Otto J. Betz
Veteran

Lawrence Syriac
Will Smith
Andrew Law
Interviewers

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Otto J. Betz : OB
Lawrence Syriac: LS
Will Smith: WS

LS: Good afternoon. I am Brother Lawrence Syriac here at Chaminade High School and we are conducting an interview with Mr. John Betz, who served in Vietnam for at least a year. With me is Will Smith who will also be asking questions this afternoon, and Andrew Law. Our camera man is Robert Guzza.

LS: Mr. Betz. How did you get involved in the Marine Corps in the first place? Did you volunteer or were you drafted? How did that work?
OB: It was 1967. I was at school at Boston University. My grades were not really quite up to snuff. To be perfectly honest I probably wasn't ready for college when I went to college. It was a fairly unsettled time. There was a great deal of liberal thought at a university like that. More and more of my friends and some of my family were in the military and were over in this place called Vietnam that none of us had ever really heard anything about. What really happened was I basically wasn't invited back to school, and in 1967 when you were not in school you were fair game. So I knew I was going to be drafted but rather than be drafted into the army I chose to enlist in the Marines Corps. My dad had been in the Marines in World War 2.

LS: So at that time if you anticipated the draft you could volunteer and that would give you the opportunity to choose any service you wanted, but once you were drafted they could put you any place they wanted to?
OB: That's correct. I think that probably would have been the case. Right.

LS: You did your training at Parris Island in South Carolina?
OB: Anybody who joins the Marine Corps as an enlisted man, it's different if you're an officer, but if you are not a college graduate you have to go in as an enlisted man, and anybody east of the Mississippi goes to Parris Island which is a place down in South Carolina, and anybody in the west goes to San Diego.

LS: Could you tell us some of your pleasant experiences?
OB: Anyone who knows anything about the Marine Corps knows that the training is really second to none, and it's tough, and I think I mentioned it in my note to you there,

but I'm standing there at 5 in the morning or whatever it is they got you up, and I'm standing with other guys that in my normal course of life, or your lives, you would never meet. I had guys who I know who probably joined the Marine Corps from Brooklyn or The Bronx or Harlem who some of them may have joined the Marine Corps to get 3 meals a day. There was a young guy from some place in the south, I taught him how to tie a tie, because he had to tie a tie at times. So you met a cross section of people from this country that you normally would not have a chance to meet.

LS: Was there any possibility of getting dropped out of the Marine Corps?
OB: I don't know what the percentage is, but from Parris Island probably 10% don't make it, for various reasons.

LS: It's a wartime thing when you're in Vietnam. What happens if they get dropped out? Does someone pick them up and they get put in the Army?
OB: That's a good question. I'm not sure. I guess it would depend on why they dropped out. Most of the ones that didn't make it in the Marine Corps was that there was something physically wrong that they couldn't do, or that they couldn't get themselves into shape and do what was necessary. Whether they were then going to be drafted into the Army, I don't know. I suspect that could have happened.

LS: Like today, if they drop out, they didn't make it, they have to take another walk of life, but this is wartime situation.
OB: I'm not sure, to tell you the truth. 10 or 15% probably did not make it. I know it's true today. In the officer corps, the dropout rate is higher, because they have to make sure they are to lead and they can do the leading.

LS: Now you became a sergeant?
OB: Over a period of time.

LS: You didn't leave Parris Island as a sergeant?
OB: No. You left Parris Island either as a Private, and you had nothing on your sleeve, or you left a Private 1st class, in which you have one stripe on your sleeve. And I did get the Private 1st class. I was proud of that.

LS: And you have down here that you were a rifle man and a squad leader?
OB: Yes. What happens in the Marine Corps, there are different jobs that you could get, but at that time, and even today, the bulk of the Marine Corps is infantry men, be it troops or the officers. That is the mission of the Marine Corps. We don't have doctors for instance, or corps men. Our doctors and our corps men that take care of us are all part of the Navy. So all marines are taught through basic training to be first riflemen. They may go into different areas like artillery, or machine guns or that type of thing. I was a rifleman, just a member of a squad.

