

Oral History Transcript

Interviewer: Annmarie Samuelson

Interviewee: Lou Williams

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Q: Okay, so you mentioned that you were drafted, (before I turned on the recorder), what year was that?

Lou Williams: 1964

Q: How did you feel about that? (the draft)

Williams: We knew Vietnam was going on and of course I didn't really want to go, nobody did. At the time you could volunteer for the draft, which put you at the top of the list. I had no clue at the time that I was going to be even considered and in 1963 I found out I was going to be examined. Then of course we got a classification that was 1A, just like Elvis, remember he got drafted. So anyway I went and after 10 days of misery I finally figured how to cope with it. And it was a good deal it really helped.

Q: Cope with it in what way?

Williams: Well you're taken out of your comfort zone and your put in with a bunch of people you don't know and having to do what one person tells you to do, it's misery.

Q: How old were you?

Williams: I was, *oh, lord* twenty-three-ish

Q: Did you go to college?

Williams: Yes

Q: And had you already graduated?

Williams: No no, I had too much fun to graduate, *chuckles* therefor I was in between trying to figure out what I was going to do, and I had a couple things and someone suggested that I check how I stood in the draft, and I said 'What draft?', I didn't know, I mean I knew but I didn't pay attention. Then they said you're going to be examined. That's when I first found out.

Q: So what year from the process of being examined...?

Williams: Well after they called in few people in January from McDowell county, where I'm from, and then in February I went. So February 1st, *corrects himself* February 3rd is my reporting day for the Army and I went to Fort Gordon *corrects himself* Fort Jackson for

orientation, you took tests, got some uniforms, it was just... And then they said they were going to send so many to Fort Gordon, Georgia and that's where I went. I went through basic training, which is 8 weeks. And then I was assigned to go to the MP (Military Police) school, which was at the same Fort, and I got through that. Then they sent me to Fort Benning Georgia, which was the 11th Air Assault Division which was going to be the 1st Air Cavalry Division and my 1st Sgt. when I was in MP school and we were graduated, I said, 'What am I going there for?' and he said 'You're eventually going to end up in Vietnam'. Which we did. I was in Vietnam, about 6 months, because the whole division went over at one time. Some 20,000 people. And you can't replace the people at the same time. So some people started leaving in 30 days after we got to Vietnam and some so forth and so on, until they finally got everyone squared away. When they got their time end, it was still staggered. We had to have 5,000 replaced so that's why they did that. So there we were.

Q: Okay, so you mentioned on the phone earlier (pre-interview) that the normal time was more than 6 months, right?

Williams: Oh yeah, it was a year to 13 months was a normal tour in a combat like Korea or somewhere. You know, a lot of people volunteered, but if you didn't volunteer you were sent there. Now Europe was a different story, you might stay there 2 years, it was just different. Like I said, I had to process out and when I left I think I was the only one from my company that left at that time, it was just a slow process. Most MPs and most medics and engineers, they're in brigade situation, which means that's a large group. We were unusual because we were in an MP company which you know didn't *gestures*, we were assigned to a cavalry division. So we were a small group compared; and working in the town and villages or wherever, we very seldom do, we did where we were but in Saigon it was the brigade MPs that did all the work. We mainly helped guard the General or do whatever in the company.

Q: So your tasks as an MP in those six months varied from whatever you were needed for?

Williams: No no, if you were an MP like I was; if I wanted to reenlist, or extended or stayed in the MPs, or got out of that and gotten into something else. Once you were drafted as an MP and you stayed there. Like in the Navy they have short patrol, which is the same thing but they don't train for that. It was maybe just like law enforcement now. If you are a highway patrolman, which is what I became later, you actually trained and know the rules and the laws and how to proceed and that's what the MPs did.

Q: So while you were over there then what did you do? Like what was the job of an MP?

Williams: Well we had platoons, 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th. Since I was Airborne we were the 1st platoon. And one of the first brigade went somewhere forward to go out into the field away from the area. It was a large area where the division was so we would go forward with them out and you'd stay out in the bushes, I mean we weren't in the jungle, we weren't going through stuff like patrols at night but we would guard the perimeter around our little area there. But we went with the 1st brigade and while we were out there; if we had prisoners of war, which we did, we

would take care of them. They would be interrogated out there by people, once they got through with them we take them down and turn them over to the South Vietnamese. Vietnam, where we were was like a book; you got a book and it's flat, then you put another book up, then you got a mountain to climb, then it's flat again, and then you go up another group of mountains, it's just plateaued. And we were in from the coast, I guess the next country was like 3 books basically, and we were in An Khe, Vietnam. We landed in Quan An and then where we worked out of was Pleiku. Pleiku was, well it was the center place for the Army Corps and the Air Force; they had an Army base and Air Force base there. And of course we went up there didn't have anything and we had to take what we could find and then we would go out; they had a place out there that was a tea plantation and they had a real flat, I mean it was like 15, (no it was more than that), 20 football fields, just flat. We landed big planes and helicopters there and that's where we worked out of. The Premiere of South Vietnam, Premiere Ky, landed there and I was as close to him as you are (we were sitting at a dining room table at the same end). Westmoreland, the general, was in charge of everything, he was there. Our group had captured a bunch of weapons and of course they killed a lot of people and doing that they had them on display. Unfortunately, Vietnam was a lot of politics you know, and it showed.

Q: That actually leads me to my next question, President Johnson; were you ever surprised at anything about the decisions he made in Vietnam?

Williams: Well we had gone through jump school. 'Cause they wanted one brigade to be airborne and they were and wanted a platoon of MPs to be airborne. So we went through that. Anyway, I remember we were in the day room and Johnson was speaking. He sent a brigade of soldiers and the first Air Cavalry Division and we all said; *chuckling* "Thank you,...for nothing" So the way we went, we had to transport from Fort Benning Georgia to Charleston, South Carolina, everything. So for the 5 or 6 or 7 weeks we did escort duty to get stuff to the place to jump off at Charleston. So eventually we were probably the last group, my group of MPs, some went forward, and they flew out there, we went on a ship and we loaded up on the USS Patch. They had used it during World War, maybe, One, I don't know, but it was old, but it was okay it was nice, you know. And we went through Charleston down through the Panama Canal, that was interesting, through the Panama Canal, went up along the beach. I was on the ship 31 days, you know.

Q: How was that?

Williams: Well being an MP, I didn't have to do a lot of stuff, so I mean we basically, well it was easy for us. So anyway, so we landed there and there were no docks, there's no harbor, you'd have to climb over on the rope and get in on those...like they did in Normandy, only of course it was smooth, there roughs and nobody was shootin' at you. So, we landed and of course I had to spend an extra night, cause they said we want you to bring a vehicle to our camp. Which was about 30, 40 miles from the coast. Anyway, we had to go over like everyone else and carry your stuff and I didn't even hit dry land til this little Vietnamese boy wanted to sell me a Coca Cola *laughs*, I said what is this place. Anyway, what was so aggravating, I drove this jeep that was

assigned to me in Fort Benning and I patrolled you know everything in it and whatever, and they carried that sucker over and I had my jeep was there. So I drove my jeep in Vietnam and Benning, *laughs*, and I left it there by God. Anyway, we went, and uh, it was uh, you know like I said. I never... the prisoners we did get, which was several, and we kept them. We had concertina wire around it and they were out there. We didn't keep them long, 2 days, you know, most of them didn't know anything, I mean anything important that we could use. I never...some of them were actually wounded but they were not serious wounds.

