Terry McDade
Salt Lake City, Utah

Interviewer
Give us your full name.

Terry McDade
My name's Terry D. McDade.

Interviewer
And last name spelled?

Terry McDade
M-C, capital D-A-D-E.

Interviewer
And you're from where?

Terry McDade
Originally I'm from Ogden, Utah and lived in Riverdale, Roy. South Willard's where I was at when I joined the Marine Corps.

Interviewer
And you went to high school...

Terry McDade
In Box Elder, County, Box Elder High School.

Interviewer
And you went in in 1969?

Terry McDade
1967.

Interviewer
You have to volunteer to be a Marine. Why at that time?

Terry McDade
I'd grown up on all the John Wayne movies, all the combat movies and this, and it's something I knew it was going to be the great thing to go to. And so I was sitting in a botany class, and my instructor, when he called my name on the roll, says, "You're not going to graduate from high school." And I'd already turned 18, so I said okay. So I went down. I was going to join -- I went down. The Army recruiter was gone. The Air Force recruiter wasn't there. The Navy recruiter wouldn't promise what I wanted, which was to be a gunner on slip boats in the delta. So I went in there, and the Marine Corps recruiter was there, and I'd had family members who had been in the Marines. So I joined. Then I went and told my mom. That was a real treat. Trust me. She had no sense of humor over that. She wasn't a real true believer in the Vietnam War. But I was 18, so there wasn't much she could do.

Interviewer
So with all the protests and things going on, you were going to go?

Terry McDade
Yeah, I believed in the country. I still do. I believed in it then, and you got to remember the time frame I grew up was during the Domino Theory time where if we didn't stop communism, it was going to overrun the world. So being raised the way I was with all my family members had been in World War II and the Korean War, it was a simple thing for me to go do.

Interviewer
Terry marched in the Days of '47 with the Utah Platoon?

Terry McDade
Yeah, Utah Platoon of 67.

Interviewer
You were with Gary and all of them?

Terry McDade
Yeah, in the Utah Platoon in boot camp. We marched in 1967, and it was quite a -- they had all of us staying in, I think, it was at the Hotel Utah a time the night before, and that was quite a night. Put a bunch of 18-year-old kids in a hotel up there. That was an interesting night. And so the next day we marched in the Days of '47 Parade. They had the big swearing in ceremony at the capitol and all this. So there was at the time, I believe, three: the Utah Platoon of '66, '67', and '68. And I believe at one time, there was one during World War II, one or two during World War II also.

Interviewer
How many were in that platoon?

Terry McDade
Oh, boy. I was going to bring that book, and I didn't. There had been, I remember, 40-some odd, 50-some odd. I really don't remember on it. I know we flew to San Diego, and the drill instructor got on the aircraft. We double timed through the San Diego Airport and got onto this bus. And that drill instructor stood in the front of that bus, and he looked eight feet tall. And you got off that bus, and it was stand on them yellow footprints. And you went in there, and when you got our hair cut, the barber could make about four or five passes, and your hair was all done, and it was back out on them yellow footprints. It was just really interesting. Let's put it that way, because he's right in your face constantly, so...

Interviewer
What was so unique about the Utah platoon? What did you share together? What did you talk about? How close did you get?

Terry McDade
Oh, the Utah Platoon of 1967, and we marched in the Days of '47 Parade, and then we were sworn in, and we left a few days later or a day later, something like that on an airliner and went to San Diego is where we went through boot camp. They double timed us through the airport. We got put on this bus with this drill instructor. The drill instructors have exactly no sense of humor, and they're in charge, and they know it. As soon as you got to the recruit depot, it was off the bus, on the yellow footprints. The drill instructor was right in your face. They run you through. In about four passes or five passes with the clippers, your hair was done. And it was back out on the yellow footprints. They run you through where you had to take all your civilian clothes and all your civilian stuff. They boxed it up, sent it back to Utah. By then you had your first issue of your uniforms. And it went downhill from there. Trust me. You had no clue what Marine Corps boot camp was going to be like. I was not really good in it, to be honest with you. It was not what I expected. I was not a garrison Marine. I can be honest with you on that. I just wasn't. I just wasn't. I was not a garrison Marine. I wasn't good at it.

Interviewer
Explain what that means.

Terry McDade
A garrison Marine? Garrison Marines are the old school Marines that they have the high and tights all the time. They have a crease on their trousers that you can shave with, the shoes that reflect light that the satellite can see them. I wasn't one of them. I was always in trouble for my hair, the way my uniform looked, the term they used back then was a shit bird. And I was basically one of them, to be honest with you. And I just did not fit into that. I didn't do well there. I didn't do well in aviation school. I tried to drop out of aviation school to go to Vietnam as a grunt because I was afraid the war was going to get over before I got there. The squadron I was in, I was in trouble in there constantly. When I went to Vietnam, I think I was an E-2 of like 18 or 19 once in grade. So does that tell you what I was like? But once I got to Vietnam, the first squadron I was in, I was in for I got there in March '69, which was HMM362. And I stayed with that until August of '69 when it was disbanded. It was the last UH34D squadron on active duty in the Marine Corps. And I went down to Marble Mountain. We had been based at Phu Bai off the USS Okinawa. And we went down to Marble Mountain, and the squadron was disbanded. And I joined HMM 364, the Purple Foxes. And that's who I stayed with 'til October of '70, when I come back home. I was there for 19 months.

Interviewer
So the Army said they couldn't promise you...

Terry McDade
Yeah, the Army recruiter wasn't there.

Interviewer
Okay, but did the Marines promise you aviation school?

Terry McDade
Yeah, they said they'd put me in under an aviation guarantee. They had an opening for aviation guarantee. So that's where I ended up. Now, aviation guarantee is you can be anything from a NHE equipment, which is ground support equipment, mechanic, electronics, hydraulics, the bubble chasers, the tin benders, spark chasers, or a helicopter mechanic. And at the time, the Marine Corps still had reciprocating engines. And you had reciprocating

engine school and jet engine school. The ones that went to the reciprocating engine school ended up in, like, C47 squadrons, UH38D squadrons. I think there was still an AC119 squadron in the Marine Corps. The jets people went to either fixed winged jets, or they went to 53s or 46s because they were the gas turbine-powered helicopters. So that's how I ended up in 3642 for the first three months, four months.

Interviewer

So when did you actually get to Vietnam?

Terry McDade

March of 1969, and it was funny because when we were flying into country, when we first went in, we landed at Da Nang. We're flying along, and you're looking out the window there, and the pilot comes on the intercom and says, "We're going to make a combat approach into Da Nang Airport."

Interviewer

Is this a military aircraft?

Terry McDade

No, it's a civilian aircraft, civilian airliners. They were running so many military into Vietnam at the time that they were using mostly civilian airliners to do this. And he come on the intercom, says, "We're going to make a combat approach into Da Nang Air Base." So I'm looking out the window for all these jet fighters that's going to escort us in, and all of a sudden, the bottom drops out of that airplane because what they do is they come in high. Then they just drop and then just come down and then pull it up last minute and land on that runway because you don't want to give the gooks a chance to shoot you when you're coming in low and slow. And I got off the airliner, and the country stinks. Know what I mean? That's the smell of, I don't know, mold, mildew. It's humid. Sewage systems are the rivers, canals, rice paddies. So everything they burn, and it just kind of stinks. And we got off, and went to Freedom Hill where they assigned you to the squadron you're going to. And then they take you out, put you in a cattle car, which is a semi pulling a regular cattle car type trailer with screen over the windows. And they take you out, and they dump you on an LZ somewhere out there. And you wait for an aircraft to come get you. Now, I'm out there. I have no clue what this is like after going through staging battalion and listened to everybody. I knew the Vietnamese were going to charge out of that tree line and kill us all sitting here. Yeah, I had no clue. I really didn't. And occasionally a helicopter would come in. You go ask them where they're going, things like that. Then you finally got to your squadron wherever you were going. You're sitting on this thing in a rice paddy looking around these tree lines just knowing you're going to die. And then we went aboard the USS Okinawa. And we flew in support -- and then we offloaded at Phu Bai, went back from Phu Bai on the Okinawa, supported BLT126 on operations on Barrier Island until we offloaded again in July, I think it was, June or July.

Interviewer

Tell us what the day to day was like. Now, what is your job specifically? You're a door gunner, but what else do you do?

Terry McDade

Well, when you start, you start as a door gunner. And all you are is basically a step and fetch for the crew chief. You got to get your guns, get both guns on there and make sure you've got enough ammunition for what you're doing. You make sure everything's serviced. Whatever he says he wants done, you clean the windows on the helicopter. When they get ready to crank the engine over, you have what's called an APP, auxiliary power plant. Start that. The crew chief stands out there while they turn up, make sure droop stops come out, and everything else. So when you fly, you're responsible for the left side of that aircraft. You're responsible for watching other aircraft. You're responsible for if you go into a zone, if you're taking fire, for returning fire, things like that. That's what you do. Also if the crew chief is busy, a lot of times it was more in 46s because 34s' operations were winding down, so we did not get the quantity of medevacs that we got in 46s. But you would end up helping the corpsmen. A lot of times, you might have a dedicated medevac bird, but you're going to get sent somewhere else to get a medevac, and the medevac can be anything from a permanent routine, which is a dead body, to an emergency medevac that's got his guts laying all over the floor of the aircraft, and he's hanging onto your leg screaming for his mother. So you're trying to help these corpsmen do this, and if you're on your own, you're trying to do it yourself. And I'll tell you what. You can try all you want, but at times you know he ain't going to make it. The only one who can save his is God, and a lot of times God ain't there, and it gets, I think it's frustrating at times.

Interviewer

So you're assigned to this unit, adjusting to the climate?

Terry McDade

Oh, yeah. You sweat to death. It's humid. It's about 900 percent humidity, I think, at times. Its average humidity is about probably 80, 90 percent.

Interviewer

And you're a Utah kid from one of the driest places on...

Terry McDade
Second-driest state in the nation, matter of fact, and it's just you sweat to death. It's hot. It's humid. You're 10,000 miles away from home. All of a sudden, you're 19-years-old, because I got there when I was 19. I celebrated my 20th and 21st birthday in that country, and the first mission I flew in 362, we took fire twice. And I thought, welcome to Vietnam, and one of the -- the one mission that brought it all home to me about what the war was like was in May of 1969.

Interviewer
Walk us through that mission.

Terry McDade
It was a lousy ass packs run. And a packs run is passenger run. And we were flying off the USS Okinawa.

Interviewer
Start over again.

Terry McDade
It was a lousy ass packs run, which is a passenger run, C&C, command and control, things like this. We were on the Okinawa. Raymond St. Pierre was my crew chief. We were flying in 34s; 34s have a big side door on them. And you have the floor of the aircraft, and you have a step that goes down, so it breaks the distance up because 34s sat fairly high. And this Marine staff sergeant brought this Vietnamese NVA Vietcong prisoner out, and he had a sandbag over his head because that's what you do when you transport the gooks, you put a sandbag over their head so they can't see what's going on. And this guy had no sandals on or anything else. And the flight deck of a carrier gets hotter than hell. It really does. And they run him out across that deck, and they slammed him into that door, just boom, and face planted him into the aircraft; picked him up, threw him in the aircraft. Well, we launched and going in there, you get what's called a zone brief. And it goes something like whatever your call sign is, "We have a good one bird LZ, negative fire last 24. Most likely direction of fire is from," whatever, north, south, east, or west, other than when I worked one time with the New Zealanders with the Vietnamese. But I'm digressing here. We got into the zone. They gave us our zone brief. We sat down in the zone. And I don't know why to this day, but I undone my seatbelt. Now, I'm sitting in a canvas chair with my left side towards the left side of the aircraft. And that first mortar round come in. And when it did, it hit right outside them blades, and that concussion blew me out of that seat. And I remember it going off, and I remember waking up on the floor. And I was lying there, and I had got my chimes run pretty hard. And I remember looking at my crew chief, and he's looking down at me, and he's just shaking his head. And my arm was numb from the elbow down, my left arm. And I was looking out the door of the aircraft, and that second round come in, and when it did, it went right through the top of a refugee tent. And when a mortar goes off in real life, it ain't what you see in some Arnold Schwarzenegger movie or something like that. It is a dirty, nasty, grayish-black color, and the sound, it's not like in the movies. I don't care whatever TV you got or sound system. It ain't the same. And I remember watching that tent just come apart. And I remember a Vietnamese woman, she had a baby in one arm, and she reached into what was left of that fucking tent and grabbed another baby by the leg and lifted it out of there. And the third round come in. I don't know where it went. I couldn't tell you. And the copilot was on the ICS that he was hit. And we come out of the zone, and I'm trying to get up on my gun, and that staff sergeant is holding me down. Now, I'm trying to push him away. I've got to get on that gun. And I come up, and I looked out the window, and there was three gooks running this way. And I keyed to mic. I said, "I got three gooks at nine o'clock." And I don't remember who it was. I think it was probably Mouse, the crew chief. He said, "Shoot." And so I shot, and I never got credit, as much as it might seem a strange thing for three kills. But I could watch them tracers go right to them as they were running across the rice paddies there. And we got out of the zone, and I thought, "God, what happened to my arm?" I pulled my flight suit up, and I had a scratch right here just like you'd taken a fingernail and dug it in. And what I'd done, I'd hit my crazy bone. And what it did, it numbed my arm. And if you think I was going to go to the dispensary with a lousy ass scratch like that, say, "Oh, look. I need a Purple Heart," I don't think so. But that was the first time I ever seen anybody really die violent deaths. I don't know if there was -- what you could see, people coming out or parts of people or whatever. But the thing of that woman reaching in and grabbing that baby that was naked by one leg and lifting it out of there, I don't know if it was alive or dead or whatever. But that was the first time that I ever seen anything like that happen. And it wasn't the last time I seen anybody die. But that was the first time. It just, you know... and I was 19 years old.

Interviewer
Talk about being so young. And then you into dehumanizing -- talk about the psychological environment you're put in.

Terry McDade
You're put in an environment that it becomes dehumanizing, and it desensitizes you. It has to, or you're not going to survive. You get cold. And at times you get cold towards people, so you come across times as a jerk. But you get attached to somebody, and they die or they get wounded or they go home for whatever reason, it's a loss. And you get to the stage that human life, at times, the more kills you get, the better you're well-received. And that's a simple

fact about combat. And I was raised Protestant, and I'd been a head of a church youth group when I was in high school and this. And you go there, and you're trying to, I don't know, justify or deal with killing people because that's what you're expected to do. Now, air crew are just like Special Forces, Seals, Recon, everybody else. They're volunteers. You put your hand up and say, "I want to do this." And I could've walked away from it. But I think part of it was I had something to prove, not to anybody else, but to myself. Maybe I had something to prove that I could do this; I could go ahead and be this way. I said I had been raised on John Wayne movies, man. You never seen him cry. You never seen him get upset. So I just kept doing it.

Interviewer

And being a Marine, was there something else about that that you're expected to -- something more?

Terry McDade

I think part of it was you didn't want to show weakness, too, in front of other people. I don't know. I really don't know on that. That could be part of it because of the legacy of the Marine Corps. It could be part of it. I was scared to death every time I got on that helicopter. I hate to fly. I'm scared to fly, and I'm scared of heights. But I had something, I think, to prove, is why I kept doing it. And I just kept doing it, and also the more you flew, the more the lifers couldn't screw with you because you weren't around. And if you look at the pictures of me in Vietnam there, especially myself and Charlie Bassett that I flew with, neither one of us have what I call regulation haircuts at any one time or a regulation mustache. And so when you flew, they just couldn't find you to screw with you. And a lot of the missions I flew were standby. So you can't leave your aircraft. You're five, fifteen minutes standby. Well, you can't go get your haircut. Barber shop's closed when you get off at six o'clock at night or seven or eight or nine, depending on what you've been flying.

Interviewer

Tell us about some more memorable missions.

Terry McDade

I think there are so many of them that things happened that when you -- like with the one with the .50 caliber case...

Interviewer

Tell us about that story.

Terry McDade

That's a case from a .50 caliber M2 machine gun. It's what we used on 46s. 34s I've flown, we used M-60s, which were a 308 caliber weapon. And on your 46s, you had a .50 caliber on each side, and when you go into a zone, if you were doing a recon insert, the gunships with prep the zone, and you would troll a little bit going in. And what the gunships would do, they'd fire rockets, machine gun fire into the zone trying to get the gook to shoot back at you because if they do, then you're not going to drop the team there. and when you troll a little bit, you'd go in a little bit slower than what you normally would to see if they're going to jump the gun, so to speak, and shoot at you. Well, we were flying out near northwest of Da Nang, and we were flying a recon mission. And they prepped the zone. We went in, no fire. We dropped the team off, and when you drop these teams off, as soon as you come out of the zone, they are very quiet, this very whispery, "We're in the zone. We're safe. No fire," and this. And they're talking to us on the radio, and all of a sudden, you hear an AK-47 go off over that radio. And his voice goes up from that to about 120 decibels. They're taking fire. They're pinned down. They need to be extracted. So we went back in, and I'd already chambered a round in the gun. You do that. You keep one round chambered unless you're coming back across the wire into wherever you're going to pick a team up, at their base or your main base or whatever. And I come in, and I hit the butterflies on that .50 caliber, and it went bang one time, and that was it. I run a cocking lever on that thing and hit the butterflies; nothing. Run it again, nothing. Well, what had happened is this case stuck in the chamber, and when it did, it peeled them off when the boat come back trying to extract it. So now I'd really jammed that in there from loading it again, trying to load it again. I opened up that feed cover, threw that belt back, and there that sat. And I had a combat knife. I was frantically trying to pry that out of there. Well, you're sitting in the zone. People are shooting at you. All I got is a rusty, trusty six shot .38 Smith and Wesson between me and somebody with an AK. And the gunfight was on. And I'd shoot out the window, go back trying to get this done, load the .38, shoot out the window, go back to trying to get this done. By the time we got about the second time through on the reload, the team was onboard, and we were out of the zone. And I was so mad at that damned gun, I couldn't see straight. "How dare you do something like that to me?" So for years I -- well, for a while I drilled a hole in it and wore a nylon around my neck with a nylon thing where I hung it up where I could see it. But I'll tell you what. Anybody that says they ain't scared of anybody or anything, get trapped in a zone like that. It is not a good feeling because you're well outgunned. Trust me.

