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3 ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW OF GARY BEIKIRCH

4

5 . February 7, 2003

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1 Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003

2 (The interview commenced at 3:30
3 p.m.)

4 MR. RUSSERT: Approximately
5 three-thirty p.m. The interviewers are Mike
6 Russert and Wayne Clark.

7 BY MR. RUSSERT:

8 Q. Could you give me your full name,
9 date of birth and place of birth, please?

10 A. Okay. Gary Beikirch, born in
11 Rochester, New York, August 29th, 1947.

12 Q. Okay. What was your educational
13 background prior to entering service?

14 A. Prior to going into the service I
15 had finished high school, decided to go to college
16 because the girl I was going with at the time was
17 going to college. She majored in P.E., so I said
18 I'd major in P.E. too. Three months after being
19 there she broke up with me, so I didn't have much
20 commitment to being in school, but I stuck it out
21 for another two years -- for about two years
22 anyhow. And then I quit after two years. That was
23 back in '67 I quit college and enlisted in the
24 army.

1 Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003

2 Q. Why did you decide to enlist?

3 A. The big -- the big reason was I
4 thought it would make my girlfriend jealous. Then
5 I wanted to go in the Green Berets because I
6 thought I would show her what a -- what a hunk of a
7 man she missed, you know, what she could have had.
8 And the other reason was that I thought it would be
9 a good challenge, so I wanted -- that's why I went
10 in special forces. And I wanted to travel. I
11 wanted -- I wanted adventure. Plus also back at
12 Brockport College in the mid '60s it was a hot bed
13 of controversy. And if everybody had their opinion
14 about Vietnam, but I wanted to find out for myself
15 what Vietnam -- what this whole thing was about.

16 I had a couple of friends from
17 high school that had already quit college
18 previously and a good friend of mine, and I
19 remember the day that he came back. He was going
20 to University of Denver, and he quit college. His
21 girlfriend broke up with him and he wanted me to
22 come back and enlist in the Marine Corps with him.
23 And I said, you know, I don't think so. I don't
24 want to go into the Marine Corps. But he went in

1 Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003

2 and became one of the youngest graduates of Marine
3 Corps O.C.S. He was killed in Khe Son. But I
4 don't know if all my motivations for in this going
5 in were all patriotic, but there was -- there was
6 some of it. I really felt that I wanted to find
7 out what Vietnam was like. I felt I should do
8 something for the country too. Plus also there was
9 that I wanted to show up my girlfriend some things
10 too. There was all of that. Plus then there was
11 just the macho thing of wanting to prove myself.

12 Q. When did you go into service?

13 A. August 31st, 1967.

14 Q. Okay. So, you went in with the
15 express purpose of joining the special forces?

16 A. That had been my goal.

17 Q. That was your goal?

18 A. Yeah. I remember going down to
19 the recruiting center, talking to a Sergeant First
20 Class Flota (phonetic spelling) was his name. And
21 I said I want to become a Green Beret. I really
22 said that. And he just said, well, it doesn't work
23 like that. And he said you've got to go in and
24 there's a lot of schools and tests that you have to

1 **Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003**

2 pass, he said, but I think I could get you into
3 airborne infantry. And that -- like it was big
4 challenge --

5 Q. Uh-huh.

6 A. -- to get into airborne infantry.
7 But he said I -- I can get you into that. And
8 then, you know, from there you'll just have to be
9 on your own then, go get through jump school and
10 then they'll come down to jump school and give you
11 tests and if you pass those, then you have to go
12 on. He said then it will be up to you, but I can
13 get you into airborne infantry. I said you'd do
14 that for me. He said sure, I'd do that. So, I
15 went in airborne infantry. Yeah. Pretty naive.
16 Twenty -- twenty-year-old naive kid.

17 Q. Uh-huh. You enlisted here in
18 Rochester?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. Where did you go for your basic?

21 A. Did my basic training at Ft. Dix,
22 New Jersey. Yeah, right there did my A.I.T. as
23 well there. E-53 was my basic training in echo
24 five -- five three. And did the A.I.T. at Ft. Dix

1 Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003
2 as well. Most of the guys that went in to my basic
3 training company were in the new barracks, but for
4 the A.I.T., the infantry, we were in the old -- old
5 World War II barracks by McGuire Air Force Base.
6 And that was -- it was cold then. I remember it
7 was winter. I remember they got us over shoveling
8 off some deserted field, air field -- air strip at
9 McGuire and telling us we had to get this done
10 because an emergency plane was going to make a
11 landing and all we had was the trenching tools. It
12 was somewhat harassment. It didn't take us too
13 long before we realized we were being hassled, but
14 yeah, did basic and A.I.T. at Ft. Dix.

15 Q. Okay. Where did you go from
16 there?

17 A. From there I went to Ft. Benning,
18 Georgia for three weeks of jump school.

19 Q. And could you tell us what some
20 of your experiences in your jump school stands out?

21 A. Yeah. In jump school -- well,
22 experienced was basic training normally it is my
23 understanding that everybody had to have a K.P. at
24 least once, you know, just to experience K.P. I

1 Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003
2 had it nine times in eight weeks of basic training
3 because I just -- I had this bad attitude I guess.
4 I don't know what it was, but I -- although I was
5 told that that's the kind of guy the Special Forces
6 were looking for, you know, and I just had all
7 kinds of trouble. I was always doing K.P. And
8 A.I.T. was a little bit easier.

9 By the time I got to jump school
10 I was pretty gung ho as they say and -- but I
11 remember going through in our -- in our jump school
12 company. There was about seven of us that were
13 hopefully going to be going to S.F. training. Most
14 of the guys from A.I.T. went to Korea out of my --
15 except for those of us who were going to jump
16 school or O.C.S. And in our jump school company
17 there was like seven of us that figured we were
18 going to S.F. And there were a group of Navy SEALs
19 that we went through jump school and some recon
20 marines. And there was always, always competition
21 between -- between us. The SEALs especially.

22 BY MR. CLARK:

23 Q. What kind of special tests did
24 you have to take to get into Special Forces? You

1 Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003

2 said that there was a battery of them.

3 A. Yeah. Yeah.

4 Q. I believe that you mentioned that
5 earlier.

6 A. Yeah. The -- after -- after
7 going -- I think it was the last week of jump
8 school some cadre from Ft. Bragg came to Ft.
9 Benning and they -- they put us through a -- if I
10 remember correctly there was a battery of written
11 tests. One of them was critical decisions. They'd
12 give you a -- like it would take -- seems like I
13 was in there all day just taking these written
14 tests. They would give you critical decisions and
15 you would -- you would say -- you know, you would
16 have to write down what would be your responses in
17 these situations.

18 Another part of the test was
19 to -- to judge your perspective kind of thing.
20 You'd be looking at a particular object and then
21 they'd say if you're looking at this object, this
22 is the view you're looking at. Now we'll give you
23 a general picture of a lay of the land. Where --
24 where are you and will you be able to see this

1 Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003

2 object from this point of view. You know, which
3 one of these pictures --

4 Q. Uh-huh.

5 A. -- was a general lay of the land.
6 I had no idea what that was all about other than
7 just to test our reasoning abilities and things
8 like that. All kinds of aptitude testing. Then we
9 had to take a four-language test. We had to take
10 some written -- some more written like expression
11 tests. And then we had the P.T. test as well. I
12 don't really remember the P.T. test as being all
13 that challenging, but it must have been because
14 some of the guys didn't pass the P.T. test. But
15 those were the main things. And some of the guys
16 that didn't pass that went to the N.C.O. They just
17 started an N.C.O. Academy. I think about two or
18 three of the guys didn't make it, so they went into
19 the -- that N.C.O. Academy. But there was about
20 four of us that came to Ft. -- that went to Ft.
21 Bragg after jump school.

22 I remember in jump school I said
23 will my -- like I said, the first experiences with
24 the SEALS, and they were an impressive crew. They

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Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003

really were. They would -- we'd be running our five miles in the morning and before we would -- you know, we'd be about half a mile and we'd have to run in formation and before we can get about half a mile away from the end the SEALS would all break formation and sprint, you know, the rest of the way ahead of everybody else. So, when the rest of us were coming across the -- the line they'd be standing there in formation. And then the TAC sergeants would go up to their -- their lieutenant, (unintelligible) I think they call them, whoever was in charge of them and he would say very impressive. I want you all to drop down and give me ten. And they would always say one hand or two hands, sergeant, you know, and they'd all drop and give ten pushups, one-handed pushups. And they were -- they were impressive.

And then the last day everybody always tries to do some crazy stunts and they climbed to the top of the two-hundred-foot -- two-hundred-foot tower and they tied this inflatable frog on this two-hundred-foot tower. These guys were nuts. But that's when I started

1 Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003
2 really developing some real unit pride and the
3 esprit de corps which was an important thing.
4 Because I saw the SEALS had it, you know. Then
5 when I first saw some of the SS guys they installed
6 it in us too. It was -- it was exciting. I was
7 looking forward to it. Really looking forward to
8 it.

9 Q. Now, did you receive specialized
10 weapon training and -- and so on or was that later
11 or --?

12 A. In -- in A.I.T. my -- my M.O.S.
13 was light weapons. I was a light weapons
14 specialist. So, I had received training every --
15 on the light weapons right up to -- to a 106 recoil
16 less rifle, for, you know, all different mortars.
17 Even though I was in Eleven Charlie -- normally
18 people who were mortar men get in Eleven Charlie,
19 but I did receive training in mortars, 106's, and
20 then the regular mission guns and all different
21 kinds of weapons.

22 As soon as I got to Special
23 Forces I know that the program has kind of changed
24 now, but back then you started out with eight weeks

1 **Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003**
2 of they called it Special Forces basic training
3 where we would do a lot of planned navigation,
4 squad tactics, pearl operations, land navigation,
5 ambush techniques, a lot of those things. It was
6 eight -- eight weeks of classroom and then
7 harassment. And after we finished then there would
8 be a two-week F.T.X. And during that time we also
9 get -- we get training with weapons and
10 communications and -- and those kinds of things.
11 But everybody who went through that first phase,
12 what they call phase one training, all had the same
13 basic training. It's basic training all over
14 again, although with the Special Forces. And we
15 began to get involved with some counter gorilla
16 operations, Corpsman control operations and
17 psychological stuff. And when you finished that,
18 after the two week F.T.X., then you were awarded
19 the beret. You wore the beret --.

20 **BY MR. RUSSERT:**

21 Q. Did you have a lot of people drop
22 out of the program --

23 A. Oh yeah.

24 Q. -- or did not --?

1 Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003

2 A. Yeah. People were leaving all
3 the time. You know, they would -- they would
4 harass you. They would get up like two, three
5 o'clock in the morning and say come on, you know,
6 be downstairs full -- full dress, full battle gear,
7 whatever, you know, and -- and then when -- then
8 they'd take you out and you'd spend the night out
9 in the -- what they used to call Tortoise's Trail
10 down at Ft. Bragg. They'd wake you up at two,
11 three o'clock in the morning and they would say,
12 okay, your position's been compromised, we have to
13 repeat the robinson's code, is what we used to call
14 it to -- and -- and they'd make -- they'd make us
15 crawl through this obstacle course, you know, two
16 or three o'clock in the morning now and you'd be --
17 the cadre there would be walking along side of you,
18 helped you, threw mud in your face, just saying,
19 you know, come on, quit. You want to quit, you
20 know.

21 I watched some of the SEAL
22 training on Discovery -- on the Discovery station.
23 It's some of the same kind of the harassment and
24 stuff. It was -- it was the same kind that we got

1 Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003

2 back there. They wanted you to -- they were just
3 trying to see who would be willing to stay in. So,
4 yeah, we had -- we had quite a few drop out in that
5 first basic training. And if they washed out of
6 that, they were -- usually everybody that washed
7 out got sent right to Vietnam and went over with
8 usually an airborne unit. Or if some guys weren't
9 lucky enough to get assigned to an airborne unit
10 they'd get assigned to a regular. Some went to
11 N.C.O. school at Ft. Benning. It all depended on
12 why you were -- why you were leaving the training.

13 But after eight weeks of --
14 after -- after the eight weeks of phase one
15 training we then went through some more aptitude
16 testing and interviews with officers and other
17 selected people and we were told what M.O.S. we
18 were going to be trained in. Because in Special
19 Forces you can be light weapons, communications,
20 demolitions in the air, or medic. Or if you were a
21 senior N.C.O. you would go into operations
22 intelligence.

23 When I went through mine I said
24 that I wanted to go through medical training, I

1 Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003
2 wanted to become a medic, which the medic training
3 was about eighteen months long for Special Forces
4 and they said that my aptitude was -- my scores was
5 not such that I would qualify for that. But I
6 begged and begged and begged. I guess because I
7 had done so well in phase one training they said
8 okay, we'll give you a -- a shot and let you go
9 through your -- you know, the ninety-one A, the
10 first -- first basic medic course and we'll see how
11 you -- how you do. And -- but they said they
12 wanted me to continue with light weapons and go
13 through light weapons. I said I didn't want to.

14 But I went through ninety-one A,
15 aced it and after you did the eight weeks of basic
16 medical training you then went to -- if I can
17 remember all this correctly we then went to ten
18 weeks of what they call phase two medical training,
19 which was training out at Ft. Sam Houston. The --
20 the ninety-one A basic course was all emergency
21 medical care, which was the actual basic course
22 that all combat medics take.

23 And so after you finish that then
24 we went down to Ft. Sam Houston and it was there

1 Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003

2 that we went through medical school. Our
3 instructors were doctors. We were instructed in
4 all kinds of signs and symptoms of different
5 diseases, treatment for diseases, we took
6 pharmacology, we took lab courses, we took surgical
7 procedure courses.

8 BY MR. CLARK:

9 Q. You took what?

10 A. Ten weeks of intensive medical --
11 medical training. Seven days a week if I remember
12 correctly. Ten weeks, seven days a week. And
13 again each time, you know, people would be dropping
14 out. After we finished the ten weeks of that
15 training down at Ft. Sam then we had ten weeks of
16 O.J.T. where we -- at the army hospital where we
17 would go and we would spend ten weeks working in
18 the hospital and rotating through the pediatric
19 ward, medical surgical ward, emergency room, all
20 the different areas and stations of the hospitals,
21 the labs, the dental clinic. We were trained in
22 dentistry, we were trained in veterinary medicine.

23 All that was down at Ft. Sam and
24 then we spent those ten weeks going through all the

1 Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003
2 different areas of the hospital. I did mine at Ft.
3 Hood Texas which is the most desolate place on the
4 earth I think. That's where the first armored
5 division was and actually a lot of the guys just
6 back from Iraqi came out of Ft. Hood. It's just
7 all desert there. It's just desert, desert,
8 desert, that's it. And so I spent ten weeks there
9 at Ft. Hood Darnell (phonetic spelling) Army
10 Hospital. I had some great experiences there
11 working in the hospital there. It was there that I
12 actually encountered my first D.O.A., my first real
13 experience with someone who had died. And
14 naturally I took care of him in the -- in the
15 emergency room. It was a soldier who rolled over
16 in a Jeep and died -- died in -- in the emergency
17 room. And they asked if I wanted to go through
18 and -- go through the autopsy, so I went right
19 through the autopsy experience. What had happened
20 was when the -- the Jeep rolled over it just
21 crushed his skull a little bit because there was
22 no -- no visible signs of -- of why he would have
23 died. But the pressure had just pushed on his
24 skull and the nasal bone here went like that

1 Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003

2 (indicating) and ruptured. All he had was a little
3 bit of blood coming from here. And I saw the
4 bone -- nasal bone had just and a hemorrhage to the
5 brain. But I -- that was my first autopsy
6 experience too.

7 I had many, many more there, but
8 my first delivery at Darnell Army Hospital working
9 in the ob-gyn ward. But every Medic had -- went
10 through S.F. training I just loved working in the
11 O.J. -- because we called it O.J.T. It was a real
12 experience and it was really where a lot of the
13 guys washed out too.

14 BY MR. RUSSERT:

15 Q. Now, if they washed out did they
16 go -- do they stay in Special Forces or were they
17 gone?

18 A. I'm not sure if at that stage you
19 were -- I don't think at that stage you could stay
20 in Special Forces. They just normally would
21 kick -- go into a -- go right to another -- another
22 unit. Once we got into the dog lab area which was
23 further on down there in training if you washed out
24 you could rotate and go back into the second -- you

1 Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003

2 know, into a class that's coming up. But up until
3 that point I think most of the guys that washed
4 out -- I never saw them again. And I don't think
5 they -- I don't think they went through a -- you
6 know, a later class. I think they were just all
7 assigned to a -- another conventional army unit.

