

Interviewer: Emily Ellis

Interviewee: Stan Jones

Date: 3/23/19

Stan: I'll bet this is Emily

Emily: This is Emily

Stan: Hey Emily it's Stan

Emily: Hey, how are you?

Stan: Hey I'm doing ok I got a dog on my lap and a beer next to me so life's pretty good.

Emily: Sounds pretty good

Stan: Yeah well I'm only going to be available until 4. I'm supposed to go to a birthday party from 4-7 but I can be there late so if you need a little extra time today, more than half an hour we can probably do that. So just letting you know. Can you hear me ok?

Emily: I can. Can you hear me ok?

Stan: Yeah!

Emily: Ok perfect

Stan: So lets get started

Emily: Alright

Stan: Let's get this party started as they say

Emily: laughter. I guess the first question I would have would be um how did you get involved in the war? Did you enlist or were you drafted as part of the war effort?

Stan: Well... I enlisted. Not because I was ya know pro-war or wanted to particularly go to Vietnam. As a matter of fact, I joined the air force. It was kind of a calculated move, because I figured I would join the air force and spend four years in the air force. And that that was better than getting drafted for a two year stint in the army. I didn't think my chances of survival were as great being drafted, going into the army and being a grunt in Vietnam. So I opted for more time uh in the military, but um ya know a little more safety.

Emily: So just a lower risk position giving you a little more control

Stan: I eventually volunteered for Vietnam from Korea. But anyway that's how I got involved. I... I graduated high school when I was seventeen, and we went across country, took a road trip to Montreal from LA and came back and just was hanging out at the beach and knew I was gonna get drafted. Um, so I joined when I was seventeen.

Emily: ok

Stan: Yeah

Emily: Alright, um so then you said you were in Pleiku in '69.

Stan: What's that? (asking to repeat the question due to static in the phone connection)

Emily: You said you were in Pleiku in '69?

Stan: Yeah, I went into the military... I think that's right. I went into the military uh in the fall of '67 and then I went to Korea from there and then Vietnam after that. So it was supposed to be 1969 that I was in Vietnam.

Emily: And then you were a security policeman for the USAF?

Stan: Right, and in the air force on domestic bases here in America, you know security policeman are basically just like... I don't know, cops here.

Emily: Yeah

Stan: You know they they man the front gate, they get called for disturbances, you know all that stuff.

Emily: Right, they kind of have the same basic functions

Stan: Right, but in Vietnam its a little bit more of a combat role in that you're really kind of the combat arm of the air force except for of course the fighter pilots who are at the top of the Pantheon you know.

Emily: Yeah

Stan: But uh, but this security policeman in Vietnam basically meant um guarding the perimeter of the base and uh particularly when we were hit with 122 rockets, which we frequently were. Um, I ran a mortar pit and I fired up mostly illumination flares made out of white phosphorus. Um, along the perimeter so that if we were getting hit with rockets, it was to soften us up so to

speaking, and then have a ground attack. So, the idea was just to light up the perimeter outside so that we could see if anybody was you know coming for the ground attack. So I guess I was kind of... I think they thought Emily that I was smarter than I was.

Emily: *Laughter*

Stan: *Laughter*. Because they gave me a lot of pretty choice and I don't know if they were choice, but they were pretty um... they sent me down to the first air-force mortar school ever. And, and it was at an army base in a place called Phuket and we went down there to learn how to fire mortars and how to set up mortar pits and then I came back to the base and uh in Pleiku and set up the mortar pits. So we had two mortar pits on the base. One was where we mostly fired illumination flares. You know to light up the perimeter... uh we called them um... one one of the mortar pits was sunshine and the other was moonbeam.

Emily: ok

Stan: So... um yeah I was kind of um I don't know, I don't know if it was an honor or anything but they chose me along with another couple of guys to go do this and it was the first air-force mortar school.

Emily: And you said that was in Phuket?

Stan: Uh in a place called yeah Phuket.

Emily: That's... that's in Thailand, yeah?

Stan: Well, there's actually two Phukets.

Emily: Ok, I was gonna say...

Stan: This one happens to be in Vietnam. And I think its on the coast, you might look on your map, but I think it's on the eastern of Vietnam. That's where I remember it being.

Emily: Yeah, I'll go look for that and see.