LS: So when you left, you were a rifle man, infantry, not a sergeant yet. And when did you become the squad leader? Was that in Vietnam?
OB: That was probably after being in Vietnam for probably 6 or 7 months.

WS: What does a squad leader do?
OB: A typical squad has probably has 15 men in it. And depending on where you are and what kind of operation you are in, you might operate independently, or you might operate as part of a company. There's usually 3 or 4 squads in a company. So sometimes you would go out on a company size mission so that would maybe be about 300 people. But sometimes you would be at a base. We were for instance at a place called Con Thien, you may have heard of that. Our company was there, along with a few other companies. We would run patrols out of there. Typically, those were squad size patrols. My orders would be to take a squad out and check out this area. That would be 15 men. Usually, depending on where you were and what was going on you would probably have a machine gun crew with you as well, you might have had, with a corps man, probably about 20 people. The Marine Corps typically operates in small units like that, but then you do have larger patrols, but usually you do it more in squads.

LS: But the emphasis of the training is toward the small units.
OB: Oh yes. Very much so.

LS: Did you go directly to Vietnam?
OB: After Parris Island, it was pretty quick. I went in the Marine Corps in October '67, and by the end of February, or early March I was in Vietnam. But Parris Island was from October to December and then you had infantry training after that, so it was pretty quick.

LS: Would you go to Guam and then Guam to Vietnam, or straight over to Vietnam?
OB: We first went out to California, and were in Camp Pendleton, which is a big Marine base there. Worked around in those hills there because it was similar to what we were going to have in Vietnam. Then we flew to Okinawa and we were in Okinawa for a little bit and then into Da Nang which is where most of the Marines went into.

LS: When you're in Da Nang, it's '68 now
OB: That's right. About early March '68.

LS: And this about the time we started the massive buildup.
OB: Well Tet had taken place. Tet was a big offensive by the North Vietnamese. It took place, I think, mostly in January or February.

LS: So you came in after Tet?
OB: Just arrived towards the tail end of it. We had a lot of troops building up about that time. And there was also a siege of Khe Sanh going on—you may be aware of that—and one of the first places I went to was into Khe Sanh. because we were patrolling there and around there.

LS: So when you arrived in Da Nang, was there any dominant thought?
OB: Well obviously you're very anxious. You're not sure where you're going to be or who you're going to be with. It's not like you go over in a unit. We were going in as replacements in units that already existed, that were already there, that were already out

in the field. You find out who your unit is, and you check into their rear. And then you go out to wherever they are and join a squad.

LS: That particular area is pretty tropical—
OB: It is, yes.

LS: Did Parris Island, which I can't imagine is necessarily a nice place to be, did that help to prepare you for that tropical …?
OB: It actually is a beautiful place. I've subsequently gone back there. It's unbelievable how beautiful … It's a pretty South Carolina beach community. But when you're there, it doesn't look very (nice?).

LS: But the heat? Did that get to you?
OB: Yes. But I was there in the fall. I didn't do it by plan, but if you had to do it, that's probably when you want to be there because it isn't be so hot. And from there we went to North Carolina for infantry training, to Camp LeJeune. I was there in January, and it was awful cold. That's why they sent us to California to try to simulate some of the heat.

LS: When you get off the boat and you first saw some of the countryside of Vietnam, did it seem like you were on the moon?
OB: It's very jungle. No. Not so much on the moon, because it's quite a bit of jungle. It was very hot. I think, even people I served, we'd talk about it, the heat doesn't hurt as much as the cold. So, I think, if I still had my druthers, I would still go for the heat, even though it was pretty tropical.

LS: Did you have a problem with the insects at all on patrol?
OB: There were plenty of bugs. And some snakes on occasion. Overall, not too bad. It would be pretty cruddy. You'd be going through jungle grass. Your arms and your hands would become cut, grazed. —

LS: It was like saw grass type of thing?
OB: Exactly. Because you're pretty dirty, we didn't take a shower every night, it would immediately become infected. It was pretty cruddy from that standpoint. That was just something you live with.

