Daniel Maynard

Sergeant

U.S. Marine Corp

Section Chief

Magna, Utah

"Escalation"

Interviewer

Can you go over how you got into the Marines, and start from when you went in, and what you heard about the war, and what your thoughts were as you actually got shipped over there?

Daniel Maynard

I went in July 9, 1963. The war hadn't started yet; they had advisors over there, and I wound up in a Marine barracks back East until 1967. I was kinda feelin' a little bit guilty that I was in the Marine Corps and everybody was in Vietnam, so I extended a year to go over, and they shipped me over in March of 1967.

Interviewer

So you extended just to go over to Vietnam?

Daniel Maynard

Just to go over to Vietnam.

Interviewer

Give us your reasoning for that.

Daniel Maynard

When I was in the Marine barracks, we were by a Naval hospital, and most of my replacements, the military police, were wounded Marines. I felt that I should do my duty and go over, so that's why I extended a year.

Interviewer

Tell us about going over.

Daniel Maynard

I went to staging in Camp Pendleton in March and went through staging for one month with 360 recruits. I was the Sergeant over those recruits. Then, I wound up in Vietnam in the 5th of April 1967.

Interviewer

What was your experience in when you first got there?

Daniel Maynard

When I first got there, in understanding that I had been a Marine barracks most of my Marine Corps career, and then going back into division, they put me in a mortar battery. I had never even seen a mortar before, so I had to

familiarize myself with operations. They trained me for about ten days, and then, they sent me out on a firebase in the Que Son Valley, a place called Nui Loc Son.

Interviewer

What was your experience there?

Daniel Maynard

When I first got there, I was assigned Platoon Sergeant of the gun platoons, and I was Section Chief of gun one. It was pretty slow for the first few weeks, and then the North Vietnamese that were in the Valley that we knew that were there all the time were staging to overrun us. The 5th Marine Regiment was anticipating this, and they started Operation Union One, and they swept the Valley. During that time, we fired extensive support for the 5th Marines. About five days later, Union One ended and the Marines started to push out toward the sea, and the North Vietnamese came back into the Valley, and the 5th Marines came back in and we started Operation Union Two. Operation Union Two lasted until June 7th, and then, they ceased operations, and then, eventually pulled us out of the firebase.

Interviewer

Tell us about these mortars. Did you have a forward observer that would call back and tell you the coordinates?

Daniel Maynard

What coordinates, and we were shooting a four deuce, which was a 107-millimeter mortar. At the time, that was the largest mortar the U.S. had. Our job was to support the 5th Marines, but at night, we'd shoot what we call H and Is, and they were designated targets that we would shoot one or two rounds, basically to keep them awake and see what we could hit. H and Is were done almost every night while we were there for the duration.

Interviewer

What does H and I stand for?

Daniel Maynard

Harassment and Insurgent.

Interviewer

Tell us about these mortars. How did they work?

Daniel Maynard

The mortar was 107 millimeter. There were packs on the back of it; they were compressed nitro. There were 35 packs when they come out of the case, and then they would call in a charge and we would take off the packs we needed. And then there was a primer about the size of a 12-gauge shotgun shell that was inside what we call the broomstick. When we dropped it in the tube, it set this off. It was about equivalent to about two and a half sticks of dynamite. We had a range of about 4,000 yards.

Interviewer

Was there an explosive charge on the shell?

Daniel Maynard

A lot of our shells were BT, which were proximity fuses, and these are the fuses that allowed us to do air bursts. They usually went off about 70 feet over the enemy. Then the other type fuse we'd use would be point detonating, which we'd do on bunkers. Shot a lot of illumination at night for the infantry that was out there. We did use some white phosphorus rounds while we were there.

Interviewer

Did you ever get overrun? Did you have any close calls?

Daniel Maynard

Not really. Fox Company of 2nd Time, 1st Marines was our protectors on that hill, so they pretty well held the perimeter. Plus, we had our own defensive weapons. We would have a few probes in our lines at night just enough to keep you interested in what was going on.

Interviewer

Did you have any mortars, small arms fire, or machine guns coming at you?

Daniel Maynard

While we were on Nui Loc Son, we would receive incoming mortars, and basically tried to get into a mortar battle with them. We were a little bit more accurate than they were, but it was enough to keep you on your toes. They didn't do it that often, but when they did do it, it was pretty frightening. They were continually shooting small arms at us, again making things very interesting while we were there.

Interviewer

You never had to go out on patrols or anything like that?

Daniel Maynard

Yes, most of the units out there, we did our own patrols. We didn't do any patrols in Nui Loc Son, but when we moved up into Quang Tri, we ran our own patrols. Mainly, each unit was responsible for what we called TAOR out in front of the lines, so we ran two or three patrols per week just to keep on top of what the enemy was doing.

Interviewer

Tell us in detail about some of those patrols. Did you ever have any real dangerous situations while you were out there?

Daniel Maynard

We would get small arms fire. I know up in Quang Tri, we used to do night patrols, which are a little bit more tense than a daytime patrol. We were getting a lot of illumination out in front of us; didn't know what the enemy was doing so we would set up ambushes and waiting for them to do it. We still never did find out what they were doing, but

night patrols is very intense. It plays tricks on your mind when you're out there.

Interviewer

On these mortars, did you ever have any shells that wouldn't fire and were potentially dangerous?

Daniel Maynard

We had either a misfire or a short round. Now in misfire, the initial charge wouldn't go off and we'd have to disassemble the mortar and pull it out. Our biggest concern was short rounds, and the primer charge would go off, and it would shoot the mortar probably about 20 feet from us. The fuses were set by the revolutions coming out of the tube, so they were pretty dangerous because we didn't know if all the fuses had been set when it landed, so we'd have to carefully put it off to the side until it could be exploded. We had a lot of short rounds, especially up on Nui Loc Son. A lot of times the ammo was older ammo. We could tell that it was 10, 15 years old. A lot of the fuses, we had a problem with BT fuses. We were getting mid-air explosions prematurely. In fact, in one fire mission, we had to cease shooting because none of the fuses were working properly.

Interviewer

Tell us about some of your most interesting experiences in actual battle.

Daniel Maynard

Nui Loc San, the Union One and Union Two, I was excited for it because it was my first big operation. The one battle that really sticks in my mind was '68 Tet Offensive. And when the Communists overran Hue, our battery was sent to a place called Gia Le to shoot on the city of Hue. I stayed with ten Marines to protect the area of Phu Bai. Right at the height of the Tet Offensive, Phu Bai started getting rocketed from out in front of our position, so we opened up with

50 cal machine guns and destroyed quite a few rocket launchers. That was exciting for me because I was actually involved in the exchange of fire.

Interviewer

Did any of the guys on your crews ever get wounded?

Daniel Maynard

Yes, we had a few on convoys that would get hit. We'd get some wounded. We had one gun that had a premature explosion in the chamber, and the gun blew up killing two of our Marines and wounding five, and that was during the battle of Hue. They pretty well classified it as a hairline crack in one of the rounds that set off prematurely. That was the only deaths we'd seen from our direct unit.

Interviewer

Can you tell us any unique experience that you had being a commander there and what was going through your mind?

