

Interviewer: Casey Taylor

Interviewee: Ed Mansfield

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Q: All right. I am talking with Edward R. Mansfield also known as Ed. Where did you get that nickname?

Mansfield: My name is Edward, but in the seventh grade I kind of decided I didn't like War so I took it out of my name, it became Ed'd.

Q: Okay

Mansfield: And overtime the apostrophe got lost and somehow the Ed has stick, uh, has stayed with me.

Q: All right and what was it like growing up in the 1960s?

Mansfield: Well I began in the..in the sixties in the 8th grade, I went through four years of high school four years of college and finish the 60s in Vietnam. Uh, the hippie movement was growing, protests were widespread, dru..drugs became, like-like LSD, became really popular. The peace movement was growing. A lot of Chaos. And the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago was a national embarrassment. It was a hell of a time. The movie Forrest Gump captures much..most of this however the movie wasn't intended to be a documentary, but it sure did show how people behaved in the 60s. Uh...

Q: Where..where did you go to college?

Mansfield: St. Mary's University in San Antonio. Texas.

Q: And what did you study when you went there?

Mansfield: Mathematics and business.

Q: And did you, uh..did you volunteer to go into the military?

Mansfield: Not exactly. The military draft was a big deal. The draft lottery had not yet started. Those who did not go to college or dropped out of college had a high chance of being drafted and going in the Infantry or going in as an enlisted man. I chose to take the ROTC route. At St. Mary's that meant taking 20 extra hours of military science. Uhm..we had a two-year commitment with this..um ROTC. We had a 2-year commitment of active-duty service. Most ROTC programs taught infantry, however ours was the only program in the nation that specialized in artillery. Many men interpreted ROTC as "Ran Over To Canada, which people did. Eventually all those who avoided the draft by moving to Canada were pardoned by President Carter. He allowed them to return home to the USA without any penalty.

Q: So, what was the transition like from college to military?

Mansfield: For me it was going from student to teacher. My first assignment at Fort Sill Oklahoma was the Nuclear Weapons Employment Division called NEWED. That meant taking a 5-week program then becoming an instructor in the program, we had a team of four instructors that team taught a class of 40 career officers. Mostly captains and majors. We team-taught 8 hours a day for 5 weeks. Five sections were talk simultaneously. Everything was classified so you didn't have any homework, you couldn't come to work early, you could not..uh.. stay late. Was a great experience. Our team had 20 instructors half were West Point graduates, others have PhDs in physics, engineering, chemistry. And then there were three second lieutenants who were pulled out of basic training..uh.. because of our background and science and math, and we were interviewed to see if we would be able to become nuclear weapon and tactical use of nuclear weapon instructors. Uh..It worked out pretty well. What was interesting in this time with the nuclear weapon stuff it was our BS sessions. Sitting around tables talking to each other and things going on. Uh... conversations were great. Those West Point guys were really cool. As a group they had no respect for this General Westmoreland who was the head guy in Vietnam. They were not shy about saying things. They thought his ego was unbearable. They didn't want him to ever be invited back to West Point. It was enough that... it was thought... that he wanted the war so he could get a fifth star. He was very ego-driven. He proposed expanding the number of troops in Vietnam, assuring President Johnson that we would win the war quickly. Johnson refused to send more troops to Vietnam. He was in the beginning of his civil rights legislation and he didn't want to put much more into Vietnam. So, Westmoreland didn't give up. He convinced McNamara, who was the head of Ford, that if you talk to the president you could convince him that we can generate a lot of weapons and stuff to go to Vietnam, and really help the economy. President Johnson reluctantly gave in. [cough] This is how these West Pointers described what happened. When it came became apparent to President Johnson that he made a serious mistake he announced on TV that he would not seek reelection in 1968. I believe he felt that he was betrayed by Westmoreland and McNamara. If you have a chance to watch the Ken Burns TV series about Vietnam, he makes it very clear that General Westmoreland inflated the kill statistics here. He lied to leaders in Washington, he lied to the American people. Westmoreland was not popular. However, he got the war he wanted, but at a great loss of American soldiers. He never got his 5th star. [Laughter]

Q: So, when did..when did you go to Vietnam?

Mansfield: October 1969. I remember it well. It was the day the New York Mets, the worst team in baseball up until this year, won the final game of the baseball world series. Nobody ever thought that would happen. Our flight to Vietnam was on American Airlines. Left San Francisco, stopped in the middle of the night in Hawaii to refuel. We were given 30 minutes on the ground. Surprisingly when we got off the plane, we saw that there was an open bar just 60 feet away. [Laughter] Two mai tais later and we're back in the air and landed at Long Thanh Airport. This is a place near Saigon, southern part of Vietnam.

Q: And where did you serve? What part of Vietnam were you in?

Mansfield: I was assigned to the Americal Division. I was based in a place called Chu Lai. It's in the I Corps area of Vietnam. Near the coast. Then this division that was in the first of the 82nd Artillery Battalion and then there is several batteries under this Battalion. I was in Delta Battery. Our home was a Firebase known as LZ Dottie.

Q: What kind of artillery did your unit shoot?

Mansfield: Delta Battery shot 8-inch Howitzers. These are big guns that can shoot...uh... 200 lb. shells accurately up to 14,500 meters. Roughly nine miles. The Fire Direction Center or FDC is a control for all our fire missions. Consisted of a room of about 16 ft by 16 ft, with about a 4-foot thick ceiling and 3 ft thick walls. This was to stop rocket-propelled grenades or RPGs from blasting through the walls or ceiling and wiping everybody out. Our team consisted of one lieutenant and four enlisted guys. We worked 12-hour shifts. I was a college graduate; our four enlisted guys were college graduates. The difference is I went to ROTC, they got drafted. Each of the four performed a specific task. But everybody knew how to do everybody else's job. When we had light time, we'd practice fire missions. We'd uh, arbitrarily come up with targets and then go through the process of how do you determine where to aim the shells or aim the artillery tubes and raise the shells to get the right distance. It's kind of like deciding on where to uh...hit a golf ball. There are lots of ways to get it to one spot. High angle or direct fire, uh the infantry encountered fire they'd call us on the radio for help. We jump into action. The Fire Direction Center personnel coordinated the mission by communicating with our guys under fire and to get people working on the guns. These missions could happen at any time day or night, rain or shine. Sometimes we had simultaneous fire missions with guns shooting in different directions. Sometimes they lasted many hours. Sometimes they lasted very short times.

