Transcript of Russ Moseley Interview
Salt Lake City, Utah

Interviewer
Give us your full name and spell it.

Russ Moseley
Russell Scott Moseley, and Moseley is M-o-s-e-l-e-y.

Interviewer
Where are you from originally?

Russ Moseley
Well, we live in North Salt Lake. I live in North Salt Lake now, here.

Interviewer
Where did you grow up?

Russ Moseley
A lot of places military, spent a lot of time in Africa and Germany and France, so mainly Africa and Ethiopia.

Interviewer
So your father was in World War II?

Russ Moseley
He was in World War II, was shot down by the Germans over German-occupied France in a P-47 Thunderbolt and bailed at really low altitude and was rescued by the French family who owned the farm where his plane went down and he hid there for four months with that family in various locations while the Germans came in and out. And I went back to France and found the airplane and I know the family and know the place. He survived that. He never got captured. They kept him hidden for four months and after the war, they made a first communion dress out of his parachute because they had nothing and so they cut up his parachute and made a white silk communion dress for their daughter who, during the war, was just a little girl.
Then he went to Korea. I was alive then, and he flew the old Mach Bell 13 helicopter for medevac. He was a forward air observer so he flew the Bell 13 helicopter for support and the L-5 and the L-19 fixed wing aircraft as a forward observer for artillery.

Interviewer
Where did you go to high school? All over the place again?

Russ Moseley
A lot of it was in Ethiopia, and my last year I did in Kecoughtan High School, Hampton, Virginia, and you couldn't spell Kecoughtan to save your life. It's an Indian name.

Interviewer
How did you end up in the military? Were you drafted? Did you get a number?

Russ Moseley
I wanted to fly, and the only way you could fly is if you enlisted. The draftees all ended up in all the other parts of the military but if you wanted to fly, that was premium. So I enlisted and took off and went to helicopter flight training, went on through flight school in Texas. I left that program and went into flight engineer school at Ft. Eustace, Virginia and became a flight engineer, and of course, when you're flying in combat, the flight engineer is also the left gunner when you're in the air but on the ground, you're the mechanic so you do double duty.

Interviewer
When did you actually join?

Russ Moseley
I joined up just a few months before I graduated from high school in '68, so that I would already be signed up and enlisted when the draft came around. They couldn't get me. It was just to avoid being drafted, knowing that I already signed up and so I was obligated after high school to report; right after graduation, they give you about 30 days, which I did, came out here to Utah to visit family and then left for the service.

Interviewer
What day? Do you remember? What year?
Russ Moseley
1968. So I showed up July–would it be July 1968, at Richmond, Virginia and they shipped us all down by train to Louisiana for basic training, Ft. Bulk, Louisiana.
Interviewer
Vietnam is raging at this point?
Russ Moseley
Vietnam is going hard and heavy. We all knew where we were going. There was no kidding anybody about that. We knew where we were going.
Interviewer
And you knew you were going to go?
Russ Moseley
Oh, I knew, and actually, I joined up with a good friend of mine, went with me and within hours of arriving at our first duty station where we got our heads shaved, got our uniforms and everything, they pulled him out. His name was Chuck Tieg and he was from Hampton and they pulled him out to let him know that his father had just been killed by – his father was an Air Force fighter pilot – and his father had just been killed by a red-eye missile from the ground that got him, and they told him he could not continue in the service because he was the only surviving male of the family, and they told him he could not serve and they sent him home, and I never saw him again. But we did the bravado thing, “I will go there, and I will get even for both of us.” So I went, and he went home. I never saw him again.
Interviewer
So how did you actually arrive in Vietnam? Did you come by commercial aircraft?
Russ Moseley
World Airways took us over and they had to stop in Japan and this was one of my – I was full of bravado and I had no fear, had no trepidation. In my mind, I was a tough guy and they're never going to get me, and I was going to get even for Chuck's father, and when we got to Japan, they had to refuel the aircraft and in military, everybody gets off the aircraft for refueling. So they put us in a little station and we were all sitting there talking about tough guy stuff, and at the same time, another aircraft came in that had left Vietnam with veterans from that, hardened soldiers, and they arrived.

And when those guys walked through that doorway to sit in chairs around us and we saw what they looked like, I said to myself, “What would you have to go through to have a uniform that looked like that?” And their boots, their boots were in shreds; their uniforms were in shreds. They had that look. They had that look that you can't describe, and it wasn't until then that I was terrified; I was terrified. I knew that to get to a point, looking the way I did in fresh-pressed, green new-issue uniforms, to looking the way they looked, I knew that I was going to have to go through indescribable things and it wasn't until then that I became very afraid. And from then on, I was very afraid, scared to death. That frightened me. They never said a word. I don't remember any of them speaking anything. They came in, they sat down, they had that look. We got on a plane and I think we were silent all the way into Vietnam, until landing time. It impressed every one of us – saw that and we all were struck the same way, like, this is not going to be good.
Interviewer
You touched down and what happened?
Russ Moseley
Touched down in Vietnam. I had been riding with a guy from North Hollywood, California, whose name I can never remember. We touched down. The enemy started a rocker mortar attack on the runway and the area surrounding that just as we hit the ground, and I don't know whether the aircraft was damaged but we pulled over and I don't remember ever having stairs or anything to get out of the aircraft. They just pulled off the side of the runway, threw open all the emergency doors and just told us all to get out, just get out and to lay down because the mortars were coming like crazy. So I don't know if the airplane was struck, but they were done. Everybody had to get off, including the crew, pilots, everybody. They were looking for a place to hide.

So, you know, my friend and I, we were just thinking, “The Army is going through a lot of trouble to scare us, to try and psych us out, that now we're in-country and this is a battle and this is a real stupid way of introducing this,” because we didn't think it was real at all, and we thought it was a harsh way to get out of an airplane. But there, the sand dunes where of the place we landed – I'm trying to think of where it was – just seemed like sand dunes and while everybody else was digging in, this guy and I, from California, sat on the top of this sandy mound, and every time something would blow up, we would throw a dirt clod at somebody to make them think that stuff was flying around them and they would dig deeper and get more frightened. But me and him were just sitting there and going, “This isn't real; this is not real; they're playing with us.”

And when the smoke cleared and the sun started coming up and we started moving toward the hangar to be processed into Vietnam, we found a couple of our dead soldiers that had been badly mutilated by rockets or mortars coming in, and they were really dead and we realized that he and I had just sat up there exposed to everything and thinking it was just an Army way of, I don't know, turning your mind into a combat mind, leaving the safeness of back home and now you're in combat. We thought it was all just another training thing, and it turned out to be the real thing, and that happened to us several times in Vietnam.
It happened to many guys I've talked to, said first time they saw the enemy, they didn't think it was real and maybe a couple of guys had to get killed near them before they realized this was the real thing and that guy was the real deal. Now it's time to start firing, getting down and doing what you're trained to do. It was amazing how long it took us to go from, “the Army is just trying to scare you into the new attitude of being in combat,” and then finding out that they didn't need to; the enemy was there at the gate waiting for you when you arrived there. They were going to do it for you.

Interviewer
So you'd been baptized into combat just getting off the plane?

Russ Moseley
Yeah. The first night we thought was just fun and games. We were throwing dirt clots at everybody and the guys who had been in Vietnam before, they were digging the deepest, they were finding the deepest place to hide and keeping their head down because we weren't armed at that time; we were just getting off our aircraft, that we hadn't been issued our weapons yet, and me and this guy just sat there throwing dirt clots, because you know, in the training, they take you through the pit, the bombs and stuff. We just thought it was another one of them.

Interviewer
Is that when you got your nickname?

Russ Moseley
Yeah, that was the first time, that was the first event, and they just kept going, kept going.

Interviewer
What was your nickname?

Russ Moseley
Well, they called me Casper, like Casper the ghost.

Interviewer
Why did they call you Casper?

Russ Moseley
They called me Casper because there were so many things that happened to us where I was supposed to be in the kill zone and I ended up not in the kill zone or walking away untouched. Several times, when people looked and they saw me there and then things blew up and I popped up someplace else.
The same guy and I, we were walking into the barracks that we were going to be assigned to, our first barracks, after the airport incident. We had both written to our moms and as we were walking to the place where we were supposed to throw our bags and get our gear, we looked down and saw a post box, and I said to him, “Let's just run down there, drop these in there and we'll catch up with these guys, because they're not moving very fast and they'll never miss us.” So he and I bolted, and we ran down this dirt road, dropped our letters in the mailbox and turned around to come back. The guys had gone in the hooch and the enemy had put a satchel charge under the hooch and it blew up with the guys in there, and me and him, we missed the whole thing because we snuck off to mail letters to our moms.

Interviewer
This is your first day?

Russ Moseley
That's my first daylight day. That's my first day in daylight in Vietnam. So we missed the bullet twice because we were goofing off. We hadn't taken anything serious yet. We still thought, we've got a while before we have to face the devil. And on a base we thought we were safe, so we did not know that sneaking away and dropping mail in the mailbox to mom actually saved our lives. And we went back and the hooch was a mess and some guys died; some guys were wounded and me and him walked away unscathed. And there were several incidents like that through Vietnam where they saw me at a spot, the spot blew up and they all figured I was a goner and I had decided to do something else and had dove out of sight at the last minute and I wasn't there. So they started calling me Casper because every time I should have got it –

Interviewer
What did you say the second time to this new friend of yours?

Russ Moseley
I don't know. I don't remember any conversation. We just went over there to regroup with the guys that were left

and we got new instructions, got moved, where we could get issued our things, our weapons.

Interviewer

So when did you end up with the unit you flew with? What was that unit?

Russ Moseley

My first unit was called A-1-2 so first battalion, A Company, First Battalion, Second Platoon or Second Flight or something. Anyway, it was in Phu Loi, but it was during the monsoon, so for a few days, while we were getting processed and assigned, they would send us out on guard duty at night, and I just remember just being in a poncho all the time, because everything was always wet. My job was guarding the big ammo dump and the lightning was furious. The night lightning was furious all around you, everywhere. It was blinding and deafening, but I was guarding the ammo dump and I thought, “With all the explosives inside this sandbagged area, if I get a bolt of lightning, I'm toast.” Because every once in a while, you could hear a bolt of lightning strike and a mine or two on the perimeter would detonate because they were electrically fired. And so enough electricity must have been traveling through the wet grass, would fire mines once in a while just randomly. And I thought, “If they fire the mines in this big dump that I'm guarding, I've had it.”

So I think my first real big decision, combat-wise, was, “Do I stand right next to this, so if it goes, it will be very quick and I won't have to feel anything, or do I go to the outer extremity of where I'm allowed to go and still be within my guard station, hoping that if it goes, I'll survive it?” And I chose to nestle right up close to it, because it offered some protection from the storm, but not much. You still just got soaked.

Interviewer

When did you first get assigned to an aviation unit?

Russ Moseley

I think it took two or three days, and then they trucked us all out and they sent me to this aviation thing and my job was to be a crew chief, to fly, but they wanted you to work for two or three weeks in the hangar doing mechanic stuff: working on ships, get really, really familiar with them, and as soon as a guy rotated out and a helicopter became available, then you got assigned a helicopter and from then on, every time that helicopter left the ground, you were in it, without exception.

Interviewer

Do you remember your first combat flight?

Russ Moseley

I don't. I just remember that it took a few flights, because we flew with the doors open and crew chiefs, and door gunners were supposed to wear a harness that kept you anchored in the ship, and we called them monkey harnesses, and I never saw one.

Nobody ever wore 'em because that wasn't the tough-guy thing to do. That wasn't the macho thing to do, so nobody ever wore the harness. Everybody just flew with doors open, your feet out on the pegs, your M-60, your gun, is right in front of you, and we just flew on these missions and that's what you did; you manned that gun and if it got hot, you brought up your gun and fired for all you were worth. And otherwise, you just kept an eye out for other aircraft. You didn't want a mid-air collision and did whatever you could, whatever the pilots needed, you know.

Interviewer

During the first mission you really had to fire your weapon?

Russ Moseley

Yeah, I think a unit had gotten hit and there were some wounded guys and some guys needed to be medevaced, but I remember, when we flew in, the mission zone was still hot. The firefight was still going, and we flew in with guns going and we flew out with guns going. And I had one guy with a round in him and we flew him to a medevac station. But I remember, just as we took off, an enemy soldier jumped up from the grass and fired an RPG at us. Now, RPG, rocket-propelled grenade, fired by weapon or shoulder fired, they're deadly. They can take out a tank. I remember, in total surprise, watching this guy jump up a few yards ahead of me. I watched him fire the weapon, I watched a round come at me, and we're talking milliseconds here, and the round come and struck the mount that my guns were mounted on, the rocket struck that and I had my feet on it and I can remember how bad it hurt. When I felt the round hit that thing that my feet were on, but the detonator failed. It didn't go off, and it ricocheted down into the ground and exploded in the dirt some ten or fifteen feet below us. So we were okay.