Interviewer

So tell us about what's it like to be in a helicopter. I know the smell and the noise...

Terry McDade

Oh, geez. Helicopters, most helicopters have their own smell. And they talk about certain aircraft have their own

smell. And it's your aircraft. When you're a crew chief, you're assigned that aircraft. And it has its own sounds, its own smells, its own vibrations, everything else. And when you go into a zone, if it's a hot zone, your gunners, as soon as you take fire, the gunners are going to shoot. Now, on a 46, it has a crew chief's door -- it's called a crew chief's door -- that is between the pilots, the cockpit, and the gun on the right side. And so you stand up, and you hang from about here up out that door. And you're trying to talk that pilot into that zone. Now, this gun on the right side, this .50 caliber, when it goes full lock to the left, the first time they shoot, you know your mustache is gone from the muzzle flash. You ain't never going to hear a little bird sing again out of your right ear. I know while they're shooting, the left gunner's shooting. The radios are on from the gunships talking, trying to tell you where your fire's coming from and what they're doing and where they're going. The chase bird is trying to tell you if you're taking fire from here or there or whatever. You're trying to talk over this to that pilot to talk him into that zone because he can't see where he's going. His total view of that combat is from right here to right here. The copilot's is right here to right here. They can see nothing else and down through the chin bolts. That's it. You're the one that's running back and forth from side to side in that aircraft trying to get them in that zone. And the worst case scenario is doing a hoist operation because you're looking through the hell hole of that aircraft, and you've got to keep that pilot centered while you're lifting a guy up out of double or triple jungle canopy on a hoist. That is tough.

Interviewer

Can you tell us the specifics of one of those missions? You rescued pilots.

Terry McDade

The ones I got were the grunts. I flew search and rescue, but I never did a pilot pickup. The grunts were the infantry, the ass in the grass guys. And when you go into the zone, especially an emergency extract, it is an adrenaline rush that is unreal. And you're 19 years old or 20 years old. You're making these calls, go left, go right, go forward, go down while all this is going on, and you're trying to talk over this. And recon team, they were starting to do the Vietnamization thing then. We finally had to tell the recon teams, "Make sure the first one up that ramp's an American, not a gook, or I'm going to shoot him," because they would have one or two Vietnamese in that team. Now, you're sitting in elephant grass. You're looking out the window, and you can see this booby trap flopping back and forth and a grenade in a C-ration can on a piece of bamboo, and the first one up that ramp's Vietnamese. My first instinct's going to be I'm going to shoot him. And you're doing this. And once you get them onboard, as soon as they're coming up there, the copilot's running that ramp up, and you're out of that zone. They got the collective pulled up under their armpit, and you're leaving. Times where these recon teams, especially if they're being chased, they're tired. They've been out in that humidity in that jungle. They might've been running for a day or two. And you're back there trying to help them, pull them up these ramps, try to get them in there. And they don't have any cigarettes with them, so invariably you had out all your cigarettes you had to these guys because that's the first thing they want, is a cigarette. But I think on the medevacs, if you go to the medevac side of it, the medevacs, I said, are everything from permanent routines to emergencies. Permanent routines are the ones in the body bags. That's what they're called as is a permanent routine. And the emergencies are a life-threatening medevac. You have permanent routine, routine, priority, and emergency. And the emergencies are the ones that they're wounded badly. They're dying from something or going to die, so you got to go get them. The patrol cannot go on 'til you go get that medevac. And those, I think, were the worst. They're going to be. And because a lot of them aren't unconscious, they're alive. They're still conscious. And you'd look at them, and it's things that's come back since I originally talked to Sally about this -- that you'd notice they'd have blood on their face or dirt or whatever. But you'd see where a tear had run down this way while they were waiting for us to get there. And you'd see their hands. Their hands were -- I don't want to say messed up, but like they'd been rubbing their hands in something or whatever. And it was all smeared, whether it was blood or dirt or whatever, and I could never figure out what it was 'til I happened to look at a picture one time -- and not too long ago after I talked to Sally -- that it showed this corpsman or medic, whichever you want to call it working on this medevac, and his buddies had a hold of his hand. That's where it was coming from, because they were trying to comfort their buddy that was wounded, maybe dying. And that's what they were doing, and that's where it was coming from. And I finally 40-some odd years later figured it out. But the medevacs, Christmas Day, 1969, I was fragged to fly medevacs, and I figured that we're not -- were in a stand down or whatever. And I thought, "Yeah, nothing's going to go on today." And we launched on an emergency medevac to a civic action group at a ville. And we got out there, and when they loaded the medevacs onboard, it was two Vietnamese kids. And they had been shredded from about here down from a booby trap. We owned it during the day, but the NVA and the Vietcong owned it at night. So these civic action teams go clear the booby traps and landmines out. Look, the gook would come back in that night and put them back in. Kids go out in the rice paddy, guess what happens? They're the ones that's going to find it. And the medevac that I launched right at 0000 December 31st or January 1st, whichever you want to call it, 1969 or 1970, we launched on a medevac, and we couldn't get to the medevac because it was New Year's Eve. And everybody was firing these machine guns in the air, all these flares out of these mortars. And they were doing it to celebrate New Year's Eve. Well, this guy had got his head over a mortar tube when they had launched an 81. And when it did, it took the top of his skull off, and we couldn't get to him. We had to go out and shut our damned lights off, circle out over the ocean 'til everybody got tired of doing that 'til we could get in and get him. And when they loaded him onboard, I just looked right at the

top of his brain. He was still alive. At least I think he was. And we loaded him on the aircraft. And I don't remember who it was, if it was a gunner or the corpsman, said, "You got to hurry or he ain't going to make it." And I mean we were flying at probably 140 miles an hour. Still you're looking at that, and it is just you're thinking just, "God. There's nothing I can do for him." That is what's so horrible on medevacs, times it was nothing I could do or what I did wasn't enough. We were flying a resupply out around Elephant Valley or Antenna Ridge, somewhere out there. I don't know. And a grunt patrol had come up on the net and called for the swift bird, the flying medevacs resupply. "Can you take a medevac?" And the pilot says, "Hey, you need to call the medevac bird." And the radio operator says, "If we wait for the medevac bird, he's going to be dead when they get here." So I said, "Let's go get him." And we sit down, and the ramp wouldn't come all the way down on that 46. They'd get on big, heavy brush, and it just won't go down. It can't. It just stopped. And they come hauling ass across there, and they didn't have him on a stretcher. They didn't have him on a poncho, nothing. They were carrying him. And I come hauling ass over there, and I got off that ramp, and you're not supposed to. And they come up there, and they just basically threw him in my arms. And I rolled backwards on that ramp because it was hitting me right about here. And the copilot was sitting there in the left seat watching over his shoulder. And I went like that, and he run the ramp up on him, and I just kind of rolled down the ramp with this guy. And he had taken shrapnel wounds through both lungs. And I patched him as good as I could, but I knew he wasn't going to make it. I just had that feeling looking at him. And at the time I don't know if I was 20 or 21. It was right at that time frame that I'm looking at this guy, and he's younger than I am. And we worked on him. And we got back to Da Nang, and we went back over to Marble to refuel, and the pilot come over the intercom and says, "Your medevac didn't make it." And I'd used both first aid kits trying to keep him alive. And I went into the flight equipment, place there where you get your flight suits and your survival vests and all this when we were doing some of the missions we did. And the sergeant in there, I went in there, and I said, "I need two first aid kits." I just -- and it just was the wrong thing for him to say. He made a comment about it, "What did you use them," doing with them or what the hell -- how or something. And I come unhinged. I threw both of them at his head, and I said, "I tried to save somebody's fucking life." I turned around and walked out the door, which I should've got office hours for right then. But kind of like, "We just -- we'll let this one go." And things like that, they just -- we got one, and you had a lot of different things going on in country with the CIA, who was flying Air America. And I had a brand new crew chief that I was trying to train. And we were flying just a resupply or a packs run or C&C, something like that. And we got dispensed to pick up a permanent routine. And I will apologize to, if somebody sees this, whose son or father or brother, whoever it was on this, I will apologize about what I'm going to describe, that I'm not doing this to be mean or anything like that. But we sit down, we got out there, and you see where this helicopter had burnt up. And there was two Vietnamese there, two Vietnamese Army, Vietcong or NVA depending on what time of the day it was and what side they were on, come running up the ramp, and they had this guy on a stretcher. And he had been burnt. He was charred. And he was in the same position when they crashed as he was when they got him out of what was left at that wreckage. His one hand was down here for the collective. His one hand was here like he was like he was holding the cyclic, and both feet were out for the rudder pedals. And anybody that tells you that burnt human flesh smells like burnt steak don't know what they're talking about. And I mean it's obvious he was dead. There was no two ways about it. This wrist had been broke. Now, in a 46, the wind comes down the side, and we never run our hatches on them because all it did was hit your head on the, the upper hatch. And then it'd come down. The wind would come down, and then it comes up the center line of the aircraft on the inside. And I'm pretty cold by now. And this guy's wrist was broken, and in the wind, his hand would sit there and go like that. And this new crew chief was sitting there in the seat. And I would watch him, and he kept going...watching this. And he jumped up. And he started down the aircraft to the guy, and I reached up, caught him. I pulled him down, and I said, "Where you going?" And he says, "He's alive. He's waving to me." I said, "He's fucking dead. Go sit down, slammed him back into his seat." There's nothing you could do for him. He was dead. And this is the kind of things you dealt with time after time after time, medevacs that you thought, "Am I doing him a favor by saving him?" kind of thing. It just what goes through your head. And I think probably as far as one of the worst medevacs that I ever was involved with, there was no gunfire. There was no screaming, wounded medevacs that were covered in dirt or blood or anything else. But we used to go out to the USS Sanctuary or Repose. We transported the wounded off there to Da Nang to go to Iwakuni or Subic Bay or back to the States. And I come in one morning, and it said rig for litters. You know, "God, here we go." Now, we got out there. And now on a 46 you can rig for 15 litters, six on each side, three down the center line of that aircraft.

Interviewer

Explain that.

Terry McDade

Rig for litters? What you do is you go out, and you have straps that you hang on down from each side of the aircraft that when they come out, you clip the litters into them, front and rear. What it does is then they're hanging in the air really. They're hanging in the air on it. So that is what you do with it. And when you do that, you rig for 15. And we got out there, and you sit down on the repose or the sanctuary, whichever it is. And they also give you a 20-man life raft. You're putting 15 people on stretchers on this damned aircraft. And if it goes in the water, you ain't saving nobody other than yourself, hopefully. And they had a boat there that would rescue the crew if it went in. But they

come out, and these guys were all in the bandages, there were guys that had legs gone, parts of legs gone or arms or their heads and faces were totally bandaged. It was these white bandages, and they come in there, and you helped them hang them. So when you were looking right into their faces. And once you got them all onboard, you launched. And the thing is you can lose your turns. You can lose your boost systems. You can have problems with a high speed shaft or something like that, and you can go in the water. So these pilots, as soon as they'd come off, first thing they'd do is pull all the power in and go for altitude. But we'd come off there. And I said I didn't have a hatch. So the wind would come up there. And these guys are just laying there gently swaying in the wind. I was looking out the back of the aircraft at the hospital ship as we went away from it. And it's one of them images that photographers love. They just think that's the neatest photograph in the world. And it was quiet. We had sound of the blades, the engines, but there was no radio traffic, no ICS traffic, nothing like that. It was just such a surrealistic image that that's when it really dawned on me what the cost of that war was. And to this day, I had buried that one so bad that 'til I got to the original interview over this, I hadn't thought about that in a hundred years, it seems like. And then you get to Da Nang, and they unload them all. And you might do couple of trips or whatever. But that is probably the one that's brought it oh so home to me. It really did.

Interviewer

So you're looking at 15...

Terry McDade

Yeah, six on each side, three laid out... I'm looking down to the center line of the aircraft. And there's a picture on our website that shows one of these kind of things. And you're looking at three stretchers laid on the floor head to foot. And then you have three here. Back behind them, you have three more. And the wind -- they just -- and the movement of the aircraft is a shake, and they vibrate. These guys are just -- these stretchers are just gently swaying in the wind, and the thing with what you normally deal with with the blood and everything, but the white bandages and the stretchers just gently moving is just one of them things that it makes you realize what the cost is right then, what the cost has become. And I think that's what did it to me, really made me realize what it was, what the war was costing in human life. But I still kept going. I flew for the grunts. And I flew for the people that I flew chase with or flew lead with. I didn't fly for God and country and mom's apple pie and the America war effort in Vietnam.

Interviewer

Did you come across any of the Utah platoon?

Terry McDade

No, I never did. Most of them were grunts, and we did a platoon reunion or a couple of them. And most of them got to Vietnam just before Tet of '68. And there was a bunch that got killed in 1968 and some that got wounded. But they were back before I got there in '69, so no, I never run across them after that. I never did. I think I did one time. I run across a guy in the Marine Corps Band, of all things, that we were taking somewhere to some base for something, that was, I think, had been a member of the Utah platoon, I think. But that's the closest I ever come to running across anybody.

Interviewer

Another mission -- this is probably with the hospital ship receding in the distance -- you changed after that happened.

Terry McDade

I had changed. Several things brought about a change with me. And one, we were scheduled to fly afternoon medevacs. And in Vietnam, like Forrest Gump says, it rains down. It rains up. It rains from the side. It flat rains. And we were scheduled to fly -- I was flying afternoon medevacs. And they called us for an emergency medevac, a head wound on a grunt. And they wouldn't launch us because of the rain. But in that squadron, we had a VIP aircraft that had all the windows in it, all the insulation and the aircraft seats in it for generals and all these important people. And they launched that damned VIP aircraft to go get a VIP and wouldn't let me go get a medevac. Right then and there is when my attitude really changed. Of course generals, I guess, are more important than grunts in the field. But the grunts are who we supported. We are the ones that took them their mail. We took them hot chow. We got them their food. You might have some of these FSBs up on top of a mountain somewhere. They'd get so clouded in you can't get into them for three or four days. And some of them were these pilots that we flew into them. You flew right straight at that mountain in the clouds 'til you could see the trees. And then it was just one of these numbers. Keep the trees right in front of that cockpit as you went up through them clouds to get in that resupply. They don't give you medals for that. That's part of your job, is to resupply them grunts. And that's what it's all about.

Interviewer

Body bags, what's it like to fly those?

Terry McDade

It's easier to fly a body bag than it is somebody on a stretcher that you know is dying or essentially dies while you're

taking them there because in the body bag, you don't see them. They're in there. And it's easier. It's like it's just a big, green bag, then, you're looking at. And you can tell how much of them's in there by how many grunts haul that over to the aircraft and put it in there. If there's only two of them carrying it, he's got killed by a mortar or a rocket or something like that and just they gathered up what they could of him and put it in that body bag.

Interviewer

You were saying that you didn't want to see a South Vietnamese soldier come up into the chopper. Can you explain because '69 really was Vietnamization.

Terry McDade

Okay. I just thought because I got some Oriental friends, people I work with that are Orientals and this, so... But, you can put the disclaimer at the start of the show that opinions expressed are not necessarily opinions of...

Terry McDade

It was, and that's why -- and on -- this is the first thing I asked Sally about, language and terminology. So Vietnamization, I said when we were working with the recon teams, some of the Vietnamese, the rangers in this were very dedicated. They did not want to see the communists take over their country. But when you go into a zone, and a zone brief you'd get from the New Zealanders. And they'd say, "Most likely direction of fire is from within the zone itself on their advisors for the Vietnamese," that tells you just what you're dealing with. And you'd fly these Vietnamese. And you learned. If you knew you were going to do it, you'd take your seats out totally. If you didn't, you rolled them up. And the reason why, I'll explain here in a minute. But when you went into a zone where these Vietnamese on a troop strike or whatever it was, soon as you come down and that ramp come down, you stood and looked right down the center line at that aircraft at that last Vietnamese going off that damned ramp because if he turns around with a gun towards me, I'm going to shoot him because I don't know what he's doing. Either A, he's scared and don't want to get off that aircraft, which I don't blame him, or B, he don't care if he dies by taking out an American aircraft. He don't care. But I guarantee you if he turns around and points a gun up that ramp, I'm going to shoot him. We're going to have one hell of a gunfight right there. And I didn't like working with them. During the day was bad enough because you learn. You'd learn to make a sweep down the aircraft as soon as they get off because they had a real nasty habit of pulling the pin on a grenade and stuffing it in behind a rolled up seat because helicopters vibrate. And if it's during the day, you'll get a three to five second warning as soon as something falls out and you go, "What the..." and by then it's over and done with.

