

Robert A. Barraco  
Narrator

Interviewers: Elania Clickman, Catherine Mohier, Tia Van Winkler, Kyle Bridger, Mike Wright, Shelby Key, Mike Mavens, Rebeka Havens, Meghan Walsh, and Heather Biggs  
(from Richfield Springs Central, Mr. Manganaro's Public Speaking class)

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at Rome Free Academy High School,  
Rome, NY

INT: What is your name and date of birth?

RB: Robert Barraco, 7/14/1947. I was born in Danville, NY.

INT: What was your prewar education?

RB: I completed two years of college.

INT: What was your prewar job if you had one?

RB: I was a student and I did part time work.

INT: How did you hear about the Vietnam War?

RB: Through History classes in high school.

INT: How did you react to the news about the war and stuff?

RB: At the time, it was somewhat visible on TV and there were always news clips and a lot of media coverage through the newspapers. We also discussed it in History classes. The information kept coming to us on a regular basis as we got more and more involved in the conflict.

INT: Did you feel that it was your duty to enter the war?

RB: At the time, I really didn't have a real good understanding of why we were there outside of typical "to prevent the spread of communism." There was the draft at that particular time so if you didn't get a college deferment or if there wasn't a way to eliminate yourself from the draft, eligible males were being drafted into the army to keep the numbers of the forces up so after two years of school, they were monitoring your credit hours each year. At the end of two years I didn't have enough credit hours so I was drafted out of college.

INT: What was your reaction to that?

RB: I kind of expected it. I wasn't really applying myself as well as I should have to getting through college and a couple of courses slid here and there and I didn't make any attempts to try and change that. The next thing I knew, at the end of my second year of studies, I had a draft notice and you got a physical and I was drafted into the army.

INT: Was that scary?

RB: Not really. I wasn't really scared about it. I was probably more naïve than anything else. I didn't know what was going to happen to me, I left it up to chance.

INT: What do you remember about entering the service?

RB: I remember being very naïve about what I was getting myself into. I didn't know what to expect, I went in with no preconceived notions about what was going to happen to me, where I was going to end up. I went through the training. I knew that the Vietnam War was still going on and that we were still very much involved in that. I knew my chances of going there were pretty good but was hoping to get sent someplace else. After four months of training, I ended up being sent there.

INT: Did you have any goals when you went in the military?

RB: Not really. Because I was drafted I knew it was a two year commitment, I had to serve my country because of the draft, all I wanted to do was put in the two years and get out.

INT: What time of year did you go in?

RB: It was late August.

INT: What was going on in the country at that time?

RB: If I remember correctly, the presidential election conventions were going on. There was a lot of unrest in the country in terms of civil rights, people against the war. It was very highly debated whether or not we should still be there, what was going on, what were we accomplishing. The national administration was telling us that were moving forward and that we were probably going to be successful there and there was a lot of debate about that. There was a lot of unrest on colleges, people were protesting involvement in the war. It was a very tumultuous time in terms of what the country was going through. A lot of conversation about what we were doing, should we be there, shouldn't we be there. There was a whole mentality all over the country about peace and war and back and forth. If you've studied anything about the sixties, you know that it was a pretty difficult time for everybody because there was a lot of anti-establishment movement at that time. People hadn't spoken up that well prior to that point. I firmly believe that if it wasn't for the work of the people who were trying to bring this to everybody's attention that perhaps the war would have gone on longer. Who knows what the outcome would have been?

INT: Did you have the opportunity to choose what branch of service you went into? What branch of service were you in?

RB: No, there was no choice. Actually what did happen when you got drafted, they could decide to put you either in the army or the marines because both branches were involved in Vietnam. A lot of people who did join were being very selective about where they wanted to go, the number of people going into the marines kept going down and down. The marines were doing a lot of the fighting over the whole course of the war as was the United States Army. I recall at that time there were times when you were drafted and they could decide so many people are going into the marines and so many are going into the army. So you might have just been picked by the luck of the draw but at the time I went in, it was specifically for the army.

