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WEST VIRGINIA VIETNAM VETERANS

AN ORAL INTERVIEW WITH: Perry Campbell

CONDUCTED BY: John C. Hennen, Jr.

TRANSCRIBED BY: Jessica Elza

TYPED BY: Gina Kates

DATE OF INTERVIEW: June 20, 1986

John: This is John Hennen, June 20th, 1986, Smith Hall with Perry Campbell of the Vietnam Veterans Oral History Project.

Perry: My name is Perry Campbell. I'm here at Smith Hall uh, to make a statement, also give my views of the Vietnam War.

John: Okay, let's try this again. It's June 20th, 1986, Friday afternoon, this is John Hennen. I'm with Perry Campbell and uh, 423 Smith Hall for the Vietnam Veterans Oral History project.

Perry: My name is, my name is Perry Campbell. I'm here at Smith Hall uh, giving my views and my feelings of Vietnam War.

John: Okay, Perry, just for purposes of a little background, would you tell us where you were born and raised, what year...and uh, things about where you went to school, how you got into the service.

Perry: Okay, Uh, I was born December 1st, 1940 in Washington, D.C. Uh, moved around a lot during my, during my life because my father at the time worked for the government. Uh, due to uh, certain circumstances of my father's that we had to reclick-relocate in one area and stay there which was in Maryland and there I grew up, spent my childhood and went to school. Uh, how I got into the service was really simple. Uh, back in the '50's, early '50's before you reached the age of 18, uh, usually it was in the last year of high school or the, or the second year before you graduate you had to register for the draft. Uh, this was to get everybody that came the age of 18 would automatic have their cards and everything. You had to have a little card, a little draft card. And you had to sign up for the draft. Uh, no matter if you were a conscientious objector or if you're in uh, uh 12th grade or your last year of high school or you were in college, you still had to sign up for the draft. Finally, I did it. And this is during the time of the uh, the Korean War. Now, let me back up, I lived, lived through the period of uh, World War II, which was near the area I was born in, a war baby, whatever you wanna call me or...or other people, point of views, that during the time I was born is when, uh, United States was at war uh, with Germany, also the Chimp Japan. And all during these years, since 1941 up 'til 1945 there's a great uh, spirit of serving your country and this infatuated me because I'd seen it on TV uh, uh, seen the pictures of the war in Europe and how well we were winning and I absorbed this in as a small child and then as I grew, as I became older, I became more infatuated with serving my country. And as a little child growing up, I would play war games with my brothers. Uh, it wasn't cowboys and Indians any more. It was strictly you're a German and I'm a good guy and I'm gonna shoot you. BANG! You're dead. So, this is how I was raised; this is in the era of uh, of the great war and this is how we were brought up. To uh, serve our country uh, to put everything on the line for and never uh, take no for an answer. And also, during this time there were uh, many people who were against it uh, uh, against the war but we look to those people as, as during the McCarthy years as, as Communists. As history goes by, i...I

remember that the witch hunts that were made in this country during the period from 1941 to '45 um '46 and then up 'til in the early fifties, the same way. Uh, there was no such thing to us as, as the peace movement. It was the uh, the opposition, uh, that was against our country. And this is how I was raised. So, the years on by, I go from school to school, I learned a little bit more about the world at large, the wars that we had, the wars that we've won. But we never really heard about wars that we lost uh, or any battles we really have lost or anything, just minor setbacks. And this was, this is what the government fed us, in the newspapers on tv, through the radios. Uh, we had a minor setback at Normandy uh, but we never lost! Just a setback. We continue on losing hundreds and thousands of lives. Wounded but there was never too much emphasis on that. But I never changed my mind. I still wanted to serve my country. Okay, my time came when I reached the last year of my high school. That summer, soon as the school year was over, I immediately went down and waved my little card in their face saying "hey, I'm not at school now. Here I am".

John: This 1961?

Perry: This is, yeah, right, 1961 it was and uh, uh, uh, whenever the end of school year was uh, uh, it was April. I think it was in May. I think last school year, May, when we graduated and got out. I went down and applied from this at the time were having ... I wanted to go to Europe because this is where they were building the Berlin Wall. 'Cause it's considered the Cold War and the Korean conflict was over. And uh, I wanted to go to Europe. I wanted to, you know, to do the same things as my father's father's done or, or whatever. I want to be on it. I want to jump on the bandwagon too, because these guys that would sit in these little offices is, is known as recruit officers, uh, were quite diplomatic on, on how they could sucker you in the service by, by filling your head full of ideas and dreams that really didn't have anything to do with the military, whatsoever. Why did they teach you to sign that little piece of paper see, you will go in. Report, you know, to such and such a place and I was dumb enough to fall for it. Really! God! Talk about naive! OH! I was fresh out of the hills. I mean, I lived in the city but I acted like a farm boy because I didn't (were you?)...I still didn't know.

John: Were you still uh, in D.C. at this time?

Perry: Yeah, I was just outside of D.C., in Maryland.

John: Okay.

Perry: I graduated from uh, BCC. It was, it was a well-known school on...on the East. It's called Bethesda Chevy Chase High School, which is affiliated with Maryland University, which later on I could, I went to. And um, all, all these people, all these guys that I know, we all grouped together. We formed our, our own little organization you know um, we called it up, Men of War. It

was a club. We know, you know, we were there. We had the flag and then we'd up and we'd put our hands over our heart and gave the, said the Pledge of Allegiance of the flag, you know, before our meetings and, and now stupid! Because we were so well brainwashed. And uh, it, it, it was if you stop and think, it was terrifying because it..it made us like a police state almost or, or a military state. Everybody had to go to the military at that time. Every young man had to go. You reach a certain age, you had to sign up; you had to do your time. And if you stop and think about it, i....I've always used Russia for instance. In Russia, when you reached the military age, they don't ask you to sign up, you had to go. Period. Same way here back in the '60's, and '60's, they told us we had to sign up for the draft, get our draft cards. (uh-huh) Uh, in Russia it's, it's the same. You were told to do it. You're sent in and, the thing about the military in Russia, you had to spend 60 years or 65 then you could get out of the service. Uh, so it's lifetime. Here...but we had a choice, you see. And some of us would be called "lifers". And the "lifers" means a person who keeps "re-ing-up" at the end of each enlistment ending it. At each enlistment, you re-enlist and you had a choice. You had two year enlistment, three year enlistment, six years enlistment. So I go in and I signed up two years. I went in oh, it's ...it's like a parade. The guy sits there and tells us "hey, look! You can do this. You can become anything you want in the military. You can go anywhere you want to be stationed in the military. You can become anything, from a private to a general while you're in the military. You can go to electronic school. You can go to mechanic school. You can go to uh, college if you want. You can do all this if you so desire. An all you have to do is sign this piece of paper. So that, so that I do, I whipped my ballpoint pen, which belonged to my father, and I signed my name. Great. Next thing I see my life did, did uh, the opposite reverse of everything I ever knew. He told me after I'd signed that paper was to go out the back door and get on the bus. In a day, you know, that's fast, you know. No ceremony, no nothing. Went out the back door. There was a Greyhound bus sitting there with a bunch of other guys on it and I got on it. They were all sitting there wondering what, what's going on, you know. A guy comes out, tells the driver, hands him a bunch of papers says "here, take 'em to uh, a receiving station in Baltimore", which is about 65 miles from where we're at. Uh, so there. We...we were given the physicals, given the shots, taken outside lined up and we're told not to talk to each other or to go to talk at all. Told to raise our right hand and take one step forward. Thinking...you know, this isn't exactly what I wanted because really, what I saw was, the place looked like a concentration camp. This has wooden buildings with some barbed wire around it. And you're standing in it and you're raising your right hand you're giving a allegiance to some, to some little guy standing on a porch, reading from a piece of paper and there's another bus waitin' for you. You don't know where you're gonna go. So, that's, that's the start of it. but, I was in as my career advanced, I was in for 6 years, 7 months, 7 days. And I was starting my third enlistment 'cause I was going to be a "lifer". I'd been to Europe. I've been all over Europe. Oh, I

Loved it! I...I loved the duty that I had because I was helping somebody because when I was in Europe I was on border patrol. The first year is I was there, I spent...the way they would...you rotate. I was in the field like for 72 days guarding a 15 hundred mile border. Usually walk half of it, you ride the next half. (huh) And you're out there 7 days a week, 365 days a year, summer winter, fall, spring. You're...you're...you're in the open. You have, you're not in a building. Uh, you're either in a fox hole with a tent over you or something.