Daniel Maynard

What was really interesting is to listen to everybody's story about how they got there. When I was there the Marine

Corps had started to draft--and this was one of the first times they had drafted since World War II. My gunner owned a trucking company back in Massachusetts when he was drafted. Just listening to the people, what they were doing when they were drafted and all of sudden they're there. Some of them that thought that they'd get in Artillery and be able to ride-- don't have to be in the line of fire, and then, wound up in Mortars. And I had one young kid that came to my gun and he was about 18 years old. I got a letter from his mother, basically telling me to watch and make sure that he didn't get hurt or anything. I thought that was pretty good, so I kinda took him under my wing and watched him there for a while.

Interviewer

So his mom got your name and sent you a letter, and said, "Watch over my son?"

Daniel Maynard

Uh-hmm. One of the neatest things is when we were up on Nui Loc Son. We would get these letters from these organizations, women's clubs or something like that. We got one letter from a women's club back in the Midwest wanting to know what they could do to help us to feel a little bit at home or anything else. Everybody in the battery got together and decided well, what we needed was a toilet seat because the outhouses we had were just holes and plywood. And so this women's club sent us this toilet seat. That was the pride and joy. When we set it up, the infantry, nobody could use that toilet seat. During one of the fire missions the outhouse caught fire, and we were spending more time to put that fire out and save that toilet seat. We were trying to do the operation, but it was funny. The first Sergeant of the outfit, he eventually took that toilet seat, and he would up in a college over in ROTC. He had this mounted on his wall, and this was his trophy from Vietnam.

Interviewer

So he took it home with him, huh?

Daniel Maynard

Yep. He asked if he could have it, so we gave it to him.

Interviewer

Tell me about how you coordinated where you were shooting. How did you know how to adjust the mortar?

Daniel Maynard

Our fort observers would go out with the infantry, and they would call in a grid to our FDC, which is Fire Direction Control. You gotta understand, this was back when we had no computers. Everything was figured by hand. Then the FDC would call me on a landline radio and give me deflection and quadrant. And we had two instruments on the gun. One was a scope that lined up aiming stakes, and the other one was just like a level. Deflection would tell us which way to point it, and quadrant was the elevation. I would call the deflection and quadrant out; my gunner and A gunner would take it, and they would set it on the scopes; set the gun. I would check it. Once everything was checked, I would tell FDC gun one was ready to fire. I would drop the first round because I had the headset and I heard the command, and then usually somebody else would continue to fire if it was an extended raid of fire. But

FDC was our key to where we were shooting.

Interviewer

How many men were on that mortar?

Daniel Maynard

The mortar had five. Sometimes we would have six, but normally, five men. You had a gunner and an A gunner. You had an Ammo Corporal that would set the charges, set the time on the fuses. Then you usually had a loader. Usually, two people might wind up being loaders on that. The one thing that was really bad was the Ammo Corporal would be in a small, enclosed room. It was usually a dugout area right next to the gun where we kept our ammo. When you're working with compressed nitro you'd get ferocious headaches 'cause of the fumes. When you finally couldn't stand it any longer, we'd get somebody else in, cuttin' charges. But the fumes would give you a very, very bad headache.

Interviewer

Any other experiences while you're running those mortars that you'd like to share?

Daniel Maynard

Usually, when we went into an area that we're originally setting up, we'd come into a firebase and they'd have the stakes lined up where our guns would be. We would dig a round hole about six-, eight inches deep, and we'd put in about three sand bags on it. Then we would set the gun up and all the gun crew would stand on the base plate and we would fire a round with a full charge and it would slam that base plate into the ground. Usually we had to fire three rounds to get those base plates sunk into the ground and then we were ready to fire. But it was interesting seeing five guys standing on this little base plate while this gun goes off.

Interviewer

You got moved into Howitzer's?

Daniel Maynard

Yeah, we went up to the DMZ, Camp Evans, and picked up four 155 Howitzers from the 12th Marines. We moved them down to Phu Bai just before the Tet Offensive. We were on the outskirts of Phu Bai up until Tet finally hit. Then we moved to Gia Le to help support the assault on Hue.

Interviewer

What's a GLA?

Daniel Maynard

That was the name of the firebase, Gia Le.

Interviewer

Tell us about a Howitzer, the difference from a mortar.

Daniel Maynard

The Howitzer is one of the biggest artillery pieces the U.S. have. They have 155 8-inch and 175s. What we do, you

would have to load the shell. Now this is just the artillery shell. You'd have to seed it into the gun, and then, throw the powder bags in after. They'd say, "Charge 5, Charge 6." You'd put the powder bags in and then the last charge, one side of it was red. You'd put that in, and then close the breech. Then you had a primer. It almost looked like a blank cartridge. You put it in the primer holder, and it actually had little clappers, a little hammer that the lanyard was on. You'd pull that and it set the primer off that set the gun off. Once was the breech was opened we had to swab out the inside to get any sparks that were in there out so we could load it again because if you tried to load powder in there with sparks, you'd set it off. You had one guy that was doing all the swabbing. But on a 155 crew we had up to nine people on the crew.

Interviewer

What that sounds like to me is like an old Civil War kind of --

Daniel Maynard

Almost.

Interviewer

About how long did it take you to shoot between rounds?

Daniel Maynard

Oh, we could probably get a round off one a minute. One of the things that the Marine Corps had over there that we liked--usually the guns could shoot it at about 130 degrees. We were able to put the 155s on a truck jack, and the gun was balanced. We could turn the gun 360 degrees and we used two sets of aiming stakes so we could shoot in front of us or shoot in back of us. It was unique to the Marine Corps at the time.

Interviewer

Could you think of a couple of interesting, unique experiences you had with the Howitzer?

Daniel Maynard

In the 155, what was very tricky was if we had a misfire on a 155 it was usually the primer. But you had to wait so many seconds before you could open the breech on that to make sure that nothing discharged while you were trying to open it. We had an instance where they were probing and one of our big defenses on 155s is we can take the spare powder bags and load it in the chamber and shoot it. The Vietnamese were very fearful of fire, and when you have a 155 shooting about 30 pounds of powder at you it's pretty scary. We would fire that as kind of a defensive if they were trying to overrun us.

Interviewer

So you would shoot the powder up, and it would ignite?

Daniel Maynard

It'd ignite and it was just like a flamethrower.

Interviewer

How far away would that powder go from where you guys were?

Daniel Maynard

About 40, 50 feet.

Interviewer

So the enemy was that close at times?

Daniel Maynard

Yes. And we'd go into a firebase up on Quang Tri and we had to set up our defense, put up constantan wire, and the fence. I caught a Viet Cong that was posing as a villager. And while they were setting steel stakes in, he was putting explosives in the same hole and we caught him doing it. So that was the first VC I'd ever caught. That's what we had to watch over there is that during the

daytime, they were friendly to us, and at nighttime, those were the same ones that were attacking us.

Interviewer

What did you do with them?

Daniel Maynard

We took them over to interrogation and they commenced interrogating, and this was where we found out he was a Viet Cong. But it was surprising. He was only about 15 years old. They come back and told us that he was a Viet Cong.

Interviewer

For what reason were these pegs going down?

Daniel Maynard

We were putting in what they called a tangle foot. It's a low barbed wire that's stretched. It's only about six inches off the ground.

Interviewer

Kind of like a booby trap.

Daniel Maynard

It's very hard to run through, yeah. We would bury stakes to wrap this on, and as we were digging the holes, they were supposedly helping us, and he was putting explosives in it. So we had an idea what was gonna happen.

Interviewer

He had powder and was puttin' --

Daniel Maynard

He was putting C4 in there.

Interviewer

Any other unique experiences?

