usually ours because we was the first one in there, that nest would fall down and as soon as it would hit the ground they'd start eating us, eating on us, biting us --

Interviewer

They'd fall on you?

Delbert Hunt

Yeah, they'd drop down and it would just bust. And there were so many ants they would just start trying to devour you it'd feel like. So we always had to have spray cans of stuff when you go through the jungle to kill the ants. And they bite really hard. They bite real hard. But they'd do that two or three times a day sometimes. You can't see them because they're camouflaged up in the jungle, but they'd drop down and once in a while the guys, a couple back would hit something on the side and knock one down, but usually it was the first track that would get all those there.

So we had those and then we had pythons and big snakes. We ran over one that was crawling along side of a log, we ran over it and it still crawled way. So I don't know if the log saved it or if it was just too big. Scorpions--we'd go through the jungle, scorpions would fall down onto our tracks. We never could find them. We had one of those little pit vipers fall on our track, never could find it. We didn't ride in that thing until we got back and took everything out to see if it was in there, but it got out somewhere.

hey told us before we went over there, "If you get bit by a snake, don't worry about it. Take deep breath, undo your belt, walk over to a tree. If you sit down you'll live, if not don't worry about it. So you're gonna die before you get over there otherwise. So if you make it to the tree and sit down, you'll live."

Interviewer

What about the noise of the jungle?

Delbert Hunt

Oh, there's a lot of noises. There's some fun noises and some bad noises. There's some dirty noises and I won't say what it says, but there's the frogs that say, "Ree-op! Ree-op!" And there's the lizards that say some stuff that is pretty nasty. We have a name for them but I'm not going to say it.

Interviewer

What are some of the other noises? Keep telling us about those.

Delbert Hunt

Well, there's that and there's some tree frogs that make some nice noises. Then every once in a while you hear a tiger or a lion or some big cat of some kind. There was a few of those over there.

Interviewer

You heard a tiger?

Delbert Hunt

I don't know if it was a tiger or a lion, but it was a big cat. Didn't see it so I don't know. But we've seen elephants over there and they'd come by but we can't shoot an elephant. We'd be dishonorably discharged for shooting one of those knowingly. But the Viet Congo would use them to haul stuff and they'd be on one side 'cause they knew where we were and we couldn't shoot at them. So they'd haul stuff through the jungle with elephants.

Interviewer

Were you seeing a lot of Viet Cong?

Delbert Hunt

No. I didn't see a whole bunch. The only place we ever saw them is if they captured some. Like I say, we get in a firefight every day and never saw very many 'cause we knew they were there, they'd take a body count afterwards. When we first got there and first got in a firefight, we would have to ask permission to shoot back. If they started shooting at us we'd say, "Can we shoot back, we're being fired upon?" And they'd give us yes or no by however close the next village is or however close whatever they are is. When we lost our first

person we'd start fighting and we'd call, "Can we shoot back?" If they said no, we just wouldn't body count.

Interviewer

So you say you lost your first person. You first casualty of the day?

Delbert Hunt

First casualty, period. When they said we couldn't shoot and they shot one of our guys and killed him, that was the last time we ever called. We called every time, but that was the last time we ever listened to what they said. If they said no and we was in a fire fight, we're going to shoot back.

Interviewer

How far were you into the campaign before you lost your first man?

Delbert Hunt

Six days. Six days after we got our vehicles.

Interviewer

Did that change everything?

Delbert Hunt

Yep. Yeah.

Interviewer

Did the tactics change?

Delbert Hunt

We done a lot of things different. A lot of things. We learned how to rely on the other person, we knew where the other person would be. So we knew exactly how far we needed to be away from him, how close we needed to be to somebody. We knew where he was going to be shooting at. When we first got there we figured that's what we're supposed to be doing. But sometimes it had to change. We had enough faith in each person in the Cav unit that they would be where they're supposed to be at. And so we had to rely on that, but that was something that saved our lives, a lot of us. We just felt that, they all felt that. We was a tight knit group. So if you said you're going to be there, that's where they'll be at.

Interviewer

I've seen photos of you guys putting sandbags and stuff around your APCs.

Delbert Hunt

We didn't pile too much around the APCs because they were square boxes but the jeeps and the trucks, they'd put them on their fender wells, up their doors, all that kind of stuff.

Interviewer

Why?