8 But after O.J.T. at Ft. Hood
9 Texas we then went back to Ft. Bragg. And I'm
10 trying to think if it was at that time we had one
11 more -- I think that when we came back is when we
12 had our dog lab. Back in the '60s, late -- '67,
13 '68 it wasn't as controversial as it got in later
14 years, but after a while the S.P.C.A. got a hold of
15 the idea that we were doing -- shooting dogs and
16 then operating on them, so I -- I heard that they
17 just disbanded that.

18 But what our dog lab entailed for
19 us was is that we -- we worked in surgical teams
20 and each of us were given a patient. We had to
21 choose -- give our -- give our patient a physical,
22 which was a dog. We couldn't refer to them as a
23 dog, we'd refer to them as our patients. Give it a
24 physical, make sure that it was healthy enough to

1 Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003

2 survive all the procedures that we were doing. If
3 our patient died during any of those procedures,
4 you know, you go back and you rotate. And you're
5 allowed to rotate one back. You know, if you -- if
6 you wash out again then you're out.

7 But if your patient dies you
8 rotate back. If another patient dies or if you
9 fail to do a procedure correctly you're out. We
10 had to make sure our patient was healthy enough to
11 survive all the procedures. And then we took them
12 out and if we were given the okay, we took them out
13 and we shot them. And one of the things that we
14 did immediately is we'd then take them into the
15 emergency room. The surgical team would -- one of
16 us was a surgeon and assistant surgeon and
17 anesthesiologist. We had an O.R. tech, scrub tech,
18 concentric unit and it was a regular surgery,
19 circulating team -- or a surgical team.

20 And each surgeon had his turn of
21 shooting his patient and they bring him into the
22 room and as a surgical team you had to do a -- you
23 had to do a I.V. cut down on the dog, just finding
24 the vein, cutting in and making a surgical incision

1 **Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003**

2 so that you can get an I.V. started. And you go
3 through and do a multi debridement, treating a
4 gunshot wound.

5 **BY MR. CLARK:**

6 Q. So you shot him to wound him?

7 A. Yeah.

8 Q. Always shot them in the same
9 place?

10 A. Usually in the thigh. Yeah, in
11 the back quarter thigh.

12 Q. What -- what type of weapon was
13 used?

14 A. A twenty-two.

15 Q. Twenty-two?

16 A. Yeah. And then we'd do a
17 debridement and we're not allowed to use any kind
18 of antibiotics. It was just all debridement
19 procedure and debriding, no antibiotics, just
20 changing the dressings, combatting infection that
21 way and then waited for it to heal. Once it -- it
22 healed you passed that surgical procedure. The
23 next surgical procedure was a -- an I.V. cut down,
24 the wound debridement, then we would do a

1 Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003

2 tracheotomy on the patient.

3 After the tracheotomy we do an
4 amputation and once the amputation was done, you
5 had a choice, either you terminate the patient with
6 a cardial injection of sodium penathol or if you've
7 really gotten attached to your patient you can keep
8 him. There were quite a few three-legged dogs
9 running around Ft. Bragg because they -- some guys
10 really had gotten attached to the dogs and so they
11 kept them, you know. I terminated my patient.
12 That was -- that was the dog labs.

13 If you get through dog lab okay,
14 then you've actually finished your technical
15 training phase of medical and then next is you sit
16 for the boards and then you go before a board of
17 doctors and they fire questions at you, you know,
18 and then you go through a practical --.

19 Q. Now, these -- how many doctors
20 are they?

21 A. Medical doctors.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. Yeah. Special Forces.

24 Q. Uh-huh.

1 Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003

2 A. Army medical doctors that would
3 just fire questions.

4 Q. So, they're all Special Forces
5 also? Okay.

6 A. And that was quite intense,
7 quite -- quite an experience. And if you passed
8 that, then you were awarded your Ninety-One B
9 qualification, your M.O.S. and you became a -- you
10 know, you finished your M.O.S. training which then
11 enabled you to go through phase two of Special
12 Forces training, which phase two was another eight
13 weeks of more -- more of the tactics -- tactics and
14 techniques, a lot of psychological operations,
15 relating with people, because actually Special --
16 you know, our -- we were teachers as much as we put
17 all these covert things that Special Forces did our
18 main job was teachers. We were to move in and
19 mobilize people and work with them, live with them
20 and so we did a lot of study of culture, we did a
21 lot of study of relating with people, a lot of the
22 psychological operations and more common grownup
23 operations. We had eight weeks of this kind of
24 stuff.

1 Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003

2 And then we had a final F.T.X.
3 and after that eight weeks if you successfully
4 completed that, then you were awarded a flash, then
5 you could put on your beret and that flash
6 signified what unit you were assigned to. Back
7 then there was a -- it was the first in Okinawa,
8 seventh which is at Bragg, the sixth which was at
9 Bragg, the third -- the sixth was supposed to be in
10 Asia, the mid East, the third, which was in Africa,
11 seventh was at Bragg, the eighth was in Panama, the
12 sixth was in Vietnam and the tenth was in
13 Badenhaus, Germany. Needless to say every one of
14 them says, you know, that's why you went to S.F.,
15 but I got assigned to the third -- third Special
16 Forces Group.

17 And I did make it through. Most
18 of the guys that made it -- made it through medics
19 because of the length of time that it took to go
20 through there, because by then I'd been in the army
21 almost two years, most of the guys graduated that
22 were medics made E-five when they finished. When I
23 came out I was still an E-three. Even my --
24 especially if you're graduating in the top five and

1 Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003

2 I graduated third in my class. But I still was
3 only an E-three because I -- we kind of messed up
4 when we got back to Bragg, otherwise getting in
5 trouble. Not serious trouble, I just didn't follow
6 the rules and stuff. So, my roommate, he finished
7 number one in the class and -- and I was number
8 three. He made it to sergeant, I stayed at P.F.C.
9 Part of the problem was we -- when we came back
10 from Ft. Sam Houston we were supposed to be living
11 in the barracks, but we didn't think we -- we were
12 older, you know, we just got an apartment off post.
13 We got caught a couple of times of being off post
14 when we weren't -- living in an apartment when we
15 weren't supposed to be, so I would get -- get
16 passed over for promotions and things. But I
17 finished -- I finished training group. I graduated
18 as a E-three.

19 Most of the guys that were medics
20 were all E-five. So, when they got assigned to a
21 team most medics were E-fives. And here I went to
22 a team with the third as an E-three, which kind of
23 set the stage for some more problems that I
24 encountered. Because the third we were supposed to

1 Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003

2 be going to Africa, but I was -- I was stationed at
3 Ft. Bragg being an E-three. Most of the other guys
4 were E-three were usually in, you know, light
5 weapons or camo guys. I was always -- the E-threes
6 would always be split with guard duty, K.P., extra
7 duty, buffing the headquarters, the floors and
8 stuff.

9 So, during the day we'd be --
10 we'd be doing our -- playing army stuff, you know,
11 and working as a team and going out and doing all
12 these training things and stuff and then in the
13 evening they always needed somebody to do the K.P.
14 and we always needed somebody for extra duty,
15 cleaning up the headquarters, barracks. Because I
16 was an E-three I always got stuck doing that. And
17 the usual -- the usual routine was you go to K.P.
18 one day after your training for the day. And
19 because I always heard that once you finished all
20 your training, you know, and you get assigned to a
21 team it would be just like a regular job.

22 Q. Right.

23 A. Well, that's great, you know.
24 You know, eight to five, whatever, you know, and

1 Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003
2 then you're off. Well, it was and I had worked
3 eight to five, but then okay, we need K.P.
4 Beikirch, K.P., you know, so the next day, okay, we
5 need somebody to buff headquarters -- buff the
6 headquarters building. Beikirch, report to
7 headquarters, you know. The next day, need guard
8 duty, need somebody for guard duty. Beikirch,
9 guard duty. And so that was my routine for a long,
10 long time, you know, a couple of months. And I
11 said there's got to be something better than this
12 going on.

13 But after guard duty you would
14 usually end up getting a day off, you know. So,
15 on -- on one of my days off, I don't know if you're
16 going to get to -- how I ended up going to Vietnam,
17 because this -- I'm leading into --

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. -- going to Vietnam. One of my
20 days off I went down to Fayetteville and just
21 started -- you know, I went to one of the bars and
22 just started drinking and the last thing I remember
23 is every twenty minutes having to go out and put
24 a -- put a nickel in the -- the meter so that I

1 Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003
2 wouldn't get a parking ticket. That's the last
3 thing I remember. The next thing I knew I'm -- I'm
4 waking up and I'm just aching all over. And I look
5 around and nothing looks familiar and I look over
6 and I see bars. I'm thinking oh my gosh, what did
7 I do now. And didn't even recognize the bars, you
8 know, and it wasn't the military.

9 And what had happened was the
10 next thing I know is my -- my team sergeant's there
11 and he goes, "Beikirch, you've really made --
12 messed up this time." I said what happened. And
13 he goes, well, from what I've been told I went and
14 got in my car to try to drive back to Ft. Bragg,
15 left Fayetteville and I started bouncing off parked
16 cars. The Fayetteville police started chasing me.
17 I started running. Went out on the 95. They
18 called the state police. The state police tried to
19 set up a road block, I ran a road block. They ran
20 me off the road and when I came out of the car I
21 came out with a billy club I usually carry and I
22 started swinging a billy club at the north guard
23 and the state police. And they beat me up bad.
24 They beat me up real bad.

1 Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003

2 And so I was in -- in the jail
3 with a beat up body facing assault with a deadly
4 weapon, hit and run, driving while intoxicated, all
5 these charges. And my team -- I said what do I do
6 and he said I'd get yourself a lawyer. Because he
7 said if -- if the -- if the civilian courts find
8 you guilty the military will just tack onto it and
9 you'll -- he said you'll be in real big trouble.
10 So, I said okay. I went and I got a lawyer.

11 I went down, I talked with this
12 guy who eventually became the mayor of
13 Fayetteville, so I must have picked a good guy.
14 And I -- I went and told my story and he kind of
15 just shook his head like I'm here, I'm a lawyer in
16 an army town, I've heard this story a hundred times
17 before at least. And without even looking up he
18 just said how quick can you get yourself out of the
19 country. I said what do you mean. He said get
20 yourself out of the country, we'll go to the court
21 and I'll tell them that you had received orders to
22 leave the country. You were just down
23 commiserating and let's have mercy on -- you know,
24 because you're going to be going over fighting for

1 Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003

2 our country and he said the judge will give you
3 some leniency. He said but you've got to get
4 yourself to Vietnam.

5 So, I went back and the team
6 sergeant says we're not going to Vietnam. He said
7 maybe we might be going to Mali (phonetic
8 spelling). We were on alert to be going to Mali
9 which is on the West Coast of Africa. And I said
10 no, that won't work. That won't work. So, I think
11 I tried to -- and I needed money. Now I needed to
12 get out -- I needed to get out of the country, but
13 I needed money to pay the lawyer, because he said
14 my fee is six hundred dollars. And I didn't have
15 six hundred bucks, so I went down to the
16 reenlistment sergeant and I said I'd like to
17 reenlist. He goes what do you want to reenlist
18 for. And I said I want to reenlist to go to
19 Vietnam. He goes what? I said yeah, I want to
20 reenlist to go to Vietnam. And that made me for
21 reenlistment bonuses and at the time I guess as a
22 medic our -- our bonus was RNRT be like one -- some
23 guys would get like thousands of dollars to
24 reenlist. I got about seven hundred bucks to --

1 Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003

2 but just enough to cover my fine -- or not even my
3 fine, my lawyer's fee.

4 So, I went and I -- I told him
5 I'm on my way to Vietnam, I'll be gone in thirty
6 days. He said great. Okay. Let's go to court.
7 And we went to court, he did all this legal jargon.
8 I had no idea what the judge was saying or what he
9 was saying. And he just said stand up. So, I'm
10 standing up. The judge had suspended me. I looked
11 at him, I said what's happening. He said --
12 because I heard him say guilty. He said you're
13 guilty of reckless driving. All the charges have
14 been dropped. I was found guilty of reckless
15 driving and -- and fined one hundred dollars and I
16 was on my way to Vietnam. It was either go to
17 Vietnam or go to jail. But --.

18 Q. So you were -- you were
19 transferred then to the sixth?

20 A. I -- yeah. I went to -- well,
21 you had your thirty days -- thirty-day leave and
22 most of the guys -- you know, you always ended up
23 late, you know, you were supposed to report to Fort
24 Washington. But in Ft. Lewis Washington, yeah,

1 Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003

2 that's where I took off from. And most of the guys
3 say, you know, we always can show up late. So,
4 what are you going to do, send me to Vietnam. You
5 know, so I -- I was supposed to be there a certain
6 day, but I had a friend who was stationed at Ft.
7 Lewis and he was married and he lived out there.

8 So, I -- actually I stayed out
9 there probably a week beyond my date that I was
10 supposed to, which you'd think I'd learn and I'd
11 just start following the rules. But I -- I didn't.
12 I just never really paid much attention to that
13 stuff, so I -- I reported in late to Ft. Lewis.
14 Again, I'm a P.F.C. even though I have the beret
15 on. And they start hassling me right away about,
16 you know, doing duty at Ft. Lewis and all that
17 stuff. So, I got stuck with some extra duty there
18 and plus I was late a week. Ended up going over
19 and my name wasn't on the manifest, so by the time
20 I got over to Vietnam nobody was -- I wasn't there
21 when I was supposed to be there and they didn't
22 have me on a new one. So, I ended up staying at I
23 think it was Cam-ranh when I went in, wherever, got
24 off for something.

1 **Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003**

2 **BY MR. RUSSERT:**

3 Q. When did you arrive there?

4 A. July -- July of '69. And --
5 and -- July of '69 and I ended up -- because I was
6 not on orders, because I was reporting late and
7 because I was a P.F.C. they assigned me to some --
8 some holding company down there and here I ended up
9 with the same old duty again, you know, K.P.,
10 cleaning and burning out the trees, which is a lot
11 of fun. You know, I'm thinking this is what I went
12 through all my training for, you know, I graduated
13 third in my class and here I am burning -- you
14 know, burning out the trees.

15 Q. I think it was mainly because of
16 your last name starting with a B.

17 A. Yeah, probably.

18 Q. The same situation because my
19 name started with a C, so they always went for the
20 first part of the alphabet for -- for all that duty
21 stuff.

22 A. Yeah. Yeah. So, I -- I was -- I
23 remember one day I was just sitting there and I had
24 just finished pouring diesel into the

1 Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003
2 fifty-five-gallon drums and I'm stirring it and
3 burning and wearing a beret. And this sergeant
4 major came walking by, don't know what his name
5 was, and he said "Hey, soldier, what are you
6 doing." I said I'm burning shit, sir. That's what
7 I was doing. And he goes, "You want to do that
8 forever." And I said no, Sergeant Major, I want to
9 get out of here. And he said come on with me. And
10 he just said -- he took me over to some place and
11 said I want this guy out of here. I want -- I want
12 him to come up to Con Tun. And he said when you
13 get to Con Tun come see me. He said I'm a C.C.C.
14 at Con Tun. And I said great sergeant major.

15 He got me out of Cam-ranh Bay and
16 got me at least into training in so, because all
17 those other guys had to go through this -- you
18 know, have climatization training and everybody had
19 to go through a couple weeks of training there at
20 the Truong. And I was wanting to go, but I got
21 stuck in Cam-ranh Bay forever. I may have been
22 stuck there if he hadn't pulled me out of there
23 because I had heard that a lot of S.F. guys that
24 went over road kind of ended up in conventional

1 Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003

2 units.

3 Q. That C.C.C., was that Command and
4 Control Central?

5 A. Yes. Yeah. So, he got me at
6 least on -- on orders to go into training. Matter
7 of fact he -- he got a chopper to fly me up to the
8 Truong and where fifth headquarters was. And I
9 reported into headquarters and I started going
10 on -- in the cycle now. And so I went through the
11 in-country training, went out to Entre (phonetic
12 spelling) Island, which was an experience for us.
13 Part of the training there at Entre Island -- every
14 day we used to have to walk to the top of the
15 mountain, we had like two sand bags on our backs,
16 you know, for training. And it was just really
17 crazy because we'd always heard that S.F. knew how
18 to live and here we get climbing up to the top of
19 this mountain, up to the top of the mountain. S.F.
20 had Dairy Queen up there. We had a Dairy Queen
21 stationed up there in the Dairy Queen was a couple
22 of slot machines and there was this S.F. sergeant
23 that used to run the -- the Dairy Queen up on top
24 of the mountain on Entre Island.

1 Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003

2 Oh, there used to be some
3 communications unit up there too. But yeah, this
4 is a great unit. I'm in the right unit, this is
5 where I should be, being S.F., glad I came here.

