

Veteran's Release Form

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ACCEPTED AND AGREED

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Transcribed and edited by Phillip McCabe from April 21, 2005 – May 2, 2005.

[Interview continued from March 21, 2005]

MITCHELL: You released that red apple, you let the bag fall. Now you don't want to do this premature. If you do it too high, you'll have yourself an oscillation. The parachute's here, you're here, and this forty pound bag's below you. You know how an antenna starts swaying. It will go this way and then it will go this way, of course you know that. But it makes landing tough, so you don't release that button too soon. But then you get on the ground and then you got to get all your group assembled to become an effective force, and go off to an agenda.

[Interview pauses for a refreshment break]

MITCHELL: So I re-enlisted and went to Fort Campbell, Kentucky, this was January (____ 4 seconds). We were really training and it was rough. This was nineteen sixty-three, and there was a lot of things going on. There was a lot of tension and we were really training hard. One day we went out in January and we jumped with our full field pack, and we marched about twenty miles. We took some sweeps through the forest and all that and I got back home about eight nine o'clock at night. Fortunately, I got to go back home, because I left about five o'clock in the morning. Went in the house, and got all fixed up and she said, "You got a letter from mom." I opened it up and it said, "Mobay called and wanted you to take a physical." It was just miserable that day. It was a lot of hassle jumping and assembling the troops and things like that. I was really; I was really down that day. That was one of my low points in my military career.

MCCABE: Yeah.

MITCHELL: It was real tough down at Fort Campbell. The 101st they really trained hard. I remember another low moment was we would go out in the [____ 3]. It was in the night and you

don't, we didn't have the time to set up a perimeter area or camp or anything, you just pulled something over you. Like a [] or something.

MCCABE: Yeah.

MITCHELL: And you'd sleep under a tree. I went to sleep, woke up, and there was a funny light. It was weird. What had happened was it had snowed the night before and I was covered with snow. And the sunlight coming through the snow, and I it took a, I'll never forget that, but I had about two or three inches of snow on me. I was like man I look like a. A lot of times you live like an animal.

MCCABE: Um-hum.

MITCHELL: But, good training, good conditioning. But went to Vietnam with the 101st Airborne Division. Well, after all this, after jump school training and all that, I went up through the ranks to make star soldier, E6. Now this is an interesting story because I was a supply sergeant for Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Had it made, supply sergeant for my company and it's really a cake job, 'cause you don't go to the field, you stay in, you make sure all the supplies get in, keep records, and all this stuff you know. Me and the personnel sergeant were good friends, and one day he come out and says, "Hey Mitch I got a levy for Vietnam." 76K4P that was my grade. He says, "You're the only one in the battalion." I said, "Damn." He says, "If you apply for OCS, Officer's Candidate School, I can say you're not available." "Okay. That's cool." So I had before put in an application for OCS. The application had twenty-one enclosures. You have to have a physical; you have to have all types of things. And the physical can't be over ninety days old; I had letters of recommendation. And I sent that out and it came back, something was wrong. So I redid it and sent it up and it came back something was wrong. I redid it, sent it up and by then my physical.

MCCABE: Yeah.

MITCHELL: Physical examination had expired. And then I made six and I was like, "The hell with it, I wasn't going to mess with it." So Captain or Sergeant Corpins he says, "You put that OCS application in, and I'll say you're not available for Vietnam." So I said, "I'll do it." So the application this time was the bare minimum. It was just a physical, security clearance, and something else. I sent that sucker in and about two weeks later I got a call for OCS. So that's how I went to Officer's Candidate School. And Officer's Candidate School, after that I wanted to stay airborne 'cause now as an officer you get one hundred ten dollars instead of fifty-five. So to do that I went to parachute [] school. It's aerial delivery school. And they teach you how to rig up trucks, and of course how to pack personal parachutes and all that stuff. So I went to that school, and then they sent me to the 101st Airborne Division, which was getting ready to go to Vietnam. So we went to Vietnam. And one interesting thing the first real fire I came into in Vietnam. I tell you the military, they get you all psyched up for this stuff. And there was this guy, Lieutenant Smith; I can't get what his first name was. He was a, he came out of the University of Texas. He did lots of his commission there. And we were all fired up getting ready to go to Vietnam. I mean they psych you up; training is intensified, they brought a new general in and this guy was hard as nails. He would, he did things like the former commanding general, a two star general, was fairly lenient. Not so, we knew he was there. Well Lieutenant, Major General Marsal came, and he started kicking butt. Like he went to the NCO club. They had a 789 club where sergeants, E7, eights, and nines they were kind of clannish in there.

MCCABE: Yeah.

MITCHELL: He went in there at two o'clock in the afternoon. And there were several servicemen. "What are you guys doing in here? You're supposed to be out training. We're

taking this division to Vietnam, and you guys are in the club drinking." And he busted them. He reduced them in rank. I mean he started kicking butt, and he had mandatory training on Saturday mornings. Usually, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday we had off. Mandatory training. The post had several gates that you could come onto the base with. For some reason, he closed them all except for one. Everyone had to come through the main building. It's almost like security that you'd expect now.

MCCABE: Yeah.

MITCHELL: Supposedly he'd drive around in his staff car, and he'd have a bus behind him. If you didn't salute his car, you got on the bus. Not only you would get an Article 15, you're company commander would get a letter. This guy was tough, but he was whippin' us up into shape. And I'll tell you what it really had an affect on us. I mean everybody started cutting clean. You knew what to do and you did it. There was no fooling around. Well this Lieutenant Smith was a platoon leader, and I was a platoon leader with the 101st Quartermaster. So we went, we all went to Vietnam together. Then one night, it was before Tet, Tet of 1968. We got there December, and Tet occurred in January. It was New Years and the big Tet Offensive.

MCCABE: Yeah I've heard of that.

MITCHELL: So we were at Bien Hoa airbase, and Bien Hoa airbase is like a oval shaped area. I dunno how many miles it is, but it's a large area. And right through the center is the runway; the runway is a five thousand foot runaway strip. And then beyond it on each end maybe one hundred yards around the perimeter are fences. And then, on the each side of the airfield, this way is to the east the army encampments and on the west side there were the air force encampments where the planes went for maintenance and everything like that. So, it was a big oval like that. Well, we got alerted Lieutenant Smith and I. Oh I have to back up second.

