

Let me know if you get some glare in those glasses...[discussion of lighting]

So what did you do? Like what was your [inaudible] specialty? What were you called, I guess you could say? And where were you stationed? And how long?

If you start off, Charles, with your name...

My name.

...and then go into all that...

Alright. My name is Charles Schyab, and I served in the United States Army from November of 1967 in Vietnam to April of 1968. I was drafted in June of 1967 and served until April of 1969 as a medic with Company C, 1st battalion, 22nd Infantry 4th Infantry Division in the Highlands of Vietnam. Our base camp was at Pleiku.

Gotcha. How was that base camp?

It was a pretty big operation, you know. There were a lot of soldiers around and so on. You're probably talking about 5 or 10 thousand people. Now, as a field medic I was just assigned to the Company C literally in the jungle of Vietnam.

Gotcha. Did you want to go into the army or were you forced to go into the army?

I received my draft notice in 1967 [in]...February, and uh I went in as a conscientious objector, which meant I didn't carry a weapon. And, I, they usually let na...conscientious objectors become medics. And I thought that once you're a medic you get assigned to a field hospital. You get 3 hots to a cot, you know. You're not gonnabe walking through the jungle. But uh I was a replacement for the wounded people who needed to be replaced after a battle in November in the A Shau Valley. So once I left base camp, I was assigned to um the company and they, they were camping in the Highlands. We had elephants. And, ah you know, it wasah very primitive. And everything we had we carried on our back. We were eating C rations which is a case of 12 meals which would last you for 4 days and uh that was uh, you know. We would get water out of creeks. Sometimes they would ship us water. But ah it didn't seem to be very pleasant.

Ok. So, where exactly was this?

This was in the Upper Highlands of North Vietnam outside of the, the city of Pleiku. And I also went to places like Kon Tum and Buoh Ma Thuot and this is uh near another place of a famous battle at Dak To. So those [were] our area[s] of operations that we were ah fly into by using helicopters. And they were known as combat assaults where the helicopters would take our

company of about 120 men in helicopters and put us down in the jungle for days of patrol. And we were always under the umbrella of a firebase that had the artillery - the mortars and the 105s and the 155s. So that and always in constant radio contact, too.

Gotcha. So how long were you at any point staying in the Highlands? Like how many days at a time?

Probably...ahhh I can't remember being in any place more than 4 to 5 days. Ah we would go in to get resupplied in base camp and go back out. And then we would go to a fire base. And each battalion would have a fire base, and so we would patrol for the enemies. We were essentially bait.

[Inaudible]

And once we would find the enemy, then we would give the locations and then they would do the artillery and bombings and so on. And every time we would come in contact with the enemy, we would probably get 2 or 3 killed and about 6 or 7 wounded. The choppers would come in and take them and then we were always getting replacements. So you're always walking. You've got the temperature. You're staying awake at night. You're not really enjoying the food, and I lost like us between 30 to 40 pounds in 6 months. And uh ahhh you know it was... we had tick bites and leeches. You had snakes. I lost all of my fingernails. I had tick bites. Um we were lucky to get a change of clothes probably in 2 weeks. We lived in tents and half shelters. I was lucky to have a jungle hammock which was screen sides. And sometimes your backpack with your food and medical supplies was so heavy that you needed somebody to help you get off the ground and so then you would stay awake at night at rotation basis watching and waiting for the enemy.

How heavy were the backpacks that you carry around?

Minimum I would say of 50 to 60 pounds and that was everything we had so you had a few change of clothes and some socks in case if you got blisters you had your medical supplies and you had your food and that was all C rations and if you weren't careful enough and packed them right everytime you walked you would make a lot of noise you had to keep the cans separated so they wouldn't make noise and the enemy wouldn't know where you were.

Ok, so...Who...Did you have a certain person that kept strong through doing this, because obviously it wasn't 100% your choice? So did you have a strong person..

