

**T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection**

**ABSTRACT**

**INTERVIEWEE NAME:** William M. Coleman

**COLLECTION:** 4700.0942

**IDENTIFICATION:** Vietnam veteran

**INTERVIEWER:** Paul K. Moore

**SERIES:** Americans in Vietnam (Southeast Asia)

**INTERVIEW DATES:** 4/11/74

**FOCUS DATES:** Dec. 4, 1962-Dec. 31, 1968, March 16, 1966-Apr. 12, 1967

**ABSTRACT:**

**Tape 1378, Side A**

Born and raised in Louisiana; siblings; entering service; basic combat training at Fort Polk; armor training at Fort Knox; worked as tanker in Germany 1963-1965; married for military marriage benefits; changed from armor to engineer; trained for rock crushing at Fort Leavenworth, MO; explains three types of combat training: armor, infantry and artillery; sent to Thailand; explains how taking time off before re-enlisting can lead to demotion; working at Thai rock quarry; crushed rock to build road to Saigon; description of blasting procedure; returned to US after a year; mechanical and technical school in Virginia; returned to Germany for year of rock crushing; marriage did not lighten his military duties as expected; felt more racial prejudice in service than out; blacks and whites killing each other; white clubs; drugs in Thailand; typical day at rock quarry; worked 12 hour days; recreational activities in Thailand; shows from Australia, England; loved Bangkok; talent, low cost and old-fashioned equipment of tailors and seamstresses; NCO club; cheap drinks and cigarettes; racial discrimination Coleman faced; black market; difficult to get parts when rock crusher broke down; Coleman's arm operation, hospital stay, cast; re-assigned to be dispatcher; description of fleet of trucks; quarries in Cambodia; dynamiting mountain; Thais paid \$25-\$30/month; prevalence of prostitution and venereal disease; girls in US military sanctioned brothels checked for VD; soldiers having to go to Okinawa for VD treatment; friend who suffered from VD for at least a whole year; description of prostitute bars, prices; jealousy over girls; Coleman's contact with Thais, Thai friends; eating meals in Thai households; what Thais ate; description of Thai houses; description of squat toilets; using water buffalo in farming and irrigation; cutting rice with sickles; attended Thai Water Festival; Thai kick boxing festivals.

**Tape 1378, Side B**

Small stature of Thais; Thailand is paradise; Coleman never sent to Vietnam; fear that he'd be sent to Vietnam; American purpose in Thailand; US military already in Thailand as part of SEATO agreement; Thai feeling toward Americans; Coleman didn't see that he was accomplishing much in Thailand; Thai opinion on road Coleman helped build; thoughts on re-

enlisting; feelings about US military and being black; equipment used in quarry; accident where man got killed by rock crusher; use of dynamite; contact with Thai army; Thais got secondhand US equipment; Thai army equivalent to Americans; getting in fights; Coleman went to Vietnam to teach class in chemical and biological warfare; meeting Thai village officials; meeting mayor of Khorat; selection of village chiefs; population of towns, villages; Thai civilians working in American camp; housing for soldiers; food on base.

**TAPES:** 1 (T1378)

**TOTAL PLAYING TIME:** 1 hour

**# PAGES INDEX:** 4 pages

**RESTRICTIONS:** None