Stan: But, I think that was an army base, but you know air-force guys, we didn't know anything about mortars. So we went to the army to learn how to do it an um and then we came back and built the mortar pits and... went to business. You know got down to business.

Emily: Yeah, when you say it was sort of a choice position, what would have been the contrast to that?

Stan: Well, I don't know, I mean I always (*laughter*) thought I was very ego-centric. I thought that uh you know it was a choice assignment, it had some responsibility to it. You know it wasn't just walking the perimeter.

Emily: right...

Stan: with just an M-16. You had to kind of think, you had to operate a mortar gun. You know you had to know what you were doing. And they'd bring around, I remember them bringing around a lot of the brass, real high ranking officers. It was kind of a pride and joy thing to, to show off to visiting Generals and all that here was an air-force base and we had mortar pits and air-force personnel running them. So it became kind of a... I don't know... kind of a show off spot, you know where they'd bring the big heavy brass by to look at what we were doing and stuff.

Emily: Right, so you were kind of the shining star in a way of the base.

Stan: And then, also, not to jump around too much but I think I mentioned in my preliminary email uh... I forgot what they called these guys, not spotters, but anyway... they also put me in the control tower of the airbase for awhile to um get coordinates from where rockets were being fired from. So you could see muzzle flashes from, well they're not muzzles, they're launch pad flashes from where the rockets were coming. And I would um you know get the coordinates on that location so that we'd know where those rockets were coming from. And then they'd send out helicopters with rockets on them to go blow away whatever... you know whatever was there at that location. So both of those, both of those... what I'm saying is that they both had a lot of responsibility.

Emily: right

Stan: Or at least I thought they did.

Emily: It sounds like they did.

Stan: I was 18 you know um anyway those were kind of choice assignments.

Emily: Yeah, that does sound like a lot of responsibility. Um the other thing you mentioned in your text was that you smoked a lot of marijuana to remain sane.

Stan: Well... I don't know if you're going to put this in your report but

Emily: That's up to you, completely up to you

Stan: I was 18 years old and I was smoking a lot of marijuana in Korea and um my friend, my best friend, who I've been unable to track down. Uh, I've gone online to the sites, you know they all charge money, it just seems kind of sketchy and scammy. You know find your old military friends you know. Um, anyway he was definitely my dearest friend uh in Korea where we lived in tents for twelve months right on the yellow sea. But anyway, he uh... in that place, Korea and Vietnam at that time were the only two places in the world where you'd get hazardous duty pay. You got a little extra bump every month cause you know you could die.

Laughter. That's worth five, ten bucks you know whatever. No, it's more than that but uh Korea was because we were, they had taken that boat, the pueblo, I don't know if you, you don't remember that of course. But there was a US boat off the coast of Korea and it was captured and we went on high alert and we went over there. But anyway this guy was my best friend and he said to me, I'll never forget um "Let's volunteer for Vietnam, they've got great dope"

Laughter from both Stan and Emily

Stan: And I said "Cool, let's do this". *More laughter from Stan*

Emily: And then did you volunteer right after that?

Stan: Yeah!

Emily: Alright

Stan: The other thought there was that if you served in the two, you know the only two places on the planet that were considered you know war zones, that you'd pretty much get your choice of where you were going to be stationed when you got back home. That was our thinking. You know we were both from California, so we were thinking we'll put in, you know you'd have this little dream sheet where you'd put down the locations that you'd like to be stationed at you know

Emily: Yeah

Stan: And we chose all these little California air stations. You know so we could surf and...

Emily: Yeah, live it up

Stan: I ended up going to Grand Forts, North Dakota

Emily: *Laughing* That's a little different, there's no surfing up there

Stan: Yeah... it was kind of hideous. But um... but anyway so that's really how it happened. My friend just said lets go there and they had um... they had things, they were called uh OJs. And uh they were really strong marijuana kinda joints dipped in Opium.

Emily: wow

Stan: So, yeah, hence the OJ. You know the J was the vernacular for lets smoke a J and um joint and O was for Opium. So they were really potent and um my friend was right, they had great dope. And I can remember... this is all kind of chalked up to youth I guess and fearlessness when you're 18. I can remember passing a joint outside the barrack when we were getting hit, the base was getting hit with rockets. And all of our you know fellow servicemen were running to the bunkers. The instructions were you put on a helmet and a flac jacket to stop shrapnel and um head for the bunker when you're getting hit. And I can remember clearly standing outside the barracks while we were getting hit standing there with two other guys... standing there, we were all in our boxer shorts and passing the joint back and forth and saying you know basically looking up at some sort of imaginary enemy in the sky an saying "bring it". *Laughter* So we were young and idiotic.

