

Bruce Parry

July 22, 2015

Interviewed by Edward Sanderson

Transcribed by Edward Sanderson, and Sonix, with corrections by Leah Cohen and Bruce Parry

Edited by Teri Embrey & Leah Cohen

Web biography by Leah Cohen

Produced by Brad Guidera

A lot of shuffling about, background chatter, stuff about documents being declassified, etc. before the actual interview started.

Interview Starts 5:08

Sanderson: Today is July 22, 2015, and we have the honor of speaking with Dr. Bruce Parry, who was the company commander of the 1/8th Cav, 1st Cavalry Division during Vietnam. Thank you for coming out today.

Parry: My pleasure.

Sanderson: Do you mind being videoed during this? We always have to ask to get the official besides the actual signing part. So, we're going to start it off. Where were you born?

Parry: Madison, New Jersey.

Sanderson: Madison, New Jersey. What year was that?

Parry: Nineteen forty-six.

Sanderson: Nineteen forty-six. Sir, how was it growing up in New Jersey during the '40s?

Parry: During the '50s was when I actually grew up. I grew up in a suburb of New York and I had my friends and stuff like that, how do you describe your childhood? It was relatively, it was there, you know.

Sanderson: Do you have any brothers or sisters?

Parry: I have a sister, five years older.

Sanderson: Five years older.

Parry: Yeah, she lives in Baltimore. I'm going to see her tomorrow.

Sanderson: How nice. Kind of along those lines, was your father in the military?

Parry: Yeah. My father had been in World War II. He was, both my parents were physicians, and he had been in WWII as a physician.

Sanderson: I know eventually, as you got older you had stated that you had went to the Valley Forge Military Academy. Was that one of those where it kind of propelled you into going into the military?

Parry: I guess. I went from there to West Point and it was sort of a default kind of thing, you know. And that obviously propelled me into the military.

Sanderson: So what was life like at Valley Forge?

Parry: Well, it was very disciplined. They had regular formations. The good thing about it for me was that it was very structured. They made you sit down at your desk and study. You had to sit at your desk and always have a book open all evening long and you couldn't be messing around and they really enforced the study habit. So, my grades improved dramatically. Actually, the Madison School System was probably academically much better than Valley Forge but Valley Forge made me study and pay attention, so I did much better at Valley Forge than I had in the Madison school system. It was military formations and you formed up and went to breakfast and then you went to class and then you went to lunch and then you went to class and then you had after-school activities and then you went to dinner and then you studied. So, it was very regimented.

Sanderson: How many years did you go to Valley Forge?

Parry: Three. Sophomore, junior and senior years of high school.

Sanderson: Why did you go to Valley Forge?

Parry: I had this history. I actually got my parents to send me to a military school. I had been enamored of my father being in World War II and the European Theatre and we had played war growing up and I had some friends who went to military school and I had subscribed to *Leatherneck* [US Marine Corps] magazine as a kid, so you know and I was into the [US] Marines and things like that and I wanted to get away. My sister went off to college so it was just me and my parents and my father had severe PTSD and alcoholism from World War II and I had to get out of the house so I kept asking them to send me to military school and eventually they acceded in my sophomore year.

Sanderson: Why Valley Forge?

Parry: They selected it. We lived in New Jersey; it was an hour and a quarter away and they advertised a lot in the *New York Times* and probably in the *Newark News* and the other papers in New Jersey. I don't know. They selected it.

Sanderson: Looking back, it definitely has an outstanding reputation.

Parry: I actually just visited a couple of weeks ago. It was probably, I think, the first time since I graduated which was 1964, fifty-one years ago. I just posted some pictures on the internet, on Facebook, the other day about that. It's still there.

Sanderson: Nice. Actually, not too long ago, we did an interview with Vice Admiral Ron Thunman, he was the last deputy chief of naval operations for submarines and he spent four years as, I guess you would call it, commandant of the school.

Parry: Of Valley Forge?

Sanderson: And during that time, I saw that and I wondered if they ever did any kind of reunions or ever did anything along those lines and you guys had ever met. Also, I think General Schwartzkopf had went there. Quite a few.

Parry: I knew Schwartzkopf. He was at West Point when I was there and he was my commander of my flight to Vietnam as a lieutenant and that was when he was a major at West Point and I had him for mechanics and then he was a lieutenant colonel on the flight to Vietnam. And I had heard that he had gone to Valley Forge. I didn't know that at the time. The superintendent at the time was Baker, Milton Baker, who founded the school and the commandant was Medenbach who was I think the first commandant. I don't know. He had been around for a while. All the others kind of came afterward. So. On one hand, it put me on a path into the military and it was a high price but on the other hand, it saved my life. So, it was one of those things.

Sanderson: What branch of the military did your father serve?

Parry: [US] Army.

Sanderson: When you graduated from Valley Forge was it an automatic pipeline into West Point?

Parry: No. Not at all. You had to, first, you had to apply and there were some school appointments to West Point and I also got an appointment from my congressman in New Jersey, and in fact what happened was I went for the physical for the school appointment and I got the 24-hour flu and I couldn't do the gym part, the physical test, I was dying of the 24-hour flu and they wouldn't give me any slack so that whole appointment was negated. And I would

up getting in through my appointment by my congressman who had another appointment to send me to the physical and I did fine on it.

Sanderson: Definitely, kind of stinks that they do that...

Parry: Uh, huh. At least I had a chance to do it.

Sanderson: They don't like to give, something, like, something...second...

Parry: If I had only had the one appointment, I wouldn't have ever gone.

Sanderson: When you were in Valley Forge, what were, things, what kind of, like, extracurricular activities that you were involved in?

Parry: There were some intramural sports, but I don't remember. I remember being pretty occupied with stuff but I don't remember. You know like at West Point I remember I was in the Russian Club and some other things like that, you know, and went out for hockey and stuff. Intramural sports were more structured at West Point than at Valley Forge. But I don't think I did too many at Valley Forge. I was involved in a lot of math stuff. I got the medal for the highest grades in math in my class. Things like that. More academic stuff. Extracurricular activities. I'm sure I did something. But I don't remember. They kept you busy but I don't remember.

Sanderson: Did they have any kind, of like a rec room where you relaxed?

Parry: Oh, yeah. I've forgotten what they called it but there was one building that was just for that, for relaxation and things like that we went up there all the time.

Sanderson: What was [sic] some of the things you guys would do in the rec area?

Parry: I guess just hang out. Watch TV. Talk.

Sanderson: You said that math was your best subject area.

Parry: Yeah.

Sanderson: That was never my strong suit. Still isn't. I can add, subtract, multiply and divide. Anything else... So, in '64, you entered West Point?

Parry: Right.

Sanderson: When you got to West Point, what was it like getting there?

Parry: It was pretty much what I expected. You know the basics. What it looked like was Valley Forge, so you know. I went in, the first two months were called "Beast Barracks" and it was

very severe discipline and hazing and everything and they taught you to march and all this stuff, all of which I knew because I'd been to Valley Forge. And how to wear your uniform and all that kind of stuff. That goes for July and August and then you're integrated into the regular corps of cadets at the end of August, the beginning of September. And then you start the academic year. It's very severe. They have you walk in and there are all sorts of stories about you know about people who are carrying radios and stuff and they make you drop everything you have, you know, and I just did that, obviously, pretty much what I expected.

Sanderson: What was [sic] some of the things that you enjoyed while you were there? Subjects, anything specifically?

Parry: I did Russian Area studies and that was pretty much what I liked. I was in a thing called the Culture Club which was an interesting name. But the guy who did Russian area, who did Russian history, had this thing where we took some field trips down to New York and we met George Balanchine and Suzanne Pleshette, not Suzanne Farrell, the great ballerina, I've completely forgotten her name, the great ballerina that worked for George Balanchine...oh.

Sanderson: I think I know who you're talking about.

Parry: I'm just completely spacing her name right now.

Sanderson: I'm seeing her face.

Parry: And we went to a lot of cultural events like that and you know and ate at the Russian Tea House in New York which is super fine restaurant. And we practiced. And it wasn't just Russian, it was really high culture and stuff, so I was exposed to a lot of stuff that was very good. We did the Russian Club. We did some plays there. I actually acted in a couple of plays, both in the Russian Club and... The Russian club did a thing where I played Lenin and then we had our senior play where I played a hippie actually. And things like that. There were a lot of extracurricular activities that were interesting. And I did a lot of ice skating at West Point. I actually went out for the hockey team one year. I didn't make it, but I went out for the hockey team and spent a lot of time on the ice in the winter and that was fun.

Sanderson: What was some of the things you really excelled at, or you did excel at, at West Point?

Parry: I did well in Math and Physics and that was it. I was not at the top of my class; I was about a third of the way down. I was considered an academic kind of oriented person and that's what... the education there is non-parallel, it was superb. It was very broad-based. It's about 60% science, engineering, and mathematics, and about 40% humanities and language and things like that. So it was very well-balanced. I had a course in virtually everything except for

accounting and biology, the only two things I didn't, weren't touched on in some course that I had. So, I'm very pleased with the education I got there. I would argue that it's the best education one can get. [Nice from Sanderson in the background] Yeah.

Sanderson: I've heard a lot of people that come out of there, they say it's one of the best ones they've ever had. And of course, you've got the Naval Academy and the [US] Navy/Army rivalry that kind of goes back and forth. Some people say that Annapolis is better on one side and West Point is better for the other side. Kind of goes back and forth. Which always makes it, makes it interesting. [Comments in the background from Parry, like "Yeah" and "There you go."] Some of the courses, I know they used to offer, I don't know if they still do, but do they still teach saber fighting there?

Parry: No.

Sanderson: 'Cause I know at one point it was part of one of the core classes they a..

Parry: That was before I was there, but you know, it was, we had the [course] History of Military Art, I mean you had, you learned. Most of the military stuff other than that one course, in the history of military art, which was a senior course, the fourth, your final year. All the tactical stuff and things were done during the summer. You got one month off in the summer and then each summer you did something different for the two months of the summer. So, it's like the military. You get thirty days' leave a year. And you got some extra because you got Christmas and a spring break. But basically, it was thirty days a year.

Sanderson: What was [sic] some of the summer classes you had?

Parry: Well, the first year, you had Beast Barracks when you come in as a freshman. And then as a sophomore, going into your sophomore year, you go out to Camp Buckner [New York] and that's basic tactical training, sort of an AIT, Advanced Individual Training kind of thing, where you do recondo [acronym of RECONnaissance commanDO] training and other tactical and military training. Your junior year, it switches between junior and senior, but one of those two years, you go out and spend two months as a platoon leader in an actual unit. I was at the 101st Airborne in Charlie Company of 326 Airborne Engineers and they were preparing to go to Vietnam. One Brigade of the 101st was already in Vietnam. This was part of the unit that was getting ready to go over, went over shortly thereafter. I did that in my junior year and then in your senior year, you are in the cadre for Beast Barracks. And that switches off. So.

Sanderson: How was it when you got to the 101st?

Parry: I enjoyed that very much. I had one of these seminal, little experiences. We had one of these first sergeants, who if I remember correctly, was about 6'4" and 250 pounds, huge guy,

you know, "Arr, arr." And one night he put his arm around me and said, "You're coming with me." So he took me off and we met some captain whom I had never seen before or since, and we spent all night drinking. And the next day I was so drunk, so hungover, the next day, they literally just sat me in the platoon leader's room and I just sat there all day like this and everybody was going by, "Boy, he really tied one on last night." And it was like a pride thing, you know. It was like really good. It was sort of a rite of passage kind thing you know. And we went out and did some tactical exercises and stuff like that, you know and it was, I learned a bit and got to know people and got a feel for the thing and so I felt pretty good about that. It was a good experience. I've always been, and I wanted to go into the 101st, and I later changed that, but I've always had an affinity for the 101st Airborne Screaming Eagles.