And we had flown five or six kilometers when the unit on the ground said – and they were joking, and they said, "Ask your gunner if he was scared." And so the warrant officer turned around and said, "Hey, chief, were you scared?" And I go, "Yeah." And he goes, "They wanted to know on the ground." And I go, "Why?" And he goes, "You shot that guy pretty bad. You didn't get off the trigger for a long time." And I guess that's what I did. I guess I just opened up and I never laid off the guns until I was out of ammunition. I don't remember that. I don't remember it at all, but the guys on the ground were sort of teasing me, laughing at me, because they said, “You didn't need to shoot that many rounds. I mean, you got him, for crying out loud!” I don't remember much of that. I just remember I unloaded everything I had because I didn't want him to shoot another one.

Interviewer
Can you talk about what it's like to fly in hot, and to rescue guys?
Russ Moseley
You know, those are great helicopters. By today's standards, they're primitive, but they still fly 'em. They're still an incredible tool, even the same old models, those '60s version models, and our pilots were incredible guys. I mean, they flew those helicopters like they were driving BMWs or Corvettes, sports cars with a lot of power. And they made those helicopters do some things that you would have never thought possible. And it got to a point where things that initially would frighten you when you flew, like, oh, man, I hope he doesn't do that again, and it got to a point where you trusted those guys; you knew that if you weren't dead, you were fine; you're okay.
Yeah, and when you flew in on these hot LZs, you didn't have a lot of time because you knew that that helicopter was a huge target, a huge mark for the enemy. Either they wanted to capture one or they wanted to destroy 'em because they were the nightmare for the enemies, and you're a big, slow target and you're not really heavily armed and you knew, getting in fast and getting out fast saved more lives. Now, if you had packs on board and they needed to get out, you needed them to get out quick and you didn't have time to talk about it. You generally, as soon as your skids hit the ground with that first bump, everybody had to get out because you were gone and if they waited as long as ten or fifteen seconds, that bird might be thirty feet in the air and headed out when they decide to leave. So they knew that they had to leave. We didn't have time to sit on the ground because they had no protection in the helicopter and we're sitting on a lot of fuel. So speed was of the essence, but sometimes you didn't have a lot of space. The jungle was thick, the trees are tall. Sometimes you had to drop straight in from the sky, straight down, drop and get out. Our pilots were incredible, every single one of 'em, every single one of 'em did amazing, miraculous things, flying those great airplanes.
Interviewer
And you were talking to them the whole time?
Russ Moseley
Oh, yeah.
Interviewer
What would you say? Can you give an example?
Russ Moseley
You'd hear the pilot would say, "Watch my tail, watch my tail," because we didn't have a lot of length to land in and he didn't want to stick that tail rotor in the brush because if that tail rotor went, you were done. If you struck a blade on a tree, you were done. And so he'd be screaming out, "Watch my tail!" and you'd lean out as far as you could so you could look back and see the tail rotor and when you were clear, you'd say, "Clear, clear, clear," and he'd drop and hit the ground.
Before he took off, you could feel the helicopter start to pick up a little bit and myself on the left, I'd say, "Clear left." I'd look; I'd watch to see if there was anything he could hit. I'd always say, "Clear left." My gunner on the right side of the ship, he would always look, "Clear right." We'd look back at the tail, one of us would say, "Your tail's clear," because he couldn't see the tail. He could see the rotor path in front of us and so he watched that, but we always watched the tail and to right and left. We didn't want to hit anything, another helicopter coming in or going out, soldiers, brush, anything. So we were his eyes in the back of the ship and we were constantly clearing. "Clear left, clear right, tail's clear, tail's clear."
Interviewer
When you're taking fire, what's the conversation, or is there any?
Russ Moseley
Same thing, same thing. The pilots, they were concentrating and getting in and out. Myself and the door gunner, if we felt we needed to fire, we fired. We didn't ask for any permission and we fired until we were either out of ammo or until it became unsafe. Sometimes you couldn't tell the difference between the enemy and our guys. There was a lot going on out there. There was a lot of grass blowing around and rotor wash and maybe smoke. There was a lot of things going on and so when we weren't sure where our guys were and where their guys were, we cut off; we left it up to them on the ground to fight it out. We had to get out.
Interviewer
Describe who's on the ship and tell us, were you flying your Bulldog H-Model Huey?
Russ Moseley
Same ship, flew that ship the whole time.
The ship was an H-Model Huey, had a jet engine, produced 1350 horsepower. The side of the ship was painted with the Georgia Bulldog because our first sergeant evidently was from Georgia and he had an English Bulldog as a mascot in the company unit. And so we were called the Bulldog Company and we set as our call sign, Bulldog 1, Bulldog 17, Bulldog 23 and that was our call sign. The particular flight that I belonged to was the Comancheros. We had two or three flights of about ten ships each. I was a Comancheros. Other guys belonged to the Champagne

flight and I know there was another one and I can't recall it. So we had “Comancheros” written on the door of my ship, and a big Georgia bulldog painted on each side on the doors.
We had two warrant officers up front generally. Sometimes they were ranking officers like lieutenants or captains but most of the time they were warrant officers. The warrant officer on the left is in command of the ship; the warrant officer on the right is under him. The crew chief is in charge of everything: the loading, the unloading, the fuel; are we going to do this, are we going to do that. The pilots took care of all the flying part but the crew chief was the ship's manager. If you thought we were too heavily loaded and if you thought we weren't balanced right or anything to fly, you had to take care of that; that was your job. Pilots didn't have time to worry about that, and my gunner, who was on the right side of the ship always, always took care of the guns.
So I was the mechanic on the ground, the gunner took care of the guns. When we got on the ground, the guns came off the ship, he took them to a shed, cleaned them, tuned them up, made sure that they were good, re-outfitted the ship with fresh ammunition while I worked on the ship: filters, hydraulics, making sure the windows were clean for the pilots, spotless, so they could see in all kinds of conditions. That was our baby. That was our home. Make sure the medical kit was full.

Interviewer
What does that feel like, to hang over the edge, flying over Vietnam?

Russ Moseley
Well, at first it's frightening, but you get used to it. You get used to, that's your place. It became as natural as anything. It just became very natural. You didn't want your spider harness, you didn't want the monkey harness holding you in, because sometimes one of the pilots would say, "God, I haven't had anything to eat in” – I don't know – “since yesterday," and I'd go, "Hey, I got a can of C-rats here." There's got to be some crackers and peanut butter, and I would crack open the C-rats and get out the crackers and make peanut butter and slide out of my machine gun well and crawl to the front of the ship and pass the pilots peanut butter jelly crackers, or whatever I had.

Interviewer
How are you dressed?

Russ Moseley
Well, you have your Nomex flight suit, on which is supposed to be flame-proof. It wasn't flame-proof; it was flame retardant. You had your Nomex gloves, same thing, combat boots. Most of us had zippers in our boots so we could get them on and off quick. You didn't wear anything that could melt. So you never wore nylon or rayon. Or your underwear, things like that, you wanted to make sure it was cotton, because if you got in a fire, that would melt and burn into your skin. The other stuff at least would burn off, but the other stuff would melt into your skin. Even our socks, military wool socks, only wool socks.
The smell? Jet fuel, JP-4, all the time, you could smell jet fuel. Close to the LZs, when you were landing and taking off, a lot of times you smelled smoke from smoke grenades or fire from combat or powder burns. Stunk, stunk all the time. Our clothes stunk. We had Vietnamese civilian girls that washed our clothes for us. That was an interesting thing, but anyway, they always had the same smell and every once in a while, even today, I'll get that smell from something and it's so similar and it just brings me back this flood of memories which it shuts you down for a minute; it shuts you down for a minute because it's so vivid, that smell. But, you know, we got used to it. We all sweated and it was a hot, humid environment and mold and moss grew everywhere.
Although I will have to say that our job is the best job. I think now, as I look back, you land and you see those poor guys that have been going through the swamps and they're soakin’ wet and they haven't seen a dry pair of socks in weeks. The joke in Vietnam is, “Hey, Joe, you saved my life yesterday. Hey, I've got a dry pair of socks; we're even, you know?” A dry pair of socks was that valuable. They hadn't had a dry pair of clothes or clean clothes or fresh water, some of them in days and days and days.

Interviewer
We've got infantry guys talking about the sound of that rotor and coming in and they're in trouble and you guys were a godsend to them.

Russ Moseley
Yeah, that sound, that sound, for years, haunted me, because after coming to Salt Lake, after Vietnam, coming to Salt Lake, and you know, we had the National Guard here and we have those same helicopters here, and when they went over, it haunted me, haunted me. I would be good for weeks and then I'd hear a helicopter go over and then, you know, it was tough. But I know that, to those guys, the sound of a rotor and the sound of angels coming was the same sound to them, because they knew that they were getting a ride out, or at least they were getting more ammunition or medical supplies or food or fresh water – all of those things in high demand – fresh, clean water that they could drink.

Interviewer
Or fire support or your guns?

Russ Moseley
Yeah, but the enemy kind of backed off a lot of times when the helicopters were coming, especially the Cobras because they knew that hell was coming for them, when the Cobras came. But when we came, they knew they'd get a ride out, you know, the wounded guys, they were there being taken out of the field and taken back to a base for 24 hours of showers and a bed where they could lay their weapon down for the first time.

Interviewer
Can you talk about how your roles changed and you became a rescuer as well as a medevac?

Russ Moseley
Well, it's funny about the Huey Slicks, we called them Slicks, the H models, because they did everything. Sometimes you hauled cargo, mail, passengers; somebody needed to get someplace, sometimes you took messages that couldn't be trans –
What do you call it?

Interviewer
Translated?

Russ Moseley
Yeah, they couldn't be sent over the air, they were so sensitive that they didn't want to be over the air and the enemy pick them up so you'd take a guy that had this message locked to his wrist and you'd take him to a place that he could deliver the message. I mean, you did everything.
At nighttime, sometimes you'd do psychological operations where they'd strap huge speakers on each side of your helicopter and you'd fly over the jungle at night with your lights out, almost within pistol range of the enemy, but they couldn't see you because it was black and you had no lights running whatever. And you'd fly blind, by instrument only, and you'd play these tapes; the psychological guys would be on board and they'd hand each of you, the gunner and the crew chief each got a big box of these leaflets that you'd throw out, and they were leaflets that gave instructions to the enemy: “If you're fighting and you don't want to fight and you want out of this, this is the way out, and these are the instructions and this is how you surrender safely, that you don't get shot accidentally. This is what you do, and we'll take care of you, and we'll take you to a place that's safe, and we'll come and get your families, and we'll save your pigs and we'll save your chickens and we'll take your parents and we'll fly them to a safe place, but you've got to come out.”
And while we were throwing these leaflets, these speakers would be playing this nightmarish audio and it was the sound effects of a firefight. There was machine guns and mortars and screaming and Vietnamese yelling back and forth. And then this voice would come on and it was the voice of a Vietnamese who evidently had been killed and he was in that place hovering over the earth that all Vietnamese go to, of their religion when they die, and he was now able to see the Earth, and now he could comprehend the truth from the lies, the Communist lies.
And in this video explained, “I'm here and I see the Earth from above and I see the truth, and now I see that Communists are lying to us and you're fighting for a cause that's not right. But I've been maimed and disfigured, and I cannot go on and I'm going to be here now forever, but you still have a chance to save yourself from this above-the-earth hell; surrender, let them save your families.”
But it was such a horrible thing. Even at night with our night scope vision, we could look down and every once in a while you could see a guy coming out of the trees with his hands in the air unarmed, chancing the fact that somebody else in his unit might kill him for surrendering. So I know that frightened 'em and I know it frightened me. Listening to it frightened you. You had no idea what it's saying; it was all done in Vietnamese. But the psychological operation guy on board that was running the little tape recorder, he'd say, “Yeah, this is what this says; this is the story that we're telling, and those guys down there are scared to death because this was done in such a way that they really believed that this guy is telling them the story.”

Interviewer
You're creating a nightmare.

Russ Moseley
We created a nightmare for it and it was a nightmare. And a lot of them that were fighting for us didn't want to be. A lot of them were taken out of villages in the middle of the night by the Viet Cong, either Viet Cong or NVA soldiers and say, “You're going to come and you're going to kill Americans with us,” and they would say, “We don't want to kill Americans; we have a farm to run; we have our rice that's growing; there's nobody here to run the rice.” And so they would walk over and shoot grandma and go, “Now, how do you feel about not feeling like going with us, because we can kill everybody in this hooch. How do you feel about resisting us now?”
And we've captured soldiers and I've talked to them myself, personally, yeah. “I was lying, sleeping with my family and I resisted and they walked over and shot grandma, and they go, ‘How do you feel about that? Get up, get your clothes on, you're coming with us.’”

Interviewer
So you would pick up enemy soldiers?

