



**Larry Chadwick**

**Sgt. E5 Army**  
**Radio Operator**  
**Salt Lake City, Utah**  
**“Turning Point”**

**Interviewer**

Give us your full name.

**Larry Chadwick**

My name is John **Larry Chadwick**.

**Interviewer**

And Chadwick is spelled?

**Larry Chadwick**

C-H-A-D-W-I-C-K.

**Interviewer**

Where would you say you're from?

**Larry Chadwick**

I consider my home to be San Jose. That's where I went to high school; that's where I graduated. That's where my draft board was.

**Interviewer**

What was your life like in high school?

**Larry Chadwick**

I was a true child of the '60s, and living in San Jose, I alternated between Santa Cruise and riding some waves in San Francisco in the start of the hippie movement. I just wandered around. For quite a while there after high school I didn't have a set place I lived. I just moved around, slept on the beach or slept in the Haight.

**Interviewer**

So you were really a flower child?

**Larry Chadwick**

Yeah. Still am.

**Interviewer**

That's a very interesting place in time to be, especially with Vietnam looming. Tell me about that and what people were talking about.

**Larry Chadwick**

I don't remember a whole bunch of talk. I saw Mrs. King speak, Martin Luther King's wife, and she was talking about the war. But I came from a political family. I knew what was going on. I knew the war was going on. But I came from a very, very conservative family.

I had been involved in Barry Goldwater's campaign as a youngster, Young Americans for Freedom. So I knew what was going on, but on the other hand, me and my family went in the military. It's what we did. I never doubted that I would go in the military. I didn't know when, but if there was a war going on, that was my job.

**Interviewer**

Was your dad in World War II?

**Larry Chadwick**

Yes, he was.

**Interviewer**

What did he do in World War II?

**Larry Chadwick**

He was in Hawaii just after Pearl Harbor, and then his ship had gotten sunk, so he spent the rest of the war in Hawaii. Luck of the draw. I have an uncle that went across the beach at Iwo Jima, and they were all actively involved in the war effort. My mother was a nurse in San Francisco.

**Interviewer**

Did you have a girlfriend before you went in?

**Larry Chadwick**

Yes. I was living with a woman. When I went in, she came back here. That's how I wound up back in Utah. Nice lady.

**Interviewer**

Tell us about getting drafted.

**Larry Chadwick**

Well, I had had my draft notice. I was at a local draft board in San Jose, and they had sent me the notice. I had gone for my pre-induction physical. Is that what it was called? The one where they marked me 1A. It's been a lot of years.

I decided I wouldn't let 'em do that to me, so I got drunk with a friend of mine, and we went down and enlisted. So I was in the three-year enlistment. It was just a spur of the moment decision. Poor impulse control, I think it's called.

**Interviewer**

Tell people what 1A means.

**Larry Chadwick**

1A means meat on the hoof. It means you are prime candidate to be drafted. You will be drafted—that was before the lottery—and that you will wind up in the combat arms, most probably, and you will go to Vietnam. It means you were healthy, and sound of mind and body, and all of those kinds of things.

The other ones: I think 1Y was a student deferment. 4F was, for some reason, you were not able to go into the military. I think there was actually was one OAV, Over-Age Veteran, that they just threw to the side. That's the only ones I knew.

**Interviewer**

So you enlisted, and what happened?

**Larry Chadwick**

I did basic training in Fort Lewis, Washington. Then I came to Fort Ord. We were the last infantry class to go through Fort Ord because there was nowhere to shoot rifles at Fort Ord. It was surrounded by cities, and there really wasn't enough room to do it. Westmoreland had said he didn't want any more infantry soldiers from Fort Ord there.

You fired your rifle out over the ocean. If you hit the ocean two out of three shots, they said you were good enough, and we went. I remember being lined up on the beaches down in Monterey and them calling one guy's name. I don't know him, so I won't mention it. I still remember it, by the way. They said, "Step forward. You're going to Germany. The rest of you," and there were a thousand of us out there, "Are going to Vietnam." And we were part of Lyndon Johnson's build-up.

We went in, and I was assigned right to the 1st Air Cav. I wasn't resigned to a replacement depot, and I still don't know why. Luck of the draw again. I joined my company just outside of Quang Tri up by the DMZ.

**Interviewer**

How did you arrive in Vietnam?

**Larry Chadwick**

I went in a commercial airliner. It was a really strange time.

**Interviewer**

Why?

**Larry Chadwick**

Well, I'm looking at these civilians, and I could've sworn I had a round-trip ticket. They landed, and I was expecting to go to a war zone. They landed on an air strip that was just like anything here. It was hotter. I remember they came on, and they said, "It's 5:00 in the morning. The temperature is 92 degrees. Gunfire is light to medium from the south to north," or something like that.

That was what passed for humor, but then they were going back home. I didn't see any humor in it. They got us on buses, and I remember the buses had wire over the windows, and it was to keep the grenades out. And I thought, "Oh, this is the real thing." I went right through and went up to An Khe, where the 1st Air Cav had its headquarters.

**Interviewer**

How did you arrive in An Khe?

**Larry Chadwick**

Went by C-130, by just old cargo airplanes. And their wings flapped as you took off, so everybody on 'em was goin', "Come on, you can do it. Come on!" We went up there and landed, and they gave us an in-country training. We had talked about being the best-trained Army in the world.

I had never fired an M-16 before I got to Vietnam. They took us out and had us run one clip through a full automatic and then said, "Okay." They had us throw a grenade. I had thrown one in basic, but that was all. They sent us out that night on listening posts. An Khe, at that time, was really a safe place to be, relatively. We went out and spent the night, and came back, and they gave us all this stuff for our backpacks and sent us north.

**Interviewer**

Where is An Khe?

## **Larry Chadwick**

An Khe is in the central highlands. It's right in the center of Vietnam. It's where the 1st Air Cav was at first, and then it moved north.

### **Interviewer**

You're an infantryman, correct? So your job is to be ferried around the battlefield by helicopter, and then get on the ground and fight? Is that your job?

## **Larry Chadwick**

That's what we thought it was. For me, I had this intense feeling. I was sitting out on the lawn before I came in here today, and one of the medevacs took off from the hospital, and I cannot not cringe when helicopters go. In the 1st Air Cav, we always said, "If they took you in a helicopter, no matter how bad it was where you were, it would be worse where they took you," because if you were coming to the rear, they made you walk. I Corps, I think the official name of it was the **(Antonite Cordella? 08:44)**? Anyway, it's straight up and down mountains. So we humped straight up and down mountains, and right away, I was given a radio.

### **Interviewer**

Tell us about your first real time when you knew this was combat.

## **Larry Chadwick**

Well, I had a squad leader who was quite a great guy, and he took me aside, and he told me to follow him and do exactly what he did. And for God's sake, don't shoot my rifle 'cause I'll kill somebody. And we were going out, and I remember the artillery fired, and I asked him, "Is that good artillery or bad artillery?" And he looked at me, and he said, "There's their artillery, and there's our artillery. Isn't any of it that's good." That really meant a lot to me. We went out, and I remember my first getting shot at was single rounds of sniper fire. There weren't any of the big, huge battles for the first while I was in there. It didn't dawn on me until I'd been there a couple of months that I could actually—I was still this little boy—that I could actually be killed here. I'd seen people killed already. One day, there was a sniper that had kicked up dirt about six inches from nose for ten minutes or so, every time I moved. It dawned on me that this was no longer about communism and capitalism or Ho Chi Minh and LBJ. This was about Mrs. Ne Yin's little boy trying to kill Mrs. Chadwick's little boy. It made it a whole different look.