Q: Now you mentioned uh, the movie Forrest Gump and then the series by Ken Burns about Vietnam, uh were there any other movies that you would recommend that would give a kind of a good snapshot of what it was like?

Mansfield: My favorite movie is We Were Soldiers. This is a story of Lieutenant Colonel Hal Moore. A man who grew up in Auburn, Alabama. He went to West Point and became a very distinguished leader and he's the person who created the use of the Huey helicopters for putting troops on the ground close to the action. He was always the first person to step on the ground before any of his men, and he was always the last man to leave the ground. And in this movie they showed that very dramatically. Hal Moore was a true hero. Part of the reason I like the Forrest Gump movie is the character Lieutenant Dan played by Gary Sinise. I like all the extensive and fantastic support he is given to U.S. military after he played a role in that movie. I also like the movie Apollo 13. The real event happened in the spring of 1970 uh...while we were having a very hectic time and Vietnam with the Viet Cong. So, I didn't know so much about what was going on but I know Gary Sinise played a key role in this movie and I like the movie because it showed how uh... teamwork... the team work it took to save the crew of three astronauts. Extraordinary story. I think this was NASA's greatest hour.

Q: And were there any leaders in Vietnam that you admired?

Mansfield: An infantry battalion Commander was assigned to take over as a head of a unit outside Chu Lai on a firebase called LZ Bayonet. He found that the outgoing leader had no real experience as a combat leader. He had been sent from a desk position in Washington DC so he could have 6 months of combat time on his record and then he could retire with more money. His replacement found that the guy left the battalion in total disarray. Casualties were very high. His..uh.. officer leaders had no positive morale. The replacement found it necessary to move the unit's headquarters to a new firebase. After visiting several bases, he chose LZ Dottie my home base. This man was outstanding. Lieutenant Colonel Norman Schwarzkopf was a true leader. When he was not out on fire missions with his troop, he would eat in our mess hall with his and our officers. He was awarded the Silver Star for saving a man who was injured in a minefield. He was in his helicopter when he saw this happen. He has a pilot drop him off so

he could keep the wounded warrior from crawling over more explosives. He laid on top of the guy until another helicopter could come in and get both of them off the ground safely. He told us many stories at lunch about West Point. And the best of the stories he told were those about Hal Moore.

Q: Was there anything else you would like to add to that?

Mansfield: I remember saying to myself my freshman year at St Mary's University that I never wanted to be a teacher and I darn sure never wanted to be in the military. Well I learn to be a good teacher at Fort Sill. Teaching people who all outranked me was an unusual experience. I left Vietnam in August 1970, started graduate school at SMU in Dallas, 2 days after I arrived in Dallas. 5 years later I accepted a position as an assistant professor at the University of Alabama. I was tenured after only 4 years and taught statistics at Alabama for 39 years. Be careful what you wish for. [Laughter]

Q: Very good. Now you stated that..uh..well one of the things we kind of learned ..in..in class was as far as the Infantry there was a lot of like long periods of nothing happening you know just kind of humping it through..through the jungle and you would get ambushed. What was it like working on an artillery unit? Was it kind of the same where they would be long periods of time of nothing going on and then you would be called into direct fire somewhere?

Mansfield: There are lots of hours of boredom. Uh..we play basketball, volleyball, uh..but when we heard the call for fire we all got into our positions and did what we had to do. Uh..rain or shine it didn't matter, uh..shooting in two different directions at the same time required a lot of coordination. Uh..you may have heard things about friendly fire? Well each person in the Fire Direction Center has a job to do. Friendly fire can sometimes happen when the Infantry isn't really sure of where they are. They called back with where they wanted the fire to go but when you're in a jungle... in the middle of the night.... it's really hard to use your compass to figure out what is going on. So the main thing is the people in the field have to really know where they are. So when they called back from fire we shoot maybe one shell and if they don't see that shell they know that we're not good. We're not going to be able to protect them. Um, sometimes they call the fire in on themselves unknowingly. And the shells come down right on top. So that's problems with on the receiving end. In the fire Direction Center. You lay the guns in one of eight basic directions. In the middle of the night..uh.. you may think that you're shoo..that you're supposed to be shooting to the north but you actually set everything up to go to the south or the east or another direction. And once you get the basic directions then you move the tubes left to right based on how far off that base direction they are and you just adjust the elevation. Uh..sometimes we do things wrong. And we hit wrong places. We... as an artillery officer I had to read a book about 3 inches thick each page of which described in artillery incident. An artillery incident meant something went wrong. Sometimes it's us hitting our own troops, sometimes it's hitting friendly Vietnamese, sometimes it's hitting a village that we didn't intend to hit. Mistakes can be made in many different ways. When the data is sent to the guns, you're given a specific elevation and..uh.. which way to move the tube. They may hear it wrong. They repeat everything back to you, we double check everything, but if you're not alert problems can happen. In my year in Vietnam we never had an artillery incident. But when you read through this book and all the different things it basically came down to carelessness is a reason why things went wrong. So, if you stay alert and you..and you practice fire drills to make sure everybody knows how to do everybody else's job... that's good. And you have to keep morale up people get down they tend to make more mistakes.

Q: Okay. Now you had mentioned earlier before we started recording so I wanted to kind of capture it, how long what it usually take, say, if there was infantry and they had encountered..um.. the enemy and

they called in for artillery support, how long between the initial call and when you could actually put fire on where they were? How long would that usually take?

Mansfield: In the first part of my year in Vietnam, uh.. if the Infantry was taking fire, we could shoot..uh for them very quickly. You need to get clearances about helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft that might be flying between you and the target. Uh, the chance of hitting one is..is very unlikely however it could happen so you had to make sure there was no one flying in that area. No med-evac's coming in they didn't know about. Um...uh... [coughs] [asks for pause] Another problem that could happen is there might be a big hill or mountain between you and the target. And you fire the artillery and you hit the front side of the mountain instead of going over the top. That happened. Uh...units calling in fire on other units without realizing it they think they are bad guys but they're not. Uh..it all takes concentration, coordination, everybody has to be alert to keep from making mistakes.