Lieutenant Smith's obligation, his duty obligation is going to be up in like four months when we were back to Fort Campbell, Kentucky. But he was so fired up he wanted to go with us to Vietnam that he extended. He extended a year or whatever it had to be so he could go with us, deploy with us in Vietnam. You know if you think about it I don't know if you'd want to do that, but he was all psyched up and so he extended and went with us. So we're back in Vietnam and it's the night of the Tet. We got a call from the tactical operations center that we had a perimeter set up, our perimeter set out on the east. They tell us to set up a defensive perimeter on the west. "Why is that? All that's down there is the airfield." And this is probably a half a mile away is the air force. They said, "Set up a defensive perimeter on the western flanks." So he and I sent some men down and got it set up. We're standing on our, we had this out house, and we were standing out on the steps that led up to the out house. And we were looking over just B.S.ing; you know looking where we had positions. All of a sudden we start receiving fire from the runways. I mean those suckers had penetrated the perimeter because at the end of the runway that's where our fences were and there was very few defensive measures out there. That's measures out there; I don't think we even had trick flares out there or anything. Apparently the Vietcong had penetrated there and were coming up to our rear. And he and I were standing there and tracers, almost all military use these. If you shoot at night you don't know where you're bullets are going unless they hit something and spark. So they fire tracers, like every fifth round they put a tracer in. Then the bullets designed is whenever it fires it's projected but it burns. And they were using red, ours are red, the Communists' are green. And I had never seen this before and all of a sudden we start seeing, we hear the fire. And all of a sudden I see the tracers coming up to our right, and they sweep down this way towards us and they hit the shit house. Smith and I dive down; this is the first time we've come under fire. And it's a tightening

experience once you do that. I mean you realize then you're at war. The point of the story is that the next day or the day after that, Lieutenant Smith has become the commander because our first commander got taken out, or I don't know why he got, so Lieutenant Smith was company commander. It wasn't three or four days later we got through Tet, paperwork came out for Lieutenant Smith to be discharged. They had lost his request for an extension. He took it. He got the hell out. He was discharged so he was in Vietnam about two and a half months. You know the military didn't want him to do that, they wanted him to extend for a year, and then they lost his extension papers so he got sent back to the states. And I became company commander, which is very significant. First off to be a company commander is a Second Lieutenant. And you're in charge of about two hundred fifty men. You've got four platoons. There's four platoons and four platoon sergeants and then all the other ranks. So I was very fortunate to become a company commander, and gain command time in combat. There was a lot of responsibilities. You had to be responsible for guys from where they take their crap to where they eat, what they wear, to make sure they're ready for combat, to make sure they're trained, that they conduct themselves appropriately, and then you're also responsible for notifying their next of kin if they're killed or wounded. So I had that responsibility; that was tough. 'Cause I had six killed, six of mine were killed. Generally mine were in concourse. We were an aerial delivery company; we took care of all the parachutes for people to jump. Of course we were jumping in Vietnam and heavy jump equipment. We, you know, speaking of parachutes we could air drop loads. We participated in Khe Sahn, it was a, early in Vietnam the French were there. They had Dien Bien Phu, and that was the collapse of the French. The Vietcong overran Dien Bien Phu. Khe Sahn was on the verge of becoming our Dien Bien Phu. It was an outpost in the northwest section of South Vietnam. It was in mountainous territory. The Communists put

in a lot of effort to take it over by force, and we put in a lot of effort to keep maintain and keep it. So it was re supplied the majority aircraft landing and taking off. But, it started getting too hot and we started air dropping supplies in there. And so my group contributed to that, rigged up the loads and dropped them in. To make those air drops to Khe Sahn. And then I lost two guys in a car pool, on Highway 1; they were ambushed. They were killed in the woods, and you have to write their families. You know I say you have too, but it's the right thing to do. You know, but I was able to help; I got a list of new guys coming in so this one guy was from Shadyside, Ohio. Got him and he became my driver. That's some of the perks when you have a driver; if I wanted to go anywhere, I just called the airfield and picked up a helicopter. It was cool. And I had to fly around a lot. So I went to the Eagle's Nest, and I've seen something on the Discovery Channel about the Eagle's Nest, and I was there where it was. A lot of these areas in Vietnam were, the mountains were very peaked. You know just come from nowhere up to a peak. A lot of them we'd just blow the top off, and make a landing zone, make a fire base out of them. And we'd just fire artillery to use it for support of our infantry troops that were on the ground. So I got to go and visit those because in addition to rigging up air drops, we became efficient in sling loads on helicopters. You know when you rig up a load on a helicopter and fly off with the loads underneath. You know ammunition, food, petroleum, and all that type of stuff. So, at all these fire bases I had men that would be out there to recover our supplies. You always have to keep in the back of your mind the expenses of war. These slings and these pilots and things, not only just the expenses, but do the availability, having the equipment to use.

MCCABE: Yeah.

MITCHELL: You can't take a load out just drop a load off and expect to another, get the equipment from the United States to do it again. You have to recover that. So our people often

times were the ones that would do that so that you could recover it and use it again. But we worked around a lot of all type of helicopters and aircraft. I remember one time at Phu Bai, the airbase there, just coincidentally I got off a C-130 there and we brought in some casualties from Khe Sahn. And there was this female reporter, she'd been out there. And she was interviewing a soldier, and I was listening to the tape and this guy was you know making the tape, and he said, "My name is such and such, where are you from?" In the background you hear, "Incoming!" A tremendous thump. You can't record the concussion of the sound of a real explosion. It's just impossible. Once you experience it, it gives you an appreciation for the power of that. But you heard that, and then you heard the reporter say, "Oh I'm hit!" And she got hit, and we went back and got her out. She survived, but she was somewhere she shouldn't have been you know. So that was cool.

MCCABE: So, I've been told a story where. Something about you were at a base and there was a forest all around or jungle all around, or something like that.

MITCHELL: Well, at it was Camp Hue was where the headquarters was first off. It was just north of Phu Bai. We went into Bien Hoa and then we went into Phu Bai. And we would have to send patrols out to sweep the area, usually every evening. And I went out one particular evening. Was this the time that I killed the person?

MCCABE: I don't know, I was just told a little bit about it. I mean if, it's whatever.

MITCHELL: This was, I went out on the sweep and generally the Vietcong, they're you don't know how they have an ornate ability of theirs to fight tactically and exceptionally trained. 'Cause normally when you go out on patrol, you have several people who trail behind, about ten fifteen yards behind. You want to be able to keep sight of the person ahead of you of course so you don't get lost. And you have somebody doing this, and on the back of your hat or helmet

you have two strips of reflective tape. It's not really meant for anyone else but the person behind you, 'cause you follow a certain person. And I, you'd think that a person who's a novice, or a person who's new to fighting, would think [being in front] would be the worst position you could be, that guy could get killed. But they [__4] try to get the bulk of them because they know if they shoot the front man the others will take cover and they won't get them. So I don't know if it's training point, or if they learned. It was probably something that they were trained to do. But, in this particular evening, it's I have some problems with this.