Sanderson: Was this down at Fort Bragg?

Parry: No, they were at [Fort] Campbell [at the Kentucky-Tennessee border]. The 82nd is at Bragg.

Sanderson: I always get the two mixed up. You would think my entire family is all Army and I'm the traitor that joined the Navy.

Parry: No, I got you.

Sanderson: You would think I would know it especially since I had a cousin in the 101st before he went Delta. [Parry in background, okay] During the time you when you were there, kind of talking about the Navy, the Army-Navy rivalry, did you go to the games every year or...

Parry: Oh yeah. You had to. The Army-Navy game, the football game, was, everybody was there. That was the big one. And you went to other sports as they came up and it was, actually, if I remember it correctly, we lost the first three years but we won my senior year. Or was it my freshman year? We beat Staubach. That was. Rollie Stichweh beat [Roger] Staubach and I think maybe that was my freshman year and I think we lost the others, but I don't remember. But we beat Staubach when he was the quarterback for Navy. I remember that. Yeah, we went every year and my parents would meet me down there because they played in Philadelphia then. So it was convenient.

Sanderson: What was the atmosphere of the games like?

Parry: Oh, it was very exciting and you're all up and you know, after the game everybody went out in the city and things like that. It was great. You were really up for it. It was a big deal. Now, they've lost thirteen in a row and that's probably not as, they're probably just as excited but the outcome really stinks. [Laughter from both]

Sanderson: Have you been to any of the games since you graduated? Do you watch them every year?

Parry: Yeah, I watch them with Harris Kohn, who you interviewed, I don't know if you interviewed him, but he was interviewed down here. Yeah, we just have this little thing going on. We doubled the bet this year to two dollars. [Laughter]

Sanderson: It's still a huge rivalry. My [US Navy] Reserve unit that I'm at out in Rock Island, it's there at the Arsenal, so of course during the last Army-Navy game, of course, we had to have a little fun. So the Army guys, they're just like, "Dang it." ... During your time there, what was your actual major?

Parry: We didn't have majors. You had a completely fixed course. You came out with a Bachelor of Science with no major. Um, I had, because I was academically proficient, I got a couple of extra...I was on the Dean's List, I guess. Anyway, I got a couple extra electives, but basically, you only got four electives, one each semester for the last two years. All the rest of the thing was set with no major. Now, actually, if you go back and look at the thing, most majors are like thirty hours in a specific thing, well, there are all kinds of things I had thirty hours in. I had thirty hours in Russian Area Studies, I had thirty hours in math, I had thirty hours of engineering, you know. Probably could have been one, but they didn't, the actual degree says no major.

Sanderson: Roll out of there with four or five bachelors...

Parry: Yeah. Math was all, most of it was mandatory, but I went on and some of my electives in my junior year were in math, but most math was mandatory. You would take, let's see. Nine hours, an hour and a half, every day, six days a week. That's nine hours, your first two semesters, your freshman year. And more people are lost through math than any other single academic thing in the first year. So you take eighteen hours of math your first year and then you do nine hours total for the second so that's twenty-seven hours right there and I took some. And that's mandatory. There's a lot of math.

Sanderson: Thank God I never went.

Parry: You would have learned math. [Lots of laughter from both]

Sanderson: And you graduated from West Point in 1968? Correct?

Parry: Right.

Sanderson: When you graduated in '68, did they give you an option of where you wanted to go?

Parry: Yeah. You had basically two assemblies of the class. One, you picked your branch and I picked Infantry. And then the second one, you went in and you picked your assignment. And you picked your first assignment and if you volunteered for Vietnam, then you picked your Vietnam unit. Or maybe vice versa. Maybe you picked your Vietnam unit and then first your assignment. But you got to do that. Everybody, everybody picked the 82nd Airborne so I didn't want to go there. I did not want to be around all these people and be an assistant platoon leader or something like that. So I picked a place where there was only going to be one person going to be there. I was in the only infantry unit at Fort Sill, [Oklahoma] which is the home of the Artillery. So I went to the 4/30th Infantry and I volunteered for the 1st Cavalry in Vietnam. So basically it took a year to get to Vietnam for West Pointers.

Sanderson: Why specifically the 1st Cavalry?

Parry: It was air mobile and it was the leading edge of what was going on in the military at that time. That's what I wanted. I really wanted to see what was going on with the air mobile concept. Now, it turns out that the 101st was also air mobile, but I didn't quite understand that at the time. The 1st Cav was the leading edge and had been trained at Fort Benning and was the proto-typical air mobile unit.

Sanderson: You definitely wanted to have a little fun with your career, huh?

Parry: Yeah, and you want to be on the leading edge. So when I got to Vietnam, they actually said, "Yes, you have orders to the 1st Cav, but you can go anywhere you want" and for about ten seconds contemplated going to the 173rd Airborne because that's a very prestigious unit [i.e., brigade] also, but I decided my decision to go to the 1st Cav was a good one and I stuck with that.

Sanderson: So, when you got to, we're kind of going back, what type of training did you receive at Fort Sill?

Parry: I was a platoon leader. I was a mortar platoon leader for Alpha Company of the 4th of the 30th. What happened is after you graduated, you got sixty days' leave and from there you went to the Infantry Officer Basic Course at Fort Benning and did five weeks there. I had already been to Airborne, during... I was in the first cadet class to go to Airborne, so I was Airborne at West Point. And so we went from the Infantry Officer Basic into Ranger School. Went through Ranger School and then reported to Fort Sill to the 4th and 30th Infantry and I was a mortar platoon leader there for six months.

Sanderson: How was the Ranger School?

Parry: Ranger School was extremely tough and a lot of people had some taste of it and were recondo back at Fort Buckner [New York]. I had broken my wrist that summer so I couldn't go to recondo, so I found Ranger School to be very tough. I barely made it through, but I did make it through. And, you know, it taught me a lot. It taught me a lot about self-endurance, and you know, just continuing on with what you are doing and things like that.

Sanderson: 'Specially growing up where I was from, it was always interesting, you, back when Fort Benning was open, and my brother was stationed there, we would always go by there and he was thinking about going to Ranger School and we would see the Rangers... We could always tell who was in the Ranger class, 'cause if they did get to go to the [US Armed Forces] Commissary, they would be like kinda zoned out and you could tell they were kinda forced to go in there and they, it was like..... [Laughter from Parry]

Parry: I don't even remember. I don't remember even being allowed to do anything except in terms of being off of the Ranger thing. You know, we were, it was just a straight two months of the Benning phase, the mountain phase, and the jungle phase. So. Then I guess we came back to Benning at the end. It was very tough. Psychologically tough, you know, just, seven-day patrols with virtually no sleep, you know, it was really difficult.

Sanderson: Especially being down there, growing up down there, I don't know what it was like. As soon as you cross the Chattahoochee and get into the Benning side, the Georgia side of Benning, it was like automatically the humidity goes up 30% and the temperature goes up ten degrees. And it was like wow. I can never complain about hanging out with the Marines now down in Camp Lejeune [North Carolina] never again. [Comments of "yeah" from Parry in the background] Just thinking about that is like 'oow'. It's like you get on that side especially next to the airfield, it's like, it almost takes your breath away. Even during the wintertime. Always seems hot around there.

Parry: Although in the winter, we were winter Rangers, November, I graduated in November. That was the, you know, we went down to Eglin Air Force Base, down in the [Florida] panhandle and that was the jungle phase. But it got down to 18 degrees. We did a river crossing one night at 5 o'clock and the temperature dropped to 18 degrees and our web gear was frozen and standing up by itself and I practically got frostbite on my feet that affected me for years. Doesn't anymore, but it affected me severely for years. That was really cold. I'm in Florida freezing, [laughter] a little ironic.

Sanderson: That part is ... the panhandle of Florida is just an interesting area. [Laughter from Parry at this point] I always tell people if they've never been that they are basically going to lower Alabama. It's like, wow, you guys have thicker accents than we do. [More laughter from Parry] Um, when did you, when did you leave for Vietnam?

Parry: Well, I went on leave in June and I left for, I got married and moved to Boston, and I left for, I don't know, beginning of July, and went to Fort Lewis, Washington, and they flew me out on July 9th. So, my DEROS date [Date Estimated Return from Overseas; meant here to mean the beginning of his tour of duty] was July 9th, 1969, and the DEROS date was July 1970, which got pushed a couple of times. But I actually left on July 9, 1969, and I've forgotten how they counted it, it was either when I left or when I arrived in country.

Sanderson: When you uh, where did you arrive?

Parry: In Cam Ranh Bay.

Sanderson: Into Cam Ranh Bay?

Parry: They had a replacement center there. Repo depot.

Sanderson: And while you were there, how long were you at the replacement center?

Parry: Three days.

Sanderson: Three days? And then you reported to the 1st Cav?

Parry: Yeah, they assigned me to the 1st and the 8th and then they flew me out there. I've forgotten exactly how that went, but I think I took a fixed-wing into Biên Hòa and a helicopter up to the firebase¹ they were on which was Wescott.

Sanderson: Which one?

Parry: Firebase Wescott.

Few seconds pause.

Sanderson: Now when you got there, what type of training did, what type of training did they give you when you first showed up there?

Parry: There was no training. None. They just assigned me to a platoon. I was the 2nd Platoon leader in Alpha Company. I think I was 2nd Platoon. I don't actually remember, but I think it was 2nd Platoon, Alpha Company.

Sanderson: [some mumbling before a question] Now being the air mobile group and those guys being on the cutting edge..... What was [sic] some of your duties and responsibilities specifically within that area?

¹ Firebases and landing zones were interchangeable terms in this context

Parry: Well, we did a lot of patrolling off Wescott and then they would airlift us and then there was a routine you went through as a platoon leader. When the helicopters came in to do a combat assault, essentially the pilots would tell you what the, I've forgotten what they call it [ACL, Aircraft Combat Load], but it's the load, how many soldiers they could take, you know, how many that day. And it depended on the temperature and the thickness of the air and all that kind of stuff, what lift capability they had. So it was usually five or six. And so you had to divide your platoon into five or six grouped people, groups and you had to make sure that the platoon leader and the radio operator were there at the beginning and when they deployed off the helicopters they had to deploy in a certain direction because your platoon was responsible either for, if you were the very first ones in then you had to establish a perimeter all the way around, but you basically had one-third of the perimeter, you know. And you had to coordinate how people were going to get to their different positions and stuff like that and made sure they understood it and if they were inboard, that is two helicopters coming like this, that they didn't shoot the other helicopter. If they were outboard, they would move directly into the jungle. So, there were specific tasks you took. Make sure everybody had their gear and stuff like that. And then you did a combat assault and the company would move out or platoon would move out and you would do patrolling and try to find, try to engage the enemy. Or actually what happened was the enemy engaged us. Patrolled until they found us.

Sanderson: And during that time when you guys would come into the LZ [landing zone], would you fast rope or would they actually land?

Parry: They would land. Usually what they would do is hover down about four or six feet off the ground and you would jump out. But essentially it was supposed to be landing. Sort of like stopping for a stop sign in Hollywood. [Laughter from both]

Sanderson: What do they call that, a California stop? They need to change it to a Chicago stop. ["Right" from Parry in the background] 'Cause people actually get mad if you actually come to a stop. ' Specially the cabbies around here.