Interviewer

Did you ever find any?

Terry McDade

We finished a troop strike and bringing the Vietnamese out, and it was at night. And I hated that. I hated flying with them at night. And we'd come out of the zone. And we were flying back down the coastline. We'd go out over the ocean because you don't take as much fire then. And I walked down through the aircraft, and there was a damned grenade stuck behind the seat with the pin pulled. I reached down, and I grabbed it. And I walked up into where between the pilot and copilot sits is a passage way about that -- just wide enough to get through. And I stuck my hand up there and said, "Look what I found." And they turned, and it was like one of the Commie things where their eyeballs bulging out because that grenade goes off back there, you're all going to die because where it was at was right back where the engines were and the fuel cells are and all your hydraulics. You will die. You will fall out of the air and die. And so I just took and threw it out the window, out into the ocean out there. But I found one of them one time. And you get to the mental state becomes if they're alive, they're suspect. If they're dead, they're a convert. And that's what you get because I don't know for a fact. I can't prove it or not. But the rumor went around that one of our barbers was killed on a probe in the wire. But that, I can't verify. I can't verify that for a fact. But you didn't want to deal with them for that reason. You didn't know whose side they were on. And I got to look at it realistically with them. They figured the Americans were going to pull out and dump them. And we did. So, hey. If I'm a VC sympathizer, the American leaves, I got a mate. But I said I don't blame them for that. But I just -- you got to the stage you didn't want to trust them, just didn't. I did anyway, and there was others who were the same way.

Interviewer

How many missions did you fly?

Terry McDade

1,080.

Interviewer

For how many months?

Terry McDade

Well, I was there for 19 months, but I think I flew -- because you have -- I don't know why. I don't know which staff I made mad, but I ended up riding shotgun on a garbage truck for 30 days, and, oh, that's a treat. And so there's other things that you end up doing that you might not be on flight pay every month.

Interviewer
1,080, if I'm right, that's about 100 a month.

Terry McDade
Well, it's 54 air medals. And you need 20 combat missions to get an air medal. Now, they changed from the early '60s to the later '60s on how they did mission credits. But it's still a lot of missions. And during that time frame, in the 54 air medals that I earned, I got 52 strike awards. And what a strike award is getting shot at in a zone, getting shot at in flight, getting mortared in a zone, things like that. So that is 52 times that something went on with us, the lead. Something happened somewhere that we ended up in that.

Interviewer
Can you talk about how crazy the pilots can get? Talk about how good the pilots were, how skilled.

Terry McDade
They were. The most dangerous thing in the world is a second lieutenant right out of flight school. It really is because he might have 50 hours of flight time, and he knows he's God gift to helicopters. It really is. But the pilots we had in Vietnam, they come in, and you had what's called a HAC, helicopter aircraft commander. He's the one that trains these other pilots. They don't come in country and say, okay -- not in the Marine Corps, anyway, say, "Here's a helicopter. You're in charge. Go get them, killer." They have to be checked out on check rides, see how they react under fire, everything else before they're allowed to fly, and these pilots were good. These were old guys. They were 24, 25 years old. They were older guys, man. We had some really old guys who were in their 30s. Oh, my God, they were ancient. But the pilots were good. You had some of the most fantastic pilots in the world. We had one that his nickname was Weasel, Jerry White. He's dead now. The demons from Vietnam finally got him, I guess. And Jerry was the most non-military Marine Corps pilot you would ever meet in your life. But he was really fun to fly with. He was out giving a pilot -- showing him around the first flight. And he run into a tree while flying low level. And he was, I said, he was super cool. He was super good people. We had a movie star show up one day, Tony Franciosa from out of the '70s, okay. He showed up one day all dressed in the tiger coveralls, which were the Vietnamese, face paint on, everything. Well, to make a long story short, Weasel took him on a recon trip flying recon missions in and out of combat zones. Weasel trolled it all the way in there. When you troll, you go in land low and slow. You're looking for gunfire. You want them to shoot. You would much rather have them shoot at you, because you're still in the air, than wait 'til you get down on the ground. Then you're a stationary target, especially if you got team partway off the ramp, partway on a ramp. You want them to shoot before you ever get on the ground because you're a lot more bigger target sitting there, and it's by then you've got to get off the ground, and if you're in the air, you can get away faster.

Interviewer
I heard that's the opposite. I thought that they want to come in fast, land, troops off, out.

Terry McDade
It depends on who the pilot is. Okay, now he's got this movie star on here. Okay. He's got this movie star on. And so he trolls it into the zone. And the gunfight is on. I mean everybody's shooting. The Vietnamese are shooting. The Americans are shooting. The gunships are shooting. Everybody's shooting. So he comes out of the zone, and to get back to the base there, and they have to kind of escort Tony Franciosa off that aircraft because his knees were rubber. He found out that oh, being this movie star dressed like all this stuff, real combat's different than this role you're researching for. And we had other pilots that I flew with that were just super good. I mean your pilots can't panic. You can't panic. Nobody can panic. If you panic, you're going to die. And that's like that story that I wrote. They have to have faith in you. And you have to have faith in the pilots that they will do what you tell them to do. It's not, "Sir, could you go left? Sir, could you go right?" It's left, right, up, down, forward, back. It's not one of these, "Gee, we're taking fire," kind of things. It is they have to react to what you tell them, and they do.

Interviewer
Can you give us some radio chatter or some intercom chatter, how it would go?

Terry McDade
I will give you a legitimate one. We were going out to, I think it was An Hoa or Hoi An. I can't remember which one. We were flying night medevacs. I had gunnery sergeant. He's passed away now. On my left gun, I had the corpsman. I can't remember his name. I remember who my right gun was. But we were going for an emergency medevac. And we were on our way out, and we got our zone brief. "I have good one bird zone." It's standard. It was a fire support base, a major; kind of a bigger base that we went into. We were coming in, and I was standing on the center line, and I was looking backwards out of the aircraft. I don't know why. And I seen the muzzle flashes behind us. On gun he almost slammed the gun all the way to left try to get on him, but he couldn't. At about that time I around come up through the floor of the aircraft, and my corpsman was sitting there. And he was kind of leaning forward a little bit. And this round thumped that aircraft, and it come up, and it hit the bottom of his bullet bouncer. When it did, it slammed him up, and he slammed forward and fell face forward over his knees. I keyed the mic, and I said, "Wave it off. I got a corpsman hit back there." The pilot said, "How bad?" And I said, "I don't know. Let me

check." I went back there, and I grabbed him by the left shoulder, and I pulled him up. I said, "How bad you hit?" And he says, "I'm not. It hit my bullet bouncer." And I said, "Good. We're going back in again," slammed him back down on his knees, told the pilot it just hit his bullet bouncer. And we sat down there, and the grunts are going nuts because I shot the rotors down on that aircraft. You do that, you're going to get mortared, rocketed, whatever. But that round had gone up through the roof. Up through the roof , there's all my hydraulic lines, all my flight control cables, my sync shaft syncs the two rotor heads together. If any of that is hit, we can fall out of the air and die. And it went up right through one of the places you open to do an inspection with. So I looked right there, and it went up, went right between the flight control cables, all the hydraulic lines and, as far as I knew it, didn't hit anything else. And we got back to Marble, and we shut down that night, didn't fly again. Well, the next morning I went out to check blades to see if I got a bullet hole in them. And if it's in the honeycomb, you just clean it off, put some blade tape on it, metal tape, go fly. And this round had smacked right into what's called the spar of that blade. And it's the aluminum extrusion that everything is attached to. If that breaks, you die. And halfway down that blade, it had hit, and it had cracked it. And we made it back to Marble Mountain without losing half a blade, we would have fallen out of the air and died. But it's normal, most normal -- yeah, that gives you -- so we towed it back there with a tractor. But going into a zone, to go back to this, so there's one example. Going into a zone, we'll do the swift two one. It'll be, "Swift two one, you've got your radio up on the ground." And, "Swift two one, this is," whoever it is working with you. "We've got a good one bird LZ, negative fire," or they're taking fire from this direction or whatever. And your pilot's going to go, "Okay, this is swift two one. Pop a smoke when you're ready." And it's funny to watch because they'll pop a smoke. They don't say what color they're going to throw. They'll pop a smoke, and all of a sudden you'll see two, three, or four smokes come out of these different zones. Well, you know, the gooks listen in on that channel. You can go to the wrong zone. You go to the wrong zone, you're not going to have a good day. So you'll get, "Okay, I have a green smoke," or a yellow smoke or whatever. The guy is like, "Negative. I'll pop another smoke." You'll throw another smoke. You'll get that smoke. Then you'll go into it. But normally it's a zone brief. When you're talking the pilot into the zone, you're telling him, as I said, go left, go right. And if all of a sudden, you start taking fire, then it's whichever gunner normally will pick up on about the time you do. And he'll start shooting. And you'll tell the pilot, "Hey, we're taking fire from three o'clock, nine o'clock," whatever, two o'clock. And so that way the pilot knows where he's getting the fire from. Now when the war started to become a little more civilized, they come out with a policy that I did not adhere to, and it was when you went into the zone, okay, this is what you were supposed to do. You were supposed to tell the pilot: We're taking fire, the direction of fire, one o'clock, two o'clock, three o'clock; the type of fire, light or heavy, automatic or semiautomatic. You're then supposed to throw a smoke in the general direction of the fire and wait for the pilot to give you permission to return fire. By that time that beat up, old, green helicopter is going to be a zone marker on its side. But normally the conversation is just, "We're taking fire." "Shoot that person over there," or whatever. I've had some of the best gunners in the world, and I've had some that were some of the worst in the world. We were flying a skunk hunt.

Interviewer

What is a skunk hunt?

Terry McDade

Okay, skunk hunts, if you dehumanize your enemy, it is easier to kill him. It is easier to do inhumane things to him. And so what we would do is we would fly what was called a skunk hut. They would pick an area that was a free fire zone, which meant you shot anybody or anything walked, talked, or dug a hole out there. And we would go get usually I think it was Seventh Marines we were working or Fifth Marines. I can't remember now. And we would go get three aircraft full of grunts, three squads full of grunts, reinforced squads, which means you'd have about 15 grunts in a squad. And you'd go out, and, depending on which aircraft you were flying is where you dropped your teams. I was flying lead on one of them. We went out, and we dropped our squad, which was a blocking squad. Okay, you got the river here. You got our blocking squad. You got a squad of grunts here and a squad of grunts here. So they sweep through this area. I said it's a free fire zone. And then what they'll do is we'll just pick them up and move them different places. And we come in there, and I had this newer gunner. I'd never flown with him before. And we had dropped our team off. And we were coming in to pick them up, and I looked up. And there was a Vietnamese coming out of a bunker with an AK-47. Him and I got in a gunfight. I never even had a chance to aim. I just pointed my M16 at him, pulled the trigger, and I hit him once out of 20 rounds. Great for marksmanship here, huh? But I got to admit that I just hit him one time is all because I never even aimed. I just pointed it at his general direction. I figured I get enough lead at him, he'll lose interest in whatever he's doing, we can get out of there. My gunner never seen him, and I was standing at the door right there and seen him, and my gunner never seen him. He was under the edge of the rotor blades. Rotor blades are 26 feet away. The end of the blades are 26 feet. He never seen him, and so yeah. They did capture him. He gave himself up. But we took air support with us, the F4s, OB10s, the gunships. It was just a free fire zone. Shoot anything you can. We had one Vietnamese that was beating feet across the rice paddy. And we heard fast movers, which are the fixed winged, Air Force called rolling in hot. And they went after this Vietnamese beating feet across that rice paddy with a 20 millimeter Gatling gun. They made that pass, and this big thing of dirt come up. Never seen him again after that, so...

Terry McDade
What they'd do is they would announce to the Vietnamese -- we had to tell the Vietnamese what we were going to do. So the Vietnamese knew 2 to 24 hours before we did it what we were going to do. And so these people could leave that area. What we did was places like Arizona Territory, Dodge City, Elephant Valley, and Antenna Ridge, because there was normally not a ville there. But we had to tell the Vietnamese, so they knew. So that gave the gooks a chance to either set up and wait for us or get out of there. Sometimes they'd sit and wait. Usually they didn't want to pick a gunfight with everybody where they knew they were going to lose.

Interviewer
So was it part of search and destroy missions at all?

Terry McDade
Yeah, it'd be the same kind of basic thing only they'd do it on operations where we'd drop the grunts off, and they'd go out and spend a week or two weeks doing search and destroy. A lot of the skunk hunts were a fast operation. Drop the teams. They sweep, pick them up, move them here. Drop the teams. They sweep, things like that. It was a fast, one day, x amount of hour operation.

Interviewer
Let's get a little bit lighter. Let's talk about drugs and drinking and girls and R&R. Can we?

Terry McDade
Oh, my kids are going to find out things about their dad they had no clue about.

Interviewer
And we'll talk about music. But let's talk about you said you drank a lot.

Terry McDade
You did. In that **(inaudible 01:10:05)** book, it shows things, and on the website, HMM-364.org, it shows the clubs. And we drank. We did drink. We were 19 years old, 20 years old. You drank. You could drink. It was socially acceptable to get so drunk that you couldn't find anybody's butt with either hand, then go fly the next morning. And pilots would do it. I've seen pilots to walk out to get on that 46, and the ramp would be about that far off the ground. They'd go to step on that ramp and miss they were so hung over. And you're going to go fly with these guys. But you had faith in them, and drunk or sober, they'd be able to do it. So, yeah, we drank. We drank a lot. But we couldn't buy hard stuff because we weren't 21 or an E-6. We were, I said, 19 to 20, 21 years old. I mean at 21, "Yeah, I can go buy hard booze." "No, you can't. You're not an E-6." I was only an E-5, so yeah, there was a lot of drinking went on.

Interviewer
Marijuana?

Terry McDade
Weed? Yeah, there was a bunch of weed. A lot of people smoked. I knew people who did and didn't. Weed I never got into. I did a little bit, but I didn't like it. I really didn't because the weed we had made me laugh so bad I couldn't stop laughing, and everybody knew what I'd been out doing. But you could get weed, heroin, morphine, speed. Whatever you wanted, you could get. You could go out in Dog Patch, which is the ville, what we called the ville, outside the base. You could buy one of the best hype kits you ever wanted to find. And they were all brand new. You could buy anything you wanted out there, whether it was drugs, whether it was alcohol, whether it was women. You could get it, whatever you wanted out there. And speed was very prevalent there. But you had to watch it because you could get what was called Cambodian Red soaked in **(Ho? 01:12:05).** And it was a better quality weed. It was supposed to have come out of the Golden Triangle Area up between North Vietnam and Laos and China, up in that area, Laos, Cambodia, yeah, up in that northern area up there, and it was supposed to be super good quality stuff. Well, you could buy opium that was in liquid form. What you'd do is you'd get your joint, and then you'd just dip your finger in it and lace the joint and sit there and smoke it. And everybody knew I wasn't a narc. I didn't, you know... The statement was, "Are you a head? Or are you behind?" And also they'd get a lot of guys that were into it had their sleeves rolled up just four little turns, and their hat was a certain way, and it was obvious. They're not hiding it. And I've walked into hooches when guys have been sitting in there smoking a joint, and it's, "Oh, hi. How are you?" "Fine." "Okay." "What are you doing?" "I'm looking for so and so." "No, he's not here." "Okay." And they knew I just -- as long as they could fly with me, were fit to fly with me, I didn't care what they did.

Interviewer
One of the guys said they called the dope smokers...

Terry McDade
Heads.

Interviewer
Heads, and they called the drinkers...