LS: I presume on one of these patrols you probably first encountered the enemy and came under fire. How soon was that?
OB: I was probably there a week before we had our first engagement. It wasn't so much that we met the enemy, but we were in a place where they were throwing mortars at us at night. Not very pleasant, but it wasn't like you could see the guy over there. Our only defense at that point is you send mortars back at them, and try to zero in, or call in the air, which we would do, and that's usually done at the company level. It wasn't exactly an engagement with the enemy. It wasn't a firefight.

LS: When you're out with your squad what type of communication do you have? Is there inter communication between the front of the squad and the back of the squad? Any communication with the Headquarters?

OB: No. Again, a squad may be up to 20 people. We would have one radio. But the communication within the squad was just by word. If I was the squad leader, which I wasn't at the beginning, I eventually became the squad leader, the squad leader would always be next to the radio man. That's why, in ambushes, or in things like that, the bad guys would always shoot for the guy with the radio, because they knew that the lieutenant, or the squad leader, whatever size operation that you were on, has have the radio, so the poor guy with the radio, for sure the incidence of getting hit was higher than the others.

LS: More than the person leading the squad maybe?
OB: Yes. That was always an interesting thing, who was going to be walking point today. It was something that you always rotated, because someone did always walk point. But if you were going into an area where you had a pretty good feeling there was going to be some sort of enemy contact, like anything else in life, there were some people who did things better than others, so you would try to get your best man up front.

LS: Now as squad leader, you are not required to walk point?
OB: Right. You are not supposed to. There is another element. The squad leader is responsible for carrying out the patrol, or the mission if you will. He is responsible for safety of the men, hopefully directing them should you come under fire. So, since the squad leader is responsible for all that, they try to keep him in the middle, so if something happens up front, at least, if we need to call in air, or something like that, I know where we are, I know what our grids are, and can call in the air strikes. Just like if it's a platoon size, the lieutenant stays in the middle.

WS: Were you ambushed?
OB: Yes. There were ambushes from time to time. When I got wounded we were up at Con Thien and doing patrols out of there. At the time the administration had said you can't go into North Vietnam, so we were doing patrols up to the DMZ, which was the demilitarized zone. They set out booby traps. They had men there plus they had set up booby traps. They would set the booby traps to go off when our group went in there. Fortunately, this one time that we got hit, I had a machine gun with us. He was able to get down a base of fire, and get their heads down, and we called in air. They had to go.

LS: Now you were there a year. Is this type of ambush situation becoming a common occurrence for you?
OB: No. But fire fights were, where you ended it in a firefight. All firefights didn't start up as an ambush. If you set in up a hill, with your company, let's say, which was fairly common, and you would clear the growth, the vegetation, whatever. You would set in and be up on that hillside and you perhaps be up there for a couple days and you would run patrols from that. Sometimes at night they would come and attack you on that hill. You would have fox holes, and be dug in, hopefully correctly, and that was a fairly common occurrence. They would hit us with mortars. But often times they came up.

LS: Would they strike more at night than during the day?
OB: Yeah. They tended to. But again, it depended where you were and what was going on. If we surprised them, no matter whether it was night or day.

LS: Now you were being hit by North Vietnamese regulars? Not Viet Cong?
OB: Where we were was what they called the Northern I Corps, part of the country. That was predominantly North Vietnamese armed regulars. We were in what they called a free fire zone, so anything was game. Obviously if you were in a village that was a different situation. Some places like Khe Sanh, you talked about was it like being on the moon, after we'd been there for a while it did look a bit like the moon. The B52s had dropped so much ordnance there are these huge bomb craters, pockmarked all over the countryside, the jungle. It started to look a little bit like the moon.