### **Interviewer**

About when was that into your tour?

## **Larry Chadwick**

I would guess it was early spring, probably April. I had already been there a month. I had humped; I had done listening post and ambushes.

### **Interviewer**

This is '69?

## **Larry Chadwick**

'68. The Tet Offensive had gone on, but then had backed off a bit. We were getting ready for the air assault into A Shau, and the highest two casualty weeks of the war were the first two weeks in May of 1968. That was when the 1st Air Cav air assault at A Shau.

### **Interviewer**

You were there? Can you talk about it for us?

## **Larry Chadwick**

It's so scattered, and one of the reasons I had a hard time comin' up here today was I'm not sure. It seems so foggy to me sometimes. We went into A Shau, and since then, I've read books and looked at the order of battle and stuff, and apparently, the closest I can find is we lost 100 helicopters the first day.

Both sides of the valley were lined with radar-controlled and aircraft guns, and the helicopters had to set down through 'em and lift up through 'em. As soon as we got in, the rain soaked in, and we had no real support. We were within artillery range of Laos, maybe Cambodia. I don't know. We followed the trail of tanks. I actually came upon bleachers and grenade pits where they taught the North Vietnamese how to throw grenades. It was a pretty intense time.

### **Interviewer**

When you say you followed tanks, do you mean our tanks or enemy tanks?

## **Larry Chadwick**

We didn't have any in the 1st Air Cav. If it wouldn't fit in a helicopter, we didn't own 'em. There were these trails; they captured trucks. They found hospitals with three and four operating rooms underground. This was A Shau. Anybody that's been there, Hamburger Hill was in A Shau. Anybody that's been there knows it was the backyard for the North Vietnamese Army.

To the best of my ability, I think that they drafted the young kids just like we did, sent 'em down the Ho Chi Minh Trail before they really trained 'em. 'Cause if they got killed on the Trail, then they saved the training time and

trained 'em in places like the A Shau, or down in the Parrot's Beak, or down that way.

**Interviewer**

Do any moments stand out for you?

**Larry Chadwick**

I watched nook helicopters bring in swing loads of American bodies. I don't know the tactics of warfare have changed much since the Roman times. We put down a blocking force, and then we put down a pushing force. These are real estimates. I don't want to give any impression like I really know. A 4,000-man blocking force and an 8,000-man pushing force; that's the 1st Air Cav, one of the biggest divisions in Vietnam. They estimated we had 25,000 North Vietnamese regulars in between us. It just didn't work out. I was in the 1st Air Cav, one of the premier units, and we gave as good as we took. But we took some days.

**Interviewer**

When you said it didn't work out, what do you mean?

**Larry Chadwick**

I mean that the North Vietnamese fought, as they withdrew, they fought us, the 8,000 pushing force. And when they gathered their troops and marshaled 'em, they just walked through the 4,000 men, and it was just a case of hard-core North Vietnamese. It was a battle.

**Interviewer**

Where were you in the middle of that?

**Larry Chadwick**

I was in the pushing force. As first, I was whining because I always had to hump, but at the end, I was pretty glad I was in the position—

**Interviewer**

When you say hump, tell people what that means.

**Larry Chadwick**

Being a grunt in Vietnam is a lot more than getting shot at for me. Humping means you're out in the boonies—and this isn't any Boy Scout camp where you sleep out. All day long, you carry your pack, and I don't know what my pack weighed. I carried a radio, a basic load of ammunition, and a couple of gallons of water. Water's real heavy. And three or four days' worth of food. And we humped up and down, straight up and down mountains. We walked; we carried; we crawled. And then at night, they would send part of us out on ambushes. I didn't do too many ambushes.

As a radio operator, I got listening posts. Listening posts are just outside the perimeter, the nighttime defensive position. Your whole job, as best I could see, is to make enough noise when they kill ya to wake your friends up, scream when the lights go out. It never happened to me. Up in I Corps—I don't know, and I'm not talking about anybody else's war or anything, but there was only the Marine Core, the 1st Air Cav, and I Corps. We fought North Vietnamese regulars. There wasn't a lot of Vietcong. They were two separate forces. We fought battle-hardened troops in uniforms, and they came down from North Vietnam.

**Interviewer**

You're on a listening post in the jungle. What are you hearing?

**Larry Chadwick**

It is the worst place in the world to have an imagination. I was hearing everything. But you listen for any noise that was out of ordinary, and there was also this thing—I don't know how to explain it to you—there's a time when all the noise quits. And when the noise quits, you just have a few seconds.

It's like all the animals, and all the bugs, and everything else realize something very bad is gonna happen. And they go dead silent for just a few minutes. When that happens, something is gonna come down. Usually, in I Corps, the tactics consisted of a gang of us stumbled into a gang of them, or a gang of them stumbled into a gang of us. It was like throwing two cats in a barrel.

**Interviewer**

How does that moment of grave silence erupt?

**Larry Chadwick**

I never really had it erupt right where I was. The other side of the LZ, they'll trip a trip flare or for me, you'll hear grenades being thrown, because grenades don't have muzzle flashes to give away your position. And then they start calling in the helicopters. I was really a lucky man in Vietnam in that it always seemed like the major brunt of the contact was over there. Not more than 50 meters away or anything like that; not a long ways a way, but it wasn't coming right at me. I never thought about that 'til years later, and I started to go through it with a psychologist and what had happened.

At night, it would be over in just a few seconds. Firefights didn't last very long. When we were out there, I guess the polite term is ambushes, if you were out on a bush whack, which is what it was, and somebody stumbled into it, if it

lasted two minutes, that's a long time. I was never in the kill zone of an ambush, but some of my people were, and the only way really through it is to go through it. If you try to retreat, they'll cut you to pieces. But it was squad warfare. That's what we fought in I Corps.

**Interviewer**

You were on the radio, too. What are you hearing on the radio?

**Larry Chadwick**

Oh, there's all kinds of chatter going on. My major time on the radio that I remember is I was the company radio operator, Bold Warrior Six India. And my job was to relay the information from the platoons to the tactical operations center. I also, if need be, could call in artillery. If we took wounded, then for part of the time, not the whole time, I cut the medevac pad and landed the medevac. I still find myself falling into that cadence of the radio.

**Interviewer**

Can you give us an example?

**Larry Chadwick**

"1965 boy, 6 injured, boy, 6 injured. We're in contact. We've taken casualties, scrambled medevac Charlie. Medevac Charlie. We need a jungle penetrator and a rigid litter on it." And then pause on that. "Bold Warrior 6 India, this is medevac Charlie." Pop smoke in the daytime. Pop trip flare at night. And in the daytime, they'd call back, and he's say, "Bold Warrior 6 India to medevac Charlie. I have goofy grape, I have banana, and I have cherry smoke. Which one's you?" So I would say, "I'm the goofy grape. Come on down on my mark." And I would stand up and bring him into what we'd cut, if we could, in the jungle. If not, they'd hover over the jungle and dropped a rigid litter. The jungle penetrator came down through, and if you were ambulatory, you went up on the jungle penetrator. If not, you were in a rigid litter, and they pulled you up to the helicopter.