Terry McDade
Oh, boozers.
Interviewer
Boozers and heads. And he said usually the heads were always philosophizing about the war. They didn't quite get along all the time, the drinkers and the potheads.
Terry McDade
They didn't really at times. The guys go to the club. You'd listen to a lot of Country and Western music there, God and country and this kind of things. And a lot of the guys that were into drugs were more, like you said, philosophizing things about this, about the war. They would have a tendency to tear the war down, what it stood for and what the government was doing and what the government wasn't doing. And times, yeah, heads would butt. And also there was a lot of racial incidences there, too. But I did both. I drank, and I did drugs. My drug of choice was speed, and they used to sell out in town what was called Obisitol. And it'd come in a bottle about this big. It looked like one of the old glass cough medicine bottles is what it comes in. It was a clear liquid, and it was sold for weight loss on Vietnamese. Now, most Vietnamese really didn't need to lose weight. They really didn't. But that was the picture on it, showed this rather rotund Vietnamese after drinking the stuff down to a small size. But it was good quality speed. You could do a bottle of that and rush for a fat man's ass for 24 hours. But, boy, I'll tell you what. At the end of 24 hours, you better be sitting down because you're going to fall down. And that was my thing. You could drink and get drunk. I'd done it and passed out between two of the hooches, and people would walk by, "Oh, that's just McDade again. He's drunk again McDade," and step over you, and away they'd go. And it was socially acceptable. But if you got caught smoking a joint, you were undermining the American war effort. My God, the country is going to collapse. The war effort is going to collapse. It just was not socially acceptable to smoke dope. And that's what I think part of it was, was the culture at the time, and part of it depended on where people were from. This was back in the days when Texas used to give life in prison sentences for possession charges of weed. And I'm not going to get into the debate of whether it should be legalized or not legalized or anything like that, but it just was what everybody wanted to use. It was available. You were buying 50 pound bag of weed if you wanted, just whatever you wanted to use. And, yeah, there was some controversy over it because you were a doper. Man, you were a druggie kind of thing where if you were drinking beer, you were a true red-blooded American. So I did both.
Interviewer
You were all of it.
Terry McDade
I was both of it.
Interviewer
Let's talk about the women.
Terry McDade
Well, there's a story there that most Vietnamese women are not well endowed. They're really not. And there was a lot of women, though, that, as far as boobs, no. Most of them didn't have big boobs. And there was one that they called the cowgirl. And she had rather big boobs. And everybody wanted to take pictures of it, and they'd say, "Hey, flash us. We'll take a picture. We'll give you money," or whatever. Well, they'd get the picture, but they wouldn't give her the money. Finally, she learned. "You give me the money first. Then I'll flash the boobs. You can take a picture of them." But there was a lot of Vietnamese there that had French in their background because the French were there 'til 1954. There were some very pretty, very beautiful women, and there was a lot of really nice-looking Vietnamese women 'til they smiled. Vietnamese chew what's called beetle nut. And it's a slightly narcotic drug. And it turns their teeth black. I mean black, black. They're fine 'til the smile at you -- eee -- and then it's ugh, oh, my God. And I had to go over to the Army base, and I went out in town. I didn't have a whole lot to do with the hookers around the base because there were incidences where you could get in a large amount of trouble. And they could get one of these Vietnamese kids, say, "Hey, I saw you with my sister. You owe my sister five bucks for her time," kind of thing. Then they'd go find the Vietnamese police, which were called the white mice because of the white helmets and say, "Hey, GI raping sister. Vietnamese kick in door." You get carted off for rape. Now, they did not have to tell the base when they had you under arrest. And then the CO would have to go get you and everything else. And it might take a week or whatever at times because they found a bunch of Americans that had been arrested by them who had been held in what's called tiger cages. Tiger cages are bamboo. You cannot stand up in them. You cannot kneel down in them. You can't lay down in them. If you try, they come by and smack you with a bamboo stave. Okay. So I was on my way over to the Army base to get my flight glasses. And this Vietnamese hooker comes up to me and says, "I give you everything five dollars." And there is an old saying from World War II, and it come to mind perfectly. And I just looked at her. I says, "Hell, lady. I just got over everything I got for five dollars. I don't need it again." And so they were all over outside the base there and carrying on in the weeds, whatever. They just care.

Interviewer

Were there guys in your friends who got VD because there was a VD hospital ward, and that ward was packed.

Terry McDade

Oh, yeah. Even I caught it, but I got mine in the Philippines, and that's a different story on that one. It's kind of an interesting story on that. But, yeah, a lot of people did. And I mean when you got it, you had to go to sick bay, and then you had to go tell the sergeant major. And then the sergeant major, because you couldn't fly for three days while you were taking these drugs. Well, I'm allergic to penicillin, and that was the most common drug they use. And they had this other drug that they gave you that was about the same consistency as a gamma globulin shot, and the needle, I think, was about big around as, I think, my little finger, and they gave it to you right in the cheek of the butt. And it'd leave a lump in there as it slowly absorbed in your system. But they made it sound like the war was going to be lost because you couldn't fly for three days or four days, whatever it was. And so you had to go tell them you got to go in the dispensary, and they give you the medicine and this. And there was more crabs there than you know what to do with. Our medevac bunkers, you had two. You had the officers, and then you had the enlisted, okay. Now, the regular Huey gunships, not the Cobras, you had a pilot, a copilot, a crew chief, and a gunner. Okay, the crew chief and the gunner were enlisted. So if we were flying medevacs with them, you had four of them because you had two gunships, a lead and a chase. Then you had your 46 crews, which was a crew chief, two gunners, and a corpsman in one and then a crew chief and two gunners in the chase birds, so you had all these enlisted guys in one hooch, in one bunker area. Well, the story went one of the gunship crew chiefs or gunners went out in town, got a roll in the hay, and proceeded to get the crabs. Well, he flew couple days later when they were starting to get going really good, he flew medevacs. Well, all these racks were it was just a metal rack with an old mattress thrown on it because you slept in your complete flight gear because when that buzzer went, you had five minutes to be turning and burning. And so everybody that flew had laid on them racks got the crabs. So I'm sitting there a couple days later, and I'm going, "God, that itches. What the hell?" And I'm sitting there on the head, and looked down, and I thought, "Oh, my Goad. There's this nasty, ugly creature crawling up here." I go, "Agh, it's the crabs." So I went to the dispensary, and I learned this trick. You go in there, and we knew all the corpsman because we flew medevacs with them. I come through the door with a sick call, and they looked up and said, "McDade? What do you want?" And I says, "I think I got a case of the crabs, man." And everybody instantly goes away from you. "Don't you sit down. Get back in here." So they give you this ointment, and you have to go take a shower and all this. But then everybody gives you the advice. Well, you can shave one side and pour lighter fluid on the other side, and when they run across to get away from the fire, you can stab them with an ice pick. Everybody's got all these stories to help you out on this. So that happens. There was more crabs than you knew what to do with.

Interviewer

What's in the sting story.

Terry McDade

There was a couple of us went on R&R, and we purchased the services of a couple young ladies out of a local establishment. And he was in the room next to me. And they got done there, and I don't know why. I was sitting there, and I was smoking a cigarette. And all of a sudden I hear this hollering and screaming and yelling coming from his room next to me. And I thought, "What in the hell's going on?" I jumped up and pulled my pants on. And just as I went out the door, his hooker went out the door in this foreign language. But she was naked, although she had her dress held in front of her. And I reached out and caught her by the hair as she went out. I thought, "What the hell? Did she cut him?" Or what the hell's going on? And by this time, all the pimps are beating feet down the hallway and everything else. And I'm dragging her back in this room, and she says, "I ain't going." And I drag her in there, and I look. "Where the hell is he at?" I look up, and he's standing in front of the air conditioning duct naked just on top and he's screaming and hollering. And he's got something in his hand. And I go, "What the hell's going on?" And he says, "God, man. I was afraid I was going to get VD, so I poured Listerine all over it after we got done." It was burning so bad. *(laughs)* He just couldn't do anything about it. And I'm holding on to this hooker's hair looking at him. And when he got done after, he went back to -- he never had anything to do with a hooker after that. I remember when we were on the airplane back to Vietnam, I said, "You get laid after that?" He said, "No, it hurt too bad. Didn't want to even touch it." And I said, "Okay." So that's where that come from. And these hookers, how do I phrase this? I went in a bar, right. I went on R&R. I went in this bar. I had made up my mind. I'm going to shop around, right. I'm in the Philippines in Olongapo. I'm going to shop around. So get in this bar, sit down. This hooker comes up, sits down next to me. After about two drinks, she grabs me right here on the leg. I said, "Let's go, sweetheart. We're in love." So that was my first night there. Actually it was a three day, what we called, a leg trip to Olongapo for jungle survival school, okay. And they sit down, and they ask you. "You sailor, or you a Marine?" because we were in civilian clothes. "Are you sailor, or are you a Marine?" Oh, I'm a Marine? Oh, Marine number one. Sailor number 10. Okay. So you learned with these hookers, what they do when they mix their drinks, they have a bowl behind the bar that's got alcohol in it, pretty strong alcohol. They put their glass in it, rub the rim in it, then they put their mixed drink in it. They come over there and say, "You try drink, see? Real drink." So when you do that, you taste the alcohol. You learn you start switching drinks with the hookers. And you watch which ones

they get. So you can get these hookers drunk if they're not paying attention. And it makes it easier to negotiate them. But we were...

Interviewer

Geez, Terry.

Terry McDade

Well, it does. I mean, and it depends on how many ships are in the harbor or whatever. If there's no ships in the harbor, the price goes down kind of like gasoline, you know, supply and demand. If there's a bunch of ships, especially a carrier with five thousand squids on it in the harbor out there, the price goes right through the roof. Well, I bought this hooker. "Are you a Marine, or are you a sailor?" "I'm a Marine." "Ah, Marine number one. Sailor number 10." Three days later, same bar, same hooker comes over, sits down next to me says, "Are you a sailor, or are you a Marine?" "Oh, I sailor." She says, "Yeah, sailor number one, Marines number 10." I thought, "Boy, I dazzled that hooker that first night, didn't I?" I mean by then she probably had been rather busy. Let's put it that way because there was a carrier in the harbor then, so... But the hookers were quite interesting.

Interviewer

They probably made quite a bit of money off that war.

Terry McDade

They did, and when I went back, I know I was going back to Vietnam, back to flying. When I left Olongapo, the money I had left, I just gave it to the hooker, or I gave it to the taxi driver that took me back to the base. I just gave him the money I had left. I was going back to Vietnam to go back to flying combat missions. And I went to Sydney, Australia on an R&R, and I don't know how hookers made a living there. I really don't. There was enough young ladies that were more than willing to have a good time with an American than you knew what to do with. And I got there in-country in Australia, and I went and got my room, and I went downstairs, and they have a pub in the bottom of the hotels. Pubs are where the working class guy goes with these mates to drink. Night clubs was where you'd take the birds out to have a good time with. And I proceeded to get so drunk that I fell off the barstool, saw all these guys I was drinking with. They propped me in the corner of this booth. And they're rolling joints and smoking joints. And I says, "Yeah, I'm here on R&R," and I says, "God, I'd love to stay here." And he says, "We can arrange it if you don't want to go back." And I wasn't drunk enough to say yes because I knew eventually something would happen, and they would get me. And I would've felt, I think more like a coward than anything else from running out on what I'd been doing without finishing it. So I got really drunk, and I woke up the next morning. I can hear the shower running. "What the hell?" "Who the hell are you? Where'd you come from?" "Oh, I come up here with you last night." Okay, all right then. Okay. But I was in a restaurant, and this was when the micro minis come in, and there was this woman come in there. And she had long, dark hair, and she had this micro mini on that was kind of green-colored. I was sitting where I was watching people coming up the steps. And she come up the steps and walked in there and looked around like she was looking for somebody. I went to go down the steps, and she bent over to pick something up. And when she did, that micro mini come up, and she had the most brightest green pair of panties on you'd ever want to see in your life. I just kind of squeezed my hamburger to death. "Oh, my God. Look at that." I've been in country 16 months. I had been home for a while when I extended. I had gone back in February. Until then all I'd seen was people with slanted eyes. And I mean, "Oh, my God," a round eye with legs that go clear up to here, that's -- oh, my God. So it was fun there in Australia. It really was.

Interviewer

Tell me about racism, the Black Power Movement, and your friend, Al Glover, who saved you from drowning.

Terry McDade

Racism reared its ugly head even in Vietnam. Now, I can't speak what it was like with the grunts because I wasn't with them. But looking at some of the pictures and how they treated their buddies loading them on the aircraft, I don't think it was as bad as it was on the bases. We had fights. We had major race fights between blacks and whites. Black guys would go by driving a forklift or something, and somebody would holler. They'd give the Black Power salute. You had the black and you had the Hispanic and you had the whites. And I think in these supports groups, which was transportation and all these others and the mess hall and this was a different situation. I flew with blacks and Mexicans. We would've gave our lives for each other. We really would've. And we didn't care if they were black. We didn't care if they were brown or what. Or we had Orientals, pilots. You didn't care on that. But you'd get in some of these other places, and you had problems. You really did. I believe they had a race riot aboard one aircraft carriers, **(Port Stalt? 01:30:18)** or something like that, if I remember right. But, yeah, the racism issues were there, but not with the air crew. That I don't remember anything ever being said about that. Back in Ken Sawyer's aircraft, number 21, I believe, his name painted on the side of his aircraft was the Jungle Bunny. Now, that's definitely politically incorrect then, and it's really politically incorrect now. But that's what it was. We just didn't do things like -- we just -- I don't know. Maybe it was the group I hung out with that we didn't have problems with it. But there was some of it there. You had to be a little leery of it because you didn't know how they were going to react if you didn't know them. And especially when I come back in Okinawa where people are coming back to the States. Each time I come back, it was really bad there. The Black Power movement was really strong there. And it

as the white man's war and things like this, and actually if you look at it it wasn't quite what they were saying it was, but yeah, it was. And that's sad because it was in a combat zone. But Al Glover was a really neat person. He really was. We had a squadron party. And every once in a while the CO would say enough is enough; we're going to do a stand down; we're going to do a squadron party; we're going to get all the beer. And you learned you don't drink Vietnamese beer in the light because you don't want to see what's floating in this stuff. You learned you drink it in the dark. It's called bombing bar, panther piss, tiger piss, whatever you want to call it. And you learned you don't hold it up to light and go like that. "Oh, my God." Of course after so long you don't care. After two or three of them, it's full of formaldehyde. You don't care anyway. And I was out in the ocean out there. We were out swimming. And I was probably rather drunk because I drank a lot. And I got cramps in the back of both my legs at the same time. And I was probably in about four or five feet of water, and I would've drowned. And I was hollering help, and Al Glover was there. And Al Glover grabbed me and dragged me out of that ocean. Him and I were hooch mates. And if he had been racially prejudiced, situation might've been a lot different. But he flew with me. He was a gunner with me. We were hooch mates. So there was maybe a little more of a bond between the air crew, the combat air crew than there was others because you go risk your life with somebody every day or day after day or however often you do it, it's tough to hate that person because you have a common bond.

Interviewer

So tell me about music. Did Al ever share some of his music? You loved Country Joe & The Fish.

Terry McDade

Yeah, Country Joe & the Fish and the Vietnam Rag. I listened to the Doors, Eric Burn and the Animals, the Rolling Stones, the British groups, things like that CCR. But Country Joe & the Fish, Country Joe & the Fish and the "I Feel Like I'm Fixin' to Die Rag," that was an anti-war song, probably the top anti-war song. And we were playing it in the barracks one time. "Come on, all you fine young men. Uncle Sam's got himself in a jam again. Wait down yonder in Vietnam." And they come in and heard us playing that song. They were going to give us all office hours for playing that song in that barracks. You could not listen to that music. We weren't allowed to read the L.A. Free Press. There was magazines that would come out that were called Screw. They were anti-war magazines and Horse Shit Magazine and this. But a lot of them were anti-war magazines. And you couldn't read them on base. You weren't supposed to read them out in town. But they got to realize we had minds. And you're going to read things like this. That's not necessarily going to change your mindset about the war. It really isn't. What you see and what you do and what happens to you is what will affect your mindset about the war. But they come in there. They were going to give all of us office hours over the "Vietnam Rag." So you learned you had somebody that had to watch to make sure none of the staff or the officers were coming in so you didn't get in any trouble over it.

Interviewer

Did you know it word for word and sang along with it?

Terry McDade

Oh, yeah. And I mean you'd go out in the car. Back to drugs, that was even going on in the States. You can't say it wasn't. We were in Southern California, and you'd go buy all the window paint you wanted, all the weed you wanted, and that was back in the days of the nickel and dime roll of whites that were just stuffed full of crop stops. but you'd go out and look out in the parking lot, and everybody would be sitting out in the car out there listening to music smoking a joint, and the cars are full of smoke, and you can smell it on them when they'd come in. But you're not going say anything about it.

Interviewer

So did you know what was going on back home at all?

Terry McDade

Yes and no. AFVN was the news for Vietnam, and their news, I won't say, was censored but it was different than what we found out about when we got back to the States. They told us just certain things. That's all you got to listen to. And occasionally you'd go do flights that you'd take somebody from Stars and Stripes with you or things like that. You normally didn't take a lot of photographers with you, things like that. You just didn't. They were embedded. Now the term is embedded with the grunts out in the field and things like this. But the media, the AFVN, they set theirs up. They played so much rock n' roll, so much Country and Western. But the rock and roll they played was not "Fortunate Son" by CCR, "Run Through the Jungle," definitely not "The Vietnam Rag." Any of the other songs that can be construed kind of as an anti-war song, they didn't play it, at least that I remember anyway. I had a radio that I could get the BBC on. So I used to listen to the BBC late at night. So I had a different slant on the news of what was going on that we were being told about because it would come in on the short wave. I've still got the amp, as a matter of fact. You could get short wave on it.

Interviewer

Flying, did you ever have headphones and listen?

Terry McDade

You had your helmet that you wore, and you'd get the pilots that had turned on AFVN, so you could listen to it while

you were flying. But at the same time, you were listening to all the other radios, too. You were listening to the radios from the chase aircraft or the lead aircraft, from the gunships, the zone briefs. And when you'd get ready to go into a zone, I'd have them turn the rock n' roll off or the AFVN off so I could hear what else was going on because that was kind of more important at the time.

Interviewer

When you talked about the Vietnamese, you said, "They kicked our asses. It was their first war, body counts, not territory." Talk about the Vietnamese a little bit and what you know from your fierce fighting.