6 So, when I finished that training
7 they said where you going. I go -- and I said B
8 company out of -- out of Con Tun and so they said
9 you're a medic; right. And I said yeah. And all
10 medics had to spend some time working in the
11 C.I.D.G. hospital for a short time just to get used
12 to the medical procedures in Vietnam and the
13 medical support that was there because the C.I.D.G.
14 hospital Pleiku was our major source of our support
15 station for all the A teams and all the special
16 operations that came out of B company, out of
17 Ghabour (phonetic spelling).

18 And so I -- I flew into Pleiku,
19 started working at the C.I.D.G. hospital and loved
20 it. Now, this is what we've been trained for, you
21 know, doing the -- you know, the -- the medical
22 care and working with the people and I just really,
23 really loved it. The thing was is that right
24 across the street from the C.I.D.G. hospital was

1 Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003
2 this Mike force unit and I developed a friendship
3 with a -- with a medic that was with the Mike
4 Force. And he would say, no, you don't want to go
5 to C.C.C., come on over to Mike Force. I said
6 well, I don't know, I'm -- I'm moving -- by that
7 time I had -- I think I'd gotten E -- no, I had to
8 sit and when I was in Pleiku and I had -- I got
9 promoted to E-four. I said I'm an E-four, you
10 know, I -- I can't make much choice in anything. I
11 have to go where they send me. He goes "I'll see
12 what I can do."

13 So, they changed my orders from
14 C.C.C. to go to Mike Force, but I had to be waiting
15 for a while. So, then I still stayed at the
16 C.I.D.G. hospital. And while we were there and
17 while I was waiting this old E-seven medic, Dane
18 McGinley (phonetic spelling), who's still alive and
19 he's down at Ft. Bragg, great, great man, taught me
20 an awful lot about medicine, liked what he saw as
21 far as what I could do with the medical. He said,
22 "Gary, you would be a waste at Mike Force why don't
23 you let this wait." I said what is that. He said
24 come here. So, he got me rotating going up to

1 Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003

2 different A teams around -- around Tu Ma Lie which
3 that was I'd go out and I'd spend a few days and
4 the medic that was on site would then come in. And
5 an A team was a Special Forces team. They actually
6 put them in jungles and supported the Montararis.

7 Most of them at Tukor (phonetic
8 spelling) was mostly Montararis that we were with
9 because of the Highlands. And so I got to go
10 around to about ten or -- ten or twelve A teams
11 that were in Tukor and -- and the C team out of
12 Pleiku -- Pleiku and the B team, B twenty-four.
13 And I -- I loved that.

14 So, I came back and I said, yeah,
15 I want to go to an A team. So, Mac (phonetic
16 spelling) said I've got just the A team for you.
17 And he said that he -- he was the first medic on
18 that Camp Thai Nguyen. And he said that's --
19 that's my camp, and he said I'll send you out
20 there. And so I got my orders changed again and I
21 went to Thai Nguyen as the A team medic. That's
22 how I ended up at Thai Nguyen.

23 BY MR. CLARK:

24 Q. What type practice? Did you have

1 Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003
2 a lot of gunshot wounds or tropical diseases or --
3 or everything?

4 A. Everything. There were usual
5 gunshot wounds, amputations, the usual accidents.
6 Somebody, you know, a Montararis getting drunk and
7 blowing -- blowing off his arm with a grenade, you
8 know, and a lot of malaria, a lot of upper
9 respiratory infections, snake bites. We had a
10 couple of people mauled by tigers. All kinds of
11 parasitic diseases. Skin diseases, those kinds of
12 things. We -- would actually run a regular sick
13 call. Being the medic on site there's usually --
14 when I went up there I was the -- the Junior Medic.
15 Doc Nelson (phonetic spelling) was the -- he was
16 the E-seven. He had been the senior medic on site.
17 He was a great guy. But we would run sick call
18 every day.

19 Well, actually by the time we got
20 there we had trained our -- we'd -- we'd go out
21 there, we would identify medics or Montararis that
22 we thought had the aptitude and we would train them
23 to actually hold sick call. People would line up.
24 There would be somebody there that would take their

1 Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003

2 complaint. Then we'd go to a -- a yard medic that
3 would do vitals, blood pressure, temperature, those
4 kinds of things. If they felt that they needed to
5 have blood drawn they would send them to the lab.
6 We'd have a Montararis lab tech that would draw
7 blood, make smears, lab smears to look for the
8 W.B.C. counts to a differentials to see if there
9 was infections, did malaria smears and stool
10 smears. And we would train the medics how to do
11 that. And it was quite an operation. And if there
12 was anything serious, more serious that they felt
13 they couldn't handle, then we would step in, you
14 know, surgery, those kinds of things. We would
15 always do all the info and they would assist us.

16 If it was a -- a real -- a real
17 surgical necessity and things like that most of the
18 time we would send them down to the C team in
19 Pleiku where there was a Sergeant Wright (phonetic
20 spelling) who was -- even the -- the doctors at the
21 seventy-first E-Vac, the American doctors, said he
22 was the best surgeon that they had ever seen and he
23 was an E-seven sergeant. But he would do all kinds
24 of -- of -- of Bone marrow tabs, he'd do skin

1 Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003
2 grafts. He was just a tremendous, tremendous
3 surgeon. But we would send those kinds of real
4 serious surgical procedures down there for the --
5 the SS medics and the C team to take care of.
6 They had some real good medics down there. That's
7 where Mac was, the -- the guy that taught me a lot
8 about -- about the medical surgical things.

9 But on the site in the camp we
10 would -- everything that you could think of that
11 a -- that a village doctor would do we did, dental,
12 pulling teeth. The Yards loved to have their teeth
13 pulled. They'd all come in, pull my teeth, pull my
14 teeth. They'd want -- they'd want them all pulled
15 because for them it was a sign of beauty not to
16 have any teeth. And so --.

17 Q. You always were well equipped?

18 A. Yeah. Yeah. It really -- it's
19 really -- unless -- unless the weather for us the
20 weather wasn't that bad. Some of the camps further
21 up, Mag buk (phonetic spelling), Doc Pac (phonetic
22 spelling) socked them with weather, but for us we
23 never really had too much problem getting supplies.
24 A chopper was the only way into our camp. Some of

1 Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003

2 the camps further on down they did have a highway,
3 Highway 14 that went from Pleiku to Con Tun and
4 then Con Tun went to some of the other smaller
5 camps that had -- I think there was a highway that
6 went all the way to Bec Hai. But that was the
7 furthest camp you could go in by road and then the
8 rest of the time it was just call chopper.

9 But it was our job to make sure
10 that we first of all did not get over crowded with
11 the dispensary like, you know, if -- you didn't
12 want to keep too many people in dispensary because
13 if your camp ever did get hit, you know, you'd --
14 you'd need to have space and so on. If somebody
15 was really sick or long-term care they'd have to be
16 sent down to the hospital in Pleiku and especially
17 for surgical procedures. We were doing a lot of
18 the emergency surgery and child birth and things
19 like that. They wouldn't go down there for that,
20 you know, they -- the Yards had this berthing pool
21 that they -- the midwives used to do that and the
22 witch doctor. Every camp the Yard -- Yards all had
23 witch doctors. That was the other thing -- that
24 was another big challenge is to try to develop a

1 Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003

2 rapport with the witch doctor that they were
3 working with.

4 But dental work, all different
5 diseases, lab work, preventive medicine, building
6 latrines, trying to teach the Yards how to, you
7 know, hygiene, sanitation, those kinds of things,
8 purifying water, veterinary medicine. All that
9 fell under the direction of the camp medic. And I
10 had this one medic, Totd, who wanted to be a
11 medic -- wanted to be a medic so bad, but he just
12 didn't have the aptitude so I made him my
13 preventive medicine specialist.

14 And he used to just spray the
15 latrines and spray the latrines for these Yards and
16 we used to engineer demolitions guy and built a
17 real nice latrines. It had toilet seats on them,
18 you know. I remember the -- remember the first
19 time the Yards looked at it the toilet seats. They
20 ended up just standing on the toilet seats and
21 squatting. Is this -- this right boss -- is that
22 how you use it. Oh, they're some funny stories
23 that -- that came out of them that year that I was
24 there. A lot of funny experiences with the Yards.

1 Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003

2 It was -- it was just great.

3 To think that a twenty -- I was
4 twenty-four -- twenty-four-year-old kid would be
5 responsible for the health and welfare of over two
6 thousand people, because that's how many Montararis
7 were in our camp, in Doc's camp. There were two
8 thousand that was amazing. It's one of the
9 greatest experiences in my life, was that.

10 BY MR. RUSSERT:

11 Q. They say you still wear a
12 Montararis bracelet?

13 A. Yeah. Yeah. Actually I -- I
14 used to have a bunch of them, but when I got shot
15 and I was taken to the seventy-first one of the --
16 a lot of the medics and the hospital, they would
17 take all the -- the Yard bracelets off and all the
18 keys and other things that the guys that were in
19 the bush would get and they'd keep them for
20 themselves. So, I lost all my stuff, but I -- I
21 had gotten in touch with Mac again and I said I
22 wanted a Yard bracelet and he -- this was a Yard
23 bracelet that was given to him by a Yard that I
24 knew. Yuett (phonetic spelling) was his name. So,

1 Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003

2 he gave this one to me. So, this was still given
3 to me by a Montararis, but it wasn't one that I had
4 when I was over there because all that stuff was
5 stolen, as was most of my photographs and
6 everything else. When the camp got overrun I lost
7 all that stuff.

8 Yeah, and there's -- there was
9 something happened to me in Vietnam that was very
10 special. Growing up my parents were divorced when
11 I was like five and I never saw my dad again. And
12 having a divorced parent -- being a divorced parent
13 back then was not as popular as it was now and
14 consequently my mom had to move an awful lot. I
15 went to eleven different schools before ninth grade
16 and just moving and living with different people.
17 And so as I look back on it now, you know, I never
18 really felt like I had a home anywhere until I got
19 to Vietnam when I hit Duk Sani that was my home.
20 That was my place where I planted myself and I said
21 I'm staying here forever. You know, this is --
22 this is my place. I planned on staying there
23 forever. You know, I -- I wanted to marry and just
24 stay right -- stay right there.

1 Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003

2 But it was a real life changing
3 experience being -- being not only an S.F., but
4 being in the situations that S.F. put me in, being
5 in -- in that camp, responsible for those people,
6 developing the friendships, developing a love
7 between you, you know, with only ten other
8 Americans. That was it. I never -- I never saw
9 anybody except for just those ten Americans and
10 then every once in a while we would get -- we'd get
11 some Mike Force coming through or going over to
12 Laos because their camp was on the border. We were
13 three miles from Laos. And our camp was -- our
14 main job was to pull surveillance on the Ho Chi
15 Minh Trail that came near us. And so that's where
16 we usually held most of our operations and the
17 C.C.C. and Mike Force used to use our camp as a
18 jumping off sometimes before going into Laos for
19 cross border operations.

20 So, once in a while I'd see an
21 American that was with Mike Force or an American
22 that was with a special operations, but most of the
23 time I just was with the young Montararis who
24 stayed right there. I kind of went native.

1 **Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003**

2 Q. What kind of food did you exist
3 on, native food or did you have "C" rations or --?

4 A. Oh, we had steaks. We would
5 always -- we'd get guys from the Air Force coming
6 in and the Caribous would land. Every once in a
7 while each of us would rotate and go into Con Tun
8 and we'd contact the Air Force guys there and say
9 okay, we've got some A.K.'s, we've got some nice
10 Chicops (phonetic spelling) out there, we've got
11 some nice Montararis cross bows made by the
12 Montararis and you've got all this -- these nice
13 steaks, let's work on a deal. Drop some steaks off
14 for us and drop some beer off for us and we'll give
15 you all this stuff. And so then the Air Force
16 would come in with the Caribous and they would land
17 at our air strip. They'd wheel off all this stuff
18 and we'd give them all the souvenir stuff. So most
19 of the time we had really good steaks. We ate a
20 lot of rice. Did eat a lot of rice. And actually
21 I did eat a lot of the Montararis food.

22 The Montararis would love to go
23 on an operation, see, because that's where their
24 homes were. Their homes were in the jungle. We

1 Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003
2 came in. Our tribe that we worked with were the
3 Sedang (phonetic spelling) -- the Sedang
4 Montararis. And we would take them out of their
5 villages and build these underground, you know,
6 fortifications and we'd say this is where you've
7 got to be to keep safe. And they did it because
8 the M.V.A. -- the M.V.A. actually wiped out a
9 Montararis village that was right near us, Noc Suk
10 (phonetic spelling) back in '65, total -- terrible
11 massacre of the Montararis'. And that's when
12 the -- Doc Mac and Doc Shang A teams got started
13 with the survivors of that massacre.

14 So, they loved to go out on
15 operations and -- and doing combat reconnaissance
16 and ambushes and things like that.

17 BY MR. RUSSERT:

18 Q. What kind of weapons did they
19 use?

20 A. M-16's. Sometimes M-16's,
21 sometimes carbines A one, A two's which was a old
22 Korean guns, M-60 machine guns.

23 Q. As a medic did you carry a
24 weapon?

1 Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003

2 A. Oh yeah.

3 Q. What did you carry?

4 A. I carried a Carbine. That could
5 be because I was cross trained. My alert position
6 when our camp -- whenever -- whenever we'd get
7 programed my alert position was a 4 deuce mortar. I
8 fired a 4 deuce mortar. So, we did not adhere to
9 the strict guidelines like other combat medics do,
10 meaning non-weapons personnel. But we were -- we
11 were cross trained and did just about everything.
12 Everybody was cross trained so that we could fill
13 in in case somebody got hurt.

14 The thing they loved about the
15 operations because when we'd go out there they'd be
16 pulling up roots and all these different things and
17 they'd go by one for one, you know, and they'd --
18 and they would show you the different things to eat
19 and the different things to avoid. One of the
20 things that we were advised to do was develop a
21 real good relationship with the Montararis and
22 let -- and let that person become your -- your
23 contact person, your best friend because he was
24 going to be the one that you could count on and

1 Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003

2 trust the most. And in case somebody from the
3 security unit, we had a security team, these were
4 people that we were really sure of, and so I picked
5 up -- this was my body guard, Da Yo (phonetic
6 spelling) was his name. He was a cute --.

7 Q. He -- he was --

8 A. Yeah.

9 Q. -- Vietnamese?

10 A. Yeah. Da Yo. He's a -- well,
11 about fifteen years old and this is me right here
12 (indicating). This was our interpreter -- one of
13 our interpreters, Brae (phonetic spelling). But we
14 were advised to develop a relationship with these
15 guys and he'd be your body guard. Every time I'm
16 on an operation Da Yo was with me. When I -- we'd
17 be ready to set up camp he'd have my hammock set up
18 within five, ten minutes. He'd come -- he'd come
19 in with all kinds of weeds and bushes and stuff and
20 say this is going to be a good soup, good soup. He
21 was only fifteen years old. And -- but he was the
22 one that really showed me how to live in the
23 jungles. And this was -- ages -- Brae was only
24 fourteen. This was Brae's brother, Breyer

1 Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003

2 (phonetic spelling). He was seventeen. He's the
3 oldest one here, seventeen.

4 We had -- we had a Montararis in
5 our camp, in our company, was twelve years old and
6 was an M-60 machine gunner. This was -- his name
7 was Kei (phonetic spelling), I think that's how you
8 pronounce it, Kei. We were on an operation and he
9 stepped on a booby trap and lost both his legs.
10 But whenever we'd go on operations and stuff Da Yo
11 or -- or any of the Montararis' that were out
12 there, they'd come back from an operation with more
13 stuff than they took out there because that was
14 where they could get their food that they were
15 supposed to -- you know, that they really enjoyed.

16 So, we'd -- we did have a lot of
17 American food, the steaks and things like that,
18 but -- and rice, but I got -- I kind of went native
19 and I would eat mostly what the Montararis ate
20 including dog. We ate dog. I didn't really like
21 dog, I didn't eat it that much, but I had to try it
22 once in a while just to make them happy.

23 BY MR. RUSSERT:

24 Q. We're going to just stop right

1 Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003

2 here and change tapes.

3 A. Came back to Lancaster, a little
4 small town and a newspaper article. Lancaster
5 seminarian -- seminarian awarded the medal of
6 honor, medic wants to be -- to go back as a
7 missionary. I decided I wanted to go back to
8 Vietnam as a missionary. So, I was in training to
9 be a -- a missionary when I found out that I was
10 awarded the medal of honor. I started -- started
11 seminary in September of '73 and in October of '73,
12 one month later, is when they told me that I was
13 awarded the medal of honor. And I found out about
14 it with a little note in my mailbox.