John: Were you ...was this in Germany?

Berry: This is Germany. Then I did uh, came under fire one time. There...there ...this was, this was in '62. We had a border crossing. And I was stationed in a place uh, it was Dachan it was a concen...used to be one of the old concentration camps, bus station up beside the Dachan on the border. Some people were trying to uh, escape from the east to the west and we helped them by bridging the mine field, bringing them over but we came under fire. It was an international incident but it didn't come out that way. It was uh, a uh, misunderstanding between two border companies. That was immediately cleared up. But we were given citations for helping 25 people cross the border. (uh-huh) Couple of them were, were Russian soldiers that escaped from the, the east who were also on border patrol. Then I really felt good. I really thought it was me doing something. Then, all of a sudden things started happening. I started getting put in different places where I didn't want to be. I started doing things that I didn't really want to do. But I had to do them. I did them anyway. And uh, then everything just came topsy-turvy until up 'til Vietnam, you know. Uh, things starting...didn't ...didn't start to match up like w...what we were told didn't coincide what we were seeing. And then, I knew uh, I guess the other guys around me or with me knew that people we...were being told at home about the war wasn't what we saw or wasn't what we were doing and this, this bothered me quite a bit. And uh, right now I would, you know, like, like now for, for you to y'know, to start asking some questions 'cause I got so much (okay), else in here it's kind of (okay), because I'm skipping and if I don't keep on track I wonder.

John: Okay, good. Uh, I know that part of the time you were in the service, you mentioned this to me before, that you were a weapons tester. (yeah) Tell me where that was and tell me exactly what you learned during that period in your, um, what you learned about the weapons and what you learned about the service and the war.

Berry: Okay uh, I also weapons, small arms weapons tester in which I graduated up to your larger models such as your tank. From the small weapons, I became an expert at uh, shooting different small arms uh, like your M16, M16, M14, M1. Uh, all various types of ...of guns and you...you look like buck Rogers. But he's waiting for a laser light to come shooting out of one of them, you pull the trigger, 'cause you never knew what was going

to happen. Guns were made out of plastic. Guns were made out of glass. Guns that were made out of uh, uh, aluminum, steel, whatever. Short guns, long guns, medium guns, guns that didn't even look like a gun. And uh, for two years, I was in a place uh, okay, it's restricted. It's an unknown area. Very few people know about it. It's down at Fort Benning, Georgia. It's a little area we use to call Sandy Patch. And this is top secret-secret. You had to have a top secret to get in. Course, I was given one. This is back in 19 uh a late part of '62 and '63 and all of '63 and part of '64 in which I traveled around to different parts of the country testing weapons. Okay, the funny thing which struck me about testing weapons was that the people who were building them--now of course you heard of Mattel toy maker uh, they're the ones who built who, who manufactured the M16. Uh, we had uh, several--like one Chester and uh, Colt company making guns. But a toy manufacturer had come up with a little gun called on, what was it? Uh, XM1. Just a little tiny rifle that shot real bullets and it looked like a play gun like you go in a store today and you buy it for your kids this is the model of the M14 or the M15 or M16. It's exactly what it looked like and it was made out of plastic but it shot real bullets. And I remember wondering what in the hell is...is the Army coming to when we start buying toys from toy manufacturers to go out and kill people with. First, I was going to keep my mouth shut about it, but I found it. I'm one of the life locks that, uh, that they wrote about the Vietnam series that with the (uh-huh), the uh, (The Time Life Series?) Time Life Series. In I think it was Volume 1, it has an article in there that, I don't know how they got it but it's the same one or the same information that I sent out to my uh, division chief over a test about this little Mattel M16 gun about why it wouldn't work sometimes and why it would work. It was hazardous. Uh, it would fail if you were in a, a severe fire fight it would fail. And I'd written this and I sent it in and then later I was told to keep my mouth quiet about it because it had a high failure rate. And then the M14 in which we're using as a uh, basic test model. Well...we tested that against the M14, which had a zero rate of failure. And uh, but for some reason the Army or military say, purchased these things and uh, sent them to Vietnam. Okay, of course that was uh, the main things that with that were sent, some of these guns here, it even looked like a gun that, that shot darts and they would explode when they hit. And then they had uh, uh, oh, you mean you sit there and uh, think Buck Rogers has landed some of these (uh-huh). things; I couldn't believe it.

John: What was it specifically that caused the M16 to fail? Is it climatic conditions, uh (okay), over heating?

Ferry: The gun, okay, the gun is partially plastic. Okay, the metal they were used, it was something like a bolidia....ah, like an aluminum alloy that expanded very rapidly when heated. Now, if you take, say 20 round clip and you fired one round every two seconds you could fire that gun for years. But if you take a twenty round clip and fire it 20 rounds within 3 seconds and use, use maybe 4 or 5 clips. The gun will, will swell, jam and become

useless 'cause parts are plastic, parts of it were metal and due the heat variations, and the two products wouldn't coincide, wouldn't mesh together and wouldn't expand exactly the same so you would have uh, barrels to split uh, housings to break uh, bolts to jam. Uh, that's what would happen. But not all of them would do it. Now some of them would go right on through. Say maybe if you had ten guns, maybe 4 of 'em wouldn't fail but the rest of them would.

John: So you got 60% of them.

Perry: So you got 60% fail. But Life Time came out with that story about the M16's, about the problems they were having, the place that it was tested, who tested it and the, and the uh, uh, drawbacks of it. And the and I did a little research. They got this from the government archives. So if the government knew, why did they buy 'em and give 'em to us to fight with in Vietnam?

John: Do you have any opinion on that?

Perry: Yes. Somebody got paid somewhere along the line. Say, hey, this is okay. How many can we get for a couple million dollars. Oh, we can make these things up in no time flat. Get as many as you want. Somebody's being paid somewhere. Just sit down and figure all this stuff up. Uh, maybe they thought it was cheaper than the M14, trying to save a buck, to spend it on something else. But I knew that the M14 was a hundred and ten dollars to be manufactured, was the manufacturing cost of it. Excuse me, two hundred uh, ten dollars compared to a hundred and ten dollars, the M16. And I figured they went with the, the lowest contract, too. Somebody said that one time I think it was, uh, the M14's too long to go through the jungle. So this idiot gets up and tries to crawl through tall weeds and go on trees with his M14. So it's too big and too awkward. But I took an M14 and modified it, put a shorter barrel, shorter stalk, which makes it the same length as the M16. And if you hit somebody in the mouth with the M16, you...you break the stalk because it's plastic. The M14 was wooden. So you had a better chance of survival with hitting something and not breaking the stalk.

John: Did the M14 have any comparable problems with jamming or overheating?

