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Dave Evans

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#399

ORAL HISTORY OF APPALACHIA

ORAL HISTORY

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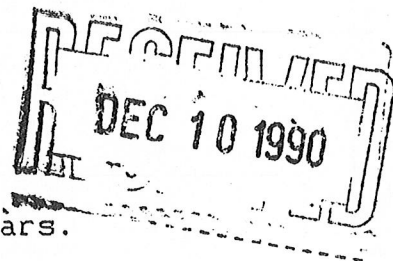
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(Signature - Witness)

WEST VIRGINIA VIETNAM VETERANS

AN INTERVIEW WITH: Dave Evans &  
Rick Richards

CONDUCTED BY: John Hennen, Jr.

November 10, 1984

TRANSCRIBED BY: Vina Hutchinson

76 pages

OHAP CATALOG NO.: WVVV-14

Tape 18 a & b

JH: This is Saturday, November 10. This is John Hennen, I'm at, ah, 1345 Lee Street in Charleston with Dave Evans, the president of the West Virginia Vietnam Veterans of America, and Rick Richards, a member of the board. If this is going to pick up, I hope it does.

RR: Alpha Bravo Charlie Delta, oh, by the way, VC comes from the, the, I mean, uh,

DE: Victor Charles

RR: Charlie comes from Victor Charlie.

JH: Oh really?

RR: Yeah.

DE: Instead of Viet Cong [inaudible] say Victor Charlie.

RR: It's Victor Charlie, the VCS

DE: Of course when you're being overran by him and they were kicking your ass, you referred to him as Mr. Charles [RR laughs] instead of Charlie.

RR: Right it's not Charlie then, it's, ah, Charles.

JH: Sir Charles. You won't mind if I do this.

RR: No.

JH: I guess this will pick up, let me check here. [checks tape to make sure it is recording]

RR: Roger, he's, he's done a lot of work, ah, for veterans and veterans' issues and things. Now a lot of people, ah, around here close to us, ah, call him names and get mad at him, cause he's so forceful and up front about his beliefs and stuff like that. But other people who, ah, you know,

are doing things, writing books and stuff like that, they talk to David, they talk to David, cause he's a real person, you know, his feet are on the ground, his head isn't in the clouds and, ah, it's like I say, he's beginning to get some well-deserved recognition for what he's done.

DE: Viet, Vietnam Veterans in general, we talked about this last night, the vet, they're getting this recognition.

JH: Ah huh.

DE: Now, we have people in politics. I like to point to Danny Johns, a local Kanawha County newly-elected sheriff, for Kanawha county, and John Kerry, who is a . . .

JH: Right.

DE: U. S. Senator now from Massachusetts.

JH: Oh, [name inaudible] wanted me to see to that. I was . . .

DE: Right, we were

JH: Afraid that guy was going to

DE: We got to see that, we got to be good friends. And it's funny because John Kerry had the same background I did - he was a loud mouth anti-war activist back during the '60s and early '70s and a very militant protester.

RR: Right.

DE: He cleaned his act up, now he's a U. S. Senator, and he cleaned his act up to the point where he took off the fatigues and put on the suit.

RR: Yeah.

DE: And he had his hair cut. That's what we said.

RR: Yeah, that's what we're suppose to

DE: Hey, you look like you ought to be in government.

JH: Yeah, he hadn't really changed his message much, I don't think.

DE: No, the message is the same, but it's the appearance. See that's, that's why we're, yeah

RR: We, they tried to get us to pose for pictures, we had, we did that article, that interview last night and the photographer wanted us to show up in jungle fatigues because of the contrast of the green against the flag - red, white and blue.

JH: Yeah.

RR: And we refused to do it. We refused to do it - kind of blew her away.

DE: She begged us to do it, we said,

RR: Yeah.

DE: She was even going to buy our fatigues for us. I said, we don't own, I don't own fa, I don't own any fatigues, you know. [laugh] Ah, it was just, we got, we, we basically, been able to, to kill that image and stereotype, typing we got from the media and from, and from the government. Cause the government wanted to blame us for losing the war as long as we were wacked out dopes-dopers and baby killers they could say well listen if we had better troops, we'd done a better job.

JH: Ah, hmm.

DE: And that's bullshit. If we had a better reason and a better cause, we'd done a better job, that's basically what it is.

RR: Well, better leaders would have helped, too. They were fighting World War II in the guerilla warfare situation. And it didn't take you long, every D-corp that I knew realized the tactics that we were using in the field, probably more appropriate than the situation. [laughs]

DE: I always make this, I always make this example, ah, the cartridge belt I have downstairs is the same one I had in Vietnam.

RR: Yeah.

DE: That the one I had, ah, it's [RR coughs] in World War II issue. We were fighting a, a war in 1970 with 1942, ah, era equipment in Vietnam. We didn't have, the Marines up North didn't have the correct gear to use in, in a tropical situation. We were carrying inch-thick haversaks, ah, that could not carry the supplies we needed for a 30-day opt. The World War II guys would go on beach, they needed food for two days, they would have ...

JH: Uh hum.

DE: A larger pack. But our packs wouldn't even accommodate enough food to, ah, to, to sustain us for, you know, a 10 or 20 day operation. Ah, so a lot of guys would take socks, fill 'em full of cans of sea-rations, hang 'em over the back of their pack, that's why you see a lot of these guys in some of the old footage of the marines with socks hanging

down out of their pack. [RR laughs] They were actually carrying food, and in, in the army

RR: The army ...

DE: The equipment you were, let me say something about the Marines. The equipment you were issued was so complex that when they first issued the M-16s, they failed to issue cleaning kits with 'em, when they issued them. They took 'em in to combat, right, there's no way they can be cleaned, they jammed - a lot of people lost their lives because the equipment malfunctioned.

RR: Oh, that's an interesting situation,

DE: Let me, let me, well, I, I was trying to make a point Rick.

RR: Go ahead.

DE: And, and, I, right, you see guys carrying an enormous amount of ammunition, right.

JH: Ah huh.

DE: I mean I carried 40 magazines - 18 to 19 to 20 rounds a piece. The reason you do that is [sound of sirens in the background] you have a machine gun, and when you fire, you fire with everything you have. I mean, in a firefight, it's exactly that, they, you fire as much and as hard and as fast as you can for a 14-second period, you know, to do 2 bust caps. And it was, it was so wasteful, I mean, there was no, nobody, I've never seen a, a marine yet fire when we were hit on semi-automatic it was always like "let it rip".

RR: Rock an roll.



DE: Rock 'n' Roll. [RR laughs]

DE: Rock an roll was the term we used, (RR: Rock and roll.) rock and roll, right, [sirens in the background] at that point, we'd walk in everything flipped on full automatic, right, a bird moved and you got a 20 round burst, you know, right into - but it was

RR: It's hard to sneak up on something when you're shooting at birds. [laughs]

DE: It was strange and, and, and another reason we had trouble in the war basically was that we were trained for 8 to 10 weeks, 8 to 16 weeks to fight against an enemy that had been fighting for 30 years.

JH: Ah hum.

DE: We were bigger, cumbersome in the jungle. We had to carry more equipment. We, we couldn't go without toothpaste we

RR: We needed our aspirin.

DE: We couldn't go without dry socks. We had to have all this stuff, and the Vietnamese lived on eating rats and, ah, what rice they could have. Basically, they were better.

RR: We kicked their ass in the field, there's no question about that. The question of American troops in Vietnam was equal to the task [DE sneezes 5 times] and above it. I mean, the best NVA troops in the field, the Americans won, we had better equipment than they did. We had far more resources, they didn't have any air, I never once saw any Vietnamese airplane.

JH: Ah huh.

RR: North Vietnamese airplane. But our le, the people who led us, you know, ah, one of my friends stated to me that the most efficient killer of United States Marines that has ever been invented was the United States Marines in Vietnam. They killed more of their officers than anybody else has been able to do down throughout history. Part of what the problem was is the people who lead us in this war. And I'm talking about the civilian leaders as well as the military leaders.

JH: Ah huh.

RR: Didn't understand what was going on. They didn't understand the war we were fighting, they didn't understand why we were there, they didn't understand what needed to be done to win it; they, and you know David was talking earlier about it, you know, we still feel like we, people are trying to blame us for it. We, the troop, that, that fought the war. And it just isn't true. They, if, if you knew, if you knew what the American ground trooper was and did in Vietnam, I ne, you'd have to feel good about it. You'd have to feel good about it cause the boys got the job done, did mostly despite their odds. The best officers were the ones that could listen, you know.

JH: You run into many of those? [sound of sirens in the background]

RR: Did I? I, yeah, I was real fortunate. I was in a specialty that, ah, we worked in two-man teams and rank didn't really mean a lot and the v, the vast majority, we, our officers were, had enough sense to know, you know, if I make a mistake, he's just as dead as I am.

JH: Ah huh.

RR: Uh, but when it's two people, it's a lot more personal. But the same thing could be said about a platoon or, or even a company. But the officers in that case were listening to their superior officers who were listening to their superior officers. They had a mission to do, and they, they were trained to do it the way that the guy above them told them to do it, you know, whereas we were, we were younger, ah, a little more disrespectful. Once you get out in the field, I mean, your goal changes from saving, you know, America for democracy, to living through that year.

JH: Ah huh.

RR: And if this guy's gonna get you killed, ah, you know, many times the decision got down to, it's me or him and particularly for American junior officers that the bad news is the troop, ah, made that decision on its own.

DE: Well, I, I haven't seen [clears throat] a lot of that. I don't know why, maybe because I was in the Marine Corps, we didn't, I never saw any officers get fried. We had problems with them, but I first got in the 7th Marine, Fox Two Seven, and, ah, there was a Lieutenant Hamilton there, his name was

Charlie Hamilton, his dad was a medal of honor recipient from the second world war, he was a gunnery sargeant that got killed in Okinawha or somewhere. But Lt. Hamilton, ah, was, Roy Hamilton, that was his name; Roy, we called him Roy in the field, I mean, the man wore no insignias, we called him Roy. He treated us like we were one-on-one, you know, like we were a long lost friend. He adopted me as his radio man and we were out once and they sent us to this one area and we set up, dug up a perimeter, dug in and set up a perimeter, ah, two hours later they ask us to go eighteen clicks, which is approximately 15 miles back to where we just came from. So that was dark when they told us to move, so we got out in the field, we were going along, and he said, - at one point he just said, "Fuck it, get off the trail, cover yourself up, turn off the raidos, we're sleeping." And that's what we did. The next day we came back up on the net, in other words, we came back in communication with our company. They wanted to know where the hell we'd been and he just told them w, we'd taken a break. So this captain was chewing his ass out on the the net, and he just responded by saying, "I know what you mother fuckers doing in the rear, you throw a dartboard wherever that dart hits that's where you send Fox Two Seven. I'll tell you one thing, one of these days you'll fuck up and you'll hit San Francisco and we'll all going home. [JH laughs] That was his response to it, so, so you know, this,

he was immediately taken out of the field, I mean, in two days, he w, you know, he was gone. I think he just resigned his commission or they just relieved him of command, cause he ...