Terry McDade

The Vietnamese, everybody kind of looked down on them. But they could make anything out of anything. A lot of the booby traps that VC made were stuff that we discarded, rifle rounds, .50 caliber rounds, any kind of ammunition, they would take and get a sharp object, put it into a base, take the round, put it in a piece of bamboo they would slide down inside there so when the Americans come by, step on it, it goes down, hits the sharp object, fires a round through their foot. Now, the jungle boots had steel plates in them. But still it's going to make life miserable for them. We used what was called an M-79 grenade launcher, and it shoots a 40 millimeter grenade round. The Vietnamese would find these that hadn't gone off. They would take them apart, and what it has is a centrifugal arming device. They would sit there and spin that 'til that round was armed, and they'd set that up as a booby trap. They were very, very creative. The Vietnamese Rangers were a very dedicated group. They were the ones that were doing a lot of the Vietnamization crossover with the Americans. So they were the ones that were dedicated. But the average oarsman wasn't quite as dedicated, and you didn't know really who's side they were on at times. You really didn't. You had to figure that they were on the Vietcong's or the MVA's side rather than on your side because if you get complacent, you can die. So that was dealing with them. And I worked with some of the Vietnamese pilots. And we were transitioning, giving them our 34s out of 362. These guys would come in. They'd come in and do what's called split the needles to disengage the rotors from the engine, reach over, shut the engines off. Rotors would still be turning down. They'd climb out of the cockpit, walk down the flight line. They got their helmet on with either the visor down or the big, mirrored sunglasses smoking a cigarette. And their helicopter's sitting out there with the blade still turning down on them. They're walking away from it. I've worked with some since then. I've worked with some Cambodians since then. And talking to them, the ones that ended up here in the States really wanted to see the United States win. But the grunts and us didn't lose the war. It was gave away. You cannot stop bombing campaigns for two or three years and give a country a chance to redo their defenses and rebuild and then expect to go back in again and find out you can just run over them. You can't. We did too much of that. We did too much politics. At one time, the White House was telling these pilots flying the bombers and the fixed wings the course they would use, the IP points they would use, they told them everything they had to do on a bombing run, which by the time you do at about the third day, they're going to know what you're doing, and they're going to get you. And that's what I mean. That's why I said we didn't lose it. We were, true, maybe not as dedicated as we should've been at times. But we were fighting the war. And the anti-war movement was going on. But we went and we fought.

Interviewer

What did you think of the anti-war movement?

Terry McDade

I knew people who had protested the war, and I know of people who -- these are some of the stories I've been told that are hearsay. I cannot verify a couple things on it -- that found out they were going to get drafted and had an accidental hunting accident and shit their big toe off their foot so they couldn't go in the military. Now, I'd rather take my chance than shoot myself. I'm a coward. And when it comes to things like that -- so the protest, I didn't care if they protested. The problem I had is two things: One is with Jane Fonda, okay, the photographs that to this day I will not watch a Jane Fonda movie. I don't care. And I used to like to watch – "Cat Blue" was one of my favorite ones and "Barbarella." To this day, I will not watch a Jane Fonda movie . And the other ones are ones who were the cofounders of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War, and you cannot mistake this profile of Senator John Kerry testifying before Congress as a cofounder of Vietnam Veterans Against the War and throwing his medals over the White House walls, the gates, and then wanting to be President of the United States. That's where my problem lies. And Jane Fonda's saying, "Well, we ought to let bygones be bygones." No. So is John Kerry. No, if you did that, stand up for it, and say you did it. Don't try to rewrite history. The protesters, when you come back, I come back, I had these medals. I had wings and things like that. And I come back to friends I thought were my friends. And the first question you get asked, "Oh, were you in Vietnam?" This is from people who were protesters or protesting war that were my friends that went to college and stayed in college so they wouldn't get drafted and people that I'd run across that I'd meet somewhere. They'd say, "Oh, were you in Vietnam?" "Yeah." "Oh, did you ever kill anybody?" And if you were stupid enough to say yes, then it was the next question invariably every time was, "What did it feel like?" And I come up with some rather nasty answers that we won't go into here on camera.

Interviewer

Oh, please do.

Terry McDade
I got to the stage, and this is a direct quote. Depending on whether it was a male or female that asked me that, my next follow up statement was, "Did you ever fuck your mother," or your dad? And you'd get this really shocked expression on their face, and then now, "'Til you've experienced it, don't expect me to explain it to you." And it would blow them away so bad that it'd just...

Interviewer
That would shut them right now?

Terry McDade
Yeah. And you'd just get that way. Finally you'd get to the stage that people ask you, "Were you in Vietnam?" "Yeah, but I was a spoon," which is a cook or a bubble chaser, or a turd chaser, which is a plumber, something like that because you got tired of the comments. And when you went to get a job when you got out of the military, you'd take your DD214 with you, which shows your military service, and they'd look at it and say, "Oh, you were in the military." "Yes, sir, I was." And they'd look down there. It gives overseas service. And they look at that, and they'd say, "Oh, you were in Vietnam." "Yeah, I was." "Are you a drug addict?" was the third question invariably. And you got to the stage you just, "God, I got to explain this four year blank in my history," but you got tired of that. And the protesters you got to the stage you didn't want to even deal with them, and you got to the stage you didn't want to talk about it because a lot of us got the grief that, "You didn't fight in a real war." "You wouldn't make a pimple on the ass of a real combat Marine." And, true, our war was different than World War II or the Korean War or the Civil War or any other war before or even now, the ones after. But we paid our dues. And I think that's part of the reason why so many of us had so many problems and hid it so much, simply because of the way we were treated. True, it's fine if you're going to protest; sure thing. But don't go to some foreign county and saw down a gun that's killed Americans. So I said that was it on a lot of this. My mom didn't believe in the war. Trust me.

Interviewer
Were you writing letters to your mom?

Terry McDade
I did. You did, but...

Interviewer
So you're for the way. She's against the war. How careful were you in your words?

Terry McDade
I didn't tell her what I was doing. They have things when you go there that when something happens, if it's something that's newsworthy, they can send it to the local hometown newspaper. And I put on there "not for publication," so they don't send it. So I'm flying combat missions. I'm not telling my mom that I'm flying combat missions because she knows I'm going to get dead, and she's really not in favor of this war. So I come home. I didn't tell her I'd extended for six more months. So I come home, and I just kind of danced around the subject of my next, "Where's all your uniforms?" "Where's this?" "Where's that?" "Where's the next duty station?" Finally, I told her I was going back to Vietnam six more months. And then my dad wasn't in favor of it either when they found out that because I had these wings on and they saw my uniform that's what I'd been doing and what I went back to doing. They weren't in favor of it then either. Trust me. And it just was one of them things. People either were for the war or against, and as the war progressed longer and longer, it'd become more people not in favor of the war.

Interviewer
So in '75, fall of Saigon, you were home. Were you watching television?

Terry McDade
Yeah, I did, and I watched a lot of the peace things with Kissinger and the Paris Peace Talks and how this was solved and how the North invaded the South, I think it was in '73. And they said, "We won't come in any farther," and the United States was withdrawing support. It was taking away fuel and ammunition and everything for the Vietnamese. The series, "Vietnam in HD" covers this very well. It really does. It's a very good series. And we just slowly left the Vietnamese hanging out to dry. You can't fight a war without guns and bullets. But the United States didn't care.

Interviewer
The more you thought about the world in Vietnam, the farther it seemed. It was a surrealistic dream like Vietnam and your experiences there as a young man became reality, and this was non-reality.

Terry McDade
The world wasn't reality. The world was a nebulous place that you went back to that if you lived through it, you went back to it. You got letters from, there was pictures from, but it didn't exist because you could not touch it. You couldn't see it. These letters could've been wrote by somebody sitting in a hooch out in town. It was this dream to go back to. You had all the dreams what you was going to do when you went back, build a street rod, do this, do that, sleep forever, not get a haircut, not shave for four years or whatever. It was something that you wanted to go back to, but it just really kind of wasn't there. The only ones that went back to the world were guys who went to

Hawaii on R&R with their wives, and they'd come back, and, boy, they were the ones that had a tough time. I had a tough time after I come back on my extension, coming back into this again because you got out of the mindset of what you were doing and got back into the world. I mean for 30 or 45 days I never got a haircut. I didn't shave. Man, I went back to being a civilian for 30 days or whatever. But it was something you wanted to do. It was there, but you couldn't really touch it or see it or smell it.

Interviewer

Can you describe the DMZ really briefly and tell us why it was so important for choppers?

Terry McDade

The DMZ was the section between North and South Vietnam. It was free fire zone. Anybody got into it from either side, you got to shoot them. It was supposed to separate us from the North. They would have to cross it to get to it. But they didn't. They could go out on the Yellow Brick Road and come around that way. But the DMZ was something that was supposed to keep us apart, and I gave you the one picture of South Vietnam taken from the north side of the DMZ in a helicopter, looking out the back of a helicopter. And to this day, I don't know why we went. I don't know if it was a road trip or what, but we went out, and we flew around in North Vietnam. Now, you get to North Vietnam, that's where all the 57 millimeter and 37 millimeter anti-aircraft guns are. They can really make your life miserable in a helicopter. But it was one of them things. That was the separation. That was what kept us away from them. I mean it was something that we'd go out, and we'd fly along or fly across at times back and forth. So I don't know.

Interviewer

I was told there was a lot of buildup through that whole zone.

Terry McDade

There was. There was mines, booby traps. You name it. It was booby trapped and mined from both sides. And at the time, the United States was pulling back and getting less and less people. But the DMZ to me, I flew up to it a few times and flew across it. But I just didn't really have much to do with it. I can't really say other than flying into North Vietnam.

Interviewer

This guy in particular was talking about Westmoreland thought Tet was such a surprise. He thought it would be along the DMZ, so he built up his troops along the DMZ.

Terry McDade

Yeah, and that's what it was.

Interviewer

And he was incorrect.

Terry McDade

Very incorrect. It took place -- now, in '75, when the North come South, that's where they went through. But in the Tet offensive of '68, they all come down the Yellow Brick Road and all just kept infiltrating instead of a major attack. But you got to remember. We had the generals and a president that got us involved in that war, Dwight D. Eisenhower, who had the military concept that it was going to be a major steamroller attack down there, and that's why the buildup in the artillery and the booby traps and the mines and everything else because that's where we were going to stop them at. As it turned out, it didn't work that way.

Interviewer

Two more questions: You said everybody's perception of combat is different. Explain and describe that.

Terry McDade

You have a perception of combat from what you see on the TV or on YouTube or military.com, one of them. The sailor on a ship launching shells in-country had a different perception of combat. His perception of combat is they fire shells into country. They know they go there. They don't know what they're doing there. The B52 bombardier dropping bombs from 30,000 feet has a different perception of that because all he's doing is toggling the switch, and they're watching this arc-like strike down below. The gunship drivers have a different perception because they're shooting at somebody at a distance, x distance. The grunts with their ass in the grass have an entirely different perception because they're down there with the mines and the booby traps and the firefights. The pilots in the 46s or the dust off pilots, they look from the side forward. That's their perception. They're listening to the guns, they're listening to the radio. The crew chief and the gunners have a different perception of it because they're looking at muzzle flashes or tracers. They're trying to shoot these people that are trying to shoot them. The crew chief has a different perception because he's trying to talk that pilot into the zone while all this is going on. The corpsman has a different perception because he has to work on the medevacs. So everybody's perception is different, and I think that's where the crew chiefs on the 46s that were helping the medics or the corpsmen have a totally different perception. The pilot's perception of a medevac is he gets talked into the zone. He gets shot out of the zone, flies back, gets off the aircraft, goes to the O club. The crew chief and the corpsmen are the one back there that are dealing with somebody with their guts lying on the floor of the aircraft or that are dying and you can't

save them. They are the ones that have the worst, probably perception of the war. The grunts have a bad perception also because they're the ones that buddies are getting killed. But they get loaded on aircraft, and they go away. So they're done dealing with it 'til the next one.

Interviewer

And then there's also you have your combat from the different branches. But then you've got your service people, your cooks, whatever. We've got lots of different opinions about the war and their experience with the people.

Terry McDade

That's because of the perceptions.

Interviewer

So you've got such hugely different ideas.

Terry McDade

You do because it's the perception of what combat is going on and what you're dealing with. If you are somebody that never goes out and gets shot at, rocketed, or mortared, occasionally, something like that, you're going out in town, and you've got a mama-san in town that you're playing with, your perception of combat's entirely different in Vietnam. Now, you brought it up about the Vietnamese. Okay, the average Vietnamese farmer, he could care less who's in charge in Saigon. He just wants to go out and work in his damned rice paddy, go home, snuggle up against mama-san, and do that day after day after day. He doesn't care. But now he's the pawn. You got the NVA, Vietcong saying, "You come to our side, or we'll kill you. And we'll demonstrate what we're going to do because we're going to kill the village chief now. We're going to rape your daughter. We're going to rape your wife," whatever. So now he's got the Americans coming in there during the day saying, "Hey, come to our side. Everything will be good," and it's not. So he's the pawn out of all this. And that's what they're doing. That's what they're thinking about. And they just don't want to care less who's in charge. And I think they talk now about seeing the big picture of things. When you're in combat, you don't care about the big picture. All you're concerned about is that 100 square meters in front of you because that's what's going on right at that time.

Interviewer

Reflecting after all these years, what is the big picture to you? What have we learned from Vietnam?

Terry McDade

Now in the long run, they finally learned some things, that people from clear back in the Civil War, whatever, had PTSD and had come on, and everybody talks about how the vets come back from World War II, and everything was perfect, and they got married and lived the American dream. But if you read in the obituary, a lot of these guys that come back as vets had two or three marriages also from World War II and the Korean War. And I think we've learned, my point of view, that you need to see what's going on with your troops and understand that to take care of your vets, don't spend years saying, "You guys didn't have a problem. Agent Orange didn't cause problems." Now a lot of the vets that died from it died before they turned 40 from the cancers. If somebody comes back, get him into a program where they can get help. If not, there's these units that are coming back that have suicide rates that's unreal, homicides out of different bases that are gone up because of this because you take and now it's women. Women are flying combat missions. They're running machine guns on gun trucks. They're running patrols. They're doing what the men did. And you take somebody, a man or a woman, and you send them 10,000 miles away from home, they get incoming. They get IEDs. You got firefights. They're watching their friends die. And it affects you. There is no two ways about it. It affects you. And now I tell anybody that I run across that was there, "Hey, man. If you think you need some help, the VA will help you." But you've got to get away from the "Big boys don't cry" or "It's so gay if you go do this or you go do that." You have to get away from that image. And once you do, your life will be a little bit better. Stay away from the drugs. Stay away from the alcohol. Quit trying to crawl in a damned bottle and hide your problems. People now understand that you can have problems, things that people didn't understand back then. So I guess maybe that's what I look back on. But even when I tried to talk about it back then, people didn't want to hear about it.

Interviewer

So you saw people are more aware and open about PTSD?

Terry McDade

I think they are, but there's been some incidences. There's two guys I want to say out of Texas. Now I might be wrong on this -- that when Vietnam started to become popular again, they went, and they become this cause celebrity about how they told what they'd seen in Vietnam and how it had affected them and everything else, and how their lives are so screwed up. And I'm not a big fan of the Fourth Estate at times. Trust me. But one of the reporters finally thought, "Let's check into these guys." One had been at Ford Ord and had never gone out of the country. The other one had done a year in Saigon, never gone out on combat missions. And they were talking how they had been in FSBs, which is a fire support base and everything that had gone on and all the combat they had seen. And when this come up, these guys disappeared and ain't been heard from since. And now there's been a couple incidences in the news, one in Mount Rainer, Washington that they're saying the guy is claiming he had

PTSD that had killed a ranger up there, shot the four people at the party and shot the ranger. And he was in communications. He was at Fort Ord for a year and then went to Germany for three years, never deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan. And this one with the shootout with the state narcotics team, he was in the communications unit , spent a year at Fort Bragg and then spent three years in Germany, never deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan. PTSD can be caused by any sort of trauma really. But this is the thing. It is becoming kind of a buzz word for anything that goes on. That's why when any of these guys that -- this is one thing I would hope -- that if you think you got it, go talk to the VA. It's one of these things that you don't just show up down there and say, "Hey, I got PTSD," and they say here's all the money. They do evaluations and everything else. And there's enough programs that they have you can get into that does help.

Interviewer

I can't tell you how many veterans' lives have been saved, just the guys that have interviewed here, through the VA services.

Terry McDade

They do because the demons you bring home with you, you try to trump down, and you can't. You try to keep them down. But they come out. And you look at the suicide rates of people, and I don't know if it's you don't necessarily know how to handle it or cope with then or what. The constant nightmares night after night after night and the flashbacks constantly, all the time that even sitting, talking to somebody like you are going there wears on you after a while. The jump at loud noises, and some people find out that you're jumpy, and then, "Oh, it's really fun. Let's make him jump." At various times in my past, I have reacted to it in what's not necessarily a politically correct way. But they haven't done it to me again.

Interviewer

I really want you to describe briefly what the energy and absolutely chaos when you're coming in fast to unload some guys.