Perry: You could take it, put it in mud, roll it around, pick it up and shoot it as long as you change your magazine. Now, the magazine. I think all the guns had problems with the magazine it ruins the whole sport. You take it out and put a clean magazine in, no problem. But with a dirty magazine the bullets uh, the bolt had a problem picking up the shell because of the dirt within the spring mechanism. (uh-huh) And uh, we had these things in the swamps. We...we...we did all testing that we could, we could er, think but. Even dropped them from helicopters. Dropped them right on the plain ground and picked them up and fired them. Did the M16 the same: I think we dropped them from 50 feet, loaded gun, stick it out the door and just drop it. Now the M14 stalk

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broke, the M16 shattered, the stalk, the, the uh, ball housing and broke the sight off. But the M14, we could pick up and still fire because even though it had a broken stalk you could still fire it. The M16 you couldn't because it was shattered. There was nothing to hold on to 'cause every, everything major about it was plastic. So...

John: That became the weapon though.

Perry: That became the weapon (you used...), the jungle weapon. No, when I was in Vietnam, I didn't use the M16 'cause I told them I wouldn't use it because I knew what it's done. I used the M14. I used the modified. And see the thing about the M14, you can make it automatic or semi-automatic, where the M16 it was either automatic or semi-automatic, you couldn't convert the two. It could fire rapid but you couldn't change there to fire it 20 rounds per trigger pull or whatever. But the M14, you could...you could take out the trigger housing, change the spring and put it back in and that was it. You had an automatic rifle.

John: Did that put you in the position of refusing an order when you wouldn't use the M16 or did you just tell them before you went in that...?

Perry: No, I just, they handed me, they handed the gun to me, and I handed it back to 'em; I said, no, thank you. I'll keep the M14 because I know what the M16 does under, under pressure. It don't work. He kinda looked and said, okay, it's your choice.

John: So it was, you had a choice then?

Perry: Yeah. There...I...I made my gun choice. And I'm glad I stuck with it.

John: When did you go to Vietnam?

Perry: I went to Vietnam in '68. Uh, before that, uh, I'd been to Alaska. I'd been to the Mohave Desert, the American Desert. Uh, been to the west coast, east coast. I've been south. I've been north. I've been everywhere. During my military career. And then, finally I got orders to go to Vietnam, which I thought, hey, you know, this time I can, I can use my knowledge and everything because what I learned in testing weapons. We had to create the...

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Perry: ...we on?

John: Yeah, we have plenty of tape, don't worry 'bout that.

Perry: Oh, okay. We had to, yeah, okay, we had to create the atmosphere in which the gun would be used in and doing that uh, we had to put the men in dangerous situations. Uh, now the men we used were, were kids, out of basic training or still taking their

basic training. Where we go in we would pick up a platoon or recruits there in basic training, bring 'em out to our test facility and see how much they learned. Or see how much they forgot. Whichever the case may be. And put 'em in situations that were life threatening, but they were controlled to a point that if a man was going to be killed due to an action of something, it was stopped. We could stop it. Course we had, we had that much power. What I mean by dangerous situations, we put men out in a field of nothing around, just a bare field. Lay them on the ground, give them a gun, have them shoot at a certain target. And are told don't get up, don't move, don't anything. When you finish firing, just lay your head down on the sandbag. What we didn't tell them was that there was three sharp shooters behind them. And these sharp shooters were, had a designated area to shoot at, next to the soldier. Either behind them, beside of them, in front of them, hit their sandbag. Shoot in front of (inaudible)...hit the ground, you know, keep it to the ground. Don't actually shoot at the man but shoot to either the left or right or over 'em or below 'em to see what his reactions would be. Can he still hit that target while somebody's shooting at him? This is how we train them. This is something that people didn't know. I didn't know we were going to do it till I had orders to set up the situation and conduct the experiment.

John: Did you ever lose any?

Perry: Nope, nope. We had some hell fights afterwards, though.

John: When they found out?

Perry: Yeah. We had one guy had finished firing his, had turned his head and the guy up with the weapon shot, shot right into the sandbag, where he had his head laying on. And I...I gave the clear signals everybody quit firing. This young kid came up. He wanted to kick....kick ass, I know. Told it was an experiment. "You're being tested." I said, so, go back to your position, and same thing on a lot of these tests we, those who are giving tests don't wear rank. So we don't know who's who. Well, I do, because my testing there was a major; a fullier....a full-bird colonel; a major, two captains, two lieutenants, and two sergeants. I was one of the sergeants but we never wore our rank because, therefore, if we're running a test against a company or platoon they couldn't say that this colonel did something or that major did something. We wore no rank and it was all first name basis. And sometimes we wore civilian clothes. That was protecting us, protecting their unit, because their unit was secret uh, they...they knew about uh, but he knewdidn't know who was in it because it was that type of thing.

John: When you went, by the time you got your orders for Vietnam, did you still have pretty much the same attitude about service? And uh, (yeah), what were you going there for?

Perry: Yeah, I thought in my mind that what I've learned through testing other soldiers, testing other weapons that I had a chance

maybe to survive in Vietnam. Uh, I'll follow the orders, but I will try not to get into the situation where I'm just dropped and left and you say make it on your own, you know. 'Cause looking around me as was in Vietnam...as I was in Hawaii, now uh, the unit I was in with in Hawaii. I looked at these guys and they reminded me of weekend warriors you know. Uh, one weekend a month they go out in the field to play soldiers and they come back. This is what these guys were doing. They ...most of what they thought about was going on did drop on them, during the weekend, weekday, uh, going through a little bit of a training class for...for an hour or two hours and coming back in, sitting around talking about home or where you're going to go next hour, or you want to go to Pearl Harbor and look at the, the Arizona or the memorial. Some...some about the war stuff but not paying attention to what, what the reality was going to be when you got sent to Vietnam.

When I went to Hawaii, I knew I was going to Vietnam. Because that was the first stopover. So a lot of the time I was going to Vietnam. When I got orders to go to Hawaii unassigned, I knew I...I was going to Vietnam. An unassignment means that I was there to go with that unit because of the field that I was in. Small arms uh, evaluation and before that I was a radar uh, technician and ...and before that I was uh, uh, combat uh, technician and uh, they were giving me all these tech...technical names and everything. And it really didn't seem that the...the...the what I was doing was playing the part over the overall picture of the army. I was back here watching them doing their thing and if I was to do mine, which was entirely different from what they were doing. And I was really scared because these guys uh, really weren't soldiers and it made me mad because these guys weren't...weren't uh, thinking about the consequences of what's going to happen to them if they don't do what they're told; if they don't learn to do this; if they don't learn to do that. but general tactics, general training, whatever. And uh, most of these guys had never been out of the states before in their lives. And uh, I'd been to Europe. I'd been...been to, uh, situation where I was fired at and I'd trained people uh, to respond certain ways. And uh, and it seemed to all...all go to waste because of what I was put into nobody knew what they were doing. You know, and Vietnam, oh...

John: Where did you get, where were you located in Vietnam, where at?

Ferry: Oh, I was located in a place called Chu-Chee. Uh, it's 35 to 40 miles northwest of Saigon.

John: How do you spell it?

Ferry: And uh, uh, C-h-u; C-h-u uh...matter of fact, we obliterated the town when we got there. My duty when I got there, was a squad leader. I had all green troops. Uh, men just out of AIT, Advanced Infantry Training. Places like Kansas, Colorado, uh, Fort Benning uh, Ford Jackson, places like that to where uh, they didn't really have the kind of training in the situation in which we were placed in then. You know. Guys were just walking

around, you know, you know, strutting their stuff, waving to their buddies, you know. Not realizing but somebody out in that jungle out there, who's aiming a gun at 'em, say and uh, had no conception of a boobytrap. Uh, I remember uh, see, the first two months in Vietnam uh, back the first two months at Vietnam uh, I was with uh, uh, helicopter unit uh, volunteer as door gunner, first 2 months I had back units that I was with. Uhm, I was shot down 3 times.

John: In 2 months?