Emily: Well it worked out... When you say imaginary enemy was that sort a general consensus that there was an imaginary enemy because you never really came into contact with them? With the rocket?

Stan: Well, you didn't know where the rockets were coming from. Because you were on the base and you weren't like, in my position in the control tower I had a real high vantage point but when you're on the ground all you can hear is this kind of noise. And I can't remember what the noise was as the rocket approached and then um, I think it was kind of a whistling

noise. But I do remember when they impacted on the base, it was more than a boom, it was more of a big crack, you know and then you can hear shrapnel kind of zinging through the air from the rockets. So anyway, when I say imaginary I... you know you didn't know where they were coming from

Emily: yeah

Stan: You just kind of looked up and puffed out your chest and said you know "Bring it" you know, what do you got? Idiotic stuff for people that are 18 years old and stoned.

Emily: Yeah. What was the official ruling on that as far as military, I don't know rules for smoking marijuana?

Stan: Oh, (*laughing*) that was really uncool. You weren't supposed to do that. But you know, you eluded to it earlier. Uh, I survived. And you know I still have some, I go to a veterans group pretty much once a week for an hour. Um, and I get some compensation, disability compensation from the VA for um well PTSD, from being over there. But um, it really relaxed me and and I wasn't as tightly wound as a lot of the guys that didn't, they just internalized everything. You know they were really messed up.

Emily: Yeah, I could see that.

Stan: You know, I thought (*laughter*) I saw it the way that medical marijuana is being seen today. I saw it as uh as a medicine. And something that would you know calm my nerves while I was over there so I wasn't so tense all the time.

Emily: I was curious...

Stan: A lot of guys who didn't even drink or anything like that they were just really... I don't know... on edge. I hung out with people that smoked dope. There were different kind of crowds. There were drinkers. You know they got through their stress by getting drunk a lot or whatever they did. There were drinkers and there were dopers and then there were people that were just really straight and didn't do any of that. They were the most tightly wound, uh veterans in my opinion.

Emily: Yeah

Stan: They scared me. *Laughter*. If they didn't drink or smoke dope I didn't really trust them.

Emily: Did you just not understand how they were getting through things?

Stan: Yeah, just wondered yeah wondered what was going on in their heads that they didn't need some kind of medicine to deal with what was going on. But that was just my own perspective. But I don't know... there were the guys that used to come by the, they used to have, oh I don't want to go into that, never mind about that. But anyway that's kind of how it was divided up and I had a lot of um, where I grew up in southern California, I think we had maybe one black guy in our school. You know, Torrance, California, next to Redondo Beach. But I really related to, uh a lot of the black guys that were in the air force. They, you know a lot of them were smoking dope and I don't know, they were just part of our group. You know what I mean.

Emily: Yeah, was there sort of...

Stan: They were... they were sort of exotic to me, you know.

Emily: Yeah

Stan: Because I was a you know 18 year old white guy that had been living at the beach pretty much. So I didn't see a lot of black people from Detroit or New York or wherever. But they became uh, they were the people that I related to a lot. Not just black people, but you know, they were part of our group. We sort of ran with them so to speak.

Emily: Yeah. Did you see like... when you say they doped with you, was there any sort of segregation as to who sort of used what substance to deal with things or which groups, the tight wound versus the drinkers versus the dopers, did you see any of that?

Stan: Did I see any what? Like discrimination?

Emily: Uh not discrimination just kind of almost like self segregation? Like did different groups lean towards different things?