Delbert Hunt

'Cause the bullets won't go through it. Bullets don't go through sandbags too well. Their rockets can, but the bullets don't.

Interviewer

What does an RPG do to an APC?

Delbert Hunt

If it hits it, it will go through it and explode inside of it. And 90 percent of the time will kill everybody inside. They didn't have them until we got there. They didn't have a big amount. But after we got there with the Cav they started getting a lot of them around. By the time the Cav left, or the APCs and tanks left they had a lot of them over there. That's how most of them were killed, just like the IUDs now.

Interviewer

So did that start changing the way you fought?

Delbert Hunt

Well we got back before they got too many, but yeah, it did. We was always watching for that first. If we seen something like that first, if somebody started shooting one it's all it'd take. If it hit something and we knew it was an RPG that's where we'd do most of our concentration of firing.

Interviewer

Were you working with helicopters?

Delbert Hunt

Yeah, we had our own helicopter outfit with us. The 11th Cav has got a helicopter crew. They were good, too. We always called in airstrikes. We got really close to a lot of them. We got two guys killed just before I came home that was from not our guys dropping the bombs--I mean Americans dropping the bombs but it wasn't 11th Cav guys. But they, two Cav guys--one of the bombs skipped across the canopy of the top of the jungle and when it fragmented it hit one in the hip and one in the chest.

Interviewer

That's friendly fire?

Delbert Hunt

Mm-hmm.

Interviewer

Was that a big problem?

Delbert Hunt

Yeah. In some cases. Not with us so much because we always had a helicopter usually above us to tell us where we're at. One time we went through the jungle and they started a firefight like we thought and it was the other troop over about a hundred yards from us. They hit a booby trap and as soon as we hear fire we start shooting. Well the helicopter up there told us to stop so we knew and nobody got hurt but still it sounded like a firefight to us.

Interviewer

Did you ever go in the helicopter?

Delbert Hunt

Yeah. A couple times. I went just to fly back to go on R&R a couple times. I've been up in a Chinook. We went in one time 'cause our vehicle broke, but we had to come back. And then we went back to pick up our vehicle.

Interviewer

What do you think today when you hear a helicopter?

Delbert Hunt

Well some of them don't bother me. The little tiny ones don't bother me. But a Huey bothers me still 'cause of the noise it makes. The wind that hits the props makes a whop, whop, whop, whop. And if it idles and it does it just right it will make a lot of noise. My wife can tell you that. She can tell you that it really bothers me.

Interviewer

Takes you back there?

Delbert Hunt

Mm-hmm. I was up in the surround sound thing up on 33rd South when they had it there and watched "Forest Gump" and they had the helicopters come in. I had white fingers because it had all the surround sound and it sounded like they were coming right over my head. It just scared me to death until I realized it's just a movie.

Interviewer

What do you think of some of the Vietnam War movies?

Delbert Hunt

They're junk.

Interviewer

Why?

Delbert Hunt

'Cause they're not real. Some of them scare me but the first one I saw was "Green Beret" and it was bothering me for a while until I seen pine trees and then it didn't bother me anymore because there's no pine trees in Vietnam.

Interviewer

What about some of the other ones?

Delbert Hunt

Some of the others, I don't watch them. I had to watch "Platoon", I think it was. One of them they asked me to watch, I can't remember which one when I was going through my stuff for PTSD and they wanted me to watch it, I can't remember what it was. It bothered me a little bit, but since I had some really good counselors and stuff I got over that. But I still don't watch a lot of Vietnam movies. A lot of things like that. Part of them is fake but even though they're fake, they still have some real sounds and real live stuff. I don't like blood and gut movies. I don't like that kind of stuff. Even though I've been a policeman at one time, I don't like the police movies 'cause it's all blood and guts, somebody's dead. I don't like that.

Interviewer

What about the medics? Did you have some medics there with you?

Delbert Hunt

Yeah, we had medics. I got wounded over there.

Interviewer

How did you get wounded?

Delbert Hunt

Well we was on convoy escort and was heading back to pick up another convoy because we dropped a convoy off and we stopped because there was another convoy that had the convoy with it. So they get priority. So we had to pull off the side of the road while they passed. Well, we was in a little village, but we don't know where the round came from but it was only one shot. Like I say, we sit this high out of the thing and every time, since we go all night all day sometimes you don't get very much sleep, so when we have 20 minutes or so we take a little nap. Well, I was lying on the turret like this on my hatch like this and I got shot right there. So they were trying to get me.