Q: Did you ever treat the Vietnamese soldiers or civilians in the American camp for their wounds?

Williams: No. When we got them they were already, whatever was done to them. If had been something serious they probably wouldn't survived anyway. So, they brought 'em in and trying to get some information about what unit they were with and this and that. They got very little information from those people.

Q: Because they were probably foot soldiers?

Williams: Yeah, they were just soldiers, you know. We did get and we were guarding, he was the first officer from the North that we had captured and that was a big deal. But you could look at him and look at the others and immediately tell he was different. I mean he looked, well, like a poor person on skid row to a rich person. I mean there's that much difference in their looks, and he was educated I'm sure, in the North and so that was the only one we had. But it was like I said, mainly we didn't *pauses* go out in the 'bush', as they called it. We did, I know, where I'm talking about in Pleiku, we'd go back and maybe another brigade would go out and other company, I mean, platoon of MPs would go out and we were the first ones there. And I don't know if they zeroed in on them, we had just left. 2 days after we left, they got hit with shells, mortars came in, but I don't think anybody was...mainly because there weren't many of them killed, I don't think, well not in my company. But it was early on, this was beginning and I told you about the movie, did you ever look at that? (We Were Soldiers)

Q: I couldn't find it, I'm not sure where it was, but describe to me a little about what it entailed.

Williams: Well, it was, out at Pleiku, we were out in the tea plantation and I could hear, I was in a little pup tent, one man, and that was mine and I heard this racket, and I said what in the world, and I got up and there was this, I'd say 50 or 60 helicopters took off over my head and that's where they were headed, where this movie took place. It was the 1st brigade, it was our brigade, and thought they were gonna take on 500 soldiers, and it was more like 4,000, and they were overwhelmed. They, many of them got killed, and the movie is about that. And they went over like we did, from Fort Benning, and they trained and like I said, one group was the Custers group. So it was, I can't remember, I told you the name of the movie, We were soldiers...? I should've brought that book. I'm sorry, I've lost my mind, but he wrote book about it. The man that was in charge of the group that went in and they made the movie out of it. And of course movies are, it was probably worse than the movie and the movie was pretty bad. They couldn't

make it as bad as it was, a lot of things happened. It was the first big battle. It was interesting. Like I said, we got there and we had some 20,000 people counting the support group people and of course they go out there, let's get out feet wet, in other words get it out and see and it didn't take long til it was more than that, you know, actually combat.

Q: Any of the people that you served with in you division do you still keep in contact with them or did you after the war at all?

Williams: No, I got a letter, a couple, I don't know if it was twice, but I know one time, they were going to have a reunion of the people of the, what did I say, the 545th MP company, whatever, 50-whatever, I can't remember the name of it, but it was our company. Because we were a company, we were, like I said, 100-200 whatever it was, they wanted to have reunion and they were going to have it Georgia somewhere and I didn't go. There was no one in my area that was in the company. You know, you're talking about thousands and thousands of people in the Army, we only had a small group, 150 people. And that included the officers and sergeants and stuff, but I never had any more contact with any of them.

Q: Do you remember them at all? Did you make any close connections at all?

Williams: Oh yeah, oh yeah. There was one black kid, *chuckles* who was from Jacksonville, and we were sorta close. And we went through jump school together, and of course I was also kiddin him about things, and he would always tell me to shut up, *laughs*. And he stayed with me on the ship and we drove up to our area on the coast, and I was always kiddin him. And we pitched a tent together, and of course this is before we had the big tents where you could have 14 or 15 people in that one big tent, but we were together. That first night it was a lot going on, everybody was scared, they were shooting flares up and firing off rounds; I woke up and he was sitting up with his rifle, and his name was Goosby, and I said, 'Goosby, have they broke through yet?' *laughing* And he said, again, 'shut up' that was his response, 'shut up, Lou', and I said 'well, wake me up if you need me'. I mean I was so relaxed, I had no fear, I mean I was 20-something and bullet proof, you know. Just like kids, you know. Well, I mean, I really didn't. Flying in a helicopter, when I talked to the crew chief, not flying it but, and we were talking and he said, 'well we're supposed to do maintenance every 56, 57 hours of flight', and I said 'well' and he said 'this one has had 300 something hours and we haven't had time to do maintenance,' and you know, you'd say well I'd hate to crash and get killed in a helicopter going back to base, not getting shot down. But there was a lot of them crashed, because the equipment just wore out because they didn't have time to do manientence on them.

Q: Have you ever heard about Agent Orange?

Williams: Oh yeah, I actually get money from the VA.

Q: You do? I was going to ask if you did.

Williams: Yeah, cause I had prostate cancer and now I might have got it anyway, but, uh, I'll tell the area where I said we were at in An Khe, I'd say 500 yards from where my tent was, was

jungle. I mean you couldn't, I mean it was thick and they were trying to clean it up and everything. So we went to Pleiku and when I came back there wasn't a blade of a grass, there wasn't a tree, nothing but bare ground. And there's no way they could've done it without the Agent Orange.

Q: So even though it made both Americans and Vietnamese sick, do you think it was worth it to clear out the jungle?

Williams: *Pauses* *sighs*, No. Because the people that spread got sick, the people it touched got sick and the Army says or whoever says, 'if you've been one day in Vietnam and you get certain diseases then you're covered. Yeah, it helped, cause it would've taken an extra, instead of 50 people slipping in, it would've taken 500,000 people, because they had claymore mines out there, they had Constinia wire, I mean I was as safe were I was as I am right now in Asheville. Maybe more safe *laughing*, cause I had a weapons, you know. But, no Agent Orange was terrible.

Q: Yeah, I was doing quite a bit of research on it and I don't know if I was surprised or not that the VA still offers compensation on it

Williams: Mmhmm, and from my understanding there actually adding more disease

Q: From the Vietnam war?

Williams: Mmhmm, well it's just like 9/11, where people are breathing that stuff, I said to myself, those people are crazy, cause they're going to have problems and they have. Because anything like that causes problems. That's why smoking is so bad for you, you know, it takes longer. And not everyone, it depends on you being exposed to it, and I said, what happened to... well we cleared it out.

Q: How long did it take for them to clear it out?

Williams: It wasn't too long. No. I mean it was almost, well, if you ever sprayed up around stuff, it doesn't take but 2 days to die, and then it's something simple to pull up and that's what they did

Q: Did you ever have any contact with non Vietnamese soldiers, but the civilians that were there? You mentioned that whenever you landed you met the..

