

**Allan Fenton Glynn  
Veteran**

**Mike Russert  
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Interviewers**

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**Q:** Could you give me your full name, date of birth, and place of birth, please?

**AG:** My full name is Allan Fenton Glynn, my date of birth is April 21<sup>st</sup>, 1947, and place of birth was Bronx, New York.

**Q:** Before you entered service, what was your educational background?

**AG:** Completed college, I had a bachelor's degree in biology- B.S in biology- and I had spent a year full-time, and many years part-time as a park ranger.

**Q:** Where were you a park ranger?

**AG:** Statue of Liberty.

**Q:** Oh, okay. Were you drafted or did you enlist?

**AG:** I enlisted.

**Q:** Why did you enlist?

**AG:** Well my father was in World War II. He was in Southeast Asia in the army air core, and I... felt it was my duty.

**Q:** And when did you enlist?

**AG:** I enlisted in 1968.

**Q:** Where did you go for your basic?

**AG:** I went to Fort Linwood, Missouri for basic and AIT... and I went out to Fort Sill, Oklahoma, and then overseas.

**Q:** Did you have any specialized training at all?

**AG:** I had explosives ordinance demolitions training.

**Q:** With what you saw in Vietnam, do you think you were trained that well?

**AG:** Yes I believe I was, I didn't have any problems with their training.

**Q:** Were you assigned a unit, or did you go into a unit when you entered Vietnam?

**AG:** That's a good question. We spent a couple weeks at a replacement company, getting acclimatized. I believe then I was assigned to a unit.

**Q:** And what unit were you assigned to?

**AG:** It was a survey unit, and I... really can't remember the numbers. I have bad memory in a lot of areas.

**Q:** What things did you do in the survey unit?

**AG:** I was there for about three months, we go out one night, they planned to move the guns somewhere- the artillery pieces- and we'd go out and lay the guns and put down markers where the guns would be facing and where they'd be placed and everything. That was fairly interesting. We ended up going to Cambodia and Louse. After three months my unit went back to Hawaii to Schofield barracks and they shipped me up to the Americal because I hadn't been in the country long enough. During the first three months since we had time, many of us volunteered for MedCAPs- medical civil action patrols. Where we would go out and help give shots and medical care to people who, it looked like had never seen a doctor before. And that was rewarding.

**Q:** Did you do any of the giving of shots?

**AG:** I never gave shots, the medics did that.

**Q:** And what was your job with the unit?

**AG:** We'd prepare the people, do Band-Aids and such. Mostly it was just to provide guard duty, I believe... and play with the kids (Laughs)... and I got a kick out of the fact that a couple of times both the elders and the young kids would come up to me and start picking at the hair on my arm, like I was a monkey or something. Because they didn't have hair on their arms, and it fascinated them. A couple times we'd be leaving a Ville- after being there for about eight hours, doing medical stuff- and they'd loose off a few shots at us. They never tried to hit us, I think they did this to show the Viet Kong that were on the right side. My wife was furious about that, but I understood. They never tried to hit us, and we didn't shoot back.

**Q:** Were you married at the time you went in?

**AG:** I got married on leave before I went to Vietnam. I met my wife in college.

**Q:** What other assignments did you have while you were there?

**AG:** When we got shipped up to the Americal, they trained me on an integrated optical system (IOS scope) which was a combination of a laser range finder and a starlight scope. There were five of us on duty on different hills that they'd send us to, and we'd call in fire missions, day and night. There were five of us and we each worked two and a half hour shifts, and there were... I think seven infantry men assigned to guard us. We'd work our two and half hours and then we'd be free to sleep or do whatever- on the hilltop, we couldn't go anywhere obviously- until it came our time again. So we'd work around the clock basically. We'd get to see the country in every aspect, all hours of the day and night. The starlight scope also came in handy for looking at the stars- just by the name of it- you could see a comet every five minutes or less.

**Q:** Did you establish a fortified position on these hills or was there one already there?

**AG:** Usually there was one already there. It would be a rather small position surrounded by barbed wire and flares, and we often would sleep in a hole in the ground... with wooden boards on the bottom. And if we were lucky we had an air mattress, and the hole

in the ground would be covered with a piece of metal and dirt, which kept us rather safe when we were shelled.

