

**Richard D. Crammond
Veteran**

**Wayne Clarke
Interviewer**

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New York State Military Museum
Saratoga Springs, New York**

Q: Today is the 29th of January, 2010. We are at the New York State Military Museum and Veterans Research Center in Saratoga Springs, New York. My name is Wayne Clarke. Sir, for the record, would you please state your full name and your date and place of birth please.

RC: Richard David Crammond, place of birth is Troy, New York, and the date would be nine nineteen forty-eight.

Q: And did you attend school in Troy?

RC: I attended school in Stillwater, New York.

Q: Did you graduate from High School?

RC: I certainly did.

Q: What year did you graduate?

RC: 1969

Q: When you graduated did you go right into the service or did you go to work, what did you do?

RC: I was out of high school for approximately a year and approximately two days before my marriage I got my draft notice.

Q: So you were drafted in?

RC: A month later I was on my way to Fort Dix.

Q: Ok, and what was it like at Fort Dix?

RC: Fort Dix was an experience that I will never forget, but I was treated fairly.

Q: Was that your first time away from home?

RC: Absolutely, very home sick for the first week.

Q: Did you go down with anyone else from the capital district?

RC: I did, I went down with, there was a fellow that lived in the trailer park that Deb and I had just put our new mobile home in that went with me, Jim Nobles his name is and there was quite a few people from Saratoga which I don't remember the names of.

Q: After basic training did you go onto an advanced school for your MOS?

RC: I went to eight more weeks of truck driving school, light and heavy duty truck driving school at Fort Dix.

Q: Did they teach you mechanics also or strictly truck driving?

RC: Mostly truck driving, there was some mechanics but the people that wanted to drive and people that wanted to be mechanics was like more drivers than mechanics so they focused on more drivers.

Q: And once you finished that training were you sent over to Vietnam right away?

RC: I sure was.

Q: Did you get any sort of leave before you went to Vietnam?

RC: I believe, thinking back, I believe I got a two week leave.

Q: How did your wife react to you being sent to Vietnam, was she very upset?

RC: She was, and I was too to be honest with, but we talked about it, and I said well, being the patriotic person that I am I said "I have to do it".

Q: And whereabouts did they ship you out of?

RC: I left from right here in Saratoga.

Q: But did you go to like Fort Lewis or Fort Ord?

RC: I went from Fort Dix to Fort Lewis, Washington and then from Fort Lewis, Washington to Anchorage, Alaska and then Yokota, Japan and then right over to Cam Ranh Bay.

Q: What was your reaction when you landed in Cam Ranh Bay?

RC: To be perfectly honest with you, when I got off of that plane I took a look around that airport, 14th Air airport, I'll be perfectly honest with you I looked around and I said "What did I do to deserve this?".

Q: Now did you land at night or during the daytime?

RC: During the daytime.

Q: And once you got settled in how long did it take before you were assigned to a unit?

RC: Approximately one week.

Q: What did they have you do around the, I take it, it was a replacement depot where you had landed and stayed for a week before you were assigned.

RC: Baggage detail, paper work, general maintenance, we had two formations a day and that's about it.

Q: And then you received orders that you would you would be staying in Cam Ranh Bay?

RC: I never received the order that I would be staying right there at the replacement center. One of the other fellows that fooled around and played with me pulled me by the arm and said, "Hey come on with me I heard they need bus drivers here at the replacement center". I said "no no" he says "Yes", so we went over to motor pool, warrant officer was sitting at the desk. To this day I'm still surprised he says "Yes I can use you, you, you and you". Says "Start tomorrow". So that's how I got stationed at 22nd Replacement in North Cam Ranh.

Q: So you were a bus driver, Crammond?

RC: For a while and then I was a baggage truck driver for a while loading on the commercial jets the freedom birds we called them.

Q: Now as a bus driver where did you drive to, was it strictly on post?

RC: It was from the replacement center approximately four and a half miles to the airport and back most of the time.

Q: What brand of buses were they?

RC: Our first buses were Isuzus and then approximately 6 to 7 months after they got so wore out we got a whole fleet of new Internationals.

Q: Did the buses have any sort of wiring over the windows to prevent grenades from being tossed in?

RC: The first ones did, the Isuzus did, they were all wire cased windows. Oh yes, absolutely but I don't recall the later buses having wires on them.

Q: Were the buses air conditioned?

RC: They were, the newer buses were, the Isuzus were not if I remember correctly.

Q: And what was your typical work day like?

RC: It was chaotic, it was twenty-four hours call. So I never really, I could take a nap for an hour or I could take a nap for 5 minutes I never knew. First six months there was almost back to back in and out flights coming the country and going out of the country. Second six months just the opposite.

Q: Did you run into anybody that you knew from back home that were either coming or going?

RC: Yes I did, there was a fella that was stationed, I put in a good word for him I guess you could say to my motor officer and he came over approximately six to seven months after I was there and he was from my hometown, Stillwater.