**Interviewer**

How do you keep your wits at night when something like that's happening?

**Larry Chadwick**

I don't remember ever losing it during the time it was happening. I don't know what that means. I really don't. I had and have an immense tie to the men I was with. Everybody had a job. These concepts that we hear now about bravery and stuff, they kinda fall by the wayside. Just do your job. If you're gonna be a hero, be it every day 'cause we're gonna count on it. You just focused right on your job and did what you did. I was real good at what I did.

**Interviewer**

Tell us about this bond between you and your friends.

**Larry Chadwick**

There were two groups of people in the world. When I was in a squad, it was my squad and the rest of the world. I knew them so well. I served with a man who was Cuban, whose wife was Canadian. She didn't read Spanish; he didn't write English, and so I helped him translate the letters to and from his wife. They were moving to Miami. He said when he got out, he was gonna fly to Toronto and take a bus to Miami because of all the hijackings that were going on at the time.

**Interviewer**

Were you writing home at this time? Were you getting letters from your parents?

**Larry Chadwick**

The letters that I wrote home—and I actually got to see them later—they were so: "It sure is hot here. We're pulling for you, son." Many years later, I discovered that my father had a map on the wall, and he kept pins in it where I was. I didn't know that. I came back so angry and so crazy that it just—he died a couple of years ago, and I got to make peace with him. It was pretty good. But that's when I found out. And my ex-wife, she gave me the letter that I'd written, and they said nothing. I have 322 days left. I never talked about we were doing; never talked about where we were. I didn't know how my father kept track of where I was 'cause I didn't know where I was. To this day, I'm not sure they didn't fly me around in the air and land me in Georgia somewhere.

**Interviewer**

Did you lose track of time?

**Larry Chadwick**

No.

**Interviewer**

Tell us how.

**Larry Chadwick**

If you ever want to know how important it is, try counting a year backwards. Try breaking it up into quarter days because you came home at a year. Marines did 13 months, as I understand. In the Army, we did a year. You counted 'em down. When you broke 100, you became a double-digit midget. When you broke days, you were so short, you could walk under a door. Somewhere, they tried to get you out of the fields.

The Army knows when you get ready to go home, you're not really a lot of use to 'em out in the field, so they would try to bring you back to the rear and give you some kind of duty if you'd done good. I just counted it backwards, and I never lost track of a day. I knew exactly how many days I had. I remember once I was in the hospital with malaria. I was real sick, and it really freaked me out 'cause I guess I did lose a day then. They had given me morphine. I wasn't sure if I'd lost a day, but I panicked. I was running around, talking about, "What day is it?" On the other hand, I didn't know Sunday from Monday; I didn't know Tuesday from Friday. There was no difference in days. But I knew how many days I had left.

### **Interviewer**

Were you aware of what was going on back home?

### **Larry Chadwick**

Yes and no. Of course, we knew what was going on back home. Every day, we got new people in, and they told us what was going on back home. Well, not every day, but regularly, we got new people in. The Armed Forces Radio gave a real sanitized version of what was going on.

I was in Japan at a place called Camp Zama. I wasn't wounded; I wasn't a hero; none of that stuff. I had had malaria, and it was active when it came time for me to come home. They won't let you come back to the States while it's active, so I was waiting for it to get knocked back down. I had gone downtown to a Japanese movie theater, and back in those days, they had the news things, in Japan they did. And I saw this picture coming out of a hotel window, and all of these people screaming, and the whole world's watching.

Of course, that was the Chicago demonstrations. I had never heard that it had happened. When they told me that Robert Kennedy had been shot, and that was June I think, I had not heard that had happened for a long time. It was different with Dr. King. When Dr. King got shot, the war almost shut down. Almost shut down.

### **Interviewer**

Why was that?

### **Larry Chadwick**

He was one of those people who was respected by everybody, and when it dawned on us—and I was in the infantry, and we had a lot of races in the infantry, and just didn't make anything. Everybody bleeds red. When he got shot, people were walking around going, "What are we doing here when they're killing one of the greatest men the world has ever known back there? Why are we fighting here? I didn't lose nothing in Vietnam. There ain't nothin' here for me." We quit doing. We quit humping; we quit doing operations. We just sat for just a day or so, and then we went back to it. It definitely made a pause.

### **Interviewer**

You said there were a couple of big operations you were in on.

### **Larry Chadwick**

There's a place in Vietnam called the Street Without Joy, and it's famed of history. The first books by Bernard Fall were written about the Street Without Joy. It really is just a strip of dirt-poor people right along the South China Sea up North of Da Nang and up towards Quang Tri and the demilitarized zone. I think they must've made their living just going across the border and coming back and bringing guns or whatever. We swept through there.

The A Shau was a big one. I didn't take part, but my unit took part in the relief of the siege at Que Son. But the fighting was over by the time we got there. The next biggest one I did was the 1st Air Cav moved from northern I Corps right up on the Z to I think it's three-quarter of the Parrot's Beak area down by Cambodia. I remember at the time, I was running the log pad, getting people out, and they came and they were proud of the fact that we had moved the major division clear across the country. I don't know how many miles; many miles. We were in contact at 10:00 a.m. in the north, and we were in contact at 4:00 p.m. in the south.

Then we went up to the Parrot's Beak, Tay Ninh. There are two mountains, Nui Ba Den, which is the Black Virgin Mountain, and Nui Ba Ra, which is a sister mountain a little lower. I spent a month up on top of Nui Ba Ra on a radio relay. The radios the Army have are a straight line, line-of-sight radios. So if you're on one side of a mountain, on another side, somebody's got to relay it. I'd had malaria so bad that I was up there hallucinating. I shot my rifle down the hill, and there was this platoon of Vietnamese soldier there who were real happy 'cause they weren't out in the front lines, and they came over and said, "Don't do that." And I said, "What do you mean?" They said, "We have a deal." They don't shoot up, and we don't shoot down. I said, "Works for me. Let me go back here and go to sleep."

I only got off that mountain—the Army was crazy. This would've been November. It had to be November because I had been calling in saying, "My fever. I've had malaria a number of times; I know what this is. I'm sick. Get me a replacement." They said, "We can't, we can't, we can't." On Thanksgiving Day, Westmoreland had said every troop would get a turkey dinner. So they flew a turkey dinner up to us and dropped it off and flew away without me there. We used to say, in I Corps especially, Boy Scouts and the Army, the Boy Scouts got adults for eaters. That's the only difference. I don't know if I was bitter and angry because of what was going on, or I was so sick that I just couldn't function from then 'til the end of my tour. Most of the time was spent in the hospital.



## Interviewer

You said you were really angry. Is that about that time?

## Larry Chadwick

It had built. It had been building. Since we're talking about my experience, I didn't know anybody that was for the war in Vietnam, not in the 1st Air Cav. Everybody was saying, "What in the hell are we doing here?" We invented the term "wasted," and it didn't have anything to do with drugs 'cause those guys had died. They were wasted, and they just kept throwing 'em out there for no purpose. It was a meat grinder.