MCCABE: If you don't feel comfortable.

MITCHELL: I, it's something that I don't really like to talk a lot about it, because it's something that happened. I was back in the patrol. They thought the last was gone and started firing into the patrol and I was still coming. They killed this Kennedy, the guy's name was Kennedy, they shot him and then I fired and he turned, didn't realize, I just shot him when I saw him. I killed him, and just the look in his face was surprise because I'm sure he thought that the patrol had gone. That's why he exposed himself like that, and that was difficult [__2]. You don't want to think about the family. But anyways, we would do that and go on patrol. And you don't get yourself. You don't want to get yourself.

MCCABE: Yeah, I could agree with you.

MITCHELL: You have to go back and be civilized. It's some what [__]. But you got to do it; you know there's a lot of controversy about war and peace, and I'm a far right winger. You know I'm not too far; I'm a radical right winger. But the influence and prosperity we had in the world is because the United States became a strong force. And I feel that the majority is a force for good. We want people to prosper in society, and without the Department of Defense or the type of government we have I don't think we'd have all the advances that we have today 'cause

you look at like the medical field with stem cell research and all that. That, to have a society where you can develop a career related to doing this you know you have to feel relatively safe. There's a lot of basic things you know food, shelter, and all that that can be taken care of so you can do all that technical type stuff. You know you don't have to worry about a Taliban, Saddam Hussein or Omar Kadaffi, or you know whoever's in Iran, or Kim Jong-Il in Korea, but those people those types of government are terrible. We probably make mistakes in the United States, some of those they don't talk about. When we went to Afghanistan and Baghdad, we got to do that. It upsets me, and then back in those times, back in the Vietnam era, it upset me that about all the anti war stuff that was going on. Because, I didn't really know how to express myself, but after coming back from Vietnam and being a company commander getting command time in a combat environment I kind of got put on a post. Got put on kind of a fast track; you got potential. Because you're being tried, all you got to do is screw up somewhere or somebody else is going to screw up; one of your people's going to screw up. And you're you know I was very fortunate to have a lot of good troops, and I'm not boasting and saying it was because of me. But then again, I had to hold certain standards and hold people to those certain standards, and let people know that I expected certain things so that they could have prevented something bad from happening that could be career ending for myself or them. And I'm say career ending not, let alone life threatening. Where was I going with that? But, oh, during that time this is what I was going to say. After I came back from Vietnam, I went to [somewhere] in California, and then I was sent back home to go to school. I was still naïve you know colleges sent me these things. You're eligible for the Honorary Degree Completion Program; you can go to the school of your choice as long as you complete your Baccalaureate in less than two years. I was [] at the time. All you have do is get accepted by the school, the school of your choice, and we'll send

you there to get a two year Baccalaureate. So I went to West Lib. I could have gone to any school that would have accepted me, you know that's my being naïve. So I sent them a letter to see if they would do. They said, "Yeah you can do it." I sent that to the Army and the Army said ok. So they sent me back here to go to school for two years straight, two solid years with eighteen credit hours each semester, four each summer semester. There were two summer semesters. I barely made it, but I made it through with my degree. I still don't know, let me think of this. Oh, so I came back and I was going to school in seventy and seventy-one. And I was and Kent State occurred at that time, and they called for a school rally down at the commons, the theater up at West Liberty and this professor got up there, "This is terrible! We're going into Cambodia, the United States." Where's the address of your. I went to one. I thought, "I'll go down and add my two cents into it, 'cause I had been to Vietnam." I didn't make that, I didn't publicize that, but a lot of people knew that, you know my friends knew that I had been there. I didn't make it a big deal, and I didn't want to take on these professors, but I wish I could have. 'Cause they were getting up there, they were. They said they were going to have a discussion of the incursion into Cambodia. That was what they were talking about. So well, they're won't be []. Shit, it was bizarre. There was no discussion about it. It was the war is terrible, write you're senator here's the addresses for your senator and your congressman, these are the, you know write and tell them how upset you are about this. It was crazy. I'm sitting in there, and what I would have liked to have said was here's these professors. They were talking this stuff about how bad this war is. The guy next to me might have the college referral so he doesn't have to go, he might be on the verge of losing that. He might lose it, and in six months he'll be over there. Now you don't want this guy, and this is one of my chores as a company commander is to motivate the troops. You can't let this guy sit on his laurels and say, "Oh woe

is me I shouldn't be here. We shouldn't be in Vietnam." That's the best way they can get you killed. You got to get these guys, it's just like rallying the football team to win; it's like WVU. You got to motivate them. You can't have someone back there saying, "Woe is me." Or read in the newspaper and see these bad publicity; it's all detrimental. It's something that I had to contend with as a company commander. I had to be the forceful one to show them; hey the reasons we're here are the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization. We're a co signee of that, and if we needed Vietnam would come to our aid. If, you know it was the same type of thing, you know [__]. But to try to keep these guys motivated, and not let them sit down and start crying and thinking bad about themselves, and I kicked some ass over there. I put a guy in jail, LBG Long Bend Jail. That was a confinement facility. This guy that mouthed off [__ 2]. He had marijuana; he had a little drug problem. Again I'm naïve about this; I wanted to think we didn't but drugs were easily, readily available. There was marijuana, and I don't know what else. But I put this guy in jail, and he was. I'll try to make this real quick. When we left Fort Campbell, Kentucky, the division had three brigades. The first brigade was already in Vietnam, and they'd been in Vietnam for three to five years. And in Vietnam they had their normal rotations. It was a one year tour over there, so you lost a unit. The other two brigades back in Fort Campbell, and the unit I was with we were all getting fired up to go to Vietnam. We were training together, we were getting morale boost speeches; we were all fired up to go. And, we also got rid of a lot of deadweight. If I had a problem with a guy who wasn't up to snuff, we sent him off, and a couple guys thought, "Oh all I have to do is screw up, and they'll send me off. I won't have to go to Vietnam." Well the guys we sent off they went over to Vietnam as replacements. So everybody started tightening up; we'd rather go as a group rather than an individual.

MCCABE: Yeah.