WS: What was daily life like? Did your equipment work well, and how was it compared to your enemies?
OB: Daily life depended really on what was going on. If you were in combat situation, daily life was pretty hectic. You can make all the best plans in the world for how to operate during in a combat situation, but that can all go out the window when the bullets start firing, because it's a mess. We try to keep it organized but it's mayhem. You can read the paper today. It's what's going on unfortunately today in Iraq. Other days it would become very tedious, because if we had no enemy contact, which would be fine, but then you would be out doing patrols and you might be walking around in the jungle for hours on end, not sure what you're accomplishing. But I guess you're accomplishing something. So those days could be fairly tedious. Or moving from one hill to another, and you ask why are we doing that? Because we have to dig new foxholes and all that kind of thing, but that's part of what you do. As far as our equipment, it was fine. We had for the most part M16s, which they still use today. I think they've modernized it a bit. The North Vietnamese had some pretty good equipment. They had AK47s, which were all Russian made, but a lot of their hand grenades and rockets, and things like that, were not as good as ours, so we were more advanced in that. And of course, we had air and we had tanks, and they had none of that.

LS: On your patrols, did you ever encounter any type of a tunnel or bunker complex that they had built?
OB: One time, we were actually called in to help another company that had had some problems. We got in there and we set up a perimeter and then during the night started taking fire from within the perimeter. What had happened was the North Vietnamese, some of them had been in what they call spy holes, which they had dug inside of where our lines were. So that wasn't a very pleasant evening. [Smiles] We managed to quieten them down. But I never saw one of those tunnel complexes that you're referring to, where they lived and had hospitals and things like that. I never saw one, but they certainly existed.

LS: Now you were close to the DMZ but not permitted to go over?
OB: Well not after a certain date. I can't remember exactly what that was.

LS: Did you get anywhere near the Ho Chi Minh Trail?
OB: Well that was more to the west and so when we were over by Khe Sanh, that area, we were near there. The thing that was to the advantage of the North Vietnamese was the jungle, the canopy as they call it, was so intense, that the flights over couldn't see beneath it, so they could run men and equipment down beneath that thing, without us seeing it. So that's why they would send a lot of reconnaissance teams, (we were not reconnaissance, recon was usually a smaller group), to try and find out where they were and where they were coming in.

LS: That was starting to change from a path to a road?
OB: Yes. I think it did. But again, we couldn't see it from the air, so I think it worked out pretty well for them.

LS: Now were you aware of the defoliation program that was taking place?
OB: Yes. And unfortunately, a lot of people even now are coming down with various forms of cancer. The Veterans Administration, once they hear you've got have that type of cancer, they don't even question it. They just support it. It was great. It served a purpose, and it probably saved some lives, because it did defoliate the jungle, but now, it's killing guys, which is a shame.

LS: Did you see any of that?
OB: Well, you'd see them spray it. Absolutely. (Do you fellows know what we're talking about here?) There was a substance called Agent Orange, that they would spray on the jungle, which would take the leaves of the trees, off the vine. So it would kill all that, but unfortunately now it is killing Americans who were exposed to it.

LS: He was talking about the canopy of the jungle. It's not only a problem from above, it's a problem from below.
OB: That's right.

LS: So if you can get rid of some of that, you can ferret out what's going on there. Did you yourself have to go in to any hand to hand combat?
OB: No. I never did. Thankfully. I know people who did. We got close a couple of times where we had to throw hand grenades where we were dug in because they were coming up the hill. But we managed to get them to back off before they got inside.

LS: In your summary remarks, you said that "Combat was a constant occurrence. My feelings incredulous – fear". Now are those two separate words, or together?
OB: They are two separate words. Now I would sit there and think it was rather incredulous, that here it is, 1968 by now, a pretty modern world, and I am sitting here trying to shoot that guy and he is trying to shoot me, and why is that. What does he have against me, and vice versa? [Smiles] War isn't a fun thing. But it does seem rather strange, so it was incredulous at times.
The fear factor, I think anybody who tells you that they are under fire and are not worried about it, is maybe not telling you all the truth. Because it's quite something. Especially when you're first there, and you literally hear the bullet whizzing by your ear.

It makes you think. It's quite an experience. I don't recommend it for everybody, but I'm awfully glad I did it. It made me grow up a lot.