INT: Where was your basic training?

RB: Fort Dix, NJ.

INT: New Jersey, long way from home.

RB: I grew up in western New York so it wasn't terrible, it was on the east coast but it was definitely different. It was the middle of the summer and it was very hot and uncomfortable, and rigorous.

INT: How was the experience for you?

RB: Looking back, it was a tremendous experience. Being put into a situation where a lot of the things that I did and the experiences I had were critical. They were also very dangerous. You grow up fast. You see a lot of things that you probably would never see in most lifetimes. Good, bad, or indifferent, it had a huge impact on myself as a young person and growing up. I think I really matured quickly.

INT: When you were going through basic, were you enjoying the service?

RB: No, I can honestly say that there wasn't anything really to enjoy. You did what you had to do, you tried to stay within the confines of everything that they asked you to do. You didn't want to get yourself in trouble, you didn't want to get yourself in any kind of way shape or form out in front of people as a troublemaker. I conformed to everything they asked me to do because I just wanted it to go smoothly, I wanted to get it over with.

INT: What do you remember most about basic?

RB: I thought that they did a really good job of getting people into shape. Physical fitness was a high priority. I didn't like a lot of the regimentation, the marching, those kinds of things didn't seem to have much value. Because I thoroughly enjoy exercise and always did, and I was in good shape when I got there, I thought that the physical fitness aspect was very good. To a degree I didn't mind it, I kind of enjoyed it. It was good to know that I could do everything that they challenged me to do. You had to do a complete physical

fitness thing every day, every morning and afternoon we did physical fitness kinds of things and there was a test at the end of the 8-week basic training that they scored you against. My own personal goal was to do the best I could so I think I enjoyed that. It wasn't anything that a lot of people enjoyed, it depends on the kind of person you are.

INT: What kind of physical training did they put you through?

RB: A lot of running, a lot of exercises, pushups. Every day, before every meal there was a ladder that you had to go hand over hand before you could get into the mess hall. It built up strength; if you do that every day, three meals a day, you didn't really think about it, but you were getting stronger doing that kind of thing. In addition to the running that we did every morning early PT and afternoon PT. Those were the kinds of things I remember.

INT: What was the regime like? You mentioned the ladder and the running. You wake up in the morning?

RB: We'd get up in the morning, first thing we would do is have a roll call to make sure that everybody was still there from the night before. Then they would take us on a run and we would do all kinds of physical fitness, pushups, sit-ups. We had to carry a person of our equal weight a certain distance. An intense amount of physical training, lasted a good 45 minutes or so and from there you went on to breakfast, and then you had classes in different things. Some of the classes had to do with actual utilizing weapons, the grenades, the M16, taking them apart, cleaning them, getting familiarized with various things you would probably have to have regardless of whatever job you got. There was a lot of regimented information about who you salute, who are the officers, what does this mean, the pecking order of people, rank and responsibilities.

INT: What was your job?

RB: After basic training you get assigned to another two-month training program and I was sent directly to artillery. Artillery was basically utilizing howitzers and so forth so I was sent to Fort Sill, Oklahoma where that was a specific area where they did that. They trained you in all aspects of using howitzers and whatever went along with that, the types of explosives that you might be encountering when you fire those howitzers. To be honest with you, when I got to Vietnam I never, ever had anything to do with howitzers. I was an artillery person assigned to an armored infantry unit because there was a need for somebody who could read a topographical map and because I'd taken a geology course in college, when they asked me, I said yes and was a forward observer to an infantry unit where I had a totally different job than I was trained for. It was on the job training pretty much.

INT: When did you enter the service?

RB: August 1968.

INT: What was your specific training?

RB: Most of my training was for artillery but I never really used that training when I got to Vietnam.

INT: What was your unit's assignment?