MITCHELL: So when we went over to Vietnam, I had very little problems with the troops. The guys were well organized, well disciplined, and had outstanding organization. Then we started getting replacements in, and these guys were less motivated; they were just drafted getting out of basic training. They had orders to go over to Vietnam. That's the cohesiveness we had from when we first went over was starting to deteriorate, because we were getting more people. And also, when we went over there, the people from the first brigade that had been there for three years co-joined the units. So I got some people from them. I remember one night these guys, one of these guys was leaving. So I had a policy of lights out at ten o'clock, and that's it. And I slept in the company barracks, we were all just in [] about the size of a city block. You know there were groups there, and everybody else just stayed in the barracks. So one guy was leaving, the next night or so he was going back to the States, so they were having a party, and they was getting loud. So I called the first sergeant and said, "Tell them to knock it off, lights out at ten o'clock. I'll give them another hour because so and so is going." "Okay." Eleven o'clock rolls around and they're still loud. I call the platoon sergeant, or the first sergeant. I said, "First sergeant, I need ten thousand sand bags filled. I want the second platoon to go out back and fill sand bags." They took all those guys out back and started filling sand bags. They were pissed, but you know what, you had to do stuff like that. The rules were ten o'clock, I was a little lenient, and the guys when you're messing around with live ammunition, raw fuel, helicopters, flying, sling loading stuff out, you gotta be alert; you can't have a hang over. You know. You gotta have discipline. There was only a, and I didn't think too much about this, there were incidents of fragging. You know what fragging is?

MCCABE: I've heard of it but.

MNITCHELL: That's when your troops shoot [__2]. It's getting back at one of your platoon sergeants. You set off a fragmentary grenade, that's where it comes from. And one day on police call, you got this police call is when you get a bunch of people together and you walk through an area and you pick up trash cigarette buts and cans and all this stuff. And I still don't know about this, but one guy saw a glove, an Army glove. It was on the ground and he called attention to it, and there was a hand grenade in it, a fragmentary grenade. The pin had been pulled. You know how a hand grenade works?

MCCABE: Yeah.

MITCHELL: When the hammer flies off, then it explodes after a few seconds. So the pin had been pulled, the hand grenade was in the glove, and the glove was cinched up so the hand grenade wouldn't go off. So if someone would have picked up the glove, the grenade would have gone off. Never did find out who did it or why. That was a concern. There was another unit nearby, that somebody threw a grenade. I don't know what happened. [__3]. It's really bad when something like that happens, and really that's an awful loss because that's a very bad. You know, this is a philosophy I kind of had, I you wanna keep the guys on the edge of being pissed off. You want to give them stuff to do, you want to make it hard for them, have them do work, and put challenges in front of them. And of course give leeway, but you want to set goals ten percent more than what you think they can do. [__4] I always ask people, if you give me seventy percent I'm happy. You know if anybody, if you didn't want to work with me, I didn't want you working for me. You know, I'll work with you to get you out of there. I would just let you know that, and that was my philosophy. If you don't want to be here, I don't want you here. 'Cause if you don't want to be here and I make you stay here, there's and an adversarial situation that we don't need. If you stay here you do your job. [__4] That was Vietnam.

MCCABE: Now I know there had to be times when you weren't. I mean what did you do for fun?

MITCHELL: Oh well you make your fun. We would have steak fries every now and then, and things have changed now in the service. This young major in Iraq, she got convicted of misappropriation of military gear because she misappropriated government property. I don't know what it was. It was really, as a aerial re-supply company, we loaded up fourteen something like eight nine hundred [] in boxes about half as big as this room. This metal box is kind of like your tractor trailers, you know how they take those things. This was probably about [] 2] container delivery. And you'd ship those boxes; these boxes had metal doors on the front of them, just like a small tractor trailer. For aerial delivery one of your key items are plywood. That's what you make your skids out of. So we had two or three, I don't know how many containers we had, full of plywood. In Vietnam, plywood was like gold. 'Cause if you had plywood you could make a floor under your shower. You could make a end on a tent. You could hooch out of it, a place to live. I mean it was gold, so we bartered for that. I mentioned LBJ, that's Long Bend Jail; well Long Bend was an Army depot over there. All your supplies came in there. And it wasn't Tet, but the VC got into the ammo dump, set off a charge in there, and set the whole thing off. It exploded, that Long Bend ammo dump exploded from like ten o'clock at night to like seven o'clock the next morning. Just huge. Well we were like seven or eight miles away, and we would get the shock waves of that, and we could see what was happening; just huge balls of fire. But anyways, that was the depot, and we'd send some guys out, put four or five sheets of plywood on a truck, and go over to Long Bend where the food processors were and get a case of steaks. We'd come back and cook steaks, and they had beer over there too that they'd supply. We'd go down to the beer warehouse, you know. We'd bring

plywood, and we'd get beer. So that was kind of fun. And you do get R&R, rest and relaxation, and I went to Bangkok, Thailand. And then, we'd play cards, and I was good in this respect, but I sent all my money to my wife, and I kept over a hundred bucks to last me a month. But you know you don't need that much, and we'd play cards. And I got on a lucky streak. I won, I was probably up seven, eight hundred bucks and all you had to do was put in for R&R. And you had to have two hundred bucks when you left the airport to go on R&R. They'd fly you to Bangkok, Thailand or Sydney, Australia or.

[The tape cuts off here. Eventually he tells me about going to Thailand and that is all for the interview on March 21, 2005.]

END OF SIDE ONE, BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

MITCHELL: I explained to you out in the other room about cadence and the importance of that when you're moving troops. When you have a company is generally comprised of five elements it's a headquarters, platoon, first, second, third, and fourth platoons. The first, second, third, and fourth platoons are generally are about fifty men per element. When you have a company size element, which is these five elements out marching or running for physical training or something like that it's it's helpful if you can keep everyone in step. If you don't keep everyone in step you're like a crowd of civilians it's no different than being on Fifth Avenue in New York all these people walking down in different just.

MCCABE: Yeah.

MITCHELL: One of the ways of keeping people in step was to sing cadence called cadence. And I used to do this for our units the units I was assigned to. And most of them were airborne again and I told you I mentioned earlier that airborne are paratroopers and non airborne people are legs. I'll start off with one of them. This is corny I really hate to do this. You almost have

to envision a group of people with you and I'm the lead I say something and then it's repeated by the masses. C-130 sittin' on the strip. And then they'll say C-130 sittin' on the strip. Airborne daddy's gonna take a trip. Stand up hook up shuffle to the door. Jump right out and count to four. If my main don't open wide. I've got another one by my side. If I die on the old drop zone. Sponge me up and send me home. Send my remains way out west. Tell my girl I done my best. Another popular one is Jody. You know you're away from home and Jody's supposed to be the boy back home that didn't have to go so. We had this song that said ain't no use in looking back. Jody's got your Cadillac. Ain't no use in going home. Jody's got your girl and gone. I'm gonna take a three day pass. Go back home kick Jody's ass. This kind of enlightens things and helps you run because we would run for miles and at times it was you know five of six miles we would run. It's very monotonous and again we want to keep people in step as much as possible. So these things just enlightened. There's two kinds of people I can't stand. Bowlegged women and straight legged men. I got a girl in Kansas City. She got whiskey in her titty. Now this is since then they got more females in the military you don't say that too much.