Stan: Yes, yes, yes! You know I have a friend that uh told me once and I, it stuck with me. This is not a Vietnam friend but, he said "like what likes you". And uh *laughter* those are the peeps that I ended up with. You know it's just like what likes you, that's what it boiled down to. So I

felt real comfortable around people that smoked dope and people that were you know well hippie types you know I would get out and grow my hair immediately down to my shoulders and just keep my head down so that no one would know that I'd been to Vietnam. You know it wasn't a very welcoming environment to come back to. You didn't go around saying you're a veteran. You know, just yesterday I got stopped by a cop for speeding and I don't know if this mattered, but he was a young Hispanic guy and uh I don't know I was going 64 in a 55 and uh when he was taking my license and my registration back to his vehicle to you know do the check they do while you're sitting there, I mentioned to him and said I hope you notice on my license that I'm a veteran. So, that's all I said and he let me off, I don't know if that was it, why he let me off, but that, the fact that you're a veteran to cops

Emily: Yeah

Stan: Where in the old days, I mean I was you know a hippie wearing overalls without any underwear and smoking dope (*laughter*) I didn't want anything to do with police. I still don't... but attitudes have changed is I guess what I'm trying to say.

Emily: Yeah... I was not alive during the actual Vietnam war, but I see a lot of people wearing hats and sort of promoting that they were a veteran now but, that was one of the things I wanted to ask you was how did you feel, especially with the massive anti war movement, did you feel like they were sort of targeting you inadvertently?

Stan: Uh... yeah like I said uh I really kept my head down when I got back and immediately slipped into the hippie culture up in Santa Cruz, California. Uh because uh I wanted to be you know incognito. I didn't tell people I'd been to Vietnam, I didn't you know uh I just didn't. It's not something I talked about, it wasn't something I wanted people to know.

Emily: That's interesting. Do you remember any...

Stan: Because there was so much anti war stuff going on and all. And frankly, you know on the political side and all, I'm a pretty leftist, progressive guy. And you know I really... I was a hippie you know and I was anti war, but you know you can't go around saying you're anti war if you've been to Vietnam. I mean I volunteered for god's sake.

Emily: right

Stan: you know...

Emily: But it sounds like you were stuck between sort of a rock and a hard place with the draft.

Even if you were anti war, unless you somehow got an exemption, you were kinda stuck.

Stan: Yeah, and I knew I wasn't going to have an exemption. I wasn't, I didn't have any plans to go to college, I mean I'd gotten out in you know may or late may out of high school and we went on this road trip to Montreal and I came back and we just hung out at the beach everyday and I didn't really know what I was going to do. But I was gonna be 18 in a bout three months and I figured well they're gonna draft my butt so I've gotta do something and I might as well do it now and get it over with when I'm 17 you know. Then I'll be out when I'm 21 and you know there's a lot of kind of bitching and moaning in this veterans group that I go to. It can get that way. And um, but then you know then you have benefits. You know I'm a UCLA graduate and they paid for it.

Emily: Right, so that's a benefit right there

Stan: So I went to, I got a damn good education and the vets paid for it and you know they helped me with the first down payment on my house. I got a better rate because I was a veteran. I get disability now for PTSD. I mean I still work, its not a huge amount but it helps. And um, but what's really interesting, I wanna go back to your thing about the guys with the hats. When you go, when I go to these meetings for instance, almost all the guys have those hats. You know they have like you know I don't know what, they have buttons, they all have their license plate. I don't have any of that. And it has to do with I think still trying to keep a low profile.

Emily: Yeah

Stan: And uh, you know I still work, you know I sell Realestate. And I had a conversation with the group a couple of weeks ago about, well they said "are you taking advantage of the free license plate and registration?" And I said no and they said why. And I said because I'm in

Realestate and I don't want my clients getting into a car with a disabled veterans plate on it.

Because I've obviously got all of my arms and legs and I don't wanna *(laughter from Stan)*

Emily: You don't wanna give the wrong impression...

Stan: Yeah, I want my customers to feel safe. You know and I don't want the to say "Oh shit, who am I getting in this car with". That stigma still hags around. Some of the guys in the group were misinterpreting what I was saying and were saying that or they were inferring you know "well what are you ashamed?" And, that's not it at all. I mean, if somebody asked me if I'd been in Vietnam, I'm gonna volunteer it. I mean I'm gonna say yes I was, I'm not gonna lie about it. But I'm not particularly proud of it. I don't wanna, I don't wanna draw the attention. It's just like when I got out and grew my hair long, I don't like drawing attention to myself as a veteran.

Emily: Yeah, that's interesting...