Daniel Maynard

When I first got over there, a lot of the units had the M16s and I was really surprised that when I first got there we

were all issued M14s. And these were the 762 that the military had for years before that and then the M16 came out. But we never received the M16 until probably about December of that year. It's just interesting that they would run units with two different weapons. Most of the infantry had M16s, and we were stuck with the M14s, which was still a good rifle.

Interviewer

What was the difference?

Daniel Maynard

Well, the M16 is a small 223 round, and the M14 was almost like 30-06. The big difference is with an M16 you can carry more ammo with you. The M14, you couldn't carry as much ammo 'cause it weighed too much. So that's why they went to the M16. But we still had the M14 up until December. What was hard about that is we'd get into an area and if we were short on ammo, all the ammo in the area was 223, not 762. So we'd have to go looking for ammo for our weapons.

Interviewer

Do you have any other experiences that you'd like to share with us about what it was like at camp at night?

Daniel Maynard

Firebase, you know, I used to tell everybody that we was about 98 percent boredom and about two percent terrifying over there. During the daytime, naturally we'd clean guns. It was very dirty, dusty over there, so it was a continual job cleaning the guns. But there was a lot of downtime. You could write letters, play cards-- do whatever you wanted. We always had to stay in and around the guns because of fire missions. A lot of the firebases were restricted on getting mail because everything was flown in by helicopter. We were on Nui Loc Son for two or three months and you couldn't take a shower because your water is flown in by helicopter, so we were each given a canteen of water per day. You had to brush your teeth; you had coffee; drink that, and that was it, one canteen. The water was so bad--and what I mean by "bad" is that they would mix chemicals with it to sterilize it. It didn't taste very good, and when you made coffee with it, even the creamer wouldn't mix with coffee 'cause there was so much chemical it would just coagulate. This is why if you start reading the stories about it, people loved Kool-Aid because they could put Kool-Aid with this and it killed the taste of the water. So Kool-Aid was a very, very important product for us over there. When you're on a firebase, your meals are all C-ration. You don't get any hot meals. The only hot meal you have is you have to cook your C-rations. Your C-rations could be 20 years old; they could be two years old. How we could tell was that if you smoked cigarettes you had to watch lighting the cigarette because usually the thing caught fire 'cause it was so dry. The thing that everybody cherished over there was the can openers, which we called John Wayne's. When you had one, you never loaned it out because it was the only way you could eat is being able to open that C-ration with that John Wayne.

Interviewer

What does a 20-year-old C-ration taste like?

Daniel Maynard

It tastes pretty good except when you get into eating the chocolate or the gum or smoking the cigarettes. You could tell it was old.

Interviewer

Did you have to mix it with water or anything like that?

Daniel Maynard

No, it was --

Interviewer

It was ready to eat.

Daniel Maynard

Ready to eat and they had different meals. The worst meal in there was ham and lima beans, and if you were late getting your meal, you wound up with that ham and lima beans, so you wanted to be the first one there. Sometimes we could cook it; sometimes we couldn't. They had blue tabs that we would light on fire and then we could cook our C-rations with it. And if we had the tabs, fine. If we didn't, you had to eat the C-rations cold. A lot of that was just not very good cold. The bread that was in there--they used to give us canned bread. The only way you could actually eat that is put a few holes in it, add a little bit of water in it, and then put it over a fire and steam it. Then it was kinda like fresh bread when you got it out. Then halfway through someone came out with a C-ration cookbook, showing us how we could mix things and make different meals using the same C-rations, and that helped a little bit but not that much.

Interviewer

How long would you be on those firebases?

Daniel Maynard

You'd be up there about three months. You can be anywhere from one month to three months on a firebase.

Interviewer

And then, you have to live on those C-rations.

Daniel Maynard

Yes, but some of it wasn't too bad. You had a tin of crackers; you had peanut butter and jelly. It wasn't too bad, but I've eaten better.

Interviewer

Then when you go back to the main base, you had mess halls and that kind of stuff.

Daniel Maynard

Yes. Usually, at the rear areas, a battalion would set up a mess hall and then each unit would have different times that they would go to the mess halls. But that didn't happen too much because we weren't spending too much time in the rear areas.

Interviewer

Did you spend an equal number of time on the Howitzers as well as the mortars?

Daniel Maynard

We spent a little bit more time on mortars, and the reason was is we're more of a mobile artillery than the 155s were. We could load on a helicopter and be brought into a firebase and unloaded within seconds; where a Howitzer has to be towed in. It takes a little bit more effort to set up a 155. The infantry liked using us for forward elements.

Interviewer

What were your thoughts about the war while you were over there?

Daniel Maynard

When I was over there, I was comfortable with what I was doing. I felt we should've been there. I would read what they were doing back in the United States and people demonstrating, but all in all I think we should have been there. I think we did great while we were there. A lot of people disagree, but from what I saw in the Civil Actions that the Marine Corps was doing over there, I thought it was a pretty good deal. And when you see what the people are living on and what they're subsiding on, and then what we were doing to help them, I think it made all the difference.

Interviewer

You weren't there when they left Vietnam?

Daniel Maynard

No. In fact I left right as the '68 Tet Offensive ended. In fact, we were on our way to Que Son to relieve the Marines in Que Son in an operation called Operation Pegasus. I left in the middle of Operation Pegasus to come back.

Interviewer

What was it like coming home? Did you run into some problems there at all?

Daniel Maynard

No, when I left Vietnam they took us to Okinawa and we processed there. Then we flew to San Francisco where we processed out there. The only thing that was really interesting is all the military were flying on standby. So I was flying back to Salt Lake City and they told me the plane was full and I'd have to wait. And the pilot came out and he asked me if I had just got back from Vietnam and I said, "Yeah." And he put me in first class, so I was able to fly back to Salt Lake on first class, on him.

Interviewer

So you flew back commercial from Okinawa?

Daniel Maynard

Yes. In fact I flew to Vietnam on a 707 commercial jet, and then we flew back on it.

Interviewer

On a commercial, and you got first class.

Daniel Maynard

The only thing I didn't like is we left El Torro to fly to Vietnam and the movie was "Funeral in Berlin." And a year later I flew back and it was the same movie.

Interviewer

When you're shooting mortars and Howitzers, how does it impact your hearing?

Daniel Maynard

That's why I'm wearing hearing aids. What was really bad is in Vietnam there was no hearing protection. We didn't have earplugs, we didn't have anything like that. The headphones that I used next to the mortar, they were just hard plastic. I couldn't take them off to cover my ears because I was listening to FDC on it. After a fire mission your head was ringing for about an hour after that. And this was continual while we were there in Vietnam. The noise was unbelievable.

Interviewer

If you were to give a message to future generations about Vietnam and your experiences, what would you say?

Daniel Maynard

I would say that I think we should have done more while I was there. There was a lot of restrictions put on us. I think that politicians shouldn't fight wars; I think the military should. Especially being in artillery, we were shown areas we couldn't shoot into even though the enemy was shooting at us from those areas. We couldn't shoot in the areas because it was restricted area. During the battle of Hue, we couldn't shoot on Hue because of the political impact that it was having. We lost a lot of Marines until the ban was finally lifted and we were able to shoot on Hue. That's my outlook on it, is I think the military should fight the wars, not the politics.

Interviewer

You said night battles played tricks with your mind. Can you describe what those tricks are?