JH: Was he a career man?

DE: He'd actually flipped out. No, I don't think so.

JH: Oh.

DE: I don't know what, I never talked to him, I know he was a college graduate. I think he was, he was a physics major and he was a very intelligent guy, he may have been drafted. I'd say he may have been drafted and went to OCF, cause you know, he was definitely off, officer material. He was good and the p, people love him, that were with him. He took care of us, right?

JH: Ah huh.

DE: I was wounded my first day out in the field, miss, some shrapnel in one eye, and bleeding, looked like I was dying but it was just, you know, a superficial cut from shrapnel, and, ah, he freaked out, holding my head down with a bandage on it like that, you know, and the corpman says, "Let him up. It's okay." And he said, [imitating the person he is quoting] "he's bleeding bad," you know. [RR laughing] But he cared about us, you know, he wouldn't let us, he wouldn't get us fucking killed. He wouldn't put us in situations. we all said one time what we have to do is survive, you know, and, ah, he was the kind of a guy that you couldn't

upset him, we were staying on this hill one night, on this trail, right, it was raining like hell, it was muddy, and this guy beside of me said, he said, he said, what dumb motherfucker stuck us here. And Lt. Hamilton, of course I was with him, radio operator, he said, "I did." He said, ah, "Okay." [laughs]

JH: Now I know ah. [laughs]

DE: Now I know who did it. [laughs]

RR: Ralph, Ralph tells this story when they start talking to the guys in his squad about R and R, that's rest and relaxation.

JH: Ah huh.

RR: I know a lot of your troops used to call it I and I, or intercourse and intoxication. And, ah, th, they talked to Ralph's squad, and, ah, this is a friend of ours from here in Charleston.

JH: Ah huh.

RR: And, ah, they said, they can't, they asked the guy, well, it's time to start thinking about your R and R, you know, you gotta fill out these papers, where you're going and he said fuck you, we're not going anywhere. He said what do you mean? He said one of the guys looked up at him and said, look pal, if I ever get out of here [laughs] I ain't coming back. [laughs]

JH: Yeah.

DE: They had this thing af, after I was wounded in 1970. It started in '70 you get a Christmas leave, a 10-day leave in the States and then you would go back to, to Vietnam. And a

friend of mine did it and, ah, I, I was in Philadelphia Naval Hospital and he came home. He called me from Indiana. My response to him was don't go back, you know, don't fucking go back, go somewhere else cause I was worried. I'd just been fucked up pretty bad, you know, m, mutilated, and I didn't want this guy, he was a good friend, I didn't want him to, you know, to, to go back. I me, I, can you imagine coming from a combat jungle situation for 10 days at home. I mean it's dangerous to send somebody home like that and then expect them not to maybe hurt somebody or t, or to even show up. I mean, how could they, could they blame you if you, you know, if you came out of that situation an, and went home and didn't want to go back? Would you be at fault? I say not. You know, cause you survived and you made it back to where you sh, is it, is it, it is one year of surviving is what Vietnam was.

RR: We got a friend of ours down in, in Welch who spent a year in Vietnam.

JH: Is that Randy?

RR: No.

JH: Ah, okay.

RR: Yeah, well, Randy's a friend of ours, too. But this is a different guy. He was in the Marines. He came back and he, you know, he had time to serve in the military after he got back. So, this chicken-shit garrison duty, right,

JH: Regular army, huh?

RR: Well, Marines, which made the problem worse.

DE: Which is worse than regular army. [laughs]

JH: [laughs, sniffs]

RR: Umm. depending on where, where you are and what you're doing. But, anyway, he was an infantry troop, he didn't have a skill, you know. He wasn't in an office everyday so he was doing all this chicken-shit military stuff, he had already been to Vietnam, he was just putting his time in before he got out, and so he, ah, [laughs] had a little altercation with one of his officers over being out of uniform. What it was he had a pistol belt, Marine corps uniform has a belt that goes around it (JH: Ah huh.) which doesn't do a damn thing. The belt is there for decoration. He had to wear a pistol belt over top of it, right. For this Class A guardman. Well, the problem is, the pistol belt will wrinkle the little belt, which means you gotta take your uniform out, you know, you gotta get it ironed and all that shit. So he thought well hey, this is what I'll do, I'll take the belt off, just wear the pistol belt. And you can't tell because the pistol belt covers it up, right? Wrong.

JH: He wouldn't go for that, huh?

RR: No, the officer caught him. Well, they had a bit of a disagreement about that, and he went AWOL. He took off.

DE: He went to Canada. (RR: He) He spent 13 months and those days in Vietnam, came back and had like a year, or 18 months



to spend in the service. He doesn't spend his time, he went to Canada.

RR: Bec, because

DE: Not because he didn't want to fight for this country, he'd already done that. He just felt it was

RR: Ah huh.

DE: Chicken-shit. Right, I think they should have let him off.

RR: They were picking on him.

DE: Yeah. To this day he hasn't had his discharge upgraded yet.

RR: He, the Marine Corps refuses - the Marines are hard on people. I mean, if you get a bad paper from the Marine Corps, man I mean, they'll slam your ass big time. They don't, you know, really, they set - they try to set no precedent to let you slide.

JH: Ah huh.

RR: So anyway

DE: They're gonna force this guy into going to, to Congress or whatever to get his discharge upgraded. They just, it's the mentality of the Marine Corps, and that's the, that same mentality Rick was was talking about. I mean, it's like, it's like, ah, the Caine Mutiny, right? I mean, who took the strawberries, right. To me it's the same thing as like, why doesn't this guy have a belt on? Should I court-martial this guy because he forgot this little cotton belt that goes underneath the gun belt?

RR: When

DE: When the gun belt's what important.

RR: What, but the whole point about telling you this story was [sniff] we, he started working on getting his discharge upgraded and, ah, he's, he's been pretty active in VVA since he's been in it.

JH: How long did he stay in Canada?

RR: Ah, it was a year.

DE: No, no he's lived there for five years.

RR: Was it that long?

DE: Yeah, he lived there for five years. He just, he never came back, see, he was a draftee, a deserter

RR: Deserter, right.

DE: Yeah, he didn't come back until Carter.

RR: It'd be different if you was draft dodging, you can't get extradited, but desertion you can.

JH: Right. [clears throat]

RR: And desertion is a capitol offense, by the way, in the United States today.

JH: Ah huh.

DE: It, only during wartime, which was ...

RR: Yeah, right. So anyway, so he came back, you know, he went through the bullshit and they threw him in jail, and they busted him out with a dishonorable discharge. All of a sudden, he got a civilian lawyer and fought it, and then he had it, I think, to an undesirable, or maybe a general discharge and then, but the general reviewing it took it

back down again to [DE & RR at same time:] dishonorable, [RR:] but anyway, we were talking about it one night. It was, a few of us sitting around a table and we were about half-loaded, it was late at night and everything and he looked up, you know, it was one of those moments when the, the truth kind of bursts through and stuff, but he looked up and he goes, he says, you guys don't seem to be worried about the fact that, you know, I have a dishonorable discharge and we said, no, Carl, we said, he said, I've been ashamed of it all my life.

JH: So, fuck it, don't worry about it.

RR: He's been ashamed. He fought, this guy, man I mean, he went through the shit, right, and he's thinking we're going to be down on him, you know. I mean, that's the kind of mind set that the patriot has.

JH: Ah huh.

RR: The man who fought for his country, you know, look I fucked up and all this stuff, and I'm really ashamed of doing it. Hey, I mean, the, the guy who deserves the shame, the guy who should have been court-martialed, was the guy that was jacking him around. I mean, you could have said, you know

DE: An, and another thing

RR: There are other ways to handle it other than that one.

JH: Sure.

DE: And, and, another problem you ran into, too, when you came back to the States, and you were a combat vet, the people

Like the, the second lieutenant hadn't been to Vietnam, so they resented you, for the fact that you were different cause you were totally changed.

RR: E, everybody

DE: If, if you were with an officer and left for Vietnam and came back a year later to his unit again, he could see you were a different person. You were a survivor, and you couldn't be fucked with cause if you didn't get killed in Vietnam, there's nothing they could do to you in the States that's gonna hurt you. Right? (JH: Ah huh.) And they were very resentful.

RR: Ow, they were.

DE: I've seen, I've seen we got what we call returnees, people who come back, ah, a Vietnam vet returnee, people who came back from combat. They made them squad leaders or something. They had a lot of confrontation with the officers stateside. All my training instructors in, in Panama

RR: In the army, they used to take 'em and put 'em in special units, and send 'em way the fuck away from regular troops.

DE: Yeah, they'd keep 'em away from

RR: They ostracized Vietnam veterans, or worse yet, they would put one or two in a unit and, you know, I can remember where the Vietnam veterans, when I went in the army, when I didn't even know anything, I mean, the first day I was in the army

JH: Wh, when did you go in?

RR: I went in, ah, April 11, 1968.

JH: '68.

DE: I went in May 13, 1969.

RR: And, ah, but they put the guys that was the shit detail, was a reception station, where you get all these guys off the bus, off the block is the term,

JH: Ah huh.

RR: If you want it right. These guys came off the block and you don't know how to march. I, I can remember they lined us all up and they told us how to line up and everything and the first time they ever tried to march us, guy went 'forward' and he didn't say anything and everybody leaning forward [RR & JH laughs] you gotta take two steps to keep from falling on your face. Well, ah, [JH laughs] all the guys in the reception station, all the E-4s that pushed the troops around, were all Vietnam veterans. They hated what they were doing they wanted to be ab, I would, I suspect, at least, they wanted to be able to sit down and say, 'you dumb asses', you know, 'what are you doing here' or 'wake the fuck up or you're gonna get killed' (JH: Yeah.) or something like that. But they, instead, they couldn't say it, you know. They, one thing they couldn't communicate to us, another thing, they were scared to death that the officers were gonna come down on 'em like a ton of bricks. And, by God, they would have. I guarantee it.

DE: I, ah, ah, I was in counter guerrilla warfare school down in Panama, with First Force D-con, and they told us that, ah, ah, out of thirty people in each class, that at least 10 from each class would die, and 10 would be wounded, and 10 would come home.

RR: Yeah.

DE: I mean, they just told, that was a cold statistic, that's what's gonna happen.

RR: Well, see they never told us that.