Perry: Within 2 months. Uh, the 3rd time is usually uh, uh, uh, they usually don't last if you've been shot down 3 times. You're usually killed on the third. But I was lucky, I guess, that uh, I didn't get killed. Came close, didn't get killed. Volunteered as a door gunner on a troop ship. They said carry men out, drop them off; fly air cover; go back, pick up supplies, bring them out to the men, you know, who were on the line. I guess I felt uh, I felt safer up there, up in the air than I did on the ground. Because you never knew uh, what you were going to walk into on the ground. Plus that I think I was an idiot uh, and dumb enough to uh, the wrong there was TDY. It was called TDY. Uh...

John: What's that stand for?

Perry:training detachment uh, temporary duty assignment. And uh, it was uh, why did that little, why ...why did I do this was simple. That when we went over there, helicopter units sent over. The only thing they had was pilots. They didn't have door guards. The rest of the unit wasn't over there yet, so they had this major going around to our unit, to all units, picking people to be door guards, to volunteer. Any duty was uh, it turned out the duty was 6 months. You served 6 months, you go home, back to the states. It's up, that's all you serve, 6 months. No problem. Ground troops, 1 year. If you didn't get killed. Six months seems shorter than 12 months. I raised my hand, got picked. Went out an I thought, my, this is going to be a great job. I had the best job there was. All I had to do was shoot out my door, drop a couple grenades, couple hand bombs, and that was it. You know. Uh, but I got wounded, got shot down 3 times and wounded once on the chopper. And then, I thought you know, why do they say 6 months? You don't last 6 months on the chopper, 'cause the chopper is the first thing that gets hit. And I'd been hit by rockets, small arms fire. And even got hit by mortar even before we got off the ground. And when that happened to me, I just went to the commander and said I want to go back to my old unit. He sent me back after reading my record, you know, saying shot down 3 times and okay, he said, you go on back. 'Cause I figured my, my life span was getting a little shorter and shorter as each time I got hit, it got that much closer of not making it. But, things of, things of...were changing though. Uh, I was going after anybody and everybody, uh, going on patrols, uh, ambushes, everything. Uh, I'd seemed, I'd seem to, to lose my fear as long as I was doing something. If I was sitting back in my fox hole, things got hairy because I had longer to think. And the longer

you think, the slower your reactions are, the less that you want to do, and the more you think about home and getting there and you start making mistakes. And this is what happened to a lot of the guys. When I got back to my unit, they'd lost, I think, the first two months about 100 men, stepped on...on boobytraps, blowing themselves up uh, getting caught in ambushes that should never have happened or just being in a fire fight, dropping their guns and running the other way and then uh, they get, get blown away. So, these are the stories that were never sent home. These are the stories that you never heard about here in the states. They write home. oh, we were, we were kicking them butts! Uh, we had uh, see this, the U.S. Military, U.S. uh, what do you call it, uh, U.S. troops were pushing north. And we were taking over VC strongholds and all this and that and everything and...And the thing was that even there in Vietnam, we didn't know what were doing. We didn't get any news from home, 'cause back here at home they were having peace movement, peace marches, peace demonstrations. We didn't have none of that. We didn't hear anything about that. Until those came home. But then we came home afterwards. And then it really st....it really hit me. You know, that uh, even today 'til today, the government, those...these little branches of government, is feeding all the youth in, in this country with information that oh, we got this: oh, we got that, huh! We have the situation down here, you can go to school here and become an officer, get out and get a commission to do this and that. And I says, that's great, that's really great, but what if you tell them what happens, what happens when they pick up a gun, they got to walk, walk a path and shoot at somebody else. They don't tell them that. Even in their trainings the...they don't even do that. Uh, they don't explain to 'em that if you don't shoot that man, he's going to shoot you. So, this is to make you be a little more aggressive and we do have some aggressive people in the military. And I'm shooting their sergeants and I'm shooting their buddies. But uh...

John: How long were you there before you got your wounds?

Perry: Only 5 months, 5 months.

John: So you were in the helicopter for 2 months and three months (3 months), after that you got hit.

Perry: Yeah, never knew what hit me. We had two generals to get fired, that were commanders of the U.S. forces in Vietnam, to be fired because they weren't making headway. And then we had General Westmoreland come in and his words for us to push, push, push, push. Push where? We didn't know which way to go. 'Cause at that time, we had...there was no front line. It depended upon which way you were facing to, where's the enemy. If you had backing, standing facing one way and turn completely around and face the opposite way that was the front line again. Uh, nothing, nobody had any objective and when they did have an objective and you got that objective through the loss of many men and be turned right around and be told okay, back up, leave it, see, you want it, leave it. And a week later come back and do the same thing

over again, because the VC would move right back in the area, set up their stronghold and, and it seemed, it seemed to be a game. We take it from them then they take it from us. Nothing gained-nothing lost. We're still there. They're over here; we're over here and it's just back and forth. And it, it becomes a game. But a serious game because you're loosing people. People are dying on both sides. And I liked one general that, I believe, we could've won the war in Vietnam strategic...strategically, if I can say the word right, if we kept up the bombing. But then again they were bombing our allies as well as the enemy because they're bombing not only in Vietnam. They're bombing in Cambodia. They were bombing in Laos. They were bombing in Thailand because somebody forgot to tell them where Vietnam was at and they were flying over and dropping bombs on us, on them, on anything that, that looked like it had, hadn't been bombed in a week, they'll bomb it again. So uh, that...that screwed us up. Nationally. And in the end, well we accomplished nothing.

John: What have your...well, you obviously...you, you were one of the...the obvious wounded uh, and what sort of relationship did you have during your rehabilitation say with...with the Veterans Administration and and...?

Perry: Anger. Just plain anger uh...

John: You came back. Where...where were you? Where did you do your rehabilitation at?

Perry: Uh, I was real okay uh, several hospitals uh, uh, I guess from nineteen, a later part of uh, see '65 to '66. May of '65 to around December of '66, I was in the hospital uh...

John: About a year and a half.

Perry: Yeah, about a year and a half. Uh, eight different hospitals uh, some were air force, some were army, uh, passed one hospital to another. I'd spend a week or two then go to another hospital. Then a week or two then go to another hospital. Because they were bringing more wounded in. They had to move me to another one because they had to make space. And my role in weekend rehabilitation was an operation after operation, removing pieces of shrapnel, rebuilding my face uh, removing shrapnel from my uh, skull because when I, when I got hit at...at uh, somebody made the statement he was just like one massive piece of metal with hair around it. Thought that was kind of cute. Man, I got blown up and I was in the midst of the blast itself. I guess what saved me the, saved my life was that I didn't try to run from the blast; I just got myself up and let whatever's going to happen, happen. What saved my life was I was closer to the blast, because the blast instead of being and this picture is going to set a beam out blowing out this way, the blast was up them out (uh-huh). The closer I was uh, uh, chances of me a survivor were greater.

John: Was this mortar fire, is that what...that...?