Interviewer

Knock you down?

Delbert Hunt

They were trying to kill me, of course, shoot me in the head.

Interviewer

What happened to you? Did you fall down?

Delbert Hunt

No, I was sitting inside so it just hit me right there. I got a wound right here in my shoulder.

Interviewer

So what did the medics do?

Delbert Hunt

They came and sewed me up. It wasn't that bad. I didn't even know I got hurt until somebody said I was bleeding. There was too much going on. He said I was bleeding, went back there and took a big chunk of skin out but they wrapped me up. I was going on R&R a couple days after that so I went to Hong Kong with my arm in a sling, but that was my R&R.

Interviewer

What's it like to go from the jungle in a day?

Delbert Hunt

It was different. It still had a lot of things that remind me of Vietnam. But it was enjoyable to me because I was out, that's seven days that I didn't see any gunfire or any firing or any bullets, any stink of powder and stuff like that. The smell of war. I didn't have to smell that.

Interviewer

Tell me more about the smell of the war.

Delbert Hunt

Well, there's a lot of different smells. There's the smell of gun powder. There's the smell of rotting flesh. There's the smell of the rubber plants that's over there, they stink really bad. There's the smell of each different little village. I could be inside, covered up and I could tell you what village we was going by, by the smells. After a while. If we went by two or three different villages you could tell what smell was in that village. They just stunk different. So it was one of those kinds of things. I still have a problem with one of the smells it's like there's a perfume out there it's call patchouli, a lot of the hippies use that back in the hippy days. It smells like dirty, rotten burlap sacks. And when I smell that I absolutely go nuts. Berserk. I can't help it. I can't stop it, but if I catch just a whiff of it, I'm gone 'cause I know what it will do. So if I smell it right now I'd be leaving. I wouldn't say a word, I'd just be gone to get out of it 'cause I know what it does.

Interviewer

So it smells like the burlap sandbags?

Delbert Hunt

No, the old burlap sacks that have the Cosmoline stuff on it still, all that kind of crap.

Interviewer

That smells like the military.

Delbert Hunt

Yeah. Just some of the military smells bother me. Dirty feet. You smell that because you're riding there and the guy that's on the machine gun standing up right behind you basically in the turret and his feet if they got rotten feet, they stink. So they're getting right there. If the wind's coming the other way, it's blowing right past you, so it smells.

Interviewer

Did you have some close buddies?

Delbert Hunt

Yeah, I did.

Interviewer

Tell me about them.

Delbert Hunt

I'm still close to them, the ones that are still alive. One of the first things when I actually seen death, it was my best friend died in my arms. And he was shot once, just one time. We was up on like a little ridge. It was a clearing, but they were having a firefight down below the ridge and all we were doing is backup for whatever came up over the top. And he got one round through the mouth and out the back of his head. He started to go down through the turret 'cause he was on the .50 caliber machine gun and I reached down to see if he was okay and he fell back in my arms, closed his eyes and died.

Interviewer

What was his name?

Delbert Hunt

His name was William F. Johnson. I've tried to find his family in California. He was from Watts, California. He went into the induction center the same time I did. So we became pretty good friends. He went all the way until was killed in January of '67. I had a hard time dealing with that. I still can't find his relatives. I've gone everywhere. I did go back to The Wall a week before 9/11 and found his name on The Wall. So that helped. I did find out where he was buried at and

I've been to his grave three or four times so that helps. I still can't find his relatives to tell them how he died. We had him in our vehicle for almost 12 hours before we could get him back to where they took him away and that's the last I seen of him.

Interviewer

So when you started getting short, did you keep a calendar? Did you have a stick? What did you do?

Delbert Hunt

No, I didn't. I didn't have anything like that. I know what you're talking about, yeah. A short timer's stick. No, a lot of us didn't have those unless you was an officer or something. I just didn't have one. I knew when I was going home and that's all. I told myself all I want to do is go home. I didn't care if I got at the airport on American soil and crashed and died. I didn't care, I just wanted to go home. I made that. I mean I got wounded, but I didn't die. But I would go in a heartbeat anywhere else they wanted me to go. Right now.

Interviewer

Tell us about coming home.

Delbert Hunt

Well, a lot of it's blocked out. But they put me on a plane in Tan Son Nhut Air Base.

Interviewer

Was it an airliner?

