# Audio file

[OH Interview-Mike Ryan.mp3](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

**[Transcript](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)**

[Luke Bowman](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[There we go. So just to get started, I'd like to ask you just a few brief questions. What years did you serve in Vietnam?](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

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[In Vietnam, it was part of ‘69 and part of ‘70.](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

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[Yes, sir. Part of ‘69 and part of ‘70. And you were an army engineer.](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

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[Yes, a combat engineer.](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

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[Combat engineer? Yes sir, yeah. And where in Vietnam did you serve?](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

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[I was in the fishhook. That's what it sounds like. Fishhook area. West, I think it is. Or southwest of Cambodia. I was. I was. I was close to Cambodia. But not as far South as…as Saigon.](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

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[OK.](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

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[Was up in. But I was up in the foothills.](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

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[All right, and with what unit did you serve?](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[Mike Ryan](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[The first cavalry division.](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

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[The first cavalry division. All right, cool. So my first question is what motivated you to serve in Vietnam?](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[Mike Ryan](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[The draft.](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[Luke Bowman](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[OK and…](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[Mike Ryan](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[That was it. That was the draft.](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

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[OK. And so what…what was it like when you realized that you'd been drafted?](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

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[I knew it was coming for a long time. I had. I was I was in college and using the student deferment…student deferment and trying to drag out hoping the war would end before I had to go. And ultimately I – at that point in time, we still had the draft. I was hoping that the war would end before I had to go.](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[Luke Bowman](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[Right.](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[Mike Ryan](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[It didn't. As soon as I graduated…and you had to finish in four years or you were gone anyway, you you had. You had no options regarding, you know, to extend anything I graduated in. June of ‘64. And by October of ‘64, I was in basic training. So I saw…I saw it coming. There was no surprise to it.](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[Luke Bowman](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[Right, right. And so what were your initial impressions of Vietnam upon your arrival?](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[Mike Ryan](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[I'll never forget, and I'll keep in mind that I lived in Arizona for 25 years, but when I got off the airplane on the tarmac in Vietnam, it just literally took your breath away. You know, this was long before I got out into where I was going to spend any time out the foothills or the jungle. This was in Saigon that I'm talking about now. Say, Vietnam, Vietnam itself, once I got out to where I ultimately ended up spending my time, it was a beautiful, beautiful country.](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[Luke Bowman](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[OK, so as a combat engineer, what did a general day in the life look like for you?](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

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[I did a lot of different things. But the core mission for the First Cavalry combat engineers at that time was to drop into the jungle someplace with lots of chainsaws and explosives and clear a landing zone, clear a fire base so that they could drop in artillery and infantry into a base somewhere and then use it to create fire missions for the infantry. If you think about, think about your cell phone. And the different cells and how they have their little area that they can cover. Well, that's what we were doing. We were expanding that area towards. Which turned out to be a major…a major mission for U.S. forces at that time was moving into Cambodia and shutting down the traffic from the Ho Chi Minh Trail.](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

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[OK. And so you've…you've mentioned the general mission of the First Cavalry division. Can you provide some specific things that you did in that like?](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[Mike Ryan](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[Yeah. Yeah. Well, I would lead a squad of five to seven and we would drop in. We would, we would be surrounded by these enormous mahogany and other types of type, I don't know what all the hell they all were, types of trees and we would load them with C4 explosives and knock them down so that the artillery would have a clear shot. Like I said, I led the squad. When we weren't doing things like that, we were doing things like blowing up… Well, after we went into Cambodia, I was in Cambodia on the third day. And by then they had discovered a number of caches of ammunition and artillery, shells and explosives and all that sort of crap. And they had to be blown in place and for about 3 weeks I flew around from landing zone to landing zone, blowing up. Caches is a kind of a funny word, it's C-A-C-H-E-S. And I think it's a, I think it’s a French derivative. But, basically, it was a hole in the ground where they were storing explosives and ammunition. Once we had been there for a while, the number of…number of attacks that that our fire bases went under dropped dramatically. But the invasion of Cambodia was a very big deal in the US and the in the States. It wasn't popular at all, but from my perspective…You know…From my perspective it was a good thing because we weren't getting, we weren't getting mortared anywhere near as much as we had been before.](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

