

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAME: Brian T. Landry

COLLECTION: 4700.0959

IDENTIFICATION: Vietnam veteran

INTERVIEWER: Dudley K. Meier, Jr.

SERIES: Americans in Vietnam

INTERVIEW DATES: 4/20/75

FOCUS DATES: Jan. 12, 1968-Mar. 21, 1971, Mar. 18, 1970-Mar. 18, 1971

ABSTRACT:

Tape 1396, Side A

Grew up in Franklin, LA; education, majored in mechanical engineering at LA Tech; got drafted; father was a paratrooper in Germany; father thought he should stay in school, college education more important than military service; worries about draft; Army did him a lot of good, didn't have negative feelings toward it; basic training at Fort Polk, applied for OCS; AIT for combat engineering; had to switch to infantry OCS instead because he lacked college degree; OCS at Fort Benning, heavily Vietnam oriented; wide cross section of people in OCS; Landry kept low profile in OCS; learned about weaponry in OCS; qualifications for OCS; volunteered for unpopular training at Fort Polk to avoid jump school; Fort Polk was all Vietnam oriented, had fake Vietnamese village set up; teaching them to dig holes, but terrain different from Vietnam; training reminded him of John Wayne movies; jungle training school in Panama Canal Zone; Landry's whole class was going to be sent to Vietnam; raised lots of hell in Panama; learned rappelling; dangers of moving at night in Vietnam, scared of it; Canal Zone similar weather to Vietnam, good acclimation period; doesn't know why jungle training school in Canal Zone was disbanded; landed in Long Binh, Vietnam, sat around in receiving station for a couple of days; orders to go to Americal; in-country training; Vietnamese villages; rumors of beautiful half-French whores in Saigon; ignorance of common people; hard to compare conditions of Vietnamese villagers to American standards; Vietnamese villagers didn't understand what was going on around them; villagers caught in middle of VC and Americans; getting assigned to a battalion; commanding officer from New York; involved in operations right away; first mission was a fiasco; losing a comrade; usefulness of training at Fort Benning; first time he saw someone killed; quite cautious for a while after seeing the guy killed; transporting men on foot, by helicopter; was constantly on the move; sometimes the company would split up; areas of operation, working in a circle, feeling like he was accomplishing nothing; men often suffered from low morale; infrequently shot at, few big contacts; men in platoon became close; racial and socioeconomic diversity of unit; visited Sydney, returned, hoping for a job in the rear; very opposed to returning to field; Landry made temporary company commander; spent two months

as acting company commander; Landry didn't want promotions; differences between responsibilities of a commander and a platoon leader; how he dealt with his men as commander; felt nervous and green all over again when he got sent back out to field; personal satisfaction from praise by his underlings; finally got a job in the rear coordinating air operations; got moved back to base camp at Chu Lai; kinds of helicopter companies he worked with; moved to smaller base camp; amenities of base camp; getting resupplied.

Tape 1396, Side B

Camping out on a little knoll close to the Vietnamese; American GIs secured all the guns; encounter with ARVNs in field, unimpressed by them; distinguishing between people noises and animal noises in the night; developing senses by listening carefully in the dark; things Americans take for granted; primitive life in the field, eating out of cans; took leave, visited Bangkok; sent to Danang for two weeks, hospital commander in Danang; carried beeper; no patience for petty gripes of hospital commander; difference between seeing people suffer in emergency room and seeing injuries in field; remembers pilots he knew; legendary pilot named Joe; pilots were very individualistic; inserting troops into different areas; some pilots he didn't like, felt like shooting them down himself; respect for Medevac pilots, contact with Medevac; Cobra ships; scouting; Puff the Magic Dragons; contact with Vietnamese villagers; Landry questioned what US was doing in Vietnam; Vietnamese weren't intelligent or educated enough for democracy; ARVNs were scared and lazy, were possibly in cahoots with VC; American weapons, ammunition, found on dead VC; VC would pick up American garbage, recycle it, use it against Americans; Landry tripped a booby trap made of Coke cans; booby traps made of melted dynamite in Coke cans with fuses; ingenuity of VC; people in charge playing strategy games with big maps; Landry ordered to dig up graves; soldiers with dope problems given jobs in the rear; guys in the front depended on each other for their lives; nickname for prostitutes; prostitution in the bush; VD; men in field using drugs; military waste of ammunition; ammunition going bad because of moisture in climate; Bangkok as a city that catered to military personnel; people in Bangkok were just out to get US money; girls who worked as escorts; got out of military in March, 1971; money he saved in the military; didn't do much for five months after returning from war; adjusting to being back in US; felt very out of place when he returned to college, age difference, experience difference; lingering feeling that someone owes you something can drive you nuts; still wonders why he was there, didn't seem to accomplish anything; doesn't know enough about why he was there to decide if it was worth it or not; how he feels about Communists taking over Vietnam, it seemed inevitable; ARVNs didn't care, so Vietnam fell into Communist hands when Americans pulled out; liked the way Nixon pulled US out of Vietnam.

TAPES: 1 (T1396)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 1 hour, 20 minutes

PAGES INDEX: 4 pages

RESTRICTIONS: None