15 BY MR. RUSSERT:

16 Q. Okay. Now, you said there were
17 two things in your mailbox that changed your life?

18 A. And the other thing that happened
19 was that Lancaster's a very small town and I think
20 just -- there's not even any street -- stop lights
21 or traffic lights in the town. But I was taking
22 this correspondence course, New York or photography
23 or something, so I was out taking some pictures of
24 an Episcopal Church in the town which is probably

1 Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003

2 one of the most photographed churches. It's one --
3 you always see it when they -- they show a little
4 churches. And it's always this St. Paul's
5 Episcopal Church. So, I was taking some pictures
6 of it to get my license. That's the first time
7 that she saw me.

8 But one day I went to the post
9 office box and I get this letter. I open it up,
10 it's not even -- not even mailed or anything, it's
11 just written on a piece of notebook paper and
12 shoved in my mailbox. And it's written from, you
13 know, this -- this girl. She starts just talking
14 about things that's going on and told me about her
15 life and everything. And I'm like who is this
16 person, you know. And the next -- you know, a
17 couple of days later I get another one and then
18 another one and I get three or four of them. And
19 then I get a picture. She puts a picture in there
20 and very attractive girl. I was probably
21 twenty-seven, twenty-eight by this time and the
22 next thing I know I -- I -- I recognize her because
23 I see her in town, you know.

24 To make a long story short, it's

1 Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003
2 really long and involved, but it ends up that my
3 wife had seen me and just wanted to get to know me,
4 so she started writing me these notes. And then
5 one day she saw me in the laundry mat down there so
6 she came down, you know, and she came in. I
7 recognized her because she had given me her
8 picture. And so we started talking and we
9 officially met was like on January 1st and we fell
10 in love immediately. March -- let's see, January,
11 February, March 30th we decided let's get married.

12 She was -- she was nineteen --
13 yeah, nineteen. We knew each other three months
14 and we got married on March 30th on top of a
15 mountain in New Hampshire. But those were the two
16 most important things that I've ever received in my
17 life in that little post office box, being told
18 that I was getting a Medal of Honor and this note
19 from my -- from this woman, young girl who saw me
20 and just wanted to meet me who eventually became my
21 wife. We've been married thirty years.

22 But I've -- I've put her through
23 a lot. After we were married I went back and I
24 finished -- I got my undergraduate degree from the

1 Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003
2 University of New Hampshire. I finished the
3 seminary and was ordained and didn't go back to
4 Vietnam as a missionary because Vietnam fell. I
5 was all ready to go over there and she fell April
6 30th, 1975. I was ready to go back with the
7 Christian Missionary Alliance because they had
8 heard that I had worked with the Sedang which is
9 the only tribe that they had never been able to
10 have any kind of contact with. The Sedang were the
11 most war-like and fierce, the most feared of the
12 Montararis tribes in the jungles of Vietnam.

13 They -- they wanted me to -- to
14 go back with them and I was all set to go back and
15 work with Dr. Bob Green (phonetic spelling) who had
16 a hospital in Con Tun. But then Vietnam fell and
17 the M.V.A. who were in the hospital took the people
18 and the hospital and -- well, four or five of them
19 died as they were being marched back up to -- to
20 the north. So, after I finished -- I got my degree
21 and then I finished seminary was ordained, I went
22 to work and took a job as an assistant associate
23 pastor in a small little church in Lewiston Maine
24 Lewiston has a Norway, South Parish. It's right

1 Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003

2 near Lewiston. Pretty little town.

3 But again I was still having
4 difficulties relating to people. So, I moved my
5 wife into this small little hunting camp that we
6 bought, twenty acres of land. I call it a hunting
7 camp, she called it a shack. But we heated with
8 wood, we cooked on a wood stove. We had to haul
9 water from the creek that was in front of our
10 house. We had to go down this dirt road, park your
11 four-wheel drive. You need a four-wheel drive to
12 get down the dirt road. Park your four-wheel drive
13 and then hike about two hundred meters up into the
14 woods. We had to go across this creek and that's
15 where our house was, up there. Here I am living up
16 there. We had two kids at the time. Heating the
17 house with wood, cooking on a wood stove. We
18 didn't even have a outhouse out there. I told my
19 wife that we had cattle, a cow, you know. That's
20 what we used to do in Vietnam.

21 And I'm surprised that she stayed
22 with me through all that. We didn't even have an
23 out -- she -- in the winter time she had to warm
24 her butt up by a wood stove, run outside, dig a

1 Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003
2 hole and then go to the bathroom and then come back
3 in. My oldest daughter was probably about three or
4 four or five at the time. She thought it was
5 great. My youngest son was a newborn and he -- he
6 doesn't remember it too much. But she -- my
7 daughter called it our little house on the prairie.
8 But my wife often says that the best gift that I
9 ever gave her was one day I finally came home with
10 this collapsible camping toilet that you just
11 pulled out and put a blue bag on it and that --
12 that was our bathroom facilities. We used to bathe
13 in the creek in the front and -- and here I was the
14 associate pastor of the church. We lived there for
15 two years. Like this for two years.

16 She stayed with me because then
17 after we moved from there and we moved into a tepee
18 which she liked better than the shack because the
19 tepee was near a campground and we could have
20 shower facilities there. But shortly after that I
21 decided that I wasn't doing too well in the
22 ministry kind of thing, but I really loved working
23 with kids. So, I decided to come back to New York
24 and I went back to graduate school and got a

1 Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003

2 master's in counseling and from that moved into
3 school counseling.

4 So -- but yeah, my wife has been
5 through a lot. She often says that she wishes
6 someone would come and interview her because she'd
7 like to tell them some stories.

8 Q. Tell her to come over, we'll do
9 it to her too and get her side.

10 A. She said that -- she said Vietnam
11 is nothing compared to what I put her through. But
12 yeah, I have.

13 BY MR. CLARK:

14 Q. I think you've told us how your
15 time in the service affected your life. How do you
16 think winning the congressional medal of honor has
17 affected your life, or do you think it has?

18 A. I think for me for -- I felt a
19 little bit of "mauch." I always say that there is
20 a little model that I had, that I saw in Vietnam
21 that was in the Mike Force team house. And it was
22 one of these things. As soon as you breath it was
23 just emblazoned in my mind and it said to really
24 live you felt stunning for those that fight for it.

1 Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003

2 Life has a meaning my country will never know. And
3 I almost died and I think that those experiences in
4 Vietnam really taught me what mattered. To me life
5 is very, very important now and it's very, very
6 precious and Vietnam gave me my life mission and
7 that was just to let people know how important and
8 how precious life is and to appreciate it and to
9 value it, to treasure it and to know and what to
10 believe in that there are things worth living for,
11 worth dying for and worth killing for. Da Yo
12 taught me that. He died for me. He really did.
13 When I think of -- and which is one of the reasons
14 that I decided that I was going to work with kids
15 because a fifteen-year-old gave his life for me.

16 And I think that we as adults too
17 often take young kids for granted. We don't give
18 them enough credit. I think that most of them
19 can't think or feel beyond the next person but I
20 know that kids are capable of valuing something
21 very, very important and so that's my mission is to
22 impact kids with that message, to really live is to
23 almost die and to those who fight for it life has a
24 meaning and if protected will never know. So,

1 Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003

2 that's my mission is to -- is to give that message
3 out.

4 On a more personal level, I also
5 think that because of my hospital experience that
6 God's an important part of my life. And I have a
7 chance to tell my story only because of the Medal
8 of Honor. The medal of honor has opened doors that
9 has allowed me to be able to tell my story to
10 others who would never have heard it if it had not
11 been for the medal. And there's a -- a verse that
12 is very important to me and it's found in Psalms
13 forty-nine, verse twenty, it says that man is an
14 honor and understands not, is like a beast that
15 perishes. So, it's like God saying, "Gary, you're
16 going to be given an honor, but you need to
17 understand something, and if you don't understand
18 it you're no better than the beast that's going to
19 perish. And what does it mean to understand it?
20 Well, for me, it's -- it's God and God's the most
21 important thing in my life. And I've been given a
22 tremendous honor, but I need to understand that
23 it's for his glory, for his honor, not my honor.

24 So, that's the message that I

1 Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003

2 take. So, the medal of honor has changed my life
3 because it's really helped open doors and enabled
4 me to have done my mission and of trying to impact
5 the young kids.

6 (Off the record)

7 Q. -- a narrative of the -- of the
8 action.

9 BY MR. RUSSERT:

10 Q. Who -- who are those fellows
11 again?

12 A. Paul Andrews (phonetic spelling)
13 was my -- was the team leader, the captain in
14 charge of the team. Pat Dazenni (phonetic
15 spelling) was the cammo man, John Linard (phonetic
16 spelling) was the other cammo man. And recently
17 like within the past couple of years John Linard
18 ended up coming back to -- moved into Rochester,
19 New York, and he works for Harris (phonetic
20 spelling) Communications. And he had heard that I
21 was -- he remembered that I was from Rochester, so
22 he's gotten in contact with me. And John's writing
23 a book about the whole siege and so in talking with
24 John it's helped me to put some order to some of

1 Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003

2 the events that I just remember specific things
3 about, but I never knew the order of those things.

4 For instance, John thought that I
5 had been medivaced out the first day, but I
6 remember things happening that John said didn't
7 happen until the second or third day. So, I must
8 have been on site for a couple of days before I was
9 able to me medivaced out. So, these are the kinds
10 of things that were -- were worrying me, but John
11 wants to write a book about -- about the siege at
12 Dhon Seng. So, he's -- I know he was involved
13 with -- he was one -- one of those that was
14 interviewed. I also -- somebody wrote a book. I
15 can't remember the name of it, but he was a major,
16 George Dooley (phonetic spelling) and he used to be
17 up at the camp. And I got his book and I read
18 his -- his recollections of the -- of the battle
19 and in there he -- he writes about putting me in
20 for the medal of honor. But I don't remember him
21 being out there. I thought he got injured when he
22 was there. I thought he had left. So, I know he
23 was another whose name is -- is in my files.

24 There's -- there was somebody

1 Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003
2 that got a hold of all the original recommendations
3 and all the paperwork and there's just reams of
4 paper to go -- has to be gone over before someone
5 is awarded a medal. And his name was in there too
6 as somebody else who was interviewed that asked
7 about the events. It goes through a pretty
8 involved process. I believe the action took place,
9 like April 1st, April Fool's Day, 1970 and I didn't
10 get the medal till October '73. And I think part
11 of that was the fact that I -- I was hiding out and
12 they couldn't find me.

13 (Off the record)

14 Q. All my kids and my grandkids.
15 This is a picture of me and my wife. This was
16 at --.

17 BY MR. CLARK:

18 Q. No, that wasn't taken in the
19 cab -- the shack, was it?

20 A. No. That must be the -- get
21 another straw there. No, this was taken at Ft.
22 Drum. I was up speaking to the First infantry 2nd
23 infantry before they were deployed over to --
24 they -- they went to Afghanistan. So, I do a lot

1 Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003

2 of speaking. I'm very involved with the R.O.T.C.
3 groups and -- and a lot of people at Ft. Drum.

4 And I also had an opportunity to
5 go back to Vietnam in 1980 and we went to -- we
6 actually went back and of course I can't what goes
7 on here. We went back as a delegation to talk with
8 during Co Tok about the M.I.A. P.O.W.s and we spent
9 some time in Hanoi meeting with -- with the
10 Vietnamese. We -- we went over to start a -- a
11 science council that would be studying agent
12 Orange. We wanted to establish an exchange program
13 that Vietnam children have from -- this is from a
14 Shakespearean Theater down in New York City.

15 We went over to start a culture
16 and exchange program. We went over to see if we
17 could facilitate the -- the departure of Amerasian
18 children. This was back in '82. And our -- wit --
19 our delegation we got -- well -- well, there was
20 nine of us that were vets that went over there and
21 we -- our government at the time was kind of angry
22 with us for going over because we sidestepped them
23 and we were invited by the North Vietnamese to come
24 over. They thought we were going to be made

1 Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003

2 political pawns. Then once we got over there the
3 Vietnamese wanted to take us down to the War Crimes
4 Museum and take pictures of us and stuff. We
5 refused to go.

6 But just as soldiers to soldiers
7 we wanted to break through and see if we could get
8 some work started on resolving some of these
9 issues. And shortly after that the Border the
10 departure Program for the -- for the Amerasian
11 children was started and we did bring back some
12 more names. But I haven't had ask to see -- I
13 didn't know if you were interested, but those were
14 some of the other things that -- that are military
15 related that I've been fortunate enough to be
16 involved with.

17 But then -- then back in '83 too
18 as -- as a way to changing the perception of
19 Vietnam vets Jim Donohue (phonetic spelling), who
20 was a S.F. guy from -- he's from Buffalo. He
21 worked with the Department of Labor.

22 Q. Oh yeah, I know who he is.

23 A. Jim Donohue and Steve Bako
24 (phonetic spelling) --

1 Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003

2 Q. Uh-huh. Yeah.

3 A. -- they were very instrumental
4 in -- in getting what we called the death penalty
5 marathon team going. We have thirteen of us former
6 S.F. guys. One -- two -- one navy SEAL and one
7 U.T.T. guy and one recon rate who parachuted into
8 Death Valley and made a movie of us running across
9 Death Valley. And Martin Sheen did the narration
10 for it. That's another one of my memories that's
11 very, very special. You know, it's one of those
12 things you wanted to do because if you didn't do it
13 you'd regret it later on. And I was -- I was the
14 youngest guy on the team. I was thirty-six then.
15 We ran across Death Valley, a hundred and fifteen
16 miles, a hundred fifteen miles a day. They made a
17 movie about that. So, that -- that was a fun
18 thing.

19 And then I brought -- this is
20 just pictures of the ceremonies and stuff that --
21 that -- with Nixon.

22 BY MR. RUSSERT:

23 Q. So, Nixon was -- yeah, that's
24 right.

1 Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003

2 A. Yeah, Nixon was the one who gave
3 me that. I have a picture of him giving me the
4 medal. Here's Frank Horton (phonetic spelling).

5 Q. You think -- you think you could
6 hold that up?

7 A. I don't know if you can get that.
8 You know, recent memory. I was surprised at how
9 short he was. That was the most memorable thing
10 that I remember about being with -- with Nixon is
11 thinking my gosh, you're short. And -- and I have
12 more pictures of him, but --.

13 Q. Now -- now, who is that in the
14 opposite photograph there?

15 A. Oh here? This was one of our
16 escort officers and that's my aunt. And this was
17 another one of the escort officers. See, they --
18 because you've got to remember they came -- they
19 got me out of a cave to come down here and they
20 wanted to wine and dine me and entertain me. My
21 escort officer, he never -- I had the long hair
22 again before I got it cut. I don't know if I have
23 a picture of him in here. But he was saying we've
24 got fifteen hundred bucks -- here's another one I

1 Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003
2 guess -- we've got fifteen hundred bucks. We want
3 to take you out and party. And I said I don't want
4 to go with you. And all the other guys, you know,
5 they're going all out and they're partying and
6 everything.

7 They were -- these were all the
8 army guys that got the medal with me. One guy
9 refused to get his hair cut, so he had to get it in
10 civilian clothes. He later committed suicide. He
11 was -- he was of the 101st airborne. Ken Case
12 (phonetic spelling) was his name. He was an
13 amputee.

14 Well, these guys were -- they
15 wanted to party and I said I don't want to and so
16 all the other guys was all partying and doing the
17 town of Washington. I stayed in my room. I
18 told -- I gave them the money, I said you guys do.
19 You -- you go out drinking. They said we can't do
20 that, if we go out without you we'd be in serious
21 trouble. I said, well, I'm not going out guys.
22 But they did finally get me to go out and they
23 bought me a new outfit because I -- and they -- and
24 they took me to the Watergate Restaurant in '73.

1 Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003

2 Yeah, they had -- they had a real
3 big, big party for me. But when this was over
4 they -- I was on the way out to go to the airport
5 and I flew back to New Hampshire, put all that
6 stuff in my duffel bag and went back to my cave.
7 And I'm just not -- just not ready for all that.
8 Here's the little pictures and here are the --
9 these are -- these are pictures the kids and I took
10 in Vietnam. It's when the kids were in the camp.