There's a book that I read that I really liked, and in there he said, "By 1969, the Marine Corps had become the best machine in the world for killing young Americans." It was insane. I really, truthfully, had gone. It's not that I fell so far, it's that I had so far to fall in my belief system. I had gone to make Southeast Asia free for democracy. That's the most absurd thing in the world. When John F. Kennedy said, "We'll go anywhere; bear any burden; pay any price to ensure freedom,"

Vietnam wasn't about that. Vietnam was about—after all these years, I'm not sure exactly what it's about, but I had this sneaking hunch in the back of my brain that it was about old men who didn't fight in World War II, wanting to prove they were tough and doing it with young men's lives. That is no claim to be true whatsoever; that's my feeling. I came back to the States crazier than a drunk Viking. I mean I was nuts.

## Interviewer

How?

## Larry Chadwick

I was right at the edge of violence, anger. I could not stand to be around people. Now they talk about getting spit on. Nobody spit on me. I'd have reached down your throat and torn you lung out for ya. Besides, we landed on an Air Force base ten miles from the airport. Well, the story I'd heard mostly was about a parent that had gone and shot a soldier coming back 'cause their son had died in Vietnam. It was kind of a tear-jerker, but it had me watching every little old lady with a big purse, I'll tell you that.

I came back to here, and I remember flying into Salt Lake City, and everything was so green. I had never seen it that green before. Everybody was doing things natural—I mean, regular life, and I couldn't believe it. I just wanted to shake people, and slap 'em, and say, "Don't you understand what's going on right now?" I came back committed anti-war, committed, and have been ever since. I went to an SDS up here at the University meeting, and somebody was strutting around screaming about how we should burn down the ROTC building. My comment was, "Let's go. Zippo squads to the front. I know how to do this. Come on!"

I had learned when I went to Vietnam that when our leaders say, "We are gonna do something," they don't really mean me and them. They mean me and you, or my children, or now my grandchildren. I still had time to do in the Army. I was assigned to the home of the infantry in Fort Benning, Georgia. Whew! So I went down, and I lived in a swamp. We were aggressors against the OCS candidates.

Then at night, I would go back to the United States, and I would go downtown to this apartment where this woman lived who thought I was crazy. She had real good sense. I would sit by the window and wait for "them" to come. I don't know who "them" was. Back then, they called it delayed stress. My stress was delayed about two seconds. What was delayed was the recognition of it. I didn't know what it was. I thought everybody did this. Were there people that weren't heavily armed, heavily medicated, and marginally stable? That was pretty much everybody I knew. Hurricane Camille hit; I was down there for Hurricane Camille. We went down to the Gulf Coast. It really had an effect on me.

## Interviewer

Why?

## Larry Chadwick

You know, I'm not sure. It was the devastation. Camille, it was a biggie. People talk about their first task being to go down to find out if the bodies are fresh bodies or ones that washed out of the graveyards. That's not the best job in the world for a Vietnam Vet. When I was at Fort Benning, part of my job was to be the Sergeant in charge of the Honor Guard for the burial details in the South.

## Interviewer

-- killed in Vietnam?

## Larry Chadwick

And them Southern boys lined up to die.

## Interviewer

What was that like?

## Larry Chadwick

For years, I thought I was the only one doing this. There must've been hundreds of us doing this. I could always see this look. Why are you alive, and my boy isn't? That's what it really boils down to. I don't know if it was truly there. We drove around in one of those Army green station wagons, and we'd go from town-to-town, and I'd drink a lot. I'd

drink a real lot. I was real happy.

I was transferred to Germany, and I was real happy when I was transferred to Germany. The anti-war movement had come up, and this is the year the hippies were gonna ohm around the Pentagon and raise the Pentagon off the ground. My unit was the one that was called up. And I think it was my unit you had the famous picture with them putting a flower in the barrel of a gun. I think that was my unit. I just said, "I can't go." They said, "Well, they'll send you to jail." "So? I can't go." Because I had been in Vietnam—and I was not a hero. God, I gotta keep saying this 'cause I don't want anybody to misjudge.

But I got a bunch of, "I've been there, too, and way-to-go-son medals." And they transferred me to Germany instead of sending me to the stockade. And then I went to the stockade in Germany. I spent the last year in Germany. The Army gets real mad if you take part in a demonstration in a foreign country in uniform.

### **Interviewer**

Is that what you did?

### **Larry Chadwick**

It seemed like a good idea at the time. I have a whole series of things I've done in my life that seemed like a good idea at the time, and that was one of 'em. They kind of became unstuck. Then there was a misunderstanding about a bayonet and a First Sergeant and me. It was all just a misunderstanding, so I went to a stockade for a little while there. And then came back to here. Since this is my bully pool, and I get a chance to say it, I'm gonna tell you guys something. And I don't share this with anyone. Right now, it is so in style to say the hippies, or the left, or the anti-war movement treated Veterans like crap. That is not my experience. I came back here. I went to the VA. They said, "You're crazy!" I said, "No kidding." They said, "We wanna help you." This is before PTSD was even a diagnosis, so they were trying to make me fit their diagnosis, and they sent me down to what they call the day hospital. They said, "We've got two groups. They're down at the end of the hallway. The signs are on the door. Go on down." I went down, and the sign on the left said, "Vietnam Veterans," and the sign on the right said, "Real Veterans." Some of those people became my friends. They were dealing with something they didn't know. They didn't understand drug problems. I remember talking to someone and them saying, "Why can't you be a good patient like Sammy?" And I said, "Because Sammy's been taking his meds every morning for 50 years, and I don't wanna do that." They gave me a disability. I did not know what a disability was. I didn't know. Never heard of it, never anything. I walked in, and I sat down, and a social worker—God's sake, bless them social workers—sat down, and she said, "Larry, would you rate your combat light, medium, or heavy?" That is the stupidest question I've ever been asked in my life. The first time someone shot at me, it was the worst combat the world's ever seen. My squad leader, Butch, told me I used to ask him, "Is this the worst you've ever seen?" And he said, "The worst you've ever seen is the one you just saw." That's just the way it is with it. They gave me a disability, and I went to one of the major Veteran's organizations here in Salt Lake. I said, "I think I should join." I had been rated with this disability, and I still wasn't sure about it. He said, "We don't want you in our organization." You're nothin' but a bunch of drug-crazed killers." Later on, someone hunted me down and said, "He doesn't speak for the whole organization; come and see us." That's changed drastically. I've watched it change. We talk about our bonding in Vietnam; that continued. The doctor I had at the VA was my doctor in Vietnam. He was the head of the malaria ward in Vietnam. I just saw him before I came over here. I think he's mostly retired now. You ought to have him on. He's been to every war we've fought. I came in, and we talked about malaria, and he said, "Oh, you were in the hospital." He said, "I was the GI doctor then. I took care of all the malaria patients." When I was at the day hospital, there was a guy that had been in the Marine Corps at the Frozen Chosen in the Freezin' Season. He took me aside and talked to me about whatever. I had a great uncle who served in World War I, and he and I went up. He was from Lone Tree, Wyoming; population four or whatever it is. He and I went up there, and I said, "How long until you get over it?" And he told me, "Larry, some of it goes away real quick. Some of it goes away just with over years as your life grows and your memory gets worse. Some of it will be with you until the day you die." He was right.