RB: Basically, we were to search, destroy, and find the enemy, or to protect areas that we needed to go to and protect. Sometimes the base camps would be overrun and we'd have to go in and try to take it back. I remember one specific place where there was an airstrip and I think we took it back three times. We'd take it, they'd take it back, we'd go back and get it again, they'd take it, we'd go back and get it again. Doesn't seem very useful but we did a lot of those kinds of things. We supported the South Vietnamese Army in certain places depending on what the target was. If we had to go into an area and it was highly infiltrated with either North Vietnamese or Viet Cong, we would go in there and do the best we could to flush it out and clean it up.

INT: How long of a period on that landing strip?

RB: It depends on how long it took us to do it. Could be three, five, six, seven, ten days. I really didn't know when they decided to say "enough." Somebody made the decision that we're done what we came to do, we've secured this airstrip, and now we can leave. That was the reason that the whole strategy of the war was unsuccessful because we never really held anything. We would take things and then relinquish it, take it and relinquish it. We never really held on to anything specifically because there wasn't really a line where you crossed over and you were in enemy territory, everybody was everywhere. So that was the most difficult part because it didn't matter where you were, you could be assaulted at any time.

INT: How did you separate enemy forces from friendly forces?

RB: Very difficult, extremely difficult because they all dressed the same, they all spoke the same language. There wasn't anything to set them apart. Some of the people that you interacted with in the daytime were the people that were shooting at you in the night time.

INT: Did you take part in any specific battles?

RB: In Vietnam there weren't any specific battles. There were times when we were sent out, like I said earlier, to do something to accomplish a specific thing like take an airstrip or whatever. I don't recall anything like "this was the battle of." There were places in Vietnam where there were major skirmishes that lasted a long time but for the most part where I was, in my experience, were these kinds of encounters where you'd go out and have to accomplish something and you'd do that, and go back to base camp and wait for another assignment, go back out, do something else, that kind of thing.

INT: Was that just your unit or was that part of a bigger [unit]?

RB: The unit I was with was just one of many. We would get assigned to a specific area and anything that happened in that area, we were responsible for trying to either correct it or support it. That was pretty much how we operated on a day to day basis. I do remember the anniversary of the Tet Offensive. I wasn't there for the Tet Offensive in 1968 but in 1969, on the anniversary of the Tet Offensive, there was an all-out assault on our base camp and we had to go find where all this enemy activity was located. We went out and searched and tried to squelch that.

INT: What was it like fighting on foreign land?

RB: It was definitely a disadvantage. If for some reason you needed to find your way through an area, a lot of what I was involved with was very thick areas, mountainous areas, sometimes rice paddies where they all look alike, flat and open. Did we get used to it? Yes. Was it a disadvantage for us? Yes, because the enemy knew where they were going [breaks off] I was attached to an armored infantry unit—I'll show you pictures here—and we had no element of surprise. We were tanks and armored personnel carriers so when we went some place, they knew it was coming. It wasn't like we could surprise anybody or we could hide. There was no hiding and waiting. Whenever we got involved in something, they knew we were coming and they were ready for us.

INT: So basically you were going after them and they just stayed back and waited.

RB: No, they would attack. The day that I got wounded it was an ambush. They were waiting for us and they knew exactly where we were and when we were coming, and they lit into us.

INT: What kind of equipment did you use in battle?

RB: I had a variety of things that were available to me. Because I was with an armored infantry unit, on an armored personnel carrier there was a 50 caliber machine gun set up on top. In the back there were two 60mm machine guns that were mounted to the back and sometimes I would use the 60mm machine gun but most of the time, I just had an M16 which was what everybody had. It depended on what I needed to do at that particular time. If somebody who was supposed to be there wasn't there and the machine gun was available I would take it. We also had M79 grenade launchers and grenades.

INT: What was it like, holding different kinds of weapons? Were you trained for it?