Perry: Yeah, it was, uh, I believe what they call something like a grenade uh, a large grenade. The french style the VC were using. They would pull a pin, head it and then throw it. And uh, what sent me up like grenades used in World War II, the Germans had...the potato masher (uh-huh). Uh, we got ambushed or over run. They were using these things left and right. And uh, one of them kind of hit me in the head, rolled down my back and I rolled over, got it off my back and it exploded, killing the man next to me, uh, just about ripping me in two and throwing me away from where I was at. And then uh, really not loosing consciousness. I lost uh, reali-I lost reality. I didn't know if I was unconscious. I didn't know I was awake because I didn't feel any pain. Figure I was, I was unconscious and I was dreaming it was what I was seeing. And uh, uh, later I see these people, these men moving through the troops that were laid out on the ground. Uh, they were shooting the wounded. I thought was, I thought it was help. They were coming down to get us. But they were wearing the wrong colored uniforms. And I couldn't hear anything, but I could see. You know. Then someone would reach down, pick up a soldier, shake them, throw 'em over side, roll a couple of off, one moaned or something, 'cause I seen him take out his gun and shoot it a couple times. And his path would happen to me because I felt my head being pulled back and then there's this blinding light and that was it. And later told, I was shot through my helmet. The guy, guy shot me in the head for some reason. I had my helmet on. And uh, that's how I got shot in the head. But uh, later I was filled in by uh, by eye witnesses, uh, had seen it then by uh...uh, news reports uh, that I'd later picked up, I picked up here in the states and uh, uh, by watching news reels on TV and stuff and everything. Seeing them all there in Vietnam. And then in that book that I mentioned before, there was a uh, I think it was the last chapter that the, the U.S. government did have proof about uh, wounded were ...were being shot, weren't taking prisoners. They were being shot by the NVS, North Vietnamese Soldiers. The government had proof of that and Vietnam has really never uh, denied it either in their peace talks or whatever. And I thought it was being done not only in my area. It was in other areas as well. Then, that made me think uh, uh, about what was going on, about what, how I was rehabilitated oh, you done great and you ...you know did real great and you got all these medals and everything or all your (inaudible)....and I said, what in the hell for? Uh-huh. They...they stall by trying to rebrainwash you again to uh, make you to...to try to change you, change you over again. The military change you once you get back down, they bring you into something uh, that just sits in a corner, doesn't talk about it, doesn't want to discuss it uh, you know, if anybody asks you any questions you don't know, that...that type of thing.

John: Is that what made you angry?

Perry: Yeah! 'Cause I was held in Japan close to 6 months, 5 or 6 months and they kept going over that, over it. Do you know what happened? Do...are you sure this has happened? Did you see this happen? Uh, are you sure it was your men? Are you sure it was

vour men? Are you sure it wasn't just the VC that were killed and that was your men going through and shooting the wounded? And I said, Look, American soldiers, I know this for a fact, I know you hear some horror stories coming out of, of Vietnam, but I know that there's a very small percentage, very small maybe point, one percent of uh, of American soldier gone through a VC village and just shot people because they were wounded. Just for the hell of it, just shot them. Uh, unless they were told to do it. And I don't think you or me or anybody else was, was given a gun and told to go out and just shoot people just for the hell of it. You know, you have to have a reason. And they never did come up with a good reason why we should do it. We wouldn't do it. But that's the way our, our society is. But in Asia, southeast Asia, their beliefs are...entirely different from ours. They figure if they kill an enemy it makes them that much stronger, spiritually. And uh...

END TAPE 1

Perry: See, it's been 20, 21 years now I think. Since well, this is...I've been in the war since '65. Uh, what is it 21, 22 years, something like that. It seems that, that this country of ours is being, is starting to gear up again for war. Building bigger and better war machines, building more missiles, enlarging all the armies, uh, going to the star war things. You know, this is you know, when we were in Vietnam we had all this massive fire power yet, we...we...we couldn't, we didn't win because we didn't know what to do because in government, you know, the way the...the bureaucracy works. I figure this, I'm...I'm not okay, if we go to war and if I wasn't this old, or in this wheelchair, I would go again. Because I love my country and I would serve it again. But what they're doing now to these people is what deep down 30 years ago they brainwashed them in to, to a false pride. This, "hey can win this war". I you just get out there and do it and you can win it." And not telling them what the consequences are chances of you being wounded, killed, captured, whatever. Uhm, it's...it's unbelievable. During the Korean War they came up with the...the code of conduct, the seven codes of conduct. If you're ever captured in Persian War you have seven codes to go by. This is because, during the Korean War uh, American soldiers that were captured were telling everything, you know, about how many men they had, where they were stationed at and, and how many so and so. And after that they came up with this code, and you had to go by this code. You give your name, rank, and serial number and date of birth and that was it. In Vietnam, the code wasn't used, because you're mostly worried about trying to stay alive and not being captured and another thing was, was well put by that, uh, by Dan Rather uh, (inaudible)...that newsreporter was, that you couldn't tell who the enemy was. So therefore, the code, you couldn't use the code; you didn't know the enemy. So uh, this...this is another, another thing. And...and today uh people uh, are trying so hard to...to forget it. And this is another point that i want to bring up uh, about the Vietnam War. A lot of people want to forget it. The reason why they want to forget it is because it's harming uh, the...the patriotic values of this

country. They want to forget a war as fast as it started. Now you don't hear too much talk about Granada. What war did we have there? Say now that's one item. Hey, big deal, we won that one. I mean, how many, how many were you? Just 50? How many troops landed? 5,000, 2,500 here, 2,500 here. 50 Cubans in the middle (yeah). They didn't know what was going on. So what happened? 10 soldiers, American soldiers were killed. Why? Because they landed in the wrong place. And these guys over here, as they moved in and they saw these troops coming out saying "hey, they're enemies. Shoot!" Bang, bang, bang. "Hey, no, no. We're Americans." So uh, I don't know.

John: How 'bout uh, uh, do you see, what...what do you see the role of the VVA is, to...to prevent people from forgetting Vietnam?

Perry: Okay. VVA, to the, to us, to the Veterans and to the rest of the people here is the, is like a moral foundation into which VVA does not have to bend its knee to the government. Uh, what I mean by going down on one knee and saying okay, boss, uh, we'll do everything you say as long as you don't cut our uh, money to keep us going or whatever such as , like DAV, VFW, whatever. It's an organization it's strictly for those who, who knows the outcome of war even before it starts. Some of these guys express, look this is what happened. And if, and ...and if you take it, if you go back and you look through history we're following the same path as we did 200 years ago. We're starting our 200 years over again. Which is the uh, uh, uh, indep...war of independence. Uh, Civil War. War over this, was over that. We keep, we keep advancing. The last war we had was with Libya. And that's nature, that's natural for our society to tend to have a war with somebody because that's what America is. And if, if you (inaudible)...American, what is America? What is an American? He's an Italian. He's a German. He's a Russian. He's a....it's everybody in the whole world gathered in one place, say, okay, you're an American. And if you stop and think what is American, if you look back through history, American was an indian. But all these people from other countries come over and take over all this and say okay, I'm an American, you know. Uh, American um.

John: In the uh, in the period since you got, got out of service, you've gone to school a lot, haven't you?

Perry: Yeah, I...

John: What have you done and how is that being threatened now?

Perry: Okay, being a Vietnam Vet in some states has it's rewards and has it's disadvantages. When I went to school, I didn't have to use my out of school but my VA or Veterans School uh, co-rate. Because the state in which I lived in at that time, which was in, I went back to Maryland and lived, declared that a Vietnam veterans had free rights to attend any school at no cost. So I never had to use my VA thing. But I had it in case if I wanted to, to go somewhere, to go to some school in which they didn't

have that. And my kids could go. I thought that was great. But what had hapoened is over the years I began to notice these little hatchet jobs that, that the government was coming out with all of a sudden. We cut this; we cut that. We're starting to cut programs uh, that are uh, they seem to be obsolete for the Veterans because the majority of us were dying out therefore there weren't no use for these programs so they cut them. Uh, but what, what they done, what the country doesn't think about, see I'm thinking of the period of, see uh, '64 and '65, or '65 or '66, okay. There's a gap in it, '67. That, that's my gap. Okay, '68 through to '75 there's a different type of veteran. There's a Vietnam vet, there's a different type of Vietnam Veteran. Okay, what about this veteran? Okay. This veteran uh, it seems, to...to show, or to bring forth, and I even using the wrong words, turned out to be drug users, drug addicts, whatever, an alcoholic uh, a uh, completely disoriented person. After '75, it..it was when the war was over and they were all sent home here. Here we had all these guys, uh, that starting committing crimes, uh, a...ah....and nobody wanted to touch them. N...not even DAV or the VFW, whatever, none of those guys. But VVA did. VVA says, hey, look, got a problem? We'll help. And of course it took VVA years to get a national charter and (uh-huh), they just got it. (uh-huh) Okay, VVA can do more for us than say the DAV because the DAV is a government finger. Uh, if they speak too loud, loud for the veteran, they're told to quiet it down, you know. Do so much and that's it. Don't over do, uh, don't overstep your boundaries. And this is, has to do with the DAV, PVA, any government branch of any, you know, the...the DAV is the branch of the government.