11 BY MR. RUSSERT:

12 Q. How many of the Montararis
13 were -- were killed in the siege, do you know?

14 A. I don't know. Hundreds. I don't
15 know what the --.

16 Q. Do you know whatever happened to
17 the tribe once Vietnam fell?

18 A. They were mostly -- I contacted a
19 Christian missionary Alliance Thomas Devins
20 (phonetic spelling) who was in charge of the C.M.A.
21 in Vietnam and he told me that most of the Sedang
22 were all -- the ones that didn't take off into the
23 jungle and were still hiding were put into
24 re-education camps. But that meant for me that

1 Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003

2 they were joking. But most of them always told us
3 that if the Americans ever left they would just go
4 back into the jungles and still fight. And from
5 what I heard when I went back into -- back in '82
6 the Central Highlands were still a very unsafe
7 area. The Vietnamese were telling us that the --
8 that it was not safe there. There were two areas
9 that were not safe and they were even concerned
10 about taking us. One was back in the Central
11 Highlands and the other was in Thai Kan province
12 near the Cambodian border. They took us up -- up
13 into Thai Kan and they had armed guards with us all
14 the time. Boy that was a rush, to get off the
15 plane in Hanoi and looking onto the -- looking
16 there and seeing these guys with AK-47s and these
17 N.V.A. soldiers. That was -- that was scary.

18 And then when we was there that
19 was there they pulled me into -- into a separate
20 room in the Hanoi Airport and kept me in there for
21 three hours. Here I'm thinking man they found out
22 I'm Special Forces, they're going to think I'm a
23 C.I.A. spy or something. They're going to take me
24 out and throw me in the -- in prison. I have no

1 **Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003**
2 **idea why they did that, but actually I was just**
3 **brought back and no explanation given. But they**
4 **kept me separate for three hours. They just said**
5 **they're looking across the desk at an N.V.A.**
6 **soldier. He just stared at me for three hours with**
7 **his AK-47. And I thought oh my gosh, I don't need**
8 **this.**

9 MR. RUSSERT: That's it. Thank
10 you.

11 MR. BEIKIRCH: Okay.

12 (The interview concluded.)

13

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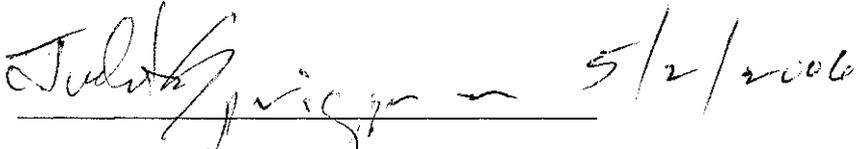
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1 Gary Beikirch - February 7, 2003

2 This is a transcription of the audio
3 provided to us. It is completed to the best of our
4 skill and ability. The transcript consists of
5 pages 1 through 71 inclusive.

6  5/2/2006
7 _____
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A		
abilities 9:7	anesthesiologist 20:17	11:12
ability 72:4	angry 64:21	A.K 47:9
able 8:24 55:9 60:9 62:9	antibiotics 21:18,19	B
Academy 9:17,19	anybody 46:9	B 23:8 33:16 36:7,16 38:12
accidents 39:5	apartment 25:12,14	38:12
aced 15:15	appreciate 59:8	back 2:23 3:11,19,22 11:24
aching 28:4	Approximately 2:4	14:2 17:6 18:24 19:9,11
acres 56:6	April 55:5 63:9,9	19:12 20:4,5,8 21:11 24:6
action 61:8 63:8	aptitude 9:8 14:15 15:4	25:4,9 28:14 30:5 38:14
actual 15:21	39:22 43:12	45:13,17 48:10 51:12
adhere 49:8	area 18:22 70:7	52:3,6,7 54:23 55:3,6,14
adults 59:16	areas 16:20 17:2 70:8	55:14,19 57:2,23,24
adventure 3:11	arm 39:7	61:18 64:5,6,7,18 65:11
advised 49:20 50:14	armed 70:13	65:17 69:5,6 70:4,5,5,10
Afghanistan 63:24	armored 17:4	71:3
Africa 24:10 26:2 30:9	army 2:24 16:16 17:9 18:8	background 2:13
agent 64:11	19:7 23:2 24:20 26:10	backs 35:15
ages 50:23	29:16 68:8	bad 7:3 28:23,24 41:20
ahead 10:8	arrive 33:3	43:11
air 6:5,8,8 14:20 47:5,8,15	article 52:4	Badenhaus 24:13
47:17	Asia 24:10	bag 57:11 69:6
airborne 5:3,6,13,15 14:8	asked 17:17 63:6	bags 35:15
14:9 68:11	assault 29:3	Bako 65:23
airport 69:4 70:20	assigned 14:9,10 19:7 24:6	barracks 6:3,5 25:11 26:15
AK-47 71:7	24:15 25:20 26:20 33:7	bars 27:21 28:6,7
AK-47s 70:16	assist 40:15	Base 6:5
alert 30:8 49:5,7	assistant 20:16 55:22	basic 5:20,21,23 6:2,14,22
alive 37:18	associate 55:22 57:14	7:2 12:2,13,13 14:5 15:10
Alliance 55:7 69:19	Associated 72:9	15:15,20,21
allowed 20:5 21:17 60:9	ate 47:19 51:19,20	bathe 57:12
alphabet 33:20	attached 22:7,10	bathroom 57:2,12
amazing 44:8	attention 32:12	battery 8:2,10
ambush 12:5	attitude 7:3	battle 13:6 62:18
ambushes 48:16	attractive 53:20	Bay 34:15,21
Amerasian 64:17 65:10	audio 72:2	beast 60:14,18
American 40:21 46:21,21	August 2:11 4:13	beat 28:23,24 29:3
51:17	aunt 67:16	beauty 41:15
Americans 46:8,9 70:3	autopsy 17:18,19 18:5	Bec 42:6
amputation 22:4,4	avoid 49:19	bed 3:12
amputations 39:5	awarded 12:18 23:8 24:4	beer 47:14
amputee 68:13	52:5,10,13 63:5	began 12:15
Andrews 61:12	awful 37:20 45:14	begged 15:6,6,6
	A.I.T 5:22,24 6:4,14 7:8,14	Beikirch 1:3 2:1,10 3:1 4:1

<p>5:1 6:1 7:1 8:1 9:1 10:1 11:1 12:1 13:1 14:1 15:1 16:1 17:1 18:1 19:1 20:1 21:1 22:1 23:1 24:1 25:1 26:1 27:1,4,6,8 28:1,11 29:1 30:1 31:1 32:1 33:1 34:1 35:1 36:1 37:1 38:1 39:1 40:1 41:1 42:1 43:1 44:1 45:1 46:1 47:1 48:1 49:1 50:1 51:1 52:1 53:1 54:1 55:1 56:1 57:1 58:1 59:1 60:1 61:1 62:1 63:1 64:1 65:1 66:1 67:1 68:1 69:1 70:1 71:1,11 72:1 believe 8:4 59:10 63:8 Benning 6:17 8:9 14:11 beret 4:21 12:19,19 24:5 32:14 34:3 Berets 3:5 berthing 42:20 best 40:22 49:23 57:8 72:3 better 27:11 57:18 60:18 beyond 32:9 59:19 big 3:3,3 5:3 29:9 42:24 69:3,3 billy 28:21,22 birth 2:9,9 42:18 bit 7:8 17:21 18:3 58:19 bites 39:9 block 28:19,19 blood 18:3 40:3,5,7 blowing 39:7,7 blue 57:11 board 22:16 boards 22:16 Bob 55:15 body 29:3 50:5,15 bone 17:24 18:4,4 40:24 bonus 30:22 bonuses 30:21 booby 51:9 book 61:23 62:11,14,17 border 46:12,19 65:9</p>	<p>70:12 born 2:10 boss 43:21 bought 56:6 68:23 bouncing 28:15 bows 47:11 box 53:9 54:17 Boy 70:14 bracelet 44:12,22,23 bracelets 44:17 Brae 50:13,23 Brae's 50:24 Bragg 8:8 9:21 13:10 19:9 22:9 24:8,9,11 25:4 26:3 28:14 37:19 brain 18:5 break 10:7 65:7 breath 58:22 Breyer 50:24 bring 20:21 65:11 Brockport 3:12 broke 2:19 3:21 brother 50:24 brought 66:19 71:3 bucks 30:15,24 67:24 68:2 buff 27:5,5 Buffalo 65:20 buffing 26:7 build 48:5 building 27:6 43:5 built 43:16 buk 41:21 bunch 44:14 burning 33:10,13,14 34:3,6 bush 44:19 bushes 50:19 butt 56:24</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">C</p> <hr/> <p>C 33:19 38:11 40:18 41:5 47:3 cab 63:19 cadre 8:8 13:17 call 10:12 12:12 13:9,13</p>	<p>15:18 39:13,17,23 42:8 56:6 called 12:2 18:11 28:18 56:7 57:7 66:4 Cambodian 70:12 cammo 61:15,16 camo 26:5 camp 38:18,19 41:9,24 42:7,13,22 43:9 44:7,7 45:6 46:5,12,13,17 49:6 50:17 51:5 56:5,7 62:17 69:10 campground 57:19 camping 57:10 camp 41:20 42:2,5 69:24 Cam-ranh 32:23 34:15,21 capable 59:20 captain 61:13 car 28:14,20 Carbine 49:4 carbines 48:21 cardial 22:6 care 15:21 17:14 36:22 41:5 42:15 Caribous 47:6,16 carried 49:4 carry 28:21 48:23 49:3 cars 28:16 case 49:13 50:2 68:11 cattle 56:19 caught 25:13 cave 67:19 69:6 center 4:19 Central 35:4 70:6,10 ceremonies 66:20 certain 32:5 challenge 3:9 5:4 42:24 challenging 9:13 chance 60:7 change 52:2 changed 11:23 37:13 38:20 52:17 61:2 changing 21:20 46:2 65:18</p>
--	---	---

<p>charge 10:13 61:14 69:20 charges 29:5 31:13 Charlie 11:17,18 chasing 28:16 Chi 46:14 Chicops 47:10 child 42:18 children 64:13,18 65:11 choice 22:5 37:10 choose 19:21 chopper 35:7 41:24 42:8 Christian 55:7 69:19 church 52:24 53:5 55:23 57:14 churches 53:2,4 circulating 20:19 City 64:14 civilian 29:7 68:10 Clark 2:6 7:22 16:8 21:5 38:23 58:13 63:17 class 4:20 19:2,6 25:2,7 33:13 classroom 12:6 cleaning 26:15 33:10 climatization 34:18 climbed 10:21 climbing 35:18 clinic 16:21 clothes 68:10 club 28:21,22 Coast 30:9 code 13:13 cold 6:6 collapsible 57:10 college 2:15,17,23 3:12,17 3:20 combat 15:22 48:15 49:9 combatting 21:20 come 3:22 5:10 13:5,19 34:9,12,13 37:5,24 38:4 41:13 47:16 50:18,18 51:12 57:2,23 58:6,8 64:23 67:19</p>	<p>coming 10:9 18:3 19:2 46:11 47:5 61:18 Command 35:3 commenced 2:2 commiserating 29:23 commitment 2:20 committed 68:10 common 23:22 communications 12:10 14:19 36:3 61:20 company 6:3 7:12,16 33:8 36:8,16 51:5 compared 58:11 competition 7:20 complaint 40:2 completed 24:4 72:3 compromised 13:12 Con 34:12,13,14 36:8 42:3 42:4 47:7 55:16 concentric 20:18 concerned 70:9 concluded 71:12 congressional 58:16 consequently 45:14 consists 72:4 contact 47:8 49:23 55:10 61:22 contacted 69:18 continue 15:12 control 12:16 35:4 controversial 19:13 controversy 3:13 conventional 19:7 34:24 cooked 56:8 cooking 56:17 corps 3:22,24 4:3 11:3 Corpsman 12:16 correctly 8:10 15:17 16:12 20:9 correspondence 52:22 council 64:11 counseling 58:2,3 count 49:24</p>	<p>counter 12:15 country 4:8 29:19,20,22 30:2,12 59:2 counts 40:8 couple 3:16 25:13 27:10 34:19 35:21 39:10 53:17 61:17 62:8 course 13:15 15:10,20,21 52:22 64:6 courses 16:6,7 court 29:20 31:6,7 courts 29:7 cover 31:2 covert 23:17 cow 56:19 crawl 13:15 crazy 10:20 35:17 credit 59:18 creek 56:9,14 57:13 crew 9:24 Crimes 65:3 critical 8:11,14 cross 46:19 47:11 49:5,11 49:12 crowded 42:10 crushed 17:21 culture 23:20 64:15 cut 20:23 21:23 67:22 68:9 cute 50:6 cutting 20:24 cycle 35:10 C.C.C 34:13 35:3 37:5,14 46:17 C.I.A 70:23 C.I.D.G 36:11,13,19,24 37:16 C.M.A 69:20</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">D</p> <p>Da 50:5,10,16 51:10 59:11 dad 45:11 Dairy 35:20,20,21,23 Dane 37:17 Darnell 17:9 18:8</p>
--	---	---

<p>date 2:9 32:9 daughter 57:3,7 day 3:19 8:13 10:19 26:9 26:18,18 27:4,7,14 32:6 33:23 35:14 39:18 53:8 54:5 57:9 62:5,7 63:9 66:16 days 16:11,12 27:15,20 31:6,21 38:3 53:17 62:8 Dazenni 61:14 de 11:3 deadly 29:3 deal 47:13 death 66:4,8,9,15 debridement 21:3,17,18,24 debriding 21:19 decide 3:2 decided 2:15 52:7 54:11 57:21,23 59:14 decisions 8:11,14 degree 54:24 55:20 delegation 64:7,19 delivery 18:8 demolitions 14:20 43:16 dental 16:21 41:11 43:4 dentistry 16:22 Denver 3:20 Department 65:21 departure 64:17 65:10 depended 14:11 deployed 63:23 desert 17:7,7,7,8 deserted 6:8 desk 71:5 desolate 17:3 deuce 49:8 develop 42:24 49:20 50:14 developed 37:2 developing 11:2 46:6,6 Devins 69:19 Dhon 62:12 die 59:23 died 17:13,16,16,23 20:3</p>	<p>55:19 59:3,12 dies 20:7,8 diesel 33:24 different 11:16,20 16:4,20 17:2 38:2 43:4 45:15,16 49:16,18,19 differentials 40:8 difficulties 56:4 dig 56:24 dine 67:20 direction 43:9 dirt 56:10,12 disbanded 19:17 Discovery 13:22,22 diseases 16:5,5 39:2,11,11 43:5 dispensary 42:11,12 division 17:5 divorced 45:10,12,12 Dix 5:21,24 6:14 Doc 39:15 41:21 48:12,12 doctor 41:11 42:22 43:2 doctors 16:3 22:17,19,21 23:2 40:20,21 42:23 Doc's 44:7 dog 18:22 19:12,18,22,23 20:23 22:12,13 51:20,20 51:21 dogs 19:15 22:8,10 doing 7:7 19:15 20:2 26:10 26:11,16 32:16 34:6,7 36:21 42:17 48:15 57:21 68:16 dollars 30:14,23 31:15 Donohue 65:19,23 Dooley 62:16 doors 60:8 61:3 downstairs 13:6 Dr 55:15 draw 40:6 drawn 40:5 dress 13:6 dressings 21:20</p>	<p>drinking 27:22 68:19 drive 28:14 56:11,11,12 driving 29:4 31:13,15 drop 10:14,16 12:21 14:4 47:13,14 dropped 31:14 dropping 16:13 Drum 63:22 64:3 drums 34:2 drunk 39:6 duce 49:7 duffel 69:6 Duk 45:19 duty 26:6,7,14 27:8,8,9,13 32:16,17 33:9,20 dying 59:11 D.O.A 17:12</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">E</p> <hr/> <p>E 37:7 earlier 8:5 earth 17:4 easier 7:8 East 24:10 eat 47:20,21 49:18 51:19 51:21 echo 5:23 educational 2:12 eight 7:2 11:24 12:6,6 14:13,14 15:15 23:12,23 24:3 26:24 27:3 eighteen 15:3 eighth 24:11 either 22:5 31:16 eleven 11:17,18 45:15 emblazoned 58:23 emergency 6:10 15:20 16:19 17:15,16 20:15 42:18 enabled 23:11 61:3 encountered 17:12 25:24 ended 27:16 31:22 32:18 32:22 33:5,8 34:24 38:22 43:20 61:18</p>
---	---	---