Parry: It's the same with helicopters. They never actually landed, rarely actually landed, you know.

Sanderson: What was it like your first time ever going into this?

Parry: I was very excited. Combat assault was very exciting. You're hanging on the edge, there are no doors on the helicopter, you're flying along, so you're literally out there looking out the door, and of course, as the platoon leader, I was right there. I wasn't inside the helicopter. And it's very exciting, a lot of adrenaline. And you get out. And I fortunately never hit the really serious red LZ, I had some yellow LZs, questionables [in terms of security], you know, a couple, but most of them we went in were secure, were green. Not secure, but they were green. And

we had, by the time I left, we had a really good routine down on how to exactly to conduct a combat assault and I was the air operations officer for a month so I really got to do it from a number of different ways. And that served me in good stead.

Sanderson: And during that time, I know from looking specifically at 1st Cav, they were starting to dive into Laos and Cambodia...and um...

Parry: That came a year later. That was in May of '70 that we actually went into Cambodia. My unit never really went into Cambodia. There was some discussion of it. Some of the units I guess got in there, but I know the battalion commander at least describes it at one point as the only battalion that didn't go in. When I had been extended, or I extended my tour, and I came back from leave, I had a thirty-day leave home, and they had gone into Cambodia, we hadn't, and I left and when they came back, I was in some disputed areas and walked out of "Cambodia". We were part of the campaign but, you know, and I missed a whole chunk of it, so some people I guess went in and some didn't. But I missed, I was there for the initial assault by the Division, but the Battalion activities, I missed a whole bunch of it. But that was much later.

Sanderson: That was later? 'Cause that was, unfortunately, it was like, because of the sequestration, the 1st Cav Museum [Fort Hood], they have some stuff on their site, but not as much as you would think they would have. [Oh really, from Parry in the background]

Parry: I've never been down there.

Sanderson: And then um, and they currently, you know, because Uncle Sam you know cut back the budget, it's, you know, sometimes trying to get some information other than getting it from either people that have been there or from some of the books that have been written, there's not a lot of readily available information.

Parry: That's interesting, yeah.

Sanderson: You know especially as much as you think there would be. To being able pick up the phone and call the museum historian and get a lot more you know actual content, more of the reports. It's almost kind of that you know especially nowadays that people are starting to really look back at Vietnam there's a bigger interest in Vietnam that's starting to develop in the last couple of years, so that's one of the things fortunately they have all that good stuff down there but it's kind of hard to get access to it.

Parry: Hmm, that's interesting. I didn't know that.

Sanderson: During that time, how many various operations were you involved in?

Parry: We were on continual patrol. I mean, basically what happened was we, you would go out and patrol for about three weeks. Your company would be out in the bush around the firebase, patrolling, conducting operations. Then you would have one week where you were actually on the firebase as on the defensive perimeter and then you go back out. You rotated the four companies through the firebase, you know, so it was basically three weeks out and one in, three weeks out and one in. Actually, when I was with Alpha Company, I was there for two and a half months and we went forty days without a fire-fight and I actually got my CIB [Combat Infantry Badge] after being in Combat Operations for thirty days having never been in a fire-fight. On about my fortieth day, we got in our first firefight. You know, from then on it was pretty regular stuff, but it was you know that was what happened when I was there. We were on Wescott a long time, I don't remember how long, but it was quite a while and then we started this going to a series of firebases and I don't remember them all. I remember one here and one there and, you know.

Sanderson: How was the life like at the firebase?

Parry: It depended on what firebase you were on. The firebases really changed over the period I was there. When I first got there, they were building huge bunkers with 10 x 10 beams and they were fortresses kinds of things. By the time I left, they were just bull-doing up a TOC, Tactical Operations Center, throwing up a berm and it was a very, much quicker, and cleaner operation. Some of the firebases were really nice. They all had a helicopter pad where we could take supplies, get supplies in, or where troops could come in and out and you know, tactical operations center. Artillery. They all had three tubes of 155" and six tubes of 105" artillery on them and mortar sections, things like that. Some were terrible. Some were really muddy. During the rainy season, if it wasn't properly drained, you could be in a sea of mud. One of them had just rats. We had; I think it was [Firebase] Ellen. It had been occupied and then deserted and then occupied by the Vietnamese, I understand. And then deserted when we came in and reoccupied it, we killed two hundred rats in the first night. We actually sent people out to kill rats. It was just terrible. Really. And it was really dirty and muddy, and you know, it was, that's what it was like, you know.

Sanderson: Um, one of the, during that time, you had written that it kind of, the people that you served with kind of, the training was kind of poor in some areas, strong in other areas. What specifically, um, would you....

Parry: Well, I have come to the conclusion, ex-post, this was, I don't think I really understood it while I was in-country. There were a number of things that were really seriously wrong. The training that the troops had was really, really poor. We didn't go through any training while we were in Vietnam. You know, in World War II, they spent, they would go up to the front lines and then after a while on the front lines they would be pulled back into the rear areas, they would

go through some training and reorganization and then they would be replaced on the front lines. So, if you look at the history, the maximum time spent on the front line was about 168 days a year. We never did that. And there was no training. The units, my unit did not deploy and did not maneuver during combat. In fact, early on, I had recommended, we were in a firefight, it was with Alpha Company. And the Company, and I recommended that my platoon maneuver and the platoon wasn't going to maneuver and the people that, "No, we don't do that" and the Company Commander told me "No, you don't do that." You know, all you do is you form a circle and you shoot. And call in artillery and aircraft and things like that, you know, to bomb the enemy. And the training was very poor. Even, you know, I had to show people how to set up Claymores and things like that and booby traps that we would set up to kill the enemy. You know. And they didn't know how to do that kind of stuff. They didn't know how to maneuver. We didn't shoot at the enemy very well. A lot of people, I don't know if their weapons were not zeroed or what happened, but they weren't, they were very poorly trained, and they were very poor in the execution of any kind of military operation. The other thing I thought, and I look back and I think it is criminal, and everybody knew at the time, that any E7 or above worth his salt could get out of the field. So the fact is, your E7 is supposed to be your platoon sergeant and so we had very few E7's in the field. You know. Platoon sergeants were if you were really lucky, you got an E6 platoon sergeant. Most of the platoon sergeants were E5's and they had been promoted in-country. Come in-country as a private, get promoted to Spec 4, get promoted to E5 and you're a platoon sergeant. Or a squad leader and they didn't know what they were doing. And many of the E5s and E6s were what we called "Shake and Bakes." They came in, they went to basic training, they went to AIT, they went to NCO school and then they came over and they were E6s. They had been in the Army for four months and they were E6s. And they were platoon sergeants. And, you know, again, I didn't have anything to compare it to, I mean, well, I had way more training than anybody else because I had gone through four years at West Point and then six months of infantry officer and basic and Ranger School and I also had been to Jungle Warfare School, so I had way more training than most of the others. But I didn't recognize, how, what that disparity was, until later. And I blame the generals. The generals are sitting down in their little Pentagonal things back in, way in the rear, and they didn't, they weren't connected with what was going on, and they didn't enforce the structure of the Army. If we had had the experience of E7 platoon sergeants and E8 1st Sergeants. When I was a company commander, I had a 1st Sergeant, E8 1st Sergeant, a real 1st Sergeant, who was in the field with me all the time. Not because I ordered him to be there, but because he knew that was where he ought to be. That was such a huge exception that it was notable. You know. And I blame the generals and the colonels, the ones who had the experience. They should have insisted that we have full units out there, that every rank was, every infantry E7 was out in the field, doing what they were supposed to do. And that didn't happen. The discipline, and the morale of the troops, just "pfft", you know, down the tubes. By the time I was there, by the

time I had been through, toward the end of my tour when I was the S4, Battalion S4, CBS came in and did a TV show on the, what it was really like to be with the unit, and it was all about these guys blowing dope and smoking drugs and doing drugs and all that kind of stuff. And it was with our sister battalion, the first of the twelfth, second of the twelfth, and they made everybody from E5 and above in the Division watch this. You know, and it just showed that morale and discipline were completely shot and, you know, it was really bad. And that's the situation we were in Vietnam. People didn't know what was going on. They weren't trained. And, you know, the discipline. Instead of discipline, what they tried to do was coddle the troops and make sure that we had plenty of beer and that we had air mattresses and stuff like that. None of which is bad, you know, the creature comforts, none of which is bad. But it isn't the replacement for the proper structure and making sure that the higher-ups, the vision of everybody that was the higher-ups was that they were doing everything they could to get out of the field and out of combat. You know. I still think that today, more than ever, that was part of the tragedy that was going on there.

Sanderson: What was some of the things that you tried to do as a commander to actually bring up your unit's morale? Your subordinates.

Parry: We had, I was with different units and spent two and a half months with Alpha Company and then I went back and I was the XO [executive officer] of Delta Company and I realized that sitting in the rear after two and a half months in the field was not going to do anything for my career, so I volunteered to go back out into the field. The platoon leader got killed in Bravo Company and he later got the Medal of Honor, Lacey. And um, I went out and I replaced him, and yeah there's some really good stories about that. And I went out and that platoon was much better, had higher morale. We also did a lot more in terms of, there was a much better company commander. My company commander in Alpha Company was twenty-one years old, he didn't know what he was doing, you know, and was hated by everybody. There was actually a ransom on his head, but nobody ever had the guts to actually do anything about it. He was terrible. In Bravo Company we had a much more mature, well-trained company commanders who knew what they were doing. And so that was a much better situation, but still not trained, still not very highly performing but we did better than we did in Alpha Company. When I was in Delta Company, I just tried to get the people to move. By that time, you know, I had already six, seven months in the field and I knew what I was doing, but in the context of where we were. We didn't maneuver and stuff like that. They had been walking single file down trails and I tried to change that, and you know. It's easy to walk single file. You have a guy at the front and everybody else just follows. We always moved in three columns and I tried to get them to move in three columns and they hated that. And then they would bunch up into one column. They would find some difficulty, a thick bushes or something, and clump together and we got hit when that happened and took some casualties. But kept trying to

spread people out and it was much better to move in three columns through the jungle and never along the trail. Maybe parallel to, but never along the trail. So, it was difficult. You know. And we had a terrible battalion commander for a while. He'd been relieved in the Americal Division and then came down and was trying to recoup his career. He was an idiot. And then when I was a company commander, we had a new battalion commander named Jack Galvin and he became a four-star general and he was brilliant. He was the best guy I ever served with. He changed the whole culture. We had had a race war going on within the battalion and it disappeared within one month of him coming in so he really knew what he was doing and that really changed the complexion of the whole thing. I was a company commander under Jack Galvin and that was much better. [Nice in the background from Sanderson] Yeah.

Sanderson: Sounds like it definitely got a lot better on that one and truly shows that leadership comes from the top down.

Parry: Yeah. Absolutely.

Sanderson: You can have the best subordinate, the best junior troops out there, but if you don't have a good top, forget about it.