Williams: Yeah the little boy. Well sort of, I worked downtown, so I'd go in as an MP to, when I got there, there were 3 bars, course when I left there were 200 bars. And a bar was that had just put them up cause that's where they came. And a bar was a concrete slab and poles in the concrete. They'd take 10, maybe Coca Cola, Budweiser, and take cans and make sheets out of it. So they'd put that up and put wire out in front to keep bugs out best they could. They had a door and you'd walk in and what they have a wood frame bar And then you come in with concrete and put it in there and when the concrete set-up you would take the wood out and you'd have a

bar. it would be the shape of a bar, you know what i'm saying. And they had girls and they sold Vietnamese beer and if they had contact they'd sell them beer or cigarettes or whiskey.

Q: What would they pay with?

Williams: Well they had, it's called piastres. they put a value of like a hundred and eighteen per dollar. and it should have been worth more like 318 cuz it was worthless. and we had American script and we didn't use money, It was like monopoly money and we'd take that and they'd take that even though they didn't really want to. if you gave them a \$10 bill of that funny money as we called it you'd get back change of the same money, they wouldn't give you their money because if they changed their color, \$5 would have one color \$10 would have another color and if they changed the color of it the old ones were not worth anything and no one would take them. so they didn't want to get caught with it. They didn't do that while I was there Long enough it usually takes a year or two before they change. but anyway I would trade them I have a \$10 bill of theirs and it would cost me a lot less than it would cost them and I'd trade that back. so I was making \$0.18 on the dollar so you know, but I was helping them because they couldn't spend it anywhere. well it's just like a dollar bill is it worth anything if somebody won't take the dollar and give you something for it it's not worth anything. and yeah we had contact with them, contact with some of the bartenders and we had the Papasan and the mamasan, that's what we called them and they had girls, that's just the way it is. And We patrolled there and there was very little problem once in awhile somebody would get in a fight or get drunk but it was pretty peaceful. Believe it or not 2/2 twenty something thousand soldiers oh, it was pretty peaceful. well we had a few problems but it was minor.

Q: You're saying mainly with the civilians it was peaceful? like if you came across a soldier or something like that...

Williams: Well Deal with the Vietnamese soldiers. I had one incident some of them are bound to get drunk, *clarifies that he is referring to Vietnamese soldiers* vietnamese soldiers. Story we got Ama one had a hand grenade and he said if you don't go in and have another drink with me I'm going to pull the pin. So he pulled the pain and he said okay let's go in. this is the story and it was told that he put it in his pocket and walked in and it went off and killed the two of them plus a couple more. I mean that happens, course the good thing is the concrete bar saved some people's lives. But anyway they would name them New York City Bar, California bar, North Carolina bar then asked what names they had and it was written.

Q: do you think that was too feel better? (more welcoming?)

Williams: Well if you were from South Carolina, you'd go to the South Carolina bar.

Q: Right, but These Bars were owned by the Vietnamese right?

Williams: Yeah they were Vietnamese. plus who knew what was going on underhanded oh, that was their deal. We had Vietnamese police they didn't do much we did all the work and certain

times like 5 it was off limits at 6 you are arrested and we very seldom had any problems. Most people left and went back to their dot-dot-dot and we had NCO clubs in our big areas.

Q: So as far as going into villages and stuff like that, did you do anything?

Williams: Well I'm not talking about the villages like you see in the movies where they are huts these are actually town and they had building I'm a constructed buildings. The bad thing was they didn't have a street like where we were and the street parallel to each other and the buildings are back to back and you go in this side of the one Street and unfortunately down the center was where the sewage went and I got to the point where I could walk and I knew the way and it wasn't straight. You might hit a wall and turn to the left or the right and I could go all the way to one end of the street 2 this ended the street without being seen because I be between the two buildings some of them pretty good size establishments, big as this downstairs, some of them are not but they'd be anywhere and everywhere. and the Medics would go in and check everything and if they had found anything considered hazardous we put them off to the side which means no one could go in and of course they clean that up right away because no one could go in

Q: hazardous in what way?

Williams: well it could be someone sick or maybe had paid money to the local, *pauses*, I don't know I mean I didn't have anything to do with that oh, it came from higher up and they put it off limits. Or if they suspected they had connections with... see at night everyone who is a good friend became enemies, in the daytime they were your friends and at night they were your enemy you can't tell. How do you know you don't. So that's why we put it off limits at night because that's when you know the bad guys came in at night in that Village and it was more of a town and it was probably not quite as large as Black Mountain it was that good size. see now, Village was out in the middle of the boonies, but it's not that I called it a village but it's a town, it was on the map, you could see it. Pleiku, now was the larger town oh, it wasn't as big as Asheville oh, but it was a bigger place because we had the Army headquarters there and the other Air Force Headquarters there. They divided them up in course 1 2 3 4, they divided them up. it was a pretty good-sized town, I an restaurants and luckily I didn't get sick, *chuckling*. I found that water buffalo actually tastes pretty good, but I like bison, you know.

Q:Is that mainly what you ate while you were over there?

Williams: No, I very seldom did that.

Q: So was it mainly rations?

Williams: Well, we were there about three weeks, C rations which is C Ama then we had B rations which are a little bit higher and greater but it did taste as good in a way then C rations. Then you have a rashes which is hot food and the first hot food I had within the field, a helicopter came in and brought out these containers and let the steam come out, and I said

'oohwee'. *laughing* of course we ate out of our mess kits and you open it up and you have a place to put your food stuff to eat with and a cup. But it was tasty, it was great.

Q: What was the kind of food they had?

Williams: Well it was regular food, lima beans or whatever, just regular food. I mean they wouldn't have sirloin steak but it would be hot though so it would be somewhere in between.

Q: So was that a limited thing that would happen or was that every week?

Williams: No, Once we got back to the home, which was a humongous tent, called a mess kit tent, and you'd lineup, have you ever seen MASH, on T.V.?

Q: Mmhm

Williams: Well it was just like that. your walkthrough with a tray and sit down and it was three meals a day. as a matter of fact I was getting ready to leave, soon, to come home. and I heard of fella talking something in the line and he had just got there and he was loud and I said I I know that fella, and I said aren't you so and so oh, somebody I met in college and had been to his house and Henderson down in the center part of the state and he vaguely remembered me but I understand no. The only reason I recognized him was because he was talking about his dad who was a big wheel in the pickle company, I forget which one it was but he was some big wheel in the pickle company down in Henderson, they had big plants down there. Anyway, that's the only reason I recognized him, not because of his voice but what he was saying and anyway it was interesting and we flew out of An Khe and went to Saigon to process out process app when we were coming home and the plane that took off behind us crashed and killed everybody on board and course that came out over the radio and I don't know how many were on it, 15 or 20, and of course everybody who knew we were leaving that day where all tore up; my mother... but it clearly said they were on a mission and not coming home. As a matter of fact there was a boy from Marion on there oh, that was killed and they wrote a piece in one of the magazines hey, one of the veterans magazines, about that, anyway we got to Saigon and went through that anyway we took off from Saigon on Commercial planes and we landed and changed crews and we flew to San Francisco and it took us 30 minutes to get there, same day. I said it didn't take us but 30 minutes to get here *chuckling*. and I had been some fifty-something hours without have been in a bed beings are all the processing, we landed in San Francisco and of course everybody kissed the ground. And then you go to this big place and go through all the process and they update everything and give you pills to take because of malaria will stay with you, so I had to take those for I think 12 days afterwards and so we get back on, and then we fly military standby. You know for \$15 I was going to fly from San Francisco to Atlanta, then Atlanta to Asheville. So we landed in Atlanta and there was 7 inches of snow on the ground in Atlanta. And of course man no big deal Asheville can handle it, they canceled the flight so there we were and they wouldn't rent us a car, and it was going to take 15, 16 hours on the bus and the buses didn't know where they could go because the roads were covered. I was a member of the Playboy Club, believe it or not and I said well let's go to the Playboy club and they had hotels. so there were