<p>ends 54:2 engineer 43:16 enjoyed 51:15 enlist 3:2,22 enlisted 2:23 5:17 entailed 19:18 entering 2:13 entertain 67:20 Entre 35:11,13,24 Episcopal 52:24 53:5 equipped 41:17 escort 67:16,17,21 especially 7:21 24:24 42:16 esprit 11:3 establish 64:12 evening 26:13 events 62:2 63:7 eventually 29:12 54:20 everybody 3:13 6:23 10:8 10:19 12:11 14:6 34:18 49:12 exchange 64:12,16 exciting 11:6 exist 47:2 experience 6:24 17:13,19 18:6,12 23:7 35:12 46:3 60:5 experienced 6:22 experiences 6:20 9:23 17:10 43:24 44:9 59:3 explanation 71:3 express 4:15 expression 9:10 extra 26:6,14 32:17 E-five 24:22 25:20 E-fives 25:21 E-four 37:9,9 E-seven 37:17 39:16 40:23 E-three 24:23 25:3,18,22 26:3,4,16 E-threes 26:5 E-Vac 40:21 E-53 5:23</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">F</p> <p>face 13:18 facilitate 64:17 facilities 57:12,20 facing 29:3 fact 35:7 63:11 fail 20:9 familiar 28:5 far 37:21 Fayetteville 27:20 28:15,16 29:13 feared 55:11 February 1:5 2:1 3:1 4:1 5:1 6:1 7:1 8:1 9:1 10:1 11:1 12:1 13:1 14:1 15:1 16:1 17:1 18:1 19:1 20:1 21:1 22:1 23:1 24:1 25:1 26:1 27:1 28:1 29:1 30:1 31:1 32:1 33:1 34:1 35:1 36:1 37:1 38:1 39:1 40:1 41:1 42:1 43:1 44:1 45:1 46:1 47:1 48:1 49:1 50:1 51:1 52:1 53:1 54:1,11 55:1 56:1 57:1 58:1 59:1 60:1 61:1 62:1 63:1 64:1 65:1 66:1 67:1 68:1 69:1 70:1 71:1 72:1 fee 30:14 31:3 feel 59:19 fell 43:9 54:9 55:4,5,16 69:17 fellows 61:10 felt 4:6,7 40:4,12 45:18 58:18,24 field 6:8,8 fierce 55:11 fifteen 50:11,21 66:15,16 67:24 68:2 fifteen-year-old 59:15 fifth 35:8 fifty-five-gallon 34:2 fight 58:24 59:23 70:4 fighting 29:24</p>	<p>figured 7:17 files 62:23 fill 49:12 final 24:2 finally 57:9 68:22 find 3:14 4:6 29:7 63:12 finding 20:23 fine 31:2,3 fined 31:15 finish 15:23 finished 2:15 12:7,17 16:14 22:14 23:10 24:22 25:6 25:17,17 26:19 33:24 36:6 54:24 55:2,20,21 fire 22:17 23:3 fired 49:8 first 4:19 9:23 11:5 12:11 14:5 15:10,10 17:4,12,12 18:5,8 24:7 33:20 38:17 42:10 43:18 53:6 62:5 63:22 five 5:24,24 10:3 24:24 26:24 27:3 45:11 50:18 55:18 57:4 flash 24:4,5 flew 36:18 69:5 floors 26:7 Flota 4:20 fly 35:7 follow 25:5 following 32:11 food 47:2,3,21 51:14,17 Fool's 63:9 force 6:5 37:2,4,5,14,22 46:11,17,21 47:5,8,15 58:21 forces 3:10 4:15 7:5,24 11:23 12:2,14 14:19 15:3 18:16,20 22:23 23:4,12 23:17 24:16 38:5 70:22 forever 34:8,21 45:21,23 formation 10:5,7,10 former 66:5</p>
---	---	--

<p>Fort 31:23 fortifications 48:6 fortunate 65:15 forty-nine 60:13 forward 11:7,7 found 31:14 52:9,13 60:12 70:21 four 9:20 53:18 55:18 57:4 fourteen 50:24 four-language 9:9 four-wheel 56:11,11,12 Frank 67:4 friend 3:18 32:6 49:23 friends 3:16 friendship 37:2 friendships 46:6 frog 10:23 front 56:9 57:13 Ft 5:21,24 6:14,17 8:8,8 9:20,20 13:10 14:11 15:19,24 16:15,23 17:2,6 17:9 19:8,9 22:9 25:10 26:3 28:14 31:24 32:6,13 32:16 37:19 63:21 64:3 full 2:8 13:6,6,6 fun 33:11 66:17 funny 43:22,24 further 18:23 41:20 42:2 furthest 42:7 F.T.X 12:8,18 24:2</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">G</p> <p>Gary 1:3 2:1,10 3:1 4:1 5:1 6:1 7:1 8:1 9:1 10:1 11:1 12:1 13:1 14:1 15:1 16:1 17:1 18:1 19:1 20:1 21:1 22:1 23:1 24:1 25:1 26:1 27:1 28:1 29:1 30:1 31:1 32:1 33:1 34:1 35:1 36:1 37:1,22 38:1 39:1 40:1 41:1 42:1 43:1 44:1 45:1 46:1 47:1 48:1 49:1 50:1 51:1 52:1 53:1 54:1 55:1 56:1 57:1 58:1 59:1 60:1</p>	<p>60:15 61:1 62:1 63:1 64:1 65:1 66:1 67:1 68:1 69:1 70:1 71:1 72:1 gear 13:6 general 8:23 9:5 George 62:16 Georgia 6:18 Germany 24:13 getting 25:4 27:14 39:6 41:23 54:18 66:4 Ghabour 36:17 gift 57:8 girl 2:16 53:13,20 54:19 girlfriend 3:4,21 4:9 give 2:8 5:10 8:12,14,22 10:14,17 15:8 19:21,21 19:23 30:2 47:14,18 59:17 60:2 given 19:20 20:12 44:23 45:2 54:7 60:16,21 71:3 giving 67:3 glad 36:5 glory 60:23 go 2:15 3:5,24 4:12,23 5:9 5:11,20 6:15 10:11 14:21 14:24 15:8,12 16:17 17:17,18 18:16,21,21,24 20:4 21:2 22:16,18 23:11 24:19 26:17 27:23 29:20 30:18,20 31:6,16,17 34:17,19,20 35:6 36:7 37:4,11,14 38:3,9,15 39:20 40:2 42:7,19 47:7 47:22 48:14 49:15,17 51:10 52:6,7 55:3,5,6,14 55:14 56:10,14 57:2 63:4 64:5 65:5 68:4,19,20,22 69:4 70:3 goal 4:16,17 God 60:15,20 God's 60:6,20 goes 28:11,13 30:17,19 34:7 37:11 63:7 64:6</p>	<p>going 2:14,16,17 3:19 4:4 4:18 6:10 7:11,13,13,15 7:18 8:7 14:18 16:24 26:2 26:11 27:12,16,16,19 29:24,24 30:6,7,8 32:4,18 35:9 36:7 37:24 46:11,18 49:24 50:20 51:24 53:14 59:14 60:16,18 64:22,24 66:5 68:5,21 70:22,23 good 3:9,18 29:13 41:6 47:19 49:21 50:20,20 gorilla 12:15 gosh 28:6 67:11 71:7 gotten 22:7,10 37:7 44:21 61:22 government 64:21 grade 45:15 graduate 57:24 graduated 24:21 25:2,17 33:12 graduates 4:2 graduating 24:24 grafts 41:2 grandkids 63:14 granted 59:17 great 17:10 26:23 31:6 34:14 36:4 37:19,19 39:17 44:2 57:5 greatest 44:9 Green 3:5 4:21 55:15 grenade 39:7 group 7:18 24:16 25:17 groups 64:3 Growing 45:10 grownup 23:22 guard 26:6 27:7,8,9,13 28:22 50:5,15 guards 70:13 guess 7:3 15:6 30:21 68:2 guidelines 49:9 guilty 29:8 31:12,13,14 gung 7:10 gunner 51:6</p>
---	---	---

<p>guns 11:20 48:22,22 gunshot 21:4 39:2,5 guy 7:5 29:12,13 34:11 39:17 41:7 43:16 65:20 66:7,14 68:8 guys 6:2 7:14 9:14,15,18 10:24 11:5 14:8 17:5 18:13 19:3 22:9 24:18,21 25:19 26:3,5 30:23 31:22 32:2 34:17,23 44:18 47:5 47:8 50:15 66:6 68:4,8,14 68:16,18,21 70:16</p>	<p>31:12 34:23 35:17 55:8 60:10 61:20 70:5 heated 56:7 Heating 56:16 held 46:16 helped 13:18 61:3,24 hemorrhage 18:4 Hey 34:5 hiding 63:11 69:23 high 2:15 3:17 Highlands 38:9 70:6,11 highway 42:2,3,5 hike 56:13 HISTORY 1:3 hit 29:4 42:13 45:19 ho 7:10 46:14 hold 19:14 39:23 63:2 67:6 holding 33:8 hole 57:2 home 45:18,19 57:9 homes 47:24,24 honor 52:6,10,13 54:18 58:16 60:8,8,14,16,22,23 60:23 61:2 62:20 Hood 17:3,6,9 19:8 hopefully 7:13 Horton 67:4 hospital 16:16,18 17:2,10 17:11 18:8 36:11,14,19 36:24 37:16 42:16 44:16 55:16,17,18 60:5 hospitals 16:20 hot 3:12 hours 70:21 71:4,6 house 56:10,15,17 57:7 58:21 Houston 15:19,24 25:10 hundred 29:16 30:14,15,24 31:15 56:13 66:15,16 67:24 68:2 Hundreds 69:14 hunk 3:6 hunting 56:5,6</p>	<p>hurt 49:13 hygiene 43:7</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">I</p> <hr/> <p>idea 9:6 19:15 31:8 71:2 identify 39:21 II 6:5 immediately 20:14 54:10 impact 59:22 61:4 important 11:3 54:16 59:5 59:7,21 60:6,12,21 impressive 9:24 10:14,18 incision 20:24 including 51:20 inclusive 72:5 indicating 18:2 50:12 infantry 5:3,6,13,15 6:4 63:22,23 infection 21:20 infections 39:9 40:9 inflatable 10:23 info 40:15 injection 22:6 injured 62:21 installed 11:5 instance 62:4 instructed 16:3 instructors 16:3 instrumental 66:3 intelligence 14:22 intense 23:6 intensive 16:10 interested 65:13 interpreter 50:12 interpreters 50:13 interview 1:3 2:2 58:6 71:12 interviewed 62:14 63:6 interviewers 2:5 interviews 14:16 intoxicated 29:4 Int'l 72:9 invited 64:23 involved 12:15 54:2 62:12</p>
<hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">H</p> <hr/> <p>Hai 42:6 hair 67:21 68:9 half 10:4,6 hammock 50:17 Hampshire 54:15 55:2 69:5 hand 10:15 handle 40:13 hands 10:16 Hanoi 64:9 70:15,20 happen 62:7 happened 17:19 28:9,12 45:9 52:18 69:16 happening 31:11 62:6 happy 51:22 harass 13:4 harassment 6:12 12:7 13:23 Harris 61:19 hassled 6:13 hassling 32:15 haul 56:8 head 29:15 headquarters 26:7,15 27:5 27:6,7 35:8,9 heal 21:21 healed 21:22 health 44:5 healthy 19:24 20:10 heard 19:16 26:19 29:16</p>		

63:8 64:2 65:16 in-country 35:11 Iraqi 17:6 Island 35:12,13,24 issues 65:9 I.V 20:23 21:2,23	69:10 killed 4:3 69:13 killing 59:11 kind 7:5,23 8:19 11:23 13:23,24 21:17 23:23 25:3,22 29:14 34:24 46:24 47:2 48:18 51:18 55:10 57:22 64:21 kinds 7:7 9:8 11:21 12:10 16:4 39:10,11 40:4,14,23 41:3 43:7 50:19 62:9 knew 28:3 35:17 44:24 54:13 62:3 know 3:7,23 4:4 5:8 6:24 7:4,6 8:15 9:2 10:4,7,16 11:4,16,23 13:3,5,7,15,19 13:20 15:9 16:13 19:2,6 20:4,5 22:11,17 23:10,16 24:14 25:12 26:4,10,20 26:23,24,24 27:4,7,10,14 27:15,21 28:8,10 29:23 31:22,23 32:3,5,16 33:9 33:11,12,14 34:4,18 35:16 36:21,21 37:6,10 39:6,8 40:14 42:11,13,20 43:7,18 45:17,21,23 46:7 48:5 49:17 51:15 53:13 53:16,16,22,23 54:3,6 56:19 59:2,7,9,20,24 62:12,22 65:13,22 66:11 67:7,8,22 68:4 69:13,14 69:15,16 Korea 7:14 Korean 48:22 K.P 6:23,24 7:7 26:6,13,17 27:3,4 33:9	land 8:23 9:5 12:4 47:6,16 56:6 landing 6:11 Laos 46:12,13,18 late 19:12 31:23 32:3,13,18 33:6 latrines 43:6,15,15,17 laundry 54:5 lawyer 29:6,10,15 30:13 lawyer's 31:3 lay 8:23 9:5 leader 61:13 leading 27:17 learn 32:10 leave 29:22 31:21 leaving 13:2 14:12 left 28:15 62:22 70:3 legal 31:7 legs 51:9 length 24:19 leniency 30:3 letter 53:9 let's 29:23 31:6 47:13 54:10,11 level 60:4 Lewis 31:24 32:7,13,16 Lewiston 55:23,24 56:2 license 53:6 Lie 38:2 lieutenant 10:11 life 44:9 46:2 52:17 53:15 54:17 58:15,17 59:2,4,6,8 59:15,23 60:6,21 61:2 light 11:13,13,15 14:19 15:12,13 26:4 lights 52:20,21 liked 37:20 57:18 Linard 61:15,17 line 10:9 39:23 little 7:8 17:21 18:2 52:3 52:14 53:3 54:17 55:23 56:2,5 57:7 58:19,20 69:8 live 23:19 35:18 50:22
J		
jail 29:2 31:17 January 54:9,10 jargon 31:7 jealous 3:4 Jeep 17:16,20 Jersey 5:22 Jim 65:19,23 job 23:18 26:21 42:9 46:14 55:22 John 61:15,17,24 62:4,6,10 John's 61:22 joining 4:15 joking 70:2 judge 8:19 30:2 31:8,10 Judith 72:8 July 33:4,4,5 jump 5:9,10 6:18,20,21 7:9 7:11,15,16,19 8:7 9:21,22 jumping 46:18 jungle 47:24 69:23 jungles 38:6 50:23 55:12 70:4 Junior 39:14		
K		
Kan 70:11,13 keep 22:7 42:12 44:19 48:7 Kei 51:7,8 Ken 68:11 kept 22:11 70:20 71:4 keys 44:18 Khe 4:3 kick 18:21 kid 5:16 44:4 kids 56:16 57:23 59:14,17 59:20,22 61:5 63:14 69:9		
	L	
	lab 16:6 18:22 19:12,18 22:13 40:5,6,7 43:5 Labor 65:21 labs 16:21 22:12 Lancaster 52:3,4 Lancaster's 52:19	

<p>58:24 59:22 lived 32:7 57:14 living 25:10,14 45:16 56:15 59:10 long 6:13 15:3 27:9,10 53:24 54:2 67:21 long-term 42:15 look 28:4,5 40:7 45:17 looked 31:10 43:19 looking 7:6 8:20,21,22 11:7 11:7 29:17 70:15,15 71:5 looks 28:5 lost 44:20 45:6 51:9 lot 4:24 12:3,5,21 17:5 18:12 23:14,20,21,21 33:10 34:23 37:20 39:2,8 39:8 41:7 42:17 43:24 44:16 45:14 47:20,20,21 51:16 54:23 58:5 63:24 64:3 love 46:6 47:22 54:10 loved 18:10 36:19,23 38:13 41:12 48:14 49:14 57:22 lucky 14:9</p>	<p>61:16 70:21 manifest 32:19 marathon 66:5 March 54:10,11,14 marched 55:19 Marine 3:22,24 4:2 marines 7:20 married 32:7 54:11,14,21 54:23 marrow 40:24 marry 45:23 Martin 66:9 massacre 48:11,13 master's 58:2 mat 54:5 Matter 35:6 mattered 59:4 mauch 58:19 mauled 39:10 mayor 29:12 McGinley 37:18 McGuire 6:5,9 mean 29:19 60:19 meaning 49:10 59:2,24 meant 69:24 medal 52:5,10,13 54:18 58:16 60:7,8,11 61:2 62:20 63:5,10 67:4 68:8 medic 14:20 15:2,2,10 18:9 30:22 36:9 37:3,17 38:4 38:17,21 39:13,14,16 40:2 43:9,10,11,11 48:23 52:6 medical 14:24 15:16,18,21 16:2,10,11,19 22:15,21 23:2 36:12,13,21 37:21 41:8 medicine 16:22 37:20 43:5 43:8,13 medics 15:22 24:18,22 25:19,21 36:10 39:21 40:10 41:5,6 44:16 49:9 medivaced 62:5,9</p>	<p>meet 54:20 meeting 64:9 memorable 67:9 memories 66:10 memory 67:8 men 11:18 mentioned 8:4 mercy 29:23 message 59:22 60:2,24 messed 25:3 28:12 met 54:9 meter 27:24 meters 56:13 mid 3:12 24:10 midwives 42:21 Mike 2:5 37:2,3,5,14,22 46:11,17,21 58:21 mile 10:4,6 miles 10:3 46:13 66:16,16 military 28:8 29:8 65:14 mind 58:23 mine 3:18 14:23 17:2 Minh 46:15 ministry 57:22 minutes 27:23 50:18 missed 3:7 mission 11:20 59:6,21 60:2 61:4 missionary 52:7,8,9 55:4,7 69:19 mobilize 23:19 model 58:20 mom 45:14 money 30:11,13 68:18 Montararis 38:6,8 39:6,21 40:6 44:6,12 45:3 46:23 47:11,12,21,22 48:4,9,11 49:21 51:4,11,19 55:12 69:12 month 52:12 months 2:18 15:3 27:10 54:13 morning 10:3 13:5,11,16</p>
M		
<p>Ma 38:2 Mac 38:15 41:7 44:21 48:12 machine 48:22 51:6 machines 35:22 macho 4:11 Mag 41:21 mailbox 52:14,17 53:12 mailed 53:10 main 9:15 23:18 46:14 Maine 55:23 major 2:18 34:4,8,14 36:14 62:15 majored 2:17 making 20:24 malaria 39:8 40:9 Mali 30:7,8 man 3:7 37:19 60:13 61:15</p>		