John: PVA is Paralyzed Veterans of America?

Perry: America, which is also a uh, branch of the government because see, now what they're doing,, now they're starting to separate the veterans now. They have what you call standard veterans, Vietnam veterans who uh, say like d...didn't receive any kind of wounds or have received wounds but he's a uh, walking wounded more or less. And PVA's a paralyzed veterans is, is a person that, that has loss of more than one or two limbs uh, who has uh, who can't be rehabilitated to a, a point where he can walk. That's ...that's uh, beyond them. Then you go to somewhere else, you know. So you got all paralyzed veterans here in this one chapter then you got the walking wounded veterans over here in this chapter here and they seem, they seem to be playing against each other, see who can get more for who and for what. And DAV is, is, this is a good one. And I think they got classes. They go uh, okay, standard classes, your...your normal veteran. They got a K-class, that's a veteran that has loss of use of one limb, L-class is a veteran that has loss of more than, more than 1 limb. Now the K-class me, uh, see I was okay, what happened to me. They ...somebody screwed up instead of putting me in L, they put me in K. I've been trying for years to get that straightened out. You get '69 dollars for a K-class, a month. And you get 200 dollars for an L-class, a month. That's added on to your, your compensation. Okay. It gets more than, it, it, it's...gets more

confused as you go into this stuff and you don't know where to go because you start getting answers, "well, we don't know. We have to send you here, to this person". Or that you get it as "no, that's not my department. I have to send you over here in that department". But the best one of all is "we can't find your records (hmm), sorry. We can't help you". And that, that's the story today. We can't find your record or your records been misplaced or so-and-so has your record. So, you start doing all this back tracking, living around, call some other, doing this, doing that, trying to find your record and you can't find it. This is where your anger really comes into play, because somebody in there doesn't know what the hell they're doing. This is my thought. I've been told everything. I've been told every conceivable excuse that's ever been written and put into a book that why, why things are and I can't believe it. ...because I know it's a lie.

John: Is this what as far as your education benefits here or (everything), everything across the board?

Perry: Uhm, I was put in, I was given a good education and then after I got my good education, I was offered a great job and I went out there and the guy in...when he looked at me, he says, "hmm, I think that position's been filled already. I'll have to check, but I'll get back to you".

John: Now, was this the government position?

Perry: No, this is regular civilian, civilian job that was handled through the uh, the training program, the rehabil...rehabilitation training program of the federal government. It rehabilitates you, gets you a job. Uh, the next program was a eighteen month rehabilitation program and OJT, on the job training, 18 months. The end of 18 months, you prove to your employer that you can handle the job, you got the job. Now the thing is, the government paid half your salary. He paid, well, it is like 60-40. He paid 40%, the government paid 60% of your salary. If it was an hourly wage, or if it was a, a monthly wage or whatever, uh, the guy would get money for you, see. And now that guy has to fill out a paper say his job is uh, 7.50 an hour. The government will send him uh, 6 something and he, he has to pay 2 something, whatever it is, but your job is only getting 3 dollars and 25 cents an hour. So the guy's making money.

John: Hmm. I'd say.

Perry: And they say, well, he's got this money, he's got this 7.50 here. He only gives you 3.50 or 3.25. And uh, there's usually nothing you can do about it. So, so...so you go "hey, this guys cheating, see he's only paying me 3.25, you're paying me uh, and it's supposed to be 7.50. I only get 3.25". Then it comes, oh, there's a differential.

John: You had uh, was it training as a, as a tire inspector?

Perry: Fire inspector?

John: Where did you take that training?

Perry: Maryland University.

John: And you were later told that you really couldn't use that.

Perry: Right, because uh, due to my handicaps if there was a fire I couldn't get into the building. Uh, it seems in a way because uh, I was never really told what i could take, what i couldn't take to study. Uh, I wasn't really given counseling uh, back in my time we didn't have counselors, as you do today or as you did back in, in, un, the early or late 70's and in the '80's. We...we didn't have that kind of counseling. When we did get the counseling it was too late. We'd already been cut. We'd go in there and say he, that they'd lay this book out there in front of you says pick anything you want to study. And you ask, er, well, well, what's good? What do you have openings in?"So we have openings in this uh, fire prevention, uh, arson investigator un, fire inspector. We have several openings there." Uhm, it's a 6, 6 or 9 week course where, where how they set it up in hours. Four straight uh, oh, God, what else? Uh, I think they had some sort of like book binding, uh, you know, little stuff that you know, if something would, like book binding to keep you in a little room by yourself, nobody knows you're there. You'd sit in there, gluing these books together and doing (uh-huh), all kinds of crap. Working for, uh, the government was a joke because of uh, it seemed that all those positions are filled that you applied for. 'Cause we, we don't...don't get an opening uh, uh, always it's just a, just a damn hassle. They...they say oh, well, we'll teach you all this stuff and if we can find an opening, good uh, okay, if we can find an opening. Take...take all that stuff. You go through a year or so, tell you that, you get your little diploma. You tiptoe out there, you know, hey, here's my diploma. Uh, then the state warden says that uh, this is what got me, this is what kept me off post defense says that a person in (inaudible)...really must be 100% able-bodied, have no oh, uh, disabilities such as what, what a list such as artificial arms, artificial legs, uh, uh, of lost limbs. It's the art that looks...arms, legs, whatever uh, poor eyesight. It...it kept, it kept on and kept on and kept on, so I came under that group and it developed it's, it's state, this is a state mandatory requirement. The Federal Government will not go against the state requirement for that, see, because it was the Federal Government told the state to make up requirements so they won't have uh, somebody with epileptic seizures on a hundred foot aerial ladder all of a sudden go into a seizure and fall off. Or, they didn't want anybody (inaudible)...certain height. You couldn't be under five-foot-two, I think, and I'm ...I'm way under 5 foot. (uh-hmm) So uh, well, you know, it's several things but that's okay. I went to school you know. What, what's new? This isn't new to me. I'll be working just about the next uh, 20 years of my life. This is, you know...

John: You're writing a book right now (yeah), you want...

Perry: Okay, the book...

John: ...talk here for a minute.

Perry: Yeah, this book fascinates me. I have, I've got 5 chapters already. I couldn't think of what. I couldn't think of a title for it. So, I was at my mother's one time and I was sitting around the house trying to think of a title. What's...what's, what...what would a title mean to somebody? It would make them want to stop and think. I can not (inaudible)...then I thought about it. See, prologue...What's a prologue? It's the beginning of the story. What is life? It's a prologue. So, out of black prologue comes (hmm). It's beginning, it's beginning of the end to me. For my, my, my period's almost over. I've got a story to tell but I want to tell it as a prologue, not as a. as once upon a time there was me and there was you. That...that...that crap's gone out. And a lot of people have written books about Vietnam on a uh, reporters view of Vietnam. Very few, if any, have ever been written about the, the guy who's seen it. If there's...it's not that, never been that type of story. And this book is, is me. It...it's about me about what I've done because I can't remember my buddies now. All....all my buddies are just shadows, dreams. I can't remember their names. And that's the bad thing about, about, about what happened to me is that I can no longer remember. I can remember faces. I remember faces, their looks. but I can't remember their names or where they're from. I know where they're buried but I don't know their beginning. This is what this is about. (is that...?) If I could find a ...if I could some way back it up. What was you saying...?