Stan: You know, but I stop guys, I see guys that are in a restaurant or something and my wife goes to the ladies room after were done and there's a guy sitting there with a hat and I say you know "Where'd you serve?" And you know we start talking and you know so I'll say something like thanks for your service or whatever after our conversation. So I will engage other veterans and I, I feel for them, I go to these groups every week and I know what they go through and a lot of them, you know the reason I joined the air-force was I mean, if you wanna put it in another context, uh, I didn't wanna see friends die next to me out in the field. I mean I feared for my own life too, but I heard these stories about you know, these grunts in the army being in Vietnam and their best friend beside them gets shot and killed. I mean I just, yeah, I didn't want any part of that.

Emily: Yeah, yeah. That would be awful. I can't imagine

Stan: Yeah, and these bonds that you build up, I mean I built up deep bonds in Vietnam in the air-force but when you hear these stories about these guys in the field, you know their lives depend on each other, you know and what they do out in the field. And uh you know they either have your back or they don't or whatever or you trust them or you don't and uh I just didn't want to put myself in that situation. It was you know just basically fear, and um so I hear

a lot of those kinds of stories in my group and there's a certain amount of uh, uh guilt. Uh, you've heard of survivors guilt

Emily: Yeah

Stan: Well, I don't really have survivors guilt but... yeah I mean, I guess I have a tinge of it or something. But when I'm in this group, for instance with these guys, these guys were all on the ground and in squads you know and I don't know it wasn't the same experience. But you know I made that choice too so I'm gonna give myself credit for that. You know I made the choice to spend double the time and come out alive. So there is a degree of guilt when you're hearing these guys talk and you know you're getting compensated for PTSD, you know and uh, they all have sort of different levels of compensation. You know you're either 30% disabled or you're 70% or whatever. And in some cases you're 100%, and uh you can't work. You know, so I don't, you know I don't seek out 100% disability or anything because I wanna work. I'll go crazy sitting around the house. But anyway, the guys in the group, you know there's bronze star wearers in there, you know people that went and pulled their buddies out of a bunker or something or they'd been shot or you know real heroic stuff. And you know, meanwhile I'm smoking OJs (*laughter from Stan*) you know what I mean...

Emily: yeah

Stan: I mean it was stressful but not like their stressful. Not like getting ambushed out of the bush.

Emily: Yeah, uh that's a completely different level of stress compared to really anything

Stan: Yeah, exactly. And I had to stay high just to deal with the stress from getting hit with rockets. They called, I forgot what they called them, it was like uh... they called it some acronym for harassment fire or something where they'd like throw in two rockets for instance one night and then they wouldn't throw any rockets in the next night and then the next night they'd throw in six rockets.

Emily: Right, so you just never knew

Stan: You were just always on edge. You know and that was their intent. Because they didn't have the firepower to do an all out assault, you know what I mean and if they did, they knew that wherever they were firing from would be totally destroyed by US helicopters going out and rocketing those coordinates.

Emily: Right

Stan: Everybody dealt with it differently and uh I just stayed high you know. I mean as much as I could. It relaxed me a lot and kept my nerves from getting to bad. You know I didn't go nuts or anything. Well (*laughing*) that's debatable.

Emily: As much as you could

Stan: Yeah, exactly. So anyway um, yeah it's changed, the whole attitude towards the Vietnam war. And um, you know I like the guys in my group. They're very different from me. Most of them aren't educated. I mean not that I'm Mr. educated, but you know I have a undergraduate degree from UCLA. And nobody else in the group has those kind of credentials. I mean and that's not that much. One guy is a pilot and I know he had college because he went in as an officer. But um, you know a lot of just grunts, you know. And I mean not that I was special, I didn't have any education or I would have gone in as an officer too, but I didn't know what I was gonna do and it was a while before I got around to taking advantage of the VA educational, you know the benefits there. But I'm really appreciative of the VA and I must say you know there's a lot of complaining about how they're slow and you know and it is a kind of a laborious kind of I don't know, I don't know if that's the right word but it's a, it's huge. You know the VA is huge. And bureaucratic and all of that and it takes them a long time to come up with a judgement on a claim that you might have and you know its pretty laborious. But um, I've been, I mean they've treated me pretty well. The one thing that um, that I haven't been happy with as of late with them um has to do with my exposure to agent orange. And they consider anybody that was in Vietnam to have been exposed to agent orange. And the same holds true for Korea where I was. So um, recently I've looked at the list of uh ailments that you get and I don't remember what they are, cancer or whatever, and there's a long list of items

that if you have them and you were exposed to agent orange uh your chances are good that you can get uh some disabilities from that. You know if you have one of those diseases, and um I recently suffered uh some seizures that um my neurologist, I mean they kind of know what happens during a seizure but they don't know where it comes from, but I believe in my heart of hearts, and I'm not a doctor or even a scientist or anything, that exposure to those toxic uh chemicals that were in agent orange, which is also called ranch hand which is also the same thing I think as roundup that you get at Homedepo for your garden or something.