DE: Yeah.

RR: They never,

DE: I mean, I, I used to think about that all the time, what ten, what group of ten are you gonna be in. And there's always that, then they would say, then there's always that fucking 10% who won't go.

RR: Right. [laughs]

DE: You know, who are scumbags, and, and all this. It, it was, I mean, the, when you look at the, you know, w, when you look at, they could know exact, they knew exactly how many people they were going to lose on an operation, cause they'd have the right number of body bags. I mean

RR: Really.

DE: These guys sat in the rear and calculate the loss ratio, it's like, okay, if I spend five bucks on this stock, I can get twenty dollars in return. Well, okay, if we get five Vietcong soldiers, we'll lose two people killed but that'll

give us a ratio of, ah, you know, ah, ah, five to two. So that makes us, you know, we're coming out, coming out three ahead of them. Let's not count wounded right now, let's see what we get. That was their rationale for thinking, you know, that was it. They

JH: Is that that old war rationale, just throw as much fire power and, and manpower at 'em as you can and

DE: Yeah. But ev, but even with the modern studies of jungles, jungle warfare, they, they, they based their theory on, they knew that there were people gonna be killed, and they were only gonna kill five Vietcong soldiers, and then when they didn't get the five, and they lost 10 people, they would get upset. Then they would go in charging harder than ever to try to make up that difference and we lost ten, got one, hell, that can't happen so go back in again. Right? You go in you get your butt killed, and

RR: And this, this is, this is the guy sittin' in the air-conditioned vehicle (DE: Yeah.) out back there someplace.

JH: Right.

DE: Right. And he's the one telling us what we should be doing on this one certain hill. You know, and it's not the same. He sees it on a map. We're looking up through the trees. And it's not the same, it's not the same type of situation. I mean, it's, it's unfair that they would put you in, what makes me angry about the thing, they put me in a situation

where I had to do things that were against my religious and, and, you know, ah, beliefs and, and my, ah, morality. I mean, I didn't want to burn people's houses and villages and stuff, you know. I've seen people on Cabin Creek who's just as hard up as those people are.

JH: Ah huh.

DE: I wouldn't burn their house, I didn't want to do it. That's what makes me angry. I was put in, not that I did it cause I was doing what my country told me to do, I was being a patriot, but, looking at it in, in retrospect, I mean, you're saying, okay. It's okay to do it. You guys go ahead and do it. Then when you come home, they blame you for every damn thing you've done. It's not like that, you know, the general got the blame in the rear. On, on TV, you didn't see a general zippering the hooch, you saw a PFC from New Jersey or somewhere zippering this damn hooch, right?

JH: Ah huh.

DE: So that's who people blame. They'd see dead babies, they saw marines standing around with M-16s, not the general, not, not General Westmoreland. He wasn't in the picture, yet he was responsible for every damn one of them.

RR: Yeah. Hey, that's a good point. I would, I want to see a photograph of Willie Westy in wrinkled fatigues, just one fucking time.

DE: Never, never. This guy was starch. You, you know, shit sleeves rolled up.



RR: Hey

DE: Hat with stars on it.

RR: Stylin', man, the boy looked good.

DE: Yeah.

RR: I'm here to tell you.

DE: He looked good. He could wore a business suit as far as the environment he was in. He was in Guam someplace air-conditioned back at the, ah, back at V headquarters. He was never out really in the field, I imagine one or two times.

RR: The man was incompetent. [inaudible]

JH: Usually, the only time you see him in the newsreel, Ellsworth Bunker will be with him, or somebody.

DE: Yeah.

RR: Yeah.

JH: And they'll be marching around.

RR: There's a good name - Bunker. [All laugh]

DE: Ellsworth Bunker. [RR laughs] But th, that's basically what, what, ah,

RR: He's the guy they named the hill after, right?

DE: Yeah. The, ah, [laughs] Bunker Hill, okay.

JH: He was around then, it seems like.

DE: [laughs] Yeah, he's been around for a while. He was ambassador, right? Bunker was ambassador.

RR: Yeah. He was ambassador.

JH: Yeah, I think so.

RR: For a while.

DE: But you know, like, some statistics to throw at you for a minute, 80% of the troops that went to Vietnam volunteered, unlike only 60% that went, that volunteered to go to World War II. Ah, we were the highest educated individuals that a country ever sent to war. We were the youngest group of people that the country ever sent to war.

JH: Ah huh.

DE: And it was the longest war in our history. And it's th, the bottom line is it's still not over. I mean, they can have all the [phone rings] memorials in Washington, D.C. they want, but the damn war's still not over.

RR: Not for the warrior. [phone rings again - unidentified voice in background: "Yeah, oh, I'm --"] Crazy times.

JH: I've heard, ah, something you mentioned a while ago about when a veteran came back and he's in the, you know, regular corps,

RR: Ah huh.

JH: And that stuff. A lot of guys they gave an early out, didn't they, just basically to get them out of the picture?

RR: Yeah, the army. It, see the army was in, in some ways, they tried, I mean, they knew what they were doing wasn't worth the blessed hearts. [laughs] They never, they never bothered to stop and sit people down and talk to them and ask 'em what would be better.

JH: Ah huh.

RR: But they did know that what they were doing, so they tried everything. There were, there was a time in the Army where, if you came back from Vietnam, ah, see, okay, your [unidentified voice chattering about indistinct things in background] training would be a minimum of two months, ah, so say you been in the Army three months. By the time you had your leave and everything and went to Vietnam, you spent, you were there for a year, okay, so that's fifteen months. You got nine months to go. Well, the army will give you a five-month drop. If you were getting out of Vietnam, and you had five months or less to go, they would just, discharge you then. Okay? I think part of that was because they didn't want the veterans talking to their normal, regular troops cause they had severe discipline problems with some, ah, returning Vietnam veterans. And, I mean, you know, I can remember when I was in Vietnam, the attitude over there was, ah, you know, do this, do that, what the fuck you gonna do? Send me to a combat zone.

JH: Right.

RR: You know, how you gonna get rid of me, pal, [laughs] you know, jail looks pretty good to me out here. But, ah, ah, it, you take these guys and I, I'm, I'm serious now, the attitude of the returning combat troop, the normal enlisted men that did the shit, I mean, his attitude, he was real hard to deal with, I would guess, ah, from an officer's standpoint. I was not an officer, I was enlisted. Umm, but

I got a three-month early out to go to school, ah, ah, f, five months was the maximum when I was in the army. But it depended on when you were there and, you know, 'cause they tried different things, they had this program and that program, and they tried this for a while and tried that for a while. It depended on the circumstances, ah, what they thought they needed for manpower on paper to be able to tell Congress had something to do with it. Ah, the discipline problems they were having with returnees in, ah, in their bases, ah, back here at home was a problem, ah, and, and really, they, you know, there were a lot of benefits that they provided for veterans in Vietnam and, you know, they, it, they really tried to help us out and I'm sure in their heart of hearts they thought this is good stuff, this is something we can do for the American trooper. Because basically these people were patriots, too, I mean, they were misguided, they, they talked more than they listened, and, and they didn't listen enough, they didn't really realize what the conditons were that, ah, the troopers were coping with. They didn't have a handle on the war. That's basically what it was. And so they tried to provide things for us, and I mean they, they did a hell of a job, umm.

DE: The Red Cross, when I ...

RR: You know this Thanksgiving, they'd fight. If, if, you know, most of the guys got a turkey dinner on Thanksgiving and stuff like that.

DE: In, in the war?

RR: Yeah.

DE: Well, we, well, I spent Thanksgiving on a hill up on some mountain.

RR: Well, I know. Most of 'em, I said, I didn't say all of 'em. And you know, they'd do things like, ah, ah, when you first got back in, in reconnaissance, back in the United States from Vietnam, you, they'd feed you a steak dinner, ah, and, you know, I mean, they tried, they really did. They just didn't do very well.

DE: Yeah. They just didn't, the officers knew it was a political game, that people were getting killed. And I think they really felt sorry for us. I mean, a lot of the officers that were, that weren't there for the, like Westmoreland and the other bloody son of a bitches, the people who were there that really cared about the troops w, were soldiers, knew that it was a bad, they knew that war was wrong, they knew it was a bad situation. They really felt sorry for the troopers that were coming back. I've had people tell me, I had a chaplain tell me, as they were doing the dressing changes on me on the sanctuary and so forth

RR: Yeah.

DE: He told me, he said, "I don't know what to tell you," he said, "I think it's a God-damn waste.

RR: I'll tell ya

DE: He was a chaplain, he said he thinks, he said, "I think it's a God-damn waste."

RR: I would have gone back to Vietnam when I got wounded and I was in a hospital in Japan and my orders were to go to Camp Soloman for reconditioning and go back to Vietnam. But I had, my ears hadn't been examined and, ah, the, ah, Otorientologist, ah, sent me back to the states.

JH: Ah huh.

RR: And I mean I, I

DE: A doctor?

RR: Really believed that that was out of compassion. You know, I think this guy, anything that he could justify getting a guy out of that he would have done. I, I believe that and I didn't even know the guy.

DE: And, and when you come home it was like people really cared about you but they didn't know how to deal with your problem. They didn't know how to deal with you or your problem. When I first came back, this was my trip, I got, I was medivaced in the afternoon, I went to the U.S.S. Sanctuary for seven days and then I was flown into Da Nang, off the ship and back into Da Nang where I was, took a Mac-V flight into, ah, ah, went, \_\_\_\_\_, Japan for two day stop there. They treated me there with IV and shit. When I was stable enough to move again, they moved me to, we went (RR: Alaska.) through Alaska and then to Fort Dix, New Jersey. (RR: Yeah.) When I got to Fort D, D, Dix, Dix, Fort Dix, New Jersey, D-I-X.

RR: Swing it.

DE: It was, it was like snowing and cold. It was in, it was in December, before Christmas, you know, and it was really snowy and cold and they ...

RR: Home before Christmas, that's good.

DE: Yeah, it just ... drab. I remember looking out, they put me in this wheelchair, I remember looking out off the gurney in the wheelchair, the gurney folded up and could make it like a, So I can look out the window, I wanted to see what the country looked like, right? And I looked out at Fort Dix, New Jersey and said, why am I fighting for this? [RR & DE laugh] That was my response, man, why am I, for this?

JH: This is where we all die, huh? [laughs]

DE: For this, for this. But, ah, then the, ah, Red Cross people would let you come up and make, ah, phone calls home. Here's the thing, here, here's what ...

RR: Yeah, they did from Alaska. I had to make one from Alaska.

DE: My, mine was from Fort Dix, but here's, here's the thing, I called and nobody was at home. [RR & DE laugh] I called every relative I knew the number and nobody, I just caught people, it was on a Saturday night and they knew I was coming into the States, but, you know, nobody, nobody wasn't at home. I was so damn depressed, man.