Well we drew a lot of strength from one another. I mean if you know anything about a medic, when the shooting starts, the medic has to go and they have to protect you and do anything to protect you. A couple times you know, and especially when we were in places like Kon

Tumduring um February of '68 when we had house-to-house fighting. They kept us strong. As a matter of fact we were able to hook up in 2003, and we have reunions every year. So we get 40 or 50 people and and we talk about it. And we would have books written about it. And people would have pictures. And it's really something special to know that those people covered your back. Now back in the world I had a girlfriend, who is now my wife, Jocelyn, who wrote everyday. So when you realize that you sent postage out from Vietnam that you didn't use a stamp. You just wrote "free" on the envelope. So I would send back the film cartridges, letters and today I still have my letters. I wish I had saved the letters that were sent to me, but I had a letter and I put it down on the ground and when I went to get it it was gone. Here some termites or something had taken it away. So you could get a sense of how discomfort[ing] everything was with the animals and the hiking not having any rest. It was it took a lot out of you but you did it for the people who you are with, which is really important.

Ok. So, any lasting friendships? Do you still have friends you talk to? That you work with?

Oh I lost contact with everyone. Once your ship out once you become a casualty and go to the hospital in Korea in Japan and come home there was very little contact with people. And then in 2003 2002 I went and put my name out on a website and that's when you guys contacted me. And I happened to be in Texas when they were there. So the three of us met and we had a reunion in 2013 in Corsicana, Texas. And then we started to getting in touch with people. And then there were five. And then there were 10. And then the computer really helped. And uhthen people called me up and says, "Hey you pulled a bullet out of me. Do you remember?" And I said, "Well no." And then there's not a day or week that goes by where I don't get an email or a telephone call. And um people remember things amazing things as to how you cared for them and what you were like and so it makes it special especially when you think that you would never hear from anybody.

How does that make you feel?

It makes me feel great, you know! Ahhh...You know now here's the thing now. You see the medic it always wishes he could have done more. And so when you get to meet somebody the medic is worried if that person is going to say something like, "Well you know my buddy died, because you stayed in that foxhole because you did it come out to help him stop bleeding." And that's what the medic fears, but but that's never happens. It was the complete opposite that every good thing that you did here's pictures of me bandaging people up so on. It's just an affirmation that continues to unfold you now that makes you proud you served and and makes you that these men you served with are really special.

That you did something good, yeah? Can you tell me about your boot camp and training experiences?

My boot camp was ah I went processed from um Maryland to Fort Bragg. And then I went to Fort Sam for basic. Trained as a medic. 6 weeks basic training and because we were conscientious objectors we didn't train with a weapons. So after basic we went to we went to the fort and we got with our truck drivers and went to truck driver's school. And then we were sent you an advanced individual training for 12 weeks, and this is from June to the last part of October. So when we left Fort Sam we were trained and you know they talked about us going to VietNAM. "You guys better shape up, because you're going to go to VietNAM." We would all say, "Yes, Sergeant, right," thinking. But ended up everybody did go to Vietnam they read the orders you know. And and you know it was a time of friendship and bonding but training and realizing how a very serious thing was. And they were friends of mine that I had met at Fort Sam and then and I met my friends that had also went through training and it was good to see them.

Is there any stories that have stuck with you your whole entire life you remember that happened in Vietnam or at boot camp or anything or any stories that you would like to tell?