LS: Did you feel that you had to be there, or did you keep thinking, why are we here?
OB: When I went in the Marine Corps, if I had been assigned anywhere else but Vietnam, I would have been very disappointed. I knew what the mission of the Marine Corps is, and I wanted to be a part of that. I also think I tend to agree with why we were there. I think there was a legitimate reason to try and defend this country, the South. My questioning about why we were shooting, I see where you're coming from. It wasn't a comment about whether I should be there doing that, but beyond that, isn't this incredible that this day and age I am sitting here trying to shoot this guy.

LS: That's what I was trying to clarify.
OB: No. It wasn't a comment about not agreeing.

LS: Did you have a chance to meet regular Vietnamese people?
OB: Very little. No.

LS: So you are basically out in the Boonies?
OB: You were with your unit. We had virtually zero contact with the Vietnamese.

LS: And you didn't fight with some of the South Vietnamese units either?
OB: Rarely. They call is the Army of the Republic of Vietnam, they would be around sometimes where we were, but not very often did we fight with them. Once in a while we would have maybe an interpreter, that type of thing, with us, because often times we would capture some people and they would want to talk and think about it.

LS: Now you were there a year. Did you ever get any R and R? Were you ever pulled out?
OB: Yes. Probably in May or June, they said did you want to go on any R and R. [Laughs] And I said "sure" and we went to Formosa.

LS: You say you didn't go to Guam? My understanding was that most everybody went to Guam. But that's not the case?
OB: No. A lot of people went to Bangkok. A lot of people went to Australia. I wanted to go to Australia, but you had to wait longer to go there, and I was ready to go.

LS: So when you got the R and R, what was it? A week? Two weeks?
OB: About a week.

LS: And then they send you right back into your nice little jungle area? {Laughs]
OB: Oh yes. So you get out …

LS: How many R and R's did you get?
OB: One.

LS: One? That was it? For the whole year?
OB: Yes.

LS: Oh my goodness. And was that pretty common?
OB: Yes.

LS: Eventually you are going to get wounded. If you weren't wounded, were you going to be able to get out of there? Is your service for a year and then you go home? Or what?
OB: Yes. Actually, in the Marine Corps, you serve for 13 months. And after your 13 months are up you would have come back to the United States.

LS: And how close did you get to those 13 months?
OB: I was probably there, well in my 10th month.

LS: And that's when you got wounded?
OB: That's when I got wounded.

LS: And how did that happen?
OB: We were in an ambush. It was the one I was talking about just outside of Con Thien. And they got us, but we got them too, luckily. Then there were choppers. There were a couple of guys wounded.

LS: And were you a sergeant at that time?
OB: No. I was a corporal. They gave me sergeant just as I got out.

LS: But were you squadron leader?
OB: Yes. I was.

LS: Is that one of the reasons you got wounded? Because you were the squadron leader? Or did you just get hit from both sides?
OB: No. They set off a command that made a booby trap. Rather than us tripping it, they would set it off. They waited, probably until the middle of the column, before they set it off.

LS: I guess you got wounded with shrapnel?
OB: And small arms too. I was very lucky. The helicopters were there. They took us to an aid station in Quan Tre and then from there I went to a hospital ship. The Navy had two ships. One was called the Repose, and the other was the Sanctuary. I was on the ship for a couple of weeks. Then I went to Guam. For a month. But I never saw anything, because I was in the hospital. But we had great care. And they put us all back together again.

LS: Wow. Were you conscious? Like you saw your buddies getting carried out? You were carried out?
OB: I knew I'd been hit pretty bad. I got wounded and my right leg was pretty bad and my left arm was pretty banged up, and I was shot through here (*points to lower left abdomen)*. Luckily no vital organs. Fortunately I was able to talk to one of the guys because I knew where we were. They called in the helicopters. But then, you're pretty fuzzy after that. You're in shock and they give you some morphine, or whatever they give you.

LS: So the next thing you remember you're on the ship?
OB: No. I remember being at the aid station. I remember actually a nice Catholic priest came over and talking to me and asked me what I like to do. I told him I liked to play ice hockey, and he said, "Well I'm not sure you're going to be playing any ice hockey any time soon".