Emily: Right

Stan: Anyway, um, I just believe that uh those things have neurotoxins and that that's where my seizures came from uh and you know I've got a pacemaker so it's all electrical, you know the heart and the brain is all connected with electrical impulses and stuff, and I just believe that I'm effected by agent orange. I believe that my exposure to it over there uh, and I wasn't like directly sprayed on or anything but you know it was everywhere. Including on the planes that landed you know at our base cargo planes and all of that. So, but um, when I started exploring getting compensation, disability compensation for agent orange, seizures were not on the list. So they may be added to the list, but they're not currently on the list. So I gave up, I mean I didn't get into the process hardly at all, the whole you know gathering information from doctors and evidence you know all of those records of seizures and everything. But if it's not on the list, you don't have a chance, you know what I mean

Emily: Yeah, so there's not like a good petition process where you could potentially have your doctor say I think this was part of it?

Stan: Well, you can't uh, you can't... I'm sorry I lost my train of thought there. Yeah I mean if I wanted to do that, I could do that but the bottom line is they have their own team of doctors too and they have big panels that decide what you know so even if my neurologist says well I think these seizures could have been caused by neurotoxins, namely agent orange, uh they don't care cause it ain't on the list.

Emily: That's interesting

Stan: You know I mean, that's how they operate but the agent orange list of ailments was uh a lot shorter uh 20 years ago. You know it used to be two diseases of three, now there's probably only a dozen or fifteen, I don't know. So there's a chance that that could change, and again I believe in my heart of heart that that's what caused those seizures. I could be wrong about that uh, but um I believe that's what caused them.

Emily: Yeah, I mean I'm not a doctor but that sounds like something that could happen to me

Stan: Yeah, I mean it sounds like common sense to me. But, you know I decided that it wasn't worth the stress you know of gathering all this information and um you know when it wasn't on this list. Because I go to these groups, that's the other thing that's great about the groups, you've got these guys in there, these Vietnam vets that have uh, have been through a lot of this stuff. Right, I mean they're 100% disabled or whatever they are but they've been through the process. They know all the names, oh Mike McCanahay or whatever, you know I'm making that up, oh I know him, he's the neurologist at the VA office. They know, they have all these contacts and they know a lot of stuff so, and they're great recourses. So I just decided that it wasn't worth pursuing because well, I didn't think they'd award me anything.

Emily: Yeah that's interesting, um, it seems like multiple people would be having that issue though. It just sounds like some common sense, that that would be a problem.

Stan: Yeah, well it's just it's what we were talking about a few minutes ago about how you know the VA is so large and cumbersome

Emily: Right, you wonder if like ten years from now...

Stan: Everything takes so long. But now I did, I went down and did a um, I went down to the guy, I forgot his name now, but everybody knows his name, he's the agent orange guy down in Albuquerque, and he was, he's working for the VA and he runs something called the uh the agent orange registry. Ok, so I went down there, even knowing at that point that I wasn't gonna submit a claim for disability or anything um but if I go to talk to this guy he asks me a series of questions and then um uh there's a medical examination and all that and all this data goes into a master data base on agent orange. So I didn't really get anything out of going down to

Albuquerque but I contributed to the database uh so that you know maybe my seizures and some other people's seizures will be enough to put seizures on the list. You know what I mean?

