

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAME: Paul Dorosheff

COLLECTION: 4700.0948

IDENTIFICATION: Vietnam veteran

INTERVIEWER: Robert Talley

SERIES: Americans in Vietnam

INTERVIEW DATE: 10/2/74

FOCUS DATES: 8/7-10/22, 4/10-10/5

ABSTRACT:

Tape 1386

Raised in Springfield, Illinois; parents; extracurricular activities; education; joined Navy Seabees since he had experience in carpentry; came from close family; father was in service in Russia, brothers in service; joined service in 1967 to get good carpentry education; planned to join for shortest amount of time, get maximum amount of training; was in military for 16 months; expected to go to Vietnam; joined reserve unit, training at Great Lakes; training in Springfield, then in California; transferred to Gulfport, MS to join his new unit; school in California taught all aspects of heavy construction; training at Camp LeJeune; journey to Vietnam; landed in Phu Bai in April; US government's division of Vietnam; effects of Tet offensive; description of military presence at Phu Bai; assigned to building crew to construct and re-construct huts used by US military personnel; transferred to bridge crew to see more of country; building small bridges around Troy River; worked on Perfume River in Hue; worked in small villages south of Phu Bai; between bridge assignments, returned to Phu Bai and worked on huts; fixing damage done at Cao Hai; defoliation planes near Danang; Marines assigned to village for security; contact with other military personnel; visiting Hue; comparison of military personnel in Vietnam to those in the States; American attitude that Vietnamese should act subservient; Dorosheff later realized treatment of Vietnamese was wrong; characterizes Vietnamese as industrious, hard-working; beautiful female Vietnamese university students who didn't want much to do with Americans; Vietnamese accepted foreign occupation as a way of life; curfew for Vietnamese, road guards, citizens detained and searched; Vietnamese attitudes toward Americans; black market goods; Vietnamese hired as housekeepers, maintenance; found grenades scotch taped to bottom of their huts, apparently the work of housekeepers; arranging with village chiefs to get prostitutes; prevalence of marijuana, heroin not so popular yet; Dogpatch area of Danang noted for its whores; higher concentration of officers in Danang; about same rate of drug use in Vietnam as in US; drinking; movies shown outside at night; didn't smoke marijuana in huts because that was asking for trouble; penalties for marijuana use; Dorosheff's expectations when first sent to Vietnam; how experiences there changed his attitude; eye injury in construction blast gone awry; sent back to unit after injury healed; later sent back to US because eye infection didn't heal; soldiers who volunteered at orphanages; VC executed at night, stripped, set on

fences; heard stories, but saw few atrocities; sent home in October, sent to Great Lakes Naval Hospital; Navy offered him an early out; discharged a few days before Thanksgiving, 1968; spent Christmas at home, then went down to Florida to work for a few years; returned to school in 1972?; value of his time in service, ambivalence; became more politically radical after his term of service; beauty of Vietnamese countryside; likes to envision a peaceful Vietnam; Vietnamese religion; size of crew on bridge building projects; equipment used to build bridges, pneumatic drills; Vietnamese villagers helping on projects; construction assignments in Vietnam; amount of time it took to build bridges; transporting equipment; two-fold purpose of bridges -- for US military, and for Vietnamese villagers; weapons to defend themselves while building bridges; Seabees' relations with other branches of service; language barrier made it difficult to have Vietnamese friends; servicemen who managed to make friends, marry Vietnamese girls; prices of drugs; MPC; American currency in demand; price of prostitutes; war fought at night, movements, ambushes; Vietnam was a beautiful country, felt sad when he heard about the bad things happening there; describes mountains, forest, jungle, ocean, bay, islands.

TAPES: 1 (T1386)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 1 hour, 8 minutes

PAGES INDEX: 4 pages

RESTRICTIONS: None