Russ Moseley

No, not then; no, not then; it was too risky at night. We would just play the tape. We would plant the seed in their mind; we would throw these leaflets so they could find them, so they'd know how to – you know, the word in Vietnamese for surrender is Chieu Hoi. So we'd tell them, if you want to Chieu Hoi, this is the way to do it, but if you don't do it right, you could be shot as an enemy. This is the way you do it, and then we'd plant the seed and they'd be terrified all night. Some of them would, some of them would walk out of the jungle; some of them would sneak away from their unit at night and they would find a base or an American unit and with these instructions, they would know what to do to be taken prisoner without getting shot.

Interviewer

What's the difference in the medevac chopper and your chopper in terms of picking up and treating?

Russ Moseley

The medevac guys were air med people. I mean, these guys had been to Ft. Sam, Houston. They had trained as, I guess you'd call them nurses, flight nurses; I don't know, maybe that's the wrong term to use for those guys, but they had done very intensive medical training on wound care and first aid – but more than first aid; serious wound care – and they were equipped mentally and physically and equipment-wise to patch guys up and save their lives and that's all they did. When you called those guys, they knew it was going to be bad.

They usually had a cross on their ship; hopefully the enemy wouldn't shoot at them but I don't think it saved them ever; I don't think it ever meant anything to the enemy, but they would fly in, they'd extract these guys, and this is what they did all the time. They didn't do combat runs; they didn't do supply runs; their job was to go and extract dead and wounded soldiers and get them out.

My job, as the slick crew chief, is, we did everything. If they needed a helicopter, we were the helicopter and we would show up for anything so we would transport anything, go anywhere, any time of day or night. Sometimes it was easy stuff, like flying over a battle that we knew was going to ensue during the night and we'd fly at a pretty high altitude and we'd kick out those huge magnesium flares under parachutes so that they would light the area below, so our soldiers could see the enemy and fight with a little bit of light. And that was easy because you were too high for the enemy to get you, generally. And that's all you did, is kicked out these gigantic magnesium candles to light the ground below, and you did that until you ran out, and then you went and got some more. Sometimes they were just nothing missions. You had to transport somebody someplace.

Interviewer

When you get that desperate call from down on the ground, and you know it's going to be a mess down there, tell us about that.

Russ Moseley

Well, you know, all of us had, under our seats, we had our bulletproof vests. Now, our bulletproof vests for flight crew is different from the ground guys. The ground guys, their bulletproof vests, that you saw all the time in the films, were flexible; they were just heavy, thick, very heavy, very hot, but they'd stop a bullet. Ours, in a helicopter, our vests had solid rigid plates, one solid rigid plate on each side – well, no, it was one solid one for the whole front. They weren't split, so you lifted it over your head, dropped it down the front. You had no protection in the back but you had this big plate in front of you, so if rounds came at you and hit you in the chest, this plate would stop the bullet, but they were heavy.

None of us wore 'em. We called them “chicken plates,” because we said, if you're wearing that, you're a chicken, you know? It was the macho thing again; tough guys didn't wear bulletproof vests in helicopters. We just went out. But there were calls where, we got those calls that we put on those chicken plates, because we knew a chicken plate, you were going to need it. Oftentimes they were stowed under the seat. We didn't use them for weeks but certain calls came in.

If the Marines called for help – God bless the Marines – if the Marines called for help, you knew that it was going to be bad, this inner service rivalry; the Marines were the bad guys and everybody else, compared to them, they weren't nearly as bad. But if the Marines were in trouble, bad enough to call the Army or the Air Force or anybody else to come help 'em, you knew this was going to be really bad, because they would never stoop to call in for help until it got really bad. When the Marines called, we put on our chicken vests and in my case, I would put one on the front and I would sit on one because in a helicopter, you know a round could come up from beneath you as easily as from the front. I remember many times swiping an extra chicken plate so I could sit on one and wear one on the front.

But medevac wasn't on our job. That was not all we did. In the cases that I did that, it was one of those rare cases where there was a unit right here in front of you, someplace within just a few clicks, that had gotten into a desperate situation and you were the only helicopter, and we would respond because they don't care if you've got a red cross on your – the guys on the ground, they didn't care; they just needed a helicopter, that's all they cared about.

Interviewer

When was there the command ship up there, telling all the other ships what to do below, and what kind of operation was there, that kind of armada? Were you always flying with another chopper?

Russ Moseley

You know, generally, your mission is just your mission. It's just you. You got to go out, you got to do something and get back. Every once in a while, you'd have large insertions where they'd say, “We need 50 or 60 soldiers taken to this place to set up an ambush or a camp or an assault against the enemy. We know they're there.” And so a bunch of us would get shipped together and we'd get a – usually it was, like, five of our soldiers, because they were carrying so much ordinates that they were heavy, so we put five guys on, everybody would have five guys, we'd fly in, we'd dump 'em, get out; maybe we'd go back and get more and come back multiple times.

The thing about the command ship flying over above, I don't remember a lot of that. I can remember a couple of occasions where we went on assaults where there were major battles and there was somebody in a Bell Jet Ranger or a command Huey up above, but I don't remember ever being aware of what they were doing or what they were saying. I just remember, I just did what I did for the spot that I was in. Whatever my pilots did, we just supported them. So I don't ever remember listening to a command ship. I just remember that we knew what we had to do, picking up or dropping off.

Sometimes, when you go out to pick up guys, they were so scared and they knew they were surrounded. They knew the enemy was right in their back pocket, but they couldn't tell you where they were. They would just say, “Okay, where are you? We want you to fly this heading and be at tree-top level.” And so you'd fly at cruise speed, just above the trees, blindly, not knowing when they were going to yell out and say, “Okay, touch down, we see you.”

I know many times that the enemy was so close to the guys calling for help that they could not tell you where they were and they were scared of throwing out a smoke grenade and letting you know where they were and you'd make the agreement, sometimes in advance. You'd say, “Okay, when you can see us, throw a purple smoke grenade,” and you'd get out there and they'd go – they'd know that they could see you or not, but because our transmissions could also be heard by the enemy who had radios too, once in a while you'd see that purple smoke grenade go off, and you'd say, “Did you just pop a smoke grenade?” and they'd go, “No, not yet,” and they go, “Well, we got a purple smoke grenade,” and you'd know the enemy was trying to sucker you in to land where they were.

So we'd ask them to pop a red grenade or a green grenade because the enemy didn't have a lot of the smoke grenades so sometimes we'd have to ask for various colors so that we knew for a fact that where we were landing was really our guys, because the enemy would be listening.

Interviewer

Other aircrafts, other jets?

Russ Moseley

Sometimes, but not that often. Sometimes but not that often. I remember I went down in a rice paddy one time. We'd taken hits and my engine was out and we landed in a rice paddy and now we're on the ground, nearly defenseless and I can remember jets coming over and flying over many times and firing at the enemy in the trees and when they ran out of ordinates, they went home. And these guys were just passing by that happened to have a bomb or a few rockets on board or some .50 cal or 40 millimeter on board and whatever they had left, they would expend to support us and then they would go home and whoever was coming along, they would help out too.

Interviewer

How did you get help that day?

Russ Moseley

We got a message out, and it was really funny, because we had Marines with us. Again, I say... the Marines that we had on board, we were taking them to an ambush and they were carrying an incredible amount of ordinates on their back and when we went down, they jumped out and set up a perimeter. We're outnumbered, outgunned. Without those Marines, we wouldn't have survived a day. That was Christmas morning, daybreak, 1969. That's where I spent my Christmas.

But anyway, you know, the Air Force helped us out and they dropped some ordinates and supported us and late in the afternoon, another Huey came in, landed at a distance and three guys jumped out and ran straight toward us. Now, they were wearing uniforms that we had never seen before. They were all black and we weren't sure who they were; we almost shot them because we'd heard rumors about the enemy capturing some of our ships, putting on our uniforms, flying with their helmets on and their visors down so you couldn't see their faces and they'd fly in to rescue soldiers and the soldiers would jump on, not knowing that the guys in the ship were Vietnamese, North Vietnamese soldiers. By the time they realized, it was too late; you were on an enemy aircraft headed for a prison camp.

Now, I don't know myself, personally, if this really happened, but they were telling us, “Be careful, make sure you know who the other helicopter is. It might not be our guys.” And I'm sure they got some of our helicopters. But anyway, the guys ran toward us. One guy ran straight toward us; the other two guys ran to my helicopter that was down and he screwed a big I-bolt into the main mast of the helicopter, on the top, to receive a hook, and the other guy put a drag shoot on the tail of the helicopter so that when it was towed, it wouldn't spin and the third guy

jumped in amongst us and said, "Okay, guys, this is what's going to go down. In a moment here, a Chinook is going to come where a cable dropped and they're going to hook your ship and get it out and we're going to get it fixed. Then another ship is going to come in and get all of us and we're going to get out, but until then, we have to lay low."
And sure enough, here comes this great big Chinook with a long cable and a hook on the end, the one guy on top of my helicopter was standing there with rubber gloves on so he could grab this hook and hook it in the ship and as soon as that hook latched, he just jumped off the ship, laid down for cover, the Huey picked up and off they went, and there went my helicopter and the Chinook, and moments later another helicopter charged in out of the trees – never heard him coming – and then suddenly he was right there. He hit the ground; we all jumped on, and we were gone, and in moments it was over. It was like we got out faster than we landed. It was like, it was all over now. We were out. It was over. We were going back to our unit. Of everything that happened that day, not one of us took a bullet; not anybody was injured in that downing in the rice paddy; we all got home or got out of that deal.

Interviewer
Quite a Christmas day.

Russ Moseley
It was quite a Christmas. So, you know, I've got to be grateful. It's the worst and the best day of my life, all the same day, like in "City Slickers," you know, “What was your worst day?” You know? “What was your worst day? What was your best day?” That was my best day and my worst day on the same day.

Interviewer
You were talking about that you felt kind of guilty dropping guys off in a hot zone and that far-away expression on their faces. Can you describe that?

Russ Moseley
Well, you know, when you pick guys up, you knew it was a good thing for them, but when you drop them off, you knew it was a bad thing. There was no time you dropped guys off that you didn't know that you may never see them again. Nobody ever spoke on those missions. You didn't speak except for pilots would ask you to clear left or right for aircraft, but there was no conversation; you didn't talk about anything; you didn't talk to the guys that you were carrying. Once in a while maybe you'd say, "Okay, what are you guys doing?" But most of the time it was dead silent except for the sound of the helicopter and the wind whistling through the ship.
You didn't talk. You just thought. Myself and the gunner, we thought about, “Okay, are our guns ready? Are we loaded? Are we ready to go if things get bad?” The pilots, they're thinking about the LZ, what they're going to do. The guys in the ship that you're going to drop off, they're thinking about their mission. They already know what they're going to do. They're not talking even with each other. They know this could be a bad thing. So you didn't talk, and oftentimes you didn't talk when you picked guys up and took them out. You still were quiet, you know? Sometimes the best you could do was light a cigarette. Sometimes that's all you could manage, was to get a cigarette lit. But I don't remember talking much to guys in and out. It's a pretty quiet ride. Everybody's mentally preparing themselves for what may come and you always knew that something was coming. Something coming was inevitable. When you flew in and dropped people off and got out and a shot wasn't fired or something didn't happen, you were very relieved but you always knew that around every corner was a surprise. I don't remember talking to the guys much.

Interviewer
Describe their faces.

Russ Moseley
Their faces are blank. Their faces are very concentrated on – you know, you don't know what they're thinking, and as easily as they could be thinking about their mission and how many mines they might have on them and how they were going to set up their ambush or how they were going to do their patrol, they could just as easily have been thinking about mom, apple pie and the girl they left behind, a letter that they got. They could be easily thinking about, “I wished I'd have mailed the letter.”
And while I'm on letters, I just have to say, I can remember Thanksgiving, was one of the hardest things. I can remember flying a chaplain around with his portable pulpit that he used to do an Easter Mass, or an Easter service for the guys out in the boonies and we'd fly this guy out, we'd set down very quickly and we'd do a fast mass. We'd never stay. We'd drop this guy off and we were gone and we'd come back and get him. And while we were doing that, we would have these big insulated coolers with hot food. Now, these soldiers, some of them hadn't had hot food – or seen it – in maybe weeks. And it would be so dangerous in some of those places we'd land.
I can remember how heart-wrenching it was for me, personally, to fly in, knowing I'd had a shower sometime in the last 48 hours, to fly into a place and these guys would be slugging out of the mud one at a time because more than one guy near the ship was a big target and they'd come, one at a time, with a canteen cup in one hand and their weapon in another hand and they wouldn't look at you; they would just walk toward the aircraft and they'd put their cup out and you'd slop turkey, mashed potatoes, gravy, whatever you had, in the same cup together, and they kept an eye on the trees and their finger on the trigger the whole time.