Q: And so how long would you say just a few minutes from?

Mansfield: Well initially...initially when we would shoot we could shoot immediately otherwise we could take our time if it was..uh.. trying to collapse tunnels and stuff there's no urgency. But we could do this stuff ..now we could be prepared to fire very quickly. We don't want to put the bullets into the artillery tubes though until we know we have a go.uh... [cough]..uhm.. After...uh.. the My Lai 4 incident all the rules changed.

Q: Sure.

Mansfield: Then...um.. you had to have clearance from high up before you could shoot. And this meant...uh... that people tried to cover their ass so if something went wrong they couldn't be blamed. Consequently, a lot of guys were waiting for artillery fire that they desperately needed and we were not allowed to shoot for them until we got these special clearances.

Q: And how long would that take sometimes?

Mansfield: Sometimes it would take 45 minutes to an hour and a half.

Q: And by that time...

Mansfield: A lot of guys could be hurt by then.

Q: Yeah. You mentioned the My Lai was that that happened while you were in Vietnam right?

Mansfield: The My Lai incident actually happened 18 months before I got to Vietnam. But it happened about nine miles from my fire base. And remember we could shoot..uh.. about a nine-mile range so they were kind of in the end of that range. But on the day that that happened all the ..uh..men who were going to be on helicopters and going off to this combat assault all these guys were told this is going to be a major battle. It's going to be really tough. You got to hit the ground firing. And so everybody was keyed up like before a football game. "Yeah, yeah we're going to go out and beat these guys yeah...yeah..yeah". They'll and they get off the guns there was no resistance. There were no bad guys. That was unfortunate because these guys were so keyed up they started shooting anybody in sight. And they killed lots of people. This was an embarrassment to the country. It was covered up by people at the top. They didn't want anybody to know. Eventually it got to the press. And when it got in the press

everybody wanted answers to questions how can the stuff possibly happen? That's when all the rules changed.

Q: So that explains the..the period of time between the actual incident and when the protocols change for you?

Mansfield: Yeah. All that was happening from the time it happened until they covered it all up and then it hit the press when I was already in Vietnam. And then we hear all this stuff and rules changed.

Q: Now in some of the photos that you show one set of photos was..um.. it was a mission where you actually left the landing zone to go forward to...to..

Mansfield: Yes

Q: How often did you do that?

Mansfield: Only once.

Q: Just the once?

Mansfield: One time. We were capable of doing it whenever. Uh..and..uh..smaller artillery guns were moved around a whole lot more than we were. We were pretty much set but beyond this artillery mission we went to a place called Ni Hong. Uh, we had about an hour to get ready all the guns. We were told it would be uh, an undisclosed location until we get there. Uh, we'll get instructions along the way. And essentially, we set up in a field..shot continuously all night long about a bullet every, oh, 5 minutes. Uh, the guns got very hot. Uh, occasionally we have a check fire for a time while B-52s were flying over dropping bombs in the area. Uh, we think we were close to Cambodian border..uh..not sure they wouldn't tell us if we were. Uh, that was a uh, exhausting experience after it was over we kind of glad we got to do it, uh ,but we had no idea what we were shooting at or what the consequences were going to be.

Q: So it was just go here, do this, and go back and that's about as much as you knew as far as the overall?

Mansfield: That's it.

Q: Okay.. Did you have any.. a lot of contact with the Vietnamese while you were there? Not just on that mission but in all the year that you were there?

Mansfield: We coordinated with the Vietnamese. Uh,we had there was a Vietnamese artillery unit on my fire base. In one corner. We didn't really interact with them very much but occasionally we'd eat with each other. Not too often. Uh, one time a Vietnamese soldier ..uh..stole some engineering stakes. Okay? And his captain his [Vietnamese word] uh..got really upset because this kid got caught and beat him with one of these steel engineering stakes.

Q: Wow.

Mansfield: He didn't beat him because he stole, he beat him because he got caught. [Laughter]

Q: Wow. How badly did he beat him?

Mansfield: He hit him pretty hard.

Q: Okay.

Mansfield: He didn't break any bones I don't think.

Q: I guess discipline in the South Vietnamese Army was different than it was in the US Army. [Laughter]

Mansfield: Yeah, a little different.

Q: Yeah. Uhm, did you have much interaction with civilians that..that were maybe living around the...?

Mansfield: No. We'd keep our people away from the civilians. Although occasionally you would go into a village you didn't stay there. You went through villages more than going to a village.

Q: And you stated before that when you're going from point A to point B that you would keep an M16 on your lap when you are going to.. to..to watch for..?

Mansfield: Yeah, generally...I..I was payroll officer. I had 27 duties assigned to me when I got to this..to my unit.

Q: Wow

Mansfield: Stuff like graves registration officer, uh..education officer, [unknown] officer, all these different duties that it's just paperwork. Uh...but..uhm... where was I going? [Laughter]

Q: Oh, just talking about...

Mansfield: Oh! Oh! Oh! So I had a Jeep driver and when I went back to get the payroll the Jeep driver would take me in, I would always carry an M16 on my lap because as you went through a village you'd see little kids coming up waving to the soldiers. And you didn't know if they were just waving or if some Vietcong told this kid to "hey, go throw this into the Jeep." So, I always had an M16 loaded on my lap...uh.. and if I had to I would have shot somebody if I thought they were going to throw a grenade.

Q: From what you said that was a real danger a real thing to be worried about. Because there was precedent of that happening, right?

Mansfield: There was precedent of that happening because the Vietcong would give a kid candy and here go do this. And there were a lot of people wounded from that or killed. Uh.. and it didn't happen a whole lot, but it happened enough that where you were prepared. In case it happened.

Q: Sure. Now you also..uh.. when we were talking earlier you mentioned that..um.. who would later become General Schwarzkopf came on to your base and spend time on your base. Did you interact with him? You said that he told you some stories about West Point?