<p>mortar 11:18 49:7,8 mortars 11:16,19 motivations 4:4 mountain 35:15,19,19,24 54:15 move 23:18 45:14 moved 56:4 57:17,17 58:2 61:18 movie 66:8,17 moving 37:6 45:16 mud 13:18 multi 21:3 Museum 65:4 M-16's 48:20,20 M-60 48:22 51:6 M.I.A 64:8 M.O.S 11:12 14:17 23:9,10 M.V.A 48:8,8 55:17</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">N</p> <p>naive 5:15,16 name 2:8 4:20 32:19 33:16 33:19 34:4 44:24 50:6 51:6 62:15,23 63:5 68:12 names 65:12 narration 66:9 narrative 61:7 nasal 17:24 18:4 native 46:24 47:3 51:18 naturally 17:14 navigation 12:3,4 navy 7:18 66:6 near 46:15 48:9 56:2 57:19 70:12 necessity 40:17 need 27:3,5,7,8 42:14 56:11 60:16,22 71:7 needed 26:13,14 30:11,11 30:12,13 40:4 Needless 24:13 Nelson 39:15 never 19:4 32:12 41:23 45:11,17 46:8,8 55:9 59:2 59:24 60:10 62:3 67:21</p>	<p>new 2:11 5:22 6:3 32:22 52:22 54:15 55:2 57:23 61:19 64:14 68:23 69:5 newborn 57:5 newspaper 52:4 Nguyen 38:18,21,22 nice 43:17 47:9,11,12 nickel 27:24 night 13:8 nine 7:2 64:20 nineteen 54:12,13 ninety-one 15:9,14,20 23:8 ninth 45:15 Nixon 66:21,23 67:2,10 Noc 48:9 non-weapons 49:10 normally 6:22 11:17 18:20 north 28:22 55:20 64:23 Norway 55:24 note 52:14 54:18 notebook 53:11 notes 54:4 number 25:7,7 nuts 10:24 N.C.O 9:16,17,19 14:11,21 N.V.A 70:17 71:5</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">O</p> <p>object 8:20,21 9:2 obstacle 13:15 ob-gyn 18:9 October 52:11 63:10 office 53:9 54:17 officer 67:21 officers 14:16 67:16,17 officially 54:9 oh 12:23 28:6 36:2 43:22 47:4 49:2 65:22 67:15 71:7 okay 2:10,12 4:14 6:15 13:12 15:8 20:12 22:13 22:22 23:5 27:3,4,18 29:10 31:6 47:9 52:16 71:11</p>	<p>Okinawa 24:7 old 6:4,4 33:9 37:17 48:21 50:11,21 51:5 older 25:12 oldest 51:3 57:3 once 6:24 18:22 21:21 22:4 26:19 46:10,20 47:6 51:22 65:2 69:17 ones 69:22 one-handed 10:17 open 53:9 61:3 opened 60:8 operating 19:16 operation 40:11 47:23 50:16 51:8,12 operations 12:4,16,16 14:21 23:14,22,23 36:16 46:16,19,22 48:15 49:15 51:10 opinion 3:13 opportunity 64:4 opposite 67:14 ORAL 1:3 Orange 64:12 ordained 55:3,21 order 61:24 62:3 orders 29:21 33:6 35:6 37:13 38:20 original 63:2 outfit 68:23 outhouse 56:18 outside 56:24 overrun 45:6 o'clock 13:5,11,16 O.C.S 4:3 7:16 O.J 18:11 O.J.T 16:16 18:11 19:8 O.R 20:17</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">P</p> <p>Pac 41:21 pages 72:5 paid 32:12 Panama 24:11</p>
---	---	--

<p>paper 53:11 63:4 paperwork 63:3 parachuted 66:7 parasitic 39:11 parent 45:12,12 parents 45:10 Parish 55:24 park 56:10,12 parked 28:15 parking 28:2 part 8:18 25:9 33:20 35:13 60:6 63:10 particular 8:20 party 68:3,15 69:3 partying 68:5,16 pass 5:2,11 9:14,16 passed 21:22 23:7 25:16 pastor 55:23 57:14 Pat 61:14 patient 19:20,21 20:3,7,8 20:10,21 22:2,5,7,11 patients 19:23 patriotic 4:5 Paul 61:12 Paul's 53:4 pawns 65:2 pay 30:13 pearl 12:4 pediatric 16:18 penalty 66:4 penathol 22:6 people 11:18 12:21 13:2 14:17 16:13 23:15,19,21 36:22 39:10,23 42:12 44:6 45:16 46:5 50:4 55:17 56:4 59:7 64:3 perception 65:18 perish 60:19 perishes 60:15 person 49:22,23 53:16 59:19 personal 60:4 personnel 49:10</p>	<p>perspective 8:19 pharmacology 16:6 phase 12:11,12 14:14 15:7 15:18 22:15 23:11,12 phonetic 4:20 17:9 30:7 35:11 36:17 37:18 38:7 38:15 39:15 40:19 41:21 41:21 44:24 47:10 48:3 48:10 50:5,13 51:2,7 55:15 61:12,14,15,19 62:16 65:19,24 67:4 68:12 69:20 photograph 67:14 photographed 53:2 photographs 45:5 photography 52:22 physical 19:21,24 picked 29:13 50:4 picture 8:23 53:19,19 54:8 63:15 67:3,23 pictures 9:3 52:23 53:5 65:4 66:20 67:12 69:8,9 piece 53:11 place 2:9 17:3 21:9 34:10 45:20,22 63:8 plane 6:10 70:15 planned 12:3 45:22 planted 45:20 playing 26:10 please 2:9 Pleiku 36:14,18 37:8 38:12 38:12 40:19 42:3,16 plus 3:11 4:8,10 32:18 point 9:2 19:3 police 28:16,18,18,23 political 65:2 pool 42:20 popular 45:13 position 49:5,7 position's 13:12 post 25:12,13 53:8 54:17 pouring 33:24 practical 22:18</p>	<p>practice 38:24 prairie 57:7 precious 59:6,8 pressure 17:23 40:3 pretty 5:15 7:10 56:2 63:7 preventive 43:5,13 previously 3:18 pride 11:2 prior 2:13,14 prison 70:24 probably 32:9 33:17 52:24 53:20 57:3 problem 25:9 41:23 problems 25:23 procedure 16:7 20:9 21:19 21:22,23 procedures 20:2,3,11 36:12 41:4 42:17 process 63:8 program 11:23 12:22 64:12,16 65:10 programed 49:7 promoted 37:9 promotions 25:16 pronounce 51:8 protected 59:24 prove 4:11 provided 72:3 province 70:11 Psalms 60:12 psychological 12:17 23:14 23:22 pull 41:13,13 46:14 pulled 34:22 41:13,14 57:11 70:19 pulling 41:12 49:16 purifying 43:8 purpose 4:15 pushed 17:23 pushups 10:17,17 put 8:9 23:16 24:5 27:23 27:24 38:6 46:4 54:22 57:11 58:11 61:24 69:5</p>
--	--	---

69:23 puts 53:19 putting 62:19 P.E 2:17,18 P.F.C 25:8 32:14 33:7 p.m 2:3,5 P.O.W.s 64:8 P.T 9:11,12,14	receive 11:9,19 received 11:14 29:21 54:16 reckless 31:13,14 recognize 28:7 53:22 recognized 54:7 recoil 11:15 recollections 62:18 recommendations 63:2 recon 7:19 66:7 reconnaissance 48:15 record 61:6 63:13 recruiting 4:19 reenlist 30:17,17,18,20,24 reenlistment 30:16,21 refer 19:22,23 refused 65:5 68:9 regret 66:13 regular 11:20 14:10 20:18 26:21 39:12 related 65:15 relating 23:15,21 56:4 relationship 49:21 50:14 remember 3:19 4:18 6:6,7 7:11 8:10 9:12,22 15:17 16:11 27:22 28:3 33:23 43:18,18 57:6 62:2,6,15 62:20 67:10,18 remembered 61:21 repeat 13:13 report 27:6 31:23 reported 32:13 35:9 Reporters 72:9 reporting 33:6 resolving 65:8 respiratory 39:9 responses 8:16 responsible 44:5 46:5 rest 10:7,8 42:8 Restaurant 68:24 re-education 69:24 rice 47:20,20 51:18 rifle 11:16 right 5:22 11:15 14:7 17:18	18:21 26:22 32:15 36:4,9 36:23 43:21 45:24,24 46:24 48:9 50:11 51:24 55:24 66:24 RNRT 30:22 road 28:19,19,20 34:24 42:7 56:10,12 robinson's 13:13 Rochester 2:11 5:18 61:18 61:21 rolled 17:15,20 room 16:19 17:15,17 20:15 20:22 68:17 70:20 roommate 25:6 roots 49:16 rotate 18:24 20:4,5,8 47:7 rotating 16:18 37:24 routine 26:17 27:9 rules 25:6 32:11 run 10:5 29:4 35:23 39:12 39:17 56:24 running 10:2 22:9 28:17 66:8 ruptured 18:2 rush 70:14 Russert 2:4,6,7 12:20 18:14 33:2 44:10 48:17 51:23 52:15 61:9 66:22 69:11 71:9 R.O.T.C 64:2
Q		
qualification 23:9 qualify 15:5 quarter 21:11 Queen 35:20,20,21,23 questions 22:17 23:3 quick 29:18 quit 2:22,23 3:17,20 13:19 13:19 quite 14:4 22:8 23:6,7,7 40:11		
R		
ran 28:19,19 66:15 rapport 43:2 rate 66:7 rations 47:3 read 62:17 ready 50:17 55:5,6 69:7 real 11:2 17:12 18:11 28:24 29:9 40:16,16 41:3 41:6 43:17 46:2 49:21 69:2 realized 6:13 really 4:6,21 9:12 10:2 11:2,7 18:12 22:7,10 28:11 32:12 35:16 36:22 36:23 41:18,19,23 42:15 45:18 47:19 50:4,22 51:15,20 54:2 57:22 58:23 59:4,12,22 61:3 reams 63:3 reason 3:3,8 reasoning 9:7 reasons 59:13		
		S
		s 47:9 safe 48:7 70:8,9 Sam 15:19,24 16:15,23 25:10 sand 35:15 Sani 45:19 sanitation 43:7 saw 11:4,5 18:3 19:4 37:20 45:11 46:8 53:7 54:5,19 58:20 saying 13:18 31:8,9 60:15 67:23

<p>says 24:14 30:6 57:8 58:5 60:13</p> <p>scary 70:17</p> <p>school 2:15,20 3:17 5:9,10 6:18,20,21 7:9,11,16,16 7:19 8:8 9:21,22 14:11 16:2 57:24 58:3</p> <p>schools 4:24 45:15</p> <p>science 64:11</p> <p>scores 15:4</p> <p>scrub 20:17</p> <p>SEAL 13:21 66:6</p> <p>SEALS 7:18,21 9:24 10:6 11:4</p> <p>seats 43:17,19,20</p> <p>second 18:24 62:7</p> <p>security 50:3,3</p> <p>Sedang 48:3,3 55:8,10 69:21</p> <p>see 8:24 14:3 15:10 28:6 34:13 37:11 40:8 46:20 47:23 53:3,23 54:10 64:16 65:7,12 67:17</p> <p>seeing 70:16</p> <p>seen 40:22 54:3</p> <p>selected 14:17</p> <p>seminarian 52:5,5</p> <p>seminary 52:11 55:3,21</p> <p>send 32:4 37:11 38:19 40:5 40:18 41:3</p> <p>Seng 62:12</p> <p>senior 14:21 39:16</p> <p>sent 14:7 42:16</p> <p>separate 70:19 71:4</p> <p>September 52:11</p> <p>sergeant 4:19 10:16 25:8 30:6,16 34:3,8,14 35:22 40:19,23</p> <p>sergeants 10:11</p> <p>sergeant's 28:10</p> <p>serious 25:5 40:12,12 41:4 68:20</p> <p>service 2:13,14 4:12 58:15</p>	<p>set 25:23 28:19 50:17,17 55:14</p> <p>seven 7:12,17 16:11,12 30:24</p> <p>seventeen 51:2,3</p> <p>seventh 24:8,11</p> <p>seventy-first 40:21 44:15</p> <p>shack 56:7 57:18 63:19</p> <p>Shakespearean 64:14</p> <p>Shang 48:12</p> <p>Sheen 66:9</p> <p>she'd 58:6</p> <p>shit 34:6</p> <p>shook 29:15</p> <p>shooting 19:15 20:21</p> <p>short 36:11 53:24 67:9,11</p> <p>shortly 57:20 65:9</p> <p>shot 15:8 20:13 21:6,8 44:14</p> <p>shoved 53:12</p> <p>shoveling 6:7</p> <p>show 3:6 4:9 32:3 49:18 53:3</p> <p>showed 50:22</p> <p>shower 57:20</p> <p>sick 39:12,17,23 42:15</p> <p>side 13:17 58:9</p> <p>sidestepped 64:22</p> <p>siege 61:23 62:11 69:13</p> <p>sign 41:15</p> <p>signified 24:6</p> <p>signs 16:4 17:22</p> <p>sir 34:6</p> <p>sit 22:15 37:8</p> <p>site 38:4 39:13,16 41:9 62:8</p> <p>sitting 33:23</p> <p>situation 33:18</p> <p>situations 8:17 46:4</p> <p>six 30:14,15</p> <p>sixth 24:8,9,12 31:19</p> <p>skill 72:4</p> <p>skin 39:11 40:24</p>	<p>skull 17:21,24</p> <p>slot 35:22</p> <p>small 52:4,19 55:23 56:5</p> <p>smaller 42:4</p> <p>smears 40:7,7,9,10</p> <p>snake 39:9</p> <p>socked 41:22</p> <p>sodium 22:6</p> <p>soldier 17:15 34:5 71:6</p> <p>soldiers 65:6,6 70:17</p> <p>somebody 26:13,14 27:5,8 39:6,24 42:14 49:13 50:2 62:14,24 63:6</p> <p>somewhat 6:12</p> <p>son 4:3 57:5</p> <p>soon 11:22 58:22</p> <p>soup 50:20,20</p> <p>source 36:14</p> <p>South 55:24</p> <p>souvenir 47:18</p> <p>space 42:14</p> <p>speaking 63:22 64:2</p> <p>special 3:10 4:15 7:5,23,24 11:22 12:2,14 14:18 15:3 18:16,20 22:23 23:4,11 23:15,17 24:15 36:15 38:5 45:10 46:22 66:11 70:22</p> <p>specialist 11:14 43:13</p> <p>specialized 11:9</p> <p>specific 62:2</p> <p>spelling 4:20 17:9 30:8 35:12 36:17 37:18 38:8 38:16 39:15 40:20 41:21 41:22 44:24 47:10 48:3 48:10 50:6,13 51:2,7 55:15 61:12,15,16,20 62:16 65:19,24 67:4 68:12 69:20</p> <p>spend 13:8 16:17 36:10 38:3</p> <p>spent 16:24 17:8 64:8</p> <p>split 26:6</p>
---	---	---