Daniel Maynard

It's unbelievable. When you're out at night and you're knowing in your head that you're three, four clicks away from your front lines, you hear things that you're not sure what it is. Things go through your mind. It's dark; you can't see the person next to you. All of the patrols that I was on we never had night vision. It was quiet. You couldn't say too much. Every little noise, you swore up and down it was someone sneaking up on you. That's what I mean by your mind plays tricks on you. You could feel the tension. When you finally got back to your lines, you could feel the tension ease as soon as you realized you were in behind your lines. It was tremendous tension while you were out in front. During the daytime you can see quite a ways. At nighttime is very scary.

Interviewer

How far away would you go on those patrols?

Daniel Maynard

A click is 1,000 yards. So 4,000 yards in a jungle is a long way away. If you're getting your briefing and they told you 2,000 clicks, you felt a little bit relieved because at 2,000 clicks they could still possibly see the base. But at 4,000 clicks you couldn't. If we were going anything over 4,000 clicks, that we were going to have to stay out in the field, we'd use long-range rations. Long-range rations were a pack that had long bouillon cubes in it. One was turkey, one was beef, one was chicken. You just chewed on them and then drank water. That was your rations if you were going on a long patrol 'cause you couldn't carry anything like C-rations or anything with you. Anything that was on you that made noise, you had to get rid of it. If you noticed, that's why we taped our dog tags together. We carried no change, nothing that would make noise. The only thing that really bothered us was we had flak jackets on. Now the Marine Corps flak jackets were layered plates and as you walked, they kinda clanked, made a noise. That's the only thing I didn't like about the Marine Corps flak jacket. It worked, but it wasn't as quiet as you'd want it to be.

Interviewer

How dark was dark?

Daniel Maynard

You'd get out into a jungle, it was almost like being in a closet with no light at all, especially if it was overcast, because your bases can't show light. You're very restricted at night. Everybody goes on blackout so the enemy can't zero in on your base. There's no light reference anywhere, so it was dark.

Interviewer

What did it sound like in the jungle when it's dark?

Daniel Maynard

You could hear anything and everything rustling in the bushes. When you go over there they tell you about all the snakes and all of the animals and everything there. This goes through your mind. You're sitting there, wondering, "Okay, that that I feel behind me, is it a snake?" For every poisonous snake they had over there, they had a non-poisonous that looked like it so you couldn't take any chances. And the mosquitoes were bad, insects were bad, the humidity. And when you're walking around with a flak jacket in the humidity like that, it is totally miserable.

Interviewer

Did you carry the mortars with you?

Daniel Maynard

No, our mortars, the four deuce mortars weighed 425 pounds.

Interviewer

So they were back at the firebase and you guys were out patrolling to see where the enemy was?

Daniel Maynard

Usually when we were on a patrol, I had a nine-man patrol, and I had one M60 machine gun with me. We did

periodically take a 60-millimeter mortar with us. It was lighter. Back then we had the M79 grenade launchers and then M72 LAWS, the light anti-tank weapons that we would take with us. Usually, we carried two LAWS with us, and then, one man carried an M79.

Interviewer

Did you ever have an occasion to fire those while you were on patrol?

Daniel Maynard

In Quang Tri, we were firing at incoming, shooting an M79, and we fired probably about 20 rounds of it.

Interviewer

Did you ever run onto any booby traps in those jungle trails?

Daniel Maynard

No, and I'm glad I didn't. Punji sticks, we did, but not booby traps. Punji sticks quite a bit up in Quang Tri.

Interviewer

Besides the punji sticks, they dig holes and have 'em in pits, I guess.

Daniel Maynard

Yes, and when I first got over there, they had the combat boot that had the steel plates in them, but they were very, very hard to walk in. So we preferred to go back into the regular boot and take our chances.

Interviewer

You mentioned the first time that you met the Viet Cong was somebody that was working with you during the daytime. You said, "Daytime, they're your friends; nighttime, they're the enemy." How did you deal with that? How would you know? Did you use a lot of people?

Daniel Maynard

Very, very hard. A lot of times when we would call out for the Vietnamese to help us, laborers, the Viet Cong would mix in there because naturally they wanted to know the layout of the bases and everything else. So we had to be very careful. We had to treat a lot of the people helping us just like they were Viet Cong. We would limit them to where they could go and they couldn't wander off. Because a lot of times you would use some in the daytime, and then during the firefight that night, when you did a body count, you would find out that there were two of three of them that were working for you in the daytime.

Interviewer

How long were you over there on that tour?

Daniel Maynard

I got in country 3rd of April, and I left the 5th of April the following year.

Interviewer

When you came home, did you get any poor reception? What was your experience coming back?

Daniel Maynard

When I got back, a lot of times, the people would ask you, "Were you in Vietnam?" And then, you would say, "Yes." They wouldn't ever want to know anything about it. It was just, "Oh, okay." But I never got any negative reception on it.

Interviewer

Dan, we appreciate you coming up, and we appreciate your service to our country.

Interviewer

Talk about being drafted.

Daniel Maynard

When I was with my gun crew, we would talk about what we did before we come to Vietnam, and my gunner actually owned a trucking company in Massachusetts, and his wife was running the trucking company while he was there. And he was drafted. The attitude between draftees and the enlisted people were completely different. They had an idea that they shouldn't be there, which I kinda agreed with 'em. We enlisted, and we volunteered to come there. A lot of my young gun crewman were in high school three months before they came to Vietnam, so it was kind of a cultural shock, just an all around shock to 'em coming into country.

Interviewer

What were those conversations of those guys who really didn't wanna be there?

Daniel Maynard

Naturally, everybody over there feared for their life, getting injured. If we ever got shot at or we got mortared, the adrenaline was so high because of the fear of getting hurt, and it was more in draftees, where they just took it that they shouldn't be there. And there was a little bit of bitterness because they were there. And there wasn't too much you could say or do for 'em.

Interviewer

Did the draftees come over with attitudes and information?

Daniel Maynard

Yes, a lot of 'em, naturally, in high school -- we had some who had one year of college. They were basically, "Why am I here? I got drafted, and I really don't wanna be here." And you kinda felt for 'em.

Interviewer

What would you say to them?

Daniel Maynard

We could console 'em. With me as a sergeant, all I could do is listen to 'em and give 'em as much advice as I could. I even got a letter from a mother of one of my crewman that asked me to kinda watch over him, and he was only 18 years old. So he was kind of petrified, too, being there, just being 18.

Interviewer

What happened to him?

Daniel Maynard

He made it through and went back and got out of the service after he got back.

Interviewer

When did you arrive in Vietnam?

Daniel Maynard

I arrived in Vietnam on April 4, 1967. I was assigned to Whiskey Battery, 1st Battalion, 11th Marines. It was a four-deuce mortar battery. By the time I got there, most of the batteries were on the firebase in Tam Ky Plains, so I would up going out to the firebase for the duration, which was approximately two months.

Interviewer

When you left Vietnam, what was your rank?

Daniel Maynard

I was an E-5 Sergeant.

Interviewer

What was Tet?

Daniel Maynard

Tet is actually the New Year for the Vietnamese. It started at the end of January; went for one month. They honored our holidays, December 25th to January 1, and then we honored theirs. So we would stand down during this period. They stood down when we had our holidays, and so we stood down while they had theirs.

Interviewer

Describe your role and where you were January 30th.

Daniel Maynard

We had moved from Quang Tri providence up to Camp Evans just north of Hue, and as a four-deuce mortar company, we picked up four 155 millimeter Howitzer's and added 'em to our battery. We took 'em from Camp Evans down to Phu Bai, which was just south of Hue. On January 30th at 1800 hours, we were instructed to stand down because of the Tet holidays. At that time, the gun crews secured all the guns and stood down as instructed.