Mansfield: Well he would.. He was with his men. I mean when when he brought in his guys, we now had perimeter protection it was really good. Nobody was going to come into our fire base with this infantry

unit there. And his captains and lieutenants were really great people. And I think that's because of his leadership. He made you want to be good. Uh, my interaction with him would be when he was not out on the field and he's back at Chu Lai. His hooch was right next to our dining hall and close to my hooch. Uh, we'd go in and have meals together and we had about three other captains that were at the table and I was there and uh we just start talking and he would tell us stories about things usually they were lessons that he learned from Hal Moore. He was at West Point when Schwarzkopf was a student at West Point. He used to have a great admiration for Moore back in those days even. When Hal Moore created the air mobile infantry and started combat assaults using..using helicopters to get people in on the ground quickly right at the heart of the battle Hal Moore was phenomenal. He was always the first to get off the plane off the helicopter and always the last to leave. The movie We Were Soldiers shows that very well. And the emotion that he had that the actor had in that movie was pretty much kind of how Schwarzkopf would describe Hal Moore to us. And the other cool thing was, in that movie, is how the wives were treated. You have wives back at home living in fear that they're going to have a ..uh..cab come up and give you a ...uh..telegram. And so Hal Moore's wife in the movie and in real life got all the wives together they all lived in a military base. They decided they would go take the letters and the telegram is to widows. Widows. And try to build morale from that side.

Q: Okay. Now you said you went into the ROTC program. Were you married when you ended up going to Vietnam?

Mansfield: No.

Q: How did your..how did your family feel about you.. Well first of all when you entered ROTC I mean the war was going on already when you entered so you knew that there was a pretty good chance that you may end up going to Vietnam is that right?

Mansfield: Well a pretty good chance of being drafted.

Q: Okay and so how did, say, your parents or any brothers or sisters that you had, how.. did they ever express how they felt to you when they knew that you were going to be going over there?

Mansfield: Well I was the youngest of four kids.

Q: Okay.

Mansfield: And my brother was four and a half years older than me. Uh.. he was married so he had no requirement to go in the military. Excuse me. He was married and had a child. Uh...[pauses for a moment]. It's just something that had to happen. It wasn't like we sat down and decided "Gee, Ed's going to go in the military". [Laughter] Um, and my mother was incredibly supportive of everything that I did. She wishes I could have been closer to home, but I was at Fort Sill for a year, Vietnam a year, then went straight from Vietnam, 2 days later I was in a classroom at SMU. So, I had very little time to come back, go home other than load my Volkswagen and drive back up to Dallas real fast and uh..start classes. My attention span was really, really short.

Q: Sure. Was it I mean was it difficult for you to make that transition from being in Vietnam to coming back to civilian life and going right into a graduate program at SMU?

Mansfield: Um, it was difficult to be able to concentrate for any period of time. There was also an incident that happened three days before I left Vietnam. And that was..uh..morale in the summer of '70 kind of went downhill because we didn't have much combat. Nixon went into Cambodia in May of that year I believe and the pressure in our area went way down. So, we were a keyed up football team ready to go into action. But this was summer, in effect. And we didn't have anybody to fight we didn't have anything to do. People got bored. They tried to find things to have fun or whatever. But they did strange things. And one guy apparently thought it would be cool if he threw a hand grenade in the captain's Hooch.

Q: And so there was nothing leading up to that. They didn't have any personal conflict? He just sort of?

Mansfield: Uh, i don't know. I don't know. It happened in the middle of the night. 1:15 in the morning. Uh, we heard an explosion. First reaction is we have sappers that are in our base. And I heard one boom they would usually have a few throwing charges at different buildings. And I just heard the one, and I'm thinking okay morale was down and people are looking for ways to have fun and they thought that might be cool. My guys ran in there yelled back to me. I called Chu Lai. Got a helicopter out there quickly. Uh, but he died before they got him to the hospital.

Q: It's like that saying the devil finds work for Idle Hands to do?

Mansfield: And in the middle of the night I'm going around trying to find if anybody knew what happened. I'm going around all the people on the perimeter. Guard and..and nobody really knew anything or would say anything. Uh, ..[pauses...hard exhale] I'm walking across and some guy comes up to me and says "Sir, why don't you sleep in my bed tonight"? This is like 4 in the morning. And I grabbed him and said "What do you know? What do you know"? And he says "I don't know anything but they killed one officer and they may try to kill more officers".

Q: Oh wow

Mansfield: So why don't you try and sleep in my bed instead of your own bed I gave the guy a big hug. but generally, those guys in our motor pool who were the ones who kind of had bad attitudes.

Q: Were there any other incidents after that?

Mansfield: No. Well I don't know I only had three days. [Laughter]

Q: True

Mansfield: But seven in the morning the next day CID was on our Firebase, and they had 12 guys plus an unranked leader, and we went in a hooch and these guys sitting in a semicircle and I'm in the middle and they start asking me questions. Two and a half hours they're interrogating me. And I'd say something, and I would notice one guy over here would start writing. I'd say something else and this guy over here would start writing. And it's like I'm saying stuff that I don't really know if it's helpful or not, but different people have specialties and different types of things and then they had me rank everybody from 120 down to the most likely.

Q: 120 to... wow.

Mansfield: Yeah, so rank these people. First of all, uh...put pressure on everybody in your unit. Till we find out what's going on.

Q: So, they weren't actually sure who did it at first?

Mansfield: Oh no no. We had no idea who did it. And I'm trying to go around finding it. And he said, "Why don't you restrict everybody to stay in their bunker they cannot play their stereos. They can't do anything. They can't talk they can't do fire missions. Punish everybody. And that way someone will talk. Start doing that." They were doing similar things too but right now take charge do you tell them you can't do anything. Don't let them eat in the mess hall. Give them c-rations. Eventually someone will talk. Well I'm only there two more days. Uh, and it was kind of tough. But I ranked them and the final four they took back to Chu Lai. And they interrogated them all night long. One of them told me they had spotlights on me and they was just it was terrible. He said I don't ever want to have to do that again.

Q: Did you ever find out who?

Mansfield: One of the four was the one who did it. Actually. He was kind of a loner. And... what dog is that. Hold on. [dog had been barking in background for some time]

Mansfield: When I was back in Texas at SMU I got a letter from some of the guys saying the CID tried to stop you from leaving Vietnam because they needed you to be a witness at the trial. So, it was good that I got away. [Laughter] And the guy eventually confessed. He got 20 years of hard labor at Leavenworth.