RR: Oh, yeah.

DE: So I finally called my grandmother, my brother was staying there and I talked to him and he said, ah, something like, well, I'm sorry he said they got you. I said well, you

know, they got me but I got them and they didn't, they didn't fucking kill me, they had, th, they didn't eat me so I made it back okay.

RR: Yeah, right.

DE: But the old, the old, ah, the old people brought us, you know, they said, okay, you got ten minutes free call and all this, you know, so I, I used up my ten minutes and the Red Cross lady come by with some doughnuts and stuff, which I couldn't eat at the time...

RR: Right.

DE: I was in an airplane splint and all this shit, but, ah, that, th, that's was and when they took us to Phil... [end of side 1, tape 18a - begin side 2] Ah, h, here's how they, they give the casualties of the American people, right? Okay, Philadelphia International Airport is eight blocks from Philadelphia Naval Hospital, yet they routed us through - to Fort Dix, New Jersey and bused us down at night. Could you imagine them unloading us from planes in the middle of that, you know, that busy airport, with stretchers and stuff coming off those air, airplanes? Can you imagine what (JH: Yeah.) the, what the outcry from the public would be? Cause nobody saw these casualties, nobody saw, everybody saw people on TV, they didn't see the wards full of amputees and paraplegics that came from the war. I mean ...

RR: Oh, let me tell you ...



DE: There was 80 people on my ward, John. Eighty fucking amputees on my ward alone that were fresh, fresh. Ward 1A was a fresh. People whose stumps were still open, they weren't closed yet because of gangrene and rigor mortis. the ward above us had a hundred people on it, on that floor. They were amputees, they were in the process of healing to be fit with prostheses. There was a ward called k Ward, which was a convalescence ward down in the basement of the hospital, the big party ward we called it. And there was about 50 or 60 people there and [RR coughs] okay, total that up, that's about 380 people, right, 350 people? But see, that was rotating, there were people leaving everyday, those wards stayed full. I went home for leave one time and came back to the hospital and my bed was taken. They had a big offensive while I was home on leave, when I came back, somebody had already got my bed, I mean, it, sh, it was another amputee in my bed. But it was rotating, I mean, if you look at the cost, not in deaths, 59,000 deaths, but there were over 300,000 permanently disabled veterans from that war, 300, over 300,000 permanently disabled veterans for that war. And those are the people that you're still paying for. You still have to pay compensation to, you still have to buy legs for and eyes for and ears for and hearing aids and whatever, braces and colostomy bags and so forth, you know. So that's what, t, that's a cost of the war an, and when I say that, it's cause it isn't paid for

and good fiscal responsibility tells you that if something isn't paid for, you don't go buy another one. In other words, let's don't go to another war until we pay for the last one. But it's going to take a long time to pay for it.

DE: That's what worries me about Central America and Nicaragua, down around there, cause you can see it. I mean, I've seen these

JH: Oh yeah.

DE: scenes since first grade, when the war in Vietnam started I was in the first grade. I look at some of these kids walking up the street to school in the morning and just wonder will they end up in Nicaragua twelve years from now, or thirteen years from now, cause it happened to me and that's what worries me, you know, th, they haven't paid for the last war, they haven't, they don't pay me nearly enough money to put up with fucking pain I put up with, not nearly enough to go through the shit you go through, they don't, well.

RR: The whole point of the exercise is, you know, my, from my reading of human history, there's gonna be a war and America's gonna be involved in, in wars. And the point is let's pick a better war, I mean, if we have to put up with, ah, the monetary cost and the human tragedy of another war, let's make damn sure that we pick a good war.

DE: A war of national liberation would be, I would like to see, in other words, we should be supporting the Sandinistas.

JH: Ah huh.

DE: And, ah, not the Contra, I mean, cause those people are fighting for liberty. Next time we go lets fight for liberty. No matter what the other government calls itself, they're fighting for their personal freedom and freedom of the country, an' we oughta support that, not support oppression. If you look back at Somoza, ah, you look at the people we've always supported the oppressors, Batista in Cuba, ah, we've supported Thieu and Key, Vietnam and Diem, ah, down the line, we supported the Shah of Iran

RR: Reza Pahlevi.

DE: We supporting Menachem Begin and ev, whoever's prime minister now who is, i, is a very oppressive government is, is the Israeli government in my opinion, is very oppressive. They took the West Bank in that area by terrorist activity in the 40s and now they're complaining because the PLO wants it back and they're using terrorist activity. I think, you know, that

RR: We were good buddies with Argentina 'til they picked on England.

JH: Yeah.

DE: Right, till they picked on England in Argentina. We supported that dictatorship too. But we're always supporting the oppressors, you know, we always support the oppressors. Why couldn't we have supported Ho Chi Minh? It, i, if, if you look at the TV, 13 parts

JH: We had plenty of chances, too.

DE: Right. The series they did on PBS, a lot of people were asking 'Why in the hell weren't we supporting Ho Chi Minh?', you know, it came, an, and all the PBS series talked about was true. They didn't blink, that's what Time magazine said, they told an historical story and they didn't blink. In other words, if it looked like communism was working good for those people, they told it like it was and if it wasn't, they told it like, but they'd, they didn't blink, and a lot of people told me, said that seemed a lot one-sided, like it was all for the communism cause. Well it wasn't, it was for the cause of those people. They happen to be Communists. I happen to be a Democrat, Rick happens to be a Republican and I know you're an anarchist, so whatever. [laughing]

JH: Close.

DE: We, we all have these political differences that, that, that we're, you know, that we're dealing with. But I, I'm saying we, let's quit supporting the damn oppressors, and s, s, spart, start supporting, ah, the people who, ah, parallel our constitution, who want, ah, liberty and justice for all.

JH: It's all such a matter of bucks, you know, the people who are in power usually have the bucks, and that's who we'll

DE: Right.

JH: We will go for.

DE: that who we'll go, we're, we're going, w, who can best suit our interests, you know, if the Sandanistas were radically

anti-Soviets, and, ah, was blowing up Soviet vessels in her harbor, we'd be sending aid to the Sandanistas right now, ah, since the Contras are taking that approach. It's like Pol Pot, we're giving Pol Pot on the Thai border of, of the leader of the Khmer Rouge, which, ah, genocided, ah, ah, his country, I mean killed three hundred of his own countrymen.

RR: Three million.

DE: Three million, three million of his own countrymen.

RR: Plus.

DE: Plus, okay. But, ah, that's where

RR: It all adds up to 40 percent of the entire population.

JH: Ah huh.

DE: But we're, we're supporting this, this dictator with money and, ah

RR: And, and a seat in the United (DE: the, Nations.) Nations, my God.

DE: Right, and the seat, and the thing of it is the rationale behind that is this: an enemy of my enemy is my friend.

RR: Right.

DE: In other words, it's either, you know, ah, anti, ah, anti-vietnamese and that means he's a friend of the U.S. government, some damn, you know, some abstract, abstract thought, somebody in the State, State Department thinking about whether we oughta support this guy. Right? You know, who is this person deciding we should give money to Pol Pot.

I'd like to know who made that decision. It had to be, you know,

RR: Yeah, I'd like to see that. I'd like to go back and trace the decisions and find out the son-of-a-bitch that made it. And hold him accountable for it. That's what they ought to do with politicians today.

DE: They did that at Nuremburg. The did that at Nuremburg.

RR: For instance, Jay Rockefeller, the Vietnam veterans of this state, I predict, will eventually be together politically enough

DE: To waste his ass.

RR: To inform the public of this state to retire that son-of-a-bitch because he has fought us

JH: Jay, yeah.

RR: Every single step of the way.

JH: Yeah. [sniffs]

RR: The Legislature has given us damn near everything we ask for, ah,

JH: 'Course then he'll take credit.

RR: Oh...

DE: Oh, he did.

RR: ...he won't get credit for it, I can guarantee it, he

DE: He took credit for the Agent Orange, but we in the Agent Orange Program started it. He come out and said look what I've done for the Vietnam veterans of West Virginia, and he'd won the line item.

JH: [inaudible]

DE: The reason he didn't line item veto our, our funding for that bill was that he got phone calls that day and they weren't nice phone calls and the people who were callin' him was serious. They would have wasted his ass if he would have line itemed that bill, and he, there was a threat, there was this, ah, ah, what kind of a threat would you call it Rick, that we got down at the

RR: Well, they just called, ah, ah, somebody called him up and ask him if he thought six state troopers was enough to keep him alive. (JH: Ah huh.) And that's how serious the boys were about it, you know, at the time. The point is, every single thing that, that the Legislature has translated into law, every single appointment he has ever made, ah, that was supposed to have something to do with veterans has reflected negatively on the Vietnam Veterans, every single, solitary one of 'em. And they're fighting us tooth and nail today. They have to sit down and talk to us now, we're together enough, and we've kicked their asses enough all over the state, they've realized that they just can't rub our noses in it and get away with it and eventually the crows will come home to roost, eventually the son-of-a-bitch is gonna have to be, he's gonna be held accountable for what he's done.

JH: What kind of relationship do yo expect to have with, ah, Governor Moore, ah?

RR: We're really

DE: Optimistic.

JH: Ah huh.

RR: We're very optimistic about it and we're very uncertain about it. Ah, Arch is a war veteran, Arch is a war hero, Arch is a patriot, ah, there's no question in my mind that Arch knows enough about combat and combat veterans to respect us and what we've done. Ah

DE: Arch has been to Vietnam, by the way.

RR: Yeah.

JH: Really?

RR: Yeah.

DE: Yes, he went to Vietnam when he was a Congressman.

JH: In congress, yeah, yeah, that's right.

DE: Right, and he went to Vietnam and stayed in a missile camp.

RR: It was [inaudible] Randy, Randy Horn, he spend the night with Randy,

DE: They were both scum-sucking Republicans so they spent the night together. [JH laughs] All they talked about was making a lot of money and, ah,

JH: Yeah.

DE: How to hold down all the social programs that were g, coming up at that time in '64. As a matter of fact, that was when the, ah, new society programs were going on, you know, the Great Society programs.

JH: Great Society, yeah.

RR: But, ah,



DE: Figured Arch voted against every one of those issues. Arch is known a, as the, we refer to him in the organization as the Congressman from PPG, Pennsylvania Plate Glass and that's who kept him in Congress for a lot of those years.

RR: But the fact is, we're, we, we hope that [sniff] well, my presumption is I work for Arch Moore, I used to work for Arch

JH: Ah huh.

RR: In fact, David worked to help elect him

DE: That's right.

RR: Ah, in the past, ah

DE: Against Rockefeller, I'll have to make that

JH: Ah huh.