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[Right, right. So you mentioned being under fire by the Vietnamese. In addition to that, what were some challenges that you faced during the war? This can be like obviously you were fighting the enemy, but maybe terrain difficulty and clearing trees and such.](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[Mike Ryan](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[Our…our primary mission was really clearing those trees so that they could bring in. We were living in…If we had anything to sleep in at all, it was a little piece of culvert. And it was hard to get to sleep in in that kind of a situation because it was hot as hell. We would often come under...come under fire, but most of most of the hazards we had, the only thing I could think of that would…that would qualify as a hazard was one time I went from – I was in a convoy going from Fuk Vin to the Black Virgin Mountain to Nui Ba Den. We had a convoy of there must have been at least a dozen, or maybe a dozen or more big semi-trucks full of supplies and ammunition. And we had to go out in front of the convoy looking for landmines. And the convoy itself was challenged because it was up in the mountains, and we were down the hills and we were closer to sea level, so we had to get these big-ass trucks up to Nui Ba Den.](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

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[OK, let's change gears a little bit. Did you interact with Vietnamese civilians during the war?](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

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[Only once. Well, other than prostitutes. They were always around. But the only time I interacted with Vietnamese civilians was up in the foothills and there was a Montagnard village up there that needed medical care. My squad was sent up there along with an infantry platoon. To this Montagnard village to provide medical care, you know we – the infantry provided cover for us and my squad kind of provided an environment where they could bring the people who were having medical problems in and get shots and things like that. You know, we set up tents and things like that. And I had some interaction with them at that point in time. But I did not speak Vietnamese, and there were Green Berets there who interpreted as we needed it. But that's the only interaction I had with live Vietnamese. Well, that's not true either. We were tearing down a base once and my squad commandeered a peak. And we drove down to Saigon. You know, bought Coca Colas and crap like that.](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

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[What was your relationship like with your fellow soldiers in your squad and in the army in general?](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

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[Well, it varied. In this war, unlike previous wars, when I landed, I was assigned to a unit, and the people that – they were already there. They had already made friends and established relationships with the guys that were there. Well, that was good because it helped those of us that were new. But it didn't lend itself to a whole lot of cohesiveness. Plus, I was a noncommissioned officer. I was a Sergeant; I was a an E5. That meant that I didn't spend any time with the – most of the officers or most of the college graduates were officers. And I wasn't an officer, so I didn't have – there was only one officer that I established a nice relationship with. Unfortunately, he didn't survive the war. And the guys in my squad. I was a supervisor and they were subordinates. We didn't get that close. Didn't get very close.](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

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[How did your duties as a Sergeant differ from, say, an enlisted soldier or an officer?](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

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[I was more like a supervisor. Well, the officer was above me. I reported to the officer. The officer would say go, you know. You're going to drop into this piece of jungle on you know tomorrow and we want, you know, and you need to clear a field of fire going out of 1000 yards or something like that. So that would be my relationship basically with officers. Then when we dropped into wherever we were dropping into and started removing trees and the like, I would layout the parameters. I'd be nothing more than a supervisor at that point in time. Giving direction and seeing that we were doing what we needed to do. To complete our mission.](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

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[OK. Is there any mission that you worked on that sticks out in your mind as being more significant in some way than others?](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

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[Yeah, it would have to be going into Cambodia. That had political ramifications. Huge political ramifications here in the States. And there we were. We have been working our way gradually through the Highlands up to Cambodia. And then we assaulted Cambodia and, I say we, I was in in the third, third day. The infantry went in before me. But after the third day, they had discovered a lot of caches, as I said earlier, and I went around and blew them in place. But that was. None of the other places that I was…doing anything really meaningful. Never, never got in the headlines. Never. Never made the front page of the New York Times.](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

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[Speaking of the political ramifications in the United States, to what extent were you all in Vietnam aware of those, like the protests at universities and all that?](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[Mike Ryan](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[We were very aware of it. Very aware of it. And those protests were going on before we ever before we ever got to Vietnam. Before we ever left the States. We knew about it and many of us had participated in it.](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[Luke Bowman](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[Interesting. Interesting.](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[Mike Ryan](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[Yeah, the, the, the, the, the average Joe for lack of a better term was very aware of what was going on and for the most part supported the protests. Many of the protests were being led by ex-soldiers. Many of them.](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

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[So I take it then that you were supportive of the protests as well?](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

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[For the most part, yes. I didn't think that there was a war that we should be in. I didn't think that we were fighting it in the right way. I was – I spent a fair amount of time with South Vietnamese soldiers, and I was not impressed by their dedication or their commitment to the war.](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

