

**Lawrence Frier
Veteran**

**Mr. Philip Leonard
Interviewer**

**Hoosick Falls Historical Society
Hoosick Falls, New York**

Philip Leonard: PL

Lawrence Frier: LF

PL: What is your name?

LF: My name is Larry Frier.

PL: And where do live Larry?

LF: Right Now, I live at 59 River Road.

PL: And what about before you went into the service? Have you lived in Hoosick Falls long?

LF: All my life. I was born in Troy, brought home to Hoosick Falls and I have been here ever since. I lived at 7 California Avenue with my parents. I was a normal kid, grew up and went through high school. I went to Hoosick Falls Central High School and left there and Mr. Bolder arranged for me to get a job at Reynolds Tool and Die.

Less than a year later, I received my draft notice. I called Trapper Allard, another Hoosick Falls guy and he was an Enlistment Sergeant. I took a three-year enlistment so I could get my choice of what I wanted to do which was electronics. I went to Fort Dix for my basic training and I was sworn in on January 17, 1966. I went from Albany, of course, right to Fort Dix and came home for a short leave. Then returned to Fort Monmouth, New Jersey for Microwave Radio Repair School. I graduated from there and got a month's leave and shipped directly to Vietnam.

I was attached to the 518th Signal Corps, who at that time when I arrived, the base of the 518th Signal was in Vung Tau, Vietnam, which was the country's "r" and "r" center. It was beautiful, absolutely beautiful, right on the ocean. I flew from there to my actual assignment; the 518th was all over Vietnam, there was no central location for it other than their Main Office. I went to Nha Trang. At Nha Trang, they told me I would be at Hon Tre Island. So they put us aboard a duck...a military type vehicle with large wheels on land and propellers in the water and sent us to Hon Tre. About three miles across the bay

in the Nha Trang, and we had a Microwave Site on top of that. We installed that. Two 204 Foot Towers on a plateau on Hon Tre Island. We proceeded to run that and then started site installations which we went all over Vietnam installing Microwave Sites, it was Track 29 equipment which is now so obsolete it isn't even funny... it was tubes (laughter). After that, we installed all over the country. I came out of Vietnam, the day I came out, was the Bob Hope Christmas Show in Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam. I saw the Bob Hope Show, returned to barracks, threw my duffle bag on my shoulder, got on a bus and caught a plane.

PL: Let's talk a little about Vietnam. In other words, you went and set up these Microwaves so you could keep communications open.

LF: No, that is not actually true. What we were running was office communications, headquarters and companies through us. General S. Mooreland's communications came through us. From where ever he was, it would come through a Microwave Site in one shot all the way down, like the links of chain, all the way down Vietnam. All the way to Saigon and back from Saigon to Hon Tre and down from Hon Tre to Nha Trang and then to what is called Sat Com Unit which is a communications system where Microwave Radio would bounce off of satellites. It was a single shot from the Trang to Fort Val Fiore, Virginia and then directly in line to the Pentagon.

PL: I see, so that was your job to keep these things going and to build new ones?

LF: All the time, to build new ones and set them up.

PL: Now could you tell us anything about Vietnam, the beauty of the country?

LF: Oh, it was a gorgeous country. In Trang itself, the beach is 50 miles from one point to another, all white sand and eighty plus degree water. Because of the Island off Nha Trang, there is no real heavy surf. Wild bananas growing all over and they were so flavorful. The food was wonderful. The people themselves in South Vietnam are some of the friendliest people I have ever met. Even the VC were friendly when they were not shooting at you (laughter). You didn't know what was real and what was not.

PL: I see. Do you have anything to say about Vietnam and your feelings about it?

LF: I think there were a lot of mis-feelings ... I think. But here in this country there were a lot of people in the country that were against the war in Vietnam. I cannot see anybody not being against a war, but they did not support the troops. They were just men just doing what they thought was their job and their duty to their country. Hoosick Falls was known to be a military town. People from here just went. I came home from Vietnam and, thanks to the people of Hoosick Falls, more or less, I just dealt with it. Many people that I know, they went to other places and they were put down and everything else. Here in Hoosick Falls you were patted on the back.

PL: That was nice.

LF: Yes.

PL: That is your hope and that is all you want to say about Vietnam?

LF: More or less that is all that really happened. You did a normal job and made the most of your time. Then you started to get hit and they would charge at you and shoot more and more. You returned fire and keep going from there. You would have battles and then you would not. Whenever you got hit, you got hit and just kept going and installing and building another site.

PL: I see, so now you saw the show?

LF: I got on bus and had a kid from my own graduating class come down the aisle.

PL: Who was that?

LF: Pete Rose from Petersburg. He came down the aisle on the bus when I was getting on to go home. Oh, one other funny story was when I was on "r" and "r" in Tokyo. My buddy and I from Hon Tre... In the military, they pay you in MPC, Military Payment Script or monopoly money as most of us called it. The only difference between dominations is color. So you are sitting there trying to figure out how much money you have, to leave the country, you have to change MPC to American greenback dollars. Then you got wherever you were going, you had to change into their money because greenbacks are a black market item when you are out of this country. Even in Europe today, they really want to get a hold of those greenbacks because they do a lot with them. I am counting the money and I get through and this voice says and I quote "the hell with you Frier, I'm taking your money"! I looked up and it was Joe Rancor from here in the village. He was in Da Nang exchanging money. He was working in Da Nang at that time. It is comical, the further away you go the more local people you meet (laughter). That is it and then I came home. That is another interesting story. Because of the international date lines, I arrived in Hoosick Falls a half an hour before I left Vietnam.

