



Terry Schow
Salt Lake City, Utah

Interviewer

What's your full name?

Terry Schow

Terry Schow.

Interviewer

And where were you born?

Terry Schow

Ogden, Utah.

Interviewer

And you went to high school there?

Terry Schow

I did. Ogden High.

Interviewer

And tell us how you got into the military and what year that was.

Terry Schow

Well, I volunteered for the Army in 1967. Finished up high school, and something called "Vietnam" was going on. And I figured there was fair likelihood that I would be going, and heard a unit that I was interested in was looking for folks, so I volunteered, actually, for the infantry. And didn't realize it at that time, that I was a three-year volunteer infantryman at a time when folks were going to Canada to avoid that.

Interviewer

So what was the unit you were interested in?

Terry Schow

Special Forces.

Interviewer

And you had to take an entrance exam for that?

Terry Schow

Yeah, there's a Special Forces qualification vetter, you go to Basic and AIT and did an Infantry AIT at Fort Gordon, Georgia, and you take the SF Qualification battery. And I found out later, if I hadn't had have passed that, I would've been, as I said, a three-year volunteer infantry guy.

Interviewer

So were you an officer?

Terry Schow

Oh, no. No, I worked for a living, I was just a regular old sergeant.

Interviewer

So you went through all this training. Tell us about Special Forces training.

Terry Schow

Well, Special Forces, I mean their prime mission is to organize training in guerilla and counter-insurgency forces for warfare. The current conflict in Afghanistan, the SF guys in Afghanistan actually come to Utah to train, because the mountains here are very similar to the mountains in Afghanistan. My son, who is over there, recounted that story to me. The standard SF units in A-team normally has a couple of officers and can be broken down into an A-team and a B-team and you've got weapons, communications, those kind of skills. The idea is that they can be dropped into a foreign country or into an area and help train the local folks as guerilla fighters. That's the prime mission back then.

Interviewer

Tell us about your training, airborne?

Terry Schow

Well, I went to Basic at Fort Lewis, Infantry AIT at Fort Gordon, Georgia. Jump school at Fort Benning, Georgia. Then I went to Fort Bragg, North Carolina. I was there for about a year, for some additional training.

Interviewer

And this is all fairly new Special Forces isn't it?

Terry Schow

Well, they take their lineage back to the first Special Service Force from World War II. But President Kennedy actually gave them recognition as a unit – they're referred to as "Green Berets." Most of us who served with SF don't use that term, but they got their birth, I guess, or official birth, when President Kennedy was in office.

Interviewer

So this was the first time that Special Forces was really used in warfare, correct?

Terry Schow

Well, I think in Vietnam, that's correct. Yeah, the 5th Group was in Vietnam. They had teams, though, they dispatched teams out of Okinawa into Vietnam early on, and then they assigned the 5th Group to Vietnam after that.

Interviewer

Again, explain to us, what's an A-team, and how many men are on it?

Terry Schow

Twelve. Twelve men on an A-team.

Interviewer

And a B-team?

Terry Schow

Oh, B-team, probably four or five A-teams in a B-team, then a C-team. And then of course your group. A SF group is smaller than a normal infantry division.

Interviewer

How many people in a Special Forces group?

Terry Schow

Oh, you would ask me that. A few thousand; I don't know the numbers. That goes back a long time ago and my units were relatively small, I never served in anything above a B-team.

Interviewer

So when did you actually get into Vietnam?

Terry Schow

I arrived in Vietnam in January of 1970. Now you might be as interested in how I got to Vietnam. I was stationed, after my training, at Fort Devens, Massachusetts; I was assigned to the 10th SF Group there. And a friend of mine, a little Filipino guy by the name of Vinnie Malto, came on orders for Vietnam. At that time, our assignments were handled out of special categories, a lady by the name of Billy Alexander, actually, handled our assignments. So I called up and requested to be put on orders for Vietnam and she requested I submit what was called a 1049. Submitted that document and then came down on orders. At that time, when I arrived in country, I only had 10 months left in the military. So I would've not went to Vietnam, but because I chose to go with him, we traveled across country and ended up in California, shipped out in California, and arrived in-country in January of 1970. I came into Cam Ranh Bay and then were assigned to the 5th Group headquarters which is in Nha Trang.

Interviewer

When did you arrive there?

Terry Schow

In January of 1970.

Interviewer

And tell us about what you were assigned to.