Q: Was it hard for you too kind of wrap your head around something like that happening?

Mansfield: The good part was I had an instant change of life going through starting graduate school and I didn't have time to dwell on it. That was very helpful.

Q: But you said it did kind of have an effect on you as far as you are still kind of dealing with that when you first started classes?

Mansfield: Oh definitely.

Q: To someone who's never been in the military or been in that situation to just. It seems crazy but, I'm sure... there are reports of things like that happening not only in Vietnam but in other wars were people just.. have troubles. Did you ever hear stories like that? I mean while you were there?

Mansfield: Well..here's.. not like that. But one of my enlisted guys... a guy named McDermott. Really a nice guy, came up to me one day and said sir can I show you some pictures? I said yeah but do you got? So, he shows me some pictures. It's a woman with a negligee that came down to her navel, her arm around two naked guys they all had beer bottles and they're laughing. I look at these pictures and say where do you get these? He said that's my wife. I said what? He said she'd been sending me pictures like this for a couple of months and I can't take it anymore. Another casualty of war was the women back home. In World War II I think they were a lot different than now. And women got bored. Did different things. And I got him a 30-day leave to go back home to, I didn't get it I asked the captain about it he arranged it, uh..he went back home..uh.. took care of things came back. I don't know how the hell he adjusted to that. He said everything was better now. Uh, that kind of story there were lots of women

back home who not necessarily faithful. There were guys that were going on R&R that weren't necessarily faithful either. [Laughter]

Q: Sure.

Mansfield: A sad part of war.

Q: Now kind of to switch tack a little bit, some of your friends from high school and from undergraduate you ended up they going with you as far as you had contact with them because you said a couple of them were helicopter pilots, right?

Mansfield: Uh, let's see. Steve was a helicopter pilot, Mike was a helicopter pilot, Don was a helicopter pilot. They pick me up and fly me around Vietnam and stuff. But these are guys there were six of us what went to grade school together. And, let's see. Well we all went to the same college and we still see each other. The first weekend of October every year we get together at Texas Beach.

Q: Oh okay

Mansfield: And we are all close.

Q: So clearly everybody made it through the war okay?

Mansfield: Uh, not one of us was killed and wounded. Even though Steve had a mid-air collision with another helicopter. The guy behind him in the helicopter got too close, the blades meshed, and they crashed. But they were low level. There was not a big fall. Had they been up 20 feet higher they probably be dead.

Q: Wow.

Mansfield: That was unfortunate. JJ Miller was a forward observer; this forward observer goes with the infantry so they're out doing all the stuff the infantry is doing. And artillery is coming in ..uh..on his unit. It is calling trying to find out who was it? And JJ is psychologically been messed up ever since then. They court-martialed him and they found out heck it wasn't him. He wasn't at fault. But he never really got over that.

Q: So he he's been having to deal with PTSD?

Mansfield: Oh yeah. I have some PTSD. Uh, I don't see how you can go through that without.

Q: Do you have..um.. are there just nights where you're kind of disoriented?

Mansfield: [Deep exhale] I don't know how to describe it but there's times where you get depressed going over.. thinking about certain things. That happened or whatever. So, I go to the VA and they help me with that.

Q: I can't imagine going through what you went through without some coming way without some feelings of depression or anxiety or things like that. Do you feel like uh..the VA here in Tuscaloosa does is pretty good with the way that they treat the veterans that go there?

Mansfield: Uh..yeah. I had two bad shoulders. I went to a surgeon in town that operated on them 6 months apart. One in October one in March. The VA gave me physical therapy for a full year 3 days a week I'd go out there and get physical therapy. And it was phenomenal. It was great. They don't do surgery, but they do that kind of stuff. And I'm limping right now because of bad gout. And they take care of me with gout. I just stopped taking my medicine for some reason boom it really makes it uncomfortable. But the VA here has been pretty good.

Q: And was there anything else that you wanted to talk about?

Mansfield: Let's see. [Long pause] Stop it for a second. [requests pause] Are you familiar with honor flights?

Q: No.

Mansfield: Okay. The rotary clubs of America sponsor honor flights. And these honor flights started many years ago where uh..veterans of World War II could be flown to Washington DC, given a tour of the monuments, and then fly home the same day. Okay? Well three years ago I went on an honor flight as a Vietnam vet. It's the first time they ever did Vietnam vets. From this city. Uh..so, we had a big plane pick us up at 5 in the morning, flew to Baltimore had a police escort down to Washington, they did all the monuments..uh..that was impressive. And then the next year I went as a guardian. And that meant I'm there... they had Guardians that watched over the vets. Because it gets very emotional, these things. And I went back as a guardian to kind of..uh.. take care of two people as they go through this particular day. And I'm doing it again this May. As a vet you go free. As a guardian you pay your own way. Seven-hundred dollars to go. I think that's cheap. Because when you're with these people and some of these people are really emotional some of these could never afford to go to Washington and you're with them and you're talking to them and they relive some of their experiences and stuff and you listen to them oh, that's really cool. Really a neat experience.

Q: As part of that...

Mansfield: I might also say about Washington. Uh, I used to go to Washington to do consulting work with the Bureau of Labor. And I went up there three times before I had the courage to walk down to the Vietnam Memorial. Uh. That was tough. Uh..and then we were driving through, family trip, driving through that area and I stopped and took the kids out to see it. And..uh... [voice breaks] it was kind of weird.

Q: Yeah. Did you have names that you were looking for when you went?

Mansfield: Yeah. Seven names. Including Captain Schneider, the guy who was fragged. Uh, yeah. And the others were not with me in Vietnam, but they were guys I grew up with and did not make it. Uh, it was tough.

Q: I'm sure. Have you returned to..to the Vietnam Memorial, or did you just...?

Mansfield: Uh...in in those days, it was back in the 80s. Uh, when I was going up there and I did not want to go see it. And I went with the Honor Flight and that was... that was entirely different. But it was emotional, I saw a lot of guys crying. I think going back as a guardian was really good.

Q: Now I know there was a little bit of controversy when the wall was first put up. What were your feelings like when you first heard about the fact that they were even going to make one and then what the..kind of design of it was going to be? Did you have any thoughts on that? Or?