MCCABE: Yeah.

MITCHELL: I got a girl in Fayetteville. She won't do it but her brother will. What is this her brother will do? Go airborne like me and you. All the way, Airborne. You know you pick stuff up like that. Then I like this one. I crawled to the mess hall on hands and knees. Said sergeant, sergeant feed me please. Sergeant said with an evil grin. To be airborne you got to be thin. And then what's this sound coming down the street? Hey it's the sound of airborne feet. Standing tall and looking good. We belong in Hollywood. And that's, that's about it for the cadence. And there were several people made them up and there were some real good ones, real cute ones. There was another time I was in the Dominican Republic and I was a sergeant then. I hadn't

been a sergeant too long and I was in the headquarters talking to the supply sergeant. And we got this fellow from one of the regular line companies. He was kind of a troublemaker. He was hard to do anything with you know he was pretty independent. He was a big guy. I mean this guy, his name was Wyatt I can't think of what his last name or what his first name was. But, he was probably six three six four, weighed a couple hundred pounds and Wyatt did pretty much what he wanted to do. He tried to conform and he you know tried to get along but he had problems in A company with signal battalion so they sent him to headquarters. I ended up taking care of him. Wyatt didn't like to get up in the morning so a lot of times I'd get up in the morning and I'd go in there and try to pick his bunk up and wake him and then I'd run. I'd get the hell out of there cause he would be a little hostile. But I'd get him up and get him going. On every now and then on weekends we'd get to go down and take the troops down to Boca Chica in the Dominican Republic for a little r and r. Drinking and seeing the girls and playing on the beach and stuff like that. Well Wyatt was the driver and I was in charge of taking I think six or seven guys in this like a three quarter ton pickup truck that was old army three quarter ton truck. We went to Boca Chica and we had to back before dark because there was really a lot of guerilla activity you know you didn't know where you were going to run into trouble. They wanted everyone back at the camp by dark. So we went down to the beach and it was about four o'clock in the afternoon so I said, "Ok guys we're going to go back." I went to find Wyatt. Wyatt was sitting on a patio at this bar and I said, "Let's go Wyatt we've got to go back." Wyatt says, "I ain't leaving 'til I finish this bottle of rum." And he had about two or three inches left of rum in there. Now when I think back on this I think this stuff couldn't have happened. I don't know how full the bottle was when he started. But I just grabbed the bottle of rum and I chugged it, slammed the bottle on the table and said, "Let's go." So we got out in the truck and it was

probably an hour drive hour and a half drive back to camp along back roads. I passed out in the truck I was. After drinking that rum like that it just knocked me out. And when I came to we were in this village. A small village between where the beach and where our camp was. And we were outside this building and some of my guys were roaming around. I said, "What the hell's going on?" I said, "Where's Wyatt?" I thought if I find Wyatt I'll find the rest of the guys. Someone said, "He's in that bar." This bar was a large rectangular type building one story. The bar was in the front and in the back there was a long hallway with rooms off on the side where the prostitutes were. So we went in there me about four or five other guys. "Where's Wyatt?" One of the guys said he was back with one of the girls. We went back in that hallway and started kicking in doors. There were prostitutes in there with their guys. Finally we found Wyatt and got Wyatt and got him out of the room. Looked up the other end where we came in and the Dominican police were there. So we got out the back, got in our truck, and got the hell out. It was starting to get dark when we got back and we should have been back you know earlier. I let the air out of our spare tire and I told my boss we had a flat tire. There wasn't anything made of it. It was just something I thought of. Have any questions?

MCCABE: I was wandering about the story you had said about the orientation.

MITCHELL: Orienteering?

MCCABE: Could you say something about that?

MITCHELL: Elaborate on that? Okay, it's a. This is an exercise I don't know if they still do it or not but it was a very good exercise. You would be assigned a number and along with that number a starting point. Say you would start out at point A. And you had to traverse an area say through the jungle or through a hilly area of say a mile. And at intervals of like every hundred yards or two hundred yards there'd be another reference point you'd have to reach. It was

preprogrammed before you started out that if you were number ten, by the time you finished you should reach A, D, B, and E in that sequence and if you did all that you'd score one hundred percent. You did just right. So you start off from point A and you'd be directed to go azimuth say seventy for two hundred yards and then mark down at the two hundred yard mark there'd be a pole or a tree with a letter on it and you'd mark down what letter it is. So you'd start out at azimuth seventy, go two hundred yards, and you'd write down the letter that was on that tree. You'd do this say four or five times until you got to the end of the course and you were judged on how accurate you were by traversing this. When you traverse it like we did at this island of Arimati one of the two hundred yard increments we went through you had to there was a rice patty. We had the option of either along the dykes or the rice patty and trying to pick it up. If you stayed on one side of the rice patty if you did this right and you'd looked over and you'd say seventy degrees is that pine tree or that banana tree over there. Now then you'd walk the burm and you'd say well there's that banana tree, but then there's ten banana trees. You didn't know if you picked the right banana tree or not. You might want to pick a banana tree and then where you're standing on before you start out. Say I'm going to pick a palm tree. You know the palm tree [__]. It was a good exercise; it did a lot and there was a time limit so you wanted to do it as quick as possible so a lot of people do this and they run these obstacle courses. That's why it's even fun [__]. I'm sure I've read of it being done in the civilian world. It was something that started out in the military. It was a good exercise in map reading and of course learning how to use a compass and using a map and traversing terrain. In the also in the jungle this was my first experience. Well no, this wasn't my first experience. My first experience of this type in the jungle in Southeast Asia was on this island and the ground was really rocky. I mean large rocks. I don't recall them being volcanic rock, but they probably were. The ground was so hard that the