Terry Schow

Well, I was assigned initially to Nha Trang, and when I was in Nha Trang, they were looking for volunteers to participate in a program that they called the MAC-SOG program, and was assigned to a B-53 which, officially, they were listed as advisors to a Vietnamese airborne division, in a little place called Lom Tong.

Interviewer

MAC-SOG, what does that mean?

Terry Schow

It's the special group within SF that conducted different kind of operations.

Interviewer

So that stands for...?

Terry Schow

Well MACV, that's a separate setup. MACV is a regular unit, and you have 5th Group and then a part of 5th Group you had MAC-SOG which is a Special Operations part of MAC-SOG. And then B-53 was a part of the MAC-SOG.

Interviewer

So what were you assigned to do?

Terry Schow

Well, I was assigned to do a couple different things. One, I was an instructor at the recon team leader school, and two, I was a radio operator, because that was my secondary MOS, and then three, I went on operations on occasion.

Interviewer

So what was your first assignment?

Terry Schow

Well, as I said, I came in, initially, through Nha Trang, then up to Lom Tong. The bulk of the time was spent at Lom Tong which was about 30 miles south of Saigon.

Interviewer

So what were you doing? Did you go to villages? Did you advise people?

Terry Schow

Well, I don't want to get into a whole lot of what we did because it was a classified operation, but I will just say that I served as radio operator, so I helped with communication and things. I helped also provide instruction to folks who were part of the recon, that team leader's program. And then, as I said, went out on some operations.

Interviewer

Not to reveal anything you can't, but you worked with villagers? Or what would you do? People think of Green Berets, Special Forces, these exotic things going on. How would that differ from the reality?

Terry Schow

Well, everybody's reality, of course, is different, and I will tell you that part of the mission, even though we were listed as advisors to a Vietnamese airborne division, that part of the thing that our operation did, we were involved with the POW snatches, North Vietnamese folks. But beyond that, I won't go any further than that.

Interviewer

What can you talk about that you feel comfortable with?

Terry Schow

Well, as I mentioned, I didn't do much of any significance over there, so. Went, proud to have went, and that's probably about the extent of it.

Interviewer

Can you tell us your impression of the war at that time? Was it frustrating, was it going well? What did you think about it?

Terry Schow

Well, one memory that comes to mind for me was, there was a thing that was being passed around amongst the troops and was called "I'm a Tired American." And it talked about the folks who were burning flags and protesting back at home, and the guys over there didn't much care for that. And I sent a copy of that to one of the newspapers in Utah, actually, the Ogden Standard-Examiner, and just told 'em, "Here's how those of us who are over here feel about this."

And they ended up turning that into an editorial, and the editorial page editor, a fellow by the name of Murray Moore sent me a letter and asked me if I'd come and meet with him after I came back from Vietnam. And I did. And we had an interesting discussion about some of my observations. I guess the thing that I would share that is probably more significant, at least to me, is: number one, I don't think that I did anything of a particular significance. Number two, I was in a pretty good unit.

Number three, my service in the military gave me a deep sense of appreciation for this country. It allowed a kid who grew up on the wrong side of Ogden to get a college education. And since then, I have devoted my life to helping veterans. So rather than dwell on any significant exploits of what I did in Vietnam, I would say that that military experience, in my view, made me a better person. Got to meet guys like George Wahlen. I do what I do today, if you will, as kind of tribute to them, and so that's kind of my viewpoint, you know?

Interviewer

The vets we've been interviewing all had different views of the war, and what it meant, and whether it should've been fought the way it was. And you were there, you have your impressions; tell us about that.

Terry Schow

Well I do have some observations on that. I think it's important to understand that the feelings of folks who were drafted may well be different than those folks who volunteered. Of course, it was my choice to go, so I am certainly not going to criticize my choice to do that and don't do that. I felt the military's hands were tied, and as a result, when you have politicians making decisions about the war instead of the military commanders, I think that presents a challenge. And so that's my thoughts on that.

Interviewer

When you were conducting operations, could you see the influence you were talking about?

Terry Schow

Well, you know, if you take a look at where we were allowed to go – we were stopped basically at a certain line, and beyond that, you couldn't go there. We knew that the Russians were supplying weapons; we knew that the Chinese were supplying weapons, so there was really more afoot than North and South Vietnam. So you had two other major powers who were involved in this. And so this becomes really a world conflict, if you will, rather than just an American conflict.