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[You say you didn't think we were fighting it in the right way. Could you expand upon? That please.](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

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[Well, we were. We were relying on the South Vietnamese, but they did not support the mission like they should, and in my thinking, they should have been fighting alongside of us. We didn't see that. We saw them sitting on their asses while we were going out climbing into helicopters. And assaulting new, you know, new pieces of property. Let me just say there was also too much reliance on body counts. You know that was how that was, how the brass judged missions, you know – how many bodies did we find?](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

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[It's funny, we were reading about that just today. I think it was an excerpt from William Westmoreland where he was saying just that, like the war was judged based on body counts.](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[Mike Ryan](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[Yeah, yeah. And and that was wrong.](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[Luke Bowman](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[Just seems like a very strange way to judge success in a war. So what was it like serving in a war that you had maybe, let's say, disagreements with the way it was being run and with the war in general?](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

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[For most of us, we were just getting by. Day-to-day. We knew that we couldn't change anything. We knew that a lot of us were gonna die before we ever went home. It was a matter of just getting by day-to-day, doing what we had to do, doing the mission that was assigned to us. But not doing everything stupid. Like my lieutenant, my platoon leader, who I really liked, he was a young West Point graduate. He and the platoon sergeant were out opening up a new base, as I've talked about, I was not there. I was at a different one. They had a Jeep there. Something – and I wasn't there, so I can't speak to it exactly – but something blew up a landmine up in front of them. And they, rather than driving around, rather than following the dirt, the tracks, the tire tracks of the Jeep in front of them, they swung around to the side of it and it blew up both of them. You know, I was very affected when I heard about it. I didn't hear about it for a few hours, but I was very affected by it. I don't know how I got off into this tangent, but it was…Yeah. I don't know. I don't know why I got onto this tangent. Luke, I'm sorry.](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[Luke Bowman](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[Oh no, don't worry about it. Go off on as many tangents as you’d like. This is your experience. I want to hear about your experience.](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[Mike Ryan](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[OK, well, that was part of my experience. That was a part that was pretty guttural. And for the most part, I didn't. I did not lose – I saw a lot of dead Vietnamese, Vietcong, and North Vietnamese. For the most part, my squad and I did not engage in active combat. We were on the receiving end of indirect fire dozens of times. Dozens of times. But never saw – and in the, I don't know what the word is, to even shoot out – I never fired my rifle in anger. The whole time I was there, but I lost my Lieutenant. I lost my Sergeant. I lost. There was a young E5. Who had most of his hand blown off. He was again with a different group you know, again, I was mostly working with groups of five to seven, our squad would change from time to time plus guys were rotating in and out. So we had new people coming in all the time, but anyway, this young fellow was clearing some barbed wire, and he was using a Bangalore torpedo, which is – I won't go into what it is, but it took off most of his hand. And fool that I was, I thought, you know, it was probably a, you know, maybe a good thing. Now you're going to go home. But he didn't see it that way. You know, he saw that he had lost most of his hand. And now in retrospect, I'd have been a whole lot more sympathetic, rather than feeling envious.](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[Luke Bowman](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[So you say in retrospect. How has your view on the war changed in retrospect?](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[Mike Ryan](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[I don't know that it has changed all that much. And when I was over there, you know, I was a college graduate. I was 22-23 years old. Had a good understanding of what was going on before I ever went to Vietnam. I was surprised by very little of it. I realized in retrospect. I'm going to come back to Cambodia here. We destroyed that poor country. The King, King Sihanouk, I think his name was, was doing a what I think now was an admirable job of balancing the US South Vietnamese against the North Vietnamese and. keeping his country neutral, relatively. I mean we had troops going in all the time, but still he was doing a really good job and when we invaded Cambodia, we wiped all of that away. That poor man didn't have a chance.](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[Luke Bowman](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[So what was your exit from Vietnam like? Like what was it like for you leaving the war?](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[Mike Ryan](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[Well, it was because we didn't rotate in and out as units. We rotated in and out as individuals. I got my, and of course I was tracking it myself. We all tracked – we were, you know, short timers, short timer meant you were, you had a small, short amount of time left in country. We tracked that. We all knew exactly when we were going to rotate out. When our turn came after 12 months or so we would get orders to report to one of the major Air Force bases. And we go to in, in my case into Bien Hoa, and get on a US commercial airplane with 300 other stinky guys. And we fly back to, we'd stop in Guam, usually most