Q: What was his name?

RC: George Marshall and yes, I went over to the motor pool got all dressed up nice and everything, the respectable soldier, and sold many words and one officer says "Well I can't do nothing for ya they're making orders up before they come in the country". I said "Thank you for your time sir" next day Georgie was there, stationed with me in the same room. Which, I don't know if that's good or bad.

Q: Was he happy to be stationed in Cam Ranh and not out in the boonies somewhere?

RC: Oh definitely, oh absolutely. In a big way, we as I mentioned well I won't go into that, everybody had adapted duty and I figured whether we were in that replacement center or out in the field somewhere, we'd try to do our job the best we could.

Q: Did you have to pull any duties like KP or guard duty at all?

RC: In Vietnam?

Q: Yes

RC: No, Guard Duty yes not KP though.

Q: What type of weapon were you issued?

RC: It was an M16 and we had one fella that got into a big squabble with one of the E7's and we had to guard him with a 45.

Q: Did you keep your M16 with you at all times or were they locked in an arms room?

RC: Just on red alert, the rest of the time they were locked up.

Q: While you were over there were you ever under any type of ground attack or rocket attack?

RC: We did get some incoming to be perfectly honest with you. The ammo dump was set off one night it singed the ground real good and everybody was on the floor.

Q: Was it fairly close to you?

RC: We were on one end of the air strip and that was on the other side, towards the ocean more.

Q: By 1970 what were race relationships like?

RC: Between the whites and the blacks?

Q: Were there any problems?

RC: There were I'll call them groups or whatever they tend to stay together, but no not in the motor pool I was in, we had some blacks with us but not very many but we got along good.

Q: Did you go on R and R while you were over there?

RC: No, I didn't quite make that. I did come home for two weeks leave.

Q: What were the circumstances behind that?

RC: For Deb and I's first anniversary.

Q: Oh they let you come home for two weeks?

RC: Yes

Q: Really?

RC: Yes I had to pay forward myself but the USO gave me a discount.

Q: I see

RC: But I was home for our first anniversary which was very nice.

Q: Did you ever get to go into town at all while you were over there or tour any villages at all?

RC: I was strictly replacement center the people like George did have a run were they brought the workers back and forth from the replacement center and back to the village which was a very dangerous job I thought.

Q: Did you ever volunteer to go out on any convoys at all?

RC: I did go with George once or twice across the bay, whether I supposed to or not I don't really recall but that was a different world. I'm sure you saw more than I did.

Q: A lot of poverty?

RC: Oh definitely, absolutely, some people in this United States just don't know how good they have it sometimes, when you see people like that, oh my goodness. But anyway that's besides.

Q: Did you get to swim the South China Sea at all?

RC: I did, did you?

Q: Sure

RC: Oh yea that was cool. I mean it was very salty but beautiful absolutely gorgeous. Those people instead of fighting all those years they just should've built up the coast like Hawaii or something they could've made a lot of money.

Q: Did your unit have any problems with drugs, hard drugs or marijuana?

RC: I think so, not as much as other units that were out in the field though, there were some bad cases, but there were some.

Q: What were your officers and CO's like?

RC: The first warrant officer we had was a very nice man. He was rough, he talked rough and everything but he would sit right down, he'd try to work with you. My E7 and E6 sergeants over me were very good they were like lawyers if you had to go to court, which I did one time for speeding.

Q: On a bus?

RC: Going from the replacement center to the airport which was about four and half miles and they got the air force SP's or whatever they were. They caught me speeding and they wrote me up and gave me a tongue lashing and that was just before I was supposed to make spec four and I was very worried about that so I brought it to my sergeant forward and he goes into the office with the warrant officer in E6 and he comes out ripping it up.

Q: So you made your spec four?

RC: Yes I did, but it was definitely an experience which for a small town country boy like myself where I grew up and you could see nobody up or down the road from me and even just to go through the cities I went through just to get there and back it was a big experience. I still have mixed feelings about it, about us being over there to being with us Americans. But like I said before I'm patriotic.

Q: What kind of uniform did you wear? Did you wear the state side fatigues or the jungle fatigues?

RC: Jungle fatigues

Q: And did they have to be starched and pressed?

RC: I was a part time full bull colonel driver, a sedan driver, and for that they did have to be starched other than that not really because we had to clean our buses out and stuff like that. We got pretty dirty.

Q: How did you get along with the colonel you had to drive around?

RC: Every time was a different one, so most of them were good, except for one I recall, but other than that they were easy. I was young and sometimes I probably wasn't as level headed as I should've been, but I was treated pretty fairly.

Q: What were your quarters like, did you have two man rooms or open bay?

RC: We had barracks with two men rooms and approximately, at any given time, a half a dozen to a dozen cockroaches the size of sparrows and lizards that were surging one week.