John: Is that uh, inability to remember the names...is that a result of your wounds you think, (yeah, it's uh...), or just a result of all this going on at one time?

Perry: It's uh, they call it defensive mechanism, uh, within my mind that uh, I can see the action, I see what happened but I can't remember the person's name. Except one, one which really, really didn't get lost in the shuffle because uh, I had to go through shock treatments, stuff like that. 'cause uh, at the time that I was wounded, I was coming out of uh, uh, uh, I guess you might call it post traumatic stress. Uh, I was having walking nightmares. I guess you, you've heard of them, walking nightmares uh, sudden shifts in personality uh, something like the Superman syndrome with the phone booth, where you go in and all of a sudden you...you come out as Superman syndrome and there's only one person then the next second I'm not. I'm somebody entirely different and I had to go through this whole fucking logical rehabilitation, and uh, and things begin to lose uh, names uh, places, some places uh, times. I can't tell you the month maybe or the time that all this happened in except maybe a few uh, uh, first month, first two months and the last month I was there but anything in between I...I couldn't tell you. I could tell you

Perry: But I can remember one thing it's really stays real clear with me. I remember uh, when I got to uh, Walter Reed Army Hospital uh, uh, I could remember my mother's name. I don't know why uh, why I could remember that but I could remember my mother's name. And one day, it was during the warmer months, they used to take us out, held on to a rope, this is how we were ...psychotic people were handled. If you wanted to go outside to a little square area for exercises, you held on to a rope. And there would be a attendant at this end and a attendant at that end. Those who were gonna hold on to a rope, paraded out together uh, once you got outside, the doors were locked. You had a high wall; I remember a high wall with barbed wire on it, surrounding us. And uh, this is where you went for your exercise. And I can't...I can't remember my mother's name. I think just after I had shock treatment uh, my mother's name just popped in, I think after the 2nd or 3rd time. See, I wanted to call up my mother. But I was trying to figure out...then this is where I start changing, okay. Hey, this people here are the enemy. (so your mother at this time still thought you were missing?) Right. So I started...start planning ways to get out.

John: Where were you, what hospital?

Perry: Walter Reed. (okay, yeah, you said that) Right there in Washington, D.C. I said, I got to get out, get to a telephone, find me a phone booth, find my mother's name and call. Tell her where I'm at, see if she'll pick me up. So I start watching people, watching the attendants, as they go in, come out, move around. I mean, I begin to notice that as long as I sat real calm, they began lax, they started to leave doors unlocked, you know, just kind of nonchalant walk up to the door, see if it's open. If it wasn't, I'd just wait 'til somebody comes through. And usually I'd wait for the laundry to come through, 'cause the guy's got a big laundry basket. He's got the whole door opened you know, (yeah). Yeah. This is how I got out. The guy with the laundry's comin' in, I'm by the door, and he came in, he pushed this big steel door, with bars and a glass in it, he comes through, and says, hey, will you hold the door for me? I said, yeah, I hold the door open and uh, he pushes it on through, you know, and I said you got it? And he says, yeah. I go on out the door and close it; so now I'm out. But I in the hallway that is guarded by MPs and a nurses station. Okay, I act like...I act like I'm supposed to be there. This is...act like you're supposed to be there. I wheel up to the nurses station, say, hey, can I use the phone? The pay phone down the hall here? The guy says, sure. I said, oh, by the way, I left my uh, money on the table; you got a dime I can use? I just want to get some information. I'll give it right back to you.

Perry: He said, okay and handed me a dime, and I went down the hall, I grabbed this damn phone booth, I'm going through it like crazy. And I remember Betty Sue (inaudible). And there must have been a page of 'em, Betty Sue Harris'. I couldn't remember the address, just my mother's name.

John: Well, did you make some kind of connection that you knew your mother was in that area? You must have. Or did you just figure any phone book?

Perry: Just any phone book, you know. Just find a name, I thought phone booths were phone booths (right). I knew in the Washington area, I remember they kept telling me well, you're home. See, this kind of got me thinking, I'm home. But where am I home at? See, I know I traveled across the United States from hospital to hospital. They kept going, well, you're going to Washington, you're going to Walter Reed, the big hospital.

John: Did they know who you were at this time?

Perry: Oh, they had my name, they had my uh, eventually when I got to Washington, they had me pretty well down you know, who I was, what unit I was in. Because they were going back looking at the company records before I left Hawaii, found my name, that was it. A lot of research time. Uh, a locator, people as a unit in the military's locator, this is how they found out who was killed, who wasn't killed, who was wounded and so on. Uh, also there was a, later on I learned there was mass confusion because my unit got overrun, that the units were coming in, were pulling out the wounded and dead, were...weren't precise on who's who, puttin' 'em on a chopper, gettin' 'em to a hospital, see. And they were checkin' for see, I didn't have an ID tag, my dog tags were blown off, so they didn't have that. Uh...because I couldn't hear, they you know, it was hard to communicate. So they acted like uh, I was an unknown up to a point where they could get the locator. Locator to check back records or whatever, like what area was he found in, he was found in the 25th area, so they go to the 25th, pull other records, have all the names of all those within a certain company and they'll start matchin' names to the body, finger prints, whatever. Whoever had dog tags, you know, someone...whatever, it just took months. By the time I got home uh, to Walter Reed, they had found it but they had never notified my mother. Because once that's sent out, that's it. They erased your name off or whatever. I got there, I got the phone, I started going through and I'm looking at all these Betty Sue Harris's and I figured...I started, well, I thought I'll start at the top and work my way down. So what I done is what uh, I start in the middle of the page and I marked that one and I'd go down and those from that number down and then I'll go to the top. So I count down a couple of numbers and I put a line under there and I dial that number. And it so happens that uh, it was ...it ...it uh, I'm trying to think who answered the phone, uh, uh...(pause)...a neighbor, a lady answers the phone and I asked can I speak to Betty Sue Harris, please. And she says yes, just a moment. And then it was my mother you know, but it wasn't my

mother that answered the phone. It was a neighbor, because I don't know how I done it, I just took half the page and took the first number right in the middle of the page and dialed and it was my mother's. It scared me because I figured I would have to go through several dollars worth of dimes just to find her.

John: You figure you saw her address and even though you didn't realize it, somehow that's...