There's a book called *The Battle of the Chu Moor Mountain* which was the battle that I was wounded in in April 28, 1968 and that was one conflict that I was involved in and another conflict I was involved with was the battle for Kon Yum during the Tet Offensive of February 1968. Those were essentially my 2 large firefights that I was involved with, and there's...ah pictures. There's things on... if you look up charliecompany.org on the internet you'll find a lot of things that I was involved with and you'll see pictures and you'll see people that ahh - students I took down to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier presenting flowers and so on. And those were the two big battles, and I mean it stays with you everyday. And I don't know how much of the detail you want to get, but those - you know it was just really something to be in there. They were defining moments - to go in and see the pictures and to read the stories you get a better sense of that. Now the one that I remember of course - every soldier remembers is when I was in the battle for Chu Moor Mountain that began like April 26th. I don't know if you want to hear about it or not - about how I got wounded or what it was like there. I was the senior medic with Company C, and we were at a place called Firebase C Ration in late April, and we - our battalion got word that we were against or had located a brigade. So here we're talking 300 people going against at least 3,000 people and they had the top of the mountain. This was about less than about 2 miles away from the Cambodia border. So we went up with 120 people in our reinforced rifle company and it was all mountainous. So we were going up mountains and we were on our way in there and somebody in front of me let loose the branch. So the branch comes back and hits me in the face knocks my helmet off and I counted it rolling down 7 or 8 times. Broke my glasses. So here I am in the jungle and see in a couple of hours it starts getting twilight in the jungle and so I was trying to do the job and we got to the top of the

mountain we could actually see the enemy moving and we dug in and we started seeing what they were doing. There were other parts of our group on other parts of the mountain...

[00:00:14] "regrets, well regrets is I wish I could have done more. I mean when this guy next to me got shot in the back of the head and I couldn't get a pulse and I thought that he had left us but he was still alive, and when we heard me say I can't get a pulse he started to move around, that was very traumatic, that's one of my deepest regrets... it really bothered me and so one day I just got down on my knees and said lord you just have to take this away and when I get up off of my knees it was gone ya know"

[00:01:05] " when the corneal said I don't care how many people you have left charge that hill side, I had a bible with me and the bible is in the frame and a piece of shrapnel in there too that they took out of my arm, but that bible was in my pocket when I got his so it has my blood on it and I read that bible and I made a battle field promise to the lord I said lord and I thought I was a tough guy too but this was way over my head I said unless you want me to make it back home im not gonna make it so I promised him I said lord if you see fit to bring me back home that I will do whatever you want me to do become a teacher as to what I had been strained or what to do, and I said it up to you well an hour later I was on the chopper"

[00:02:08] "I met with my friends in about 5 years ago and they said Charlie well what about your medals and I said yeah I got a purple heart they said purple heart I said yeah you know. So the next reunion they say uh Charlie we put you in for a silver star and they said the army sent us back and said we couldn't do it that you have to do it so how about doing it for your kids so I submitted material for an award and I had to get signatures and everything you know officers to sign it and so on, and uh they wrote me back and said that my request for a medal was denied, and in 2010 or 11 we were at a reunion in Arkansas I had just been refused a application to reconsider the medal and I walked out of it and I met a officer who asked me about my medals and I said look I just got refused and he said I just put you in for a medic I put you in for a reward I got sent home and you got sent home and once you left that was it. he took my application and filed it. And in 2012 senator barber Michalski at fort mead gave me a bronze start"

[00:04:26] "well I got your Vietnam service medals from both thee American then I got the American defense and I got one or doing community service but the two im proudest of

is the bronze star and the purple heart you get the purple heart once you get wounded in battle”

[00:05:00] “the day my services ended I was at fort Bellmore and it was a far well party and they appreciated the work I had done in the emergency room, and so I wanted get back to my wife and finish my schooling in 1970 and taught for 40 years”

[00:05:47] “ I got out in April of 1969 and I had a 100\$ of collage and I went back to school”

[00:06:43] “if you make the best out of the military itsgonna pay you back. If you try to fight it there’s enough people in there to make it miserable for you”

[00:07:14] “like just coming here today I heard a helicopter fly over and if my wide had been in the car she would of payed attention to that you see all kinds of different sounds smells your always you know if you woke me up in the middle of the night and asked me for my service number there would be no hesitation”

{00:08:30} “you have been through the valley of the shadow of death for all intended purposes you shouldn’t be here I mean you don’t think about it but your pillow you go home and hit the old sack and you have a pillow you know we didn’t have a pillow but we were lucky to have an air mattress and in a couple of days it would be eaten up by termites, you folks don’t really understand but to meet with other fellow vets it’s a privilege because they understand”