Q: How about snakes, ever encounter them?

RC: We had the sand lizards that were approximately 2 feet long that would occasionally come in. But it was fun anyway.

Q: Now how about the food, how was that?

RC: We were fed decently.

Q: What about entertainment, did you have a lot of bands or USO shows?

RC: We had our E4 and below lounge, motor pool lounge, and we had our E5 and above and they had better entertainment. That we weren't allowed to go in there.

Q: That was an enlisted man's club E4 and below.

RC: Though probably thinking back it was E5 and below.

Q: So was it strictly beer?

RC: Oh it was beer and it was whisky I don't remember and vodka or gin or anything like that.

Q: Food also?

RC: Just like any regular bar would have.

Q: Chips?

RC: Yea and nuts and things like that.

Q: You mentioned you extended?

RC: I extended, yes I did.

Q: How long did you extend for?

RC: I extended for, it was supposed to be for 6 months, but President Nixon by the end of my tour was really starting to pull the troops out of there which was the end of seventy-one. I was approximately a month on my extension.

Q: A month in and you were sent back?

RC: I got there December 2nd and I left there the end of December so I was there approximately a month.

Q: How did your wife feel about you extending?

RC: I don't recall

Q: When did you say you left Vietnam?

RC: I left Vietnam probably on the last day of 1971.

Q: And you left of course from Cam Ranh?

RC: See as you well know you have travel time, you lose a day and gain a day when you go through the time zones, so it was probably the last day of 1971.

Q: Whereabouts in the states did you land?

RC: The first state landing was Anchorage, Alaska.

Q: Whereabouts where you discharged from?

RC: I was discharged from Fort Rose, Washington and I was discharged again from Fort Dix, New Jersey. What happened is they lost all my medical records in Fort Rose so they gave me a month to stay home then I had to go down to Fort Dix and go through the whole discharge again.

Q: Did you stay in contact with anyone you were in service with, obviously the fellow from Stillwater you probably see him quite often.

RC: Yes

Q: Anybody else?

RC: Well there was one fellow from Stillwater his name was Frank Russel I remember seeing him in basic training but I really don't see him that much anymore.

Q: Did you attend any reunions at all?

RC: No I haven't. That would be nice.

Q: Did you join any veteran's organizations?

RC: I am a volunteer at the public information center at the Gerald B. Solomon Saratoga National Cemetery.

Q: Did you join the VFW or the American Legion at all?

RC: I did for a while but I let my membership lapse.

Q: How do you think your time in the service changed or effected your life?

RC: Thinking about things more and being more mature comes with age, it taught me a lot of things, but I can't really tell you any one specific thing that it did for me. It did change me but I don't know how to answer.

Q: Let me go back a little bit to when you were discharged, did you run into any protestors at all at any of the airports, did anyone bother you because you were in uniform?

RC: No, I did not. But on the other hand I didn't get any special homecoming either. I was GI that did his time and put on his civilian clothes. I was proud and I still am today to have worn that uniform.

Q: Did you make use of the GI bill at all did you use it to buy a house at all or for better training?

RC: No, I got an exemption on my taxes for being in Vietnam in a combat zone. That was very nice I thought. The GI bill I don't think I did. Deb and I have always lived in mobile homes so I really went for any big house.

Q: Are you still married?

RC: I'm still married it'll be forty years June 20th.

Q: Any children?

RC: One boy, Richard Jr.

Q: Any grandchildren?

RC: Two twin girls

Q: Are there any other any other incidents or memories from your time in the service that you'd like to share that we may not have touched on? Anything funny happen in basic training or anything like that?

RC: Basic training taught me a lot right off the bat because there was big fellas, great big fellas and little small fellas and about half way through I started thinking "I don't know if I'm going to make it or not". But I took a look and well this guys doing and that little guy and that great big guy and one on each arm and they're helping them along and everything and if they can do it I can do it. Like I said I had never run into any real, my father was stern, but discipline, I didn't know any real discipline until I got off that bus then I did.

Q: Thank you so much for your interview, oh wait a minute, yes, you do have those photographs we'd like to see. If you want hold those up. Ok and these are taken in Vietnam?

RC: Yes.

Q: What kind of aircraft is that in the background?

RC: That is a C5A Galaxy and my nickname when I drove the bus, my real name is Richard Crammond, but my nickname was Ralph Crammdon.

Q: Was that a newspaper clipping from the local newspaper or was that an army publication?

RC: That was from a local paper that my mother sent to me when I was over there.

Q: And you've got another photo?

RC: This is just basic training

Q: Whereabouts are you in that photo?

RC: I am right there. Scary being in that picture because that drill sergeant right there you see the stern look on his face.

Q: Where's the drill sergeant the fellow in the front?

RC: Right here with the Smokey bear hat

Q: And what was his name?

RC: Sergeant Gauss

Q: Well thank you again for your interview

RC: Thank you sir.