Parry: Yeah. Yeah. Exactly. When I was in the rear, you know, that race war was going on and I spent a lot of my time as a company XO, Delta Company XO, in 1969, processing people out. There virtually was a race war going on and it expressed itself as all the African Americans refusing to go to the field. So I was sitting there processing general discharges to get these people out of the military and that problem disappeared when Galvin came in later. I had volunteered to go back out to the field and we had a battalion XO, a major, whose name was Blake and I saw him later in '95, after the war at one of our reunions and he was a very interesting guy. He's mentioned in the book *Incursion*. He was in charge of the green line when Quàn Lợi was hit in August of '69, and I was with Alpha Company. We were about ten-twelve clicks off of Quàn Lợi patrolling and Quàn Lợi got hit and Quàn Lợi was a brigade-level firebase. It was huge. And there were a lot of people killed and a lot of the enemy killed in that fight. And when I had come out of the field, he had told me, I had a big handlebar mustache, and he told me he wanted my mustache to look like his and he didn't have one. So, he made me shave off my handlebar mustache. But before I went back out to the field, he actually called me in and he said, "Look, you don't have to do this. There is no pressure whatsoever. We have a job for you if you want to go out and replace Lacey, you know, we can do it. But if you want to just stay here, you can do it. There's no pressure, it won't affect your career." Well, I thought it would affect my career in the longer term, so I volunteered to go back out. But it was really nice of him to do that, it was, you know, he really mentored me in that situation, and it was really good. And I went back out and the company commander was Jerry Fitzgerald and he was there for, not even a month, three weeks, and then Charles Baughman took over for him. Baughman later

became a brigadier general. Jerry Fitzgerald leads our regular reunions. He's recognized as the company commander for our Bravo Company reunions. We have a Bravo Company reunion every year in March that we go to and that was a good platoon. I'm still in touch. I just saw, Bill Nichols was one of my squad leaders and I just saw him the other day. I was down in Philadelphia where he lives. We made contact on a fairly regular basis and found caches. And we had some. You know. And that was most of my experience as I recall was with Bravo Company. With Alpha Company we had smaller unit contact, a lot of smaller unit contact, where, as I said, we would be patrolling, or we'd be sent up, and they would hit us and that was how we found them. And that was my experience through most of Vietnam. We rarely came upon the enemy and engaged them. We found a lot of caches when I was with Alpha Company. We would find, and later with Bravo, but more with Alpha. We would find huge bunkers just full of weapons and things like that. And a...

Sanderson: Was the intelligence not very well gathered?

Parry: No, the intelligence didn't get down to us. They would tell us stuff but it was pretty much useless at the company level and we were working along the Cambodian border and III Corps and later in books like *Incursion* and others they said "Well, the Ho Chi Minh Trail would come down and it would divide into three right along where we were working and they would come down and that would be supply routes into III Corps" and when it was our III Corps and then into the Delta regions for units down there and we were interdicting supplies along those routes and patrols of the, mainly North Vietnamese, units, although once in a while we hit units of the VC [Viet Cong]. But, you know, we didn't really understand that at all. All we knew was that we were patrolling around looking for the enemy and you would find them once in a while and you wouldn't other times. But one firefight I had with Bravo Company. The enemy....you know there is a maneuver, an infantry maneuver, and this is an example of the difference in discipline. Where what happens is you want to disengage from the enemy. You stand up in the middle of the fire-fight and shoot lots, a lot, and you gain fire superiority. Everybody else has to keep their head down and then you withdraw. And this was the classic thing that we all laughed at. No one understood how it worked or why it would work, or you know, and nobody would do it. Well, the Vietnamese did it to me. We had come into a camp and it was obvious that it was fresh and things like that and we started to move through, we didn't know what was going on and they hit us and killed one guy and we started shooting back and we pretty much out-gunned them, there were only four or five of them, we don't know. And then all of a sudden, they did exactly that maneuver. They all stood up and started shooting, a lot, so we all got our heads down and they disengaged and ran away. And that's the discipline they had, the training they had, the ability they had to maneuver, and you know, versus what our military was. They were much better-trained infantry than we had and that was my experience while we were over there. As a company commander, I only had a couple of engagements. Again, that was

basically they hit us and we would shoot back and attempt to kill them. It was really simple. By that time I was really scared and it wasn't, I was shaking and stuff like that, you know. So, I was not an aggressive company commander. I did not go out and look for combat, you know. I was trying to keep the troops safe and keep people alive. It didn't always work, but that's what I did.

Sanderson: When you did become a company commander, um, um, what was one, what was some of the things, um, besides, um, looking, um, doing what you could to, you know, take care of them, um, keep them alive, what was, um, some of the more enjoyable things, um, that you enjoyed about being a company commander?

Parry: Enjoyed isn't a term I would have used, I don't think. I mean the idea was to get them to do, you know, to move in a secure manner, and to set up in a secure manner. Again, you had a regular routine. Alright. You moved in three columns, and everybody knew exactly, you know, you could, with three columns you could automatically make a perimeter, so when you got hit, you had an automatic perimeter that was already pretty much there, you know. One unit go forward, others to the side, and one to the rear. So, you had, what was, you know, I really knew how to do that stuff, and how to call in artillery and have regular artillery support and everything else. So, keeping people secure was the main deal. You know. And I avoided...There was one situation where we were inserted on a combat assault and they said the helicopters found a .50 caliber machine gun] position north of where we were. We were supposed to move south. And the battalion commander told me, "You can do what you want" and I said, "Really?" I had seen, I had spent so much time investigating .50 caliber positions and I'd never found one. So, I moved in the opposite direction. I just said, "To hell with that." I didn't believe them. I think I got dinged for that later, not by the battalion commander, but by the brigade commander. But, you know, I didn't want to go up against a .50 cal anyway, so they gave me my choice, I moved in the other direction. But I don't know what I did to make it enjoyable. There's nothing that I enjoyed about being a company commander, but I knew what I was doing and I felt like by being competent and having more experience than most company commanders and most of the people in the field, with that unit, with the 1st of the 8th Cav, that I was able to minimize the impact of combat. In other words, keep people alive. And we had plenty of people killed, you know, that haunted me for years.

Sanderson: I know your, you'd said you stay in contact, you stay in contact with quite a few people, um, quite a few people from Bravo. Um, is there, um, any of 'em that tried to contact you and you're like, 'Eh, I remember this guy? And no.'

Parry: No. No, and mainly because I don't remember most people that I was with. I have a really hard time. I think I have blocked out a lot of the people I served with. Names and things like that. It's been difficult, but no, you know, there's some people I like and some people I don't like, and people I've gotten along with afterward, you know, and people I haven't gotten

along with afterward, and people I've been in touch with and people I've lost contact with. There was one guy who I thought was really disliked in Vietnam whom I met afterward and I kept in touch with him for years. Eventually, he wandered off and I've lost touch with him, but that's on him and not on me.

Sanderson: It's a, um, I think, I think that's one of the constants in the military. When you're there, when you're with someone you don't like, 'Ahh, it's like, huh, *that guy*.' And then afterwards, later on, you sit down and like, 'Yep, he's actually not a bad guy.'

Parry: Yeah. This guy, he was a good guy. He had some, his problems from Vietnam really haunted him for [years], and he had a lost decade. The seventies. Went to the VA and didn't get good care back in the seventies, you know, but he was an okay guy.

Sanderson: During the time, I know, um, you received a lot of very prestigious medals. Um, between the silver star and five bronze stars with a V for valor, two ARCOMs [Army Commendation Medals], [Parry in the background, one ARCOM], with a V. Um. Can you talk about, um, some of the stuff that you did to get those awards if you'd like to?

Parry: Yeah, well. The Silver Star [Medal], that was with Alpha Company and [big sigh] we were in a fire-fight and there was a new platoon leader as on first day, or first week, really. And another platoon. And I don't think they wrote it up quite this way. He didn't know what he was doing, and everybody was jammed up. And his side of the perimeter was getting hit. So, I got up and actually spread out the unit and moved from position to position under fire and got things set up and did my own platoon as well. I mean I didn't take over his platoon, but I just got them moved around and got people in the position where they were supposed to be shooting back. We were in very thick jungle so we never saw anybody. But, and I was later told, you know, I never got a Purple Heart. My thing about Purple Hearts, is, stuff was going off all around me when none of it went through me. You know, as simple as that. One of my RTO, my Radio Telephone Operator, later said, "Sir, these bullets were going like an inch over your head." And I didn't even know. I mean I knew that there were bullets going by but I didn't know they were that close. So, you know, they gave me the Silver Star for that and I had kind of, they had put me in for the Silver Star and I had to sort of find out what happened to it but when I asked about it, it went through. I got that sometime later. You know about almost a year later. It took a while for that to happen. The Bronze Star {Medal} for Valor, was, I was the Air Operations Officer, night tactical operations officer, and we got hit by twenty or thirty rockets, incoming, heavy incoming on the firebase. And one was killed, nineteen wounded, I think, if I remember correctly. I was in the TOC and there was a sleeping area and we shared beds. The day-time people would sleep at night and the night-time during the day. And the guy who was sleeping in my bed, that I shared my bunk with, got wounded by shell fragments, rocket fragments coming in that actually got in past the baffling and into the TOC. I did not get wounded, but the, they

asked me to run out, we had wounded, and we had the Intelligence sergeant who had a sucking chest wound. So, they wanted me to go over to the medical bunker and get the doctor. So, I ran through fire to the medical bunker, informed the doctor, who had the guy who was dying and some other people that were seriously wounded there, told me, you know, "sucking chest wound, seal it up, put a poncho around him, stuff like that, I'll be over there as soon as I can." And I ran back and took care of the guy and they gave me, the battalion XO put me in for the Bronze Star for Valor for that. The other four Bronze Stars, you got a Bronze Star for being in combat for six months. At the time I was there for almost two years, so I wound up with four Bronze Stars for being in the combat situation. The ARCOM for Valor, that was that firefight that I talked about where they stood up and shot back. That was, the company commander put me in for the ARCOM for Valor for that operation that we had. So, I, the way I look at it, I also have an Air Medal, basically, I've got three awards for valor and six awards for being in a dangerous place for a long time. And, you know, I'm proud of that. That's all right.

Sanderson: Definitely. When I was reading it, I was like wow as to the point where I was kind of like, when I walked up, I was kind of like, I didn't initially, when I shook your hand, it was like wow, it was kind of hard to look you in the eye at the time, like 'I'm shaking hands with a guy who's been to hell and back times ten, you know, and has these very prestigious medals' so it was very, uh, very good to meet you on there. [Parry responds quietly, thank you] It was almost kind of ties the tongue to the fact that especially the fact that you'd gone through a lot of that stuff. That's one of those makes you definitely stop and think and you know and um. With the air operations officer, what was [were] some of the things that you did specifically as the air operations officer?

Parry: That was the most fun job I had. We would actually plan the combat assaults. And you would pick, you were looking at the map and you would have to pick an LZ which was basically a hole in the jungle or field and you'd would want the largest field you could find within the area of operations so you could get more helicopters at one time in. The number, you determine the number of helicopters could get in and you had the unit you were going to pick up and you had to figure out. Usually, you did not go from insecure to insecure. Usually, you went from insecure to secure and secure to insecure. So, you would pick a unit up and bring them back to the firebase and then launch them from the firebase to a new LZ. So you would, we would... You had to plan those whether you were picking somebody up or inserting someone. The insertions were great fun. Basically, you would fire artillery here and put them in over here or we'd fire the artillery all around where they were and then you would fire aerial rocket artillery. That was tube artillery. Then you'd have aerial rocket artillery come in beforehand and then the helicopters would come in behind that and you had the time, the artillery, because you can't fire, you can't fly in the route of the tube artillery or you'll shoot down your own helicopters.