**Q:** Did you get to see any USO shows like Bob Hope?

**AG:** No, I was on guard duty when Bob Hope Show came over. So I got to see the trucks going down toward Saigon at the time I believe. I think I was in Cu Chi at the time. So I got to watch the people going to see the show. I'd really hoped to be able to see him... we all looked up to him, and we still do. I also was involved from time to time on fire teams going into Villes and looking for Viet Kong. I was told that I was exposed to Typhoid- or Typhus, I'm not sure which- on three of those occasions. But nothing ever happened, thank goodness.

**Q:** I noticed you said you were exposed to Agent Orange also?

**AG:** Right, I'm on the Agent Orange List, and I developed Type 2 diabetes about ten years ago or so. And about two years ago, the VA said that that's basically cause by Agent Orange.

**Q:** How were you exposed to this?

**AG:** Just by working out in the hills and the areas where it had been used.

**Q:** Did you test positive for Hepatitis at all?

**AG:** Not that I know of, no.

**Q:** Now when you wrote about your experiences, and what had the greatest impression, you said that people used the war to do bad things. What did you mean by that?

**AG:** I was under the impression that a lot of people who were accused- or not accused- got away with things like shooting up civilian populations. If they had had the chance before the war they might have done it anyway in the United States. Vietnam was famous for illegal drugs being used, and I think a lot of people came over there with habits, and it may have been easier to get over there, but I don't blame the war for all those things. I was on a convoy one time, and people shot up a Buddhist Temple when we were driving past for no reason at all, except that they wanted to shoot it up. I was on a hill overlooking a place called Duc Pho, where they had a dust-off chopper stationed, and every once in a while a chopper would take off at high noon, and start shooting at the farmers in the field. And that was disgusting, that was murder.

**Q:** What was your impression of Lt. Galley and company and the whole situation?

**AG:** Well my wife and I have different views on that. She thinks he was a scapegoat and I think what happened is horrible and he should have been prosecuted. I wasn't there though, and I really can't compare my stress with the stress that they were under. Just going by my lifestyle, that's not something that should have been done.

**Q:** What do you mean by stress?

**AG:** Well I recall vaguely that he and his men had been subjected to a lot of losses and come under fire, and possibly from that Ville. So I can understand why they might be very eager to make sure there were no Viet Kong left alive there. But as far as hurting

men, women, and children into a ditch and shooting them, that seems to me, something that I really can't picture anybody doing, in their right mind anyway.

**Q:** How did you feel about being under fire?

**AG:** The first time I came under fire, it was basically my fault. It was during the first three months and we were out doing surveys and we drove into a logger position one night to stay overnight. And it was a rather small encampment of American forces with the guns all facing out, and I couldn't get to sleep. There was too much noise, too much music at the time. I finally got up, went outside the position, outside the circle, and laid down under one of the guns, I figured I'd be safe there (Snickers). About two o'clock in the morning we got attacked. And I could see the red and green traces going out and coming in. The gun above me started firing at a low elevation, so my body was bouncing up and down, jarring every organ I have, I believe. I didn't try to shoot back, I tried to get my entire big 'ole six-foot-two body into my steel pod- I tried to crawl into my steel pod. It didn't work, but I'm still that embarrassed by it. That was my baptism of fire. But I never slept outside the position again! (Laughs)

**Q:** What was daily life like there?

**AG:** It was hot.

**Q:** Ever get accustomed to the climate?

**AG:** Yeah, we did. I ended up taking about eighteen salt packets a day. When I wore a uniform- which we didn't usually wear on the hills, except for the pants- they would turn white with the salt coming out, but you get used to it. It was a beautiful country. I enjoyed it, I enjoyed being out in the field. I enjoyed the choppers, I enjoyed the comradery.

**Q:** What kind of weapon did you carry, or weapons?

**AG:** Usually what I personally had was an M-16. Toward the end they gave us the uh... I don't remember if it was an M-69, it was a combination of an M-16 and M-79, or 209 it may have been. I also was fairly good with the blooper, with the grenade launcher. At one point they shipped out LAWS rockets that we used.

**Q:** Did you ever have any problems with your M-16?

**AG:** Uh, no. We had the new and improved version. I understand that earlier in the war there had been a lot of jamming problems. But they fixed most of those problems. As long as you kept it clean. (Laughs)

**Q:** Were you ever wounded?

**AG:** Oh I'm sorry, I also use an M-60. I used to ride, every once in a while during my first three month period, I would ride security on a Jeep side. I'd be riding 60 in the back of the Jeep with the 60 on a swivel.