LS: Well, he was honest. [Laughs]
OB: Yeah. He was great. I was more concerned about some other parts of my body, but he assured me that they were OK. [Laughs] And he was great. But then within hours they had us out on the ship. And as I said, they did things there, a month in Guam. This is all naval care. There was a naval hospital in St. Albans, Queens, and I ended up there, because that was closer to where we lived.

WS: What medals were you awarded?
OB: I got two Purple Hearts and I have some Vietnamese things that they give you for just being there, and something call the Navy achievement medal for the combat bit.

LS: How do you get two Purple Hearts? Do you have to get wounded twice to get two Purple Hearts?
OB: Yes. I had taken some shrapnel in the leg in an operation.

LS: Before this one?
OB: Oh yes. In the fall. Nothing major—maybe like the ones Kerry got [Smiles]. The first ones didn't cause any limps. I earned the second one big time.

LS: You ended up in Gaum. They put you back together again. And where do you go? Fort Pendleton again?
OB: No. They sent you to St. Albans in Queens, which was the Naval Hospital. All together I was in the hospital for nine months.

LS: And you were close to your parents at that point? You grew up here on Long Island?
OB: In Garden City.

LS: I guess you were able to write, how frequently home?
OB: That's the thing. It's really amazing what we did verses what they can do today. When I was in country, in Vietnam, you'd write your family or whoever whenever you could, and they got letters to you whenever they could. But today, sometimes they can pick up a cell phone. They can certainly do email, and they do it. Communication now is much, much better. I know when I was there, my father tried to get hold of me. He got hold of me finally through a ham radio operator. There was no direct telephone lines and things like that.

LS: I guess that's good and bad?
OB: I think it's awful. I think it was actually tougher for the parents that it was for us. You knew you were alright, but for your parents it must have been just awful.

LS: You probably didn't want them to know too much either?
OB: Right. They had no idea. They got reports. The Navy or whatever would send

reports to say he was wounded. What happens is somebody shows up at your doorstep and says your son, or your husband, or whoever he is, has been wounded. My mother said she knew it was OK, because she had heard that if you'd got killed, they sent an officer with the enlisted man. Still not good news. [Laughs]

LS: How soon would you be released from the Marine Corps now? You're going to get an honorable discharge? A medical discharge?
OB: In fact they gave me a full retirement. That happened probably in the summer of '69. My career was brief.

LS: A year, you said "in country". Nelson DeMille wrote a book about "up country". What's the difference between "in country" and "up country"?
OB: "In country" was anywhere in South Vietnam, being in the country. "Up country" was where we operated. The northern part of the country.

LS: You didn't have to go into North Vietnam to qualify for being "up country".
OB: No. Just up in north of South Vietnam.

LS: So I guess you know Nelson DeMille?
OB: Yes, I do. He was a good man. He was in the army. Most of the northern part of the country was operated by marines, but he was with an Army unit that happened to be up there as well.

LS: And you also know Chuck Mansfield.
OB: I do.

LS: And he wrote a book "No kids, no money, and a Chevy". And he has a letter of yours, that he quotes, a letter that you wrote to President Clinton. Can you tell us about that?
OB: It was right after September 11th. I had had a fairly steady dialogue with President Clinton. I had some problems with how he'd handled avoiding Vietnam, and marching against the troops when he was in England, and that kind of thing. I guess the thing that bothered me, I'm afraid that … You know, everything was actually pretty good during his administration. The economy was good. We weren't in any real wars or anything like that, but then if you look back at it, I wonder, I worry, I'm not sure whether they were not paying attention to the outside threat, against the United States to the extent they should have been. And perhaps some of that inattention, to that kind of thing, resulted in what happened on 9/11. You don't want that kind of thing to happen again. I don't think he has or had respect for the military and what the military does.