Delbert Hunt

It was a private airliner type thing. I can't even remember which one for sure. All I cared about was getting on that plane and going home. I got on it with a lot of people I had no idea who they were. There was only one other person on that plane I knew. That's all. They took us and we landed in Hawaii --

Interviewer

What happened when they closed that door?

Delbert Hunt

I was scared.

Interviewer

When you took off, what was everybody doing?

Delbert Hunt

Well, we was glad we was going, but we was scared because we were being shot at. They shot at every plane. They got a guy there that was called One

Shot Charlie. They'd shoot at every plane that would come out of the airport. So everybody knew we were going to get shot at at least. Never got anybody down. We got to Hawaii. They treated us good on the plane. The girls had brought some little sandwiches around, and we were in our uniforms. Actually we weren't in our uniforms when we got on the plane.

Interviewer

Why was that?

Delbert Hunt

I didn't know right then. I know now, but I didn't know then. We got there and went to Hawaii. When we got to Hawaii I took one duffle bag under my arm, one over my shoulder and held one in my other hand and took off to catch the other plane 'cause if I would have missed it, I would have been there for another two days and I wanted to be home. So I got on the other plane, we took off and we got to San Francisco. It was late in the afternoon, early evening, it was getting dark. They landed on the tarmac. They didn't take us to the terminal and got us out in formation and then they marched us out through the gates. We had to put our duffle bags, though, on a thing. Because they were taking us to the hospital so they could get us out and put us on a bus. Well they walked us out through the gates and they threw rotten eggs at us.

Interviewer

Who?

Delbert Hunt

Protestors. We had no idea that there was that kind of stuff. Our mail didn't tell us that. We didn't get that kind of stuff over there. All our mail was censored for a while.

Interviewer

So get there and there are protestors? How many?

Delbert Hunt

Oh, I don't know, we couldn't break rank, we couldn't look. We had to march. But they'd throw eggs at us, tomatoes, anything they could hit. They'd pee on us and throw feces at us. Called us all kinds of names. Baby killer's one that they called everybody. They called us all kinds of just rotten names. And we couldn't do anything about it, we couldn't fight back, we couldn't do anything. We was told to march on, so we marched on and got on the busses.

Interviewer

What were you feeling while you were marching?

Delbert Hunt

I didn't know what it was. I really didn't know.

Interviewer

Were you shocked? Were you angry?

Delbert Hunt

I was mad, yeah. I was really mad. 'Cause I didn't know what was going on. We got to the hospital thing. They told us and took us in there to the hospital and they said, "Okay, now you can claim everything that happened to you in Vietnam, but if you claim it you'll be here for three more weeks. If you don't claim it you can go home tomorrow." So how many people claimed whatever they had? Three weeks on one day and the next day they could go home? Nobody claimed it. It was a joke. The hospital thing after we got back was a joke. They lined us up in a line to check your heart. The doctor went by and if he could have got a heartbeat out of that I'd have paid him 20 bucks because all he did was lined you up and just go like that and go to the next guy. So they didn't give us a good physical coming back. I went in afterwards after I started work, it was probably six, eight months afterwards, the VA down in Long Beach, and claimed some of my stuff and if they didn't want to give it to me, they didn't give it to me. They put it on record. It was on record, but they didn't give me anything.

Interviewer

So you're on a conveyor belt?

Delbert Hunt

Mm-hmm. Get you in, get you out.

Interviewer

So what happens after you walk out of that gate? Just to leave that day?

Delbert Hunt

It was great. I didn't even know the guy until I got on the plane, but he said his parents were going down to Orange County by where Disneyland was and well, it went right down the freeway where I was at. And I'm getting out a little bit earlier than I was supposed to, by a couple days anyway, and so I asked if I could get a ride and they said sure. So when we flew into L.A., 'cause we flew from San Francisco to L.A. and then we got on the L.A. thing and went right out to Santa Ana Freeway. I told them, okay, I get off at the next exit. So I get off at the next exit which happens to be the 605 freeway. It wasn't there when I left. It wasn't there when I went in the regular Army and then went to Vietnam, that was two years. It took me about five miles out of the way from my house so I said just drop me off in Rosecrans, I'll call my folks.

Interviewer

What did you folks say when they picked you up?

Delbert Hunt

Well, it was my friend that picked me up, my folks weren't home. When they come home they seen me. My friend Big John picked me up. He couldn't make it in the service, he had some heart problems and he come and picked me up.