Was I ever wounded? Early on I was up in one of the towers, which was about 30 feet off the ground. I think this was May of '71. I was being relieved at about one-thirty or two-thirty in the morning, and I took one step back onto the wooden ladder and slipped and fell headfirst basically- and I remember looking between my feet at the stars

on the way and thinking how pretty they looked. Which I guess is a defense mechanism that the mind uses. And I busted my M-16 in half in half, it was around my neck, and I was unconscious briefly. The medic came and apparently gave me morphine or something for three weeks and taped me up and kept me doped up day and night, which I needed because I was in such pain, and I found out in 1989 that I had broken my neck in the fall. So I was having some muscle problems and pain, loss of muscle and things of that nature on one side. My doctor up here took an X-ray and said, "Oh you broke your neck did you?"

"Oh did I?"

"Yeah..." (Laughs)

I also got blown through the air one time by an RPG, or a mortar I should say. We were watching one of our batteries across the valley, shooting up the valley, because there were Viet Kong that day out there. I was sitting up on top of a Conex box which is a very tall metal box that you ship things in. We were all watching the explosions, which are beautiful, especially at night. And all of a sudden, all I remember is- and it's a false memory- is flying through the air like Superman. I felt like I was hanging there, and the ground was moving beneath me. And that's all I remember until I came to. And I had gotten blown through the air by an enemy mortar. Apparently they had found a couple people that had seen it- I'm supposed to get a purple heart in February. They said I was spinning over and over like that little finger in the Cingular commercial (Laughs). So I guess I wasn't flying like Superman.

**Q:** Did you get any shrapnel in you?

**AG:** Yeah, I got a couple nicks on the head and back and stuff. I also got... my feet and legs were cut up a little bit in another mortar attack at a basecamp. The medic offered three of us purple hearts. Two of us sort of laughed it off. It was embarrassing. So many people that were injured worse, you really don't want to accept something if you don't feel that you were injured badly enough.

**Q:** How long were you in Vietnam?

**AG:** A year... that was enough. (Laughs)

**Q:** How did you feel about the time you were there, the anti-war movement?

**AG:** It didn't bother me as long as they didn't take the side of the Viet Kong. Everybody has the right to protest and to say what they think but, for instance I'm from New York City and when Columbia University ran up the Viet Kong flag, I thought that was an outrage and I was rather angry about it.

**Q:** What about Jane Fonda, what did you think of her?

**AG:** The same thing. She went over and had pictures taken by an enemy, anti-aircraft gun that had shot down an American plane, and I thought that was a traitorous thing to do. And I'm still not happy with her.

**Q:** Do you ever watch any of the movies about Vietnam at all?

**AG:** Yes, I've seen a lot of them. I think the best of the lot was "Apocalypse Now". It was a very realistic movie- it was Hollywood... it was theatrical- but as far as special effects

and such, I thought it was well done. And I thought it was the best anti-war movie ever made because it was also best war movie ever made in my estimation. I saw "Platoon", and I thought the special effects were great, but there were no heroes in that, so I didn't particularly like it. I saw "The Deer Hunter" and I thought it was crazy, it was ridiculous. My wife saw Apocalypse Now with me, and when she came out... she thought she was going to faint, she didn't know what she was going to do. She was so upset because she had seen so much in the movie that she had already heard from me had happened. It was like being there for her.

**Q:** Do you ever read much on Vietnam at all?

**AG:** I've read some novels on Vietnam. Not too many political novels, because I... I was there. I can't take it back. And for whatever reason we were there. There were rumors we were there because maybe oil was going to be discovered or something of that nature. But... never heard anything about that.

**Q:** When you came back, were you greeted with any anti-war protestors or did you have any bad experiences coming back?

**AG:** No, I had very good experiences coming back, I was one of the lucky ones. My wife's town out in Uniondale, Long Island, had a parade for two of us through the town and a picnic in Eisenhower Park. My wife and I went to Washington for the four-day opening of the wall- the dedication of the wall- I think in 1982, and that was beautiful. We made good friends there that we still keep in contact with. I have one friend out in Iowa, we call each other a couple times a year. We went out to see him a couple years ago. He and I both served over there at the same time. We served together for a couple months.