three of us, and one boy was married and he was from right up the road he was in the engineers the other boy was from just down the road in Far city. So I said come on, lets go the Playboy club. we all had money because we had gotten paid we probably had \$2,000 between the three of us. So we get in the cab and this man says what's going on, and I said what flights are getting cancelled New York or anywhere North in canceled cause the snow is bad it was terrible. so he said where do you want to go and I told him he said oh I know where that is, and naturally he would, and we get in there and start talking to him, go to the cab stand and said I need to get gas, he said I'm not working I just came to get a paper call his wife Hills of his tank and says do y'all want to go to Marion? Now that's a long ways, and we ride on the interstate, we were about the only ones on it, cause it was just ruts on the interstate. So he carries us to Marion and we get to North Carolina at Chestney, the roads are cleared, there's no snow they cleared it off. So we drive into town the snow is piled up higher well probably about a high as that, probably 10-15 ft of snow. And the whole town is close down, so we go to the bus depot we talk, So I went down to the drugstore and it was closed but there was somebody there he was getting an emergency fill and I said carry me home, he was a good friend of mine, he was from Marion and he drove me to my house. And I knock on the door, cause I didn't want to just walk in and my mother answers the door and her first statement was what are you doing here?! I said well, I live here. we had told everyone we couldn't make it and had to spend an hour or two Atlanta cause we couldn't make it, and they thought we were going to stay there which is why she said that. So, I go to bed sleep for 2 days, I'd Get up get something to eat and go back to bed I did things thinking back now there's no way I could have do that, there's no way I could have done that and survived, but it was no problem.

Q: You mean in Vietnam?

Williams: I mean anything, in the army, everything, trip back up, and you'd say how did you survive that and it was simple, you just did. Well you know Vietnam didn't get real bad until '68, that's when Walder Krimkot said on T.V., I don't think we can win this war. Well we didn't really try, unfortunately, course know we would've had to bomb the North into the Stone Age, and then we were worried about the Chinese coming in and the Russians coming in. Now we're dealing with the same thing in Korea, course, who knows what's going to happen.

Q: So what do you think of Vietnam now? I know you've mentioned a little bit, but looking back at it now?

Williams: We've talked, I've got a couple troopers that..., one went through Tet and one had been wounded several times, he gets a lot more than I do, of course he deserves a lot more than I do, but anyway he was willing to serve, and he said one time, 'you know if I would've gotten killed over there, I really would've been pissed off', you know. It was a waste, I hadn't been to the wall yet, *pauses and chokes up*, I just hadn't been. Think about how many wasted lives, where over there. The first Methodist Church son was a year behind me in high school and he got shot down over the North, and they finally found his remains, he's now in Charlotte buried there, but you know, it's a waste. One of these days I'm going. *Stays quiet for a moment, thinking* You asked

what I think about it and I think it was a waste. Now in World War II and I, we had a purpose and things were accomplished. I don't know how good it was but we did it and the war ended, and a new enemy comes up, you know. Vietnam, even Korea it was even probably worse, you know in some ways it was. Course we accomplish the same thing, now Vietnam is a trading partner with us *knocks on the table* furniture, clothes, even President Trump just went over there. I mean the place is modern. We didn't get anything and they got a united country, yeah. See the French moved out and got whipped and that should have been a sign to us that we shouldn't have been there.

Q: Why do you think that we went?

Williams: You know, they claimed and I don't know if this happened, the North Vietnamese shot at one of our ships in the Gulf of Tonkin but, whatever, whether we were there or not I don't know, but anyway it was political I think. If Kennedy hadn't been assassinated, I honestly believe he would've kept us out of that, so that's another reason. And I wouldn't have been a fan of Kennedy or vice versa. If he would've lived I think he was trying to keep us out of there, I may be wrong, but anyway. Johnson, wouldn't run again. It should've ended way before it did and it wouldn't have been any worse, and he said, 'oh if they took over everything is going to happen', they took over and it still didn't happen.

Q: So like part of the reason was that fear of communism spreading?

Williams: Yeah, they said they would come down and take over and come here, and pretty soon they'd be in Australia. *pauses* Some people said, and I'm not saying this, but that we fell on the wrong side. We should've been fighting for the North, because the South was probably more corrupt, politically than the North was. Even though the communists were not good, *sighs*, it's just one of those things. Ho Chi Minh who was one of the big wheels, he wrote a letter to Truman, asking... *asked me* have you heard of this, *I shook my head no*, the CIA kept this from him.

Q: From Truman?

Williams: From Truman, yeah. They wanted, its all, everyone does what they think is right. You know what the truth is, history changes. You'd think history would be written in stone but it's not. It keeps changing, this fact comes out. And I don't know, but Ho Chi Minh was shocked when we took the side of the South, cause he was a, well look at us, we fought the English, we rebelled against them. Everybody says well you're doing the same thing we were trying to do, it all depends on your point of view. You know what I mean? *Laughing*

Q: No, that's true. There was this document that we were reading in class, and it was very very similar to I want to say the declaration of independence, I think is what he was modeling it after, it was interesting because it was so similar to it, but almost in the stance of communism. So it was very interesting to see that parallel, and look at the freedom of the United States and that type of thing.

Williams: Well, again, back in the day when we were there and all going through, no one mentioned the fact that he was trying to do. Well they fought the French, and the French were terrible, it's weird, you know, you don't what side you're supposed to be on. But you know, everyone was, the communist is bad and it is. Course what you're doing right now, you're young, this socialism, well go to Cuba and see how things worked out. Not that anything else is perfect but that's certainly not. *drums fingers on the table* And of course look at Vietnam now, my God, there's some great looking, I see furniture, clothes, golf shirts, made in Vietnam.

Q: It's very different now.

Williams: Oh yeah, if somebody said would you like to go back, I'd say not really. Because where I was, was really out in the boondocks, now.

Q: Would you want to go back to one of the major cities?

Williams: No. I don't care to go back. Now, as a matter of fact, I'm not leaving this country, if they want to kill me, they're going to have to come and get me. I wouldn't dare go to Mexico, I mean, *sighs*. The only place I've been outside the country was Jamaica once and that was in '69 and I wouldn't go back there either, I have no desire to go anywhere. Why, when you're in beautiful downtown Asheville? *laughs* Why would you want to go anywhere else? Now you've been everywhere, would you want to live anywhere besides the U.S. of A?