trees, the roots of the trees, would grow over the rocks to seek water, or dirt, or whatever, nourishment. The ground essentially was covered with these with roots. And of course there were roots of many different trees intertwining and spaces in between them, and try to run a platoon through that. This particular time the exercise was that we would go on patrol, and this was all in preparation for going to Vietnam. You'd go on patrol as an organized element and this was a platoon. You got a lieutenant, a couple sergeants, and then the regular troops. You'd try to stick together and again you follow these azimuths, but this wasn't an orientation. You just had to get from point A to point B irregardless of how you got there. It took us three or four hours to get to the top of this one mountain and like I said before, the mountains there were very peaked, they're steep like an ice cream cone upside down [__]. We got to the top of this one and the lieutenant that was leading us said, "Christ, we're supposed to be on that one." He got us to the top so we had to go back down and get up to that other mountain top. I'll tell you what, we'd have killed the guy. Then afterwards, we got back and the island is oval shaped and we started out on the beach, that's where our encampment was, and we went up to the top of these mountains and then proceeded north and we came back down to the beach. And we were probably two or three miles from our base camp so we came down to the assembly area where everyone cam down to and we were debriefed, and this is a military tactic also. They would ask, "What did you see? Who did you see? Did you see anything suspicious?" They asked you this. They asked about the type of terrain. Did you see any evidence of the enemy and discarded food wrappings? Animal carcasses that a human would eat? An animal would eat just about all of the carcass; a human would probably eat just the hind quarters or you know like of a deer or rabbit or something that they catch. So you look for these types of things. We were debriefed from that. Then, when we were released individually. Like I was saying, we were at this assembly

point was about two maybe three miles from our base camp, where we were supposed to be, but it was all along the beach. So when we were released the guy says. "You have to make it back to your base camp on your own. Now there are enemy forces out there that will try to capture you."

And of course these were Americans.

MCCABE: Oh.

MITCHELL: This was a training exercise.

MCCABE: Yeah.

MITCHELL: "And you are to avoid them at all costs. You may go." And they released me. Well I walk about thirty yards just outside of sight and I go into the jungle, and I just lay down and chill. Cause I figure, 'cause I know what these guys are going to do. They'll capture you. They'll, and this is what they really do. They'll capture you. They'll take you to a mock prison, and they'll try to break you down. Try to make you sign documents denouncing the United States and all this stuff. And they can do, they do all kinds of weird things. They take guys out in the mud, they throw cold water on them, and they put them in a wall locker and they beat on the wall locker. You know they actually do this. I knew that I was in for that if I got caught. So, I just went off in the jungle, like I say thirty, forty yards out and I sat down 'til dark. I figure it was about, cause there was no time element you just had to be back for reverie the next morning. So I went back and sat down. It was probably about eleven o'clock, and I got up and I took the most direct rout back. It was kind of a path, about a half [] trail. It wasn't something; it wasn't even a logging trail. I made it back to camp, and when I got back to camp, I found out the exercise was still going on. I was just fortunate that nobody had captured me. Or else they had captured enough

MCCABE: Yeah.

MITCHELL: troops to keep them busy and there wasn't else out to capture. So I just lucked out on that one. They and a lot of guys broke down and signed these statements denouncing the United States, and boy did they catch hell. There was another incident that two guys on these all these islands there are apples and you have a large reef from the shore out to a certain point, then you have deep water. And it's real deep. Well these two guys said, "Hey, we want to go out and go down by the water." They had an air mattress; an army issued air mattress. They blew that up and they go out, and they started going down in the water. They were probably I don't know how far out from the shore. But the air mattress started losing air. This one guy says, "I can't swim." And the other guy says, "Well I'll go to shore and I'll get help and come out to get you." So this guy comes to shore and he sounded the alarm. And this was you know the next morning there were helicopters looking for this guy. And hell, he'd drifted down to where he could touch bottom and he walked to shore but he was so exhausted that he practically passed out on the beach, but they had an all out search for this guy, interesting training. In this area we slept in pop tents, they're little shelter halves they're just enough for a person or two people to get in. in fact, you get a shelter half and your buddy gets a shelter half, combined they make a little V-shaped tent. I was lucky that I don't know why they set these up and I was the only one in this tent and I didn't have to share it. There was just enough room for a sleeping bag, two sleeping bags. I was sleeping one night, and I was near an area where we just threw the trash. You always dig a pit for your trash, whatever you had, food stuff like that, leftovers. And I heard something kind of scraping the tent, but man I was dead tired. All of a sudden, a damn rat ran across my face. I remember his tail dragging under my nose and ugh man [laughter] that grossed me out, so I had trouble getting to sleep so I just lay there and I'd rattle my mess kit. It's a metal thing that had a knife, fork, and spoon. They're probably all made of plastic now, but I'd rattle

that just to startle 'em and keep them out. Then I went to sleep. I figured if I was asleep it wouldn't bother me too much. Good training. Another time in Panama, that's when I said this was my first experience with the jungle and the ceremony. Well, in 1960 right after I got in the service we went to Panama. I told you maybe that wasn't on the other tape we took off from Fort Bragg and everything was just took off as it was supposed to. I don't think that part of the survival training I told you about down there was that you meet a friendly and they gave you a chicken. "This is your rations." So you had to kill the chicken and dress it and cook it. And I didn't eat the whole thing. You know if the enemy had seen it, they'd have known a human ate it cause I ate the wings and the breast and the legs and the rest of it was there. And it was, it wasn't really cooked well. It all adds up to good training. Now you'd asked me before you know when I went in and all that that recorded you say?

MCCABE: Um.

[Short break to explain what was on the tape from the previous interview. One side of the tape from the March 21, 2005 interview disappeared.]

MITCHELL: I went in to the service because I didn't have any prospects for a job around here. And the thought of going off to college just never even approached that. I barely got out of high school. In fact, if it hadn't been for my brother, I'd have got kicked out from my senior year. I had a little problem with a teacher down at school but I hated school. But anyways, my brother had gotten out of the service and he'd got kicked out of high school. He got kicked out of Union for fighting and then I had a problem down here and actually Mr. Booth, he was the math teacher, that I had a problem with. I think he just retired from down there of the Marshall County School system. But I had a physical run in with him; we almost went to blows, and then I got kicked out of school. So my brother, he made me go down to see the principal and

apologize and they let me come back in to graduate, 'cause this was the year of graduation. This was around March or April of my senior year. So. So I really didn't have any goals and I decided to go into the service. And I was, I could have been destined to do some bad things around here. In fact, I did some kinda bad things around here. If it hadn't been for this type of location, I could have ended up in jail. 'Cause we would go down to the toy plant, you know when it was in operation, and go through the cars. If somebody would leave their car unlocked and the keys in it, we'd take it for a joy ride. You know, that's grand theft auto. So anyways, I'm glad I made the decision to go into the service. I was concerned about going in because I was, my weight upon entry was on hundred and nineteen pounds. I didn't think I'd make the weight requirement, so I beefed up on banana splits the night before, and I was able to get in. Then I told you a little bit about the basic training, how they, there wasn't any prohibition of hitting, or cursing you when you went in into basic training. And they did a little bit of it to correct you. I think it was effective, and I'd recommend they do it today. Not in today's world. Went over jump school, we went into, I talked to you about jump school, I don't know if that's recorded or not.