Emily: Right, yeah

Stan: So I contributed to the database, but I wasn't furthering my own claim. But maybe you know these tests, these medical, these uh, not tests, research. But the research takes a long time, you gotta have a good sampling, it has to be done very scientifically, in order for them to then review it and say ok well it looks pretty clear from this graph uh you know agent orange causes all these people that were exposed to it to have seizures. So anyway, maybe some day, and I think it should be, I think it will be on the list. But right now its not

Emily: That's interesting

Stan: So anyway, I don't have a lot of bad things to say about the VA. But I can say this, I do remember being in Vietnam and being so miserable uh I can remember telling my friends, I'm going to get everything I can out of this. Um every little bit, because this was hell, and I'm gonna claim every damn benefit I can after I get out of here. And I did. Uh, you know, I mean I got a good education, they financed my first house, they gave me disability now for PTSD, which I definitely have, um so you know they've been good to me in that way. I don't have a lot of bad things to say, but I did not enjoy the military or the authority or anything like that. You know I thought there were a lot of idiots that were in charge of stuff that shouldn't be and you know whatever, it was four years of awfulness but you know its a long time ago.

Emily: Yeah. I have one question. When you got on you went to Santa Cruze and grew your hair out, um did it ever cross you mind to maybe join an anti-war movement? Or were you just trying to keep your head down either way?

Stan: I just was keeping my head down. I mean I wasn't a real activist when I came back. I was more interested in getting high and you know

Emily: Just kind of hanging out and forgetting?

Stan: Yeah, you know I didn't wanna get involved. But I didn't you know, I wasn't like anti Jane Fonda you know. I didn't once call her, I never once called her you know Hanoi Jane or

whatever they called her or I don't know what. I sympathized with the anti-war movement. I didn't think we should be over there, but I wasn't about to go out on the marches or whatever. I just wasn't that interested in politics you know. I figured I did my time and I'm done and I'm gonna move onto the next chapter.

Emily: Right, that makes perfect sense.

Stan: But recently for instance, last, a couple of weeks ago, well last Sunday actually, I hosted, there's a progressive group that uh, unfortunately it doesn't have a lot of people of color, which is the one drawback, they tend to be older, educated, white people who go to this. But its a coffee shop every uh every Sunday at Collective Works Bookstore and so that week I moderated the event, and I was nervous as hell, because I'm really good kind of one on one but I'm not a crowd person. There probably was like 50 people there. But I had to introduce Senator Garry Ortiz uh from Albuquerque uh who is really progressive too. I'm loosing my train of thought what the heck were we talking about... Oh! And so I was there for that, he gave his whole legislative run down and everything and there were questions and we passed the mic and all that and I was down on the Plaza (Santa Fe Plaza) a week ago Friday, for the marching to the Capital and doing a sit in at the Capital with young people that were for the Green New Deal. So I guess what I'm saying is I'm involved in politics now as I'm older and I am very very left wing or left leaning. Uh, but at that point uh I just you know wanted to get laid, I wanted to get high, you know all the stuff that guys in their early 20s wanna do. I wasn't an activist at all. But when I submitted all my college interest stuff, I definitely wanted to go to Berkeley. Uh, I definitely wanted to go to Berkeley because that's where everything was sort of happening, but I mean when they told me UCLA I didn't go cry. You know I was really happy to go to UCLA.

Emily: Yeah, that's still a great school.

Stan: It's and awesome school and I'm really proud that, I don't know I'm overly proud that I'm a graduate there. But you know, uh, I wanted to go to Berkeley because I knew that's what was happening you know.

Emily: You wanted to be around it even if you weren't involved in it?

Stan: Oh absolutely! And I probably would have been more involved there. But I also, when I went back to college I had a wife and two kids.

Emily: Right so that limits your time to get involved in things to some extent

Stan: Yeah, I had a full time job at the uh LAX at the airport at Hertz rent-a-car. I was an English major and I would drive on the 405 freeway south everyday to work and then I had a little office up in my garage and I'd go up there and I'd read Shakespeare or whatever you know. And you know I had a family to support. So you know I didn't have a lot of extra curricular time. But that's because I kind of applied to college late because I didn't know what I wanted to do or you know, I was just like I said you know trying to get laid and get high. So, anyway

Emily: Was there a time in history, do you have a specific recollection of when the attitude towards the war kind of shifted towards veterans being more accepted and oh I don't know veteran pride kind of came back?

Stan: Uh... no.

Emily: Not really? Just kind of happened overtime?