Interviewer

Would it be fair to say it was the "hot" part of the Cold War?

Terry Schow

Well, I guess. I wasn't a student of world politics or anything. I just thought, "This is something I feel like I should do," went in and did my part, and came home. I've never much cared for the idea of trying to put folks on a pedestal who have served there. But on the other hand, I'm deeply offended by the image that everybody who served is a Rambo or that they're a druggie. I remember I came back and went to work for the Post Office, and because I had a Fu Manchu mustache and I rode a motorcycle, the Post Master thought that I used drugs. And I made it a point to express to him that he was in deep error.

But there's that image, you know, Vietnam vet, drugs, those kinds of things. You know, the average Vietnam vet out there who served, went there, did their job, came back, raised a family. The caricatures, if you will, the images on TV are just very false. The movie images are just very false. And I have a tendency probably to downplay what I did more than anything else. I'd rather recognize others who have done far more than I.

Interviewer

Tell us about this pop-culture image and how it's inaccurate. Tell us how you'd like to be thought of.

Terry Schow

Well I'd like them to be thought as people, those, whether they volunteered or whether they were drafted, understood a sense of duty, did their duty. And, obviously 58,365 at the loss of their life. And hundreds of thousands who were injured as a result of that life, be it physically, or who have PTSD and Agent Orange exposure, those kinds of things. And so I felt like society didn't understand many of those folks. When they came back, many of my counterparts were spit on and treated poorly by protesters and those kinds of things. And the message from that war that was delivered to the Vietnam veterans, I think causes the veterans today to be treated far better.

The Iraq and Afghanistan veterans are welcomed, they're thanked, people stop them in the airports. And I think the public says, we don't ever want that to happen again. You can hate this war, but love the warrior. And so I think that's part of the image of the Vietnam veterans who share that. Certainly, the World War II veterans. And there is a brotherhood, if you will, of folks who served in the military, so they stand behind each other. But even in the current conflict, there's such a small percentage of people who are serving, and they are all volunteers. And the military are the only ones at war today; the civilian population isn't.

But you have such huge numbers who were at war during Vietnam. At the height of the Vietnam War something like 550,000 troops were in the military. But if you look at the number of folks who actually conduct operations, there's probably 10-to-1 support folks who are supporting the average person on the ground-to-gun, if you will, someone carrying a rifle going out on an operation and those kinds of things. And so a lot of support people to support those folks who are the infantry folks. And in my view, the real heroes are the folks who are the infantry guys, out conducting operations.

Interviewer

Was that statistic, 10-to-1, the same for Vietnam?

Terry Schow

I am talking about Vietnam when I use that number. At least that's my recollection.

Interviewer

How many Utahns fought in Vietnam? Do you have any idea?

Terry Schow

I don't know, but I know that there are about 364 names on the Vietnam Memorial which sits on the west side of the capitol. Roughly 10 percent of the population are veterans. Utah slightly under that, maybe about eight percent, something like that. I probably have that number, I just don't have it off the top of my head because you have Vietnam era veterans, people who served during the time-'62 to '75, '76 – and then Vietnam veterans. And there's a distinction to be made. Those who served in-country, boots on the ground; those who never went to Vietnam who were in the United States or other places around the world.

Interviewer

We would love to track down that number of how many Utahns served in Vietnam.

Terry Schow

I'll see if I can find that. I helped on the Vietnam Memorial and we struggled even trying to get a list of the Vietnam veterans back in. Because of privacy concerns, the VA and others wouldn't release that to us, but I'll see what I can come up with.

Interviewer

Did you meet any other Utahns when you were over there?

Terry Schow

No. I didn't because we didn't go as part of a unit, we weren't part of a National Guard unit or anything. I'm what I refer to as a onesies, twosies. Even the current conflict, guys that go over as part of the National Guard unit, they come back and they've got their whole support system. I joined, as I said, in Ogden, went in and from then till the time I got out, came back from Vietnam, I didn't see any Utah people. It was a pretty small specialized unit.

Interviewer

Was that common? People going not with a unit. Wasn't that one of the problems?

Terry Schow

It was, yeah. They really were because the draft was going on and who knew where a guy would be assigned, to an infantry unit or to Germany. I knew draftees who were sent to Germany to do work as well too. Just because you were a draftee didn't necessarily mean you were going to Vietnam.