And they would slink back into the trees and they would stand watch while somebody else came in and got their food. And they couldn't turn loose of their weapon, so they would drink their food, slop it in their mouth with one hand, weapon in the other, standing waist deep in water. And once in a while, a guy would set his cup down and he'd reach inside his shirt and he'd pull out a letter – and sometimes the letter was just cardboard that'd been ripped off a C-ration box – and it was a note penned to his wife or his mom on a piece of cardboard, and he'd say, "Can you put this in the post for me when you get to a base?" And you'd just jam these things in your shirt because your hands were on the guns you were trying to supply these guys.

And those are the moments that you felt a great deal of gratitude, knowing that you weren't him. He just wanted to slip a note to his wife or his mom and the best he could do was put it on a piece of cardboard to let them know that he was still okay, covered in leeches, standing in swamp water, one hand filled with a weapon, the other hand filled with a cup of food that he couldn't even use utensils to get into his mouth. And that was their Easter, that was their Thanksgiving.

And the great thing about that was, it made you feel so eternally grateful that you were just going to pick up and fly off and leave this behind you and go to a much safer place, but leaving those poor guys behind to do that duty that they were doing, day in and day out, every day. If you were smart and aware of the things that were important, if you did what I did, you became acutely aware that you were better off than everybody else because you didn't sleep in a jungle. You just went out there and took care of those guys the best you could and some of them you never got to see again; most of them you never saw again, most of them because somebody else came and got 'em, some of 'em because they didn't survive that night.

Interviewer

Can you tell us the cross story?

Russ Moseley

The story of the cross, you know, the story of the cross came at a time – now, let me see, I would have arrived there the first of August, probably worked in the hangar sharpening my skills with maintenance, waiting for a slot for my own helicopter and then I started flying, Septemberish, Octoberish. And I think that a lot of my missions weren't too intense. They were just missions, ash and trash, what we called it.

But we were just flying along one time, and we just suddenly got this radio call and we could hear it and it was a “Mayday, mayday, we've had a couple of guys – we got a couple of guys that need a lift out; we got two KIAs” – killed in action – “so we need somebody to come get them.” And it was an armored units, tanks and APCs and so we flew down. We were right there. We flew down and we landed and we never shut the ship down. We knew that we just could not spend much time there.

But one of their APCs, they had been going along through the jungle, one of the APCs had run over a mine and when the mine blew up, it tipped the APC up on its side, blew off one track, wasn't going to be repairable. They were going to have to destroy the track and go on, bunch the guys into other units and go on. All the guys got out; everything was okay. The guys got out, had a cigarette, ate something, let things cool down for a minute, made sure the enemy wasn't right there in their pocket. And when they didn't get any rifle fire from the enemy, they decided a couple guys need to go inside the APC and throw out all of our personal stuff, everything we can take with us. And so they did and when they went in, somebody must have been smoking. Everybody smoked but there was a tank of – it would have been napalm, it was the juice that supplies the flame thrower so it's napalm, so there was a tank inside of there and it must have ruptured because when they went in, it blew and it killed these two guys in a horrible ball of fire. So that's how they got killed.

And we were flying in to get up their bodies and take them to Long Binh to grave registration. I had never seen a dead soldier yet. I had never seen a wounded soldier yet. I don't think at that time I'd ever got into a serious fire fight yet, so this was my first thing, and I was really nervous. I was afraid, I was nervous, but I knew the landing site was going to be safe. There was an armored unit there; there were guys there; we're okay.

We landed and I watched them as they put the two guys on a single poncho and tied it up, and I thought, “How are you going to throw that poncho with two guys, a plastic poncho?” but there wasn't enough left of them for that to be a problem. I think they were both gone from their torsos down. So they tied them up, they tied the corners of the poncho together and they slung it over and threw it on the floor of the ship and, you know, the looks of the guys, their comrades, left behind, they were going to miss these guys. But more than that, they were two guys that they had been fighting with, a different kind of bond than any other kind of bond. And so we just picked up and flew off with these guys.

Now, I don't know where they're from, didn't know what their names were; I just knew there were two guys in this single poncho on the floor of my helicopter and this is my first contact with death in Vietnam. So this must have been Novemberish. It had to be around that time. And flying back to Long Binh where grave registration was, just very silent; we didn't have anything to say to anybody. We cleared for take-off and that was the only words spoken and then we were gone.

And as we flew off, you know, I just kind of looked down and I could see that APC laying up on its side with the tank there and maybe another APC, other guys, now they were busy doing what they had to do; they had to continue on; they didn't have any time to mourn the loss of their friends; they didn't have any time to think about it. They had

things to do and we flew off and left them. The looks on their faces were... I can't describe it. They knew how serious the situation was, but they also knew that they couldn't weep. They didn't have time to weep over this. They had to get out of there.
So this poem that I wrote about that incident was about the incident, and the flight home and the aftermath and what it did to me. But I didn't write this poem until some 26 or 27 years later. I was at a cowboy poetry gathering in Elko and you know, I was really into that. I memorized a lot of cowboy poetry. I thought that was good times. And at Elko, Nevada, there was one cowboy who I have tons of respect for, in my mind, one of the great cowboy poets, writers and performers; his name is Rod McQueary, a veteran himself, and I think he was a lieutenant and then a captain in Vietnam himself.
And at these cowboy gatherings, there was always a segment where we did poetry relating to veterans, of all wars, any veterans, anything attached to veterans. And you could sit in one of those sessions and hear great writings and great stories from cowboys who were also veterans, and Rod McQueary was one of the best but he felt so strongly about veterans that he usually headed this up. He was always in charge of the veterans and I had such a great respect for him that I thought, you know, after all these years, I had this burden on me that I always wanted to get rid of, and didn't know how to do it. And this year, when I watched Rod perform and the way he took care of the veterans, I said, “Okay, this guy is going to be my way out,” and so this is why I wrote this poem, and this is where the poem comes from. Do you want it?

Interviewer
We'd love you to read it.

Russ Moseley
I call it "The Cross I've Had to Bear," and I wrote this 26 or 27 years afterwards and at this time right now, this is some 42 years later. This is actually a letter that I wrote to Rod, explaining to him what my problem was and how he could bail me out.
"Upon these pages, I'll explain this package I've sent you, And I pray you'll undertake the task I ask for you to do.
‘‘I was flying over the jungle near a place called Nui Ba Den, When a call came over my radio about some trouble a unit was in.
‘‘They were calling for a medevac chopper. It was a call I learned to dread. Still, they needed some help and while two of their comrades were dead.
‘‘Just another mission of duty though this one was solemn and grim. Long months of duty lay ahead for me but it was the last day of duty for them.
‘‘Our LZ was just a clearing. I could feel the oppressive jungle heat, And we stared in solemn witness as they were wrapped in a poncho sheet.
‘‘To the Long Binh registration, it was a long and silent flight, And my crew was dealing with feelings and I was dealing with all of my might.
‘‘There were things that made this mission so hard that weighed heavily upon my mind. This was my first mission flying out with the dead and it was a look of the comrades left behind.
‘‘It was shortly before Christmas, their unknowing families would have it tough. I'm glad that I did not know them, this flight was rough enough.
‘‘I don't remember mention of their names or where they were, where they might be from. Their comrades just said, "Take 'em home, boys," and their spirits were awfully glum.
‘‘I didn't know if they were black or white and their faces were never seen. The important thing is that their blood was red, their uniforms OD green.
‘‘I flew them only part of the way home, but the story doesn't end there. What follows is why I call this The Cross I've Had to Bear.
‘‘And during that flight, from out of the poncho came a hand clenched tight in the fist, And I couldn't see what he had. This took a spiritual twist.
‘‘At the end of the day, I washed out my ship, and the day's mission filled my mind, And the water cleaned out the debris and the blood and I noticed this cross left behind.
‘‘It was the very thing that had been clenched in the fist of the soldier who had died. And in that instant, he knew his life was over and to his creator he had cried.
‘‘It was as if, in the clutching of this cross, in faith, was the only chance he had. He'd fought for his country and he believed in God. He's probably somebody's dad.
‘‘I couldn't just cast this treasure away or trade it as a souvenir, So I kept it safe in my quiet place and though hidden, it's always been near.
‘‘For the last 26 years I'd open the box and the cross would be laying there. Not knowing what to do with it all of these years made it the cross I've had to bear.

‘‘But then I saw Rod McQueary at the 96th veteran session. It brought back floods of memories for all and we gained valuable lessons.
‘‘And then it came to me, and I could see, that this was the end of the trail. I knew that he'd help me. His heart couldn't refuse. So here's the end of the tale.
‘‘I buried this cross out on your ranch, out where the sage brush grows, Out where there's peace and quiet and only a few folks know.
‘‘Please say a few kind words of farewell for this soldier and fellow vet, And although we did by him proper and my burden will be lightened, you bet.
‘‘Well, Rod, is a man with a mind of his own and he finished it in his own unique way.
And if you care to be curious, you ask him about it someday."

Interviewer
Can you describe what happened as well?

Russ Moseley
You know, we flew the body back to Long Binh, and we landed at this place, and they knew that we were coming in with two dead soldiers and, you know, I don't remember much. We just landed and my gunner and I didn't do anything; the pilots didn't do anything. We set 'er down. The guys came out from grave registration, they took the poncho, put it on a litter and left, and we took off. I remember not looking. I remember just looking out forward from my gunner's well, out into the distance, or at my feet, or at my guns. And I remember us lifting off and I turned around to look and they were gone, and we flew back to our base. And we didn't have anything more to do that day and so we flew it back and landed it in a place where we had some water to wash out the ship, and we did.
My gunner wanted the cross as a souvenir and I just thought it was a crucifix; it was a crucifix and it was a crucifix like the military issues and we've all seen them; it was a military – I suppose you could call it generic crucifix. And my gunner wanted a souvenir. A lot of us that went over there, sometimes we were looking for souvenirs to bring back and the guys on the ground who really did the fighting, they got souvenirs a lot, but those of us who flew back and forth, we weren't really in the mix. So we had to fish for our souvenirs. And it just struck me wrong for that to be a souvenir. It wasn't a souvenir. It was a man's crucifix, and I'm thinking, “I don't know who these guys were. How do you return this crucifix? Maybe I'll take it to the base chaplain and give it to the chaplain and he'll know the proper way of disposing of this crucifix.”
I never did that. We were busy. We had lots to do. I never got away to see the chaplain, so I ended up just cleaning it and putting it away in this box that we kept. All of us had a little metal box or something that our precious things – letters from home, photos of our families – those things were in those boxes and those were our sacred places, whatever was in there. So I put the crucifix in my box and that's where it stayed for 26 years; travelled all around; went everywhere, but that's where it stayed. And I always felt guilty that I didn't turn it over. So, after all the years, every time I'd get in the box to look for some old memorabilia, military memorabilia, I kept facing this cross, kept thinking, “I never did anything with this cross; I've got to do something with it, but what?” Who do you take it to? Do you take it to a Protestant chaplain? Do you take it to a Catholic priest? Do you take it to your Mormon bishop? It almost felt like they didn't have the feeling for this crucifix that you did so I never did.
And it wasn't until the cowboy poetry gathering in Elko, Nevada, seeing how Rod respected and took care of the veterans, that I said, this was my way out. So the first thing I did when I came home is I sat down, I wrote this letter to Rod, and packed it up in a box and I sent it to him. I didn't give him a lot of choices. I sent the letter and the crucifix and the package to him and now he was stuck with it, and for me, I felt a great deal of relief. At least I felt like I had done the most right for that soldier, whoever he was. I had done the most right I possibly could by giving it to Rod.

Interviewer
And tell us what Rod did with it.

Russ Moseley
Well, I've never seen it since and I asked Rod what he did with it, and he said that he had, best to my recollection... now, this is a long time ago, but to the best of my recollection, he found a chain or some, a thong or something, and he took it out to a place on his ranch where there was fresh, cool water, I think a spring, and big trees, maybe big cottonwoods, shady, cool, a favorite place for maybe his cowboys, maybe his cattle, I don't know. And I think he just hung it in a tree by this spring, maybe over the spring, near the spring where it wouldn't be disturbed and it just had its place and I never asked him about it again. I just walked away from it and I never thought about it again until now.

Interviewer
When you were flying back, you said on the phone that you saw a charred hand and a crucifix. Can you describe that?

Russ Moseley
Yeah, I was just flying back from that unit out of the jungle to Long Binh. We flew with the doors open and there's a

tremendous amount of wind blowing through the aircraft as you're flying and it's noisy, hard to keep a cigarette lit. But I remember looking over at the poncho; I couldn't stop, and every once in a while I'd keep looking at the poncho. I couldn't believe that I had two dead American soldiers on my helicopter. I was new to flying; I was new to this thing; never seen real action up until then, and I just kept looking back at this poncho and it was whipping around in the wind. The top had been tied pretty good but you couldn't help but notice the poncho was whipping around and I kept looking and I don't know whether the hand of the soldier relaxed from its state when we picked him up, or whether the poncho had shifted around the body somehow, and I know that it was nasty inside that poncho, and his hand came out.