Stan: It was kind of a, I know this isn't the right term, but sort of a soft opening. You know just gradually over time and I don't know if its because I'm older. I'm almost 70 years old now, so I don't know what its been but there's definitely been a shift. You know and people are a lot more sympathetic uh but man when I got out in '71 I didn't want anyone to know anything about what I'd been doing. And I hadn't been doing anything bad. I hadn't killed. You know I hadn't been a baby killer or whatever. I don't know the circumstances of all those stories anyway except for the William Cali thing which is totally appalling, going into a village and uh mowing people down, and you know he's probably a guy, I'm making this up now, I'm just totally guessing but William Cali is the type of guy that I was talking about before that was probably you know didn't get high, didn't drink, and then you know just didn't use good judgement.

Emily: Yeah too much mental stress?

Stan: Yeah, just tightly wound. You know and just too much of a military machine. You know, I don't know like a robot, he was a lieutenant you know. He probably took himself really seriously and uh you know... committed atrocities. You know war crimes and shit. So these were the kinds of people that made me nervous.

Emily: The ones who just took everything super seriously? Almost brainwashed? I don't want to say brainwashed, but that's what it sounds like.

Stan: What's that?

Emily: I said brainwashed. I don't know if that's too strong of a word but

Stan: Yeah! You know I never was brainwashed. I can honestly say that (*laughter*) I didn't like the military, I didn't like the way it was run, I didn't like the superiors. You know and even though they gave me like I said before, they gave me a lot of opportunities you know to kind of excel or I don't know, it sounds kind of egotistical or something to say it but I think that they thought I was a bright kid and they gave me these good assignments because they knew I'd use good judgement or whatever. I don't know if that was true or not but, they gave me every opportunity to succeed. And you know I didn't want any part of it

Emily: Yeah, so you were out after four years?

Stan: Oh (*heavy laughter*)

Emily: couldn't get out fast enough?

Stan: Three years and 9 months, they let me out 3 months early. They gave me what's called an early out and um, but I can remember driving up to uh, I mean I when I got back to California from Vietnam, I bought a Porsche, a '59 Porsche and drove that to North Dakota. And I was just like oh god I gotta go live in North Dakota

Emily: How long did you have to live there?

Stan: Um, about a year and half

Emily: Oh gosh

Stan: Yeah, so anyway I was this California punk ass in a Porsche. You can keep that, the alliteration is cool, I just thought of that, California Punk ass in a Porsche. Yeah I didn't like it, I

didn't like anybody in it, well any of my superiors, like I said I met a lot of great guys from around the country. Some of them has the same strategy that I had. You know, the joined the air-force so they wouldn't get drafted. I got introduced to other cultures, black guys you know I really got along with well, you know there was a Puerto Rican kid that I really liked, that part, the social part, meeting people from all around the country who were around my age and stuff was a good education, let's put it that way... How are we doing on time here?

Emily: Um, we're at almost an hour so you've said quite a bit and I have plenty

Stan: I mean do you wanna know how tall I am or anything?

Emily: *Laughter* I don't think I need to know that unless you're particularly proud of that

Stan: No, no uh anyway yeah that's the story and its not a I don't wanna say its uncommon, but in my little universe, in my little exposure to the veterans is once a week for an hour at the vet center in Santa Fe. And so its unique in that uh you know they were all like ground guys you know and um... so they only like, they don't like air-force guys because they think they're pansies or something you know unless you're a fighter jet pilot then you're ok. But generally speaking the marines and the army they don't or navy, they don't like air-force guys because they think they're just, they look good in a uniform or something. I don't know what the hell it is, but once they found out that I ran a mortar pit and that I um, whatever they call that, I can't remember, when you set up coordinates from where you're getting hit, to give those coordinates to the helicopter pilots so they can go out destroy whatever was attacking you, you know. So, they accept me pretty well into the group. You know because of those things, because they, some of them said oh we've never known anybody in the air-force that had uh kind of combat duties.

Emily: Yeah, they kind of thought that...

Stan: All they thought of were fighter pilots or cargo plane pilots and the rest of the air-force was just like mechanics on the planes, administration you know guys that had clean finger nails you know. So that's been nice, its nice that I'm accepted.

Emily: Yeah, that's that's good

Stan: by my by, my peers. And so I've got a birthday party I've got to go to

Emily: Well, thank you so much for doing this

Stan: You're so welcome Emily and you know if you wanna call me tomorrow sometime or something or if you need any clarification on something feel free to give me a call I don't know where I'll be when, like tomorrow I'm doing this uh coffee house thing