

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAME: Mike Perrett

COLLECTION: 4700.0974

IDENTIFICATION: Vietnam veteran

INTERVIEWER: Murphy Duplechien

SERIES: Americans in Vietnam

INTERVIEW DATE: 5/3/74

FOCUS DATES: 1969-1971

ABSTRACT:

Tape 1423

Joining the Marine Corps; being sent to Vietnam in 1969; attached to Third Infantry Division; stationed near Danang; sent to the 2nd Battalion, 7th Marines; describes his duties as a radio operator; describes the make-up of a company and duties of its members; dangers of being a radio operator; feeling of joy at being wounded; describes being hit by shrapnel from a booby trap -- Viet Cong wanted to kill a sniper in his company; demoralizing effect of the booby trap on his company; booby trap also enraged the company and made them want to kill some VC; VC knowledge of American tactics; describes the duties and dangers of being a point man; racial tensions within the company between blacks and whites and a near race riot; removing an officer because black soldiers threatened to kill him; black soldiers trying to bring the Black Power Movement to Vietnam; receiving news of racial unrest at home spurring on conflict within the ranks; describes his duties as a radio operator; length of time taken to get air support -- the more frantic the call, the quicker the support; Forward and Observer flying a Piper Club directing air attacks; helping to direct air attacks; discusses favorite pilots; informal relationship between officers and enlisted men in combat; lieutenants not wearing their bars because feared they would be killed; by-the-book officers didn't last long; unit stationed near the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ); describes the terrain; crossing the DMZ; fire fights in rice paddies; preference for fighting in the jungle; lists equipment, weapons, supplies, and personal belongings that he carried in the field; M-79 grenade launcher; Vietcong using things Americans left behind (garbage) in booby traps; Vietcong making booby traps out of C-ration cans and grenades; crushing and burying C-ration cans to keep them out of VC hands; cans and grenades; describes other types of booby traps; points out distinctions between VC and North Vietnamese Army; battles with NVA; setting up nighttime ambushes; difference in combat between Vietnam War and other wars; inaccuracies in the body count; American troops carrying the bodies of slain soldiers off the battlefield; discusses different levels of Medevac; directing a Medevac chopper into camp; four helicopters in each Medevac mission; US helicopters being shot down; attempts to rescue crews of downed helicopters; removing or destroying downed helicopters to keep VC from stripping them and using the materials against the US troops; cryptographic messages; length of missions'; search and destroy missions; discusses the incompetence of the South Vietnamese Army; Vietnamese interpreters; ROK forces; describes the Vietnamese population; anti-Communist

indoctrination of US soldiers; anger and resentment of Vietnamese masses toward United States; Danang; discusses his bouts of malaria; hospitalization for illness and wounds; lack of personal hygiene while in the field; discusses the Marine Infantry -- the ones doing the fighting; contrasts conditions for members of the Air Force and of the Marines in Vietnam; importance of having fresh socks in the field; taking quinine tablets to prevent malaria; becoming cautious as time to return home approached; describes the joy he experienced when he left Vietnam; drug use by soldiers in Vietnam; describes the fear he experienced in Vietnam.

TAPES: 1 (T1423)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 1 hour, 30 minutes

PAGES TRANSCRIPT: 46 pages

RESTRICTIONS: None