Interviewer

This whole idea of unit cohesion, it was a problem in Vietnam wasn't it?

Terry Schow

Well, it was, it really was. World War II, they had Guard units that were called up, but then after a while I think one out of every two men, in effect, served in World War II, if my memory served me. But the guys that serve today, and even my son, I use as an example, he served with a Guard unit in Afghanistan. And at least you know the people you're going with, and that helps an awful lot.

Interviewer

But people in Vietnam, I remember it was people coming and going and not as units, but as individuals. So that affects how a person thinks about the military doesn't it?

Terry Schow

Well, it depends. Your unit becomes your unit. When I was assigned to the 10th Group at Devens, or when I was assigned to the 5th Group in Vietnam, I mean your unit becomes your family, if you will. And so the fact that I didn't have anybody from Utah was of little consequence to me.

Interviewer

Did you feel like your unit was affected? Did you feel like it was doing the job it was supposed to and turning up the results it was supposed to?

Terry Schow

I do. The 5th Group received at least one Presidential Unit Citation, which is the highest designation that a unit can receive. And so if you base it on that, then obviously somebody at a pay level higher than mine thought that we were effective.

Interviewer

How long does classified material stay classified?

Terry Schow

That's a good question. Whether classified is my whole back or it's my personal feelings, I don't really know, I just prefer not to go into a lot of that. I will say that I was shot at, that I returned fire, that I was not injured. And I would leave it at that.

Interviewer

Talk a little bit more about why you do what you do now to support the vets.

Terry Schow

Well, I refer to my journey as the improbable journey. As a kid who grew up on the wrong side of Ogden, my family was on public assistance. An average kid, certainly, in school. No athletics, none of those kinds of things. Worked at a little market, opened up a little grocery store in the 10th grade at 8:00 in the morning. Worked there for a couple of hours, went to school, came back, worked in that store again. Mowed lawns, all those kind of things, to earn money; shoveled sidewalks. Then volunteered for the Army. And because SF is a good unit, because they do instill some sense of competency and some sense of worth, it allowed me to buy a home, it allowed me to get an education; I went to school on the GI Bill; it allows me to get health care from the VA.

I've been involved with veterans much of my life since I've come back. I state commanded the DAV, state commanded the American Legion, held a number of national positions with veteran's organizations; unemployment in veteran's employment. I do a lot of things like that and I guess what it amounts to is that I look back with folks like

George Wahlen, who was my dear friend and one of the highlights of my life is that I got to speak at his funeral. You meet guys like that. That's the reason, when you ask me, "what have you done?" – in my view, I haven't done hardly anything of any significance. George, who was injured three times at Iwo Jima, who went back in, retired from the Army, who worked for the VA for 17 years and then devoted his life to veterans; getting the cemetery, a nursing home. And the last battle he fought was for the Ogden veteran's home. I look at guys like that, I'm inspired by that commitment and it's an honor to work with those guys.

You know, George said he did what he did, not because of any sense of bravery, but because he did not want to let his guys down. I guess I do what I do because I enjoy championing causes for veterans. But I ride a razor, because sometimes some elected officials have not been happy with me because I push a little too hard. But you know, we look at what we've done here in Utah, from no veteran's office to an office, to a division, to a department. That's pretty impressive to think we've done that, but with a lot of support from the community. I think that because the military was good to me, because I have such love for these folks, especially these World War II guys, who are so humble and so modest, who will not advocate for themselves.

A lot of people have the tendency to say, "Well Terry, you've done this." What I've done is, I facilitate a large number of veterans and the media and elected officials to come on Team VA. To want to focus towards the needs of veterans and helping our veterans, whether it's a new nursing home in Ogden or Washington County, or a vet center up in Ogden that we desperately need. If you want to talk about needs, vet centers for PTSD issues for Vietnam vets. When folks are killing themselves, guys coming back are killing themselves, those are important issues and I get great satisfaction in working those issues and helping veterans. And using the contacts I have to help those veterans, be it Senator Hatch or the President to get a Purple Heart for Clint Sagers who was a great World War II infantry guy. So I have a tendency to focus fairly heavily on infantry guys, I guess because I was an infantry guy and I know the sacrifice of those folks. I cannot believe they pay me to do this job, I almost have to back up to the pay line.

Interviewer

When the Vietnam vets came back, I keep hearing this story that they were shunned and virtually ignored. Did you find that same experience?