Interviewer

So you come home and you're a Vietnam vet, how are people treating you?

Delbert Hunt

Even my own church didn't like me too well, even the Mormon church. Maybe it was from California, maybe it was from somewhere. I couldn't get a job real easy. I finally got a job down at the Todd Shipyards. I was a stage rigger. I put up scaffolding up the back of the ship out of the water and stuff. I did that because I was trained on my mission to build scaffold and stuff because I was a brick layer. So I was on that and I was for about two weeks and this guy comes up there and was working brand new and it was back before OSHA so we didn't have to have these belts and stuff all hooked on. We climbed around like monkeys. He got the plank and he started pushing the plank over to where I was at and then he shoved it. Well, it knocked me off of the thing out into the water. Then I went over backwards and the plank started coming down, I thought I was going to get hit by the plank. Well, I didn't. It missed me. So I went back over and climbed up. I was going up the gangplank and he was coming down, it hit him really, really hard. We both got fired.

Interviewer

Why did he do that?

Delbert Hunt

I have no idea. I didn't give him a chance to tell him, all I know is it hurt him and I didn't care.

Interviewer

Was it because you were a Vietnam vet?

Delbert Hunt

That's what they say. But he was trying to kill me. I didn't care, I hit him. When I first got home, the very first thing that happened is I came down with my friend, Frank. He was in Vietnam, too, but we was coming down, it was a couple days after I was home. It was these bunch of kids beating up on these two kids. Just a whole bunch of guys beating up these two young kids. They were just young kids. We just jumped the curb with his truck, went out there and just scattered them all until they all took off. Had no idea what they were doing, didn't really care. There was just a whole bunch on two, but when I done that one at the boat thing, I got fired from that and then another guy, actually a guy that was an iron worker wanted me to go do iron work with him. So I said okay. So we was out there building bridges, tying rebar and stuff, and we'd get that done. Well I had

this one guy, he was a colored guy, and he was a conscious objector I guess, but he was calling me all kinds of names. He was a protestor.

Interviewer

What kind of names?

Delbert Hunt

He was calling me baby killer, you're not worth anything, you're scum. He was calling me everything he could think of. Making fun of me and I'm getting my dander up all the time. It was hard. It was hard to live with all of that kind of stuff all the time. I couldn't even take some of the girls I was going with before, before I went on my mission and stuff because their parents wouldn't let me 'cause I was a Vietnam vet. Because all the protestors told them we were no good and stuff like that. It took a long time. But this guy one time was sitting -- we was building the parking structure for Beverly Hills High School. Now they got a parking structure, okay? So we was building the parking structure and it was up to the second level and he was standing on the outside edge of the second level and him and I were the only ones on that level and he started mouthing me and I pushed him. Pushed him off the edge. I have no idea what happened to him. Don't really care. Still don't care. Never looked down, never seen what happened, don't really care.

Then I had a couple other things like that and I told my dad, I gotta leave. I gotta leave out here before I kill somebody or get in trouble, or something because I'm not that kind of a person. So I moved back up to Salt Lake where I'd done part of my mission at. I spent a better mission in Vietnam than I did on my mission anyway. So I moved back up there where people knew me as a missionary. And to where I felt safe.

Interviewer

It was better for you?

Delbert Hunt

It was a lot better, yeah. I haven't left Utah since.

Interviewer

1975 when you saw on TV the Saigon Embassy?

Delbert Hunt

I saw part of that, but I didn't watch anything about Vietnam.

Interviewer

What did you think when you saw it?

Delbert Hunt

That scared me because of what it was going. 11th Cav was involved in that so I did see part of that.

Interviewer

Were you angry?

Delbert Hunt

In some ways because I knew what was going on. People were fighting, taking over Saigon after we was fighting it for so long. We didn't lose the war. We did not lose the war and I'll tell everybody right straight to their face: America did not lose the war. We were out of Vietnam before the Viet Cong came down and took over South Vietnam.

Interviewer

So if you'd been treated differently when you came home, what would that have done for your life?

Delbert Hunt

Like what do you mean by "differently"?

Interviewer

Welcomed like we welcome the troops now.