**Q:** When did you return from Vietnam?

**AG:** I believe it was August of '71.

**Q:** And you were in service for another several months?

**AG:** Yeah, I got out 'two, two, seventy-two'.

**Q:** What did you do in the time that you were back in the States?

**AG:** I was back and forth still. They used me as a demonstrator, I volunteered to be a demonstrator for the repelling. Tying the flares on the boots and everything and showing people how to repel down on that, and how to get out of it when you do it wrong- when you're hanging there upside down. And being young and foolish I loved it. They asked me if I wanted to become a drill instructor and they'd send me to school. I thought about getting up at four or five in the morning and trying to outrace everybody else (Laughs). No, I don't think so, thank you very much.

**Q:** Have you joined any Veteran's organizations?

**AG:** Besides the people from Washington we met at the wall, we formed an organization called Americal Vietnam Veterans, down in Long Island. I used to go to meetings out there monthly until I moved upstate quite a while ago. I hope that's still going on, it was a good organization, it was growing. Up here, about two years ago I joined the Veterans

of Foreign Wars. I've never been to a meeting. I've never been to a VFW hall. I just joined to support them basically. Not much of a joiner.

**Q:** Have you stayed in contact with anyone that you served *with*?

**AG:** Well, Dennis [unclear] out in Iowa that I served with for a couple months is the only one. There was another fella down in New York that we met once for lunch at a Chinese restaurant. But for some reason I could never get him to go out again. That might be me and not The War, I'm not sure. (Laughs)

**Q:** Have you suffered any lasting things from the war? Medical?

**AG:** Medical, yeah. The diabetes, I have pains in the neck and right side. I have PTSD. I went to the VA psychiatrist down here a couple years ago, and he diagnosed PTSD. I guess my emotions are closer to the surface than they used to be before the war. And I know I've been angry since the war, and my whole family and my wife attest to that, unfortunately. When I came back from Vietnam I was at Fort Sill and we went to the dentist and my wife went with me because he was going to do some extractions and she figured she'd drive home. We were there for eight hours, because I had dry sockets, which really complicates matters. And the fella was sewing me up. He was there so long the dispensary closed, and he couldn't get the right material for the stitches and they were breaking as he was doing it. So after eight hours we came home, and I put my fist through a door, which scared my wife- my wife is about 4'11". She was afraid I'd do this to her sometime, and I don't blame her. I never would but...

**Q:** How do you think your time in service affected or changed your life, if in any way? I know you just mentioned *these* things.

**AG:** The anger, the emotions. I really can't say... how it did, if it did. People say well you gave a couple years to the military, therefore you're that far behind in your business life, etc. I'm glad I went, I'm proud I did it, and I have no complaints about it. My major complaints are about what happened afterwards.

**Q:** I noticed that in this interview that the student did with you, you met someone famous on Ellis Island?

**AG:** Oh yeah, Francis Ford Coppola. I had the good fortune... he was scouting a location for "Godfather II". They assigned me to him, and I went over with him for the entire day. He had his entourage with him and he'd be humming the theme from the Godfather in the great hall at Ellis Island and pointing out different scenes he would want. And he also told me about the fact that he was going to make another movie, a movie about Vietnam, which turned out to be Apocalypse Now.

**Q:** Oh so this was before?

**AG:** It was before. So we traded some Vietnam stories because he had been talking to some vets about it. And he did good job. He really talked to a lot of vets I believe.

**Q:** Okay, do you have anything else you wanted to add?

**AG:** Only what the lady in The Gazette asked me a couple weeks ago, 'do I have anything I would want to say to people today?', and I would encourage them to be patriotic and to

volunteer if that's what they want to do. I think it can really help people grow up. Some people may even need it. But as far as actually being there, it can be too horrible to try to describe or try to remember. I was up here when the wall came over to Cohoes- a month or so ago, the traveling wall- and I ran into a couple of vets who were looking at my section of the wall, at the time I was there. And I had never looked at that before, even in Washington. I just avoided it. And I have a terrible memory as far as names, especially from Vietnam. I was standing there, looking at it, and I'm looking at a couple names, and I'm thinking "Yeah... yeah, he's dead... yeah, yeah, I know he was killed... yeah, I saw him get killed." But these are not names I would remember. I couldn't... until I saw them. And when these two fellas walked up, my daughter pointed them out, we went back and I introduced myself. They were there at the same time, in about the same area, and they had the same problem; they couldn't remember names. I thought that was significant. I thought it was me all those years.

**Q:** Okay, well thank you very much for your interview.

**AG:** You're welcome.