LS: Your background as a Marine, in combat in Vietnam, that puts you a little bit on the edge. Now if you didn't have that, would you have written to Mr. Clinton?
OB: I'm sure the fact that I served had a lot to do with that. I feel very fortunate to have been able to serve. I think, to live in this country and to live the life that we all live is a very special thing. I guess the thing I really like about it the most, is that my son, one of my kids, he went to school, and he graduated from college, and he was working in New York. He called me one day, and he said, "You know, Dad, I don't think I'm being challenged". And I said, "OK. So what are you going to do?" And he said, "I'm going to

try and get into the Marine Corps". I said, "Well, good luck. You'll be challenged if you get in". He got in. He wanted to go and become and officer. An officer goes to Quantico. And we went down and saw him graduate, which was a great thing. He did get into the Marine Corps, but it was very difficult to get in the Marine Corps. Physically, you have to be able to run circles around your troops, and your troops are all eighteen, nineteen-year-old kids. The thing that struck me though, was here is a group of men, who are all probably 20 to 30 years old, and they are all there for only one reason. They have all volunteered to be there. They are going to give up certain luxuries. They are going to put themselves into harm's way. No one told them to do it. It was something they chose to do. I just think that the ability to do that, and to be with those kind of people is a pretty important thing.

LS: I'm going to mention 2 names, and you don't have to react if you don't want to. Kerry and Fonda.
OB: [Laughs] Well Fonda's worse, I think. [Laughs] It worries me. I don't care if she's a liberal and she has all these grandiose ideas. But what does worry me in that what she did during the Vietnam War perhaps prolonged the captivity of some guys and that's despicable. So she's very low on the totem pole as far as I'm concerned. Kerry worries me because I really don't trust him. Everything he did seemed to be so orchestrated. It seems ironic that I'm supporting for president a man who basically dodged it, dodged the draft, because like a lot of wealthy people he got into the National Guard. And he served, and he learned to fly a jet, and I think that's great. And I think he's a pretty good guy, but I'm voting for him as opposed to the guy who went to Vietnam, because I just don't really think that the guy who went to Vietnam is really being straight with us. I do worry, just what I said about Clinton and September 11th. I do worry that if he gets in, and takes his eye off the terrorist ball, I do worry that we're not going to wake up and find that same kind of thing happening again. That does concern me.

LS: You came back from Vietnam. They said they put you back together again, but it 's going to take a while before you really get back together again. What did you do? Did you go back to school again? Or go into business? What did you do?
OB: Again, I spent 9 months in the hospital. My leg was pretty well beat up, so I was in traction, so I'd just sit. People would come and visit me and friends of mine said, "What are you going to do?". My age group, all my buddies, had just graduated from college in1969. That was the grade I should have been in. I said, "I guess I'd better go back to college and finish that". So, a friend of mine had just graduated from the University of Pennsylvania, and he said, when you're ready, come on down and I'll introduce you to some people there. So I did, and they got me in there and I graduated from there.

LS: What field did you go into? Did you go into business?
OB: I went to Penn. The government paid for everything because it was the GI bill, and benefits because of being wounded. After college I interviewed mostly on Wall Street, working with the Bank of New York, and I was with them for about 15 years.

LS: We have a few minutes left on the tape. Is there anything else that you want to say to us? Anything we didn't cover. While we were talking, while we were asking questions, were you thinking they should ask this question, but they didn't do it.
OB: Last year, thanks to the internet, I got in touch with about 15 people that I served with, that were in my squad, or squads nearby. So last fall, about a year ago, 34 years later, 10 of us got together out in Oklahoma City. It was amazing. There were 10 guys, of that group, there were probably 15 Purple Hearts, all deserved. No other medals to really speak of, which is interesting. I think some people gave out Bronze Stars and Silver Stars a little more quickly than they should have. Again, I'm talking about just enlisted men. There were no officers with us at this reunion. To me, the myth of how screwed up the Vietnam veteran is, was pretty well dispelled, because there were 10 guys. 50%, 5 of us, had gone on and gotten college degrees after getting out. This was all on the GI bill. 2 of them had graduate degrees. They were all gainfully employed, with families and things. So it was very uplifting. There was none of this hang dog stuff that you see. It was really quite something.

LS: Thank you very very much for giving us your time, because we know you're quite busy.
OB: Happy to do it.

LS: We've learned a lot. You've said a lot. Almost an hour's worth.
OB: Nice to see you.

LS: Thank you.