<p>spray 43:14,15 Spriggs 72:8 sprint 10:7 spy 70:23 squad 12:4 squatting 43:21 SS 11:5 41:5 St 53:4 stage 18:18,19 25:23 stand 31:9 standing 10:10 31:10 43:20 stands 6:20 stared 71:6 start 32:11,15 64:10,15 started 9:17 10:24 11:24 21:2 27:21,22 28:15,16 28:17,22 33:19 35:9 36:19 48:12 52:10,10 54:4,8 65:8,11 starting 33:16 starts 53:13 state 28:18,18,23 station 13:22 36:15 stationed 26:2 32:6 35:21 stations 16:20 stay 14:3 18:16,19 45:24 45:24 stayed 25:8 32:8 37:15 46:24 56:21 57:16 68:17 staying 32:22 45:21,22 steaks 47:4,13,13,19 51:17 step 40:13 stepped 51:9 Steve 65:23 stirring 34:2 stolen 45:5 stool 40:9 stop 51:24 52:20 stories 43:22 58:7 story 29:14,16 53:24 60:7,9 stove 56:8,17,24 straw 63:21 street 36:24 52:20</p>	<p>strict 49:9 strip 6:8 47:17 stuck 2:20 26:16 32:17 34:21,22 study 23:20,21 studying 64:11 stuff 12:17 13:24 23:24 25:6 26:8,10,12 32:13,17 33:21 44:20 45:4,7 47:15 47:17,18 50:19 51:10,13 65:4 66:20 69:6 stunning 58:24 stunts 10:20 successfully 24:3 suicide 68:10 Suk 48:9 supplies 41:23 support 36:13,14 supported 38:6 supposed 24:9 25:10,15,24 31:23 32:5,10,21 51:15 sure 5:14 18:18 19:24 20:10 42:9 50:4 surgeon 20:16,16,20 40:22 41:3 surgery 20:18 40:14 42:18 surgical 16:6,19 19:19 20:15,19,22,24 21:22,23 40:17 41:4,8 42:17 surprised 56:21 67:8 surveillance 46:14 survive 20:2,11 survivors 48:13 suspended 31:10 swinging 28:22 symptoms 16:4 S.F 7:13,18 18:10 24:14 34:23 35:17,19,22 36:5 46:3,4 65:20 66:6 S.P.C.A 19:14</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">T</p> <hr/> <p>tabs 40:24 TAC 10:10</p>	<p>tack 29:8 tactics 12:4 23:13,13 take 6:12 7:24 8:12 9:9,9 13:8 15:22 20:14 39:24 41:5 44:17 48:4 59:17 61:2 65:3,4 68:3 69:22 70:23 taken 44:15 63:18,21 talk 64:7 talked 29:11 talking 4:19 53:13 54:8 61:23 tapes 52:2 taught 37:19 41:7 59:4,12 teach 43:6 teachers 23:16,18 team 20:15,19,19,22 25:21 25:22 26:11,21 28:10 29:5 30:5 38:5,5,11,12,15 38:16,21 40:18 41:5 50:3 58:21 61:13,14 66:5,14 teams 19:19 36:15 38:2,10 48:12 tech 20:17,17 40:6 technical 22:14 techniques 12:5 23:14 teeth 41:12,12,13,14,16 tell 6:19 29:21 58:7,8 60:7 60:9 telling 6:9 70:7 temperature 40:3 ten 10:15,17 15:17 16:10 16:12,14,15,17,24 17:8 38:10,10 46:7,9 50:18 tenth 24:12 tepee 57:17,19 terminate 22:5 terminated 22:11 terrible 48:10 test 8:18 9:7,9,11,12,14 testing 9:8 14:16 tests 4:24 5:11 7:23 8:11,14 9:11</p>
--	--	---

<p>Texas 17:3 19:9 Thai 38:18,21,22 70:11,13 Thank 71:9 Theater 64:14 they'd 8:11,21 10:9,16 13:8 13:10,14,14 14:10 41:13 41:14,14 42:15 44:19 47:17 49:15,17,17 51:12 thigh 21:10,11 thing 3:15 4:11 8:19 11:3 27:22 28:3,3,10 36:23 42:23 49:14 52:18 53:22 57:22 60:21 66:18 67:9 things 4:9 9:7,15 12:5,10 20:13 23:17 25:16 26:12 39:12 40:4,14,17 41:8 42:18 43:7 44:18 48:16 49:16,18,19,20 51:17 52:17 53:14 54:16 58:22 59:10 62:2,3,6,10 65:14 66:12 think 3:23 5:2 8:7 9:17 10:12 17:4 18:19 19:3,4,5 19:6,10,11 25:11 30:10 32:10,23 33:15 37:7 41:10 42:5 44:3 51:7 52:19 58:14,16,17,18 59:3,13,16,18,19 60:5 63:10 67:5,5 70:22 thinking 28:6 33:11 67:11 70:21 third 24:9,10,15,15 25:2,22 25:24 33:13 62:7 thirteen 66:5 thirty 31:5,21 54:21 thirty-day 31:21 thirty-six 66:14 Thomas 69:19 thought 3:4,6,8 39:22 57:4 62:4,21,22 64:24 71:7 thousand 44:6,8 thousands 30:23 three 2:18 5:24 6:18 9:18</p>	<p>13:4,11,16 25:8 46:13 53:18 54:13 57:3 70:21 71:4,6 three-legged 22:8 three-thirty 2:5 threw 13:18 throw 70:24 ticket 28:2 tied 10:22 tigers 39:10 till 63:10 time 2:16 7:9 12:8 13:3 16:13 19:10 24:19 27:10 28:12 30:21 32:19 36:10 36:11 37:7 39:19 40:18 42:8 43:19 46:23 47:19 50:15 53:6,21 56:16,23 57:4 58:15 64:9,21 70:14 times 7:2 25:13 29:16 toilet 43:17,19,20 57:10 Tok 64:8 told 7:5 14:17 28:13 29:14 31:4 52:12 53:14 54:17 56:18 58:14 68:18 69:21 70:2 tools 6:11 top 10:21 24:24 35:14,18 35:19,23 54:14 Tortoise's 13:9 total 48:10 Totd 43:10 touch 44:21 tower 10:22,23 town 29:16 52:4,19,21,24 53:23 56:2 68:17 tracheotomy 22:2,3 traffic 52:21 Trail 13:9 46:15 train 39:22 40:10 trained 14:18 16:21,22 36:20 39:20 49:5,11,12 training 5:21,23 6:3,22 7:2 7:13 11:10,14,19 12:2,9</p>	<p>12:12,13,13 13:22 14:5 14:12,15,24 15:2,7,16,18 15:19 16:11,15 18:10,23 22:15 23:10,12 25:17 26:12,18,20 33:12 34:16 34:18,19 35:6,11,13,16 36:6 52:8 transcript 72:4 transcription 72:2 transferred 31:19 trap 51:9 travel 3:10 treasure 59:9 treating 21:3 treatment 16:5 trees 33:10,14 tremendous 41:2,2 60:22 trenching 6:11 tribe 48:2 55:9 69:17 tribes 55:12 tried 28:18 30:11 tries 10:20 tropical 39:2 trouble 7:7 25:5,5 29:9 68:21 Truong 34:20 35:8 trust 50:2 try 28:14 42:24 51:21 trying 14:3 19:10 43:6 61:4 Tu 38:2 Tukor 38:7,11 Tun 34:12,13,14 36:8 42:3 42:4 47:7 55:16 turn 20:20 twelve 38:10 51:5 twenty 5:16 27:23 44:3 56:6 60:13 twenty-eight 53:21 twenty-four 38:12 44:4 twenty-four-year-old 44:4 twenty-seven 53:21 twenty-two 21:14,15 twenty-year-old 5:16</p>
--	---	--

<p>two 2:21,21,22 9:17 10:15 12:18 13:4,10,15 15:18 23:11,12 24:21 35:15 44:5,7 52:17 54:15 56:13 56:16 57:15,15 66:6 70:8</p> <p>two's 48:21</p> <p>two-hundred-foot 10:21 10:22,23</p> <p>two-week 12:8</p> <p>type 21:12 38:24</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">U</p> <hr/> <p>Uh-huh 5:5,17 9:4 22:24 66:2</p> <p>undergraduate 54:24</p> <p>underground 48:5</p> <p>understand 60:17,17,19,22</p> <p>understanding 6:23</p> <p>understands 60:14</p> <p>unintelligible 10:12</p> <p>unit 11:2 14:8,9 18:22 19:7 20:18 24:6 36:3,4,4 37:2 50:3</p> <p>units 35:2</p> <p>University 3:20 55:2</p> <p>unsafe 70:6</p> <p>upper 39:8</p> <p>use 21:17 43:22 46:17 48:19</p> <p>usual 26:17,17 39:4,5</p> <p>usually 14:6,8 21:10 26:4 27:14 28:21 39:13 46:16</p> <p>U.T.T 66:7</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">V</p> <hr/> <p>Valley 66:8,9,15</p> <p>value 59:9</p> <p>valuing 59:20</p> <p>vein 20:24</p> <p>verse 60:11,13</p> <p>veterinary 16:22 43:8</p> <p>vets 64:20 65:19</p> <p>Vietnam 3:14,15 4:7 14:7 24:12 27:16,19 30:4,6,19</p>	<p>30:20 31:5,16,17 32:4,20 36:12 45:9,19 52:8 55:4,4 55:12,16 56:20 58:10,20 59:4,6 64:5,13 65:19 69:10,17,21</p> <p>Vietnamese 50:9 64:10,23 65:3 70:7</p> <p>view 8:22 9:2</p> <p>village 41:11 48:9</p> <p>villages 48:5</p> <p>visible 17:22</p> <p>vitals 40:3</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">W</p> <hr/> <p>wait 37:23</p> <p>waited 21:21</p> <p>waiting 37:14,17</p> <p>wake 13:10</p> <p>waking 28:4</p> <p>walk 35:14</p> <p>walking 13:17 34:4</p> <p>want 3:24 4:21 10:14 13:19 15:13 30:17,18,19 34:7,8 34:11,11,11 37:4 38:15 41:14,14 42:12 68:2,3,15</p> <p>wanted 3:5,9,10,11,11,14 3:21 4:6,9 14:2,24 15:2 15:12 17:17 43:10,11 44:22 45:23 52:7 54:3,20 55:13 64:12 65:3,7 66:12 67:20 68:15</p> <p>wanting 4:11 34:20</p> <p>wants 52:6 62:11</p> <p>War 6:5 65:3</p> <p>ward 16:19,19 18:9</p> <p>warm 56:23</p> <p>war-like 55:11</p> <p>wash 20:6</p> <p>washed 14:5,6 18:13,15,23 19:3</p> <p>Washington 31:24,24 68:17</p> <p>wasn't 19:13 28:8 32:19,20 41:20 45:3 57:21 63:18</p>	<p>waste 37:22</p> <p>watched 13:21</p> <p>water 43:8 56:9</p> <p>Watergate 68:24</p> <p>way 10:8 21:21 31:5,16 41:24 42:6 65:18 69:4</p> <p>Wayne 2:6</p> <p>weapon 11:10 21:12 29:4 48:24</p> <p>weapons 11:13,13,15,21 12:9 14:19 15:12,13 26:5 48:18</p> <p>wear 44:11</p> <p>wearing 34:3</p> <p>weather 41:19,20,22</p> <p>weeds 50:19</p> <p>week 8:7 12:18 16:11,12 32:9,18</p> <p>weeks 6:18 7:2 11:24 12:6 14:13,14 15:15,18 16:10 16:12,14,15,17,24 17:8 23:13,23 24:3 34:19</p> <p>welfare 44:5</p> <p>went 3:9,24 4:14 5:15 6:2 6:17 7:14,19 9:16,18,20 12:11 14:7,10,15,23 15:14,16,17,24 16:2 17:18,24 18:9 19:5,9 24:14 25:21 27:20,21 28:13,17 29:10,11,14 30:5,15 31:4,7,20 32:23 33:11,19 34:24 35:10,11 38:21 39:14 42:3,4,6 45:15 46:24 51:18 53:8 54:23 55:21 57:24 63:24 64:5,6,7,10,15,16,20 69:6 70:5</p> <p>weren't 14:8 25:14,15</p> <p>West 30:9</p> <p>we'll 8:22 15:8,10 29:20 47:14 58:8</p> <p>we're 21:17 30:6 51:24</p> <p>we've 36:20 47:9,9,10</p>
---	---	---

<p>54:21 67:23 68:2 wheel 47:17 wife 54:3,21 56:5,19 57:8 58:4 63:15 willing 14:3 wine 67:20 winning 58:16 winter 6:7 56:23 wiped 48:8 wishes 58:5 wit 64:18 witch 42:22,23 43:2 woman 54:19 wood 56:8,8,17,17,24 woods 56:14 wore 12:19 work 4:22 23:19 30:10,10 43:4,5 47:13 55:15,22 59:14 65:8 worked 19:19 27:2 48:2 55:8 65:21 working 16:17 17:11 18:8 18:10 26:11 36:10,19,22 43:3 57:22 works 61:19 World 6:5 worrying 62:10 worth 59:10,11,11 wouldn't 28:2 42:19 wound 21:4,6,24 wounds 39:2,5 Wright 40:19 write 8:16 62:11 writes 62:19 writing 54:4 61:22 written 8:10,13 9:10,10 53:11,12 wrote 62:14 W.B.C 40:8</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">Y</p> <hr/> <p>yard 40:2 42:22 44:17,22 44:22,23 Yards 41:12 42:20,22 43:6</p>	<p>43:15,19,24 yeah 4:18 5:15,22 6:14,21 8:3,3,6 12:23 13:2 14:4 21:7,10,16 22:23 30:19 31:20,24 33:17,22,22 35:5 36:3,9 38:14 41:18 41:18 44:13,13 45:8 49:2 50:8,10 54:13 58:4,12 65:22 66:2,23 67:2 69:2 year 43:23 years 2:21,21,22 19:14 24:21 50:11,21 51:5 54:21 57:15,15 61:17 Yo 50:5,10,16 51:10 59:11 York 2:11 52:22 57:23 61:19 64:14 young 46:23 54:19 59:17 61:5 youngest 4:2 57:5 66:14 Yuett 44:24</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">1</p> <hr/> <p>1 72:5 1st 54:9 63:9 101st 68:11 106 11:15 106's 11:19 14 42:3 1947 2:11 1967 4:13 1970 63:9 1975 55:6 1980 64:5</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">2</p> <hr/> <p>2nd 63:22 2003 1:5 2:1 3:1 4:1 5:1 6:1 7:1 8:1 9:1 10:1 11:1 12:1 13:1 14:1 15:1 16:1 17:1 18:1 19:1 20:1 21:1 22:1 23:1 24:1 25:1 26:1 27:1 28:1 29:1 30:1 31:1 32:1 33:1 34:1 35:1 36:1 37:1 38:1 39:1 40:1 41:1 42:1</p>	<p>43:1 44:1 45:1 46:1 47:1 48:1 49:1 50:1 51:1 52:1 53:1 54:1 55:1 56:1 57:1 58:1 59:1 60:1 61:1 62:1 63:1 64:1 65:1 66:1 67:1 68:1 69:1 70:1 71:1 72:1 29th 2:11</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">3</p> <hr/> <p>3:30 2:2 30th 54:11,14 55:6 31st 4:13</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">4</p> <hr/> <p>4 49:7,8</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">6</p> <hr/> <p>60s 3:12 19:12 65 48:10 67 2:23 19:12 68 19:13 69 33:4,5</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">7</p> <hr/> <p>7 1:5 2:1 3:1 4:1 5:1 6:1 7:1 8:1 9:1 10:1 11:1 12:1 13:1 14:1 15:1 16:1 17:1 18:1 19:1 20:1 21:1 22:1 23:1 24:1 25:1 26:1 27:1 28:1 29:1 30:1 31:1 32:1 33:1 34:1 35:1 36:1 37:1 38:1 39:1 40:1 41:1 42:1 43:1 44:1 45:1 46:1 47:1 48:1 49:1 50:1 51:1 52:1 53:1 54:1 55:1 56:1 57:1 58:1 59:1 60:1 61:1 62:1 63:1 64:1 65:1 66:1 67:1 68:1 69:1 70:1 71:1 72:1 71 72:5 73 52:11,11 63:10 68:24</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">8</p> <hr/> <p>82 64:18 70:5 83 65:17</p>
---	--	--

<p style="text-align: center;">9</p>		
<p>95 28:17</p>		