Interviewer

Then what happened?

Daniel Maynard

Then about an hour and a half later, we started getting what we called counter-rocket fire missions. A lot of the villages and some of the compounds that were just west of Hue started getting rocket and mortar fire, so we fired on those positions and didn't think nothin' about it. We fired about five fire missions that night and then ceased fire until the next day. Then come around noon the next day, everything broke loose. We had villages and firebases that

were being overrun. We had NVA's that were going toward Hue. We were called in to do numerous fire missions, and we fired mostly all that day and all the next day, continual fire for these missions.

Interviewer

In support of?

Daniel Maynard

Basically, in support of these firebases that were getting overrun. (Kap Nung? 08:11), that was just west of Hue, was getting overrun, and we fired support for them. A lot of the villages that were between Phu Bai and Hue were also getting overrun. The South Vietnamese and some of the Marine and Army units that were out in that area were firing support for them. Eventually, all this action started to die down until -- there were initially 14 battalions of NVA's that overran Hue.

Interviewer

You went before this. When did you go into Hue?

Daniel Maynard

About the 26th of January, we came down through Hue from Camp Evans. When we into Hue, it was a fairly modern city, what we call a Western city. In fact, what was funny is while we were over there in '67, '68 is the miniskirt came out, and the first time we ever saw a miniskirt was seeing the students at the University of Hue was wearing 'em. It was a modern university. They even had a stadium for soccer. They had what we call skyscrapers. They were four- and five-story buildings, something that you don't normally see in any of the Vietnamese cities. So it was more modern than anything we'd ever seen.

Interviewer

Talk about the Buddhist temples.

Daniel Maynard

Hue was just a gorgeous city. It was a historic city; it was originally built as a fort, from what we understood. That's where we got the Citadel. The numerous walls, there was only eight entrances into the Citadel. A lot of the buildings and everything in the Citadel was off-limits to us because they were Buddhist temples and a lot of the religious artifacts. So they were kind of banned from us from seeing it. But we were in Hue for about three or four hours, and we was able to see quite a bit of the city.

Interviewer

So it was more of a modern city like Saigon?

Daniel Maynard

No. I'd say Saigon and Hue were probably about the two most modern cities in the whole country.

Interviewer

Talk about the sequence of events during the Tet Offensive.

Daniel Maynard

When we had stood down on January 30th, the few fire missions that we had that night, we really didn't think anything of it. Then the next day, they cancelled the cease-fire, and the fire missions came in one right after another. Our forward observer was telling us what he was seeing out in the field. What's interesting is about four days before Tet, we had military come in from special weapons. They brought 155 ammunition that we'd never seen before. It was called the (dolphram? 12:35) round, and we called it a firecracker because of the color it was painted. It was set aside, and they told us we couldn't use it until division gave us permission to use it. When the NVA were going toward Hue, they gave us permission to fire these (dolphram?) rounds. And our forward observer said it was quite devastating. Just in the 12 rounds we fired, we'd normally get one or two KIA. We got 75 KIA with these rounds, so they were a devastating round. After that, they come and took the rest of 'em away, and we never saw 'em again.

Interviewer

Because you'd already done the damage?

Daniel Maynard

Well, we experimented with it. A lot of the things that went on, we were testing a lot of weapons that were used in there. This is where special weapons -- we were familiar seeing them come in with something. We'd use it, and then they'd come and take it, and that was it. We'd never see it again.

Interviewer

How were you able to be selective in your range?

Daniel Maynard

On the different fire missions, we had different forward observers. They would tell us we've got five or six san pans with NVA in it, and they'd give us coordinates. Or they would tell us of a platoon of NVA, they'd give us coordinates, so the forward observers were our eyes and ears out in the field. Now what was interesting was for the first two weeks, maybe not quite two weeks, we were never allowed to fire on the Citadel. This was kind of in respect. The Vietnamese government had asked that Citadel not be bombed by aircraft or shelled by artillery, so we would fire in the newer part of Hue in support of the marines. They were trying to retake Hue. Finally, after a short period, we were allowed to fire on the Citadel in support of the marines retaking the Citadel.

Interviewer

I hear Hue was one of the longest battles.

Daniel Maynard

It was a 30-day battle. It was the longest battle in Vietnam in the ten years.

Hue was the longest battles in the years of Vietnam. It was a 30-day war. It was one of the only times that the NVA stood and fought the U.S. It took us 30 days to retake the city.

Interviewer

Why was this city chosen to be the longest battle?

Daniel Maynard

For all we learned later on is the North Vietnamese really thought that the Vietnamese people would rise up against the South Vietnamese government and the Americans. So they felt that taking Hue, which is the second-largest city in Vietnam, would be the mark of the people that rise up and overthrow the South Vietnamese government. Well, it didn't happen, and the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong were very surprised to see that the people didn't do it.

Interviewer

Talk about the Viet Cong being wiped out and then the huge armies of NVA.

Daniel Maynard

The VC was a very large part of the North Vietnamese strategy, but Tet, they were totally outnumbered and outgunned by the U.S., and the largest body count was through the VC. The North Vietnamese, later on after Tet, had to send more in to replace the Viet Cong that got killed. The Tet literally devastated the Viet Cong.

Interviewer

You said you were excited about your first exchange of fire.

Daniel Maynard

A lot of people don't understand that war; you aren't shooting and running every day. Even on a firebase, you get bored, and there's nothing to do. You can't go anywhere; you can't do anything. Every once in a while, you'd get a mortar in, and it reenergizes your adrenaline. It makes you start thinking about what you're doing now. After a while, you kinda get a little bit lax until someone shoots at you. Then everything comes back in reality after that. So we would always say the adrenaline hit would almost feel like you were excited when someone was shooting at ya. You were scared, but you still have the feeling of excitement. I don't know what our other people felt like, but that's what I felt like.

Interviewer

Can you talk about the excessive Tet preps from the NVA point of view.

Daniel Maynard

From what we learned later, they had moved a lot of supplies and equipment and everything close to Hue. They actually brought down battalions that were up near Khe Sanh. It's interesting because they started shelling Khe Sanh and puttin' pressure on Khe Sanh, hoping that we would leave Phu Bai and Hue to support Khe Sanh. And this is where they failed in their strategies. We didn't. They moved their battalions in on the west side of Hue. A lot of the NVA and Viet Cong actually were already in the city, disguised. So when everything come loose on the 31st, it totally surprised us how much the enemy was there. They had totally overwhelmed Hue before we even knew what was going on.

Interviewer

And other bases all throughout Vietnam.

Daniel Maynard

I was in Phu Bai, and they tried to attack Phu Bai on the north side. The Army had Twin 40's on the north side that they defended the base using those Twin 40's. It devastated 'em. After that, the only probes we ever got on Phu Bai was on the west side, and they shoot rockets, or mortars, or small arms. They never tried to do an all-out assault on Phu Bai. I'm pretty sure that they figured they'd keep all their forces up around Hue. But even for almost 30 days after Tet ended, we were still fighting the NVA in and around Hue, which a lot of people don't understand. A lot of the operations in March were the cleaning up a lot of what was left from Tet.

Interviewer

I've read in some books that the Tet Offensive went all the way up until the end of August in some areas.

Daniel Maynard

Right after Tet, the North Vietnamese broke up into smaller groups, and it was these smaller groups that the U.S. and South Vietnamese forces were fighting all through the rest of the year.