### **Interviewer**

Tell us about some of your buddies that were close to you.

### **Larry Chadwick**

I'm trying to think of the ones I saw. When I came home from the war, and I was going to Fort Benning, I went to Denver to Fitzsimons Army Hospital, which is now a VA. They had one whole floor that was for my battalion. I saw people I knew, and people that I had helped medevac. See, there was this concept if you were gone, you were gone. I don't ever remember. Some of my friends had friends they've had for years after the war, and that's not been the case with me. I have never seen anyone that I was in the war with. When I was in Germany, I saw one guy that we'd been in Vietnam together, and then he rotated back to the States.

### **Interviewer**

But I mean in the field. Did you have a particular buddy or circle of friends that you were with?

### **Larry Chadwick**

The guy that taught me to hump—in the 1st Air Cav, they called it your mother. He's the one that told you what you had to carry; what you didn't have to carry. You really don't need a sweater or a arctic sleeping bag in Vietnam, so



he said, "Throw this out; throw this out; throw this out." He was a medic, and his name's on the Wall. This year, for Memorial Day, I took my rubbings from the Wall, and I had a number of 'em. A Vietnam vet, they gotta go to the Wall once. After that, there isn't much. I went on Father's Day. I had these rubbings, and I kept 'em with me. I kept 'em in a drawer beside my bed. This year, for Memorial Day, I burned 'em. I set those guys free because it dawned on me I am unapologetic about my—I'm a pacifist. I believe that warfare needs to be struggled against as much as possible. But I don't know if they would've believed that. I have no right to use them anymore than people have a right to use Veterans to bomb out a Presidential candidate or anything else. So I went and saw Mike—I'm not gonna give you his last name—and he'd lost his leg. He'd been in Vietnam 36 months, 34 months, somethin' like that, in the infantry. He was my Platoon Sergeant, which was my squad leader, and he'd been wounded seven or eight times, and he just kept comin' back. His brother had been killed in Vietnam. He's been in the Army and got out, so he was an old man. He must've been 27, 28. He was about ready for Social Security, I think. He looked like Spanky from Spanky in "Our Gang." He was just this kind, wonderful—I remember him crawling over towards me goin', "What would the Duke do?" And that was his big saying. "How would the Duke handle this?" It kinda broke some tensions sometimes. In the morning, one morning, we'd had movement the night before out front. He had come down and told the guys that were on the bunkers—we were on an LZ—that he was gonna go down and roll up the claymores because one of the things claymore are the anti-personnel mines—one of the things that Chuck did was he would booby trap 'em, so when you went out to get 'em, they'd go off. Really, what started with—he would sneak up at night and turn 'em around because they're one of those shaped charges that throw everything one way and nothin' back, and then go back and shake the bushes, so you blew yourself away. So we put 'em on grenades, and they put 'em on and we did trick flares. But he went out to get it. He didn't have to do that. He was a senior man. But he didn't want somebody to make a mistake and die. So he went out and the guy that was on the bunker—somebody came back from breakfast said, "Hey, go down and get a cup of coffee; I'll cover for ya," and he didn't tell him Mike was out there. Mike lost his leg right here; his arm right here. He didn't lose his arm. His left arm was shattered a million places, but he'd lost his leg 'cause when I put him on the medevac, we put it on separate.

#### **Interviewer**

How did you spend time recreating?

#### **Larry Chadwick**

We were grunts. There was no off-duty. I'm trying to think. There was a lot of marijuana in Vietnam. There were no hard drugs. But for a while, we couldn't get beer because we weren't old enough to drink. That was the thinking of the Army. We were sitting out there whackin', and stackin', and taggin', and baggin', and we can't have beer. Truthfully, I've got nothin' to really hide, the only time I ever smoked marijuana was in Vietnam 'cause when I came back here and tried it, it made me nervous. Maybe it saved me from—no, it didn't save me, but I never smoked marijuana after that.

#### **Interviewer**

What about the radio? Did you ever get to listen to the radio?

#### **Larry Chadwick**

You'd go up to the top and listen to Hanoi Hannah. If you go to the top end, she would broadcast, and I remember her welcoming the 1st Air Cav to the Bong Song Plains. We didn't know where we were. She knew before we did. She played good music.

#### **Interviewer**

What kind of music?

#### **Larry Chadwick**

Rock 'n Roll and soul music. If there's one great thing that happened to me in Vietnam, I was introduced to Smoky Robinson and The Miracles, The Supremes, and The Temptations. Things went down real quickly after that, but she played that kind of music. Armed Forces Radio, I had heard that the Catholic Mother's League of Boston had to approve every playlist. Now you hear a lot of stuff. They wouldn't play "Society's Child" 'cause it was about a mixed-race couple. I don't know. Today, it seems real silly. At the time it wasn't. But how damn silly is it? My granddaughter's husband just came back nine months ago from a second tour, and all I know is that when their relationship hit a hitch point, he had no answer but violence. That was me. I was lookin' at him, and that was me. What the hell's changed? I knew what water boarding was. When the prison stuff broke, I just didn't know it had a name. After I got out of the field, I humped the S2 Radial. I saw water boarding, and we brought Vietnamese out to do it. We could only hold their legs because the Vietnamese didn't sign the Geneva Convention. That's what our Captain, those in charge of us, told me. I saw enhanced interrogation. I saw interrogations take place where nobody spoke Vietnamese. They said, "Oh, all Vietnamese speak English." And I didn't know whether I was even gonna say that today because somebody can come and say, "Prove it." Do I put a sign in the back of one of the Veteran's magazines that say, "Anybody remembers committing murder and violating the Geneva Convention in 1968, give me a call." They will come out and say, "It never happened." It happened, and when the prison broke in Iraq, no 19-, 20-year-old girl in the National Guard ever made up a torture and then called it The Vietnam. She had people showing, and telling her, and directing her. They hung her out to dry, just like they did the troops in Vietnam

and Mei Lay. Nobody ever talks about Hugh Thompson, which you have probably have heard about.

**Interviewer**

You used a phrase earlier, "Zippo squads to the front." What's that mean?

**Larry Chadwick**

Burn it down.

**Interviewer**

You mean a village?

**Larry Chadwick**

Yeah. It was not as bad as everybody paints it now. We went through an area. When I was in I Corps, if there was a hooch out there, it was a North Vietnamese hooch 'cause there weren't any civilians. They were too smart to be up there in the mountains. They were down in the cities having a good time. In the thatched roof, they would hide bullets and grenades in the thatch. So rather than search it all, just light it up, and it'll be gone. It was part of denying the enemy whatever their means. The hardest one we had was rice. If you ever think about it, it's really hard to destroy rice. It doesn't burn worth a crap. You can only eat so much of it, and you have these ton stashes of rice that you've got. What do you do with it? We would put it in the slings and then drop it over the jungle and other things. The Zippo Squads was the same thing. Zippo Squads became kind of a catch phrase. My understanding is now the first famous news pictures of the Zippo Squads lighting it up, the cameraman had handed the Zippo lighter to the infantryman, but again, who knows after all these years?

**Interviewer**

Did you see any of your own press people?