Terry McDade

The big thing is when you are doing an emergency medevac -- we'll do an emergency recon extract. That is probably some of the most intense there is. You've got your zone brief, and the gunships and the Cobras are working this. You're listening to them on the radios. Your gunners are up on the guns, and you're coming in, and you're coming in as fast as you can. And the gunfire starts. You can hear it. And the gunners are shooting and the smell of the smoke from the guns, and the worst is at night because you can't see. It gets darker than the inside of a black cow in Vietnam when there's no moon because there ain't no backlights there. And you're hanging out that door of that aircraft trying to talk this pilot into a zone. It's dark. And that right gunner shoots. And there is a ball of fire about this big and about that long comes out of that barrel of that .50 cal. And it's right here. You lose your night vision, you can't hardly hear. Half your mustache has been singed off from that muzzle blast. People are talking on the radios. You're trying to talk to that pilot. You're trying to see. You're blind in this eye. All you can see is a muzzle flash down there. You don't know if it's Vietnamese shooting at you or if it's the recon shooting at the Vietnamese. The only difference is the color of tracers. The Vietnamese were using green, and we were using red tracers. You're seeing the explosions from the incendiary rounds hitting the ground from the .50 calibers. You are getting such a sensory overload at this time. Now you're standing in this door. You've got to go look out the left side, too because you've got two sides of an aircraft, the front and the back to get into that zone. So you cross that cabin floor, hang out that window. You're looking to see what's going on down there. If somebody's shooting, if your gunners aren't seeing it, you're trying to tell your gunners, "Hey, you're taking fire. You're taking fire there." You're trying to tell that pilot forward, forward, forward. Okay, down, down, down, down," and as soon as you hit that gun, you say, "Drop that ramp," and that ramp comes down -- now this is at night. You can't turn them lights on in that damned aircraft because if you do, it lights all them windows up in it. You got a recon team that's trying to get onboard. They're getting shot at. You don't know if you might have wounded with them. You're trying to get these guys onboard that damned aircraft. You're back there by the ramp. And as the last one comes up, you hope it's the last one. You grab him, and you say, "Is everybody onboard?" "Yeah." You start bringing that ramp up, and you key that mic and say, "The team's onboard. Let's get out of here." And then the recon team is hanging out the windows of the aircraft. They're shooting on top of everything else. And it's just such a sensory overload. And the grunts and the recon teams, they stink, and they're dirty, and they're sweaty. And you're sweating. And it's hot. And your glasses, you can steam up because of the humidity in the air. And you're sweating so bad that when you get out of there, it's just when the adrenaline goes out of your system, it'll actually give you a case of the shakes. And you're headed back to where you're going to drop the team off. The medevacs are just when you go into that zone on an emergency medevac, especially at night, you can't see. You can't turn the lights on on that aircraft. So when that ramp comes down, you're back at that ramp watching for these guys carrying these grunts that are wounded. And you don't know what's going to come out of that dark. If it's a full moon, it's not bad. But a dark moon, like I said, is darker than the inside of a black cow. And all of a sudden, they just pop out of the darkness at you. And I'll tell you what. You don't know who it is right at that moment. And you and this corpsman are trying to get this medevac onboard because they'll haul butt up in there, and they'll drop him on the floor. Then they haul butt back out, and you're

dragging him up. And hopefully, because you found out how many you got, they'll tell you you got one or two medevacs, whatever, emergencies, gunshot wounds, shrapnel wounds, whatever. So you've got that much. And you're on your way back trying to help this corpsman if he's got more than one medevac or even if he's got one. You're trying to help him. And this is back in the days of the glass IVs. We had one on night we could not get that damned thing to flow to save our asses. Finally, I got so frustrated I threw it out the window of the aircraft. We were coming across the wire at one of the bases coming back in, and they have great, big metal towers. Now, I threw this glass IV bottle out, and we're probably flying 140 miles an hour, and it nailed that tower, bam. And the sirens went off. The flares started getting launched. They knew they were taking incoming. I never told anybody about this. If it had been lower, it probably would've killed the guy in the tower. But it just hit it, and they knew they were catching incoming. Well, you get them off the aircraft then, and the corpsman, you go back and you have cigarettes. You go back, and you lay down or whatever. But you're in that bunker. And if you're flying with the regular Huey gunships, you can hear that turbine start to spool up. And as soon as you do, you know you're going to go. But if you're flying with the Cobras, they don't launch 'til you do, so you're lying there, and you're never totally 100 percent asleep. And that medevac buzzer goes off, you've got five minutes to be turning and burning. And all of you are trying to get out that door at once. And your aircraft's sitting out there with the ramp down, and you're hauling ass across that **(inaudible 02:12:03)** on a dead run. It ain't a slow stroll. And you go by, and you grab your helmet, and you put it on, and you sit down in that seat, and you look over your shoulder, and you holler, "Ready ape," which is an auxiliary power plant that produces hydraulic power for the starters for the aircraft engines. And you got a gunner back there, and he hollers, "Ready ape," and you reach up, hit that start switch on it. and if it doesn't start when you do it, you've got to pump that back up again really fast, and at times it'll try to start, and it won't quite start. So they're back there pumping like mad trying to keep it running. You get your hydraulic pressure up from that. He's got your ICS cord. He's out looking at the engine number one. Reach down, turn your igniters on, say, "Ready one," and he'll tell you, "Ready one," and you bring it forward, listen to your igniters, get it started. It'll tell you your drains are clear. He goes over, and he says, "Ready," and you tell him, "Ready two," and he says, "Ready, two," same drill. By this time you look up and make sure your rotor blades aren't turning, put your rotor brake on if they are. By this time, your pilot and copilot are coming out of the bunker. Get out of their seat, you get back there. You get your ICS plugged in. Your gunners are ready to go. You raise the ramp. The pilots call, you know, "Flight swift two one to Marble Tower. Fly to two taxies to the active." "Marble Tower, 10-4. Go ahead and fly to two taxi to the active." You get out on the active, which is your runway, and then it's, "Marble Tower, swift two one, fly to two to lift." "Roger that, swift two one," and barometric pressure is whatever, whatever temperature and humidity is whatever, "You're clear to lift." And you're standing there looking up to make sure nobody's going to land on top of you or you're not going to fly into anybody going over. And you come off that zone, and you feel as you start to come up, and then that nose tilts down as you go, and you'll sit down, and you light your first cigarette out the way of that mission. And you sit there, and you're listening to the radios going through your mind what's going on and what you're going to do. So that's kind of what you do on a medevac and this.

Interviewer

How does that feel to know that you were so important, life-saving to these guys.

Terry McDade

I said I flew for the grunts, and I flew for the people that I flew with. And I've run across -- it's funny. When I got out of the Marine Corps and I come back up here to Utah, I got talking to one of the guys that moved me, and it was kind of funny. I had talked to him. I says, "Yeah, I got out of the Marine Corps," and he says, "Were you in Vietnam?" And I says, "Yeah." And he says, "What squadron did you fly in?" And I says, "364 Purple Foxes," and he says, "I got picked up by a medevac by the Purple Foxes out of Antenna Valley -- out of Elephant Valley," and I says, "When?" And he gave me the date, and I had my original flight records. I've lost them in moving. So he dug it out, and I'd flown medevacs that day. Now, whether I picked him up or somebody else did. But I run across something that we had saved on a medevac from the Purple Foxes, and there was other squadrons that flew, 263, 165, some of these others. And that's what you did. You did it for the grunts. Or I did anyway. And if you got sent to get a medevac and you didn't have a corpsman, you were flying resupply or whatever, he's your responsibility. He's loaded on your aircraft. You need to do whatever you can to keep him alive. I had one crew chief that we picked up a medevac, and it was just a C&C that was a heat exhaustion or heat stroke. So he went back. He was one of them that was supposed to be getting ready to be certified as a crew chief. And so he went back. I was flying on the right gun, and I should have been paying attention to what he was doing, but I wasn't. And he comes up there, and he says, "I need your coat." I says, "For what?" He says, "To cover him up with." Now this is a heat exhaustion. He's got this guy covered with jackets and blankets. This guy's dying of the heat anyway. So I let out this inarticulate scream, took my helmet off, threw it at him, went back there, threw all the coats off of him and the blankets, everything else. We always carried extra water on the aircraft for this reason. And I'm down there, and I'm hosing him off, and I'm wiping his face off and things like that. I'm giving him a little bit of water onto his lips and into his mouth and this, trying to cool him off to keep him from dying. I just looked back there, and that guy had him all covered up. I lost it. I think I told him he was stupid or something like that.

Interviewer
I'd imagine without a corpsman you felt pretty...
Terry McDade
He's your responsibility. I don't care if it's an emergency or a routine...
Interviewer
You haven't been trained in the extreme things.
Terry McDade
Well, they did, yes and no. When I first started flying Medevacs, 362 -- no, but when I went to 364, they gave you a very good first aid course. It wasn't, "If you have a splinter in your finger, you take a needle and heat it with a flame and do this." It was given by the corpsmen that we were flying with, and it was on GSWs. It was on amputations. It was on this. It was on that. They gave us that because we needed to be able to help them. You get overloaded with medevacs coming out of a zone. And you can say what you want about triage. But if they're all bad, somebody's got to do something to help.
Interviewer
Chaos.
Terry McDade
It is. It is not even organized. It is chaos. It is things that a friend of mine, John Cryder, he made the comment when we went to an air crew reunion this last year. He says, "We were kids," and we were. That's all we were. We were 19 years old, 20 years old. We were flying medevacs for guys that in some cases were younger than us. And like you brought up when you talked to me originally, you look at their faces when you're taking them to a fire support base or on a troop strike or you're taking them to an LZ to join their unit or whatever. You wonder if you're going to pick them up on a medevac, if they're going to be alive or they're going to be dead, things that go through your mind. And you feel at times that, "No matter what I did it wasn't quite good enough. If I was perfect, then nobody would've died. And all you could do was try to keep them alive long enough to get them to a medevac, to the hospital. That's all you could do, give them as much first aid as you can. So it was wild at times, but I proved one thing. I proved myself to the worst critic in the world. And that's myself. I proved I could do things. I was so scared at times that I just thought I couldn't let people see me as a coward. I couldn't let people down. You panic as a crew chief, nobody might get out of that zone. Same as a pilot; if he panics, yeah, he's got a copilot to say, "I got it," or whatever, but as a crew chief you're the one that's responsible to get them in and out of that zone.
Interviewer
I'm sorry it had to involve so much devastation.
Terry McDade
Well, it does, but any of the people that's done combat, they know what I'm talking about. I can identify with these grunts and these combat air crew from Iraq and Afghanistan. I can identify with them. And true, there's things that go on. Yeah, I don't know whether I condone it or not. But I know why they do it. You cannot put somebody in a faraway country like that and have them do what they do and not be affected. I just hope they realize that there is help, and there is a light at the end of the tunnel, and it's not another damned oncoming train.

Part II
Interviewer
We're doing a pick-up interview with Terry McDade. Talk about some of the mischievous and funny things you did.
Terry McDade
Not a whole lot. We got on a thing called “hunting cockroaches,” and that was the first thing that was brought up at a reunion I went to in October. Man, these people haven't seen me since 1970. You proceed to drink a little bit and you'd go get your coffee can, poke holes in the lid and you'd go out and catch these giant cockroaches and you'd put them in – it was called the ring of fire on 'em – and you'd catch these cockroaches, put 'em in this coffee can, fill 'em full of lighter fluid in there. Put a thing of lighter fluid in the sand and light it and dump the cockroaches out and any of them that made it out through it alive, obviously, got to survive. Surprised we didn't burn the hooches down. But as far as doing a lot of things like that, no, we really didn't do a lot of it.
Interviewer
Played any jokes on each other?
Terry McDade
Not a whole lot. We really didn't. There was some, there was a party in one hooch where one guy was trying to get another guy's attention and he wasn't paying attention to him so he took his .45 and pointed it straight out and shot it next to his ear to get his attention. But other than that, there wasn't a whole lot of things like that, there really wasn't, that I was involved with or knew of.

Interviewer
What did you do to lighten the mood?
Terry McDade
Drink. There was a lot of drinking that went on, we really did drink a lot. And a lot of it was telling stories. A lot of it was sitting around, listening to music, talking about things that went on in the world; what you were gonna do when you got back to the world. It was basically what we did. A bunch of us were sitting in a hooch one night, we had a tape-recorder going, recording what was going on, and I got up to go outside, to go to the bathroom, and as I went out one door, the MPs come in the other door, and you could hear it on this tape, the MPs coming through the door, busting our party. Because we were enlisted, you weren't allowed to drink in the hooch.
And Sergeant Major Egbert went down and got 'em out of the lock up down there from the MPs. Now Sergeant Major Egbert was the one person I was scared of more than the NVA or the Viet Cong. I've done a track-down – he passed away several years ago – but he was a big red-headed Irishman. Richard R. "Red" Egbert, and he had been at Iwojima in World War II. He was really a neat guy, he really was. But he had hands about that wide. When you'd have to go face him you were about that far away from him across his desk. And he was the most terrifying man I'd ever faced in my life. I think that's why I didn't get into a lot of the trouble that some people did.
But he went down and got everybody out of the brig down there. And by the time he was done he had that poor lieutenant standing at attention going, "Yes, sir; no, sir; yes, sir; no, sir." But then you paid the price the next day when you had to go see the sergeant major, trust me. So most that's what we did was just drink. Some people smoked dope, told stories, lied about what was going on, what you did on R&R, things like that.
Interviewer
What do you mean about, "lied about what was going on in R&R?"
Terry McDade
When you come back from R&R, obviously you're the world's greatest lover, any of these hookers you've ever been around knew, you know? You're gonna tell these guys stories. I don't care whether they're true or not, you're gonna tell stories about what you did, where you went, things you saw, things like that. Now that's what I mean. You tried to out-lie each other from when you were on R&R.
Interviewer
One guy said often the R&R experience with women was their first time.
Terry McDade
Yeah, there was a lot of guys that went to Vietnam, their first time was sleeping with a hooker. And I'd lived with somebody before I went to Vietnam so, you know. But some of the guys *(laughs)* ... I said it was their first time having anything to do with a woman. And some of the stories they come back with, you know, you'd figure they ought have been a porno star or something, you know, with the stories they come back with.
Interviewer
You said R&R was really I&I.
Terry McDade
Yeah, we'd call it I&I, it's called intoxication and intercourse.
Interviewer
Can you say that again?
Terry McDade
Yeah, R&R was really I&I. I can truthfully tell ya, I went to Hong Kong, I went to the Philippines, I went to Australia. And the scenic sites that I seen were inside bars, houses of ill-repute, shall we say. I didn't go there to do sightseeing and the tourist thing. I went the first time, I was 20, when I went to Hong Kong. And I didn't go there to do any sightseeing, I can tell you well. I wanted to see things, but it wasn't the tourist traps and things like that. And the same thing when you went to Philippines. And then when I went to Australia.
When I went to the Philippines was in Longapo, beautiful downtown Longapo. And there was a bar there called Pauline's, and she had the best-looking hookers that was there. But they had a damn pond out in front of that thing that had an alligator or something, and I knew I was gonna get drunk and fall off that stairwell and that alligator was gonna eat me. Or whatever it was there. But you didn't go for – you went there to have a good time. You were going back to a combat unit, you didn't know if you were gonna be alive two days after you got back or what. So you spent your money and you had a good time. The last night I was there, the hooker that was there with me, I just handed her a whole handful of bills and said, "Here ya are." The taxi drive that took me back to the base, I handed him all the rest of the money, I said, "Here ya are, have a nice time." I was going back to flying combat missions and I didn't know if I was gonna die or not. So I was gonna have all the fun I could before I went somewhere.
Interviewer
Makes sense, doesn't it?

Terry McDade
It does. You gotta realize, I mean, I said – we were only 19 to 20 years old. That's the thing we've talked about through this interview. And most of the guys were, you know? And that was the thing, guys were drafted at 19 and they were like me. They did a tour in-country and come back and they still weren't 21 years of age. So yeah, you wanted to have all the fun that you could have. In the Texas Tavern in Sydney I'd start out drinking singles, then go to doubles, then go to triples, then go to quads. So you know, you were gonna have all the fun you could have, and you didn't care what it cost.

Interviewer
So “quads” is basically four shots?

Terry McDade
Yeah. *(laughs)*

Interviewer
Times three. Quad times three.

Terry McDade
Yeah, as much as you could drink.

Interviewer
Did you ever see USO shows?

Terry McDade
USO shows, the one time they did a USO show, the Bob Hope show. They did have shows that would come over – on the website it shows pictures of some of the shows that were there and some of the groups that come there as tours. But they did the Bob Hope show in Da Nang and I'd been flying morning medevacs and all of the sudden here come everybody saying, "You want to fly afternoon medevacs? Do you want to fly afternoon medevacs?" What's going on here? "You want to fly recon, you want to do this, you want to do that?"

And they drew names out of a hat for people to go see the show. And I didn't go. I don't know if it was – I don't know maybe it was because I'd afraid it would bring too much memories of the world or things like that, but I didn't go to see it. And we had strippers that one of the priests or one of the padres or whatever you want to call 'em, kind of didn't like that at the enlisted club when we had the strippers there the one time. But we had different shows that come in that were, I guess a USO type show that were there. Most of 'em, some were American, some were Australian, some were Filipino, things like that. So, yeah, as far as that, there were a few of them.

Interviewer
Can you mention briefly that people assume that unless it has the white cross on the chopper, it's just a cargo ship or a transporting chopper.

Terry McDade
Yeah, the Army flew dust off and they had the crosses on the side of their aircraft, the big white thing with the red cross on it. And we flew everything in 46s and 34s when I was first in-country, and in 46s, we flew everything. We flew troop strikes, skunk hunts that we talked about. But medevacs, you flew, you didn't have anything special on the side of the aircraft. You didn't paint anything on it or not, you just went. And some of 'em were a pick-up type medevac that you were flying something else that you ended up going and getting a medevac. And it could be resupply or recon, anything like that, and get diverted to a medevac. But we didn't mark ours special, no.