And I remember the one time looking, and suddenly, there was this hand and I'd seen it was the guy's hand and he had his fist clenched tight and I didn't know what he had in his hand. I knew there was something there but I wasn't going to touch it; I didn't want to know. And every once in a while, I just kept looking back and the hand was still clenched tight in a fist. And when we got to grave registration, I didn't look back again, except I knew the hand – well, I did, I guess I did, because I knew the hand was open. The hand was open, there was nothing there. And so registration guys grabbed the poncho, put it off onto a litter and they were gone and then we flew away.

But when we got back to the base and I was washing out, here where the poncho was was this crucifix. It wasn't our crucifix; I didn't wear 'em, and I don't know about my gunner, but it wasn't his and there's no other explanation, it had to be what this guy had in his hand that we weren't able to determine during the flight. I don't even think I radioed my gunner and said, "This guy's got something in his hand," I just kept it to myself. I just knew. And so when we washed out, I knew that this crucifix belonged to this unknown, deceased soldier and, I mean, immediately I knew I had some decisions to make about, “What was I going to do with this?” It's not like you could throw it in the garbage can. It was a thing you had to respect, but it was too late at that point to return it to the soldier or to his family.

To this day, I wished I could have mailed that to his family and said to them, "Your son was being the son that you probably wanted him to be, because in his moment, between life and death, he did the only thing he knew, the only thing he was taught; he went for his crucifix." I think for other veterans, many other veterans – I can only speak for myself, but I can imagine that one of the regrets that many of us have is, we might not have been the kind of person that our mothers and fathers would hope we would be during certain times. I think everybody can say that about their lives but when you've been in combat and you've done the things that you've done there, I think you have more of those times, when if you look back at it as an old man like myself, that you wish that more like – there's a poem, "I Wished I Was the Kinder That Mother Thinks I Am." It's a German poem, "I Wish I Was the Kinder That My Mother Thinks I Am," and in that soldier's case, he was.

Interviewer

Why are you telling these stories now?

Russ Moseley

I don't have an answer for that. This is not a story I particularly want to tell. I've always felt that every one of us who have served in the military, especially those who went into some of these places, they have their own story and that's their story, but every other soldier has their story; they're full of stories; we all have our stories. And I'm full up enough with what I remember that I don't feel like anybody else is any different than I am. I think everybody else is full up with their stories too and their memories and so they're well-supplied with what they know in their memories. And so I've always just felt that my stories are best kept inside me and I don't have great stories. My stories are little stories. I've talked to people who have big and great stories. I'm glad I wasn't them; I'm glad I was me.

You know, every once in a while, people will say, "What did you do in Vietnam?" My favorite thing to tell them is, I was a dog catcher. We had a lot of dogs that ran on the beach and nobody liked that and so I used to go out and catch the dogs because I've always felt that my story isn't – I didn't do anything compared – I flew, I flew in and out, I flew in and out; I was above the heat; I was above the mosquitoes. I had my moments, I had my moments when my pucker factor was right up there where you could pull the naugahyde right off the seat with your hinny, but compared to the other guys, I didn't do anything, you know? And these stories like this weren't stories that I went out and did to be a hero. These things were put on me. I would have never faced the fire on my own.

Interviewer

Can you talk about your relationship with the children, and you've got a great picture of Vietnamese kids and about Vietnam and the culture of the people.

Russ Moseley

Yeah, Vietnam is a beautiful country. Vietnam, I could have never escaped that, daily – when I flew, and I have pictures – daily, when you flew over the country of Vietnam, it was beautiful; it was emerald green. The leaves were huge, bright green; they were everywhere. The lushness of the vegetation, the rivers, the lakes; it was just a beautiful country. It was just tropical and a beautiful country but, you know, you didn't have to look very far to see bomb craters in places where things had been burned out; they'd been napalmed; they'd been bombed and their craters pocked the earth like chicken pox.

You were stunned sometimes looking at the ground, at the bomb craters and how many there were, how many

bombs had to drop to make that many holes in the ground. But you'd fly into these little places to wait, because you knew something was about to happen and they needed helicopters close by and so you'd sit on the ground sometimes for hours and the little kids would run up to you and they'd want cigarettes and chocolate and they'd want your C-rations, anything that you had that they could eat, they wanted it. It was as good or better than what they had.
Kids were out scavenging all the time to support their own families, little kids. Anything you gave them, they never consumed it right there; they took it back to their families. The cigarettes, you'd give them cigarettes and they'd take it right back to their mom and dad, or to their older siblings. But I loved the kids; the kids were great, but you know, the more experienced guys, the guys that had seen harder things than me that worked on the ground, the infantry and the armored guys who had seen kids carrying grenades for the express purpose of killing American soldiers on command. A lot of them wouldn't have anything to do with the kids. A kid got too close to them, they might shoot them because they were terrified that kid might be carrying a grenade, or a young girl.
And me, I never got that hard. I don't think I got that hard, because kids would run up, the ship wouldn't be running, it was safe, you know; you'd run out and chase a kid and grab them, mess with them, bring them back, sit them on your lap, let them touch things, let them get in your helicopter and stand on the floor and look at all the great and, must be marvelous things to them, the instrument panels, the controls, the glass, the guns. I mean, you know, helicopters are pretty awesome machines. And for a little kid like that, to be able to get into one of those things and mess around with one of the crew members was pretty fun. It got a lot of reward.
They didn't speak any English; I didn't speak any Vietnamese. It was like, you didn't need to. You'd chase those little kids around, reach in your pockets, snatch out some little thing to give them. They were ever so grateful for anything you had. But it was like, for them, it didn't seem like the war was going on. I'm sure they knew what to do when things got hot, but they had their moments when they were just little kids like anywhere. It was kind of fun to mess with them, you know? Oftentimes, I wonder what happened to those little kids. I think of those little kids still as little kids, you know, what are they doing now? But those guys now would be, what, 50 years old? More?

Interviewer
Forty.

Russ Moseley
Forty, fifty years old? You know, you wonder what happened to them after we left. Did they get sick? Did they get hurt? When North Vietnam took over, were they slaughtered because of their association with the Americans? I don't know, but I do think about them.
I think about the poor little old mama-san that used to take care of my clothes and their age – I have no idea how old she was, but to me, when I was 20 years old, remembering how mama-san looked. I had the oldest mama-san in the unit. She was a grandma and then some. She appeared to be in her seventies, hunched over, tiny. I could pick her up with one arm; nothing. I used to sneak minute rice to her and she used to think that was the coolest stuff in the world and she took really good care of me.
She was an old woman who worked long after women should have to work and she kind of mothered me. I know a few times when I came off of missions when I was exhausted, and my best that I could do was find my bunk and get on it, dirty and sweaty and exhausted and stinky. And would wake up with my clothes off, my boots off, my clothes had been washed, my boots had been cleaned up. I had been wiped down with a wet rag, stuff I don't remember because mama-san would come in and – lots of guys have lots of stories about mama-sans but this one literally mothered me and I gave her everything that I could scrounge to take to her hooch for her family, because she sincerely took care of me when she could. She's dead many years ago.

Interviewer
You told me when you were coming home, the first purchase you made in the USA when I got home was a handgun.

Russ Moseley
Yeah, the guys that left ahead of us would write letters back and some of the letters would say, "You're not going to believe this but when you get home, you're in as much danger here at home as you are there. There are people that are so angry that we're doing what we're doing. When you get home, the first thing you should buy is a gun, because you're going to be surprised at the aggression of people your own age who didn't have to go, who have dodged it. So if I was you, the best thing that you could do is buy a gun."
And I did; I bought a cheap handgun from a pawn shop, a Roam .38 revolver, about as cheap a handgun as you could buy, but it never left my side for a couple of years, and even when we landed at the Sea-Tac airport coming home, an aircraft just ahead of us that had landed had come under fire from protesters and it became quite a skirmish in the airport.
When I say, “quite a skirmish,” I'm talking about paramedics and ambulances and police, and it was just a matter of, the soldiers were coming home, the anti-war demonstrators weren't going to let them through the terminal and essentially their lieutenant said, "Guys, the only thing between you, mother and apple pie, and the girls you left behind, is this rabble here in the airport, and when we get through that, you're on your way home, but we've got to

take care of this mess first."
And it got pretty ugly, as you can imagine; guys just coming home from Vietnam weren't too finicky about being aggressive, and I think it was much more aggressive than the demonstrators were prepared for. And it was bloody and it was a mess, and when we got off the plane, they were still cleaning up that mess. They just told us not to look left or right, just to walk straight through and we were going to be processed and go home, which is what we did.

Interviewer

Do you know what happened with the fist fight?

Russ Moseley

It was everything fight. It was an airplane full of returning GIs against a bunch of protesters. Whatever could be used got used and it was evidently short work but there were a lot of people, not necessarily soldiers this time, got hurt pretty bad and it was pretty much a mess, but those soldiers wanted to go home, and they weren't very timid about what it took to get through this mess of protesters.

Interviewer

Russ, how did you feel about the protesters at that time and did you know that there were protesters when you were in Vietnam?

Russ Moseley

I didn't know much about. I wasn't aware of it. Some of the guys were, they got letters from home, but my mom and dad, they were in Africa and they never sent me anything about protesters. They weren't where you saw it on television. We had no television in Ethiopia. They hadn't gotten it yet.

Interviewer

So how did you react at home, when you came off and you had heard this?

Russ Moseley

Well, I bought the pistol and I carried it with me all the time, and I just said to myself, I'm not going to let anybody get too close to me. And if their attitude is not good and they get close to me, I can't let that happen. My pistol was always loaded. It seems silly now, but then, I think I was willing to do whatever I could not to let somebody take me out in the United States after what I thought I had been through.
I thought I'd paid; I thought the price had been paid and I thought it was over and I thought it was done with, and I didn't want to have anything to do with it. And I certainly didn't want to get into conflicts with people who didn't like it. I pretty much kept quiet about it. So I didn't wear parts of my uniform, like a lot of the guys did. I just went straight to St. George, to Dixie College, and tried to go on with my life, but it was all too obvious that there were some guys who wouldn't let it go, and so I had some confrontations.
None of them required the pistol but – well, one of them did; one of them, I thought somebody was breaking into my room and I was sleeping. I could hear somebody key in the lock on my dormitory room and nobody was supposed to be there. I didn't have roommates at the time. I was staying there by myself early, before school opened and I thought somebody was coming into my room and I woke up thinking, I'm going to have to kill this person before they spot me. And when the door came opened, it was just a girl who had handouts that had to go in every dorm class to give us our instructions about keeping up the rooms and this is the rule to the dorm and this is the rule to the campus and this is how you have to dress, and all these handouts had to be delivered to all the rooms before the students showed up, and she didn't know that I was already there. I almost shot her.

Interviewer

Talk about the children and the girl in Vietnam. What would you say about the war?

Russ Moseley

I don't know, I'm not political at all. I'm not political at all. I don't understand it and I don't want to understand it. But I do understand this one thing, is, when men are sent into dangerous places, those are the men that pay all of the price, whether it goes good or whether it goes bad. And I think it's unanimous amongst all of us who have gone to combat during any conflict anywhere in the world, one of the things that grates on your spirit, in the back of your mind, is the guy who signs the document that says, "I think this is a good idea; let's send these men in to do this job," is not the guy who's going to go in and take the heat if it goes bad.
He's probably the guy that's going to say, "Yeah, I did that," if it goes really well and is successful, he's going to say, "I did that, it was my idea." But if it goes horribly bad, he's not the guy that's going to be in the body bag. He's also not the guy whose kid or spouse or parent is amongst that group of men and women who are going to go in and perform that dangerous duty. I'm convinced of that. I'm convinced that if the man with the ball point pen behind the desk, who's – he did have breakfast that morning and he got driven to his office – when he signs that document and gives that command, he is not the man that's going to end up in the body bag, and he is not the man who is related to, people he loves and cares about, are the people who's going to go in and do that horrible duty. And that bothers me.
You know, when McCain was running, at least you could say, "When that guy tells you to go in there and do this

horrible task, it's coming from the hand of the man who has been there and suffered horribly, personally, himself, at doing that duty and he knows viscerally, more than any other human being, what could happen to each and every one of those individuals who's going in to do the task that he's asking you to do." And it bothers me a great deal that some of our people, who ask us to do the duties, are far removed from that and have not got the faintest idea or clue or a hint of what it would be like to be the man in that unit. And that's as political as I get.

Interviewer

Did you fly to the DMZ?

Russ Moseley

Do you smell that smell? Smell that smell. That's that smell. That is that smell. Okay. The DMZ, demilitarized zone, that's that invisible line that was parallel, where we decided, "If you're north of there, you're North Vietnam and you're the enemy and if you come south of there, you're in South Vietnam and you're our target." Big, dangerous area.

A lot of bad guys in there, moving from North to South to bring supplies and manpower to fight the war in South Vietnam. Some of them were North Vietnamese, regular soldiers, NVA, wore uniforms, caps with stars on them. But a lot of them were what we call Viet Cong and I'm not really sure now what the translation of that is, but they were freedom fighters for North Vietnam. They wore their clothing that they grew up in. They didn't have uniforms. They had whatever weapon that they could scrounge. Sometimes a lot of them only carried a knife. A lot of them only carried ammunition and supplies and food for those that did have a weapon.