Q: I think I would like to travel to those places, but maybe, eventually I would end up staying here. I'm not really sure you know.

Williams: Well you lived in, good god, *laughs* you've lived everywhere.

Q: *laughs*, yeah and I think that's helped a lot with my outlook on the world, but it is interesting to live in those places, like Japan and Germany, then to come back here and see the people here and how they view the rest of the world versus how they view us. So it is very interesting.

Williams: Yeah, my youngest son, he's engaged to a Brazilian, and course, she's lived her nine, ten years. She's a nurse at Duke and he's made two trips there, and course their closer to the equator on the other side than Cuba is, so it is hot. They love it hot, it gets below 70 and they freeze, but he said the air is terrible, the water is not good, there's nothing good about it and it's one of the major countries.

Q: Well it's talked about a lot, when you live anywhere outside the States, especially part of a military community, everyone talks about the convenience of living in the States. Cause there are a lot of countries that you would consider these big, great economy, whatever it may be, are lacking some of the things we have, and I think some people in the States take it for granted.

Williams: Oh yeah I know, it's like you've got a choice of grocery stores, 4 or 5 grocery stores, and they've all got the same thing, bread, milk, I mean it's always there, you never run out of it.

You never have to stand in line to get a coupon to buy meat. Yeah, we're spoiled, there's no question.

Q: Well speaking on that, what do you think my generation or around my generation, should know about the Vietnam war?

Williams: Well unfortunately I doubt if we learn anything, but the biggest thing is what a waste it was. I mean, the people are still dying, course I'm 77 and there's a lot that came after me, cause I left in '66 and it didn't end until '73 or whenever it was, and there was a lot of people, a lot younger than I am. It's, *sighs* I don't know, it's, if anyone ever learns that, look at what we did, we went into the Middle East after 9/11, so. And then we made things worse, probably, you know. So, but I mean, just *pauses* kids, just like me, I didn't have a clue I was about to get drafted, so you don't think that. You were thinking about of courses you had to have something in on time or what are you going to do this weekend and that's the way it should be, you know.

Q: Do you think we should talk about the war more?

Williams: Sure, I think you should remember and respect what was done and what happened and it's like the Korean War it's called The Forgotten War, you know. How we got there and how we left and what happened in between, it's amazing. It's a blur In some ways. The people they just don't want to think about it obviously, and the bad thing is every year that goes by there's less people like you that have a connection to it. I don't have a brother, I don't have an uncle I don't have a great-uncle, you forget about those people. I had a great-uncle that was in World War I and he never talked about it much and I knew it but how many people know someone from World War I and how many people know someone from World War II, and so forth, and eventually we're going to get to that point where there's no connection. Course we got movies now documentaries oh, that was the first war that we had on TV, you know. I mean every night there was something about 5 or 10 people 40 people that got killed, Americans and of course we killed 500 or 200 or 300 people, it was all about body count.

Q: Do you think they did that fuel of protests that were going on in the States against the war?

Williams: Yeah, you know as a veteran coming back you resented these people. But you know, *chuckles* were they not right? Possibly, we should have listened to them more. Now, Jane Fonda, people hated her for what she did. and what she did was treason in my opinion. You can say I'm against it and we should stop, that's fine that's freedom of speech and thought but to go to that and give Aid which she did, that's wrong. the bad thing about the protest is it they didn't know they were giving Aid to the north, is they said eventually the states are going to have to pull out of the war because of all of these protests, but we didn't and we just kept killing people. I think it went on longer because of the protest, in my opinion. It's okay to say, we ought to get out and in the long run, if you noticed oh, I'm sure you've studied it, how long it took the north to overtake the south after we moved out oh, it didn't take long at all. so we lost all of those people for nothing. the only way we could have kept it is to say there. and whether you're a Trump fan or not or whoever, are we going to stay there forever? He's saying let's get out, we made it worse

but we had good intentions. I like George Bush but when he said we were going to this, I said that's a stupid idea and I know that because I've been there done that and got a t-shirt, *laughs*.

Q: I know this isn't about the Vietnam War but talking about George Bush and 9/11, do you think he made that choice as a result of that to show that America was still strong and that we were going to do something about it?

Williams: Well, that was a signal as a whole country. If you took a poll 90% said let's go get them and you know that's fine. Just like George Bush number one the Gulf War is he attempts going instead of a hundred hours and they said well we lost support well who cares you know go in there and take him out he's the one that caused this and then pull out. Or like George Bush said when he landed on that carrier, he said, mission accomplished, well, fine. Come home and forget about it, you can always go back.

Q: Well is there anything else you want to talk about the Vietnam war that you haven't mentioned yet?

Williams: No, unless you have anymore questions. Two jumps there and a helicopter, you sit in the helicopter like I'm sitting here you have the running board and you just step up and jumped out in the Chute comes open and not a combat jump just a practice jump. You had to jump so many times and uh, I think the people we connected with, the local people, they acted like... and of course this was early on I don't know how it was later on I'm sure it wasn't the same but they appreciate us being there mainly because you brought money you know. Well you seen it there thoughts of human life were way less than how we value it. Well they didn't have a real long life expectancy, 45 years old you were lucky to live that long what's the diseases and well you know. How in the hell did we get over there is the good question, you know. I mean it's good that y'all study this and it's important moving forward oh, maybe they'll be someone in your class be in a position to say well wait a minute we've made this mistake once why do it again, but history repeats itself doesn't it?

Q: I actually have one more question that I just thought of; the transition of when you came back from duty into your civilian life how was that? Was that difficult for you?

Williams: No, not really cause my first sergeant asked me; 'Williams', cause they always called you by your last name, 'Williams what do you want to accomplish in the army' and I said 'a civilian' which just means I wanted out and I did but the good news was about my time coming back, well it was winter time and it was cold and snowy. You know you talked about taking things for granted and I didn't take things for granted; the fact that I could get my '65 GTO and drive down do the golf course in play golf and go to the movies...but it didn't take long so I fell back into it; the taking things for granted. Like if one of your friends was killed in a car wreck and it's like, oh my God they were drinking or whatever and you say well we're not going to do that for about three, two or three weeks and then it's forgotten, you know. But, no I didn't have trouble, course I know people in Marion that did have a lot of trouble and the reason probably I didn't was because I wasn't fighting them hand-to-hand like they were, when they're all around

you and you don't know whether you're going to live or die, I never did experienced that, which is good I guess, I mean I could have been shot and killed anytime, cause we were out there in it and it wasn't like riding around Asheville, we were out in the boonies. Still it was easier for me you know and of course I had a good attitude, I've always had one and I still do, that helped but course drugs were not a big thing back then, not when I was there but by the end it was terrible.

Q: What kind of drugs?

Williams: Well whatever, but mainly, well I really don't know cause I wasn't there; but I know marijuana was big.

Q: In Vietnam or coming back?

