



**Video Log  
Andrew J. Arsenault  
Vietnam  
U.S. Army  
Born: 10/24/1944**

**Interview Date: 05/01/2012  
Interviewed By: Ketil Osland**

- 00:00:00** I was drafted into the Army Medical Corps 1966-67, reached the rank of E-4.
- 00:01:00** I was living at home with my mother, going to school and working part time for the State of CT. My mother gives me a letter stating I should take the train to New Haven. There a bus would take me to the recruiting station. As soon as the physical was over, they called out a few names and the rest of us were told to go into another room. They told us to raise your right hand and told you are in the Army now. The phones are over there and you can tell them you are going to Ft. Dix. They gave us a box lunch, then boarded the bus. We didn't get to Ft. Dix until 2 am. We all tired and we drove into a huge empty parking lot, eventually a sergeant came over and they brought us over to get haircuts. We got our gear, underwear, fatigues putting everything in a bag. Everything was rush, rush.
- 00:03:30** Then we were off to our barracks which were new, 4 men to a room. I noticed the polished hallways. I found out that we polished the hallways daily and could not walk down the middle, only along the sides with socks, never the boots.
- 00:05:20** Remembered Sgt. Al Bell, a tuff WWII Drill Instructor who was just finishing out his career. He never mixed any words. The hall was maintained by mopping and buffing and the Drill Instructors would inspect everything. If they found dust anywhere we would have to do everything all over again. They went through everything, your locker, seeing that everything was folded just right. Your bed had to do everything just, shoes aligned. The penalty was pushups, pull ups, (there was a bar just outside the barracks) cut the grass with a butter knife. I didn't get any special awards. There was an award for the top recruit. It was a lot of work, we were constantly training. They were constantly telling us we were going to Vietnam. If you didn't pay attention you were going to end up dead.
- 00:07:09** There was a lot of special training. When you go through basic they give you a lot of aptitude tests. I had worked a little in the medical field. My MOS was 92B20 which is in the medical tech field. They asked me if I wanted to be a medic, I told them yes. Four of us went to Ft. Lee, VA. There we worked side by side with civilians at the Kenner Army Hospital medical lab. We worked 7

days a week, learning about blood bank, hematology we were transferred to Walter Reed Army Hospital and studied malaria. I didn't take us long to figure out that we were head to South East Asia one of the areas where you find malaria. To this day I can still look at a blood smear and tell you what kind of malaria it is.

- 00:09:33** We looked at malaria slide day after day. We looked at hundreds and hundreds of blood smears. Soon after that we were send back to VA.
- 00:09:56** Soon after we returned to Ft. Lee, we were called in by our captain and given four envelops with our orders. Go on leave for a week and then report to Oakland, CA. We met up in Oakland and looked around San Francisco. I thought it was going to be warm, it was June, it was around 50 degrees.
- 00:10:45** Before going overseas you had to go through another physical. There were about 200 of us. We had to get shots, they used the air guns in each arm, and I bet there were about 110 who were very sick from all the shots. I took a couple of days before you started to feel yourself again.
- 00:11:45** Then we got on a commercial airliner (TWA type) in our kaki short sleeve uniform with our duffle bag. I remember this you blond kid on the plane who seemed very nervous. Our flight plan would fly to Hawaii, Okinawa, the Philippians and then Vietnam. When we got to Hawaii this guy didn't get back on the plane. No one saw him.
- 00:13:24** By the time we approached Tan Son Nhut AB in Vietnam they plane just circled the landing strip. We could see there were some tanks crossing the runway.
- 00:14:20** When we landed, they announced to go immediately into a large hanger. When they opened the airplane door, I could feel the heat, this was my first impression of Vietnam. We got on a army school bus, there was a infantryman armed with an M-16. I noticed that there was chicken wire covering all the bus windows. A sergeant told us that we were going to drive through Saigon and sometime kids on scooters will through a grenade at the bus. Welcome to Vietnam. The sights and smells of a third world country is really different. They do a lot of outdoor cooking, open sewer system, Vietnam has a smell of its own.
- 00:16:02** We went to an internment camp. It took us about 3 days before we found out where we were going. I was assigned to the 85<sup>th</sup> Evacuation Hospital located at Quin Yon about 150 miles north of Saigon. I got on a C-130 and flew between mountain ranges. Got there got our fatigues and found out that our new home was a tent with sandbags around it. The floor was metal tracking and tanks use.
- 00:18:00** We had a mama son who would come in and clean, shin your boots. In a day or two we went into town and bought a mat for the end of your bed. She asked us how much we had paid for the mats, about 5 dollars. She got angry

at us, even hit one of the guys with the mat. She took all the mats into down and came back with new mats and gave us back a couple of dollars.