Parry: So you have to plan that and you have timing on everything. You have to the final round. The tubes are clear and the final rounds are Willy Pete, white phosphorus rounds that go off, they mark, the end of the tube artillery, then the aerial rocket artillery, which is Cobra helicopters, would come in and they would shoot. And then you'd come in behind them with the helicopters. And in the meantime, I was flying with the battalion S3 and a battalion commander in the in the command and control helicopter above all of this. You know, And, you know, you would come in and say sorties of three helicopters would come down, set down, take off, and the next three would come in. And depending on how many helicopters you had, they would have to go back and pick up more people or, you know, and the people on the ground would be there, you know, And so it was you know, you're coordinating all of this. And I really liked that. I would have liked to have done that for longer. I was the first lieutenant at the time. I later was promoted to captain. And... that was a fun job because it was very detailed. And later in the infantry officer advanced course, I realized we had a whole section on how to do a combat assault. And I was like, "Hey, I'm an expert." You know, I really have done this. Like.

Parry: And of course, I knew I had already conducted many combat assaults, so I knew what the people on the ground were doing and how they would what their responsibilities were and how they would handle it. So that was that, was a very fun thing.

Sanderson: Nice. And pretty much when you guys flew in, uh, Hueys the whole time.

Parry: Yeah, everything was Hueys except for the Hueys and Cobras was all we had. So the Cobras were the gunships and the Hueys were slicks.² They even had no doors, and they would have a machine gun on each side. Outboard inboard. Machine guns. And then as you came in, the outboard machine guns would fire into the into the jungle, you know, And you had to make sure that when you got off, you didn't get in the way. You didn't get shot; you know.

Sanderson: And how long were you the, uh, air operations officer for?

Parry: For about a month. Let me think. April, April, May of '70. And then I went on thirty days' leave. I had extended. So I went on thirty days' leave. And it was while I was there, operations officer, that the invasion of Cambodia occurred.

Sanderson: What was probably one of your more challenging tasks as an air operations officer?

Parry: Well, the conduct of air combat assaults was the most challenging and the most. That's why it was fun. You really had to know what you were doing and people's lives were on the line doing that. And that's what I like the most about that. Well, I was a night tactical operations

² The Hueys called slicks were those helicopters which carried troops.

officer as well. That was, they were concurrent jobs. So you yelled incoming when we got hit that that time, I don't remember anything particularly challenging about that. But, you know, you had radio operations, things going on all the time around the clock. But the combat assaults were the most challenging aspect of it.

Sanderson: Then, uh, you, uh, you'd went on the thirty days leave, and that brings us roughly to halfway through. Was it halfway through your time in Vietnam?

Parry: Well, it was a year. I you know, basically, I have figured out that...if I went home at the end of a year, they would have time to send me back for another year. So if and if I extended for six months, they would not have time to send me back for another year. So I decided to extend for six months and to be a company commander, which was obviously would also help my career as well to be a combat company commander. So that's what I did. I extended [it] for six months. At the end of that six months, the battalion. They made me the S4, the supply officer and the orders came down to send the battalion home. So they extended me for another three months. The battalion XO put his arm around my shoulder and said, "Look, it, I can't tell you to extend, but I do write your efficiency report and I don't want to train a new supply officer in the middle of sending the battalion home. So I want you to stay." So I stayed an extra three months and wound up spending there for twenty months in Vietnam. My roommate from West Point came in country the same day I did the same flight and he left after one year and he came back for a second tour. My analysis was correct, and he faced tanks at An Lộc, which was and he got all messed up. He got hit bad; you know. And so my analysis was correct. It was probably one of the best decisions I ever made.

Sanderson: Where did you go for your, uh, thirty days' leave?

Parry: I came home. I was married, and we traveled across the US, [the] northern US into Oregon, and Washington, and then back through Canada. And we're from Boston and came back and went into Boston. And then I flew back to Vietnam.

Sanderson: What was it like being there, then coming back and especially in that time frame?

Parry: It was not a fun vacation. It was tense with my wife. You know, I was feeling really bad. At the border, they harassed us. The FBI agents at the border harassed us terribly, coming back into the US. I was really I was not. It wasn't a good vacation. I was very weird, you know? And then I went back and I was more comfortable in Vietnam than I was back here, because, you know, you know what you're doing. It's intense. And there's a whole thing about that whole psychological thing about that.

Sanderson: As...people always laugh at me when we go for our exercises, for the Reserves. But, you know, when there's stuff going off and I actually, you know, 'cause they do simulated you

know, they do a lot of simulated stuff up at, uh, fort. Uh Fort McCoy. [Parry comments: Yeah]. in Wisconsin. During that time that when. When it's too quiet, I can't sleep very well. But stuff Pop. Yeah, right. And when they're popping stuff off, I wake up. Like, Huh? Yeah. Lay back down and start snoozing. People are like. I couldn't sleep last night. I'm like, I'm sleeping like a baby. They're like, how can you? I'm like, "Meh".

Parry: That's what happens. Yeah.

Sanderson: Yeah. After a while, once you get used to, it's almost like mother's milk.

Parry: There you go.

Sanderson: Um. But, uh, when you were the supply officer for your unit, what was it? What was some of the stuff that you purposely wanted to have for your unit that you had not previously had?

Parry: Well, the. The main thing. Galvin had made sure that one of the things under the old battalion commander was that there was a lot of pilfering and things like steaks and things didn't get down to the troops, food, didn't get down to the troops. And Galvin had pretty much straightened that out. By the time I became the supply officer, we had a different different...battalion commander. But the main thing was to make sure that that continued on the supplies, that what was needed was really, you know, got through and available to the troops. I had a warrant officer who really ran the supply shop and that was-- And I just made sure that he knew what was going on. The key thing that I did when I was the S4, I mean, other than to keep things going and to make sure things happened, was that we turned in the battalion, we went down to the Newport docks in Saigon, and got oriented. And we had to take all of the weapons and all of the equipment and everything and turn it in. And so we went down there a number of times, and there was a process of turning these things in. And then we had a final convoy that went from our firebase and drove down to Saigon and turned in all our vehicles, which were not heavy vehicles, but there were a lot of them. So we had this convoy, and I'll never forget the convoy because we had the convoy. Convoys, accordion. And so we were stopped. The vehicle I was in was stopped in the middle of the convoy. And this guy goes running off to the bush. And I thought he was going to take a leak. And we started up again and he didn't come back and we're yelling for him. And we go into the jungle where he went and he was gone. He was a mechanic in the motor pool and never came back, never found them. He deserted and he was the only, the only member of the battalion ever dropped as a deserter because it was the final morning report. [laughs] We didn't have anything else we could do.

Parry: And I often wondered what was going on with that guy. Drugs, women, both. You know, he couldn't leave Vietnam or something, but he actually deserted in the middle of the convoy going down to go home. You know.

Sanderson: Normally that'd be the exact opposite and be like as you're going in.

Parry: Yeah, exactly.

Sanderson: You'd worry about people going missing, not going home. Well, you know, that's.

Parry: Yeah.

Sanderson: That's generally people. They break the convoy limit, you know, speed limit. You have the lead vehicle freaking...and telling you, you know, having to radio them, "Slow down, slow down."

Parry: That's all right. Exactly. So that was very weird, you know, And I've often wondered whatever happened to that guy, what the motivation was and whatever happened to him. So who knows? So that was and that was the big thing we did. You know, we went down and turned in the battalion and that was, you know, we have vacuum-packed weapons and all that kind of stuff. Put them in grease.

Sanderson: Oh, yeah. All the fun stuff.

Parry: Yeah, fun.

Sanderson: Stuff. Yeah, the stuff you just kind of like, huh? Begrudge doing. One of the one of the things a lot of people have done during that time frame with the M16s, it was still kind of new at the time.³ A lot...I had an uncle that was in Đà Nẵng, hated and hated the M16.

Parry: Yeah. Now.

Sanderson: Did you ever have any problems with jamming or not operating properly?

Parry: Not if people kept them clean, no. You know, I've heard the controversy about it. When they first came out, they had a flash card that had three prongs on it but by the time I got there, they had replaced that with a circular thing. So it didn't catch it. If you're going through the jungle, it would catch on vines and stuff like that. And there's been a lot of controversy about it. But basically, the weapon fired, you know, very rapidly and very well, and you made sure that it stayed clean. I think the AK-47 [Avtomat Kalashnikova] was probably a better weapon, although the ammunition was 7.63 [mm]. So it was very heavy. And, you know, we could carry a lot more ammunition. As I said, you know, I saw like in this one particular firefight we were shooting and I was shooting and I wasn't hitting what I was aiming at. So I'm not sure that it didn't get out of zero a lot more than I thought. But, you know, but overall, no, we didn't have any problems

³ The M16 replaced the M14 in the US Army as the standard rifle in 1969.

with the M16 or, you know, normal, normal kind of complaints. "Arh, arh, arh. "But that was it then. And we had machine guns that carried 7.62 and other weapons as well. But.

Sanderson: And did you pretty much just carry the M16...?

Parry: Personally, yeah.

Sanderson: And then probably an M9 [9 millimeter pistol that was issued after Vietnam] We were issued 45 caliber pistols as well or--

Parry: A side weapon?

Sanderson: .45 [caliber]...⁴

Parry: I carried a .45 for a while. When I was an XO, I went around doing some stuff. I was in the rear and I had a .45, but no .45 was useless. I didn't, nobody carried one. Some people did, but I didn't know.

Sanderson: Oh yeah, now all we get is the M9s.

Parry: Which is a .38 [caliber] isn't it?

Sanderson: [unclear] nine millimeter.

Parry: Nine millimeter. Yeah. We had .45s.

Sanderson: And they're supposed to be going back to the .45 but when the stuff's hitting the fan, you don't need a pistol. You need, you know, send down as many rounds as possible.

Parry: Now, the .45 is actually designed in the Philippines back in 1919 or something like that. The number was M1919 [Browning Machine Gun] if I remember correctly because a .38 didn't have enough stopping power for charging people and a .45 did. You know, if somebody was actually attacking you, a .45 would knock him backwards, but it was an erratic, a very erratic shot pattern, you know, So I never you know, I never fired one in anger and I never carried one in the jungle. That was just another, another thing to have. And you didn't need any extra stuff to have, you know.

Sanderson: Right. Yeah. So about this time, uh, when you, uh, about the time you were getting ready to leave Vietnam, this was in April of '72, correct?

⁴ When Parry was in Vietnam, they were issued .45 caliber pistol rather than the M9 pistol

Parry: Seventy-one. I said March of '71.

Sanderson: March of '71. Yeah. Okay. Okay. Yeah. Sorry. Yeah. Because you get to the 1/58th.

Parry: I came back from Vietnam and I went, I was assigned to Fort Benning, they had offered me the opportunity to go back with the 1st of the 8th to Fort Hood [Texas], but they were making them an armored cav unit. And I didn't and I didn't want to go to [Fort] Hood. I wanted. So I went back to [Fort] Benning and I was assigned to the 197th Infantry Brigade, a brigade which was school support. And I spent about three weeks in their training division there, in their operations division as a training assistant training officer or something. And then a company came open and that was I think I think Delta Company also 1st of the 58 and under Pollock. So yeah, I went and became a company commander and 1st of the 58th Infantry.

Sanderson: Hmm. Nice.

Parry: And spent a year doing that.

Sanderson: What was it, being in combat then coming back and almost having the normal 9 to 5 in the rear, you know, job versus.