Mansfield: The design is really cool. Shaped as a wing and it tapers out on both directions. And the first one killed is on the top of this panel, and then they go down on each panel all the way out to the end. And then it goes from that end way over to this and it works back into the names in the middle. The middle is a very high wall it's out at the ends are one or two names. On the end. Uh, cool thing is the statues. At a distance you have uh, soldiers carrying machine guns or whatever over the shoulder and they're looking at the wall. They're looking at their friends. Great bronze statue. And then there's another one of the nurses, and the nurses are caring for the wounded people. Uh, It's cool. But when it first started I really didn't... I was busy teaching and other kind of stuff and I saw a picture of it and thought that was kind of weird. But we don't need another big monument, statue type thing or whatever. This was... this was so different that it was really cool.

Q: Now I've also heard stories about soldiers that had served in Vietnam for whatever reason wanting to go back to visit the country whether to try to face... for whatever reasons. Have you ever considered going back?

Mansfield: No.

Q: You would never want to go back?

Mansfield: No. Other places I want to go.

Q: Sure. So, it's not that you have...

Mansfield: No there's not an emotional tie. It was. it might be emotional when I got there. But I know that our Firebase doesn't exist anymore. Anything that had to do with the US troops being there is gone. So, you're not going to go back and say hey this is where my bed was. The city of Chu Lai is gone.

Q: The entire city is gone?

Mansfield: Yeah. It wasn't really a city it was made by the military type thing.

Q: Oh, okay.

Mansfield: And when it was over... the air strip. You can't even see it in Google Earth. Not there.

Q: So, was it because just because the Vietnam government just wanted to eradicate any...?

Mansfield: I think so.

Q: Okay. I didn't know if it was that or just the jungle had taken it back over or... okay. That's interesting. I didn't know that. [Laughter] Did you have anything else that you felt anything else you wanted to talk about?

Mansfield: Let's see. Honor Flight. I wanted to get that in.

Q: OK, it's good we got that in, then.

Mansfield: There's a nursing instructor in town, a professor. Retired several years ago. Her dissertation, let's see her master's thesis was interviewing Vietnam vets. With PTSD. Interviewed a thousand. Her PhD was interviewing the wives of Vietnam vets. And when I told her about the guy with the pictures, she said there was a lot of that, and we sat down, and we talked about it. [Chuckles] That dissertation she said was much tougher to do.

Q: Really?

Mansfield: Yeah. So much variation and how the wives responded. But she had several hundred that she interviewed. And mentioned one time to her I said, "Yeah I think I have a little PTSD". She said, "of course you do. It's obvious". "What do you mean?" "Certain things you do, the way you do it. Yeah you have PTSD. Not as bad as others but you definitely have some PTSD". [Cough] I get even a little choked up right now talking about it.

Q: Sure. Is it difficult to manage? Or?

Mansfield: No. No not at all. No. For some people it's very difficult. I was flying on a plane one time and the guy next to me was talking German. And I started talking to him after he got off the phone after we took off and he ran several uh...centers... that work with Vietnam vets. Any kind of not so much Vietnam. Even the guys coming in now. Coming back from Iran and all that stuff. Uh..Not Iran, Afghanistan and Iraq. And..uh...uh.. something about the suicide rate. He said it was really a shame how many people are coming back and committing suicide. Uh..and he got tears in his eyes. He said well it's worse than that. And let's see what.. he said the suicide rate is even higher for people who have never been in combat. Soldiers who had never been in combat.

Q: Really?

Mansfield: I said wow. Why would...why would that be? I said what are the signs of that? There are no signs. We can't track it down we don't know what's going on. We can see that some kids that come back from combat are messed up and we can deal with that because we know what the specific thing is, but when more people who never left this country... higher rate of suicide... we don't know how to handle it.

Q: Yeah.

Mansfield: And that was emotional.

Q: Sobering. Yeah.

Mansfield: And every time you call the VA the recording "if you have any feelings of committing suicide, hang up and call nine-one-one right now". And so, they're very conscious of the fact that suicide i..is the easy way out for some people.

Q: Sure.

Mansfield: That's sad.

Q: It is. Did you have anything else that you... [Laughter].. I mean it's, it's that I mainly want to let you... make you feel comfortable with whatever it is that you want, you know, it's to go on record. I've kind of run out of questions until you're talking about things that I can follow up on.

Mansfield: Okay. You have to turn all this in by Sunday?

Q: Well I have to transcribe it and everything but I'm not real worried about that. It's mainly, I honestly want you to get whatever it is you want to talk about out.

[Laughter].

Q: It's up to you however long this interview goes. If it goes an hour, if it goes 2 hours.

Mansfield: Okay let me try to find something here.

Q: Let me pause this here while you look that up.

Mansfield: Interesting thing with that. I'm not really big in military, but now I'm in the Army and I'm pulled out of officer basic class and ask why was I pulled out they said because you have math background and we need people that can do certain things. So I went over to be interviewed by this Colonel Myers, I'm trying to call Colonel Myers I'm walking around at Fort Sill I can't find the room number. And I see two guys two Security Guys and I walk up to them and say do you know where I can find Colonel Myers? Yes sir. Where is he? Behind us sir. Well maybe I don't have the right... What's your name sir? You're on the list. I go through two jail gates security things back in the security things and this guy starts talking to me about nuclear weapons. And I said why am I here? Well we have a shortage of people to teach our classes. We have a large number of career officers that need to go through this course. And we are looking for people to have any kind of math science type degrees. Who might want to teach. Before I ever went into active duty I knew I was going to be assigned after officer basic course to Fort Sill as an instructor. I thought it would be an instructor in artillery or whatever.

Q: Right. [Laughter]

Mansfield: But which it probably would have been, and he explains to me what's going on I said wow that's kind of interesting. He said if we select you then you would probably spend your two years here. Do you have any Hang-ups about nuclear weapons? No sir no no not at all! None. [Laughter] So, there were three lieutenants and the rest were captains or higher or PhDs in physics, chemistry. It was kind of weird. And that's what I was sitting down at sessions with other things. But what we're doing is how do you take out a bridge?

Q: With a nuclear...?