RB: Yes, when you go to basic training, you spend a lot of time on the rifle range using M16's. You get very good at handling the weapon. I think that training was pretty good. We got taught how to use a grenade, how to throw a grenade, but we didn't do it as much as shooting the weapon. I think I used a machine gun very rarely in training. But it wasn't that difficult to figure it out. [laughs]

INT: Was the United States' equipment of better quality than that of the enemy?

RB: Yes, they had Russian-made weapons. The regular army of North Vietnam who infiltrated into South Vietnam was equipped. Not to the same level we were but they were equipped. Then you had the Viet Cong who were just people in opposition to what we were doing there and they would get whatever they could get their hands on. Lots of times they used things that we dropped or left and turned them into mines and booby traps. The one thing that we didn't count on was the fact that they were very resilient and they could do a lot of things that we had no idea. The whole tunnel system, a lot of those things that they developed and were very good at utilizing, we weren't prepared for.

INT: So do you think overall that the United States wasn't prepared?

RB: We had tanks, we had armored personnel carriers, we had planes, helicopters. They didn't have any of that. We fought a war with people that were on the ground and we had planes, helicopters, tanks—ineffective to some degree because they were so good at digging into the earth and protecting themselves. These people could weather an all-out attack by F16 fighter jets because they could dig themselves into the ground so deeply they won't even be penetrated. Very interesting how they were able to survive. We had B52 bombers and if you've ever saw a crater from a B52 bomber, it probably left a hole in the ground as big as the gym. That's pretty big and then the explosion from that. These people could survive that because they knew how to get themselves protected. We underestimated that.

INT: So they were well trained?

RB: I don't know about well-trained but because they had gone through the war with the French and they had been able to withstand the whole French assault that was there for years ahead of us, they kept getting better at what they were doing, and it was on their turf. Kind of like home field advantage.

INT: How was combat similar or not similar to what you were trained for?

RB: Absolutely not even close – you can't simulate combat, the things that happen. You don't know, you have to react as it happens. You don't know where things are going to come from, you don't know what exactly is going to come, you don't know what the circumstances are, you don't know where you're going to be located. I don't think there's any real way to prepare for that. It's a whole different thing, when somebody's shooting at you because it's practice and when somebody's shooting at you because they really want to hurt you. It's two different kinds of situations.

INT: You said in the packet that you were usually sent on five to ten day missions. How many people were on these missions?

RB: Depending on how big it was. If we had to go someplace and it was going to be for a lengthy period of time, and depending on the magnitude of what we were trying to do, like I said, the airstrip kind of thing, we could have three companies. Companies are probably 100 people. You could have anywhere from 200 to 300 people on a mission like

that and sometime you only had 15 or 30 people. We got split up sometimes—based on the strategy they were using, they'd say you people are going to go this direction and form a blocking force, and you people are going to go this direction and push towards that blocking force. We would split up depending on the strategy was or what we were trying to accomplish.

INT: Would you change anything when you had more people on a mission?

RB: Yes, depending on what we had to do, sometimes if we were a small group, we would go through a village. Again, I was with an armored infantry unit so we would have a whole line of tanks and armored personnel carriers and they would just push forward in a straight line into this area, and just sweep through it. If it was area that they said was shoot on sight, then we would just shoot up the whole area. Sometimes we went into areas that they called no-fire zones, believe it or not, which meant we couldn't shoot until we were shot at.

INT: What was it like looking for these enemy forces while you were out on these missions?

RB: You're always anticipating something's going to happen but you didn't know how, when, or where it was going to come from. Sometimes it could be a surprise, sometimes we encountered sniper fire. There might be one or two shots and it's over and everybody's looking around to see if everybody's okay. Sometimes they would hit somebody, sometimes they wouldn't hit anybody and you'd never hear another shot. Other times they would try to hit us in a quick attack where it would be really fast, maybe 10 or 15 minutes and then they'd be gone. Other times they would be dug in and there would be a firefight that would take a little while. It was always different.