Interviewer

After this 30-day fire, what happens to Hue when you went back in?

Daniel Maynard

When we went back into Hue, actually two of our mortars were set up to support Hue. Then they moved 'em to the stadium, and there wasn't a recognizable building in Hue when we got there. That's how much firepower we used on Hue. To show the difference, the 11th Marines in December and January fired an average of 12,000 rounds. In February, they fired 29,000 rounds. That's how many rounds were fired in and around Hue, just from the 11th Marines.

Interviewer

So homes, buildings, Citadel? Describe it.

Daniel Maynard

Everything. A lot of the streets weren't even recognizable because of where the buildings collapsed and everything. The stadium was recognizable, but to someone looking for the first time would never realize that it was a stadium. The buildings in the college, everything had been hit. The Citadel was hit and just devastation everywhere. But we had a choice of either saving the city or saving the marines that were trying to retake the city.

Interviewer

And I heard that was a pretty fierce battle for them and quite a few KIA's. The Viet Cong were pretty well hidden.

Daniel Maynard

Well, what people don't realize is the marines were fighting building to building, and the last time they had ever fought building to building was in Seoul, Korea, during the Korean War. So they were not experienced house-to-

house fighting. By the end of the 30 days, they were though.

Interviewer

Do you remember how many Americans were killed in Hue?

Daniel Maynard

At the moment, no.

Interviewer

Talk about the DMZ.

Daniel Maynard

The Demilitarized Zone. We have a DMZ in Korea, and basically, the DMZ was nobody was supposed to be in there with weapons. But when the Vietnam War started, we had numerous bases up there: Dong Ha, Con Thien, Que Son, Camp Carroll. All these were big military bases. They were combat bases that they would run operations out of. Because it was so close to North Vietnam, it was easy for them to bring troops and supplies in. People don't realize that in Que Son, they were being shelled by 120-millimeter cannons that were never seen anywhere in the war, but the North Vietnamese could bring 'em down through the DMZ. So Que Son was quite a devastating place for marines. Right after Tet, we started Operation Pegasus, which was a relief column to relieve Que Son. The Marine Corps put a lot of men into Operation Pegasus to help relieve Que Son.

Interviewer

Can you talk about the DMZ being a dividing line?

Daniel Maynard

It went from the ocean all the way to Cambodia, Laos-- the western countries over there. By the time we put bases up in there, they were well established in that area, and that's what it made it very hard for the marines in that area. We fired a lot of fire missions in support of Que Son and Camp Carroll. If we weren't firing somewhere close, we were always firing on supported bases. I think the artillery and jets were a big part of making sure that none of these bases ever got overrun. People don't realize the assault on Con Thien was just as devastating as Que Son was. It was probably the biggest focal point of the war, was the DMZ.

Interviewer

If you were a young, drafted Marine, and you were sent to one of these bases along the DMZ, was there already some kind of reputation of that calling?

Daniel Maynard

I think when these bases were being put in the paper about the assaults and everything, this is a lot of what put the fear into people. Every day, they would look at news channels and seen the marines being shelled in Que Son and being shelled in Con Thien, and numerous assaults on Con Thien and Dong Ha. I think it's puts it in the back of everybody's mind that this is the whole war, what's goin' on in the war. It wasn't, but it puts a pretty good picture in people's mind.

Interviewer

So those marines probably were afraid to go there.

Daniel Maynard

Yeah, I would be afraid to go there. I remember in Time Magazine, on the back of Marine flak jacket, it says, "Being in a Marine in Que Son could be hazardous to your health." And that was a definitely a good slogan for Que Son.

Interviewer

Explain what a firebase is.

Daniel Maynard

A firebase could be one of a number of things. One, they put a firebase out in an area where there's a lot of VC activity, and then they run patrols or operations out of this. Now the firebases that I was on, they were basically like bait, and what we did was they set us out there. We have four mortars on it, and then a company of Marines. We just continually shot what they call HNI's. We'd just pepper the area all day, all night, to a point that the North Vietnamese would come out to try to overrun the base. Down in Que Son Valley, which is Nui Loc Son, we did just that. The 9th and the 5th Marine battalions were in Chu Lai came in, and that started operation Union 1 and Union 2. So a lot of the firebases were bait and trying to draw the enemy out. That's what made a firebase scary is you never knew from one day to the next if you were gonna get overrun or if you were gonna get shelled. And periodically, we'd get mortared, and they would line up to overrun us, but they never did.

Interviewer

But certainly, there were firebases that were overrun.

Daniel Maynard

Yes.

Interviewer

This was the first real chopper war. What was the role of the helicopters in your job in Vietnam?

Daniel Maynard

When I first got there, when we were in mortars, we were the largest artillery piece that could be brought in on the smaller choppers, and they were four deuce. They were 107-millimeter mortars. We could come in and set up a firebase and start shelling within 10 to 15 minutes. I know when we were on firebases, everything came in on helicopters. Our water came in, everything. And if it wasn't because of the choppers, we wouldn't have got anything. During some of the operations, the helicopters were taking a heavy chance comin' in. On Nui Loc Son, we had a wooden platform that the helicopters landed on, but it was almost like a target for the North Vietnamese. And so they would usually come in and just drop everything on top of the hill without landing. So it's pretty devastating for a helicopter, especially on a firebase.

Interviewer

But when you needed support and supplies, the sound of a helicopter coming in, talk about that.

Daniel Maynard

When we would see the helicopter come in, we knew we were getting either support troops or we were getting ammunition. On a firebase, we have limited ammunition, and once we were getting shelled or overrun, we could run out of ammunition very fast. You always look for those choppers comin' in to bring you more ammunition. You'd get a little bit worried when you don't hear 'em. So they were a lifesaver for us. They were totally a lifeline.

Interviewer

So we talked about the DMZ and the firebase.

Daniel Maynard

Now we actually got hit on Phu Bai, too, during Tet. We moved our four 155 Howitzer's to an area called Gia Le, and it was just southwest of Hue, a better area to cover. While they are being moved, they left me back with ten Marines to protect a section of the base, and it was about a 1,500-yard section. So they'd stripped us down pretty low on support while they were moving in position. One night, the air base was getting rocketed, and we saw the rockets out in front of us. They'd set up the rocket launchers in front of us, so we opened up with .50 caliber machine guns, and we hit two or three sites. And then next to us was Army Twin 40's. They called over and wanted to know what we were shootin' at, and we told 'em, and they opened up with Twin 40's. In about ten minutes, we didn't have any rockets comin' out of that area, so we felt pretty good that we had done our share to protect the base. But that's how close that they'd get to us. They got within probably 200 yards of our wire to shoot rockets at the base.

Interviewer

That sounds like a lot of light in the sky. Can you describe that?

Daniel Maynard

The rockets they were using were Russian rockets, and they were like a magnesium rocket, more spark and fluff than anything, but they're very inaccurate, but it could cover quite an area. We caught four of five of 'em in our area, and at night, you could see the tents where one would hit between a tent and it looked like there was stars on the tent because of the shrapnel that would go through it. I had one land right by one of the guns and didn't go off. It just stuck in the sand. We had to wait for demolition to come and get it. But their rockets are pretty devastating. They're scary; they're noisy; and you don't know which way they're comin' when they come in.

Interviewer

You didn't have any hearing protection either.

Daniel Maynard

Even firing guns, in Vietnam, we never had any hearing protection. Quite a few of the veterans wear hearing aids.