MCCABE: []

MITCHELL: Jump school was at Fort Bragg, and I told you about. Ah, this is another thing I thought about last night. I told you about my platoon sergeant in jump school, Blood Burns. And he was a big black guy, just mean as nails, hard as nails, but there was a soft side to him that you'd rarely see but you knew it was there. He was a very good instructor. What I thought about last night. This was in North Carolina, Fort Bragg, North Carolina, right outside of Fayetteville. And I also went to basic training in Fort Jackson, South Carolina in 1960. Now this is a time, like in Fayetteville, you go downtown and all the movie houses there was a colored

entrance. You go to the bus station, coloreds always went to the back, and they had signs, "Colored Restroom" "Colored Entrance". And I was thinking about the you know, about Sergeant Burns, I was impressed with him and his leadership ability, yet he had to confront this when he was off base. This strict segregation, it really was, when I was in basic training at Fort Jackson, there was a black guy from Pittsburgh and we got a group together, four or five of us in a car. This sergeant had a racket going, he owned a car and he'd charge each of us twenty five dollars to take us home on the weekend, which meant we would leave after five o'clock you know on Friday, drive up, and this was before interstate. So it would take us until about noon Saturday to get home, and he'd drop us off along the way and the he'd come back Sunday morning and pick us up and take us back. And like I said, there were about five of us in the car and he'd charge us twenty-five dollars a piece, which was a lot of money back then because I was making seventy-eight dollars a month, that was your base pay. So. But one of the fellows that went up with us from Pittsburgh was, gee I can't remember, he was colored, he was a black fellow. And we stopped in, somewhere in North Carolina to eat. Pulled in the restaurant, went inside, started to order and they said, "We'll wait on you guys, but he's gotta come in the back." We all got up and left. You know it was. You know, all these things evolve out of our system. When you reflect back on it, those guys had a pretty rough time. But they, they integrated very well. I mean they controlled themselves, I think I would have been a bit more hostile, probably to any white, than what they were. They would accept that and know that I wasn't responsible for the system, the way it was and that things were changing. So, I thought that was a good evolutionary process that I sort of lived through. What else? One time, let me tell you a jump story.

MCCABE: Alright.

MITCHELL: We were when we would go out to jump, we would load up our C-130 aircraft and I'll tell you what, those are some of the sweetest aircraft you'd ever been in. They're still using them today. They're very dependable; they're the workhorse of the military. They can go into unimproved runways; they can go into Glen Dale. Big four engine, turbo-prop plane. It's got a limited short take off and landing capabilities. That's what primarily we'd jump out of. And I was in a lead plane; there were three planes flying – one lead plane and one off to the left and one off to the right. And I was close to the door on the left side of the aircraft I was going to jump out of. So where I could look out and I could see the other plane, the plane to my left. And we were going through our jump commands, all of a sudden out of that other plane I see a parachute and a guy go out, out of the aircraft. And then I, we're all going to jump on the same drop zone so this is, this is highly unusual. Apparently what had happened was; you have upwards of sixty people in the plane that were going to jump. It's pretty cramped in there. This one fellow had turned around and he got distracted from that aircraft. He was getting ready and doing the jump commands; he turned around and when he turned back around, his reserve parachute had been pulled, and it came out undone inside the aircraft. And there was a man in front of him, and they all tried to get that parachute and restrain him; keeping it from getting into the wind to go out. But they weren't successful. The parachute went out, it inflated, and it pulled that guy out of the aircraft. It broke his collar bone and all. But I remember seeing the plane peel off; you know it aborted the flight and went back to circle and see where that guy landed. And they recovered him in I think Spring Lake, North Carolina. His main parachute opened too. So his reserve parachute was in one pine tree and his main parachute was in another, and some civilians came and cut him down and took him to the hospital. But that was. It kinda stands out early in my jump days. What else?

MCCABE: Now all your jumps were successful right?

MITCHELL: All my jumps were.

MCCABE: You didn't have any mistakes then that happened?

MITCHELL: The only time I had a problem jumping was in jump school. I told you, you complete five jumps and you try to get them done in a week and a lot of it is dependant on the weather. If it rains, you don't jump in the rain unless it is a necessity. So we had to jump three times in one day. And they modified the parachutes since this happened, it wouldn't happen what happened to me. I jumped, I landed, and it was windy. You learn how to recover; first you gotta roll on the ground; as soon as your feet hit the ground you have to roll. You don't know how hard you're going to hit the ground, so you're trained whenever you're feet touch the ground you roll and then you get up and run around you're parachute and deflate it. Because it's still inflated, and it will blow you like a sail. Well it was windy that day, and I landed started to get up and go around it. I crossed the wind; it caught my parachute, and just jerked me off my feet. It started dragging me through the sand and all these drop zones in North Carolina, they're sandy. I tried to recover again and get up and run around, the wind knocked me down again. And about the third time, I just about, I was just about crapped out, 'cause this was the third jump I'd had that day that this was happening. So, it was very it was physically demanding to do this. Particularly in jump school 'cause you run everywhere. So after you jump, you recover your parachute, put it in your bag, and then you run off the drop zone. You're running in sand and you've got your rifle and your backpack and a forty pound parachute. And you run through this sand, and if you've ever tried to run through sand, it's difficult.

MCCABE: That's right.

MITCHELL: So you run until you can't, then you get down on one knee, get your breath and then you run again. That's the police for doing that. So I was whipped on that third jump and finally some guy caught my parachute. All you gotta do is grab the string of it, and hold it, and the will blow on out of in and it will deflate. It's just like a big sail, and when you do it often it is difficult to do by yourself. Now they have canopy releases, they have metal releases just above your shoulder on the suspension line. So if you would run like that, all you'd have to do, well they tell you to release both of them and just lift the cap up and press two buttons and the canopy will be separated from the harness. They tell you not to release one because then that becomes a whip. If there's anyone else in your area, that thing will come around and hit you and do some damage with that coupler. They call them capo releases, and they do that. I was a parachute rigger in Vietnam and I told you we supplied Khe Sanh and it was almost going to be the American Dien Bien Phu, which was the downfall of the French in Southeast Asia. Another thing we did over there, it was all mission oriented. Napalm and all these bombs, you might not think about it, but if you're a bean counter you would, are very expensive. Those napalm bombs cost twenty twenty-five thousand dollars. I mean really expensive. So we rigged up a our own way. We'd make our own napalm bombs. And since we were fixin' to air drop, they could use like a C-130 to drop these. Not only did we use napalm, we'd make fifty-five gallon drums with thickened fuel. Napalm all that is is we can put gasoline. Say fifty percent gasoline, fifty percent transmission fluid, and you've got thickened fuel. It slows down the combustion of the gasoline, and that's all you got really when you've got napalm. They probably use something more sophisticated than that, but it might end up to be transmission fluid.