Delbert Hunt

Well, I hope because we welcome the troops now the way they should be welcomed home, because that will never change with our Vietnam veterans. Those guys are our legacy and we're gonna treat them right, no matter what. We help them now, right now. I really don't know. I think it would have been a lot better if somebody would have at least said you did a decent job. Welcome home. I never came back with any of my friends. I never seen any of my friends that I was over there until four years ago when I seen my first one. It was when I was on the "Run For The Wall" and I come back and he had got a hold of me through, somehow, and called me and I said I'm coming back through that way, I'll stop at your house. Did I see him last year? Every year except last year for the past four years. And I'll probably see him this year. But then I seen Bobby Joe Nelson after that. He was one of the guys. I seen him before that actually. He lived down in South Gate, California. But I have no track of where he's at. Phillip Johnson, Phillip lived in Yuba City in California. And I tried to find him, there are so many Phillip Johnsons, I can't find him. Anywhere I've tried and can't find him.

One of the really sad things, Gary Meyers when I met, he had found Ronald C. Manley. Well, he was the oldest one in our vehicle. He was the same thing, but he just got drafted later. He turned out to be a pretty bad alcoholic. And I was going to go see him. I found out where he was at and I was planning on going and seeing him and I found out that he had actually passed away before I got a

chance to see him. So I went and I checked on the Internet and found out all about him that I could find out, got his information, called the rest home, found out everything else. Got some paper, some ads and stuff like that. I should have brought them, they were interesting because they have him on his obituary that he died as an indigent. It just really bothered me. They cremated him, they didn't do anything with him, they didn't take care of him. Never even had a military funeral. I've tried to get a hold of his wife, because if we can find out where he's at, the 11th Cav, we'll go give him a military funeral. There is an organization, the 11th Cav has an organization and I go to that every time I can do the reunion since I've been hooking with them. The 11th Cav right now is stationed in Fort Irwin, California, and I got down there when they have a change of command. They treat us really good.

Interviewer

So you were a Mormon when you went over there?

Delbert Hunt

Yes.

Interviewer

So did you have the problems with the alcohol or the drugs?

Delbert Hunt

No. Not at all. I never smoked in my life. I used to drink until I was 16 years old. I quit when I was 16, when most people start.

Interviewer

The other guys around you, did they have a problem?

Delbert Hunt

Some of them did, but they knew two things; if they took me where ever they were going, they would get back okay. That was my whole job. That's why I said I served probably a better mission in-service than I did when I was building buildings. So when they'd go somewhere and they'd go drinking or something, even in basic training, they'd take me. I could have anything I wanted to eat, pop, soda, hamburgers, anything. They knew that when it was time to go home, I'd get 'em home.

Interviewer

Where there any other LDS kids in your unit?

Delbert Hunt

No. I was the only one in A Troop. There was a couple in D Company. There was two in D Company which was the tanks themselves and I met them back in Camp Pickard, Virginia. I didn't see them. I've never seen them since Vietnam. Well, that's not true, I seen one of them, he went to American Fork and I seen

him once, but I can't find him either. And they're both named Johns, but they're not brothers. One's John John and one's James John.

Interviewer

Did you celebrate a birthday over there?

Delbert Hunt

Yeah, I did.

Interviewer

Do you remember much about that day?

Delbert Hunt

No. My birthday is March 11 and it was April 1st before I realized my birthday had gone by. We was in the jungle all the time and had no idea what day it was, all I knew was night and day. I lost track of time, didn't know what month it was. Sometimes you'd go to sleep when it was dark and you woke up when it was dark. So a day was just a day. You didn't know, just day and night, that's all.

Interviewer

You talk about a new freeway, what else had changed when you came back?

Delbert Hunt

Well, there was some new buildings around that I hadn't seen. The area where I was at basically stayed the same. I'm glad I still had my good friends. I'm glad that Big John was my best friend. Big John, Frank and Bill Robbins who I take care of now, he's a Vietnam vet and he's pretty bad off. But my wife and I take care of him. I've known him since he was just a kid and I knew John since he was in high school and knew Frank when we went to elementary school together so we all kind of palled around. Big John was the only one who didn't go. He passed away a couple years ago. He had a heart problem. But when we come back we still hung around together and stuff like that, but that was my safe place. It was with them.

Interviewer

You were clearing jungle when Agent Orange came along.

Delbert Hunt

Agent Orange came and it took all the leaves off the jungle. You could see back a hundred yards into the jungle because all there was was stumps.

Interviewer

So were you exposed to Agent Orange?

Delbert Hunt

They sprayed it right over us. More than one time a day sometimes.