INT: Were you always on the lookout, waiting?

RB: Yes, most of the time it was a wait and see thing or when we went into villages to clean them out, then it was a little different.

INT: How did you feel in combat?

RB: You're always scared, you can't put a real value to what that's like. You know that chances of somebody getting somebody, you always had the feeling that "I hope nothing's going to happen to me." Inevitably when those things are going on, you're just trying to think about surviving. I don't think anything goes through your head other than "I just need to get through this."

INT: Are you always looking out for your other partners?

RB: Absolutely, you did whatever you had to do to protect everybody that was there, everybody was very good about it. Everybody was always looking out for each other because you had to depend on somebody else all the time. That was one of the most

significant things I can remember, everybody had your back. Nobody wanted to see anybody get hurt.

INT: Did you receive any medals?

RB; Yes, I have a Purple Heart.

INT: What was that for?

RB: For being very unlucky. [laughs] I was in the wrong place at the wrong time. I got wounded while I was going out on one of these missions to defend a South Vietnamese camp. We were ambushed on the way out there, the armored personnel carrier I was on hit a landmine, explosion, ambush. I got blown right out of the personnel carrier.

INT: How did you keep in touch with those at home?

RB: Letters. We were able to send mail free because the government allowed us to do that, just put “free” on the envelope. It took a long time, by the time we sent it and it got back home, it was probably six—seven days. Depending on where you were, whether or not you could get mail, that took a while, too. It was a slow process. I think back, I never really thought twice about it but today it would be so much easier to be able to do things with technology, much quicker, talking to people instantaneously. Back then it was all by mail.

INT: How often did you usually send out a letter?

RB: I tried to send something once a week. I felt obligated to let my parents know that I was okay, everything was alright so that they wouldn't worry. There was no other way to communicate.

INT: What kind of supplies did you have during the war?

RB: Depended on where we were. If we were in base camp, there were hot meals, a make-shift shower, running water that you could get to—it wasn't real clean water—we were provided with beer because the water was so bad. You could get beer regularly because they didn't want you to drink the water, it could make you sick. The other supplies were just what I really needed when I went out into the field in terms of weapons, ammunition, clothing.

INT: What were the supplies like?

RB: We had C-rations, boxes of canned food that we could take with us, so that's what we ate. The other supplies were just grenades and bullets, clothing, helmets, weapons. I was fortunate that I didn't have to carry that stuff. I was in an armored unit so I just put it in the tank or the armored personnel carrier so I didn't have to lug it around. Whatever I needed to take: a poncho, a light blanket for sleeping because it was warm so I didn't have to have too much on me at night.

INT: What was your most memorable experience during the war?

RB: Probably the camaraderie of the people that were there, the closeness of people looking out for one another, the friendships that you established while you were there. Everybody was in the same boat, everybody was trying to survive, everybody was looking to just get out of there, be safe, go home. Everybody wanted to see everybody go home safely. I think the biggest memory I have was the closeness of the people and the friendliness of people I was with.

INT: What people do you remember most from your service?

RB: Some of the people that I interacted with, both in the field and in base camp. I had core friendships there I enjoyed with people from all over the country that were either doing the same job I was doing—going out into the field—or in base camp which supported those of us that had to go in the field. To this day, I don't know where any of them are, I don't know what ever happened to them. Once you get through something like that and you move on, you lose those contacts. I'm not aware of anybody that maintained contact over a long period of time. When I left, I left in a hurry and it wasn't planned, it was unplanned and I didn't know what I was going to do, where I was going to go. For the most part, I just left those people that I had gotten close to and never heard or saw them again.

INT: Do you think about those people?

RB: Absolutely. Unfortunately, the people I remember mostly, I can hardly remember their names. I can remember a few first names of one or two people but for the most part, it was such a long time ago, I can't remember.

INT: What was everyday life like during the war?