Parry: That was difficult. I mean, my marriage broke up almost immediately. She had her issues and I was a complete mess. You had a picture? There were probably 25,000 officers, infantry officers at Fort Benning. It's the home of the infantry. And they'd all been to Vietnam. And nobody was talking about what happened in Vietnam. I was just we were all keeping it to ourselves. I felt comfortable with the troops because they'd all been to Vietnam. They're all Vietnam veterans. And but discipline was a mess and it was difficult to keep things kind of going, you know, And I wasn't very good at it. I look back on it and I think, 'Oh my God, you know, what was I doing?' But and then in that year, they started VOLAR for the volunteer army.⁵ And I got the first VOLAR platoon. And our whole idea was to keep the VOLAR platoon separate from the Vietnam vets, you know, and to train the VOLAR platoon. And they redid the barracks and gave them individual rooms. And we had we went through a whole thing of, 'What could the individual do to their rooms?' And you got to picture, these were World War II barracks. These were not concrete block barracks. They were the old wooden two floor World War II temporary barracks. And they put up plywood and sheetrock, I guess, to divide up the rooms into two-man rooms. And people were painting them black and red and things like that, and decorating, you know, it was psychedelic [laughter] things. And we had to decide what was appropriate, what wasn't appropriate. And this VOLAR platoon got trained and went through

⁵ VOLAR or Project Volunteer Army were experimental attempts to transition compulsory service into a voluntary one.

it's basic training, I guess they had been through basic and they went through AIT with us or something.

Parry: I don't remember. I remember being pretty much hands-off, handing it to a platoon leader and letting the platoon leader sort of guide it, which I wouldn't do today. It would have been much more hands-on. We also developed did the training and the testing for the Dragon weapon system.⁶ And again, I was hands-off. I today would have been much more hands-on in doing that. But they tested the Dragon weapon system, which I never liked. It had two wires. It was a rocket with two wires on it and they fired it downrange and they were training that that platoon and that that was the Vietnam vets. But, you know, I did a lot of administrative stuff. And I remember we had one guy came in, he had been called up from the Reserves for not attending his Reserve unit meetings, and he declared himself right from the get-go. He wasn't going to cooperate. He wasn't going to do anything he wanted out of the military and all that. So I made a deal with him. I told him, first of all, you can't process them out any faster than sixty days. So I told them I would process him out with a General Discharge [considered satisfactory though on a lower level than Honorable Discharge]. The 212, the same thing I've been doing in Vietnam with piles of them. I knew how to do a 212 in sixty days if he would be, and his assignment would be to clean up the orderly room and to keep it clean. And he did that, you know, and that we had that kind of deal and he just participated know, that's what he did.

Parry: But during that period, we had another guy. This guy would look like a hippie and was being real hippie-ish. And yet he really followed the orders and did what he did. And I got him out in sixty-six days. I think it took. During that period, another guy came in and reported in on a Friday afternoon, clean-cut, straight arrow-looking guy. And so we said, "Look, this is fine, here's your signed in, get lost. We'll see you Monday morning." A week later, we heard that he was found dead in the woods in Long Island, New York, of an overdose or something. Yeah. And so I got the hippie and we went out in the woods and took a picture of him with a tourniquet on lying there dead in the woods and made a big sign, an anti-drug sign, and sort of used that as publicity to keep people from doing drugs, you know, to encourage them away from that. There was a lot of drug use going on down there, and it was a transitional period. We had we had a lot of there's the role of the African American within the Army was changing, what was valid, you know, and race relations were huge, drug use was huge. And how to get rid of that retention was huge. You know, what you did to keep people in the military and things like that. So there was a period of real transition in the military while I was there. So it was, you know, and my battalion commander was a jerk. So he was I was not having a good time doing that.

Sanderson: No. Did you live in base housing there at Benning or--?

⁶ This refers to the M47 Dragon which is a portable anti-tank guided missile system.

Parry: At the very beginning, when I was married, I lived off-post with my wife. I got divorced and then moved into the bachelor officer's quarters on post. And probably that probably was while I was a company commander there. Later, I moved off post again and lived in a couple of different places. But I'm not sure. Probably that coincided after I was a company commander. I was the S1 of the Aviation command, and then I went to the advanced course and I lived in three different places, probably coinciding with those assignments.

Sanderson: Okay. Um, what was the, uh, when you were in base housing? What was it like? Well.

Parry: I lived in an apartment, and it was a one-bedroom apartment, and it was nice. You know, I didn't need a kitchen because I was eating in the officer's club and stuff like that, you know? So I enjoyed that. Yeah. And it was centrally located.

Sanderson: Um, on there. Uh, initially you said that, uh, in the survey you just stated a five-year obligation, but you decided to stay for six years before you.

Parry: Well, at the end of the fifth year, they had assigned me to the infantry officer's advanced course, which implied a one-year obligation after that. And so I went to the infantry officer's advanced course. And in about it's a nine-month course, I graduated as a distinguished honor graduate. I was first in the class. And but about six months in, they give you your next assignment. And my next maybe it was later than that. Seven months. But at any rate, they assigned me they had told us that the top 5% of all officers were going to be assigned to recruiting duty. And then they come up and they do a review and they tell you how you're doing. The Pentagon comes up and they told me I was about a third of the way down, you know, and that I was pretty average officer. And that's what I figured. And then I get my assignment and it's to recruiting duty. And I'm like, "No, I will do anything you want, but I will not recruit somebody else to do it." And they basically and I said, "And you lied to me anyway. You told me I was doing pretty normal, you know, and not nothing exceptional. And now you're sending me on this duty that's supposed to be for the best officers," you know, and all that.

Parry: And they said, "No, you have to go. We will not accept any reassignment." So I submitted, I submitted my resignation from the Army and I asked for a waiver for the one-year obligation. And they granted they had been rifting captains. They got rid of 10,000 captains at Benning, so they accepted my resignation. So after I was a distinguished undergrad, I graduated first in the advanced course and three days later I walked out of the Army. So but when I came back from Vietnam. I knew two things. I knew a number of things, but I knew two things for sure. One was that we were fighting everybody in the country. And, you know, everybody in my unit knew that we were fighting everybody in the country, you know, and if you're in favor of democracy and you're fighting everybody in the country, you're fighting on the wrong side. It

was, you know, we were not, we shouldn't have been there. You know, so, number one, we were on the wrong side. The second thing I knew was that the main problem facing the population of Vietnam was the land question and the peasantry and the question of land. And that the capitalists would not be would not redistribute land. They would keep the same property relations and the communists could and would redistribute land, and therefore they were going to win the war.

Parry: So when I came back, I was not, you know, I realized that we should never have been there, you know, that we were there for nefarious purposes. And, you know, I was so I didn't and that kind of point of view had become. I was no longer...in any way in the mainstream of the military. I realized that I was far to the left of everybody in the military by the time I left. So and that's part of the reason I wasn't going to recruit other people to do it as long as they sent me to units and I was doing something technical and I could, I could see me doing that, but I was not at this point, "Rah rah, Army, rah, rah what our role had been." So and in fact, in one of my exit mandatory exit interviews, some lieutenant colonel and I talked to him about that, and he's like, "You're full of crap", you know, basically. And, you know, that was it. So I didn't really miss getting out of the Army. I was at a high point. I had done very well in the advanced course, and I was ready to go on to other things.

Sanderson: No regrets getting out?

Parry: No. No. And the longer I've been out, the more I realize I was. No, I shouldn't. I could never have stayed in. We really skipped over being the S1 of the Aviation Command. That was the most fun assignment I ever had. That was really. That was a lot of fun. Me and the S4 used to get together and they'd take me out in helicopters and let me fly helicopters and things like that. That was very enjoyable.

Sanderson: What was it like?

Parry: That was fun. I had they had sent me on...After I had been a company commander, I was the S1 for the 1st of 58th for about five minutes. And they sent me on TDY temporary duty over to Fort Stewart [Georgia] to evaluate the 82nd Armored Division, which had three brigades was a reserve unit, and the commander was Colonel Grow, and was the commander of the Aviation Command. And he went and. He wanted an S1, so he recruited me after the temporary duty to come down and be his S1. And I replaced the lieutenant colonel which was ego-boosting. But I really straight. I was very good because I really straightened that place out. It was very it was a provisional command, which meant that everybody was assigned to someplace else. And that was all mess. And I straightened it out and I straightened out the S1 Shop and really got things running. So I felt very good on a professional level. And then I had this relationship with J.D.

Davis. He was the, he was an armor officer, had been in the 69th Armor in the 197th and he was in he was an aviator and he was the S4

Parry: And he and I just had fun, just *fun*, you know, running the place. So it was that was a lot of fun. And I did that for a year. So then I went to the advanced course. And I was because I had been at Fort Benning for two years already, they made me the S1 one of the advanced course and the commander for the class, the class S1, and the class commander was Bob Howard, the most decorated guy in Vietnam. He had a Medal of Honor. Two DSCs [Distinguished Service Cross], three or four Silver Stars. , Yeah. And he died about two years ago, December, a couple of years ago. But...I hadn't kept in touch with him...I regret not having kept in touch with Bob Howard, but he and I just got very close. And, you know, I saw him only once after that, but he stayed in, made colonel, and got out and worked for the VA. He was a good guy.

Sanderson: What was [were] some of the things that you all did for fun?

Parry: We went on a ten-mile run at about eight miles in. I said, "I've had enough" [Laughter]. But we used to work out together and we went on this ten-mile run and you know, and we'd just go out and, and drink and stuff like that. He had bad PTSD. And he would it was before anybody knew what PTSD was. But he told me he still had nightmares and stuff like that and he had them. He was married. I don't know if the marriage lasted or not. He'd been married for a while. He had a monkey in a cage and it took up like half his living room and stuff like that. So he was just he was a great guy, you know? We'd hang out. He was he was fun. He had been a sergeant first class in the in Special Forces. It was, Yeah. And the XO of the class was a guy named Mike Ranger, had lost his leg in Vietnam, and he had the DSC also. And he was he eventually got out because he couldn't stay in the infantry with only one leg. And we had another guy whose name I've completely forgotten who was in the 101st, and he was at Hamburger Hill, and they [had] given him the DSC and he was really quiet and really calm and he was completely the opposite of the rest of us. And I realized later he wasn't calm, he wasn't quiet, he was catatonic, he had PTSD so bad that he really had never wasn't even able to get out of himself.

Sanderson: And during this time, did they ever try to or was there any kind of services offered or any type of--

Parry: No.

Sanderson: Post-deployment physical or anything along those lines?

Parry: No. There was nobody talked about Vietnam, you know, things like that. As I said, there were 25,000 officers at Fort Benning and none nobody was talking about what had happened

or any of the reality of it or how they felt. There was none of that. This was 1972. I mean, I got out in '74, so '73, '74 for the advanced course. You know, nobody was talking about that stuff.

Sanderson: Also, when you were there, did you ever feel like you were under a quote-unquote, under a microscope from having the high awards that you did or.

Parry: No, Of course. I mean, the awards I had were I didn't consider them that high. When you're hanging around with Medal of Honor winners and DSC winners and stuff like that, you know, that's that was the big ones, you know.

Sanderson: With the, uh, when you took over the, uh, VOLAR unit. What was it like when they come, come walking in? You were wearing your class As and had your--?

Parry: I never wore my ribbons.

Sanderson: You never.

Parry: I wore a combat infantry badge. The airborne badge. I never wore my ribbons. I never actually got into my ribbons more when I got after I got out. If you see pictures of me. I just have the combat infantry badge on, that's all.