Interviewer

So when you flew, were you aware that you were in the DMZ zone?

Russ Moseley

Not really, not really. Those of us who were gunners, when you're in the back, you only have one thing, you have the guns in front of you and you're looking out ahead of you. You don't want to fly into another aircraft. You have the thoughts that are going through your own mind. You're always watching. You're watching for rounds coming at you. At nighttime it was easy; there were tracers. I can't tell you how many times you'd be flying over the jungle and suddenly you'd look down.

Now considering the speed of a bullet, you wouldn't think there would be time for this, but many times I'd be looking out of a ship in the dark, flying, and looking at the ground and some enemy soldier on the ground thinking, I can hit him, and cutting loose with a burst of AK-47 fire, whatever it was they had, and you could see the tracers and the bullets coming right at you, these little balls of fire coming at you in a long string. You could watch them coming at you and you could call out on your radio, "Okay, here they come, they're coming." And you just fly along and for the longest time – and it's hard for me to imagine now, considering the speed of a bullet, but you had plenty of time to watch those balls of fire coming at you, all the way from their source to the ship.

And you'd watch them coming and you'd brace yourself, knowing that each one of those balls of fire represented not only one tracer, but five other rounds that were not tracers, that were invisible but they were coming. You had plenty of time to warn your crew, "They're coming, we're going to get a hit." And it seemed like at the very last minute, it was an optical illusion. It looked like they would arc and go behind your tail which mean they didn't lead you enough.

I can remember, after being shot at so many times, yelling out loud in my mic, "You're an idiot; you didn't lead me long enough; you've got to lead me further if you're going to hit me; lead me further." That's how our humor got. You got to a point where, "Damn it to hell, man, if you're going to shoot me and give some honor to yourself, for crying out loud, could you lead me a little bit better than that? You missed again, you're an idiot." I mean, we should have been grateful, but it brought up a lot of strange humor.

Lots of dark humor. Dark humor got all of us through, and those that could not come up with a joke or something funny about something or make something funny, I think those are the guys today that are having the hard times that are psychologically out of it, they can't be helped. They're not able to make combat humor. My mother has no humor, my mother has no humor. My father was the greatest humorist who ever was, and he could always make you laugh about stuff, and that's what saved my life.

Before I went to fly for the DMZ, when I was still with the first infantry division, flying slicks as a crew chief, one of our missions, we got called out – as many helicopters as possible needed to rush to this fire support base, because the enemy had come and they would were determined to take over this fire support base, which meant they were going to come through the wire, they were going to kill everybody and take over all of the equipment.

Interviewer

And these were Marines, correct?

Russ Moseley

These, I think, everybody on this base were Marines. I don't know. In my experience with the guys we collected, they were all Marines but there could have been Army guys in there.

Interviewer
But you were saying something, when the Marines called for help –
Russ Moseley
Yeah. This was one of those situations where the Marines said, “We're getting our little hinnies kicked and we need extraction,” and so we flew in there. They could see, it was only obvious to them, that by nightfall, everybody that was at that base was going to die. They were not going to be able to hold off the enemy. I wished I could remember where it was or when it was; I can't. But it was before I got transferred up on the DMZ.
So we flew in and we were picking guys up as fast as we could. There was lots of smoke. There was lots of dust everywhere. Everything was getting riddled to pieces, mortars and rockets were raining down from the enemy. They were rushing out of the trees trying to charge the barbed wire fences. Everybody was fighting for their lives. We were grabbing everybody we possibly could and flying out with them. We knew, in our minds, anybody left behind when the last ship left was not going to survive the night; they'd be killed. So we were piling as many bodies on our helicopters as we could to fly out.
My situation, we landed, guys started running for the ship. God, this is funny, and almost funny. One guy who, in desperation to escape the onslaught, had dropped everything. He didn't have his weapon; he didn't have his bandolier of ammunition; he didn't have boots on. He had his boxer shorts on, good old, green, Army boxer shorts with that ridiculous open fly in the front, and a t-shirt on. Didn't even have his helmet, and he was running barefoot for his life to get on my helicopter, because he knew if he did not get on, he was going to die.
And we were getting light on the skids, we were getting ready to take off and he did a long flying leap into that helicopter and we were gone. And we got far enough away from the battle that we knew now they couldn't hit us; we knew now it was simply a flight like any other. We were going to take them to a place where we could set them down, get rid of them and they would be safe and the battle, at least that one, for them, was over. We had successfully gone in and made an extraction and we were still flying so we were good.
I have to show you this shirt. This is my very prized possession. And though faded, this is a diamond, and it says "First Marine Aircraft Wing, Vietnam." This is the size of the guy that dove in my ship, and as I've looked at my own uniforms, this was my size, too, so we were all little guys way back when, 19, 20, 21. This is the shirt he had on, and his boxer shorts and he said, "I wished I had something I could give you." He says, "If I hadn't have gotten this ride out, I would have been killed, and as you can see, I don't have anything to give you."
And after all that we'd all been through in the last 30 minutes, I said to him, "I really like that t-shirt, that's a pretty cool t-shirt." And he pulled it off and he gave me his t-shirt and when we got to the safe place at another base, I left that man standing out on a helipad in his boxer shorts. So he had his boxer shorts and he had his life intact, and I had his shirt, and I still have it, and it still bears the smell of what any Vietnam veteran can tell you they remember is that smell. So this is the coolest thing I own. I'd give a lot of money right now to take this shirt back to that soldier, that Marine, give him his shirt back, because I certainly got my use out of it. Tell him he can have his shirt back. 'Cause I really, I feel bad I took his shirt.

Russ Moseley 2nd Interview

Salt Lake City, Utah
Russ Moseley
I can't think of a single person I've told of that story to. When I left, I left.
Interviewer
Why didn't you tell the story?
Russ Moseley
I don't know. I have not told that story to anyone that I know of since I left Vietnam. Except Rod McQueary. I went straight away to him and I told him. So that he knew why I wanted something done with that cross, and why I wanted him to do it. Other than that I've never spoken to anybody about it.
Interviewer
This is Russ Moseley, second interview. What music did you listen to in Vietnam, or did you listen to music in Vietnam?
Russ Moseley
Oh, yeah, we listened to a lot of music in Vietnam. It was being transmitted from somewhere. We had a military DJ that kept us up on what news we could hear and, you know, a lot of the current music, and we listened to a lot of it, it was pretty important that we had it, listen to.
Interviewer
Why was it important?

Russ Moseley
Why? I don't know, it kept us from feeling so far away. It's a good diversion, you felt closer to home. And nothing's worse than silence. Silence never meant good over there. I mean... silence meant something was about to happen that just hadn't happened yet. So I think that silence was tough on us over there. So we listened to music and, you know, if you heard things happening around you, even at a distance, you know, explosions or gunfire, anything, was better than silence.

Interviewer
Do you remember the tunes? Were you a country boy?

Russ Moseley
No. You know, I was just, you know, whatever the current music was at the time. I remember... oh, boy... I can't.

Interviewer
Creedence Clearwater Revival?

Russ Moseley
Oh, yeah, CCR. All of those. You know, late '60s, all the late '60s music, whether it was country or rock or whatever, you know, I listened to lot of it. I don't remember the stations being country or rock or jazz specific; we heard a lot of everything.

Interviewer
Were there any media networks there? Television or publications?

Russ Moseley
Not that I remember. I never remembered any of that.

Interviewer
Your thoughts on the media?

Russ Moseley
No, I didn't think about it.

Interviewer
You talked about the nurses last time.

Russ Moseley
Well, yeah, you know. It was so funny that, you know, when you're so far from home and you don't see girls from back home, you know, Caucasians girls from back home, you start missing that. I mean there were certainly beautiful girls over there, but not girls from home, you know? Not English-speaking Caucasian women. And I remember how we used to just talk about 'em all the time.
And in one incidence, we were laying out in the sun – you know, those of us who had aircraft down or didn't have missions to perform would lay out in the sun and tan and read and listen to music. And I remember there must have been about six of us laying out just in our boxer shorts or nothing, I don't know, on this little grassy place we'd fixed up. And we were all talking about, you know, if some American girls walked by right now... heaven help 'em, you know what I mean?
And sure enough, several nurses walked by, beautiful Caucasian American girls walked by and all the talk stopped and it was several moments long after they'd disappeared where we kind of looked at each other and said, "Did I really see what I think I saw? Did you guys see those girls?" And all the machoism completely passed. We were absolutely paralyzed, totally paralyzed. We couldn't have stood up if we'd have wanted to. It's kind of funny, I always remember that as being one of my funny points is how quickly we went from being the tough guys – combat-hardened men to... entranced, paralyzed by a few Army nurses that walked by.

Interviewer
No whistling?

Russ Moseley
No whistling, no cat-calling, not a word from any of us. Nobody bumped the other guy and went, "Hey, look," you know? Not anything. All of us lay there totally petrified. Not petrified, paralyzed with awe at these women.

Interviewer
Talk about some dark humor and mischievous things you did in Vietnam and why that was important.

Russ Moseley
Well, you know, everybody who's ever been in those situations, combat situations, where you see things that people should never have to see in their lives, you get to where you create your own humor about your own people or the enemy; dead, wounded, captured, situations where, you know, your heart should be going out to them but instead you just make a comment that, you know – it's dark humor. It's what got a lot of us through situations that there was no other way out. And you know, you'd make comments about your own dead, the enemy's dead. Tough situations, you would make these – as I look at 'em today, I would say, you know, “can't believe I said that.” But in those times, it was to break the seriousness of the moment which was, you know, a lot of those moments

escalated to a point where... you didn't know how much more your mind could take, how much more your eyes could absorb without you just not being able to handle it.
And so you come up with this dark humor that we would never say in peace time or around decent folks, and it seemed to get us through, it broke the tension, it carried us through. It never was meant for disrespect, it was just, you're acknowledging situations or individuals that hadn't been as lucky as you in a situation, in a combat situation. So we used – a lot of us, I mean you know, many of us would pop off with things that would stand you back. But it did, it broke the incredible tension.

Interviewer

What about the light humor or jokes that you played on each other to break the tension?

Russ Moseley

Well, you know the rubber band trap in the outhouse was always a good one. You know, every new guy coming into Vietnam knew that – you know, we would tell stories about the snakes and the spiders and the things that could sting and bite you. Of course we always exaggerated how poisonous they were, you know, we'd always tell 'em that they'd only make it two steps and keel over and die. And we used to set little rubber band traps that would sting in the outhouses to catch new guys.
I remember in our unit, when I first got to our unit, some guy had a pretty good sized constrictor of some kind, snake, and the snake stayed in the shower, he stayed over in the corner where he could stay wet. And as I remember it, I never saw the snake ever move, I just know the guy that owned him once in a while fed him, and I don't think I ever saw the snake move. He just always was in his same little corner coiled up. It was a pretty sizable snake.
And I remember sometimes the very first thing we would do when a new guy came into a unit is take him to the showers. We'd say, "Okay, stow your gear, grab your towel, your razor and your soap and we'll show you the showers. And all you need is your towel wrapped around you and your flip-flops because it's just us guys here now." And we'd take 'em down and we'd all shower with 'em, but we'd all shower in anticipation of this guy spotting the snake. We'd never say anything about the snake, we would just wait to see how long it took for him to spot the snake. That was good humor. Taking guys out at night on snipe hunts. And if you're from the West, everybody knows what a snipe hunt is. And we'd take guys out snipe hunting and that was good – really good humor, sort of. And, sometimes it didn't work out so well but --

Interviewer

What is snipe hunting?

Russ Moseley

Well, snipe hunting is taking a guy out after an imaginary bird that doesn't really exist and giving him a burlap bag, setting him in a ditch and telling him to wait for this bird. And while he sits up all night waiting for this bird to come down the ditch, then everybody else goes back to bed and goes to sleep and leaves the guy sitting by himself in a ditch with a bag, waiting for a bird that's never gonna come. I mean it's funny to us but it was never funny to them. There were just a lot of things that we did.
We had a company mascot, a bulldog that had no teeth. And he was a great dog, a fun dog, except he didn't like you running by the runt of him. If you ran by the front of him he'd bite you with his gummy teeth and it was just more aggravation than it was pain. And the dog hated water. So we used to have all of the doors on the hooches equipped with a little tiny hole in it so we could spray the fire extinguisher through the hole at the dog. But whoever was the closest to the dog, when he got sprayed, always got bit. So I just remember every hooch had a little hole in the screen door and that was specifically to hose down the dog when a guy walked by, so that he'd get bit.
We pulled a lot of pranks. And that kept things light. I mean you can't be down about what you're doing every minute of every day in those situations. You have to break it up somehow, you know? And we always found ways of doing it. And if you were a guy that didn't take pranks well, you probably got it more than the other guys, so you'd better just love it or you become a target.