DE: I'll vote for a yellow dog, a yellow scum-sucking dog before I'll vote for John Rockefeller, but, cause I voted for John Raese and I consider John Raese a scum-sucking dog.

JH: I didn't vote for either one of those cats, huh uh.

RR: We think that, we think that, like the Legislature for instance, any, every time that Vietnam veterans have gone up there and presented our case to the Legislature, we have received a fair hearing and action but, from those people, we sincerely hope that we will be able to approach Arch Moore, talk to him, present our case and have action taken if we have a problem that is serious enough to need action taken. Governor Rockefeller, by the way, has never spoken to a VVA delegation, never has.

DE: No, he hasn't. He's spoken to us

JH: That's amazing.

DE: As individuals he's spoken to, ah, Rick and myself.

RR: Oh, I chase him around the mansion every time I'm up there, you know, we, we

DE: Let's tell 'em the story about the receiving line one day, [RR laughs] I just had this big battle with him in the press over giving this, ah, ah, veteran an award. I wanted to give him an award and I was busy with the convention and everything, too, and I kind of forgot about it. But Rick and I, we were having lunch and the governor walks up beside of us and he does one of these numbers, puts his head, he's real tall, right, he like reaches down and pats me on the shoulder and says, "David, David, David," and I shook, grabed his hand and said, "Jay, Jay, Jay." [laughs] [RR breaks up & everyone is laughing] You know, this guy, I know he hates, hates my family, everybody, everybody in my family has fucked with him at one time or another. My one brother Rick writes bad letters to the editor about him, my other brother was working for John Raese over in Boone County, and got into a big shitting and pissing contest with him. Now my dad wanted to say something detremental about him and I told Dad to hold off because I knew he was leaving the state.

RR: All right. [laughs]

DE: Whole family, but really, you know, he slapped us in the face, this committee .

RR: They don't want to deal with us, okay, part of it is because of

DE: We win.

RR: Yeah, well, we win in the end. But part of it is because, you know, we're not the respectful people that, you know, go up with your suit and tie on and sit down and say, well, let's discuss it. Oh yeah, you can mop the floor with me today.

JH: That makes 'em real uncomfortable.

RR: For the next 17 year and then finally you can acquiesce of some moderate demand that we have or something like that. But we're not that way, you know, we, we get upset. I see guys dying around, okay, dying because of the insensitivity of our government. Dying because they can't feed their families, or because whatever, you know, they've got a problem that, that our government needs to be dealing with an, and isn't doing and when I get a chance to talk to some son-of-a-bitch I get hot about it. I do. It's a fault of mine, it's a fault of David's. David is more successful at it than me, cause I get bummed out too soon. But the fact is, when we talk to these people, we know what we're talking about, we want something from them.

DE: And we back it up with facts.

RR: And what they do is, they say, well, this guy's, I don't like it, you know, one of the best service officers in the United States, a Vietnam veteran, they were gonna fire him because his voice was too loud.

JH: Yeah. Roger.

RR: Yes, absolutely. [JH sniffs] And, honey, and that's the way they react to us, you know. Okay, my reac

JH: So he went through so much crap he eventually quit, right?

RR: Right, absolutely.

DE: They drove him out of the office.

JH: Yeah.

RR: And, you know, the whole point of the exercise is, I don't have to like this guy to do something for him. Or to do what he wants to be done, if he's right.

DE: If he's doing what's right, right. We just want you to do what's right, Governor.

RR: You know, but that's not what they're doing.

DE: I don't like you, you don't like me, but let's do what's right. There's a lot of people out there that's gonna die because you, you failed to act.

RR: That's not what they're doing, you know. I'm sorry that it, I'm the one that you have to deal with. The fact is the boys aren't, none of them feel comfortable doing it. I'm the only one that's here to do this job, you know. I was sent up here to do this job. You don't like me, fuck it, [JH sniffs] I don't care. There's 57,000 Vietnam [JH

coughs] veterans in this state, you know, that I'm trying to do something for. The fact that you don't like me is going to get in the way of that, that upsets me, that bothers me and that makes me even harder to deal with.

DE: The, the thing of it is we, we don't go in with this humble, ah, ah, hold-you-higher-than-God attitude. We go in like on Jay Rockefeller or Jack Moon, or anybody in government is working for us. We have that attitude, we're there to help them to further our, our goals and to help them out. We don't humble ourselves to them, we go in like we own the damn place 'cause we do, it's our government. We're just wanting to participate, and we participate real hard. And we have to participate real hard, we play hard ball, we bring in the media and that just blows their mind 'cause they worked with other veteran's organizations who've been complacent, ah, ah, just, you know, ah,

RR: Don't know the issues, they don't know the issues.

DE: Don't know the issue, they, they, they just

RR: They don't talk to Vietnam veterans either.

DE: Apathy.

JH: Yeah.

DE: Apathy among them, apathy among those people is like, you know, who cares, if so, a few veterans die, well

RR: Crybabys, yeah.

DE: Well, it upsets us. I mean, if one guy dies, that's one fucking too many. If John Rockefeller dies, and another

guy, everytime he dies, somebody in his family die, I would accept that. I bet it wouldn't go on for one day, he would do something to solve the problem. These people, 57,000 vets, in, in this state, I consider a family. They're our family, you know, they're our comrades and we're not about to let 'em sit back and die. If we have to go up there and torch the goddamn place, it's already been, I, I've got jumped on to for being this militant. But I, not only will I goddamn help 'em, I'll get the gasoline and lead the damn march. We'll go up and burn it. What the hell they gonna do, machine gun us all down? We'll go up and burn the damn place if we have to, and we would express that point of view a lot of times. There's no way in hell we're gonna let this organization collapse or let them beat us. They can forget it. Vietnam Vets of America are gonna be a thorn in their side until they pick out the thorn.

JH: Yeah.

DE: And start treating us right. We're gonna be here forever, gonna be like a bad penny. We're gonna show up every time they fuck up, we're gonna show up, when they double-park, we're gonna be there to protest, I can guarantee it. Til we get what the hell's coming to us. And that's all we want, we don't want, ah, we don't want, ah, half of the capitol, we don't want to control the government, we want the government to work for us for a change. It hasn't done that in the past, I think it's about time. Under Arch Moore, we

were just talking about Arch Moore, when Arch Moore was governor before, veterans didn't have to ask for benefits. We got, for example, during his administration from 1972 to 1976, I received free tags, because I was a disabled vet, for my car, free hunting and fishing license, the tax-exempt thing for property owned by disabled veterans was raised, the tax limit on the property you could tax for that was raised. We never asked for one of those damn things, we never had to lobby for them. The government was working for the veterans. Rockefeller has been the most rapid, anti-veterans' administration that's ever been in this damn state. His administration has fought veterans on everything, not just Vietnam vets but all veterans (JH: Ah huh.) down the line. The only way we've ever gotten anything in, ah, Barboursville Veteran's Home or anything, that came from Arch Moore. That did not come from Jay Rockefeller. Arch Moore started that project, and Rockefeller was there when it was, ah, opened up. That's the only thing that he made a big deal out of it, the Veteran's Home, but it wasn't his, it wasn't his job, it was Arch Moore's job. I'm not saying Arch Moore is a saint, I'm saying he's a, he's a, like Rick said, he, he's a veteran and he knows what we feel like and he knows our needs and I think he may, he, he'll be better than Rockefeller.

RR: Look, look who Rockefeller picked to be his Department of, ah, Veteran Affairs director, Johnny Jack Moon, right?

JH: Right.

RR: A colonel in, ah, Air Force Reserve, ah,

DE: National Guard, he was in the National Guard.

RR: Guard, excuse me, in the National Guard, um, so we didn't have a talk with this guy and we're veterans. Now I'm a goddamn civilian, okay, I'm a card-carrying civilian, I've got a fucking DD214 to prove it. Stick a fork in this boy, he's done, okay. So I walk into his office and Johnny Jack Moon doesn't like me because I sit there and talk to him like a man. I don't salute him, I don't treat him like he was a goddamn colonel, you know.

DE: One, at one point in the conversation, Rick was there, I think, the first time I talked to Moon, and it was about Roger, he was giving Roger a hard time and I said, we won't have this.

RR: Yeah.

DE: I said we won't have you (RR: Right.) giving him a hard time. He said well, you don't shove me around. I said, Motherfucker, I will walk over you now if I damn feel like it, I'll come across this fucking desk on you. And after that he just, "well, ah, I, ah, ah," you know, was going crazy like that. I, I fucked him so much in the press, bringing up the asinine things he said out to the public and letting the public see what that department is really ran like. He called me one day and begged me, he said "I'll do anything for you at all, just stay, please don't take it to



the press." Come and, and now I can make a phone call and get Roger's job back if he wanted it. He'd go cause Moon, Moon right now is hurting big time. They started the same thing with the awards this year. Gary Rogers called and said I don't think we can do the awards on Veteran's Day. My response was, well, Gary, you know, what a hassle we had last year, I don't want to go through that again and I'm sure if you talk to Colonel Moon he doesn't want to go through that again. I would suggest you straighten something out and give me a call back.

JH: Who's Gary Rogers?

DE: Gary Rogers is the assistant director of some shit there.

RR: He's, ah, he, he's, ah, Uncle Tom Vietnam Veteran

DE: Yeah.

RR: That they got in the director's office up there.

DE: Right.

RR: He's, well, see he's, you gotta understand, I mean, I can understand where he's coming from. He's gotta kiss some ass up there, okay. That's his job, okay. He's stuck in it. He's gonna be real successful in whatever it is he does, he's gotta do this, gotta do that. Unlike the State of Virginia, by the way, where the Board of War Veterans claims down there kicks the VA's ass up one side and down the next. Okay, they've got their priorities in much better order than West Virginia does. West Virginia, i, you know, if you worked for the Department of Veterans Affairs, where you

gonna go, okay? What, what is your next highest echelon to go to? Well, it's to the VA.

JH: Ah huh.

RR: The same job pays almost double. It's a tragedy with the people in our Department of Veterans Affairs that work with veterans. It's a tragedy what they make. So they end up with people that are half-assed and yes-men, okay. Umm, but Gary is, you know, he's, ah, a Vietnam veteran, he was on a ship, on Yankee Station, I think on Yankee Station, hell, it might of been in the Mediterranean.

DE: It was Yankee Station.

RR: They had a goddamn gun turret blow up, and he saw some guy die, okay. He's 40 percent disabled, post-traumatic stress disorder, okay. He's in bed with the VA, he knows all those guys, he knows the right buttons to push to get his goddamn compensation, okay. I know a guy that lives not two blocks from here that spent three months putting bodies in bags, shipping them home, as a disciplinary action.