Sanderson: Although, was it more of a conscious decision or just--?

Parry: Yeah. Yeah, I was not you know, I was not proud of what I'd done. I didn't feel good about it or anything like that. Okay. Bad PTSD.

Sanderson: Um, when you did get out of the military, uh, you had stated that you spent two years, but I think it was two years.

Parry: One year.

Sanderson: It was one year. Uh, the one-year traveling.

Parry: Right.

Sanderson: What was that like?

Parry: But that was freeing. It was very demilitarizing. I traveled through Europe and then went down to Africa. I went across the Sahara Desert and through sub-Saharan Africa, down to Zaire, and worked in Zaire for six months. And, you know, and it was you know, it was a chance to demilitarize and I changed my point of view and see what was going on in a different section of the world. The organization I work for, the constructor Inga Shaba was a consortium of Morris Knudsen Construction Company. Well, they had been in Vietnam, so the people down there who were we were in Zaire building a DC transmission line for Mobutu Sese Seko was the

dictator down there, and it was the unit. All the people have been in Vietnam and they were the ones that built the tiger cages, and they were a bunch of construction workers. You know, basically, I worked in the warehouse and they were a lot of and there were some Vietnam vets that worked around where. So that was, that was difficult situation. I had some real conflict with some of the people who were there. But, you know, it was we were smoking a lot of dope and drinking a lot and things like that, you know.

Sanderson: Was a lot of that specifically for basically to treat the PTSD at that time or--?

Parry: Yeah, well, I didn't you know, we didn't talk about Vietnam either, you know, I mean, they were construction workers and civilians of Vietnam. So the few of us that were Vietnam vets didn't talk. I remember one guy was a Marine and had been a Marine and he used to get drunk and throw up. He said, "But liquor never makes me throw up. So something I ate", you know, and he was having a hard time of it. But we never talked about what happened in Vietnam. We talked about, you know, just the fact that we had been there and stuff like that. And then we just, you know, hung out and listened to a lot of Janis I listened to a lot of Janis Joplin. At that point, I was depressed. [Laughter]

Sanderson: So she's got some good songs. But yeah, it will. It definitely brings you down on some of them.

Parry: Yeah, absolutely.

Sanderson: Yeah. I'm a huge Janis Joplin fan, but it's just kind of like.

Parry: Me too, but she is depressing. [Sanderson: Yeah]

Parry: She is. Yeah. That [unclear word]

Sanderson: Yeah. And I think that I think a lot of a lot of sometimes it's just. I think a lot of people, you know, like to listen to stuff like that, just to kind of it's almost helps to calm the mood a little bit. Yeah. Blues...

Parry: I like I love her music. I just, you know.

Sanderson: Right. Um, kind of going back before we dive into postwar, uh, what was it like when you came back from Vietnam? When I know a lot of people, uh, earlier it was one of those where they were told, you know, don't wear uniforms. A lot of times it was one of those traveling to not even say you were a part of the military.

Parry: I never even experienced any of that. And I, you know, I think about 500 times as many people were spit on in retrospect as that actually happened. I don't think any of that stuff, you know. Ah, very, very little of that happened. People's memories are a little weird. That's, I think,

an urban legend that's grown. And, you know, I never debate that with anybody because if they say they were spit on then and I'm I wasn't there, I don't know. But I just, you know, I didn't experience any of that. Now, on the other hand, I went back straight back to Georgia, you know, to Fort Benning. I didn't take any leave. I was thirty days in the hole already or. No, I was even I had taken so much leave that when I came back from Vietnam, I was even I didn't want to go thirty days and all. So I didn't take any leave. My wife met me there and I came back and I didn't you know, I mean, you're in Fort Benning, for God's sake. I mean, everybody's in the military. There's very little anti-military feeling about it, but it was a bit surreal. I got back about 9:00 at night and we went to bed, you know, and got up in the morning to knock on the door.

Parry: And it was the postman. I opened the door and he starts giving me a lecture on living in the South and how the African Americans then and that's not the word he was using were Southern African Americans. And they're not like our Northern African Americans. And, you know, they were ill. Just total racist garbage that he's talking about. And I'm you've got I haven't been back twelve hours yet. And I'm listening to this, and he's telling me about the Ku Klux Klan, and I was there, you know, And where, man, I'm like, of course, I was living in a more rural setting. My wife had found a house that was halfway between Atlanta and Columbus because she was going to go to Atlanta to graduate school, which didn't pan out. And that was, that was the most one of the most surreal experiences I've ever had, you know, And I finally got rid of the guy, you know, and just we didn't exactly fit into that community, but it was a nice place to live. We had two dogs and we had two horses and we had about seven acres. And we went out and we went out in the woods and found a still out there. And then later the couple behind us got divorced and moved away and the still disappeared.

Parry: So we figured out who this was. [Laughter] But it was an interesting place and it was a dry county, so you had to go across to the county. You go literally across the road and there's a liquor store, you know, just on the other side of the county border and stuff like that. That was Pike County, Georgia. The capital was the county seat was Zebulon. And so that lasted, but we got divorced within four months. I was commuting an hour and a quarter every day down to Fort Benning and back, you know. So we just, I couldn't handle her. And she had her own issues that were coming up. And, you know, it's just not good. I mean, I was a mess. She was a mess and we really had a hard time, a really hard time there. So I got divorced and wound up coming back. And that was my experience, you know, coming back to base, moving, moving on base. And that was my experience when I got back. It was really difficult transition. Once you get into the military stuff, you know, being a company commander or being within the military unit, you know how that works. And you make friends there. But, you know, that was, that was pretty much it. And then authority, you know, PTSD, part of that is you have real problems with authority. And I had already had plenty of experience with jerks in the military, higher officers

that were jerks like this battalion commander we had had, you know, And so I had a hard time, you know, very hard time with all of this, you know.

Sanderson: With a. Whenever you go off a post into Columbus, was it ever, did you ever have any kind of difficulties or any there, you know, going in the town or was it pretty much--?

Sanderson: Not that I remember. It was pretty much just, you know, going down there and eating and buying food and or whatever you're shopping, you know, shopping and stuff. We got into Columbus all the time and I don't remember anything bad happening. And there were more seedy parts of town and more nice, you know, the nicer parts of town. The one thing I remember once, I didn't understand it at the time, but Ray Charles came down and gave a concert and it was in...What's the name of the town? Right next to Columbus and--?

Sanderson: Phoenix?

Parry: Phoenix City [located in Alabama vs. Georgia]. It was in Phoenix City and kind of a war memorial building or coliseum or something they have there. And it was very lightly attended. There were only 300 or 400 people in attendance. It was a great concert. He did a terrific job. Well, it wasn't till later that I found out he'd been banned in Georgia. You know, and I saw *Ray* and I found out what the whole, you know, the movie *Ray* and I saw found out what the whole deal was about, that that he was actually doing a concert down there. But he couldn't do it in Georgia. So he did it in Phoenix City. You know, that was, that was about it.

Sanderson: Funny thing is, uh, Phoenix City pretty much hasn't changed much since the sixties. [Both laugh] It's, I think it's actually gotten worse.

Parry: That's amazing. Amazing that it could get worse, right?

Sanderson: Yeah. You know, still, it's kind of funny when you're on the Riverwalk. You know, Columbus is, you know, where the ironworks is built up. You know, they turn Victory Drive or VD drive now into Veterans Parkway. So it is still considered VD Drive. Yeah. And a lot of people were like, "What do you mean"?

Parry: [Laughs]

Sanderson: Victory Drive. I'm like, "No". They don't call it VD Drive because of that. Half the hotels are still there.

Parry: All right. There you go.

Sanderson: But it's just [laughter] I think they changed the name to try to get a little bit better...

Sanderson: Yeah. It's kind of funny how things rarely change. Um, now that you know, know now that you had gotten out of the military, and since you've been out, you've been very active, it seems like in the last few years with the veterans' organization.

Parry: I have.

Parry: And that's what one of the things is, um. Why? Why have you been so active? Well, you know, I mean, there's the overt reasons, and then there's the more deep unconscious reasons. I mean, I certainly think that in a lot a lot of it is payback. And I'm pulling out right now from the veterans' movement. I have. But for the last eight years, I have been the chair of the Coalition of Veterans Organizations, and I just resigned. I'm now the past chair, which is fine with me. But, you know, Vietnam radicalized me and I was involved with VVAW, the Vietnam Veterans Against the War back when I was in graduate school in the late seventies and early eighties. And, you know, I became part of the left. I've been a serious lefty for forty years. And part of my, one of the ostensible reasons for my participation in the veterans' movement is to keep my connection to that and to the workers that are, you know, within that movement. And I started back in Baltimore. I was in the Fraternal Order of Veterans. I was part of founding a VVA, Vietnam Veterans of America, which was founded by the left. And then they were all thrown out later. I had, my participation had attenuated in that I was part of National Association of Concerned Veterans, NAC-V... and then I was in the peace movement. And I did a lot with jobs, with peace, and was very active in the peace movement during the eighties. But I moved to Chicago, I, you know, I didn't have the same connection. So I was pretty much more insular.

Parry: And, you know, from I moved here in '87. But somewhere along the line, I got involved with the veterans' movement in the nineties, and I also got into AA in 1989, started going Alcoholics Anonymous, and I haven't had a drink since then. I try and my life pretty much fell apart when I got here to Chicago. Things just went out of control. And so for me and the PTSD came to the fore again. I didn't have any knowledge of it, but when I went into treatment for alcohol, the guy there sent me not only to AA but also sent me to the VA to take care of Vietnam. And when I connected with the VA, that was really when I started dealing with what had happened in Vietnam. And that was in 1989, twenty years after I had gone to Vietnam. And I found a marvelous therapist, Brenda Dougherty, who was who would see me three, four times a week. And they can't do that anymore. The VA has cut back on the health care that it provides to PTSD recipients. But she really re-parented me and really helped me through a whole lot of stuff. And I started going to a group that I still go to, went to last night, you know, for PTSD. And I went through the stress unit, the five-week, three-month program, rather. They've now reduced it to five weeks up at North Chicago, which is now Lovell Federal Health Care Center, or whatever they call it, You know, So and the whole time I was in AA and I was working the steps and doing all the stuff in AA as well.

Parry: So I've had a lot of treatment and I've... For twenty-five years. I've been working on PTSD and my family of origin, which was not stellar. As I said, my father had PTSD from World War II and was a raging alcoholic. And so, you know, I've dealt with all of that. I've been dealing with it for years and that but eventually, I wound up dealing with that and then leaving the organization I have been with, a left organization. So I got into the veterans' movement and kept my connection with activity and with social activity through that here in Chicago. And for a while, I went back and I worked at the AA office. I was the manager of the Chicago Area Service Office for a number of years and was very, very proud of what I did down there. So I really turned that around. But when I left there, I had left the veterans, movement in that period. It was, you know, I couldn't do both. And some friends of mine, Rochelle Crump, and David Rogers called a meeting of the leaders of the veterans' movement together, and they met at the Montford Point Marine Association. And we had quite a few people down there. And in order, I was the only one that didn't have an organizational affiliation at that point.