Williams: Vietnam, oh yeah. well even they were actually even bringing cocaine, no not cocaine heroin, in dead bodies from Vietnam, you know if they had somebody with connections. You know they had one called American Gangster about a black man who had connections in Vietnam, I think he had been in Vietnam, I don't know, but anyway there's some connection. And somebody, when they come back, they would always check it, and then they take it out of that and put it in whatever. There have been several movies about that, I've been on flying on a plane when I worked at NASCAR there would be carrying a body back that was killed, it was interesting. There is one movie, I can't remember the name of the movie, anyways this officer was going to escort, they always have an escort, after everything was said and done and they're taking it back to their home and he would always check that all the medals are right and everything was right being a Class A uniform cause that's what the family wanted, most of them did. I can't read the number, so don't quote me on the number but there were hundreds everyday killing themselves, like it is right now, I mean that's the first thing I'm asked when I go to the VA hospital when I go to have a physical every year and of course if you call up there, if you have a question, the first thing they say is if you're having emergency to call 911 and if you're thinking about hurting yourself because there's so many of them dying and I've seen Billboards now East, because that's where most soldiers were from, what's killing our soldiers and they have bullets and guns but the biggest thing is pills and of course is killing kids like you who aren't in the military they just get hooked on pain pills. I mean there's a hundred that die everyday, it's hard to believe. Of course I never took anything, I never smoked dope or took a pill and I know, I drank a little beer and wine but it never interested me. Why would you ever want to be stoned? Bless their hearts, their life is too good. I'm sure you seen it at school you know and, well I never looked for it, to pass my time I would just I just deal with it. And people you say are they weak because they need it? I don't know, but life is too much fun to waste it. Well I don't know anything else, I've got some stories, I mean weird little things I don't know if they would be...

Q: Like what?

Williams: Well it's just things that happened, it's funny how I can remember things, *laughs* I mean this is not important, but talking about drinking we had mess kit tent where everyone went

to eat and at the end of the dinner they'd clean up a little bit and open up this club and they'd play music and you could buy whiskey and I remember I went in and saw the glass and I said give me a double double vodka and I had just enough room to put a little bit of tomato juice in, just to barely turn it red and I had a bunch of those. It's funny I never got high. and vodka would do that to me and I can still do that today; I'll drink a whole bunch of it and then all of a sudden it hits me, so I woke up the next morning, my feet on the ground and half my body was in the bed half a body was out because of a hangover and stuff like that, just crazy stuff. And like I said when we were in Fort Benning Georgia we were like police officers, and we'd check the clubs out if anyone had an accident we'd go to that, it was low-key though, I mean there wasn't a whole lot going on most of it was downtown in Columbus Georgia which is a bad place, it is, it is now too. the only reason I know is it as my daughter-in-law daughter is a police officer there and they have shootouts across the river in Alabama to Phenix City. Phenix City had a terrible reputation back in the '50s, 40s and 50s, I mean people are getting killed left and right over there it was bad but it's nothing now. she's on the task force now, she poses as a 14 year old girl and they need mad and they are arresting them left and right. Super Bowl Sunday she was with that task force in Alabama and they arrested a whole lot, well you see what happened to the owner of the football team. the bad thing is that's got his own problems. But what these people are doing wantin 13 and 14 year olds, those people are sick and there's no cure for it I can promise you that people say, well, no you can't. Anyone who treats a kid bad, there's no there's no cure for that, except the bullet. But anyway, I'm sitting here talking and thinking at the same time. I just can't think of anything I'm about to be interesting enough to stay.

Q: What about the type of stuff that you had to carry in Vietnam?

Williams: Well when I was in Basic, I had an M1, which is what they used in WWI, and it weighed a ton, And the ammunition weight a ton and then we moved to the M14 which is with the Marines still I saying I don't know what they still use now but they use that a lot in Vietnam and then return to the AR-15 which was like a little black plastic gun which was really light and I could carry a hundred rounds of that and it would have less weight. and most the time see because we were MPs we didn't do like, we had a canteen full of water and maybe two little boxes of C rations which included some fruits and vegetables maybe some meat and four cigarettes, they always put cigarettes in there back in the day, and it wasn't that bad, you know we were MPs. I had a backpack, but I never used it except to store stuff, and I usually had a 45 which is was on my belt and that was it. *Pointed to his MP badge* see that scarf, everyone wore a scarf, not in Vietnam, but that was green. if you were an engineer it would be orange and you if you are in the signal corps it would be red and so on. They knew if you didn't have that on you wouldn't be working, and of course that's the working hat, the white hat. But otherwise you didn't wear that. Yeah and I was in the Airborne, so I wore the Airborne cap and then they started wearing the Berets and all the stuff they get into now and it signified what group you were in.

Q: So when was this picture taken? *A picture of Mr. Williams as a young soldier*

Williams: Probably '64, you can see how young, but down there in Fort...probably Right after we graduate that was it. it was funny this was a Chinese type of machine gun *referencing a newspaper clipping he brought from the war* And they had on display and it was probably from WWII or I and it was terrible looking and it wouldn't shoot and the story was that the helicopter landed, and there was dirt firing up and whoever was on it looked up and saw this Vietnamese shooting and killed them, well he had something like this and they read it and it said lead the plane and he was supposed to lead it there like a dove or duck you supposed to shoot in front of it so they would fly into it and he was on the ground and he didn't know he was supposed to do that, it's only reason it saved him and that's why they printed it to show how you're supposed to do it. It's weird stuff. Well another good story the MPs were here and Engineering was here and had a big tent and we right after we had left a mortar round came through and landed right in front of the sergeants feet and after they went in there and checked it, the fuse hadn't been lit. so I didn't go off it couldn't he drained all the powder out and sent it home and put it on his mantle, and only reason was because someone didn't know what they were doing or they were in a hurry and forgot to do it. *laughing* it wasn't his time. but you know stuff like that I don't know that first-hand it was told Jimmy and it sounds reasonable.

Q: Do you think some of the stories were, not necessarily changed, but morphed into something that was a little more story like or do you think the stories you heard from soldiers were completely true?

Williams: It depends on how much time because this is a short time that happened it's more likely true if you know any story the longer it goes the more gets built up and the more people that pass through. I know the round going through the tent was true, I don't know why they would tell that if it wasn't so I'm sure stuff like that. It's like if I was telling you a story some people exaggerate and Bill (my grandfather) can tell you I don't usually exaggerate, I don't brag. It's like going to a restaurant, if I tell you it's good you can bet your life it's good *both laughing*. Just don't brag and you know something to experience in NASCAR we could ride along book how about the highway patrol is any anything anyone can imagine we've done it and not all the good, of course I was only two years but I had a good time. The Army was good for me personally because I did things that I would have never done and I said, well I'm not doing that, but I had to. You can say it made a man out of you and it showed you how you could do whatever you had to, like shaving in cold water. The first shower I had in Vietnam was when it was raining I jumped up and I started ripping my clothes off and they said what are you doing I said it's raining and they said what does that mean and I said I'm going out taking a shower and I was the first shower I had was in the rain. You gotta do what you got to do. Is there anything you can add or think about?

Q: I was going to say, let me look through; oh, do you think, cause there are so many vets today that are struggling with being there, do you think on the opposite side with the Vietnamese, both soldiers and civilians are experiencing similar or different things in the country of Vietnam?