RB: Depends on where I was. If I was in base camp, it was fairly secure. I had certain things that I had to accomplish: keep my weapon clean, making sure the equipment that we had was ready, that whenever we got called to go to the field, everything was working well and we tested it. Sometimes I just had to wait for us to be sent out in the field and when we went out in the field, it was a whole different aspect predicated on whether we were looking for the enemy, defending areas, searching and destroying, protecting certain things. As I told one group here, there were several times we took back an airstrip that I can remember; we took it and they took it we took and they took it. We would have to drive out to these areas in the tanks and armored personnel carriers and in order to get from point "A" to point "B" you could encounter anything. You could get ambushed, you could get shot at, you could get sniper fire, you could get attacked and all kinds of things could happen. Then you'd get out to a specific area where your assignment was and if you had to defend an area or take it back, you really had to try to move the enemy out of that particular area. Once we felt that that was accomplished, then we'd go back to our base camp.

INT: How often did you wait to be sent out?

RB: It varied. It could be a day or two days, three days sometimes. Usually we were going every couple of days. Usually two—three days we'd be at base camp then we'd be gone 5, 6, 7, 8, could be 10 days, then we'd be back again, then we'd go back out again depending on the severity of the situation, where we had to be called, whether or not it was something that they needed armored infantry for but we had an area that we pretty much tried to secure all the time. Sometimes we'd just go back out and make sure that there wasn't any build-up of troops in the area that we were defending. As long as that wasn't happening, we were okay.

INT: How did you feel about the war at the time of your service?

RB: I was pretty naïve about what was really going on. I was young, I was impressionable, I really didn't have a sense of what was going on until I got over there and started looking at things and figure things out. We probably weren't doing all we could to end it, I mean guerilla warfare's very difficult. There aren't any battle lines, you don't cross this line and then everything behind you is safe, then cross another line and everything behind you is safe. We were in an area where it didn't matter where you were, there were enemy people, there were enemy troops. There were enemy civilians, too because the Viet Cong were basically civilians who were fighting with the North Vietnamese Army to overthrow the South Vietnamese government and destroy the American Army. So in the daytime you would see these people in the rice paddies as you were driving through their farms or rice paddies and at night time, they were shooting at you. So it was very difficult to really determine how successful we were or weren't. Were we doing enough? My personal feeling is no. I think a lot of things that were going on there were very political, there were all kinds of issues with why we were there, should we be there. There was a lot of upheaval back in the United States about what we were trying to accomplish. Were we really trying to protect the South Vietnamese from communism? Yes, that was the premise that we were there by but I think there were other issues there that were clouded by that. I think there was a lot of benefit to private industry, economics; the economy of the country was pretty good because they were supporting the war effort, there were a lot of companies that were getting contracts, whether they war contracts, supply contracts. I think there were a lot of different things going on at that particular time. I was somewhat naïve to that. Today I can look back and see some other reasons why we were there, maybe not all the right reasons.

[INT asks previously answered question about subject's motives for joining the service.]

[INT asks previously answered question about subject's responsibilities during the war.]

INT: How did you feel about new technology such as Agent Orange and napalm?

RB: Agent Orange, we now know, had an adverse effect on the health of all the people that were there. At the time I had no clue. As far as I was concerned, napalm worked because it helped us eliminate enemy forces. Whatever we could do to do that, I guess

that's what we had to do. I didn't have any real feelings about it at the time except that I saw what it could do and as long as it's keeping us safe, it's okay.

INT: What were your opinions of the war in Vietnam when you left?

RB: I can say I had a different opinion of what we were trying to accomplish or weren't accomplishing. I felt that after the war, there was a lot of frustration regarding how we went about trying to be successful there. I don't think our strategy, the way we approached it, was going to be successful because we never really held on to anything, we never really secured anything to the point where we could eliminate any enemy activity in a specific area. Guerilla warfare is very difficult. The way we approached it was suspect in terms of what we were doing on a day to day basis. My feeling afterwards was that there were a lot of people that were sacrificed for reasons that I'm not really sure we had good reasons to be there.