So they asked me to chair it, the continuation committee, and that became the Coalition of Veterans Organizations, which I participated in, building into a respected and recognized organization. But I've had enough. I've done it. Since then, I've been married and I have a family that's occupying me, and my interests have shifted more into the political realm and back into economics. I had left my... We skipped over that entirely, you know, but I had in the 1970s after I got after this trip, I took through Africa, I went back and I got a Ph.D. in economics at the American University. I was married a second time during graduate school. I finished my Ph.D. and started teaching at the University of Baltimore and got divorced from the second wife and met my third wife while I was at the University of Baltimore and taught there for eight years before I moved to Chicago and I became an economic consultant while I was here in Chicago. And, you know, did that for a while. That marriage didn't last. After I got into AA, that marriage sort of fell apart. She was used to me being an alcoholic. [Laughs] And when I stopped drinking, you know, it stopped. But so I went through everything I just said. And I now have a family. And I got married again a couple of years ago. And so my interests are shifted and I'm doing different things today, you know?

Sanderson: What was it like, um, being a professor at the University of Baltimore?

Parry: It was that was good. I was I enjoyed aspects of it. There were parts of it I didn't like. But, you know, I, I was doing research, I got tenured, I got promoted, I was associate professor and I was tenured. When I left, I left a full-tenured position. I could still be there. You know, moving to Chicago was on the surface of it, probably the worst decision of my life, because I left a job, guaranteed job, tenured job, you know, and came into a situation that was really terrible. I didn't know it was going to be terrible, but it turned out to be terrible. I hit bottom with AA and was actually homeless for a couple of months in '93. I mean, things were pretty miserable, but

it turned out to be terrific. Just like I said, "I'm happily married, I got a family. I got." I'm doing what I wanted to do. I'm retired. And, you know, things are going really well now. So it's turned out to be great. But at the beginning, it didn't look that way! [Laughs]

Sanderson: What brought you to Chicago?

Parry: To work with a political organization, a left political organization I have been in.

Sanderson: Oh, nice. Have you thought about going back and being a, you know, an associate professor or adjunct professor?

Parry: I you know, I have. But that's not where my interest lies. I'm actually writing papers and doing research now. I'm working with an emeritus professor from the University of Chicago who's a lefty, which at the University of Chicago is real right. [Laughs]

Sanderson: Right. But I was going to say.

Parry: But he isn't, he's a lefty and so we're actually doing some research and writing, and I want to keep that up. That's the end of it that I like a little bit better. I've been, I'm a member of the Chicago Political Economy Group, which is interesting if somewhat eclectic group. So, you know, I'm getting back into economics. I've been out of it for so long that I've got to reestablish my understanding, my theoretical basis for the, for it, you know, and that. So I'm having a good time doing that.

Sanderson: Oh, that's good. Yeah. Definitely sounds like... You know, some people always say, uh, they kind of go full circle in life. It sounds like you've been through multiple...multiple circles.

Parry: Multiple circles. It's spinning out of control. But I have a fourteen -I'm 68 years old that I have a fourteen-year-old son. So that's, you know, that keeps me occupied.

Sanderson: Especially nowadays.

Parry: He's at high school. You said it. Yeah.

Sanderson: I've got, you know, my nieces and nephews are in that age and it's just kind of like, look back and you're like, wow, You know? You know. But the good thing is, you know, my brother and my sisters if they had instead of grounding or getting whippings like we used to have. "Give me your cell phone". [Parry inserts: Yeah]. They go in and take technology away, and they freak out.

Parry: Yeah. That's exactly what. Yeah, exactly. It's kind of like what we do, too.

Sanderson: What the heck? Yeah. Yeah.

Parry: So I had stepkids in my second marriage, and I have my stepson now who's fourteen. And being a stepfather is the hardest thing I've ever done. And it's, it's a very difficult thing to do, you know, But it's also the marriage and the relationship and everything is very rewarding. And I like being in a family situation. And it's really good, you know?

Sanderson: That's good to hear. Yeah. Definitely. Uh, especially with the, uh. 'Cause, when we're looking at the list of the veterans' organizations and the various organizations you were with, and we're like, 'Wow'. Yeah. And then especially going in and getting stuff, something like that. And that sounds like that definitely helps out also with probably help out with having a parent, especially a fourteen-year-old.

Parry: Yeah, yeah. My wife is a Marine. She she's a retired Marine, so she's the president of another veteran's organization, the Montford Point Marine Association. And she has a daughter, twenty-nine, who is. I don't really consider my stepdaughter, but, you know, she. And she's an Army veteran, too. Retired Army. So we got, you know, lots of veterans around the family. She was in Afghanistan. She did tours in Afghanistan, both in the military and as a contractor.

Sanderson: Definitely. Especially. And that was one of the things that, uh, you know, when we're, uh, when I was looking over, uh, when you were talking about with definitely getting into the political movements, uh, that in itself, is that something that you foresee yourself pretty much focusing, you know, continuing to focus more on and stay with?

Parry: Absolutely.

Sanderson: Outstanding. So I'm actually kind of starting when I'm starting, I pretty much ran out of questions at this point.

Parry: Okay.

Sanderson: Well, um.

Parry: I'm running out of time, too. [Laughs]

Parry: Right?

Sanderson: Kind of works out in the same way, huh?

Parry: Yeah. Um.

Sanderson: Just one final question I had. During your time, um, with the military and with all these different organizations, how did, how does it make you feel to be able to help out those veterans when you...? Or have you had those veterans come up and sit down and talk to you? And do you feel comfortable talking about your experiences?

Parry: Yeah. You know, I guess my overall reaction is I am flabbergasted and I've said this to other veterans that had the same reaction back from them. I'm flabbergasted at how much twenty months of my life can dominate the entire sixty-eight years of my life. You know, And other people who have been in combat have said the same thing. You know, they and yeah, I'd sit down and talk to veterans and I'm not, I'm not a social worker. I'm not into helping vets sort through their stuff. But I have no problem in you know, in sitting down and talking and sharing my experience, strength, and hope with veterans and with others and finding out what they've been through. And in some of the groups I've been in, in particular, you know, I've really connected with some Iraq veterans and Afghanistan veterans and that were in the infantry, you know, and particularly ones that were in the infantry. They share the exact feelings that I have. And, you know, I found that to be you know, that's rewarding, you know?

Sanderson: Yeah. Outstanding. That's. Um, pretty much, uh. Uh, well, the only one other question that just kind of popped in my head real quick. Um, I know with a lot of the databases are kind of FUBAR-ed [F***** up beyond all repair] um, one of the things that, you know, we didn't, uh, we didn't see your name pop up on some of the different websites or different organizations listing some of the awards. Is that one of those where have you never thought about engaging, you know, engaging those organizations to list your awards?

Parry: I don't know.

Sanderson: Kind of like with the Silver Star Association, how they--?

Parry: I've never tried the Silver Star Association. didn't even know there was a Silver Star Association.

Sanderson: Yes.

Parry: No, I've never done anything with any of that. I just, you know, I have my ribbons and I have them on my hat sort of thing. And, you know, people have asked me about it and I don't deny it, but I don't run around and publicize it either. A couple of people have given me Silver Star hats and things like that, and I won't wear them. That's just, you know.

Sanderson: Because, uh, definitely looking through a lot of it, it was like when I was browsing it before the interview, I was like, 'Wow' Yeah, just definitely looking at some of the different stuff. You know, very, very impressive. [Parry says quietly: Thank you] Uh. It's definitely

something. Uh, uh, it's just kind of like, well. But, um. Was there anything else that you would like to add, or at this point or--?

Parry: Well, I mean, I, you know, I said my, my basic conclusion is that how much 20 months of my life or even a short thirteen, while I was from military high school through the end of my military, was thirteen years. You know, and that's really dominated my life. And I've been in the veterans' movement for years, and I'm sort of always surprised at how much it has dominated my life, you know, and been, been an important aspect of it. But, you know, today I have a different view from most veterans and the role of the military and what we were doing in Vietnam. And, you know, it's that's sort of uncomfortable. Right? I mean, I know some people that I can talk to that, you know, have the same point of view, and agree with me. So that's more comfortable. But a lot of veterans, I think, are much more mainstream than I am when it comes to looking at the, you know, their experiences and what they did, what we did as a country in Vietnam and in Iraq and Afghanistan and what's real.

Sanderson: I definitely. It's one of those where, uh. I always tell people, you know. Tell some of my friends that when they when they start hearing certain things either on the news or, you know when they hear...like I listen to the progressive talk. Some of them I crack up at some of them, you know, I agree with and some of them I just want to jump through the radio and smack them upside the head and be like, 'What?' But I think that's all when it comes down to all views. But I always tell people I'm like, you know. People have, you know, people should be able to have their views. And a lot of it, especially someone who's been there. You know, to the point they should be able to, they should be able to speak their mind because, you know, especially when you have people that sometimes they want to censor stuff, especially when you're going against the quote-unquote, going against the grain or going against the mainstream.

Parry: Yeah. I decided quite a while ago that I would not you know, that I would always express my views and anybody didn't like them, they could go shove it because I you know, I did my stuff, you know, and nobody can tell me. I can't say what I want to say.

Sanderson: Amen on that one.

Parry: Yeah.

Sanderson: And especially, uh, especially nowadays with the. Well, recently in the news. Ay! The next, uh, political or the next presidential election is going to be quite interesting. [Both laugh]

Parry: Absolutely.

Sanderson: And especially with, uh, you know, with Donald Trump and everything going on with that, that, yeah.

Parry: I'm working for Bernie Sanders. [Laughs]

Sanderson: And he's done a lot better than I thought he was going to do. Because just because at first I'm like, and, you know, everybody is like, oh, he's running, he's run. He's like, I don't know if a lot of people would even go for it, but surprisingly. And I think I think people were starting to realize, you know. You guys are making a lot of sense. Yeah. I've always enjoyed listening to him.

Parry: Yeah.

Sanderson: You know, when he speaks. So it definitely, definitely makes it quite interesting.

Parry: Yeah, absolutely. And he's the opposite of Donald Trump, that's for sure. In every way. [Both laugh].

Sanderson: Amen to that one. Yeah. It's even it's getting to the point where it's almost a comic routine with that guy. Yeah. And it gets quite, quite hilarious, especially on the progressive channels.

Parry: There you go.

Sanderson: So, um, if there is nothing else that you'd like to add, we greatly, greatly appreciate you coming it.

Parry: I appreciate it. Thank you very much.

Sanderson: Thoroughly enjoyed this. No problem. So ah, we ran over a little on the time but we and this is a little token we like to give everybody. We always do the challenge coin.

Parry: Okay. Thank you.

Sanderson: So, ah--

Parry: Actually, I was just down in Disneyworld and with my family a couple of weeks ago, and I got a challenge coin. I found - we were staying in Shades of Green, which is the military section down there. And I found my 1st Cav of Vietnam in their exchange.

Sanderson: Oh, nice.

Parry: Yeah, isn't that nice? So thank you very much for the Pritzker Military. This is very nice, too. This is lovely. Well, I just started carrying it down a couple of weeks ago.

Sanderson: That's pretty awesome.

Parry: Yeah, So I got. Got some challenge coins here. [shuffles coins]

Sanderson: There you go.

Parry: Yeah, there you go.

Sanderson: I was going to say, uh, yeah, uh, especially, uh, with that, the whole, uh, ring banger. Uh, well, we call it ring bangers on the Navy side. When you graduated the Academy...

Parry: Yeah. we call them ring knockers.

Sanderson: Because every time you go into a military bar, the first thing that you hear is whack [makes smacking noise] you know, or they walk in your office, they come walking in, slap their hand down. I'm like, "Yep, there's the ring banger".

Parry: My ring got stolen. While I was at Fort Benning at some point, and I got the insurance for it, but never, never got another one. I don't care to have one.