MCCABE: Yeah.

MITCHELL: And it also has a capability of adhering to something, stick to something.

Gasoline just, if you'd survive two or three seconds, you'd survive. With napalm, it would stick to you and that's what the thickened fuel does. So anyways, we'd make up these; I was telling you about the plywood we used to trade for beer and stuff like that. We were waiting to get resupplied and that so not only what we had over there, we got more of it. Four fifty-five gallon drums on a plywood skid and you could get I'm not sure how many. You line them up side by side inside a C-130. And you get an extraction chute, a parachute at the back of the aircraft that the pilot can control; he hits a button, it's just like a bomb bay drops this parachute out the back of the aircraft and then that pulls that load out. And it's fairly intricate when, these were simple to do. You rig up the extraction chute; you rig it up to the loads that are going to come out and you rig it up to the timing device, an explosive device. So you're going to go in at three hundred feet, you drop this parachute, and this extraction chute it pulls out the napalm, it sets off the timer that's inside the drums of napalm, and maybe two or three seconds. There's a formula. The military's pretty precise. They don't leave anything to chance. And then that will explode, it has the same effect as a regular napalm bomb. And you can do that for less than a thousand dollars. You know to make these things. We also did that with CS, that's a gas, tear gas, but it would temporarily keep an area where people couldn't get in. No human could go in without burning their eyes and nose. And we would do this around protective areas. There were certain areas, you've heard of Agent Orange. Agent Orange was a defoliant, a very strong defoliant. It would just kill all living vegetation. It just deprives the plants and vegetation of oxygen or not oxygen the thing they need to make oxygen. What is that carbon dioxide? Anyways, it kind of coats all the vegetation, and the plants die. Then what they would do, they'd go in like maybe a week and spray Agent Orange over an area, and they'd defoliate it. And then a week later, after that was

all dead, you'd come in with napalm and drop it and burn it all off. Kind of on either sides of where they were. So you'd deprive areas, either the enemy were using these areas for their home base and using that for cover and concealment, and you would deprive them of that ability. A less harsh way to do it would be use a CS agent, it's a powdered gas and yeah you'd rig that up with an explosive so that it could explode and cover this area with; it's a powdered gas, but then after two or three rainstorms it's all washed away. So you temporarily prevented people from going into a particular area. Usually you do that around if you. I was in Bien Hoa and Phu Bai, the times I was in Vietnam. Bien Hoa was the northern part of the southern part of Vietnam and

MCCABE: I was just going to ask where that was.

MITCHELL: North of Saigon [points on a map where it is located] and the in the Iron Triangle area. And the enemy would use these areas to bomb some of artillery into Saigon and Bien Hoa and into our base camps. I have a terrible map there. But the Vietnamese, you have to really give them credit for what they could do with little or nothing. I know that when I went to college right after Vietnam, and in the political science course the guy was you know I had kind of a rough time with those guys. They were always peace, damn hippies that were against the war, which I don't have I feel I was sort of a mercenary. I'm a career soldier; they want me to go to Vietnam, I'm going to Vietnam. I didn't really have any say, I didn't really care if it was considered legitimate or not. It was my duty. Say a guy, like yourself, if you were drafted and you had an opinion I think you're certainly entitled to that. But, we were talking about re supplying over VC and the Vietcong where they were getting their weapons at, well most of it were ours. They would capture things or capture a base or overrun a platoon or something, then they'd take those weapons. We had bombs and artillery shells that didn't go off; the Vietcong would find these and they'd rig them up as booby traps or take them apart. I mean they were

tremendously innovative in what they could do to keep the war going. Of course they didn't, they were getting re supplied from the north, and this was a thing I was telling you about Kent State and that went on found out that we incurred on Cambodia.

MCCABE: Yeah.

MITCHELL: Well, that really kinda ticked me off. I knew, I knew that we were doing it when I was in Vietnam. I mean there's not a line, there's not a border line out there that says "This is Cambodia and this is Vietnam". If some guy over there on that imaginary line is shooting at you, I'm gonna shoot back. And to carry that further, to carry that further, if the supplies are coming through there that they're using to shoot at me or coming country and they shoot at me or coming through Cambodia. I should be able to go in there and take them out. If Cambodia isn't enforcing their territorial integrity by keeping foreigners out and letting the North Vietnamese come in, you know who am I to say I'm not going to go over and do that. So this is, this is about the Vietcong. [Looking at map again] This is Bien Hoa; this is where I first went in from Saigon. And then there's Camp Eagle. I was up here for LZ Vandermith, that's the furthest north. This is North Vietnamese, that's the border, then Cambodia is here and the South China Sea is here. So just to orient you the 101st landed in Bien Hoa and we were set up here, and this is where I told you the incident of Lieutenant Smith. You know the fire and the next or that week he found out that he would be discharged in a month. That's where we were then. Then, we moved from there to Phu Bai, and then Camp Eagle is where the 101st set up their headquarters. But we had landing zones all out through here and I'm trying to think let's see where Khe Sanh is, but it was back. As soon as you get back from the coast, as soon as you get back from the coast, it's just mountainous; it's really difficult terrain to go through. But we flew; I was responsible for really moving the 101st up to Phu Bai. We all moved up there in C-130s.

Do you know what an engineer stake is? An engineer stake is a metal pole, you see 'em around, people use them around here for fence poles. They're kind of a U-shaped metal strip.

MCCABE: Oh, yeah.

MITCHELL: You can use them for fences. I have a couple at home. That's you need that to put in concertina wire, the barbed wire. You drive those in and you can hook the barbed wire to it and make yourself a perimeter. The damn things are really heavy. So, you have to prioritize your flights, when we flew up to here I was responsible for loading the aircraft, making sure that the chalks. A chalk is a load for the aircraft and made sure that a truck was in there and so many people went on and you had to prioritize. Well these engineer stakes were low priority. There was a commander up there, he needed them; he wanted them for his base camp to set up. I said, "Hey they're not going to make it up there for a couple months." He said, "I want them up here now." He was very innovative. He had some troops that were coming up like ninety troops were coming up...

[The tape ends there. He went on to say that the troops each carried one or two of the stakes with them on their trip up.]