**Larry Chadwick**

Once we were in the rear, and they had us do a combat assault. A combat assault, they come get you on the helicopters; you ride the skids; then you jump off because helicopters draw fire. They had us do one, but it was back to the rear. They had a camera set up there, and they kept telling us, "Go on! Go on! Go on!" And the camera was shooting out towards the rice paddies, but if it had shot behind it, you would've seen 5,000 U.S. soldiers all standing around watching, and headed for the NCO club, and get a beer and stuff, and they shot it that way. That was the only one. But I think the guy that wrote "Dispatches," Michael Hair, came to my unit. In "Dispatches" he talks about someone who had the entertainer across his helmet and said "Why waltz when you can Rock 'n Roll?" meaning automatic weapons fire. Maybe there were two of 'em, but I knew someone like that.

**Interviewer**

Was that you?

**Larry Chadwick**

No.

**Interviewer**

Did you have something written on your helmet?

**Larry Chadwick**

Probably not suitable for television. Yes, I did. I had my radio, and the nicest thing about the radio was the absurdity of the military. I remember calling another platoon who was in contact, and they were just over there, and the bullets were comin', and they were goin' over our head, and I was laying there. I called him up and said, "Hey, can you kinda move around? The bullets are coming over our heads here, and we'd like 'em to go the other way." He said something to me, and I said, "Well, how close are they?" He said, "You wanna talk to 'em? Hey, newie!" which was a generic name for Vietnamese. I was on the radio when artillery came real close to us. The big thing about artillery is tree height. You gotta calculate for the tree height. But anyway, it was coming real close to us, and I got on the radio, and I said, "Cancel the red light. There's friendlies in that area." The command chopper 3,000 feet up in there air said, "Don't worry; it's friendly." And we go back to, "Is there any friendly artillery fire?" So later that day, his command chopper received fire from our position, and it was not me. I wasn't that brave. But when he called down and said, "We're receiving fire from your position," I remember saying, "It's friendly." There was this war going on between the command structure and the troops on the ground, and that included officers on the ground. It wasn't officer enlisted men as much as it was the command structure against the grunts.

**Interviewer**

How were your officers? What did you think of them?

**Larry Chadwick**

The amazing thing about officers in Vietnam is I had an officer who went to West Point. Worst damn officer I ever saw. I had this guy that went to ROTC, and he couldn't have weighed 110 pounds wringing wet, and he had great, big, thick glasses. The greatest infantry officer; I would have followed him into the gates of hell. He was just outstanding. They had a job just like we did. As the radio operator, my job was to stay with them, and they had to get where they could see so they could direct stuff. Not being real brave, my basic thing was I would focus on the

small of their back and just run up there once or twice. When we got there, I'd go, "Whoa!" Because if I'd looked, I wouldn't have gone. He was pretty good. The guy from West Point just liked to charge. He liked to put people on line and charge. In the jungle, where you can't see the people on the left or the right, you're just gonna keep slowing down until you ain't moving because if you get too far out ahead, somebody's gonna see movement and shoot ya. But he just loved to charge. I don't know. Mixed bag.

**Interviewer**

Did you go to any USO shows?

**Larry Chadwick**

Some in the hospital. I had malaria, and I came to. This is a story you can cut if you need to—it was really strange. I came to, and it was air-conditioned where I was. I was slowly coming out of this fog. My muscles had cramped, and they had given some muscle relaxant or morphine. The bed had sheets on it, and I looked at the bed next to me, and there was an American woman in a mini skirt sitting on the edge of the bed, talking to the soldier. I was sure I had died and gone to heaven. I really was. They took my picture right then, and I had this most amazed look on my face. My ex-wife kept that for years. She'd just pull that out and say, "Look at this boy," 'cause I'm goin', "Whoa!" I saw that one. I saw some Japanese. I remember these Japanese rock band came in and sang this song, and dedicated it to the guys at the back. And the guys at the back were from the dying ward. They probably were not gonna make it out of Vietnam. They sang "The Green, Green Grass of Home," which was a song about dying. It's just that they didn't know what it was about. They had just mimicked the words. So I saw that. I saw a few donut dollies once or twice.

**Interviewer**

Donut dolly?

**Larry Chadwick**

The Red Cross put people who volunteered to be there, and they would serve coffee and donuts at kind of a base camp. Once in a while, the 1st Air Cav, if we were in a real safe place, would fly them out. They'd give us donuts and coffee, donut dollies. I have admiration for 'em. They didn't have to be there.

**Interviewer**

You talked about when you were in that one operations, and you lost all those helicopters. Did you see any of them go down?

**Larry Chadwick**

Oh, yeah. I had 'em come out from under me. And a helicopter going down, we get these pictures from the media and stuff—there's a lot of ways to go down. If they're just shot up, and they're going in, they don't necessarily explode. It's like being in a car wreck, I guess. I know that if you're going in this way, and your front of your skids hit the ground, you want to —

**Interviewer**

I'm sorry. Could you start that over again?

**Larry Chadwick**

If they came in this way, and their front skids hit the ground, you have got to get out and get gone because the blade will hit the ground. When the front edge of the blade hits the ground, it will break off, and spin around, and cut everybody in the helicopter in half. I had read somewhere that's why so many of the helicopter pilots, you'll see 'em as double amputees because it came around and got their legs. If the rear rotor gets shot up, then they tend to try and catch up with the big rotor going the opposite direction. But if they're real close to the ground, it just goes down. It's not as dramatic as some of the depictions of it I've seen, although I'm sure that happened, too. With me, we usually were flying so low to the ground that it was a case of thump, bang, boom, and we're gone. We were young. I do believe that some of my hitches and gitches as I get out of bed in the morning now have to do with those coming down hard then. In the 1st Air Cav, you would ride the skids always on the sides of the helicopter. When it got as close to the ground as you could, you would start jumping off and running. We called 'em metal magnets. They tended to draw fire. The pilots would be yelling at me as the radio operator because as we were jumping off, the helicopter is going like this, and they're trying to hold it steady. But we were all gone by the time they yelled at me. I don't remember. Now this could be a selective memory; it could be anything. I don't remember big flame-out crashes with helicopters. I just don't.

**Interviewer**

When you walked in, you had a shirt that said, "Charlie doesn't surf." Was there, before you got angry, some kind of rapture to the war?

**Larry Chadwick**

I don't remember 'em, but I was proud of being in the 1st Air Cav, and Robert Duvall's—that's what he depicted. But it was such a personal thing. If it didn't happen to my squad, it wasn't important. We were all on one helicopter. I believe squads in the 1st Air Cav were smaller than other squads. I'm not a military guy. It's because so we could all fit on one helicopter as we went. It could be extended to the platoon maybe. After that, it was just them.

**Interviewer**

What's it like to be in the air with all those helicopters making an assault?

**Larry Chadwick**

Well, they come in in sticks, which is a reference to airborne, and you fly in six helicopters, which are holding a platoon. They fly in a straight line, and there's a line here and a line here and a line here. It depends. It's just like going into—I imagine—I've never gone into a beach. The first ones would hit and everybody would go out and get down and lay down a base of fire. I don't remember knowing whether they were hot LZ's or not because we were laying down a base of fire. When in doubt, empty the clip. I don't remember ever being moved. I really liked riding the lead on the skid, being the first person behind the co-pilot on the skid, standing on the skids. It felt good. It was cool. The wind was cool. We were going out. You could see. My war involved a lot of not really seeing. I fought against muzzle flashes. I don't know that I even really fought against soldiers, but in the jungle, it was muzzle flashes. It was so narrowed-down, the vision, and I really believe it had to be in order to survive. Now again, that's just me talking.