Interviewer

You're doing pretty well, though.

Daniel Maynard

Yeah, but I wear hearing aids also. One of the things -- and this is quite interesting. I don't know if you knew this -- a lot of the people that were on the firebases were a lot of the people that were sprayed with Agent Orange. What they were doing was they were spraying the areas around the firebases to get the foliage back from the firebases. So a lot of people that got affected by Agent Orange were on firebases. If you look at the areas that were used, you'll see that most of 'em were in or around firebases. Que Son was an example of a lot of Agent Orange that was dropped.

Interviewer

Were you hit with Agent Orange?

Daniel Maynard

Yes. I have a disability from the VA.

Interviewer

Do you remember the residue?

Daniel Maynard

They dropped it when we were in Nui Loc San. They dropped it all the around the base, and it was more like an oil. What was bad is when you're on a firebase, you can't take a shower because water is flown in, so all you have to do is just drink the water. You can't shower with it or anything else. So you go two months without taking a shower or anything, and this Agent Orange gets on you, all you can do is just wipe it off. There's really nothin' you can do about it.

Interviewer

When did you start feeling the effects of it?

Daniel Maynard

I got diabetes because of it. That was one of the causes of diabetes, was Agent Orange.

Interviewer

How do you feel about that?

Daniel Maynard

I have no resentment. I mean, the VA did their best to take care of me and everything. They do a pretty good job of keeping care of me, keeping my diabetes in check.

Interviewer

But at the time, none of these boys had --

Daniel Maynard

We never knew what Agent Orange would do. We knew that they were dropping it, and we could see the effects 'cause you'd see it hit a jungle area, and the next day, there would be no leaves on the trees. So you knew that it was doin' its job. We didn't know what it was doin' on us, though.

Interviewer

Were there drugs and alcohol on firebases?

Daniel Maynard

We were pretty strict. When we were on firebases, we pretty well let it be known that nobody was going to use any drugs. What's unusual is I was out on patrol once, and we were talking to a farmer, and I had a Vietnamese interpreter, and the farmer reached over and he started rollin' a leaf. Then he started smokin' it, and I asked the interpreter what it was, and he said it was marijuana. We looked up, and as far as I could see, all I could see was marijuana. It was just hundreds of acres of marijuana. We let everybody know on a firebase, you don't wanna be impaired anywhere, so we told 'em no drugs. But the alcohol now is -- we rated one can of beer a day. But on a firebase, we couldn't drink the beers, so they saved our beer for us when they got off the firebase. So if you were on a firebase for two months, you got 60 cans of beer when you got back. It was warm, but it was still beer, so we could sit and drink our beer once we got back. But we rated one can of soda or one beer a day.

Interviewer

But no beers while --

Daniel Maynard

No beer, alcohol, nothin'.

Interviewer

There's some antsy guys out there on the base, huh?

Daniel Maynard

You see a lot of movies and everything where drugs are rampant and everything. I'm sure it happened somewhere, but on our bases, we would not allow it.

Interviewer

Describe what you were doing out there talking to the farmer, and then describe your relationship to the Vietnamese people.

Daniel Maynard

As I progressed during Vietnam, I was the only E-5 Sergeant, so I had to take on the position as Security Chief. Well, a Security Chief does the perimeter. He's the one that sets the concertina and the mines and then runs the patrol. So each unit, even though it was an artillery unit, was responsible for running patrols in their immediate area. So we would come into an area, and then I would run patrols. And we'd run patrols about oh, every other day basically to make sure that we wasn't getting any encroachment onto our bases by VC or NVA. Up in Quang Tri, we had a good rapport with the villagers until -- the villagers were actually helping us set up our defensive perimeters, and I caught a Vietnamese boy putting explosives in a hole that we were putting stakes for concertina, which he turned out to be VC. So during the daytime, they were just villagers. At night, they were Viet Cong, so you couldn't tell the difference. You just had to be on your toes at all times.

Interviewer

Did you know in '67 or '68 that there were protestors back home?

Daniel Maynard

Yes. The Stars and Stripes was the newspaper that went out to all of the military and everything, so naturally, they downplayed it and everything. But we all got newspapers from home. I didn't listen to Armed Forces Radio. I listened to Armed Forces Australia, which was a little bit better program. They wouldn't hesitate, but tell us about the protestors back home. After a while, it bothered some people. It makes you kinda wonder if you're doin' the right thing. They're so many people saying, "No, you're not doing the right thing," but you begin to wonder. You just try to keep it outta your mind. But there all through '67, '68 that's all we kept hearing, was about protestors and this, this, and this. We just kinda downplayed it.

Interviewer

What were the conversations and questions of the guys around you?

Daniel Maynard

A lot of it was, especially us in artillery, we had areas that we couldn't shoot. They would restrict us. It was, "Oh, we're shooting into another country," especially if we were near Laos or Cambodia. But the North Vietnamese didn't hesitate to shoot at us from those areas, and it was frustrating because they wouldn't let you shoot. Even talking to the infantry, if they were chasing North Vietnamese, and they crossed the border, they couldn't pursue 'em. You'd just throw your hands up and say, "What's goin' on here?" The question was, "If you want us to fight a war, let us fight it." That's basically what was in a lot of people's mind.

Interviewer

Did you listen to music?

Daniel Maynard

Yes. Like I say, Armed Forces Australia had tons of music. That's all we heard, was the music. Everywhere we went, everybody had radios. Sometimes it got a little noisy because everybody had different channels, too. But back then, you didn't have cassettes, or CD's, or anything else. If you had anything, you had a real to reel tape recorder, which in that moisture, didn't last very long. But we still had a good transistor radio. If you got a chance, you'd go down in Da Nang and go to the PX. That was about the only PX we could find, and we could buy a radio down there.

Interviewer

What were you listening to?

Daniel Maynard

Country Western.

Interviewer

What songs? Who were they?

Daniel Maynard

Believe it or not, I listened to Marty Robbins. By the time I left Vietnam, I could almost tell you word for word every song he sang.

Interviewer

What was your favorite song?

Daniel Maynard

"El Paso."

Interviewer

What are the words?

Daniel Maynard

That was 45 years ago.

Interviewer

Use your recall now. Let's go. Seriously.

Daniel Maynard

Well, I don't think that --

Interviewer

Can you say, "I would listen to country music?"

Daniel Maynard

Country music, and it was no earphones or anything. You just had to just play it. You'd come into a firebase, and you could hear probably 30 radios playing at the same time. I guess the thing we missed the most over there was if we were on a firebase, we couldn't get mail. Now that hurt us really bad because again, helicopters only fly in essentials, which was water, food, and ammunition. They wouldn't fly mail in, clothing in, only essential items come in. So if you're on a firebase for 60 days, you didn't get any mail. Then when you got back, you had so much mail, it'd take you a week to read it all. You didn't have the phone calls that everybody makes now. I was able to make a phone call from a foxhole, and it totally surprised my mother. We were using the MARS station, and I got a hold of somebody in Nevada on the ham radio, and they patched me through to my mother on Thanksgiving Day. At the time I was talking to her, we were being shelled, and she kept asking me what the noise was in the back of us.

Interviewer

And you said?

Daniel Maynard

But it was interesting.

Interviewer

What did you say to her?

Daniel Maynard

I just told her, "It's nothin'."

Interviewer

Of course you did.

Daniel Maynard

But it was quite interesting. If someone could happen to get to a MARS station -- and we just used a regular hand-crank radio/telephone and was able to get to a MARS station. Actually, out of a bet. We were betting, and we wondered if we could do it, and we did.