Perry: Yeah, because they had like the name, then it had the address out from it. And uh, now they've just got the name and number, that's it. Maybe the street address, whatever. So uh, my mother got on the phone, and I told her, I said, "hey mom, this is me," and first of all she thought it was a joke. She thought somebody was pullin' a joke on her. I kept telling her "no, no, it was me, I was at Walter Reed." She says no, my son's dead. I said, no, he is not. It's me and I'm at Walter Reed." Then my stepfather got on the phone. And uh, he said, who is this? And I said, "it's me, it's Franny" and that was my nickname, and nobody else knew my nickname. My mother, my two brothers and my stepfather. Only four people knew. I said Franny. And this was my stepfather on the phone and he said wait a minute, he put the phone down and you could hear 'em talkin', and my mother picked the phone up and she said, who is this? And I said, "it's Franny." She said, where you at? I said, "I'm at Walter Reed Army Hospital in Washington." I said come and get me out." And she said, okay and she hung up the phone. So I said, hey, I'm okay. Great. Turned around and looked and there was a hallway full of MP's (laughter), going like this, you know. They took me back. To make a long story short, my mother came, she demanded entrance into the hospital and she said if she didn't get entrance, she was gonna have the police there and have whoever was in charge arrested or whatever you know, she raised...she came in and I'm sittin' up by the door like this, I could hear 'em, I couldn't see 'em. And I said, "hey, here I am." I rattled my door. Had the MP come up to her, take his night stick and hit and said get back, you know, you're not supposed to hang on the doors. My mother came in. I said, "mom, it's me." She said, goddamn it, get him out. (did they let you out?) Yeah. Yeah, they let me out. They transferred me from Walter Reed to uh, Veteran's hospital and then everything seemed to be picking up from there on. You know, I was back home and everything, and uh, the Army uh, apologized to her through the letter they sent her or the telegram, it was a hand carried telegram. And uh, they sent her a letter of apology and all this, that mistakes were made and so on. But my mother says there was no excuse for keeping me locked up like an animal. You know, so, I wasn't really bad or sick or anything. I was just trying to figure out what they're trying to do to me. Because you know, all of a sudden I'm behind bars and it made me feel like I had done something wrong. But they won't tell me what I've done wrong. They keep me locked up. That turned me against the government. And then they the way they...as the years went on, the way they started treating me as the years went on. That uh, you know. I fell into the category of those that were on the drug rehabilitation program or uh, uh, the delayed stress was never

heard about or talked about then. And of course I was having problems and everything. And as I as later I learned, I couldn't adapt to civilian life because of this problem. I couldn't ...if...I wanted to do it my way, or not do it at all. And then when they forced me to do it their way, then I rebelled against them. Then uh, I did...a complete reverse. I started thinking about the world around me, in general. Paid a little bit more attention to science. Because I knew what war does, does to people. It gets 'em all hyped up, you know, uh, it gets 'em to a point, they're in a killing rage. And they take these people and put 'em somewhere, say okay, here's a (inaudible)...you know, that's basically what it is. Uhm...now don't get me wrong. I'm not against fighting for my country. Uh, it's apart from that. If I was called to do it again, I'd do it again. But I'd do it my way. Because there are too many indecisions made uh, as with Bobby, Bobby Mueller once said, what was the objective, I don't know. (yeah) You know, I want to have...if I ever have to do it again, I will know what my objective is. I would know how to conduct to reaching my objective, with lesser loss of life, than to just say okay, boys, go get 'em! You know. That type of thing. But then, as the years go by again, it's months, years go by, they begin to notice changes in the government, uh, for some reason the government's become more I don't know, hostile, not hostile but uh, more cover up. It's like Watergate over again. But instead of being the uh, Robert Hitchcock and all them guys, it's Vietnam vets, see, and they're trying to cover that up a little bit, so we'll give you guys uh, whatever you want, as long as you don't bother us or raise a big stink. Alright, they give us what we want, but a year goes by, they cut it. We raise hell, they give it back, a year goes by, they cut again. So...so now what I do and my life is now, is that I reached that point. I reached the final chapter more or less in my life. I'm middle-aged now. I call it my final chapter. And I see that they're doing it all over again. They're ...planning something and they're not telling us what's going on. We hear about, they want everything that we think about is war-related. Everything, everything we do, everything. Everything we think about, even our schools, everything, is war-related; it has something to do with war. It doesn't matter what it is. If you want to study uh, industry. Great! You learn how to make chemical bombs. If you want to study nuclear uh, uh, study the atom, make uh, make atomic bombs. They got one bomb out that's uh, it doesn't destroy anything, it just kills people. What do you call that? (the Neutron?) The Neutron, yeah.

John: Do you think this has uh, anything to do with the influence of the weapons industry?

Serry: Yes. Yes. And if you stop to look at it, (tape shuts off and on)...contractors, in the United States, that are making billions and billions and billions of dollars. Of course, they've got thousands and thousands of people employed uh, with, under these major industries that sub-contract, uh, clean down to uh, a guy that makes nuts and bolts. This country...even our history shows it. Inst we are war minded. Uh, our majority of our

industry is geared to war, in case there is war, or having a war, or are planning to have a war. Everything that we ... everything we got, everything we do is geared to that. But you don't see it...it's not in the open as uh, as some of it is. Uh, it's just that our government is supposed to be uh, for the people and governed by the people. But (inaudible)...look at a select few, who governs us. They're only in it for the money. Everything that we do as an adult during our life is controlled by the government. Uh, every idea that we have uh, a new product or whatever, is controlled by the government. Uh, all our new medicines we...we ...whatever, is controlled by the government. Everything we do is controlled by the government. One branch or one form of government is controlling us. Uh, no wonder some of these guys think they're paranoid. They've got the phones tapped, so on. We're being controlled by the government, because some of us are standing up saying "folks, stop, look what you're doing. Do you want to keep on to where we have this thing is uh, big brother and it's all gearing up to the final conflict."

John: Do you think uh, Vietnam vets are more conscious of this type government control or government insensitivity or whatever than the general public? Do you feel like it's one of the roles of the VVA to sort of alert people to this?

Ferry: Yeah, I believe the VVA uh, uh, is trying to put a hold on what the government's doing. It keeps cutting us. Why do all these programs that they're cutting is because uh, not because they're spending too much money. But because they're spending too much money out on us, the people or what is needed by the people, or what is needed by this country. Because they want something to protect that government up there on the hill. We've got to have more tanks, more guns, more planes, more ships, more arms, more missiles, and then if you uh, let this go on, if we didn't have VVA or DAV or PVA, people out here say hey, look, no, you can't do that. Slow down, and we can't cut this program. Because see, if you cut us, you're cutting the new veteran, too. See. The guy that's in the Army today, 1986, young kids, young 17 and 18 year olds, (or the guy that you want to get in to the Army) Right. He gets in, he gets hurt, he comes out, he ain't gonna have nothing. So, we have these people back here, say, look, there's a new veteran--do you want to cut him as well? I says, or are we gonna have so many veterans uh, within a certain group, take that group, sit it over here by itself, and then start over again, and get another group here, and sit it up here, and say, okay, you're a special type of veteran; you get so much, and you people down here get so much. Uh, now the old ones, way back, we'll just cut them. Because they've had it long enough. See, this is what ...well, eventually we just die. I mean, that's one more dollar they don't have to pay. But if we don't have somebody in there to slow this government, this bureaucracy we got is humongous. Uh, I can't even start to imagine how big our government is. You know, we have a president, a vice pres...that's these, Reagan, Vice-president Bush, whatever, okay, well, he's got these little small departments down in through there. Uh, then they've got some departments I ain't even heard of.

(inaudible)....procurement department. Uh, they have nothing but paper. You know...legal tablets, writing tablets, typing paper uh, column paper. And he buys all this stuff for the government. (inaudible)...worth of paper. He starts sending out to different departments. Well, we need a couple thousand sheets of this or we need a couple thousand sheets of that. (inaudible) Then you got a department of uh, general supplies, that buys ink pens, pencils, ball point pens, ink wells, you know. (laughs) Stuff like that. And then uh, you got a little department that buys rubber stamps, this is uh, you got a rubber stamp for the president, you got a rubber stamp for the vice-president (laughs), rubber stamp for the everybody in the whole government got a rubber stamp with his name on it. And it'll either have void on it or invalidated (laughter), disapproved or proved, or whatever, you've got one that makes them, see. That's part of the government, see. You know. And it goes on and on and on. And we're sitting out there on, we're sittin' outside watchin', they're spending trillions of dollars and we only have uh, if you stop and think of it maybe uh, a thousand dollars a month to live on. You know. And what little bit of programs we got, they want to keep on cuttin'. And remember now, the dollar doesn't go far. They said the dollar's down, that means the dollar cannot purc....does not purchase as much as it did last year. Which is true. A hamburger today costs me \$1.55.

END OF SIDE 2
END OF INTERVIEW