DE: After he got over

RR: After he spent nine months in the fucking field, okay. Ended up spending a year in prison down at Camp La Jone, North Carolina and this guy cannot get fucking PTSD. He's got probably sixty pounds worth of psychiatric testimony that says he's got problems and has had 'em ever since he got back from Vietnam. He finally got to th, to the, um, he was denied his claim all the way through, he finally got up

to D.C. and D.C., the b, ah, VVA, the Board of Veterans' Appeal said down there now this is clearly wrong, this guy's got documentation. He talked to 'em at the Board, he went in person, the veterans got to pay his way. If you live in Oregon and you got a problem with your local, ah, VA Regional Office and you appeal it to D.C., you have to pay your own fucking way to get there when they tell you to get there.

JH: Ah huh.

RR: Okay, so most of the guys don't go to the hearing.

JH: Right.

RR: So they look at the papers and say, ah, this is bullshit, ship it off, all oh got 13 percent were overturning awhile and this was, let's see, how long has it been since we overturned, well, let's overturn this one, whatever. He goes up there, they say, hey, they listen to the guy and they go, this guy's got a problem, clearly this man has a problem, okay. So they send him back down to Huntington and they say you guys are wrong, this guy's definitely got PTSD, now you give him a raise. So what'd they give him?

DE: Zero to ten percent.

RR: Ten percent. He got a dime.

DE: Ten percent. Which is not enough money to feed your kids for a month when you're incapacitated, you can't work. But the reason, the reason Rick and I are talking to you about benefits and government is, too, that's our, that's Rick and I, that's our expertise in organization. Rick and I work in

government affairs. I chair the national committee, Rick's my, ah, ah, assistant to the president of the chairman of the state council of governmental affairs. That's a new title he just received this year. I don't know what it is, but that's what we gave him cause he's the guy that does the work in government. [coughs] We don't observe these people, and we'll set and talk, what has he got going for him? Why is Gary Rogers what he is? We, we sat down and we figured these people out, big time. So we have to go deal with them, we know where they're coming from. At all times, we know Jack Moon is basically a militaristic, ah, ah, Hitler-type personality.

RR: Jack Moon.

DE: And that's how we deal with him.

RR: Jack Moon, when we get together with him, he doesn't want to talk about veterans's issues [sniffs] he wants to tell me that I have some bad habits, "Rick, you have no class." [chuckles] You know, I mean that's what he wants to tell me. Jack, you're right, I have no class, now what the fuck are you gonna do for the veterans that are blowing their brains out, out there?

DE: Right. We

RR: The answer is absolutely, fucking nothing, unless we force him to do it.

JH: But he'll do nothing with class.

RR: Oh yes, classless.

DE: But, but the state, the state council was created for that, ah, ah, the same reason. We have to take, we have members from each chapter, we get together and we decide on policies in that council and that council is more or less the governmental spokesman for the state organization. Each individual chapter really do not go up and raise hell with the governor, this usually comes from the state council and those representatives from each chapter are on the council and Rick coordinates all of our governmental affairs work. We coordinate it through him, so we, cause he knows the ins and outs of the pol, of the politicians and people like that. Rick knows everybody in the Legislature. He's met 'em at least once or twice and they know him. So it's easy for us to go in and lobby and do what we do. We're gonna do a school this year. We're gonna teach people to lobby. We're gonna [be] doing a workshop this year which is people to work with the media. We're gonna teach people to listen and talk and do interviews like we're doing here today. That's something that Vietnam vets have never done. They're kind of backwards about joining and they've got some good ideas but you get 'em on camera or on tape or in an interview and reporters tend to fuck with them a little bit.

JH: Ah huh, yeah.

DE: In that way. What we're doing is setting up w, we get any vet you see on the state council and you walk up and stick a microphone in his face he can stand up to you and give you a

hell of a interview and be very clear about what he wants to say and that's important. We haven't been clear in the past, on a lot of occasions, we haven't been really clear. But this committee and this council [sniffs], as far as political force and veteran politics in this state, this is the only thing going. This is it. This is the most political oriented organization in this state is Vietnam Veterans of America. Cause the only way we can be successful in getting what we need is get it from the government. And the only way we get it from the government is get it from the politicians and lobby them down. We realized that in 1978 when the organization was founded. You gotta go to the source, the people who control the money are the politicians. That's where we got to kick their ass out. We can stand out and burn flags and throw bricks through windows for a week and they won't notice.

RR: We won't, and we won't throw metals away and we won't get one bed into the VA hospital.

JH: Ah huh.

DE: But we can put on a suit and walk up to the Legislature and kick ass. Jim Rogers and I testified, Rick set up a testimony before the credentials committee, ah, in the Senate, th, confirmation committee in, in the Senate this year, ah, for the Governor's Advisory Council. There was two people being really lax on that committee, never attended meetings, had been on it for 24 years and really

didn't know anything about the problems of Vietnam Veterans. We testified, within five minutes they'd drafted a bill, it went through the House, the only bill that ever beat it out was Buffalo Creek, the disaster bill, in one day, through both Houses and extended the committee to two more people. They had to be Vietnam, or Vietnam era veterans. But, that was a victory in a sense but, the governor appoints those people.

JH: And he hasn't appointed anybody.

DE: And Jay hasn't appointed anybody yet. They, I was told that, ah, at the meeting I had at Jackson's Mill, that the new governor would appoint these people. We're just hoping we have enough clout with Arch Moore to get a couple people off the state council on that damn committee.

JH: Ah huh.

DE: Cause I'd like to see some hell raisers on that, on that committee. Not some, some businessman who happens to be a Vietnam era vet who's probably a Republican and, ah, he probably had the same attitude a lot of many people, I want fighters on that committee, I want people who stand up and fight for the, their damn rights.

JH: Did Roger tell me that one of the guys on that committee doesn't even live in the state?

DE: Right.

JH: Lives in Florida, or some place. [RR laughs]

DE: That's right.

RR: The chairman. [laughs]

DE: Eberhart, the chairman, Mr. Eberhart. Mr. Eberhart is probably the nicest guy, he's the nicest guy on the committee, you know.

RR: He's as nice as we are, yeah.

DE: He's very receptive, I've drove him crazy, man. I've went in and dr, they hated me for so long, when I walked in that room they went blah, you know, here's Evans. Bob Vass from the VFW's on the committee, Bill, Bill M, Mauran, who used to be a treasurer for the State of West Virginia, who's a political hack and a, and a, and a veteran from the American Legion's on that committee. Most of these old farts set around and let Jack Moon run rough-shod over them, cause they control his budget.

RR: I give you, I, I, well, I'll give you an example. This is really clear, ah, we were at, at Jackson's Mill. Now, David was telling you about the confirmations committee and you have a little bit of background on that. Um, okay, the law reads that this veterans council has to meet at least once a year. Okay, the w, and that's in the law, they have to meet once a year. The way that they meet is the chairman of the committee calls the meetings, okay. [sniffs] Now we called Eberhart down in Florida and we asked him when the next meeting was gonna be. He said, well, I don't know, Moon hasn't told me when it's gonna be. Right?

DE: Moon, so



RR: So, now wait a minute, now wait a minute, so when the meeting finally came in September we went up to Jackson's Mill, we were up there and this guy Mauran he was talking about, lives in St. Albans, we were talking and he was going, you guys shouldn't had done that. You guys sit at the committee and this guy's such a nice guy, you shouldn't have taken him on and everything. And we said that's probably true and everything like that and he goes, how could he know when the meeting was suppose to be called? He says, Jack Moon didn't tell him. I said, man, you don't know the fucking law either, do you? It's been over half a year and you still haven't read the goddamn law. It's been on the books since 1949. [sniffs] You know, these guys, five men make decisions for all the veterans in the state and they don't even know how to call a fucking meeting.

DE: Yet these

RR: That's the quality of people that we're dealing with in government when we start talking about veterans' issues. That's the quality of people that we're dealing with. They don't give a shit, they don't like us because we do.

DE: What we do, we took the law

RR: And I don't care who I piss-off from now on.

DE: Retyped it, broke it into paragraphs and texted, every point in the law and had copies printed, we walked in and talked to 'em about this, the committee, well, they come back with this bullshit, we refute, right here's the law, I'm sorry,

you're wrong. These guys are on the committee, but, in this section right here, it says you should meet once ev, ev, every year, the chairman calls the meeting and they were saying well how do you know that. We, bas, we read the fucking law [JH laughs] that's how we know that, we read the bill that the Legislature passed for us, we read the damn law and

JH: [laughing:] "How'd you know that?"

DE: How'd you know that? Well, we can read. Does that shock you, you know, that's basically their <sup>e</sup>response does that shock you that we're able to read and write. Ah, i, i, it's like our newsletter, our newsletter, received last year the jaundice, jaundice-canine award.

RR: For yellow-dog journalism.

DE: For yellow-dog journalism and, and when we do a newsletter and I mean it is starting up and we got a word processor now.

JH: Who awarded you that award, the yellow journalists?

DE: [laughs] The thing of it is, John, the, the, nobody is sacred in that letter, a medal of honor winner means nothing if he's fucking with Vietnam veterans, I tell ya.

RR: David wrote an article once, 'Did Jesus get the Barboursville veterans a home'?

DE: Right. [laughs]

RR: And can everybody, th, we got more responses to that than we've ever gotten from any article in the newspaper. And almost all of them were uniformly negative and all of 'em

were picking on Dave for being anti-religious. They missed the comp, the whole point [JH laughs] of the article. It's incredible. They want to call you nasty names because, you know, you're, you're an agitator. I mean, honestly, we are agitators, okay. The fact is, you know, I've been back from Vietnam now for

DE: Agitation and propaganda's what we refer to

RR: I've been back from Vietnam now for 15 years, okay. Fifteen years and four or five months, something like that.

JH: Ah huh.

RR: The VA never once knocked on my door and said, hey, you know, what'd you need, bud, you got a problem, you know, and they're not going to. I'm not stupid.

JH: Was it Malcolm X said if you want justice you gotta make some noise?

RR: Yeah.

DE: Yeah, that's right.

RR: Well all Mao said, ah, political exit comes from the barrel of the gun. (JH: Yeah.) We haven't gone that far yet, umm

DE: Although I've been tempted to pick up one from time to time.

RR: Believe me, all of us have, anytime you work on P-caliber of people with the background of training we have

DE: Caliber, that's kind of a pun.

RR: Yeah, right, that's the easy way out. Pick up a gun and blow the son-of-a-bitch away. It ain't gonna work.

DE: We saw that with the Vietnam Vets Against the War. It was a good organization but what happened to its breakdown was that, you know, you can't be an anarchist and get things done.