Terry Schow

Well you know, I've heard it and I've talked to guys who said they were treated poorly. I didn't experience anything of any particular concern to me, other than the example I cited to you with the guy at the post office who thought because you had a long mustache and a motorcycle. It didn't bother me. I have found that generally things were okay for me, so it didn't really affect me.

Interviewer

Are there programs where Vietnam vets who have PTSD have learned skills?

Terry Schow

Well, I think we try to, you know, for those who will reach out to us, we'll do it. My office, because we put a lot out in the media and do outreach traveling around the state, do come in contact with a fair amount of vets. And even family members of vets who will say, "These young guys need some help." And so we certainly encourage them to get linked in. We don't necessarily have the answers. There's a fair percentage of veterans, be it Iraq, Afghanistan, or Vietnam, who have never went in and got any treatment for PTSD. Some people have a tendency just to keep it under the cover, if you will.

There's a certain stigma associated with folks who indicate they've got PTSD. Law enforcement guys worry about losing their jobs, other people are worried about losing their security clearance. But here in Utah, General Tarvis has been very emphatic that he will not let anyone harm someone who wants to go in and get some counseling for PTSD. But there's a number of groups out there that do it. I think the best money the VA spends today is on more PTSD counselors, social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists and vet centers. Vet centers, in my view, save lives. We have two here in Utah, one in Salt Lake, one down in Utah County. We need one up in Ogden because there's about 45,000 vets up there. And the idea that a vet can drop into a place, have a cup of coffee or whatever, talk to combat vets. Because normally counselors in those vet centers are combat vets themselves.

And the vet centers are starting to hire more combat vets, current theater combat vets to work in it. Dr. Al Batres who heads up the vet centers for the VA, indicated at a meeting I was at a little while back that they're now going to be hiring family counselors at these vet centers too. Because it's not just the vet who struggles, it is also the family and sometimes the kids who struggle too. So I'm very encouraged by that, but I continue to press for a vet center. And all of our congressional delegates are pretty familiar. I know Senator Bennett was very familiar with our desire to get a vet center up in Ogden.

Interviewer

What did it take to get the Vietnam Memorial at the State Capitol Building? I heard it was quite a challenge.

Terry Schow

Well, it was. I mean it cost about \$300,000 to build. There were guys like Jim Slade and Paul Malovich and Larry Weist, a former guy from the Deseret News. I came on after the process was already in place. But it took a fair

amount. You know, we got some appropriations from the legislature, we got \$20,000 from Coors Beer, \$20,000 from the LDS Church Foundation. So I find that an interesting dichotomy. But again, supporting veterans is a big deal. A lot of donations of in-kind materials. The granite that's on the Vietnam is the same granite that's used in the Vietnam memorial in Washington, D.C.

Interviewer

Why was that so important to build?

Terry Schow

Well, I think it had become a recognition of the service, certainly of those who died who made a greater sacrifice than the rest of us. And it's kind of like the World War II Memorial, if you will. It is a sad commentary that after a large percentage of the World War II veterans had passed, that memorial was built. So I'm happy that the Vietnam Memorial in Utah was built when it was completed, but saddened for the World War II guys who never got their recognition.

Interviewer

Jim Slade was saying how hard that was to build, even getting the land.

Terry Schow

Well, it is, the Capitol Preservation Board had some heartburn about it, but finally relented. But one of the stories that I'd like to recount, a fellow by the name of Lou Ross, who is a great fellow that you obviously know from the Veterans Day Committee. But when we were building that memorial they didn't want to allow us to put an American flag on the memorial. And there was concern that it might interfere with the vista of the capitol, that's a true story. Lou wrote a letter, probably about a two-page, fairly strong letter that said at the end, "that the American flag is never an inappropriate vista. Signed Lou Ross, descendant of Betsy Ross."

That memory sticks out in my mind as much about the Vietnam Memorial, but also the memory of a fellow by the name of John Malnory who kept a rucksack and an M-16 in his trunk. He was stuck in 1967. That's the problem that I have is that there are still a percentage of vets who are stuck in 1967, '68 – whenever–whenever they were there, they are stuck there. And to try to get them loose from that can be a challenge, certainly.

Interviewer

Is there anything you'd like to say that we haven't covered?

Terry Schow

I'd just thank all those who have served and we greatly appreciate those who have served in any conflict, but especially those combat veterans. Thank you.