PL: They flew you back straight, just a couple of stops.

LF: Yes. At that time, quite a few stops because the 707s did not have that long of a range. I got home, came across county, and caught a bus to New York. I caught another bus to Albany. Then on the Bennington bus, I told the bus driver I wanted to get off at Routes 7 and 22. He let me off at Routes 7 and 22 and I used my golden thumb. If I had been ten minutes early, my parents were coming home from Connecticut and they would have been the ones to pick me up.

PL: That would have been terrific!

LF: I don't know either if it would have been or not (laughter). Anyway, Mr. Saluso picked me up and he brought me to my home.

PL: So you were home. Now you were out of the service?

LF: No, no when I came back out of Vietnam I was not out of the service. I had a month leave out of Vietnam and then had to report to Fort Monmouth, New Jersey where I was assigned as an instructor and I had to go through their teacher certification program and I did that and I became a teacher of electronics in Fort Monmouth New Jersey.

PL: When did you get out of Vietnam?

LF: I got out of Vietnam ... I came home the 30th of December, 1967.

PL: You still had two years in the service.

LF: No, I still had one year to go.

PL: I see, basically one year.

LF: Yes, basically one year at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey.

LF: Yes. That was a regular job; mine just happened to be all night. At the time, there were three shifts of students. The day shift, the evening shift, and the night shift. You just kept right on going around the clock and that is what I did down there. I taught Transistor Theory. At that point, I understood, now I understood, how hard it was for you to teach us Algebra. Anyway, then I got out of Fort Monmouth and came home, discharged from Fort Monmouth, New Jersey in January of 1969, just started 1969. All my start dates of service are close to January and very difficult to decide between which years. I had full three years of service minus one day. I think that was international dateline day.

PL: When they rotated you back from Vietnam, did they have a point system?

LF: No, everyone spent one year.

PL: Everyone spent one year.

LF: Everyone in the Army, everyone I knew had a one-year hitch. It was one of the things that made it very difficult for any of us from Vietnam to find people that we were with because we were all on different schedules. One person from the group was all alone. You just went. You came in alone and you just left alone. The other people, you didn't know where they were. It was not like World War II where there were Units. Units would move and you kept track of the Unit and you knew them forever. In Vietnam, you rotated through on your own. So it was a little different but...

PL: You are the first Vietnam interviewee, so I would like to ask you some questions. In other words, it was all a hit and miss, there would not be a battle and then you would go to another battle.

LF: It was like that in some places where they fought 24 hours a day. It was a constant thing. Usually it was a night. The Viet Kong were under armed compared to us. It was like trying to find a deer hunter out in the woods. Around there, you are not going to. They knew the land like the back of their hands, they were underground so they would strike under darkness and their lack of heavy equipment would be made up for by stealth. That is where we had the problems. The guy that cut your hair downtown on Thursday night was throwing saddle charges into your bunker on Saturday night. It was like taking fifty percent of Hoosick Falls and made them the red team and fifty percent blue team and don't put anything on them and they can only fight at night And never tell anyone else what side they were on and that is basically what you had. The term Mama Son was that you would hire a woman to clean. The lady who would clean your house and wash your clothes and that sort of thing. You did not know if she was South Vietnamese or VC because a VC was South Vietnamese too.

PL: I see.

LF: They have been at war historically for 4000 years so that was the real problem. That was the real problem; you could not find your enemy. Unless he was shooting at you, you did not know he was your enemy or he dropped his rifle and came at you with his barber scissors. He was going to cut your hair but he also had a razor where he might cut your throat.

PL: I see, so it was different from World War II.

PL: It was similar to Korea but different because you knew your enemies and you knew your friends.

LF: But in Korea, they could also infiltrate back and forth so you were not real sure but it was predominately ... you know. It was really a different type of fight. It was pure guerilla warfare.

PL: Well that happened in Korea, also where they infiltrated and then they did not know who their enemy was.

LF: It was pieces of that but now take away any 80 percent of the organized action and make it all guerilla warfare. Then you get to the problems and that was one of the reasons why Vietnam went down as now Communist Vietnam. They were still, even when we left, all infiltrated throughout. It spent years and years infiltrating the infrastructure of South Vietnam. Nobody knew who or where anyone's loyalty was.

PL: Well I see, that is interesting because that gives us more vision into the type of war it was. All right, now you are home.

LF: I came home out of the service and I went to work for a construction company in the office and moved on. As I think back, I spent about ten years bouncing from one job to another; I could not keep anything together. I was divorced twice and came back to the Falls where I could put things together.

PL: I see, so where were you living?

LF: I lived in Troy, Albany Schenectady, Cohoes and all over the place. I came back to Hoosick Falls during the energy crisis in 1974. There was no work in the city, I got a job at Falls Hardware and worked there for a while. Then I got a job down here for the Village of Hoosick Falls, in the Dispatch Center. I have been there twenty years.

PL: You have been a dispatcher for twenty years.

LF: Actually, as of June, it will be my 21st year as a Dispatcher. So I now have a wife, a home, two kids and a grandson.

PL: You have a good normal life going.

LF: Yes, with a few rough edges.

PL: Well everyone has a few rough edges.

LF: Ok well that is the story.

PL: Now how old are your children?

LF: I have a daughter that is 30 years old and a son that is 24 years old.

PL: I see he lives in Bennington.

LF: Yes, he is about to turn 25 and he is on the radio up there in Bennington.

PL: I remember that he was at the High School when I was Superintendent. Good so that is the story of Larry Frier! And we thank you very much for coming!