JH: Right.

DE: Cause people will look at you a, as nothing more than an anarchist and loud mouth son-of-a-bitch and you, but

RR: Your parents, the size of your

DE: Like this thing we're doing with the Gazette. People are gonna see Rick and I up there in suits and ties, standing up for a picture behind the flag and say, boy, these Vietnam vets got their shit together, and the articles, we say in the articles exactly what we're saying to you right now. What we are basically is a veterans service organization, we're there to benefit the Vietnam vet and if we have to work in foreign policy to benefit veterans and their children, then that's why, that's what we're doing. We have a mandate from our national board of directors to, to, ah, take

RR: [coughs] Not from the board of directors, from the national membership to the board of directors.

DE: Right. To take a humanitarian aid approach to Vietnam and to stop the war in Central America if we can. No more wars.

RR: And to be involved with broad social issues. We, you know, we can make the cases, you talk veterans' issues, Agent Orange, PTSD, ah, Amer-asian children, the MIA

DE: The VA hospital admissions, ah,

RR: Whatever it is, okay, but we've got broader social issues, too. Ah, well, our first, our th, what is it, ah, C-1 G-1? [end tape 18a, side 2; begin tape 18b, side 1.]

JH: All right.

RR: Okay, anyway, think of the rationale, think of what would cause people to do this, you've got an organization of war veterans who don't know each other, get together in D.C., they're writing resolutions to govern this ungovernable mass of people with all the entire spectrum of political views and yet the very first resolution that's passed states, "never again will one generation of veterans forsake the next."

JH: Yeah. [tapping noises in background]

RR: I mean, where are we coming from? That, to me, states it pretty goddamn clearly.

DE: I think so, too. I mean, I

RR: That's why David, you know, n, we passed a, a resolution about El Salvador, what, two years ago?

DE: Almost three years ago.

RR: Almost three years ago.

DE: Almost three years ago now. We were the first veterans organization in the country, including our national headquarters to come out with an anti-intervention in El Salvador resolution. We did it as our first press conference we held when Jim Marshall and I were elected

president and vice president of the chapter. That was before Rick was even in VVA.

RR: Yeah.

DE: We did it on the steps of the state capitol, during legislative session and got, what we thought was no press it turned out we had more press than we could handle, we had to do the damn thing twice

RR: Lebanon

DE: for people

RR: We were saying, you know, we're sitting around in bars talking about how stupid it was to defend the low ground in Beirut. I'm serious, the most indefensible fucking position (JH: Really.) in the entire area is where we send our Marines to

JH: Yeah.

RR: And everyone of us sat around and said, we're gonna get people killed, we're gonna get people killed and, just like Vietnam, we're gonna get 'em for the wrong fucking reasons, we're in the wrong place at the wr, wrong time.

DE: It's not our war, it's not our fight.

RR: We're doing the wrong things, intervening in a civil war, I mean, the whole fucking nine yards.

DE: That's right.

RR: And we were tragically proven right. What we're trying to do is not be right again.

DE: Last year, there, there was a veteran, ah, his name was John, ah, oh, I can't think of his last name, from Marmet who was in the hotel when it got blew up. In the barracks in, in

RR: Yeah.

DE: Lebanon. When Jane, they marched him in his Marine Corps uniform, he was an E5-7 as I was, I walked in that day, and I saw him standing there and I said, this guy's a Lebanon veteran so I walked over and I started talking to him. He was from Marmet, he went to school, hi, high school with my little brother.

JH: Ah huh.

DE: And, ah, his name's John. I can't think of his last name. He's a lot younger than me and my response to him was, you know, I was a sargeant in Marine Corps, too, I said, I got hurt a little more severely than you did, I said, but, you know, don't let 'em railroad you into being a hero and just jacking you around all day. He said, fuck no, man, I'm not doing that he said, I want out of it. "Are you with Vietnam Veterans of America?" "Why?" He said, "Can I join?" Said he, he'd read our resolution in the newspaper a couple, after he'd gotten back, you know. His parents showed him, look what these guys said about you guys, you know. He said, "Hell, that was good." They wanted us out, you know, they were trying to save our lives. He had no animosities toward us. And the reason they brought him in there, I

think, was to put a peg between, or a wall between Vietnam Vets of America and

JH: Ah huh.

DE: these other people there in the organization by saying they picked on this poor, ah, veteran from Lebanon. We were very supportive. Within six hours after the bombing I had called every member of the West Virginia State council and did a two-page news release to all the media. We did it, the next day we were doing TV thing, the next spot the next morning. Our national headquarters calls us, how in the hell can you guys get on stuff this quick, you know, how can you do stuff this quick? But, we did it, you know, we did it. We called, I called every damn board member o, of the state council, and hell, by noon that day, Roger Sanford and I had it typed up and had it, you know, delivered to the press, the Gazette and the, and the area, ah, TV stations, and so forth, too. We were the only ones that said anything. The VFW failed to respond, either negatively or positively about it. Ah, the, the, the American Legion d, did not respond, the Vietnam Vets of America are caring enough to get out there and, and maybe take some flack and say this is wrong. We called for accountability in the deaths, in other words, who was responsible, don't blame it on the marine commander, who sent them there?

JH: Ah huh.



DE: That was Ronald Reagan, and we asked Reagan to pull the troops out, you know, now whether he listened to us or not, well, he did eventually pull them out.

JH: Oh, he's blaming the Marine commander now, though.

DE: Right, well, that, see, th, that's the way it goes, shit rolls down hill, and the president can't take the blame for everything.

RR: Well, the Marine commander did some awful fucking blunders.

JH: Yeah.

RR: I mean, tactically. The fact that that truck was able to get to the goddamn building is a tremendous mistake, the fact that the fucking guard he drove past had no bullets.

DE: Well, what you got to remember, too, is that in the military in an operation like that as far as the president's concerned, the Marines are expendable. They are no more or no less than a beer can you toss out your window on the interstate. E, expendable. It means nothing to those people when Marines die, I mean

RR: Yeah.

DE: if you cried, if President Johnson cried everytime a Marine was killed, what he said, he, he would have fucking flooded Washington, D.C., cause I've got pictures of 'em laying on, laying on the damn streets, you know, in Hue. I've got a 1968 Time-Life magazine I got from my, ah, girlfriend's dad had a co, copies of it. He gave it to me, he got it out and gave it to me. It, it's about the occupation of, of, Hue

there's a French photographer, got pictures of NVA waiting on the Marines to come back, knowing they were gonna die, with tourniquets on their legs and stuff, waiting on the Marines to come back. I should let you, would you like to, ah, take it and keep it for a couple of days, maybe read the articles in it?

JH: Sure, I'd love to.

DE: Sure, I'll let you have it.

JH: Any, anytime you got literature

DE: I'd just, I'd just like, I would just like to get back from you, cause it's, ah, he's had it for a long time, well, he gave it to me, b, I, I'd like to keep it as part of my archive. I thought it was fascinating cause it shows a lot of dead Marines laying on the streets after the seige and the NVA soldiers standing on the tanks and so forth. But my point is that you're expendible. I mean, you are no more than a tool. When you're hurt, they just throw you away. That's it, they don't need you no more. They don't need you at all. They'll try to, th, they'll make it look good. They, in my case, they had to treat me pretty damn good cause I was obviously fucked up from the war.

RR: Yeah, he had

DE: People from my neighborhood and, and my family

RR: Yeah, he had temerity to live.

DE: Right. I had, I had the audacity to live.

JH: Must have been an embarassment. [laughter]

DE: Right. To them it was. You know, oh, you sent [inaudible] home, man, it was an embarrassment, you know, for the war. Hell, we were losing the war. They wanted to portray the war as winnable and we were just kicking ass and taking names. But in another sense we were getting our ass kicked and we didn't have time to take names of people who got their ass kicked down the line because it was a war of national liberation and we were there as an aggressor force and basically that's how I rationalize the war in Vietnam. We were no better than the, ah, the Germans who came to fight against us in our revolutionary war. As I, as a matter of fact, I think it parallels our involvement in Vietnam just like we're doing in Nicaragua today, down in Central America. It's the same, same, same kind of issues, it's gonna be the same results if we don't, you know, keep our troops out of the airfield.

JH: I wonder what the troop totals are down there now, you know, I mean supposedly that

DE: There's a lot of Marines off the coast, there's an island off the coast of Nicaragua. When I was in Washington, D.C. in July, I met a bunch of kids from OCS who were there, Officer's Candidate School, they were all on a weekend furlough. Now I was sitting in Enud bar with Randy, Enud meaning snack bar with Randy and they came out and said I want to talk to these guys and just feel 'em out, so we was in this conversation and I, I was just leaving I said, okay,

you guys, good luck in your career, but listen, stay out of Nicaragua if you can, man, don't get your ass kicked. And one kid responded with, hey, I've already been there once, you know, we were off the coast, now we got observation teams off the coast. I looked at him and I said I didn't know that, and you probably shouldn't have told me that, but

JH: [laughing] Thanks.

DE: Who are you with, he said, who are you with anyway? I said, Vietnam Vets of America. He said, oh, you're the radicals we heard about. I said, maybe. [laughs]

RR: What you should have said was habla espanol. [laughing]

JH: You're gonna need it.

DE: Right. I've got a book there

RR: Hey, there's one thing I, I, we're both kind of military kids anyway. My dad was in the Navy, his dad was in the Navy, but, ah, I can remember talking to a Marine when I was in high school, ah, saying that, yeah, his big accomplishment in life was the fact that he could get laid in seven languages. [laughter]

DE: Right, what he's done with his life.

JH: That's quite an accomplishment. [more laughter]

DE: But I mean, I think, you know, if, if, if you, if you came here today looking for war stories, you probably got a few war stories, but they aren't war stories like you hear from World War II, ah, ah, and, and, like talking about the big guns and all this stuff, too. It's a war of politics. (JH:

Yeah.) Now the whole war in Vietnam was a political war and th, the only solution to that kind of a war is a political solution. You can't have a military solution for that war, it could never have happened, it had to be a political solution an, and the government, Kissinger and Nixon with the peace talks as they were called was going on at the time.

RR: [inaudible]

DE: I remember, I remember walking down a road on a mine sweep when they heard we were gonna be home by Christmas. Well, I was. I was home by Christmas, but not because the war ended, because they carried me out in a poncho. But, ah, you know, it's a political war and we're approached in this political way, we're being, what we're doing, we're getting involved in our government. We're not standing on the sidelines throwing medals and bricks, like Rick said before. What we're doing, we're getting involved and what scares 'em to death is, we're kicking ass and that's why there, there's so much animosity toward our organization. I mean, we're gonna be around for a long time. Like

RR: We're gonna win, see.