Interviewer

What does it smell like?

Delbert Hunt

Well, it smells like some of the chemicals you use when you kill bugs but it's really strong. It is red, orangey red, a rust color. It gets all over you and sticks to you like glue.

Interviewer

What did they tell you about it?

Delbert Hunt

Oh, just wash it off. They didn't tell us nothing about it. We thought it was pretty cool 'cause it would take the jungle down and kill the ants. But we didn't know nothing about it.

Interviewer

Were there repercussions from it? Health problems?

Delbert Hunt

Yes, I have a number of problems. I got diabetes from it. I probably have some small cancers from it--skin cancers from it. I have very bad PTSD which most of us have which the guys coming home now have a lot of it. We try to take care of them, but yeah I have those kinds of problems. It took a long time for anybody to realize it and it took a long time for me to realize it. I was married to my first wife and I had five kids by her. She took off and left me because I don't know exactly why except she went into polygamy. I probably shouldn't say that over the air. But anyway she went into polygamy. She took all my kids and I didn't get a chance to see them for almost five years after they were gone and then one day--I was remarried at the time to another lady in Cedar and I owned a pizza place up there and all the sudden these kids come walking in. I didn't even recognize them. They were my kids. My youngest one was walking, five years old. I didn't recognize 'em.

And she left, she just left 'em. She told them go see your dad and left 'em there. So I started getting them into school and stuff then all of the sudden she come back and took them all away. My oldest son, he stayed and went to school in Cedar and stuff and graduated. My daughters and all them went with my ex-wife. When I got remarried with hers, mine and ours, we had 12. I had one with her, my youngest daughter. So hers, mine and ours we had 12 kids at one time.

Interviewer

What would you tell guys heading over to Afghanistan or Iraq? How would you prepare them to go over and face what they're going to face.

Delbert Hunt

Well, first of all I want them to know that they have a lot of veterans behind them. Any one of them that I know would be willing to take their place if we could. Because the fact that we already have some experience. But yet, we're too old. When they come back we will help them. We will help their families as much as we can. We want them to depend on us. So that we don't do what some of the guys did to us when we came back. Some of the organizations didn't like us because we were Vietnam veterans. So they used all kinds of things. We couldn't get into some of the organizations. Some would work, some wouldn't. I was in the VFW before I got out of Vietnam, my dad was post commander at the time down in California. My brother was before he got out of Vietnam. So I was the youngest one at the post down in California. I'm a life member. But still, even now, some of the organizations, some of the people in there don't like Vietnam veterans. But that just happens that way. We was never in a war, they still say that.

Interviewer

Is there anything that we haven't talked about that you would like to make sure that is told?

Delbert Hunt

If some of the people who have their members, their kids and stuff killed in Vietnam, if they would try to contact that unit again so some of us that have friends killed could find them. 'Cause there is reasons why and some things would help us because once they were dead, once they were gone, we didn't see 'em again. Someone would like to know where they're at; would like to know if they're still alive. So if some of the kids or some of the relatives would contact back the units and let them know where they're at. We'd like to see the old buddies. Some of the old Vietnam guys are still hardheaded, they're still in the war. I was until I got help. A lot of us who has gotten help will help anybody that wants to be helped. And it's there. It takes hard, it takes pushing and it takes somebody that's been there to help somebody else new to get in it and take care of it, but it can be done. I'd go back in a heartbeat if I had to go anywhere.

Interviewer

It says here they found an abandoned VC camp?

Delbert Hunt

Oh, yeah. We were bustin' jungle and we got into this one spot and it was a VC camp. They had a big pile of grain, I mean bags of grain that come from care packages, regular care packages and stuff, stacked probably 40 feet high. Big bundles of it and it was probably 60 tons or more of rice and wheat that come from American care packages in Viet Cong, in Vietnam, at the Viet Cong place. They'd steal it from wherever they could steal it. This was a major place. There was that and there was a big camp there and they had animals and everything else, but there was no Viet Cong. They were gone, they heard us come and they

leave. But they have such a tunnel. They could get down and hide and we can never find them or they can get out, a hundred miles it seems like, they can get out and go over and drop down to another tunnel and get out somewhere else so it's hard to find them.