Mansfield: With a with a small yield nuclear weapon, yeah. You can shoot out of an artillery tube. 8-inch Howitzer is the only gun that can shoot...shoot it. But yeah shoot artillery.

Q: I wasn't even aware that was a thing. Whenever I think nuclear, I mostly think of just the big megatons.

Mansfield: Megatons, yeah. That's strategic use. Blow up everything. And this is tactical use. So yeah it was kind of cool. But my first day I had to teach in front of the class...uh... was 40 people in the class, a lot of West Pointers at this time. And I'm up there talking doing my thing. There's a break and this one Captain comes up to me and says, "Lieutenant you're doing a good job". I said "well thank you". The correct reply would say would be, thank you sir. and I went oh.

Q: Oh no [chuckles].

Mansfield: "You do realize everyone in this room outranks you". "Yeah kind of. I kind of recognize that". "The correct reply would be yes sir I do know that I am out ranked by everyone in the room". Now I'm getting really nervous. "Now when someone raises their hand and you look at them and you say yeah what's your question. Wrong". "What do you mean"? "Yes sir what is your question, sir?" Okay the break's over and everybody comes back in. 5 minutes into this someone raises their hand I said and I look at that captain and I say "Yes sir what is your question"? Everybody in that room roared. Laughter.

Q: Where they just setting you up?

Mansfield: Pretty much.

Q: Laughter. Nice.

Mansfield: So, then I felt accepted. But it was a lot of little technical stuff. Nomograms, are you familiar with that?

Q: No.

Mansfield: Kind of something that would be like here's a graph. You're used to seeing a graph like that. [Begins drawing]. Or sometimes parabolas. Okay? So, this would be [continues drawing] and these are scales calibrating. Okay? If you take a plastic thing and if I know I want this yield weapon, and something here you line these up, any two will solve the third.

Q: Okay.

Mansfield: Move this around. Somebody came up with these grams probably before computers. That's what you do in certain situations you get the data from this and do calculations and things and it was actually fun.

Q: And you did that for a year?

Mansfield: No. No no. Started doing it and then there was a shortage of lieutenants in Vietnam. Okay? So halfway through this thing I hear Colonel Mais on the phone saying I think we got three lieutenants each we need them we're short.

Q: So, how long were you teaching before you went to Vietnam?

Mansfield: Teaching? Oh, there? that was officer basic was three months so it would, uh... be eight or nine months.

Q: Okay. And then you got called to go?

Mansfield: Yeah. Well, okay.

Q: I bet. It's like I said I never even knew... never even thought about small-scale tactical...[laughter]

Mansfield: Yeah. They're not going to do it. I think it's done now, it's over.

Q: Yeah.

Mansfield: But at that time, it was a big thing.

Q: Wow.

Mansfield: But the cool part was being around these other instructors in there who were really good. In the officer basic class you had five different categories of things: tactics, preventative maintenance... trucks which seems to be the biggest things for captains and stuff. Make sure all the paperwork is right. I had no interest in. Surveying, while shooting artillery. Okay now why did I start that? Oh, okay. The course and preventive maintenance you go in classes and you have a sergeant who was teaching you certain things about preventive maintenance stuff. What does black smoke mean when it's coming out of your Jeep? After that, you had to write a review. With each test you took. And you had to sign it. Okay? 100 people in our class, seven of us were called out of the class to go see some, what was he a lieutenant colonel? He was the head of this part of the school. And, got to remember how this actually worked out. There was a class leader who was a captain cap, a marine captain, but in reserves. So he was going to this course and the seven of us were called in to this guy's office one at a time, and he is furious at the reviews we wrote. the review is really critical. I mean mine was terrible the worst instruction I ever had. He said not a question number for happens to ask about tires, you might want to reply C.

Q: Okay. [Laughter]

Mansfield: And so, I wrote that in our thing. The guy is supposed to teach us stuff, not teach us the answers to things. We don't need that. And everybody else wrote critical things. They were called in. We were just called in and sat down and he has you standing at attention pacing back and forth in front of you. what gave you the right to write that kind of stuff! Sir I'm trying to write a review. Where are you assigned when you finish officer basic? I'm going to be an instructor here at Fort Sill. What!? I'm going to be an instructor here at Fort Sill. well I'm going to make sure that you come to my unit. I'm going to ask for you specifically. And I'm going to teach you what teaching is. Was kind of scary. The marine class leader got all of us together, tell me what happened. We all told our stories. He went to General Caruthers who was the second of command of the whole four General Charlie Brown was the head guy.

Q: Nice. Laughter.

Mansfield: General Caruthers listens to what the guy has to say, he was fired relieved from his assignment. That was pretty good. So, the power of review was pretty good.

Q: How do you... do you feel that your time in the military prepared you to become a professor or an assistant professor to teach later?

Mansfield: I had no desire to be in the military. we had to take two years of ROTC oh, and when I'm trying to decide do I want to go into the advanced thing oh, I really didn't care about military but I figured okay the way things are going maybe this is a good deal and they pay you \$50 a month to do it. The only income I had. So I went in and it was good. I didn't have any problem with that. And the other guys that we all did this together we all played intramural sports together and lots of other things laughter so it was just one more step. So I didn't have any desire to be a teacher. A friend of mine Number one we're both math majors, and number two and number three. math majors. Number one and I graduated together. His last name starts with an m a and so does mine. So we were right next to each other. Number two went to SMU to get a PhD. I had a referral to go to graduate school. I had no idea what I wanted to do I was just struggling to get out. So and I was working at the World's Fair in San Antonio called hemisphere which no one has heard of. But I was working there by last couple months in school and then through the summer. And so I deferred, had a deferment to go to graduate school and decided okay I'm just going to go in. And so I went and they weren't being an officer training class and sent me the Fort Sill. Forgot where I was going.

Q: That's okay.

Mansfield: My Brain froze for a second. What did you ask me, What did you ask me?

Q: If you felt that your time in the military helped when you started teaching afterwards?

Mansfield: Oh, oh. Yeah. Yes. So when I got pulled into this other thing the two-week military instruction course, how do military South. I thought this is going to be a waste. Not. It's not your little things like when you're standing at an overhead projector don't Point like this. to you you're pointing at that butt in the classroom up on the big screen it's shaking all over the place.