Interviewer

Those were usually the new guys?

Russ Moseley

New guys.

Interviewer

Talk about R&R a little bit and what did you do?

Russ Moseley

Yeah, R&R was great. I remember that I waited a long time to get a slot to Hawaii. I'd never seen Hawaii and I wanted to go to Hawaii. I didn't want to go to Bangkok which was very popular at that time because I wanted to see American girls and break away from, you know, the oriental deal. I just wanted to get away from that environment. So I thought Hawaii would be good. And just before I went to Hawaii somebody came to me in a hooch and said, "There's a guy over in the next hooch and he is married and the only place his wife can see him is in Hawaii and if

you'll give him the Hawaii slot we'll try and get you whatever you want at a later time." And I said, "I want Australia." And they go, "Australia's hard to get." And I go, "Well, I want Australia. If he wants to see his wife, he can go to Hawaii and see her, but I want Australia." So I did get Australia and I went to Sydney and it was just... you know, it was – the food there was just spectacular. It was cold, it was their winter so it's in late June, early, you know, in June I think. And so it's chilly there in the daytime, sweaters. But it was a beautiful city. Kings Cross, which everybody knows about in Sydney is a place for everybody to voice their opinions on government and economy and just you know, if you have to vent that you want to tell the world, you can go to Kings Cross and stand on a soapbox, literally, and say what you want without fear of arrest or... you know, I saw the live play "Hair" which was big in those days, you know? The great play "Hair." I went to the theater and saw "Hair." And I went with four or five guys that I kind of knew from Vietnam and we ate as good as we could. I bought a couple of very nice wool suits and several nice shirts, it was just so nice to see nice clothing. So I bought a lot of clothing and I ate a lot and I toured a lot. And we just ran around doing everything we possibly could because we only had seven days. And I really fell in love with Australia in that week.

Interviewer

Did you find your Caucasian women?

Russ Moseley

Yeah, we did. I mean every place you went there is, you know, all the clubs and everything, as soon as they heard your accent they were just – we were yanks and we were special. It's like here in the States, when you hear a girl with an Australia accent you can't get enough of it, you just want her to talk all night. So yeah, we did. It was great. Of course that interfered with the local Australian guys' program because their girls were at our table. So that became a problem.*(laughs)* Yeah.

Interviewer

Did you get in fights?

Russ Moseley

Well, yeah, we were either fighting or running some of the times. *(laughs)* But it was after we'd had our lobster and our steak or we were all happy. It was a great time.

Interviewer

Tell me about the Bob Hope story and the prisoner?

Russ Moseley

I'd been given this assignment to take a guy from our unit, one of our own soldiers, to turn him into one of our own prison camps in Lai Khe City. Actually a village. But it was for our own prisoners, not for prisoners of war.

Interviewer

What did he do?

Russ Moseley

And he was a young kid, he was just really young, but he was just a great big strong kid. And he'd got drinking and had an ax to grind and one thing led to another and he ended up unloading an M-16 rifle in the barracks of the first sergeant thinking the first sergeant was at fault for something that had happened in his life. So anyway, the next day I didn't have a mission and I was assigned to take this guy to the prison. Now we were chained together on handcuffs. Now he was such a big guy I said, "What if he just beats me up and takes the key and he's gone?" And they go, "Well, we're not gonna give you a key." So I go, great. So we're locked together, we've got an extended length of chain between us and we are flying up there in my ship, my Huey. And when we landed at Lai Khe there was a lot of things going on; bleachers were being set up, the line rigors were climbing trees and setting up speakers into trees and a stage was being put together and we said, "What's going on?" And they said, "Bob Hope's coming." And so I said, "Really? How long till he gets here?" And they go, "About 45 minutes, he'll be here." And I go, "Wow." And everybody was in a huge scurry. And so I thought well, I'll take and turn this guy into the prison and then I'll come back and watch it. And he said, "I would like to see Bob Hope." And I said, "Well, you know, I can't, I have a time limit here, I have to set you in there within a given amount of time." And he goes, "Like what are they gonna do? Are they gonna shoot me again for seeing Bob Hope because certainly this is not gonna be a good thing I'm going into now, and I don't think they're gonna punish me anymore, possibly, than if I show up late. And I'll just tell them I wouldn't go and I just drug you in." And I said, "Okay. Okay, that sounds reasonable." So we did. We both sat there, we had a field jacket over our arms that we were connected on so people didn't see the chain and we watched Bob Hope and it was a great show and I'll never forget that Bob Hope came out and said, his first line was, "I'm glad to be here in Lai Khe, where the airport is certainly three or four feet shorter than the airplane I came in." – or the runway, "that the runway was three or four feet shorter than the airplane I came in." And we understood exactly what he meant by that because it was just a very tight runway. But it was a great show. The Gold Diggers were there, Connie Stevens, it was just a great, great show. And after the show I took him to the prison and turned him in and they acted like they didn't really care. That was good, I felt better about that. And I went back to my unit. I always wondered what happened to that guy but I don't know, probably not good.

Interviewer
That's a great story.
Russ Moseley
But, we got to See Bob Hope, the both of us, you know?
Interviewer
Mention one more time the first thing Bob Hope said.
Russ Moseley
Bob Hope says, "I'm glad to be here in Lai Khe, where the runway is three feet shorter than the airport I arrived in." We laughed about that because it is, it's a short runway. Especially for the aircraft that he came in. So.
Interviewer
Kudos to him, stopping everywhere.
Russ Moseley
What a great guy. Even today, when I see Bob Hope on television, you know, old recorded Christmas, Thanksgiving old shows for him, being in Korea, European – you know, all the wars. You know, it still makes me very emotional because of how much money and effort he put into doing them and all the people he took with him, his own entourage of entertainers that came with him and spent their time with soldiers, at a time when normally you'd be home with your family, you know, just being relaxed.
And I'm sure those shows were very tedious, I'm sure they were very intensive going from – and in this situation where this show that I saw in Lai Khe, they made an announcement, oh, probably a third of the way into the show where some of our Special Forces guys sneaking around in the boonies way out in the perimeter had located some rockets that were set to go off and land in the middle of the show, during the show. And they had found 'em and destroyed 'em. And you know, what a near miss that was. So, you know, there's a lot going on and I'm sure that Bob Hope or anybody else that goes over and entertains understands that they can be killed with the rest at any time. And so it was a great thing that they decided that they would do it in any case.
Interviewer
Talk a little bit about firebases and then talk about the DMZ. What was the importance of the DMZ?
Russ Moseley
Well, the DMZ was supposed to be a place where those who were from North Vietnam could not come into South Vietnam. And I suppose vice versa. But you know, it really didn't stop anything, it was an imaginary line somewhat like North Korea must be now, and South Korea. You know, the only greater danger I saw being stationed up near the DMZ is you got hit more often because the North Vietnamese didn't have to go so far carrying their rockets and their ordinates to get you. I mean, it was just right across the border. And oftentimes by the time they got to the south it was more difficult or labor-intensive to get some of the bigger rockets and some of the things, especially in mass amounts into the south to do these periodic raids and attacks. And the other thing was, is there were MiGs, there were a lot of MiGs that stayed really close to the DMZ that would sneak in, do an attack, and get out unscathed. I know a lot of our guys got some of 'em, but you know, you always worried, this close to the DMZ, a MiG could be anywhere.
But the firebases, I think firebases were the very most dangerous, because firebases are small bases, they're small encampments surrounded by barbed wire and mines with some artillery pieces in there and, you know, not a large compliment of soldiers. And they would surround the larger bases. Now my base was Camp Eagle, this was with my second group that I was with over there, Camp Eagle. And then there were firebases around you and they were to support and protect you from a distance all around.
And you know, the enemy wanted those bases. Because they were smaller, they were easy to attack and they were tough to defend. And I know that being in a firebase, you were on pins and needles and on alert all the time. There was no time where you felt safe. So you didn't stay out in the open for long, guys didn't light cigarettes at night unless they were undercover where the light from the cigarette or the match could be seen. It was always a situation where you kept your head down and listened very, very carefully for incoming mortars and rockets, because it happened all the time. Because you were a pain to the enemy, these little firebases. So you made a great target.
And flying in and out of 'em to supply 'em was always a pain because, you know, the enemy was just – they weren't very far away, the enemy was never far away from a fire support base. They were always out in the outskirts looking for an opportunity to get in and take advantage and flying in and out you always received fire trying to get in and out because the enemy, you had to fly over their heads to get into the fire support base. And you were always low and slow and carrying a lot of stuff. And so flying into a firebase was very dangerous. We were always happy to get away from 'em.
Interviewer
Talk about the enemy, talk about the NVA and how they fight.

Russ Moseley

Well, the NVA was North Vietnamese Army and they generally were all in a uniform, a North Vietnamese uniform. And they had their Chinese cap that they always wore with the red star. It was always very prominent. They didn't wear helmets they wore their, I guess they were wool caps with the red star. And you always knew NVA because they had the uniforms on. And wherever they were, they organized a lot of stuff. And they were tough. I mean everybody we fought against, all of the Vietnamese, they are tough. They are tough little fighters. For their size, they're like little badgers. They are a very difficult enemy to go against because they have no limits, they go to the very end. And the Viet Cong were civilians who had joined up with the NVA to come and do essentially the same task. You know, come in, find us, attack, get out, hopefully unscathed, you know, little hits here and there, kill a few here and there, and then run and hide.

And they're terrific hiders. You know, they're hard to find. They either hid in the heavy jungle or they had their tunnels already pre-built that you went down, and they were difficult to find. And even if you did find 'em, a tunnel was a very dangerous place to go looking for 'em because they knew you were coming and they've had many hundreds of years of this kind of fighting. And so it was a scary thing going after them. And then, as it turned out, a lot of the civilians – and I don't know what the percentage would've been, but there were many civilians who were fighting against the American forces who were, it was against their will.

And I remember speaking to one of those guys who had surrendered and made himself available to a base and they took him and they interrogated him and I talked to him later and he said, "I didn't want to have any part of this. My father had been killed. I was growing rice, I was taking care of my grandmother and the Viet Cong would come into the village and they would see you're the right age and say, 'Come, you're gonna fight with us against the Americans.'" And they'd go, "You know, really, I don't want to do that. I need to be here to run the farm. Because as you can see, we don't have very many men." And he said they would walk over and shoot grandma and they'd say, "Now how do you feel about not going with us now?"

And they just made it very evident that they'd wipe out the whole village. And so many of 'em fought for many years without the ability to escape. If anything happened to 'em, their family never knew when they were killed or where they were killed. A lot of them didn't come back, then from the time they left, their families never knew. And Viet Cong, I'm sure the same way. I don't think that North Vietnam made records. And so, you know, this guy, by surrendering to us, you know, it was scary for him because he worried that the Viet Cong would go back and wipe out his village because he had surrendered. And so we would send helicopters to grab, you know, the surviving members of his family and whatever livestock they had, whatever supplies they had, and fly him out to a – what we tried to consider a safe area, that the Viet Cong couldn't find him.

And lot of these guys surrendered under those terms. You know, "I'll surrender and I'll tell you whatever you want, but you need to save my wife or my kids or my family because they're gonna know I'm here and they're gonna go find my family and they're gonna execute 'em for this." So we did a lot of that.

Interviewer

Some soldiers carry guilt over the innocent civilians being killed for associating with them.

Russ Moseley

And that was a problem with fighting over there, you know, the villages were terrified to befriend you or tell you anything because you know, the rumor was out there. The NVA used to tell these villages all the time, "How do you think the American soldiers eat? You see so many thousands of American soldiers; do you think that they have that kind of food and that much food in America to feed these guys? I will tell you how they eat, they come into the village, they make friends with you and they'll eat your children." And so a lot of the children, a lot of the people were afraid to get near us because of suspicion that in order to supply our soldiers with enough food, that we would eat their children. I mean that's one of the common things that I heard from these guys who had surrendered is that, "We were terrified, we thought you ate our children."

And so villages, even though they didn't want to become involved with the enemy or to help them, most of them were afraid to do otherwise. And it's not like as if we could protect 'em. You know? They were difficult to protect a village. You couldn't have that many soldiers to protect that many villages. And so after you've been there a few days and you move on, the Viet Cong come in and go, "You housed 'em, you let 'em stay here, you became friends with them, so you have to go." And so it was very difficult to fight a war like that, you know? Unlike, maybe in World War II, in France and some places, where, as soon as the French knew that you were an American, you know, they did everything they could, kind of happy that they were doing something against the enemy. But Vietnam was entirely different.

Interviewer

Talk about when you went to The Wall for the first time and your feelings about that.