Interviewer

How long was that connection?

Daniel Maynard

Probably about ten minutes.

Interviewer

And she's like, "How you doing, Daniel?"

Daniel Maynard

I had to keep telling my mother to say "over," 'cause it was a ham radio. So you had to keep saying over. She would say something, and I said, "Okay, say 'over' now."

Interviewer

Would she say it?

Daniel Maynard

Yeah, she said, "Over."

Interviewer

What a funny conversation.

Daniel Maynard

But yeah, it was interesting. It was really interesting.

Interviewer

At the end of the war, nobody really asked you, when you returned home, about Vietnam, but you didn't necessarily have an unwelcome.

Daniel Maynard

No. I come home. I actually had three months left in the Marine Corps, so I come home for 30 days, and I wore my uniform, and everybody was quite pleasant. In fact, coming home, I was in San Francisco, and all the military got standby tickets. So I just had to wait. If the plane was full, I just didn't get to go. So the plane goin' to Salt Lake was full, and the pilot came out and asked me if I had come back from Vietnam, and I said, "Yes." And he put me on first class so I could come home.

Interviewer

So you got good treatment?

Daniel Maynard

Yeah.

Interviewer

We don't hear that story very often. In fact, we get stories from guys that really believe if they were treated differently, they wouldn't carry this bitterness for so many years.

Daniel Maynard

Yeah, and I think for the people I ran into, especially home -- I was up in Ogden, and even the college and up there -- nothing. And I wore my uniform for the whole 30 days. Actually, I went back to California to the Marine base down there, and still nothin'.

Interviewer

What is your hometown?

Daniel Maynard

Ogden.

Interviewer

In your opinion, why is it that guys had such a hard time when they returned?

Daniel Maynard

I think that a lot of it might've been, in my opinion, was training. When I went through boot camp, I spent 17 weeks in boot camp. When Vietnam was on, they spent 13 weeks of boot camp, so they were accelerating everything. I went through extensive training and everything, and they had to shorten everything because they needed replacements. I think by the time people got to Vietnam, they were basically a civilian in a uniform. I had three and a half years in the Marine Corps. I pretty well knew what to expect over there. Just talking to my gun crews over there and the people who would come in our outfit, it was similar to that. It's just, "Oh, well, I don't think I got enough training." It's almost like they were being trained just to fill a void. I think that in Iraq and everything, I think they're better trained. When I first got to Vietnam, I had the M14 rifle, which we never had even heard of the M16. Well, we knew the Army had it. So we were fightin' next to Army personnel that had M16 rifles. We had the M14 rifles. We were using two different types of ammunition. In a firefight, it gets kinda complicated 'cause you're using two different types of ammunition. Then we got the new M16's, and we happened to get the ones that jammed all the time. You started losin' a little bit of faith in the equipment. Finally, we were told to retrain our people in using the M16, and we were able to retrain 'em. They finally brought out different ammo. The cyclic rate of fire was on the M16 was tremendous at the time. It was 6-, 700 rounds per minute, and they slowed that down, and we started havin' less jams on it. But I remember at a point, nobody wanted to carry it. I'd carry a lot of different weapons before I'd carry my M16. Once they corrected it, then it was a pretty good weapon. But you'd kinda lose faith in

everything.

Interviewer

Being unprepared, going from civilian to a new, strange country, not trusting your gear, witnessing death and devastation, all that combined.

Daniel Maynard

A lot of people will say -- I've had this -- "How many people did you kill?" You get it all the time. "How many people did you kill?" You don't know how many people you killed. You'd get in a firefight, and there's so many people shooting, you don't know what you're hitting in. But I guess what's a shock to you is you're walkin' along the road, and you'd see somebody dead. You'd see people draggin' bodies up to do a body count. That's how you kept score over there. You counted bodies, and every unit had a body count. I think it was this shock of seeing dead people. Here, I've come from high school or a civilian job, and all of a sudden, here's people dead. And it gets you after a while.

Interviewer

If there was a turning point for you personally in your experiences in Vietnam, what was that for you?

Daniel Maynard

I'm trying to think if there was really a turning point. I think that right after Tet, I think that Tet proved that we could stand and fight, and we could win the war. And that was, to me, a turning point, but I don't think it was ever monopolized on. I think they went back to their search and destroy missions. They didn't kind of monopolize on what they had done. The North Vietnamese never anticipated us to react so quick, and I think that if we would have continued this throughout the war, the rest of the war, I think it would've been a -- I think, to me, it was a turning point, but then I was kind of let down when I saw that it went back to just the regular search and destroy operations.

Interviewer

Is there anything else you wanna share with us?

Daniel Maynard

We got a lot of letters from different people, schools, students. We would sit there and see college people demonstrating, but then we'd get these letters from women's clubs and schools. It wasn't like everybody is hedonist. We found out there was a lot of 'em that was glad we were doing what we were doing.

Interviewer

Can you say that again?

Daniel Maynard

I think that getting letters from the schools, students, women's clubs, different organizations, Eagles, Elks, it made us feel that we're doing something, instead of the college people saying that we were baby killers and everything. I think that's what made us feel good.

Interviewer

Talk about how the letters boosted your morale.

Daniel Maynard

The letters we'd get -- I don't know where they were getting our address from, but it was out there, and we would get a packet from letters from a fourth grade or a fifth grade class. They were very interesting to read, to see how these kids reacted to the war and everything. I remember a woman's club asked us what we missed the most, and we told them we missed a toilet seat, so they sent us a toilet seat. We kept that thing all through the war. Our first sergeant, when he left, he asked if he could have it. Somewhere, he has it mounted on a wall.

Interviewer

So those letters really helped you.

Daniel Maynard

Yeah. There was so many of 'em, we couldn't write back to 'em. They were just kinda refreshing to get 'em every once in a while.

Interviewer

Other guys helped themselves by writing poems and songs. It makes me realize that they're such different people.

Daniel Maynard

Well, the religion was interesting over there because everybody had a different religion. I was LDS, and before any operation, the navy chaplains would get everybody together, and they'd do a Catholic Mass. I didn't understand it, but I went along with it. But it's interesting how everybody, even though they had different religions, how we could always work together and even talk about our religions. What's the old saying? There isn't an atheist in a foxhole. I honestly believe that.

Interviewer

'Cause somebody said they were until they were in a foxhole?

Daniel Maynard

You're right.

Interviewer

Thank you for coming in for this pickup. We're starting out with you and the Tet Offensive on the show.

Daniel Maynard

One of the reasons why the North Vietnamese overwhelmed Hue so much was that when the Tet cease-fire was called on the 30th, the South Vietnamese went home for Tet because it was a holiday. And when they went home, this was one of the reasons the North Vietnamese used this holiday to try to overwhelm Hue and these other cities. It was because everybody had gone home for vacation. In Hue, there was less than 200 South Vietnamese left in the whole city, so they were easily able to walk right through Hue and take it.

Interviewer

Tell me that again.

Daniel Maynard

One of the reasons why the North Vietnamese were able to overrun Hue and the other cities and towns was that on the 30th of January, when Tet cease-fire was called, most of the South Vietnamese soldiers went home for the Tet holiday. The North Vietnamese used this reason to attack these cities because there was very few defenders. In Hue alone, there was only 200 South Vietnamese soldiers left in the City of Hue, and it caught everybody off guard.

Interviewer

Thank you.