Q: Oh, really? Ok.

Mansfield: lay it down. If you get near the edge you want to see something here, don't do that. Do that. Little simple things. Make letters big, eliminate unnecessary words.

Q: So even down to the minute detail they were giving you things that were you were going to use later.

Mansfield: Yeah. Two weeks of doing this, started off there are like seven people in his class going to there's that were going to be instructors. I was going to be an instructor anyway, I didn't know this was before the nuke stuff. Okay there I go again.

Q: That's okay.

Mansfield: Oh oh. You had to, you had a five minute talk about yourself. By rank. So there was a major that gets up and tells us about his military career. Next guy. Captain. Blah blah blah blah. Comes around second Lieutenant. I get up I really don't have any military career oh, I'm not going to bore you with my military career. And I started talking about working at hemisphere. Driving a train, giving guided tours. And so I gave them a guided tour because I didn't know what else to talk about. Everybody was

sort of looking at each other. Laughter. Okay? But they thought you had to stand in front. You don't have to turn around and look at the screen. If it's on the overhead projector the lights going through it, it's up there. Just don't stand between it. Little simple things that when I started teaching at Alabama, big help. Nobody ever tells College professors how to teach. They taught me. Basic little things. How to communicate. How to have eye contact. How to listen to a question. So I want to ask you a question. It was great.

Q: Okay.

Mansfield: So the Army really did help me. But I didn't know I'm going to be using the someday. Oh and then number one I sent him a letter that I was going to Texas and I was going to get an MBA. He writes back and says no come to SMU and get a PhD in statistics. Why would I want to do that? Because we need your height for intramural volleyball for football and baseball.

Q: Okay. How tall were you at the time?

Mansfield: 6'1". But he was shorter.

Laughter.

Mansfield: But he was a brilliant guy. He worked at a place called Southwest research. San Antonio. This guy solve the problem of why the Columbia Space Shuttle crashed.

Q: Really?

Mansfield: You remember that? Over Fort Worth Texas and Louisiana. He's a statistician but NASA asked him to review these 20 reports done by Engineers as to what the probable cause was. He read through all 30 of these things it would have taken me months to do that. But he looked at them and said they're all wrong. And he explained to them what happened and they didn't believe it. I don't know if you're aware that the shuttles had the main fuel cell thing and it's attached to this big main tank. They wrap foam around us tank before Lift-Off so while it's on the pad you don't want it to get hot so it's in Sylvania. Did you get this thing on here. Now they knew some of this phone was going to fall off, and they tested it and it didn't didn't break the front of the wing. But he said up close near the fuselage the phone is different than how it is on the rest of the wing. He said I believe a piece of the foam hit at the junction of the wing in the shuttle. And cracked it at liftoff. What do you consider that all the engineers just said that's the most ridiculous thing I've ever heard. We've tested that so much. Okay? So he arranged to have a wing taking off a shuttle, off the discovery, they took the wing Southwest research, they had all the astronauts, all the researchers, we had a piece of the action in all this stuff and all in there. He was telling me that they thought this was the biggest waste of time ever. they fired a piece of foam blew a hole 2 ft by 18 in. He said the engineers were gasping for air. They could not believe what they just saw. So they now have an answer. He came up with a definitive answer. He who asked me to come to SMU and get a PhD oh, such an impressive guy I did that. He did it in three years and it took me five years. We both have the same kind of Fellowship, the National Defense Education Act Fellowship. When I come to Alabama found out the lady that wrote the legislation that created this Defense Education Act stuff is here.

Q: Oh okay

Mansfield: Mary jelly. I don't know if you've heard of her. She brought the legislation and the only reason they put National Defense in there is because it was coming back in the early 60s late 50s she was chief of staff for some guy Carl Elliot from Alabama. And she wrote the legislation but put National Defense instead of other because it was selling of the time. Congressman would vote for it. So it paid our way. He continue to do great things. we take vacations together every summer his wife in my wife. His wife was the first girl I ever had a date with in high school. Laughter. It's cool. Number two was also in our math class. He went to work immediately after graduation with IBM and within a month he was assigned to NASA. So he was a NASA programmer. And a brilliant guy. Number two, the movie Apollo 13? He was the one who basically got them back.

Q: Really?

Mansfield: Yeah. He had noticed after the first two flights that they didn't have the ability to change software in the capsule. They couldn't oh, I don't know exactly what the problems were, but they couldn't change the software. That was limited upon takeoff. So he wrote some software and took it to the people and said I think this needs to be put in. He got other people test it and run it they said yeah this is a good idea. They put it in before Apollo 13. Had they not have that software they would have died. They would have had no ability to make the corrections they needed to make the inner. They might have still died because coming in with the trajectory it has to be just really close. And in the movie one thing they didn't have was the guy saying number two we need trajectory in Burn time now! So he is another guy.

Mansfield: The title of this picture is st. Mary's Brilliant Minds + dizzy Ed.

Q: laughter. Fantastic.

Mansfield: I mean these are two really bright guys. And I was lucky all the way through. Don't even pretend to be at their level. Laughter. He's just a happy guy. Really neat.. This guy was being cited as a distinguished alumni. At this event. number one had already been won. I'm not even close to that. I did go to a reunions last September it was a fundraiser at Saint Mary's. And we are all sitting together at a table with 12 people and these two guys are talking about the shuttle. He said they never tested up close. This is more exposure and they never tested it. Are they never tested the tiles to go on. Pieces fell off the foam off the big tank a lot. But they never had any reason, t they have replacement tiles, but they never tested it up close. I'm listening to these two guys talking Softly. I'm thinking wow this is really cool. Total IQ of 400. And then too. laughter. did you have anything else that you wanted to go over? While I'm trying to find a picture of the Firebase. I remember watching a movie at 3 in the morning and it was a John Wayne movie. And all of a sudden you feel stuff happening. And I thought wow these sound effects are really good. Hey we're taking fire! Laughter

Q: How often did that happen? How often would you take fire?

Mansfield: Not often. I think people were afraid of coming in to our Firebase. It was a big fire base, lots of firepower. Had a reputation of being very secure. It's just a quarter mile off Highway 1. So I think earlier before 65 and stuff it was a lot worse.