DE: And we're gonna

RR: Fundamentally we know **this war** we're gonna win.

JH: Ah huh.

DE: We're just like the Vietcong.

RR: The question is

DE: We're gonna be there sniping and ambushing

RR: How

DE: and fighting and tooth and nail until we win.

RR: How many more bodies? How many bodies do we have to pile up before they finally realize that they've lost?

JH: Yeah.

DE: Right. How much blood has to be shed? That's what Rick made his statement to Mr., ah, ah, who was the governor's aide you made a statement to that day?

RR: Oh, [laughing] [inaudible]

DE: I was standing up, I was almost asleep and, go ahead, do the statement, you do the statement exactly again, what'd you say to him? I was standing back there like this, I was tired, right? And I heard Rick say this and I said, Oh, my God! [laughing] What was the exact statement, Rick?

RR: I don't know exactly, it was something like

DE: You said we're gonna win...

RR: We're gonna win the war, but the question is how much blood has to be shed?...

DE: Before you know, we come to a decision, he set up in his chair and I set up in my chair, I couldn't believe Rick said it.

JH: [inaudible] [laughs]

DE: He couldn't believe it, Jim Rogers set up in his chair. [laughing]

RR: One of David's favorite things is sitting in Jack Moon's office talking about pulling the wool over 'em. [JH laughs]

DE: Right, I was at a meeting, I was, ah, I was meeting with Moon and he said, ah, we, I was down with David Alistone, from our national law center, the guy who does all our claims.

JH: Right.

DE: In Washington, D.C., and we were in a discussion before we testified that morning in the Senate. And it was early in the morning and David and Rick and Jim and I had all got drunker than shit the night before. I was sit, Jack says you guys are out to get me and that's all you want to do. I wish we could get along, I just wish I were, did this number and I tossed an imaginary grenade at him, I said if we ever come after you, Jack, you won't know it [laughter] til it's too late. And, basically

JH: Never hear the word against you.

DE: Right, you'd never hear the word against you. And he just sat back and looked at me, man, Alistone went fucking through the roof, [laughing] he said, 'Jesus Christ'.

RR: We had a guy, we had one of the board, one of our national board from Virginia, he's the assistant director of board of claims down there and Alistone is the, is our chief top claims lawyer.

DE: Oh, Moon tried to, Moon tried to bushwack me that morning. Okay, ah, David Alistone and I got there late cause I was living in Nitro at the time. We drove up from my house in Nitro and Rick O'dell drove in from Virginia that night and

he was there. And Moon went in, he said, 'You know, Rick, you're a nice looking kid.' Rick's a big guy who has shirt and tie, you know, husky-like fat face, looked like a farm boy. Right? He said, "I like working here", Rick said. "Is that so?," he said, "Do you know Dave Evans? Is he so radical?" And Rick said, "Yeah, I know him, he's a good friend of mine. I worked with him ever since we got in the VVA," you know, "and school." [RR laughs] And Jack just shut up and right, he said, well, at least you didn't come here with long hair and a beard. So here I come in, I had long hair, and Dave Alistone has this big bushy beard [laughter] and Moon

JH: He's your lawyer?

DE: Yeah. Moon, you know, this is, this is our, this is our head and legal officer. Right? And Moon is just eating his fucking words, he don't know what to say. "Well, I didn't mean it about the beard, (RR: Yeah, right.) I mean, some beards are okay, and some beards aren't, you know." [laughing]

RR: Alistone's really neat. He was in the Air Force in Vietnam and came back and went to law school, and went back to Vietnam

JH: Oh yeah?

RR: with his wife, and represented veterans in, ah, in, ah,

DE: In jail, that were on court, long term jail sentences.

RR: Court martials.

DE: You know, h, he did that



RR: And his wife lived on a com, she's the one who has Vietnam war stories

DE: Ir, Irene, her name's Irene. She's a really nice person. Yeah. They adopted me, David and I are adopted, I can't go to D.C., man, they don't take me out to dinner, so they adopted me. Th, ah, they're good people. And they're moving out of West Virginia by the way. They're buying a farm up in

JH: Really?

DE: Probably. I'm gonna call him, my, my girlfriend's dad is selling his place, and David could afford it, which I think he can, he oughta buy that place up in Alderson, man, that'd be the perfect place for him.

RR: Oh shit.

DE: Cause they're gonna get 64 [Interstate 64] going right in there now. Now Sandblock<sup>x</sup> church, that's gonna be, he can *\*Sam Black* drive to Charleston anytime.

JH: Is he gonna be there year-round or is it gonna be like D.C. parttime?

DE: He'll probably work in Washington, he, he runs our law center in Washington.

JH: Yeah.

DE: See, we're a pretty sophisticated organization. We're not much, we have a law center that's second to none. We have never lost a damn claims case, never.

RR: We are also the only veterans organization that sends lawyers to the Board of Veterans Affairs.

DE: Not their, their lawyer.

JH: Ah huh.

DE: [RR coughs] We're also responsible for getting the law changed that said, it used to be you pay a lawyer no more than ten dollars to represent you a, at a VA claim hearing; well, so far, we, we've got that knocked down.

RR: Try, try and talk a lawyer into coming up and doing all kinds of work for ten bucks.

DE: Unless you got a brother who's a lawyer or somebody close to you.

JH: Right.

DE: You know, in our organization we even hire a lawyer. That was ridiculous enough, you know, but we have def, we have definitely kicked their ass. I mean, and I think it's gonna go on, too. What kids gotta look at today, I mean, i, i, if there's kids who listen to this tape who are 18, 19, or 20 years old today

RR: Or 14 or 15 (DE: Fifteen.) that's when they should start thinking about it.

DE: Is that, you know, there's more to going to war than political jargon, you know. There's more than that and you've gotta have a reason to go to war and when you come back, you gotta be prepared to fight again, all over again, for your benefits.

JH: Right.

DE: To survive, I mean, i, the war never ends. A, a person can ask me when did the war in Vietnam end, and my response to that would be, it hasn't.

RR: When the last Vietnam veteran dies.

DE: When the last Vietnam veteran dies,

RR: That's when the war will be over.

DE: the war will end. Who was the last person killed in Vietnam? Look at today's obituary, who committed suicide (JH: Ah huh.) today?

JH: Yeah.

DE: He's the last guy who died in Vietnam cause h, he was still there and he died. And that's, I mean, that's something you gotta look at, cause it, it's a, the consciousness of the whole United States was turned on its ear during that era. I mean, the people on the street so forth and so on, I mean, an, an, and that was, that was so, society saying we don't want wars of aggression. I mean, you know, we're a, we're a capitalist state, we're in a capitalist system. In order to, in order to, ah, create markets for corporations should we make any profit, we have to expand, you know, expansionism an, and usually, ah, ah, it's an aggressive type of expansionism. We can't buy off the leadership of a country.

JH: Ah huh.

DE: Like we can't buy off the people, the Sandinistas, we can buy off the other president, Somoza.

JH: Yeah.

DE: We've bought and sold, right? But if we can't buy 'em then we shoot 'em.

JH: Try to buy off everybody around them.

DE: And the cannon fodder is the kids, is the working class, the coal miners and the, and the construction workers. It's their fucking kids who's gonna march up in front of those machine guns and hell, you can't blame the Sandinistas, they're defending their homeland. The, the National Liberation Front. The North Vietnamese Army, they were defending their homeland. We were aggressors, who can you blame? You've gotta look at the source, and the source is that the people who run this country, this country is, this country is ran by a minority, not the majority as, as, as in a democratic state. A majority of us don't own Dupont, Exxon, Hunt, the Hunts, the Duponts, the Rocefeller.

RR: Right.

DE: Those are the people who said, there's been a Rockefeller man in the State Department, Under Secretary of State, since 1917. I mean, that's the person who makes the economical decisions of the country. No matter what the State Department wants to do, if it's economically unfeasible, they don't do it.

JH: Ah huh.

DE: I mean, pay, re-pay, ah, ah, ah, pay, ah, retributions to Vietnam, right? This fiscal year is responsible, although we signed the treaty in 1973 that said we would pay for damages, we never did. And the way we get out of that is, is by not recognizing the government.

JH: Yeah.

DE: We'll pay when we recognize that government [JH inaudible]. But what's really going to get me and Jim Rogers blowed out of the air by the CIA is that we're asking 'em to set up an interest section in Hanoi, like we have, like we have in Havana to get people on the ground, start normalization of relations.

JH: Right.

DE: And get the missing in action and POW issue solved once and for all. And get things moving again. We, we can't live until that war is over and that war won't be over as long as we're fighting with, with the Vietnamese, for us, and that's what scares the hell out of me. We've been very successful. They've threatened to pull our passports, ah, they have, they have threatened us with death. The, the Vietnamese mafia here in this country h, have threatened us with death, ah, because we, nor tried to normalize relations. Ed Cooperman, Dr. Cooperman in California was blown away by a 20-year-old Vietnamese radical who was a rab, rabid anti-communist. Ah, and i, it's just that kind of, you know, we got a lot going against us right now, but, ah, I

believe we're gonna, we're gonna win out and we're gonna win. We may take some losses but if we start taking a lot of losses, they can expect a lot of losses too. Cause we are the best trained military unit they ever sent to combat, as far as that goes, and we know what we're doing. Rick can make a bomb out of any damn thing in this room.

JH: Umph.

DE: And I can definitely, you know, shoot pretty good [laughs] as far as that goes. And, ah, we're not afraid to die cause we figure we're all living on borrowed time anyway. Most of the people who come back from Vietnam have this syndrome of living on borrowed time. That's the way I feel, I mean, I was so close to being fucking killed fifteen years ago, or fourteen years ago, that today, anything I do today is a bonus for me, you know.

JH: Ah huh.

DE: Cause I shouldn't, i, in all, in any stretch of the imagination, I shouldn't be here today. I should be up on the fucking wall looking out at the monument today. You know, I got a lot of fr, I got about four people in my squad are there, five, they're on that damn wall looking out at, at the memorial, at the new monument today. So anything I do to better the, the life of Vietnam vets is a plus for me. I've done something with my life, you know, I felt like maybe I was spared to, you know, to do something more with my life, not to preach the Gospel, but, maybe to, ah, preach

JH: It's a different God.

DE: Right, to preach, ah, ah, independence and, and liberty an, and stay a patriot because no matter what they, like Rick and I, we said before in the press, no matter what they do to us, how they, what Olsen, the commander of the VFW, says about us, he can call us communists from day one, okay, we may be, but we're also patriots. We're also patriots and he can't take that away from us and that's what burns their ass.

JH: Yeah.

DE: Everytime they turn around, just burns their fucking ass cause they can't win. [end of tape 18b, side 1]

End of Interview