INT: What was your opinion of the state of the United States when you got home?

RB: It was an incredible time. If you've seen any footage of what was going on during the middle sixties and late sixties when I got back, when I went back to college it was anti-war movement. There were people who were totally against the war, trying to end the war, trying to bring about change, trying to let the government know that this was not something we should continue to do. We were imposing our will on a culture of people that didn't really want us there. I don't know for a fact that the people of South Vietnam really cared about democracy or communism one way or the other. For the most part I think they just wanted to survive, to be left alone. It was an interesting time. When I got back my feelings were that we should end this thing because I saw a lot of needless destruction, death, and sacrifice by people that probably didn't have to take place. I had second thoughts about all of that.

INT: Did you learn anything in the service that you were able to apply to your life and your occupation?

RB: Yes. One of the things you learn in those situations is "Don't sweat the small stuff" because if you look at a matter of life and death on a regular basis, that's pretty scary. The little things that we encounter day to day that frustrate us for whatever reason, like there's not enough soup on the lunch line or something like that, for a very trite analogy. You can't get bothered by the little things when you're facing very significant issues on a daily basis. I think I'm more mature in a lot of ways, you grow up real fast, you understand human emotions. I think that being around a lot of different people from different parts of the country, seeing a third-world country, recognizing poverty to a level, unless you've seen poverty in a third-world county the way I saw, it's hard to understand it. For us, we're so fortunate to have all the things we have. I think that's one of the things I recognized, was how lucky we are to be in a free country with all of the things that we have.

INT: What did you do when you returned home?

RB: Went back to school, finished my degree.

INT: Where?

RB: I went to Brockwood. My first two years, I wasn't as committed a student as I probably should have been. I always thought I'd go to college and I did, but I got side-tracked a little bit but when I got back, I was much more serious, I was much more mature. And I was a lot better student. [laughs]

INT: What did you major in?

RB: Physical Education, I always wanted to teach and coach and that's what I ended up doing.

INT: What did you do after college?

RB: Got a job teaching in western NY in the Rochester area, teaching and coaching. I did that for 11 years and then decided that I wanted to get into administration so I was part of the time I was the school athletic director and then my next move was to get certified as a school administrator and then I became assistant principal, and then became a principal, and subsequently a superintendent.

INT: Did your involvement in the Vietnam War affect you occupation after the war?

RB: No, I don't think it affected my occupations at all. Again, it provided me with some real understanding about how to deal with people and the fact that a lot of the issues that we deal with are really very small in terms of how they affect us.

INT: Have you become involved in any veteran organizations? Have you been to any reunions?

RB: No, I have not. No, I have not.

INT: Have you kept in touch with anyone?

RB: No, I have not.

INT: How did the military change or influence your life?

RB: As I said, an overall appreciation for what we have, our freedoms, the fact that a lot of people don't have that. Democracy is an approach that is very beneficial to everybody. When you look at people in third-world countries and countries that are in strife and conflict, going through war and upheaval, what we have, we should be very thankful for that and for the people who have provided it to us, and for the opportunities that are provided here because of that.

INT: Does the time that you spent in the military often come up in your thoughts?

RB: Not really. From time to time I might see something that'll trigger a thought. I have to say, and it's a funny thing, it may sound funny to you folks. I served with a lot of African-Americans and I had a lot of interaction with them and got to like their music at the time. Motown music is a favorite of mine and I have a lot of memories.

INT: Is there anything else that you'd like to add?

RB: I don't think so. I think this has been very good, very comprehensive. Thank you for the opportunity.

INT: Thank you very much. It was honor interviewing you.

[Photo "Troops and Armor Near Quang Ngai."]

[Photo of Barraco outside a row of shelters.]

[Photo of Purple Heart.]

[Photo of Barraco's Honorable Discharge certificate.]