- 00:19:15 We were together until 2 were shipped out. I can remember Bob Deolvier, Richard Costa and I can't remember the others. It has been over 40 years.
- 00:19:20 Our job in the hospital handled everything from accidents, guys driving duce and half trucks, driving too fast, mud and lots of injuries besides the battle field wounded.
- 00:19:58 I remember my first job was helping a medical technologist do a autopsy on a helicopter pilot who had been killed. He was burned badly in a helicopter crash. I had to remove his helmet and the top of his head came off. That was pretty rough. You get through it. We did quite a few after that.
- 00:21:52 We would do the blood smears and see if they have active malaria. The best time to do this is when they have fever. The time when the virus is most active.
- 00:22:00 Went to the middle of the tour and then went on R&R, most guys went to Hawaii or Australia. We picked Japan which was a very expensive choice. We had a great time, went out to dinner, drank a lot and had fun. They guys who went to Australia had the best time. The Aussies would invite the guys home to the sheep farms and not allow you to spend your money. I had to wire home for more money.
- 00:23:37 There were a lot of rules and regulations in Japan. You couldn't wear a uniform.
- 00:24:30 I was not in charge of anyone, we had a sergeant over us and a captain above him. We just did our work like a regular GI. We rotated around the lab doing, chemistry, urine, and blood bank.
- 00:25:23 We didn't have any clubs at the base, it was a small 200 bed hospital with the goal to stabilize the soldiers and ship them out. We would send them to the 409<sup>th</sup> General Hospital in Japan.
- 00:25:46 I stayed in touch with my family through letters. I also made some tapes. The letter sequences didn't always follow what really was happening. They were mixed up. Mail call was something everyone looked forward to. We got cookies and lots of stuff.
- 00:27:21 The food got monotonous, powdered eggs, got lots of beer, it came on pallets. Saw the USO shows, lots of beer. They sent us to Cam Ranh Bay for the Bob Hope USO Show.
- 00:27:00 I didn't have any good luck charms. Faith was very important, almost all the guys went to church or the synagogue. Everyone had a short time calendar. I would wait do it in blocks until a had a couple of weeks to mark off. I was usually a naked women and you had to fill in all the squares

- 00:30:15** The fellow officers and NCOs were fine. I do have a funny story about Dr. Gatner who I worked with at the 85<sup>th</sup> Evacuations Hospital. When I returned to CT I worked at the old city hospital McCook. I was standing in line at the cafeteria and just ahead of me was Dr. Gatner who I would be working with for around 5 years before he moved on to John Hopkins.
- 00:31:00** I remember leaving, flew on a helicopter to Cam Ranh Bay, flew home to Ft. Lewis, WA in fresh kakis. I remember the pilot announcing the CA coast and you could hear a loud roar and clapping on the plane. They said there were protesters at the main gate but we didn't see any. When I landed a Bradley, a neighbor drove me to my sister's house, they weren't home. They were in church and I met them there. Everyone was happy.
- 00:33:00** I was finished with the Army except I had a Ft. Drum summer camp. We just sat around and played cards. That was it.
- 00:33:39** I looked for a job and wanted to pick up on my civilian life. I was out of a job for a couple of weeks and landed a job at the UCONN Medical Center.
- 00:34:16** I tried to use the GI bill. I went to the Connecticut Bank and Trust and they would not help me use the GI Bill. So he had to wait until he had enough money to put a down payment on a house. Never did business with them after that either.
- 00:36:00** I kept in contact with the three other guys I knew from the Army. They came to my wedding. After that they travel through the Middle East and Europe and on the way back they came and staying at my house.
- The weapons I carried in Vietnam was a 45 in a shoulder holster and a M-16.
- 00:35:47** I am a member of the VFW in Avon, the American Legion and disabled veterans since I lost some hearing from shooting weapons.
- 00:37:00** My thinking about the war didn't change much. Speaking with the Vietnamese who worked at the hospital, they felt it didn't make any difference if you stay or leave we have been at war for a long time. Nothing is going to change, that was the attitude the most of the people had. I liked the military and regret not staying in or joining the national guard.
- 00:37:45** I have been very active in the Horse Guard. I like the military and I learned to be a man in the military. Learned to take care of yourself, you clothing keeping yourself squared away. The military teaches young men discipline and I like that. I had a high school friend Gary Dellarippa whose father rides horse with the Governor's Horse Guard. I had been riding horses in Kenny park since I was 12 years old. So his father brought me out there and I saw some great veterans. It was a tough training, no women at that time. Went

through the recruit class. Went through about 6 years, left the group with kids playing sports. Then I went back in the group and have been there since.

**00:41:25** Sometimes the Horse Guard goes to Washington DC for a presidential inaugural and I can remember taking a bus to the Vietnam Memorial.

There is a part that sinks in the ground and you start seeing all the names and I often wondered how many names of those guys who died that I might have held their hands before they died. The place always gave me a array felling. The place always gives me a strange feeling. I don't go there anymore.

**00:44:00** You can't let the military take over life. You have to let it go. So veterans never have peace. We weren't welcome home and didn't put an end to it and didn't get the recognition.