They run us through a really heavy-duty first aid course and also the more you flew with a corpsman, the more you picked up. You had the first aid kits but not like you did when the corpsman was on board or a flight surgeon that was on board. So you just flew it. Whatever come up, you flew that day. And you could be flying a resupply, the next thing you're diverted to picking up a medevac. And I told you about the one where I got off the aircraft and I got that kid, and I rolled back on the aircraft with him. We were resupply, we weren't scheduled to medevacs that day. But you go do what you're sent to do.

Interviewer
And you'd get surprises.

Terry McDade
Oh, yeah, you do. We picked up a medevac from a recon team out in Arizona territory, I think. And he'd been wounded from a booby trap. And we set down to get him and it was in elephant grass. And that elephant grass gets ten, twelve feet tall. And we sit down in that elephant grass and so what it does, that rotor wash blows it down. Well, right off of where the cockpit was was a piece of bamboo. The Vietnamese put a piece of bamboo in the ground, take a C-rat can and put it on it, put a grenade in it, and pull the pin. Well, when you come in on a helicopter, it starts that whipping, and eventually it will whip it enough it's gonna throw that grenade out. And I'm looking out the door of the aircraft and all of the sudden my eyes get about that big around and I keyed the mic and I told the pilot, "Look to the right."

And there it sat, just blowing back and forth in that rotor wash. And they loaded the medevac on board and we pulled in the power as hard as we could, as fast as we could, and we never got out of the zone before that grenade

come out of that can and went off and it put a bunch of shrapnel hits in the back of that aircraft. We got about 20 feet out away from that before it went off, but it through shrapnel through the back of the aircraft. So you don't know what you're gonna find when you sit down in a zone on things like that. And that's a really horrible feeling, trust me. Because when that grenade comes out of that can you've got three to five seconds before it goes off.

Interviewer

The chopper and gunner people we've interviewed seem to be in harm's way all the time.

Terry McDade

I think it was in "Apocalypse Now," they talk about the major in "Apocalypse Now," when they did the strike on the village so he could go surfing. And you did things that just – you went and you wanted the glory when you first started doing this, or I did anyway, I can't say everybody else did. You know, I wanted this chest full of medals because I was gonna stay in the Marine Corps forever. And I didn't fit in, I was definitely a square peg in a round hole. But you did it at first for glory and the gunfire and things like this.

And I finally got to the stage, all I was doing it for was the grunts in the field. We've talked about this, about God and country and mom's apple pie and the American war in Vietnam. No, I got to where I was doing it for the grunts. The adrenaline rushes were getting to the stage, they were there, but it just... it was more for the grunts. The guys with their ass in the grass out there.

Interviewer

And they all hail to the gunship and the crew.

Terry McDade

We did things. We talked in the other interview about trying to get into a mountaintop zone where the pilots had a heavy external hanging there, and they'd fly it – because there was so many clouds – they'd fly right up to where they could just see that mountain in these clouds right off the end of them blades, in one of these numbers going up there, just flying up that mountain in them clouds, where all they could see was just them from the rotor wash, moving them clouds where they could see them trees. And that takes quite a set to be able to do something like that.

And you'd do resupply. And the reason you're doing things like this – these grunts are out on a mountaintop somewhere in the middle out of nowhere and you're the one that's resupplying them with their chow, with their ammunition. But the big thing they had wanted was their mail. That was the thing. The letters from home. Pictures from home.

And we did one, Major Gulledge, he's passed away now, he did a lot of things after Vietnam for flights for heart transplants and things like that. But we were going into a zone, and it was a hot day and we had a heavy external and it was humid. And on a 46, you can hear the generators that supply the electrical power for the aircraft in your headsets the whole time, it's a hum. And we were going into the zone and all of the sudden, I heard the generators start to go off-line. I got just enough to key the mic to say – I was gonna tell him you're losing your turns – and I got "You're losing –" before the electrical went off-line.

And I turned and looked and he grabbed the controls and reached over and stomped on the emergency foot release and I looked out the door and the grunt down in the mountaintop zone is going like this to direct us in. And all of the sudden, he looks, and turns and hauls butt. And what we did, we dropped, picked up that load. You see there, you're gonna fall on top of him and guy. And we went off over the top of the mountain down through a canyon. And what Major Gulledge was doing was he was trying to get the turns back up on that thing, otherwise you're gonna fall out of the air and die.

And we went through a canyon, one of these numbers out through like that before he got the turns back up on that 46. And I'll tell ya, once it come back up on we called him on the radio and said, "Hey, we're sorry that we had to do that." And the guy says, "Aw, it made it easy, it just spread it all out, now we don't have to unstack it all, made it a lot easier for us." But you have things like that happen to you all the time, it seems like. And it depends on the skill of your pilot on whether you live through it or not, so you've got to have a lot of faith in 'em. Some you didn't, some you did. Just like some didn't have faith in some of the crew chiefs and gunners and some didn't.

Interviewer

Hopefully you have a good crew chief that knows your chopper.

Terry McDade

Yeah, and the thing is, because I watched right between the Major Gulledge and whoever the co-pilot was, because we went down through there and I just knew we were gonna hit one of them trees and die. Because you hit that – we were probably at about 80 or 90 knots which is around 100 miles an hour. And you hit the ground like that in a 46, you're gonna die. Everybody is. So that's things that happen all the time. It wasn't the gunfire and the glory and things like that that could've got ya killed.

Interviewer

Why was the DMZ so dangerous?

Terry McDade
Because it wasn't owned by anybody and it was full of landmines. The DMZ was no man's land. Nobody owned it and it's where everybody figured if North Vietnam attacks South Vietnam in force, that's where they were gonna come right through was the DMZ. And there was a fire support base there or a recon outpost there, I want to say it was Point Alpha, which was the northernmost point that was owned by the South Vietnamese, or the Americans, at that time, in 1969, 1970, when I was there.
But you'd look at that – because the NVA and the North Vietnamese had all sorts of tanks and weapons. Some of the best Soviet equipment there was. And it turned out when they did finally invade South Vietnam the second time – they invaded, I think, in 1972 and then turned around and did the final invasion in, like, '75. That's where basically, they just come right straight down through there and overrun everything. But that's why it was so dangerous. You knew right on the other side of that was a whole bunch of NVA that have one idea in mind and that's to take the South back. And, well, Uncle Ho – Ho Chi Minh – was dead then. But they were willing to die 100 percent for their country. They weren't scared of it.
Interviewer
Which is why they were fierce fighters.
Terry McDade
They were. You look at some of the things they did. The sappers, these guys are willing to strap – now they do it in Iraq and Afghanistan – but in South Vietnam you'd have the sappers that they'd strap the explosives to their body and attack the wire and the fire support bases and everything else. And they know if they shoot at a helicopter, the gunships with gonna show up and everything else. And so they weren't scared to die, really. They really weren't. They wanted to reunite South Vietnam and North Vietnam and they were willing to give their all to do it.
Interviewer
Did you have any experiences where you can express examples of the body count or attrition?
Terry McDade
Yeah, it was because the war attrition that they fought and the things we did, we'd go out and they'd run operations in an area, go through this area, lose a bunch of grunts, take this area, and then leave. And then a month later they'd go do sweeps through this same area. You'd go out and do the same thing time after time after time. And we were not holding the territory. We were owning it by day from air strikes and artillery fire and gunships and things like that. But we didn't keep it. We took it away from the NVA or Viet Cong, and when you worked with them, you had to tell the Vietnamese what was going on and they'd know from 2 to 24 hours prior to, what we were gonna do. So if they wanted to stand and fight they could, or if they wanted to leave they could.
So you'd go out there and sweep through these areas and gather whatever you could find, and they'd just leave. Well, when you do that they all come back. You can blow up tunnels, you can blow up complexes – they'll just come back and dig 'em again. I was reading a thing that one of the biggest tunnel complexes actually went under the Air Force Base down at Tan Son Nhut, down around Saigon. Actually their tunnels went underneath that base. So you can't move into an area. It's like going in there and stomping on an ant bed or cockroaches, whatever. You'll get whatever's showing but you won't get what's underground, and they'll come right back. And you can't fight a damn war by doing that. **Interviewer**
Hamburger Hill was like that.
Terry McDade
Yeah, Hamburger Hill, they took, they fought for ten days to take that damn mountain, because I remember reading about all of it and I've read about it since. They fought for ten damn days to take that mountain. And they took it, finally. They didn't kill as many NVA and Viet Cong as they thought, and stayed up there for however long it was, and then left. Well as soon as you do, Luke the Gook's gonna come right back and move right back in. You cannot fight a war that way.
Interviewer
Little bit about music. You loved the "Vietnam Rag," you loved Country Joe and the Fish. Can you remember the words to the "Vietnam Rag"? **Terry McDade**
I got to think. "Come on all you fine young men." The one at Woodstock starts with spelling a four-letter word. And "Give me the F, give me the U, give me the C, give me the K. What's that spell? What's that spell?" And it's, "Come on all you fine young men, Uncle Sam needs your help again. He's got himself in a – way down – he's got himself in a jam way down yonder in Vietnam." And I can't remember the rest of it, I really can't. Gets into "Being the first on your block to have a son come home in a box," you know, things like that. And that's the one we got in so much trouble there in the barracks, was listening to the "Vietnam Rag," Country Joe and the Fish. They didn't like that music. You can't censor people's thoughts. You can try. Other countries have tried it and everything, but you can't. And it didn't matter. We were all volunteers. That was the thing. All our crew was volunteers, whether they're pilots, crew chiefs, gunners, corpsman, you're a volunteer. And all of us probably joined for the same reason that I did, like we talked about, how combat was gonna be this noble experience like John Wayne did and Audie Murphy and a lot

of these others. And you find out it's not. It's so dehumanatized – however you say it –

Interviewer

Dehumanized.

Terry McDade

Dehumanized. It's so dehumanizing. And it does. It is a total sensory overload. Its smells, its sounds, its sights. It is things that just, all going on at once, and you're 19 years old, 20 years old, and you're trying to make sense of all this to keep that damn aircraft from getting shot out of a zone, to try to keep your people from getting shot while you're getting in there. Hopefully your gunners are seeing where the fire's coming from, but they can be looking at somebody – the muzzle flashes at a tree line over here, and I'm standing in the door looking over there and we're taking fire over there and you're trying to tell them, "Hey, you're taking fire back at 4 o'clock." Or you're on the left side, you're trying to tell them, "Hey, you're taking fire at 11 o'clock," while they're looking back at 8 o'clock.

And you're running from side to side on that aircraft trying to talk over that noise. And especially when you lean out the door of that aircraft to get in the zone and they're shooting, the end of that muzzle seems like it's right here and it's out probably about that far. And that force from that muzzle blast is just beating on you when he's shooting.

And just, at night, your night vision's gone, and you've still got to get him in that zone. But once you get down into the zone, that's only half of it. Then, if you've got medevacs you're trying to help load on board, or if it's a recon team that's being chased by the gooks for three days or two days or a day or whatever. They're running, they've been run, they're tired, they're thirsty, they're exhausted. And you're trying to help them get up that damn ramp so you can get out of that LZ. And once you get that last one up the ramp, you ask him, "Are you the last one?" "Yes." Key that mic, you're already on the handle for the ramp to raise it.

You key the mic and say, "The team's on board." And up comes that collective underneath his arm and out of that zone you go. And it's just – you do that and it's just – and when you get done, you know, these guys haven't had a cigarette in a week or however long they've been there. So they're all mooching cigarettes from ya, you know, which is fine. I didn't have a bit of problem with that. And you'd have it while you're trying to do that. And you're trying to get this team on board. And the first ones in are shooting out the windows of the aircraft so that adds that much more noise to what you're trying to talk over. And it just...

Interviewer

Chaos?

Terry McDade

It is. It's total chaos, but you have to manage and control that chaos. And that's where the pilots have to have the faith in you to do what you're doing. Sometimes they do and sometimes they don't, like I said, but you just... you don't want to die, first of all. You want to do like General Patton did, to paraphrase him, "Make that other dumb bastard die for his country." And that's what you want to do. You don't want to die. At least I didn't. And you don't want your people to die. And you're there for the grunts, you're trying to help the grunts, you're trying to get them in and out of that zone. That's what you're doing.

And it seemed like it was just day after day after day after day. Sometimes you might get shot up six or eight times in one day with recon teams in and out of zones. And then you might go where you'd fly for days on end and never take fire. And you'd get medevacs that were guys that were sick with malaria. The worst is when you get guys on there with dysentery because I'll tell ya what, they ain't got no control, and it really stinks, trust me. It's almost as bad – the worst thing you can move is a pig, with a helicopter. I'll tell ya right now.*(laughs)* Pigs don't like to fly in helicopters. And when you do village relocations, first thing that pig's gonna do when you get it on that aircraft, to show his displeasure with the United States Marine Corps in being moved. And you think that pig shit don't stink? Ooh! And that pig is not happy on your helicopter, trust me. Believe me.

Interviewer

And what do they do?

Terry McDade

They crap all over the floor of that helicopter.

Interviewer

Do they squeal?

Terry McDade

They squeal and they crap all over the floor of that helicopter. Oh! It just – you can't believe the smell of it.

Interviewer

Just the thought of relocating a village sounds like so much work.

Terry McDade

Well, what it was is, they'd come on there and they'd take and they'd gather all the silk parachutes up from the flares. And this is what they'd keep all their rice and a lot of the dried stuff they had in. So you'd load them on the aircraft. Well, the wind comes down the side of a 46, turns, and comes up through the center of the aircraft and there's no windows. So it blows rice everywhere in that damn helicopter that you cannot believe. It's like being in a

rice snowstorm there. And once you get them moved to wherever they're going to – and the United States was doing it to say, “Okay, we'll move you into this area and we'll protect you.” Well during the day, yeah, but the NVA and Viet Cong owned it at night anyway.
So you'd do that and you'd get rice down through all the cracks in your floor and you'd try to hose it out. Well these floors are not watertight, the center portion of 'em. So you'd get water down in the belly of the helicopter. And if you didn't get it out, what would happen is, when you'd go to lift, all of the sudden, 25 or 30 gallons of water would go forward and the aircraft would pitch like that. And it had drains you had to take out of it to let the water drain out. And you'd pull that floor up to see what was down in there and there would be albino rice growing down in the water that got down into the belly of that aircraft. It had sprouted down there.

Interviewer
Many of the villagers had never been in the air before. Did they get sick?

Terry McDade
We did some of the medevacs are village relocations. You put these people on this helicopter. Now they have no clue. The civic actions told them, “We're gonna take you out and we're gonna move you to another ville, we're gonna put you on these helicopters, or an Amtrak.” Usually used helicopters, because of the distance you were moving 'em. So you'd get mama-san and papa-san and all the baby-sans on this helicopter. You've got all these guys that are wearing white suits or armor if they're wearing them, and they've got helmets on, and dark visors. They are the evil American. The NVA or the VC have told them, "These Americans, all they want to do is kill you, rape your daughters, that's why they're here."

Interviewer
Eat your babies.

Terry McDade
Yeah, that kind of thing, eat your babies kind of thing. And so you put them on that aircraft, they don't know who you are. All they know is, all of the sudden, you're taking them away from – they might have lived in that ville for five generations or six generations. And all of the sudden you're moving them to another ville with a bunch of people from another ville that they don't know. These villes are kind of like things you read about, back in the Middle Ages, and this where there was a village in this area, and there might be another village 20 miles away, they have no clue about. And that's what this was like.

And they'd have everything when they was on there, pigs – them Vietnamese potbelly pigs were something that size, producing an ordinate amount of crap when you put 'em on an aircraft. And so you've got everything on that aircraft and then you take 'em somewhere else and it's noisy. The 46s we flew in have the highest decibel rating of any aircraft that the military has ever used. And so many guys that flew, that's why their hearing's so beat up is from that noise, that decibel level.
So it's noisy, it's windy, you're on there with all these Americans that are gonna kill you and torture you and do everything they can to you, throw you out of the aircraft, things like that. And they don't really – they're all huddled together, just boom, in a little mass about this big. You might have six Vietnamese all just huddled together like that. One family that is just huddled together. And about all I spoke of Vietnamese was, "mau le," which is hurry up; "didi mao," which is get out of here. And because that's about all I needed to learn on a helicopter. When you're doing troop strikes or anything like that with the Vietnamese. So you know, I can't communicate with 'em. Here I'm this American that's a foot taller than they are, that's got a dark visor down, and I'm, you know, trying to get 'em off my aircraft, they don't know what's gonna happen to 'em.

Interviewer
So they're terrified.