of the guys stopped in Guam, then flew on to Oakland, CA, where we got showers and clean uniforms and discharge papers and said OK guys, you're free. And we went home. My parents were at the airport waiting for me, I got a lot of dirty looks as I walked into my uniform with citations and things like that on my uniform. Had a lot of dirty looks, but nobody…nobody spit on me. Which I thought was a real, a real plus. You know, flying into Southern California or flying into California. But then I got a cab home and well, my…I should back up. But Marianne isn't here any longer. So I can say that my fiancée, who was not Marianne, my fiancée was not at the airport. So that didn't make for a very great homecoming. I was down here in Tallahassee within about two weeks and from when I talked to my sister, she says, yeah, and we were glad to see you go. Because apparently, I was not very good company.](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[Luke Bowman](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[So being in the United States. What was public opinion like? Not public opinion. That's the wrong word. What was the general like situation when Vietnam eventually fell?](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[Mike Ryan](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[It was a very unpopular war. We did nothing to make it more popular. I took my uniform off as soon as I got home. And I never put it back on again. Now when I did, a few weeks later, end up down in Tallahassee and connected with people down there, I found that it was more support for what I had been doing in Tallahassee than there had been in Minneapolis. At least that was my perception. You know I was…but...but again I never put that uniform back on. It was. It was 20. I can almost remember exactly what it was. It was 30 years later. Was the first time. Somebody said, a young woman, said to me “Thank you for your service, sir.” That chokes me up even now. With us, there was no appreciation for what we had done – and I didn't appreciate myself, what we had done. But 30 years later, when someone said thank you for your service, I didn't know how to respond. Well, I get it now all the time. If I'm wearing a cap that has a First Cav insignia on it or something like that. I'm kind of proud of wearing it now, but still very self-conscious. But it took 30 years before I got recognized by a civilian.](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[Luke Bowman](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[Having lived through the wars in Afghanistan, couple in Iraq, how do you think that public support is…that's not really what I mean. How is the public reception of those wars different than in Vietnam?](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[Mike Ryan](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[The people who fought in those wars had support from the general population. Although I've got to say that I don't think the population supported them very well. Now when I went to war, we had the draft. And I personally feel that that was fair. Everybody should support their country. When they went to war, they got support as individuals. But the population in general didn't support them. The percentage of people from rural areas or…yeah, rural areas as opposed to like Southern California and places like that. It was a world of difference. They got supported as individuals. But they didn't get but…but the populace in general didn't support them, didn't support them by sending their sons to fight. The people who went to fight in Iraq and Iran and Afghanistan or people who didn't have a lot of other choices. Does that make sense?](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[Luke Bowman](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[Yeah, yeah, yeah.](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[Mike Ryan](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[OK, good.](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[Luke Bowman](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[Yeah, that does. I mean, just to put in a little personal thing, I mean, when I was applying to the Air Force Academy, you, I was reading and you didn't see, you saw maybe the same number of applicants from certain areas of the country as you did from Tennessee. And though those areas were more populated, so yeah, completely. I completely see what you mean there.](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[Mike Ryan](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[Yeah, I…I…I personally think we should have a draft again, like, like they have in Israel, for all the help it's doing them right now, but I think we ought to have a draft. I think that that makes for. A more cohesive. More democratized.](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[Luke Bowman](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[Is there anything you'd like to share about your experience during the war after the war, about the war in general that I haven't thought of asking yet?](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[Mike Ryan](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[Right off hand. Although I will say that now in my generation, but for God's sakes, I'm 77 years old and most of my friends are about that same age, have a sense of comradeship. Camaraderie, if that's the right word, that we didn't have 30 years ago, 40 years ago. 50 years. It's hard to imagine for me that it's been that many years. But it really has. But for so many years, we were on our own, one-on-one. And we didn't talk about the war. It was all spilled too. Fresh, I suppose now. I can have conversations with other Vietnam veterans. I'm not interested in talking to anybody else because they're the only ones that are relevant or that understand what I'm talking about.](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[Luke Bowman](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[All right. I think that's all the questions I have for you today. Thank you so much for the interview.](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[Mike Ryan](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)

[You’re welcome.](https://bama365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/labowman_crimson_ua_edu/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/OH%20Interview-Mike%20Ryan.mp3)