Russ Moseley

Well, when I went to The Wall, I went with a niece of mine, she took me there. And once I got sight of The Wall and saw it there, I told her I need to go in by myself. And asked her to kind of hang back, and she did. And I went and I spent a lot of time at The Wall and it was... it's a heart-wrenching thing to see, because you see a lot of those

names and you know, each one of us only knows a few names on that wall and so you're anxious to see, you're anxious to find names. And so you can go to the book and you can look up names.
Because, like me, when I came home from Vietnam, I completely left that behind as much as I could. And so I never found out what happened to everybody, I never stayed in contact with anybody. I have, to this day, with the exception of one, I think, I've never run into anybody that I knew over there. And one guy I knew over there was a fellow that was a neighbor of mine in Virginia when I lived there. And he still sends me little messages once in a while, but I've not seen him. So going to The Wall, I wasn't looking specifically for a name. I was just going... to very quietly express my emotions... for a lot of those guys who were obviously less fortunate than me. And when I consider what so many of those guys went through, compared to what I went through, I think that, you know, I had it pretty easy over there. I had it much easier than many of the men that went over there. And I had some emotional moments over there and I had some tight minutes. But compared to those guys, you know, I really had a very easy task over there.
And to see the things that people left there in memory of loved ones – pictures and flowers and memorabilia of all kinds – it's tough to see that. And for me... it was tougher to see other veterans there in their thoughts. And it was very odd, because I don't think very many of us said anything to any of the others. We were all there completely in our own cocoon of emotions and our own memories and our own thoughts. And I don't think we really communicated with the others who were also in their cocoon of emotions and their own thoughts.
And occasionally, you'll see one guy just walk up and hug another one. But they don't really say anything, they just... you don't have to say anything. You really don't have to say anything at The Wall, everybody knows what everybody knows. And so occasionally you'll see a guy hug another guy and they just walk on, they don't really exchange any thoughts or any information or names or anything. They just recognize each other at The Wall and walk on and just absorb that great atmosphere that's there.
It's a tough atmosphere and if you've been there it's tougher. And if you've lost somebody there it's hard enough, but if you've been there – well I don't know if it's harder or not because some people that go there find the names of loved ones and it's very tough for them, so. It's a great place to go, I think everybody that's been in Vietnam should go and walk that path and say they've been there. I'd like to go again. It's a great place. It's a time and place for you to... exchange emotions with yourself. Because of all the names that are on there, of thousands of names that are on there, each name has a thousand stories and everybody, I'm sure, knows that that's been there. Every one of the thousand names as a thousand stories. And they're all tough stories. It's a great place.

Interviewer

Let's hear your story about the cross.

Russ Moseley

Some period of time after I got back from Vietnam I did write a poem about a story that had kind of haunted me for a long time, and it's called "The Cross I've Had to Bear." And while I never told this story to anybody, it was always something that bothered me because in Vietnam – it was actually the first medevac mission that I was called on, I had to go pick up a couple of our soldiers that had been killed in the field. And they had been burned very badly in an APC that had exploded.
And I was flying their bodies back and during the flight coming back to grave registration in Long Binh, the arm of the one soldier – and they were wrapped inside of an Army poncho – and that arm and hand had come out in the wind inside the helicopter, and his fist was clenched and he had something in his fist. And it was tough for me to turn around and see them there. I mean, I was just emotionally charged, knowing that two of our soldiers were lying right here and they were dead and their families didn't even know it yet. And we were flying them back to grave registration and when we got there, I could see that the soldier's hand had opened up and whatever was in his hand was gone. I didn't think anything about it, I just didn't really think.
So we unloaded the soldiers and we flew back to my unit and we flew over to a wash pad where I had some water where we could rinse out the blood and the debris and the dirt from the ship. And in doing so, I found a cross. And it was a military-issued cross, and it was the thing that the soldier had had in his hand – excuse me – and he had this cross in his hand, and during the time he had released it, it had fallen to the floor in this ship. As we were washing it out, I found it and then I was thinking, okay, what am I gonna do with this cross? Now my door gunner wanted to keep it for a souvenir and I didn't know if that was a good idea. And I thought I'll turn it over to the chaplain on the base and that never happened.
And so essentially this cross stayed with me in my little personal box for a very long time, many, many years. But every time I'd get in that box, trying to locate some memorabilia from Vietnam, I would run onto this cross and it started to weigh on me. So I wrote this poem, I had gone to the Elko Cowboy Gathering and there was a guy there named Rod McQueary who was a great, great cowboy poet. In my mind, one of the top three in my whole life. And he was a Vietnam vet and he did great poetry, and I asked him if he would do something with this cross. Well, I didn't ask him then. The thought came to my mind that I would ask him at a later time when there weren't so many people around.

And I did, I went home, I wrote the poem about the cross, and sent the poem and the cross to Rod at his ranch in Ruby Valley, asking him, you know, this is the situation, this is how I got the cross, I never did the right thing with this cross, and I know you and I know what kind of person you are, and I know that you can do the right thing for me and it will relieve me of this burden. So he did. He took the cross and he has taken it to a special place on his ranch. And so that is the story of the cross, is Rod now has it at his ranch someplace and has told me that he took care of it, and knowing Rod, I entirely trust that he's truly taken care of it and it's at the very best place it could be now.

I never, on my own, was able to decide or do the right thing for this cross, because obviously I didn't know this guy's family, didn't know who he was, and so it was a story that just stayed with me, and it was just under my skin for many, many years. And then after I sent that to him and he told me that he took care of it, I wasn't bothered by it anymore. And actually, after that happened, I don't think I ever had anymore bad dreams. I think that was pretty much the end of my bad dreams. Now that I think about it, I think that's when they ended. So that was a good thing. So win/win.

Interviewer

Why a ranch?

Russ Moseley

Well... you know, I've been a horseman and I've been a day rider for ranches and I've been involved with that and I've been out in that open country, you know, riding and, you know, to me that's God's own great creation. It's where the air is fresh and clean and, you know, it's not silent by any means, there's the wind and there's the birds and, you know, there's just nature in itself.

And I thought where – you know, I didn't think the cross belonged in a museum, I didn't think it belonged in a box in some kind of military history place. I thought that I need to, for my own personal relief, I thought something peaceful should be done with the cross, because when that cross was snatched in the hand of the soldier who had been killed, he was literally on fire and dying and he grabbed the cross. And so there was so much turmoil and so much violence going on when that cross was snatched from his neck and kept in his hand. And I wanted to cross to be in a peaceful place, someplace that was far removed from violence and the noise and pollution of people.

And part of it was because Rod is such a great... he's done so much to honor the veterans and he's a great example himself and was a Vietnam veteran. And I thought, surely, he would understand, and he did. And he would do something honorable with this cross, and he did. I don't know, for me, it was the right thing to do, because I've spent many days in a saddle in open country thinking, “This is as good as it's ever gonna get. It never is gonna get better than this moment right now.” And I thought, for the cross, you know, it's just for my own peace of mind, I thought it was a peaceful thing to do and the only right thing that I could come up with. And I think I was right. What else could you do with a cross? It certainly isn't a souvenir.

Interviewer

I'll let you know when we talk to Rod where he put it on his ranch.

Russ Moseley

I'm not real sure, I haven't seen it. I just know that he said he took care of it.

Interviewer

Anything final that you'd like to mention about the war?

Russ Moseley

I wasn't really afraid to go until I saw some soldiers coming home in Japan. And then that's when the fear kind of took over, because I saw what they looked like and that told me everything I needed to know. But, you know, I remember, you know, my own father, who flew a P-47 Thunderbolt over German-occupied France, he was shot down, missing for four months. And that in itself is just a great, a great story. And formed great French friendships that last to this day. And I've been to the site of the crash, I've seen the airplane, I've seen his equipment and I've listened to the stories. And you know, his deal, by far, was many times greater than anything I suffered in Vietnam. I always, you know, seemed to get out of the bad situations.

But we've got a great patriotic family. My mom and my dad are great patriots, great flag-wavers and have also done a lot for veterans and remembering the veterans. You know, my mother lost her brother in Australia, shot down. So we have some great personal stories in other eras. And my father came to Vietnam – I think he arrived there a couple of months before I left and he'd made a couple of attempts to come see me and I was out on missions. And I remember guys saying, "Hey, there's this colonel walking around looking for you." So they didn't know whether I was supposed to hide or whether he was really my dad. But my older brother and my dad saw each other numerous times in Vietnam. So my dad did World War II, he did Korea, he did Vietnam, he flew fixed-wing, he flew rotary-wing.

Interviewer

And he's here today.

Russ Moseley
And he's here today. Right here with me in the room. So that's been a great history, all the things that he's done and all the stories he's had. And I'm glad to be a part of it, you know?

Interviewer
Many talk about survivor guilt. Do you experience that?

Russ Moseley
Yeah. I think my very first... my very first day back in Virginia was a Sunday. And I remember somebody at the airport, whom I do not know who that person was, walked up and said, you know, "Be a good idea if you went to church today and it's going right now." So I got a cab and I told the cab driver where the church was, and when he dropped me off, I tried to pay him and he wouldn't do it, because his son was in Vietnam, and he said, "I can't take any money from you because I hope when my son comes home, somebody will help him get home and he may not have money."

So, I got to the church and I saw a lot of people that did know me. And I think a lot of people that knew me before didn't even recognize me, because I'd kind of changed a lot. But after this service there were this very good friend of mine who I ended up staying with there, Sam McAdams, said there was a lady there that wanted to talk to me because her husband had been killed over there. That was a very tough moment, and I think we were only together about 20 minutes. But the whole time she was asking me what it was like over there and answering some of her questions, what I felt was... "How come you went over there and came back home and my husband didn't come home, because my husband was very brave and very strong and... and what did you do that you were able to avoid being killed?" It almost sounded like, "Where did you hide while my husband was out being killed?" You know?

I know she didn't say that and I'm sure she didn't mean that. I'm sure the thought never crossed her mind. But there's been several occasions where you talk to people who lost a loved one there and there's absolutely no way of escaping that awful feeling that... what they really want to know is, how come you survived and their loved one didn't. And it is, with me, it is a very prominent feeling. And that's why I'm even surprised I'm here is because I haven't discussed it since Vietnam. I haven't discussed it with people and when I've had to I come away feeling like... not being accused of, but people walk away thinking, "He just have hid someplace, he must not have gone out and fought, he must have been some safe place, because my loved one was killed there and he was out fighting."

And though I do say, my job, I feel, after watching the infantry guys, the patrols, the ambush teams, the guys at the fire support bases – all of those guys, after watching them, I know that I had it better than them. But I did have my moments, and I don't have anything to defend myself with when they ask me those questions, because I'm kind of one of them guys that just goes quiet. So survivor guilt is a very real and lasting thing that teaches you not to discuss it. And that's why I think a lot of vets don't discuss it and that's why I think some of them get into trouble because of that, because you went over there and you feel guilty for it. You're made to feel guilty in a number of ways for it. And it's a tough thing.

Unlike soldiers maybe of World War II who were celebrated for doing it, I think a lot of us tend to be more quiet and avoid those conversations and avoid that glory of being a return soldier, you know, in uniform, which would've been great, but it didn't work out for Vietnam. And I'm still very proud of my uniform, I'm still very proud of the service that I did. Very proud of my uniform, very proud of the guys I fought with, very proud of my officers and my NCOs and all those guys, 'cause you know, they could make it or break it for you. But as far as talking to other folks, other than this right here that I've been corralled into by my mother*(laughs)* ...

Interviewer
Bless her.

Russ Moseley
Bless her heart. I don't really want to talk about it.

Interviewer
If you could explain to a seventh grade class what was the Vietnam War, what would you say?

Russ Moseley
Okay, first of all, I don't think I would do it but I really don't, because I really don't know so much about it, the whys. You know, the only impression I got is that we thought South Vietnam would be better off without North Vietnam running it. And as we can see today, at least for what I know, they're doing just fine as a unified country. They're doing fine and they would've done fine. I think a lot of really good people on both sides were killed... because we believed that we were saving the South from the North. And maybe we didn't know much then either. But they're doing fine.

And a lot of the veterans I've talked to that have been back to Vietnam have had the great experience of their life. Something I would love to do. I look forward to a day when I can go there and walk unarmed in Vietnam – North and South – the whole country, and be able to walk the streets and eat the food and see the sites unarmed and not

worry about noises that I hear, or lack of noises that I hear. I would love to do that. I hope that I get a chance to do that, because they're fine. But I guess at that time we thought they wouldn't be.

Interviewer

Anything else?

Russ Moseley

I just can't believe I'm really discussing this, I just can't believe it. It's just something that, you know, I know how I'm gonna be when I leave here today. I know that I'm gonna be more silent than normal, because this begs me to think about things. Things that you've asked me have brought back video in my mind that's been stored a long, long time. And while some of my videos got little moth holes eaten in it, I still remember a lot of things very vividly, as anybody who's in been in combat does, or any part of your life or things. So you made me remember some things that I've forgotten entirely. And so today I'll be more quiet than normal and... and for me that's a good thing.

Interviewer

Can you go get on a horse after this?

Russ Moseley

No, my horses are gone. I've retired them and myself. It would be a nice thought though.

Interviewer

Thank you.