But we had to destroy that wheat. We destroyed the wheat by running our vehicles through it back and forth till it scattered it down as thin as we could get it and then we poured diesel fuel all over it 'cause anything else they could pick it up so we had to contaminate it. We dropped a lot of it down the well to contaminate the well because we didn't want them back there. They had some wild pigs and stuff and some of them were dead so we threw that down the well. We found tunnels over there.

So some of us that was little at the time, I couldn't get in one now, got told to go through the tunnels. All of us got a chance at one time to go through. So Gary Meyers, which is the one that I see now, and I went through one of the tunnels. We was crawling through the tunnel and it was a place where they actually had a POW camp, that's what it was is a POW camp. And it was a big hole in the ground that had a lot of rocks and they were down inside there but they had tunnels going through different places. And somebody, in one of the other tunnels, dropped a hand grenade down in that tunnel. And when it explodes it sucks all the gas out of the other tunnels; all the air out.

So we was in there with just barely enough room to move and it sucked all the air out of the tunnel. It was only for a second or two but when you don't have any air to breathe in or breathe out, you get scared. It was horrible. I thought we was gonna die right there, but as soon as we got the air back, it was horrible smelling, horrible tasting, but at least we could breathe. We couldn't back out, we had to crawl clear through until we either found a way to get back and when we come out we was underneath the pit where they had the prisoner of war. That's where we was at when we come out. So that tunnel went into the prisoner of war place so if they needed to get the prisoners of war out, that's where they got them, through the tunnel and out the other side.

Interviewer

Do you have any desire to ever see Vietnam ever again?

Delbert Hunt

Really for a long time I told everybody that if they wanted to pay me a million bucks I still wouldn't want to even fly over it; as high as I could fly. But I've kind of changed in a little way because we've still got some people over there missing. I haven't taken it because they haven't really contacted me, but there's been a thing where they want some people to go over there to look for POW's remains. I think I would go. But not to go over there to do anything else. Vietnam is a very pretty place. When we got there it was kind of a pretty place but it come out to

be just one nightmare. I'm sure when they first got there and the people were there to just supposedly be advisors, I'm sure it was a pretty place.

When the French were there, they just up and left, but when they were there I'm sure it was a pretty place. There is a lot of green there, really pretty. Lots of different wildflowers and things like that, but after a couple of months it was all gone. Everywhere we were at we tore it up and whatever we had to do. But I would go back on certain occasions but I wouldn't before.

I was told when I was going through my help stuff by my therapist--I still have nightmares every night. I've had them ever since I've been home. But for a long time they were horrible nightmares. I'd wake up and still be in the nightmare. The one nightmare I have all the time is killing that young boy. I mean, every night. Every night. Recurring nightmares. Part of it was because I was woke up all of the time out of the nightmare.

My therapist told my wife now, Lillian, that let him go through the nightmare, let him finish it. Let him get rid of it. I still have that nightmare once in a while but I know what happened. And I've gotten through some of the nightmares because of that, because they were finished, they're over with. I didn't get woke up. So the nightmare has to go until I finish. Some of that has really gotten better. I have nightmares, but they're not as violent or as scary as they used to be.

Interviewer

You say you feel guilty about killing the young Viet Cong boy.

Delbert Hunt

I was given the Medal of Valor with the "V" device on it for killing that young boy because I stood up on my vehicle to save my tank or my personnel carrier and everybody on it. To me it was just like giving me an award for killing somebody. It bothered me. I'm not a killer. But then it turned around and they're calling me baby killer so I killed a 16 year old boy, or maybe even younger. So it bothered me. It bothered me really bad until I got through the whole thing and it was either him or us. I couldn't do anything other than that. So it was basically that.

I felt guilty for such a long time till I was made convinced enough to say it was either him or me. It was a choice that I had to make right then. I made it for not me, 'cause I wasn't afraid to die, I was afraid of getting hurt, but not afraid to die. I didn't want to get hurt. I didn't want to come back a vegetable or anything like that. If I was going to die, I'm dead. But I come back a vegetable kind of like because I had such bad nightmares.

So now it's different. It's a lot better. I have a support group. The veterans are treated better now. Vietnam is getting some recognition that they should have got a long time ago. We kept our country from being attacked. We're keeping our country from being attacked now. That's what our military is for. People say

how come you want to go over to war? I don't want the war here. If we're going to go to battle, take it over to them. Don't bring it over here. My kids and my stuff are over here. I'll go over there and fight over there instead of fighting here and having my whole family involved in it.

Interviewer

Thank you.