Terry McDade
Yeah, they are. They were. Yeah, the Vietnamese, when you did village relocations, actually you were kind of terrifying to these people, because you were this unknown entity that they'd been told about how bad you were. And true, there was things done to the NVA and Viet Cong – there was things done to them too, but there was things done by the American military. We weren't all the guys that were six-feet tall with, when they smile and the little star on the teeth there, you know, one of these numbers kind of thing.
Things were done that shouldn't have been done. Anybody that says it wasn't is a goddamn liar. Things were done that shouldn't have been done and I know that. And I know people that did it. But you were accepted for doing it because once you make that enemy of yours less than human, it's easier to try to kill them or torture them, or do anything you can to them. That's why the My Lai Massacre, that happened in 1968, with Lieutenant Calley, happened.
These are grunts that have been getting rocketed, mortared, booby trapped, no way to strike back. And all of the sudden they're in a ville and somebody shoots. Whether it was the Americans, or the Vietnamese, it doesn't matter at this point, somebody shot. Once it happened, it was a mob mentality that took over. Lieutenant Calley got hosed for this. They court martialed him for it. He could not have stopped that no matter what he did. And it was just a way

of striking back.
And that's why I said things were done to the Vietnamese, and that's why they were terrified of us, because things were done. There was rapes, there was murders, there was anything and everything you could think of. The joke was about Private Zippo that they'd go into a ville and search a ville, light the hooches on fire, burn the hooch down. Okay, you're taking away from the NVA or Viet Cong but you're also taking away the Vietnamese that might be on our side and turning them against us because you're burning their house down.

Interviewer
And for the relocation one of the fears also was they'd never been up in the air. Did they get sick?

Terry McDade
Some would get sick. Most of 'em were just so scared. I said they were all huddled together and they didn't want to look out of that window. I mean you're only, doing this, you might be at 1,500 feet or a thousand feet, something like that, 3,000 feet. But to them, the mentality of – they're not stupid. Don't get me wrong on that. They were some of the most ingenious people when it come to building weapons and booby traps and anything you'd ever want to meet. But you take somebody that their whole life for six generations or whatever, has lived in this ville that's never had electric power, never had lights, never had TV, never had radio. No cars. Their main use of farm equipment was a water buffalo that didn't like Americans – they didn't for some reason, don't know why – and all of the sudden, you're taking them and throwing them in a helicopter that they have no idea about flight or anything else and saying, “Okay, we're gonna take you somewhere else.” And it is kind of – I can see why they were the way they were.

Interviewer
It's like an alien ship coming and taking them away.

Terry McDade
Yeah, it would be the same kind of thing, and it's quite a good analogy really.

Interviewer
Music. "We Gotta get out of this place" by the Animals. Do you remember that song?

Terry McDade
Oh, yeah, I remember it quite well. That was the most common one that was played by any of the groups that come to the clubs or anything like that in Vietnam is "We Gotta get out of this Place." That was the most common song played there. And everything would stand up and cheer and everything else, because deep down inside, no matter how long you'd been there or how long you wanted stay, you still wanted to go back to the world.
You wanted to go back to brown-eyed women that didn't have black teeth from chewing betel nut. You wanted to go back to being able to go to a drive-in movie, drive a car, go back to doing what you wanted to do. Back to the world. But that song, "We Gotta get out of this Place" is one of the ones that probably everybody wanted to hear the most because you did. Eventually you wanted to get out of this place. And no matter how long you wanted to stay, you still wanted to get out of that place, honestly. And no, I can't tell you the words to it, I really can't. *(laughs)*

Interviewer
I think it was about a young teen-age boy and girl who wanted to get away.

Terry McDade
Yeah, it was. Well, he lived in an area where it was a mining type town or coal mines or a mining type town or some kind of area where it was kind of a –

Interviewer
Nothing going on.

Terry McDade
Yeah, nothing going on.

Interviewer
You mentioned once that you don't show cowardice in a unit. And you mentioned My Lai. Talk about the dynamic of mob behavior a little bit.

Terry McDade
Yeah, you don't want to show cowardice. That's the worst thing you can do. You don't want to show it. You don't want to be thought of as a coward. You can't. You can't because people then do not want to fly with you, they don't want to have anything to do with you. Everybody was scared. I don't care. You were scared. The level of fear was there. But you could not let it stop you from doing what you were supposed to do or what you needed to do. You can't let Joe Schlaboznick over here see that you're scared going into a zone. You can't. You can't let 'em see that. You don't want to be thought of as a coward. Cowardice is something you can't do.
And that's why you will do things, at times, to be more accepted by your peers. And your peers are the combat aircrew, the gunners, the crew chiefs, the corpsman. The pilots, they had to have a slightly different standard. Well, they did have to have a different standard, because they could not condone some of the things we might have done

or we did do. They couldn't. Because then they're putting their ass hanging out a mile for letting things go on that they needed to stop.
And I was scared. I hated to fly. I'm scared of flying, I'm scared of heights, but I still went and did it. I could've walked away from it at any time with all the air medals that I had and the missions that I flew, said, "I just don't want to fly anymore," and I don't think anybody would've said anything about it. But the fear of freezing on a gun, you don't want to freeze on a gun. You cannot stand there in that door and just freeze. You can't. I could not fathom the idea of having people think I was a coward. I just couldn't. Maybe it was the way I was raised, all the movies I watched, World War II propaganda movies, I could not fathom being thought of as a coward, I just couldn't.

Interviewer

One said he and two other FNGs were assigned to a unit, and within a week they were on a serious patrol and got ambushed. He said he cried and cried he was so scared after.

Terry McDade

It does, it does. That's what I've tried to explain about combat. It does that to you. The Marine Corps, or Army or Air Force or Navy or whatever, can run you through every bit of training they can. The most realistic training is when you go out and run your first combat operation. That's when you'll find out what it's really like. All training does is, in moments of intense stress you'll react – how is it? In moments of stress, you'll resort to patterning or training. And that's all that training is doing, is giving you something to resort to, to look at.
That's why you get guys that have been in-country for ten months or eleven months, don't like the FNGs because they haven't been there, they haven't paid their dues. You don't know what they're going to do when the shit hits the fan. You really don't. And that's why they don't like new guys. You don't. Because they're a liability. If you fly with the same gunners all the time, you know what they're gonna do. You put a brand-new gunner on that aircraft, especially on a skunk hunt or a recon or a medevac, they should not be on there, but they put 'em on anyway. And you don't know what they're gonna do. “What's this guy gonna do? Is he gonna panic? Is he gonna freeze on the gun? Is he gonna shoot when he shouldn't? What's he gonna do?” That's why you don't like FNGs. And that's the bottom line. My first combat mission I flew, I got shot at twice. On my first combat mission.

Interviewer

Did you pray? Did you have a ritual? Any spiritual component at all in yourself to this war? **Terry McDade**
In some ways I did. I started with it, I did. Because of my background. I started with a spiritual thing when I went to Vietnam, as far as believing in God and everything else, and praying to God and this, and you know, being actively, you know, praying to Him. And then as it went on, I went away from it more and more and more. And I got to the stage thinking about it – they say there's no atheists in foxholes – that I got to the stage that I really, I don't think I believed in God, because of the things you've seen and just that, if you have a real super strong belief in God, maybe you can make more sense of it. But my belief in God slowly went farther and farther and farther away. And I just quit believing in Him. I just did.
I don't know if this is going to make it on – this part's probably not gonna make it on tape. We had a new CO in the squadron and we were scheduled to fly one day and we'd gone out there and it was some, just regular C&C mission. And they canceled the flight because of the rain and this. And I come back there and I was walking across the flight line and our new CO was right in front of me, and of all the things to do, stopped just before I went in the hanger and went, "Fuck you, Rain God!" That's why I said, this one's ain't gonna make the tape, I know this. And he turned around and looked at me and I thought, “Oh, boy, are we done. You're going to Portsmouth or something. We're going to the brig.” And like I said, I don't think it will make it. And that's just my attitude, become my attitude. Now, some of it was bravado I guess, but some of it was my actual belief.

Interviewer

You got hardened.

Terry McDade

You did. You talk about when you're first in-country, we aboard the USS Okinawa, then we off-loaded at Phu Bai. And when I got in-country, I had everything figured out – what I was gonna do when the first rocket or mortar round come in, okay? I put my shower shoes down my gook boots that you bought from the little shop there where you bought shoes and some of this stuff, the boots and junk to send home and this. Put my flack-jacket on top of it, put my cigarettes and my lighter in the flack-jacket pocket, put my helmet on top of it. Because I knew, when the first mortar or rocket round come in, I'd get up, put my helmet on, put my flack-jacket on, put my gook boots on, walk out the door, go in the bunker, sit down, smoke a cigarette.
That first damn mortar round come in, and when it did, I come out of that rack, I jumped over the rack next to me, beat feet out the door and in the bunker. I left everything in that hooch, I didn't care right at that moment. So you talk about your first combat experience, things like that. You know, you do, you just go. You don't wait around.

Interviewer

Yeah, that's nature.

Terry McDade
We were at Marble Mountain. They used to fly out of Da Nang, they'd fly the flare ships out of Da Nang. And I was sitting there one night and I was writing a letter home. And I had a chair and I was sitting on it and I had my feet up on a rack, on my rack that I slept on. And I was looking out the door of the hooch because it was open. I'm writing this letter and I hear this piston-powered aircraft go over. And all of the sudden, there's this great big explosion right where I'm looking, right out the door. And I didn't know what it was, I didn't know if we were being bombed by the NVA or what.

And I run out the door, and as I turn to go in the bunker, I seen this big burning thing coming at me and I thought it was a rocket coming in. And it hit about ten feet away from me. And if it had been a rocket I'd been done. But they were losing power and they dumped the flares. And it was a Vietnamese aircraft of all things. Isn't this amazing? Dumped that whole thing of magnesium flares right on our base. But it was that burning section of magnesium flare that I was looking at. But I knew I was dead. That was one of the times that I really seriously knew I was gonna die. But it was that big chunk of burning flare.

Interviewer
Have you been to The Wall?

Terry McDade
No. I haven't been to The Wall in Washington, D.C. I've been to the walls that come around here and because, you know, there's people on there that I know.

Interviewer
Talk about the one here.

Terry McDade
The one at the capitol? There's people on there that I know because of the Utah platoon of '67. The guys that died that I was with. And guys that died that I knew in high school. Guys that aren't on there that should be, that committed suicide after Vietnam because they couldn't keep the demons on the leash and it gets too much. And so they killed themselves. There's pilots I flew with that killed themselves. But they're not on a wall. They're just as dead as if they got killed in-country.

But I go look at these memorials with people's names on 'em and I look at 'em and I think, you know, why are they on there and I'm not? How the hell did I live through everything and they didn't? How come I ended up not dying? And it's tough. They did the field of flags thing at County Fair Grounds and the CMA was out there with the CMA. And we went out there to that. And you walk through that and you look at some of this stuff, and it is so intense that, you know, you try to explain it some way, about what you went through and the loss you feel for friends. And people that ain't been there don't understand it.

I stumbled on a picture on the Internet the other day, and it was of in Iraq somewhere. And it showed this dead Marine and all of his members of his squad are all gathered around him in a circle. All huddled up over him. And that's what you do in combat. If you haven't been there, you can look at all these pictures and it doesn't make you really realize what it was like. Just the loss of everybody. And our squadron too, we didn't lose a whole lot of people. We lost enough, but you don't... it's the death, the dying, the sick, that are kids that you're flying medevacs for, that you're beating yourself up over, should I, you know, should I save their life? Should I try to save their lives? What's their quality of life gonna be like when they get back to the States somewhere, that all they are is just a vegetable from the head injuries? And you ask yourself: Did I do right? Did I do wrong? But you still tried. Time after time. It gets to the stage, it pisses you off when somebody dies.

Interviewer
That wall seems to be a healing place.

Terry McDade
I've heard that a lot of guys have said that that's been there, that The Wall has healed a lot. And I have wanted to go, but it's...

Interviewer
Any wall.

Terry McDade
Any wall. It's because you look at it and I think some people don't want to go. I've talked to people that won't go, that said they don't want to go see it because of the memories it brings back. And it does. It is one of them things that is just... it is just everything you went through just comes flooding back at once. It's not just one specific incident, it just is everything all of the sudden wants out. Things that you've hid.

Looking through a hell hole on a medevac with a guy on a hoist that you're thinking, “God, I hope they strap him on there, and if they didn't, don't let him let go until I get him in this damn aircraft, because if he does he's gonna fall a hundred feet to his death.” Coming out of that watch, and this guy coming up through that hell hole. The ones you've put, they've got him in a Neil Robertson, they're all strapped in, you're trying to get 'em up there. It's that coming back. It's the smell of the JP-5 exhaust. It's the sounds of things. It's the sights. It's just, everything tries to

come back at once, when I go look at these moving walls and at the time I was doing it, I got pretty hard and pretty cold-blooded.
But now, thinking about it, I've questioned it myself – should I have done what I did? I could've not flown. I could've stayed on the ground. But it was something I had to do. It was something I felt I had to do. I don't know if I was trying to uphold the tradition of, you know, my family members in the military, or if I was proving something to myself, which I did. I proved to myself I could do things that I didn't think I could ever do. I could be so pants-wetting, teeth-chattering, knee-knocking scared, but I still had to do what I did. And I did it.
Same thing as every other grunt or anybody else that had their ass in the grass, that wasn't a REMP, that went out and they did combat missions. They did skunk hunts, they did patrols, they run PBRs, they did recovery of pilots that were shot down. Every one of us that went out there and did combat, we all paid our dues on it. And that is one common brotherhood we have of what we did. Because everybody that flew was a volunteer. Marines did draft a little bit. But otherwise they were all volunteers. And that was the thing.

Interviewer
The REFPs get a lot of crap.

Terry McDade
They do. They got rocketed or mortared occasionally. And true, you have to have the support groups and everything else, but. And I think all combat troops, I don't care, will look down their noses at somebody like that. And I'm not – and like I said, I could've done it, I didn't have to fly. I was a volunteer.

Interviewer
Tell us about the story you wrote.

Terry McDade
This short thing I'm gonna read here called "They," is actually from a series of stories that I've wrote called "The Pirate Hunters and the World of **(Esparay? 58:30)."** The genre is actually science fiction – we'll cover this right on the top of it there when I read it which does not make much sense. But I modified it for, basically combat aircrew, because of what we did and things like that. But can actually use this kind of scenario for everybody that was in combat at one time or another, whether it was in the Civil War, Vietnam War, World War II, Iraq, Afghanistan, it basically is for them.
We'll pull this rough draft excerpt from one of my stories. "The Pirate Hunters and the world of **Esparay**" that I have modified for use here as the original version would not make much sense because of the genre which is sci-fi. The word "they" is often overused as in "they said," or "they did" without 'they' being identified. “They” are identified in this excerpt.
"They were the people who wore these patches as either pilots or crew chiefs and gunners or the corpsman who flew medevacs with us. They were in their late teens, early 20s, and were of all creeds and colors. They had hopes and dreams and plans for what they would do when they returned to the world. They would drink together and try to top each other's tales of what they did on R&R, they would argue and fight with each other after too much to drink and they might even think the other person is the biggest jerk in the squadron, but they were willing to risk their life to save his.
They didn't fly for God and country and Mom's apple pie, or the American war effort in Vietnam. They flew because they wanted to. Every one of them were volunteers. Some flew for the adrenaline rush and some flew because of the Walter Midi that is in all of us. You were flying and you sped high over the trenches and your silk scarf was waving in the slip-stream. It was the ultimate cowboys and Indians, cops and robbers. Now, the analogy would be the ultimate video game, only we didn't get three lives for a quarter.
They were 19- or 20-year-old kids who were suddenly responsible for four other people's lives. They had to talk a pilot into a hot LZ while both gunners were shooting and Charlie was shooting back. They are the ones who had to help the corpsman when he had too many medevacs to handle by himself, while listening to the wounded screaming pain and fear, calling out for their mothers or God to save them – loud enough to be heard over the sounds of the engines and the rotors. They were the ones who watched people die on the floor of the aircraft and felt anger and frustration because they could not save them. They watched other aircraft crashed and even though they were only hundreds of feet apart, they might as well been a hundred miles away, because they could not stop what was happening. Their only hope was to land afterwards and try to save those they could.
They had a bond with each other that is only found where lives are risked. They had to have faith and trust and a pilot to make decisions that could save everybody's lives on the aircraft in a split second. And as pilots they had to have faith and trust in the crew chief’s and his gunner's abilities. They knew one would try to save the other until his last breath had left his body. Sometimes, because we are human, the decisions that were made were flawed, and when that happened, everyone in the squadron would feel a loss. Other times they would die because that is the nature of war and that would also fill the ones who were left alive with a sense of loss.
Over the years that have passed since they were young men who were turned old by what they saw and did, they have watched as the ones who did not die in a faraway land has slowly dwindled in number. When they read or hear of another one who has died, they think back to the times they spent with him. At times, they're asked to

remember the ones who died and honor their memories by telling others about them. They think back and try to bring the memories forth to share with people. They try to convey what he was like to talk and laugh with as they try to turn a two-dimensioned picture into a three-dimensional person. They write words, and as they read them, they find out the words cannot convey what he was like. So they erase them and try different words only to find out these words have failed also.
They try again and again, knowing they will never succeed, until finally they summon the words they hope him describe him, but they know the words will fall short of the mark. That night, lying in bed, they will stare into the darkness, reliving many of the memories that were brought forth, until they drift into a restless and fitful sleep. Slowly, over the next few days, the memories, both good and bad, will return to that special place where they are kept until they need to bring them forth again. That's who they are."

Interviewer

Do you write often?

Terry McDade

Yeah, I do. I have, what is it, an 80,000-word novel that I finished. I have all sorts of short stories that I've wrote. Science fiction, fantasy, romance, horror. Just never managed to get any of them published yet. Still working on it.