Williams: I think, *pauses* no. Well maybe some, but life expectancy things were not good from the time it ended to 10 years down the road, a lot of those people probably did but they're probably dead. I'm met a girl who graduate from Western Carolina who was from Saigon, well Ho Chi Minh's city And she spoke great English and she had worked at Cherokee is the casino and she has no thoughts or remembrance. I mean, you talk about agent orange and I'm sure there are thousands who died as a result of that, maybe not right away, but eventually and they have no medicine take care of that, they would get cancer and they don't have someone tell you that you have cancer, they just died. No I don't think they, no. You know I don't even think they have the resentment anymore. On the news you know when Trump just went over there for the meetings and they had reporters go around and they saw no animosity at all

Q: Do you think it's because this current generation, because like you said, so many had died, they just don't remember?

Williams: Yeah, I think that's it, and of course prosperity as hit them and if you can get anything you want and everything's going good there's not much to be mad about you know. I mean I'm just going, by you know, and they were in Hanoi which got bombed more than Saigon. Saigon wasn't that big of deal, Because they took over and that was the end of it how about over there is there America bomb so much there's no evidence of it. Now there is a memorials there they said of the war and things that happened and of course they have prisoners of war there, where they were shot down. There was one who was there for 7 years and they got released, so you know. Like McCain, and I said he don't need to be president, he can't go through what he went did and be totally sane, there's no way.

Q: And what did he go through?

Williams: Well he was a prisoner of war, he couldn't lift his arms any higher than that *raises his own arms to demonstrate*, cause of the torture he went through, they all did. Now, that's a different story, prisoner of war. I never even think about it, to tell you the truth, the fact you wanted to do this I started thinking back and every once in awhile you come across something can you say, oh yeah, *points to a different medal* see that was the brass you wore, the pistols meant are you an MP, military police, and a heck of it is see that's my blood type O (on his dog tags) that's not my type if I would have been wounded and it given a transfusion they would have killed me. I'm A+ it's just so many people going through but the bad thing was a stupid thing was if you go they check you to being a universal donor, there's a small percentage who have O+ like my son he can give his blood to anyone and they check everyone and they said you're not O+ and I said I guess not, cause I was actually A+. when I went to my first Duty station I went to the hospital and they said come on the nurses that are in and check your blood so that if you get hurt will know and get the blood ready and I told him it was O positive and they said and they checked and they said it's A + not gotten to check several times and it's been A +, but then they put Methodist they put the religion down.

Q: Do you think, how religious were you going into the war or anything like that? Did it play a role at all? In your experience over there at all?

Williams: What are you talking about now?

Q: Like regularly going to church on Sunday? Is that something you partook in or did anything change once you got to Vietnam?

Williams: No I mean yeah probably I had him as a church and I don't even know how long but they just wanted something down Methodist, Catholic, Jew or anything.

Q: So you just had to put something down?

Williams: You just had to put something down well you didn't have to but I was a Methodist so, I was then I'm not now. I don't know why they didn't just put Protestant down, but that's what they did like I said I had two when you go to Vietnam you take them up so they don't rattle *clinks them against his coffee mug* But I kept one.

Q: Referring to his dog tag, what did you say this number was?

Williams: That's my service number. When you used to line up to go to the chow hall you had to give your U.S. five three three and so on and if you didn't remember it they would really give you a hard time, you know what I mean, eventually you would remember it.

Q: And that's something you have not forgotten?

Williams: No, well you know your social security number by heart? Well see when you use it back in my day you didn't use social security number, and I can remember that easier than I could have in my social security number. Like I said everyone went through basic training together, probably about 30% were regular army.

Q: So how did you make that distinguishment to MP?

Williams: When you went through you say what do you want to do and where do you want to go and I put medic I said Germany or Europe, And they put me in the MPs, and of course I didn't go to Europe I went to Georgia, and on to Vietnam and then I was there in Vietnam talkin about medics, I was at the main gate it wasn't much of a gate is the main entrance to our group and no one could just wander in, they couldn't drive a vehicle in anyway this medic was walking out and he's limping a little bit I said what happened, he said I got injured,*pauses* wherever, I can't complain I'm about the only one in my platoon that can walk everyone else is either died or... and I said well thank goodness I didn't get to be a medic cause that's, they did that in the Korean War and all wars, they know this person is going to expose themselves trying to help, and thank goodness I didn't...anyway, you know they did ask what you wanted to do but they put you where they needed you.

Q: When you said you would have went to Europe, gone to Europe for training? And then on to Vietnam?

Williams: No, as a matter of fact in my MP school we had a hundred and fifty something and we knew 40 were going to Vietnam Street and 105 or 200 we're going to Germany and they would have been mainly in The Stockade area probably work downtown some mainly whatever and there weren't that many left I knew I was either going to Vietnam or to Germany and they called out the Vietnam people first, my name wasn't on there. Then they called out the people on the Germany was and I said oh I'm going to Germany, I'm going to buy me an old cheap motorcycle and ride around Germany and you're but they didn't call my name. and I had a buddy he was already going to jump School and then going to Korea he was on the car and he wants to do that and they called his name and they called C with three more and they called and then call my name Fort Benning Georgia and I knew jump School. and I was one of the last ones and I walked up and I said first sergeant what the world you call my name out for Fort Benning I'm not going to jump School. This is why I said know you're going to the 11th Air Assault division, welcome to Vietnam basically is what he says and I said oh hell. so we got on a bus going to Fort Benning and we took everyone out said I'm out here said I'm out there and there were three of us did they took to Fort Benning I'm Fort Benning is a humongous area. There's the main post a place where the hospital was in the big complex and they took us out to where we were on the building I said was built in World War II I mean they were terrible, anyway. The first thing I saw was the helicopter and I said oh shit *laughing*, anyway we had, we trained and all that stuff took a while the end of the Vietnam but we did Eminem verse with close down in Fayetteville and we fought each other, to get you on the ground and and what it was going to be like so forth. and of course we don't have a whole lot to do oh, but you stayed in the woods for 2 months found in South Carolina but anyway it was we started packing up. Do you remember the Dominican Republic thing happened well they said we're going to send a bunch of MP's down there AMA troops were walking down the street shooting street lights out, they were bored and wanted to kill somebody. They said we're going to replace them and put y'all down there so we are on standby after that but we didn't have to go it was a process of moving everything to Charleston. and some we're part of the advance party; The medics or the engineers or the MPs They sent people over to kind of get their side they said the MPS are going to be here and you know everybody was scattered out it was a big complex helicopters were over here it was a mess at the time it was just a country road that's all it was the most stayed back and stayed on the ship. Have you ever taken a cruise (No), well I don't know if you ever been on a boat with food but it tastes wonderful. even though we'd be down in the hull do we have a port hole and the ocean would be sorta bad and I stand there with my tray And I didn't get sick. Cause you know if one person threw up three more would throw up and I'd say all y'all through throwing up? I'm lucky *knocks on the table* I've never gotten seasick I just sit there and eat my food and go on it tasted great

Q: So you took a boat over to Vietnam and then you flew back? (yes) So why was it a boat over?