**Interviewer**

Describe the insane noise of a battlefield.

**Larry Chadwick**

For me, the helicopters were background noise always. In a firefight, I don't remember hearing. I remember hearing it start, but then I was focused, and then I could still hear my radio. I was so in touch with my radio, at night I could sleep through all the kinds of people calling and calling medevacs. But if they called Bull Warrior 6 India, I'd wake up. There was a lot of noise. I have hearing loss. Who knows what it's from? The VA's big into hearing aids.

**Interviewer**

Can you talk about what the sound of a helicopter means to you today?

**Larry Chadwick**

I recently did something new for PTSD treatment called prolonged exposure. One of the things they do is try and give you the sounds that make you crazy. Sound is a huge trigger. So I went out to airport two and listened to the helicopters all day. It never got pleasant. But when I heard the one take off from up here, I knew immediately somebody was hurt. They never took you anywhere good. They took you only bad or came to get you if you were hurt. I cannot stand the sound. Some of my family members have said, "Let's go for a helicopter ride." Done that. No thanks. I'm not as aversion as I used to be. I would cover my ears and turn away. Now I just have this feeling of sadness. It is. It's a medevac helicopter. Somebody in a car wreck somewhere, they just got spoiled, 'cause it messes up your whole day. If you've got a date, you gotta cancel, all kinds of stuff. So I get sad when I hear it. I'm not as afraid of it as I used to be. Right now, I'm real high on the prolonged exposure. It really helped me. I think everyone ought to do it.

**Interviewer**

You said you were in the Highlands. Did you encounter the Montagnards?

**Larry Chadwick**

I never saw the Yards. Well, that's not completely true. Once, down in the South, when we were up in the Parrot's Beak, or the Fish Hook, or one of those areas right on the border, we went to a Special Forces A Camp. It was surrounded with Montagnards' Village, and that's where it was. It was aimed at across the border, and you have to understand, this is 125, 150 guys who are infantry soldiers who've been there, done that. The sense of evil in that place, I still remember it to this day. It had that red mud, and it was across the border, and I didn't see the people as being evil. I didn't see our troops as being evil. There was just a sense there that this is not a place I wanna spend my vacation.

**Interviewer**

You told me on the phone that you destroyed all your pictures and all of your memorabilia. Tell us where your head was at when you made that choice.

**Larry Chadwick**

I destroyed all my pictures because there wasn't anything there for me. Over the years, I have lived what's referred to as a colorful life since I came back, and there was a lot of movement. Some of it I lost, some of them, when I got back, I just felt like they were lies. They captured one second in time and they didn't tell us stories, and they didn't mean anything to anybody but me. The last I had was the rubbings from the wall, and that was setting them free, not me free. I was using them to feed an anti-war activity that I believed, and I'm still gonna do, but I have no right to do that to people that gave it all. I don't understand why men say that. I don't know if women do, too. Well, yeah, my wife had all of ours. She had all the ones I'd sent her. It had this little "free" in the corner 'cause you got free mail. That was supposed to be a big benefit. Thanks a bunch; I'll pay for my stamps.

**Interviewer**

When you got back and started doing anti-war work here, what kind of work did you do in Utah, and what was the response from a pretty conservative state?



## **Larry Chadwick**

Well, I was Chairman of the Utah Veteran's for Peace, and one of the first members of Vietnam Veterans Against the War here. People would talk to me, and they would say, "Gee, you're alienating people," because I was very vocal. No more Mr. Nice Guy. We're not gonna have a family outing and have hamburgers; we're gonna talk about the damn war. And that's how I lived my life. I couldn't get a job anyway. I had two little babies. I couldn't get a job until I quit listing I'd been to Vietnam 'cause I got lazy on my job. I'm not gonna get it anyway, so I was unemployment. Once I quit listing that, then I started to get jobs. That was how it was. We're gonna talk about it. That's a lie. My kids were playing in my front yard, and a car pulled up, and people got out, and took pictures of 'em, and drove away. Every house I lived in had fishnet over the windows. Nobody ever through Molotov cocktails at me, but I learned from the buses in Vietnam. It keeps the grenades out. There was a police officer who would amazingly show up at places where I was. But I never really worried about it 'cause I wasn't doing anything illegal. The word for today folks is democracy. I was accepted completely by the youth culture. Now there was some condescending attitudes. I wish you were missing a leg so we could put you out front, that kind of stuff. That's why Vietnam Vets Against the War really started to get together. I'm still a member of it. The one episode I remember was we were sitting around headquarters, which was my house right down on Martin Luther King Drive, 6th South. It's been torn down for years. But anyway, we were sitting around, talking, and I said, "I know what let's do. Let's give everybody a lesson in making napalm," because the Vietnam Vets Against the War had a theme song called "Napalm Sticks to Kids." They said, "Well, what do we do?" I said, "It's easy." I had a brother from Detroit tell me how to make napalm. You just put Tide in gasoline and get it 'til it's all good and jellified, and then it'll stick to whatever you throw it at when you light it. So let's go out and get a puppy from the humane society. Let's bring up; let's show a demonstration of how to make napalm, and then throw it on the puppy. Now we never intended to throw it on the damn puppy to start with. People came out of the woodwork. They were threatening. "You're gonna kill this helpless puppy!" I'm going, "Don't you realize this is being thrown on people right now?" I'm not gonna kill a puppy. Hell, I feed 30 cats every night in a feral cat colony. I love animals. It made the point, and it brought it up, and I have never seen a reaction that hostile when they came there. And we didn't burn the puppy.

### **Interviewer**

On April 30, 1975, the day we were watching TV, and the helicopters leaving the embassy, were you watching TV that day?

## **Larry Chadwick**

I remember seeing the picture. I don't know. I have never been a big TV person. I'm married to a movie fanatic. I'd always, for months, I had been saying, "How do you ask someone to be the last GI to die in a war we've lost, a war that was wrong?" And then when they stepped off, our big motto was, "Did the last GI that left the embassy roof... did he turn off the light at the end of the tunnel?" because they'd been telling us for years that we'd had the light at the end of the tunnel. We could see the light. They didn't tell us that it was a freight train coming our way. I watched that. Oh, I don't care. I got drunk the day Saigon fell, 1975. I got sober in 1986. I was drunk completely. I remember going to the IRS to pay my taxes and them saying, "We don't have anything on 1976." And I said, "I don't remember 1976." And they said, "You don't remember where you worked?" And I said, "No, it's a little more generalized than that. I don't remember 1976." I sat down, and I cried. There was no happiness. There were no winners. There were only losers. When Iran had its troubles and they took the embassy, one of my worst nightmares would be being a Marine Guard with one round in your 45 and watching thousands of people pour through the gates at the embassy, all of them mad at you. But I walked through the university down on the lower campus, and the ROTC had a big table and a little stage, and they were up there talking about we gotta go in there, and we gotta go in there, and we gotta—the same stuff they're sayin' now about Iran. I just freaked. I pushed my way to the front; I climbed up on the stage, and I said, "You know what? I drive right by the recruiting station on the way home. I'll make sure you get in the combat arms. Come on." And I discovered they again didn't mean we. They meant my children at that time, and now my grandchildren. What are we doing? This isn't about that.