Williams: Well cause you had thousands going over and, I don't know, you had different people going on it, engineers, medics, and fighting people, they were still training on the boat ride over. We stopped in Long Beach, California for about 12 hours and we loaded on some helicopters, I mean this was a humongous ship and we were in the bottom, and we were stacked up 3 or 4 of us in bunks, I thought we were the bottom, and the opened up, someone had something stolen and we were searching for it, there were more under us than above us. Probably 2,000 people or more on there.

Q: And this was the USS Patch?

Williams: Patch, yeah, and I don't know what happened, but there was a lot of people. So we went over and got into the South China Sea, right before we got to Vietnam and dhit the edge of a typhoon. And the ship was just like that *tilts hand to the side*, and as big as that ship was it was still struggling and I never gotten sick. I mean there's people from Charleston Harbor, you know, you got the bridge where you go under, there were people throwing up before we got to that bridge, so there you go.

Q: And that trip was the one that took 31 days?

Williams: 31 days, well 30 days, I stayed on an extra night. We landed in the Caribbean and the sea was so beautiful, you could almost see the bottom, I mean you couldn't but we parked outside Panama, we woke up and there was Panama and there were times we didn't know how far whether here or there to land, and it took all day, matter of fact it was dark so I went to bed and when I woke up we were going by Mexico and then we landed in Long Beach. And there was some rumor that we were going to stop in Hawaii, and the sergeant said, 'yup, there it is!' It was about the size of a pinhead and that's as close as you're going to be; we didn't stop in Hawaii, you know, that's funny.

Q: Was that your first time out of the States, is when you left for Vietnam?

Williams: Oh yeah, I had been to Florida, Georgia, Tennessee and that's it. I remember the first time I saw the ocean, it was amazing. As a kid in the 40s, we went to Fort Lauderdale, my granddaddy was semi retired and he spent the winter there, so we would go there. My daddy, you know, Miami and Fort Lauderdale, Jacksonville is a long way and we drove all the way down and we didn't have no interstates obviously and I'd say are we in Florida yet, and he'd say we've been in Florida for 2 hours, well you know what I meant, are we getting close to Fort Lauderdale, but that's another time. But I hadn't been anywhere to tell you the truth, I hadn't flown, I'd always wanted to, I remember the first plane ride I had it in July 3rd, or 4th, I was flying up to Asheville to visit and to pick my car up to drive down to Fort Benning, and of course back then they still allowed smoking on the planes, so I got to Asheville and mother and daddy picked me up and I spent a couple of days at home. I've made many of trip to Fort Benning to

Atlanta, Georgia. I told someone the other day, I'd walk 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning to get to my car, that I wouldn't even drive through the day there now, that's how much it's changed. Of course I was bullet-proof *both laugh*, you know what I mean, but we flew, probably over 200 different airplanes. Even now I'm bulletproof, *knocks on the table*, good lord. I mean you think you're in control and if you're paying attention, most of the time you are, but I had an accident recently, I see the man come down to the stop sign and I stop, well I don't stop but i'm slowing down and I wonder if he's going to stop and he stops, so I let my foot of the break and sort of coast along and he comes out and hits me, he's not looking, he hits me I don't hit him. You think you're, and I was, safe and careful, you know, every wreck I ever had wasn't my fault, cause you're not in control. You can't dwell on things, someone asked me if I was ever scared to walk up to a car, (as a highway patrolman) and I said if I was I would've quit, I'd never even given it a thought. You stop in a black section, and there's a bunch of black people and you stop them and you wonder if you're going to have trouble and it's the preacher and his family, they had just been to revival. Then 3 o'clock in the afternoon, you see someone broke down and you walk up to help them and there's two guns laying on the front seat, and of course no big deal, but you never know.

Q: Do you think being in Vietnam and going through that experience kinda helped you with that mentality to be a highway patrolman?

Williams: I don't think so, well I think a lot of prayers helped, from my grandmothers and granddaddies, 'take care of this boy, he's a dummy' *both laughing* As you get older, I'm 77 plus and in my mind i'm still 25. One of these days i'll wake up and say you're old. See if I would've kept my hair and stayed out of the sun; I was a lifeguard at a swimming pool, played golf, played tennis, stayed in the sun, it's not good for you. See the car I was driving was bright red, couldn't miss it, but he did, knocked the whole front end off of it, \$6000 worth of (damages). *Pointed out that I have Virginia license plates and that draws attention to me* I mean I could do 10 things, talk about something, think about something, and I've trained officers, and my son is retired, he is single-minded, which is not good. I am aware of everything that's going on....I can walk into a diner in Marion and tell if someone is off the wall crazy, and has problems. Well, anything else?

Q: Unless you can think of something else you wanted to talk about.

Williams: No, I mean I didn't give anything fantastic but I gave you something you can deal with.

Q: No, all of that information was so great.

Williams: Well good, and you got to remember if you present this I was there early on and things changed and got worse and worse, by '69, '70 it was terrible, it was terrible, and if you notice what's happened recently with people paying people to get into college. There were people who didn't go to Vietnam or service because of people they knew, you know, and I probably could've gotten out of it but I didn't, my mother wanted me, 'you could've joined the national guard and

gone to basic training and stayed 6 months and wouldn't have to go. And I said not me, cause you'd be obligated, so many years, to go meetings. And it was a good thing, it was a good choice, as it turned out, and if I would've gotten seriously hurt or killed then it wouldn't have been a good thing. But you could've been home and gotten into an accident, you don't know. *Talked about talking pictures of all of his medals and pictures and news paper clippings*, he had good conduct medal, service ribbon, your dad probably has a lot.

Q: I never knew what the color would mean.

Williams: You can get a plate with the Vietnam Vet color, I never did that, or highway patrol

Q: So how do you feel when people say thank you for your service, or when they find out? Because it seems like you don't particularly share that you were in the Vietnam War.

Williams: No, no, it's okay, yeah, when we have memorial day or veterans day out on Pit road, we had Jamie, our Jamie (my grandmother's name is also Jamies), and she was an official, and she would say thank you for your service, I mean that's better than what they did when people came back from Vietnam, they'd spit on them or throw ink on them. They say freedom's not free cause somebody served. It's better now, it's a whole lot better now. My son is a Marine and he was in the Gulf War and retired highway patrol, but he's a good boy, but single-minded. What time is it? We've been going about...

Q: About 2 hours, *laughs*.

Williams: Well when you're having fun, people will tell ya, I can a mile talking. Well we've put 2 or 3 years in 2 hours, that's not bad. *laughs*

Q: Well thank you so much for doing this.

Williams: Yeah, and if you think of something or want to ask me something you can call me

Q: Oh yeah, I'll 100% do that

Williams: Who came up with this? Your teacher?

Q: Yeah my Vietnam War teacher (Explained project a little more in depth)

Williams: Okay, well good for her or him?

Q: Her, yeah

Williams: Well that's, I appreciate that, we more of that. Alright.

End Transcript