### **Interviewer**

Your wife's a movie buff, and you must encounter films on Vietnam.

## **Larry Chadwick**

I read every book I can on Vietnam. I watch some films. My youngest daughter, who's 19, she said she wanted to see "Apocalypse Now," and we watched about 15 minutes of it, and she started crying. I said, "Darlin', I told you. It's a great movie. It's got nothin' to do with my war." She just couldn't take it. So I watch 'em all. And most of us, when they say, "Oh, Vietnam Vets can't stand to watch movies," they don't know me. I can stand to watch movies. "Platoon" was written for my war. I am serious. When they were giving the shots of the platoon, I was lookin' for my face, right down to the towels around the neck. The big fights and all that kinda stuff was overblown. But throughout the movie, there was this line of anger with each other, with the Vietnamese, with the Army. That was one of the sub themes of the whole movie, was this underlying anger. So that one, I thought, was excellent. "We were soldiers." Mel Gibson's getting a little old to be playing a Lieutenant, but anyway, it showed what happened in America much better than any others with the wives 'cause this is the Army. They're gonna send somebody that doesn't even know



you to tell you, "Hey, your boy ain't comin' back from 'Nam." The wives gathered together, and they did it. Now the stuff in Vietnam, I don't know. That was a battle my unit fought in, and it was a big battle. There was one that won the Academy Award, "Hearts and Minds" won the Academy Award. And I thought it showed us warts and all. It was not a pleasant movie to watch. It showed the run up to Tet, and it showed here's how we knew Tet was coming, and it showed a coffin maker making extra coffins.

#### **Interviewer**

What were your feelings before enlisting? What kind of a lifestyle did you lead before you enlisted?

#### **Larry Chadwick**

I come from a family that believes in taking part in the American experience. So I had, as I said earlier, had been involved with politics. I was very conservative. I did not live with my family of origin at the end. I always had a big mouth. But it was a good life, and it was the American Dream. I went surfing. I chased girls. I went to San Francisco; I chased girls. I went to high school; I chased girls. Is there a theme running through this?

#### **Interviewer**

Was drinking a part of that? You drank a lot with the boys?

#### **Larry Chadwick**

Yes. One of the major battles of my life. I've not had a drink in 25 years, and I get up every day sayin' thank you. That started before. Vietnam did not make me into a drug addict or a drunk. It just didn't do it. They talk about the Army hospitals giving you morphine until you're strung out. They gave you enough so you didn't moan loud enough to wake 'em up at the nurse's station. I never saw heroin in Vietnam. When I came back and people talked about it, I did not believe them. I accused people of being liars. I was so, "What are you talking about? I was up to my rear end in North Vietnamese Regulars." So my life before I went, it's hard to separate because teenage angst, you know, yeah.

#### **Interviewer**

What was the difference before and after the Tet Offensive?

#### **Larry Chadwick**

You know, I wasn't there enough before Tet to know what it was like. But even after Tet, there were still soldiers that believed in being a soldier. Nobody I knew believed we could win the war. My personal plan to win the war was to take the good Vietnamese who were on side and put 'em on aircraft carriers out in the South China Sea, level the country, kill everything in asphalt and pave it, and then once we were comin' home, sink the aircraft carriers because these people were committed to freedom. I never have figured out why we didn't support—and I still get angry when people say we lost 58,000 troops. Now I'm nervous, so I'm not gonna remember the number. We lost 58,200. Which ones do we forget? Now I still have friends dying of prostate cancer at a young age because of Agent Orange. Where do we stop counting the deaths that happened in that war? What would the Duke have done?

#### **Interviewer**

Did that phrase "What would the Duke have done," did he mean John Wayne?

#### **Larry Chadwick**

Yes, he meant John Wayne. How would John Wayne handle this? One of the big things that happened at the Republican Convention in Florida when they charged all the leadership in Vietnam Vets Against the War was that they confronted John Wayne. They wanted to talk to him about the war. He was a movie actor, and we were never invaded through San Diego or Los Angeles, so he did his job. We were never invaded through the Gulf Coast, and I do not have anything against what our ex-President did. I want to say this, and I can say this for Vietnam vets that are out there, George Bush Senior was a combat vet. He did exactly what any of us would do for our child. He made sure that they didn't get—and that's called love. That's not called anything bad.

#### **Interviewer**

When you talk to schools as a Veterans Against the War, what is your message to young people?

#### **Larry Chadwick**

I try to give 'em some historical that I don't think they're getting in the mainstream now. I talked to a friend of my daughter's who wrote a paper when she was in high school. It said, "It was a war that happened in ancient times," so I try to give them a perspective that real live people fought and died in this war. That real life political decisions had an outcome on people's lives. The basic message I have for them is that if we learned anything from this war, it's don't be a spectator in your own life. Whatever you believe—and I have gone to classes where current Veterans have gone nose-to-nose with me. That's just fine. We don't have to agree. It's not important we agree; it's important we have the discussion, and that starts with Vietnam. Vietnam was a milestone, was a watershed or whatever. I think it was so out there. There was whole bunches of things tied up.

#### **Interviewer**

Is there anything we haven't covered, anything we haven't asked that you want to say or talk about?

## **Larry Chadwick**

You can clip this one: President Obama, you promised. Get (mo still? 01:32:16) opened, damn it! You can cut that one out.

### **Interviewer**

There's this thought that those who split to Canada or faked some medical problem, they are cowards. What's your thought on those who tried to avoid the war?

## **Larry Chadwick**

After I'd gone, I'd a worn a skirt if it would've got me out. I think everyone made the best decision they could at the time. Going to Canada was a real-life decision, and it was a tough one. Going to Vietnam, the first decision I had to make for myself was whether to step off the plane with my left foot or my right foot. They had to think about the consequences and make this move. I did have a little trouble with the United States when they granted amnesty to all of the war resisters who were draft dodgers and didn't grant it to the soldiers that had deserted. I think that it's the same kind of thing. I don't know. I've had guys my age come up to me and say, "I feel like I missed something." It's like missing having a cold, I guess. I don't know. I don't know what that means. But it profoundly changed our society. It did. In the '50s, everybody went in the Army. There were just too many of us. It was which ones didn't have to go.

### **Interviewer**

It's hard to believe that all these terms you and I grew up with—when I hear the terms like "Ho Chi Minh Trail and Parrot's Beak and Plain of Jars," it's like it doesn't mean anything. It was everything to us.

## **Larry Chadwick**

I think taking nothing away from Ho Chi Minh being a dedicated Communist; he was a man worth studying for his beliefs. So was Giap. Yeah, my daughter sometimes, the 19-year-old, just goes, "Papa, none of my friends know what the hell you're talking about." I say, "Do you?" "Yeah, I know what you're talking about."

### **Interviewer**

That's a long time ago.

## **Larry Chadwick**

That's a long time ago. It's time to drive on.

### **Interviewer**

Thank you.