

Question: What was your first assignment when you first join the war? The navy? (0-:22)

-I went to the war went to the army in 1968 The first thing we went to was Officer school.

Question: Did you learn to be a signal Corps officer there? (:30- 40)

-well after you go to Officer school and after the school classify as you and divides you into a group of people in a so that's why they picked me for signal core.

Question: What is your name ? (1:05-1:10)

-My name is Mr. B

Question: Where are you from in Vietnam ?(1:12- 1:15)

-Saigon

Question :What year did you join the war ?

-1968

Question :Did you make any friends with anyone in the office the school with you? (1:33-1:49)

-Yes I do, many of them I don't think I can, there's only a few of us anyway in the USA

Question: Are you still in contact with them?

-Yes I still do

Question :How did your Family feel about your service in the war? (1:53- 2:31)

-Well during the war we had no other choice but we need to go by law and call by our country . OK we need to do that because we need to defend our country from the communists so my family and my father in army and my younger brother and army too. So we feel just normal very normal yeah.

Yes (it's a common thing)

Question :What is your most memorable experience from the war ?what is something you specifically remember?(2:38-2:56)

-That's a very good question because I am a signal man and I work and a very big radio station So most of the time I feel that I wasn't directly faced with communist or my enemy in the field anyway.

Question: What were your initial feelings when you were first drafted? what did you feel? (3:05-3:36)

-For myself and for my family that's almost traditional to serve for my country and in the army and is very normal and very proud to be able to defend my country. -I don't think they forced me to do anything but you know I just do my duty for my country.

Question Can you describe for me what a typical day was like from when you would get up to when you go to sleep at night? (3:53-4:25)

-Remember at the time the war happened everywhere in my country but luckily I work in A very safe place but just an army I stayed in my unit location and would wake up, get up and go to work just like that.

Question Was it hard learning English and then merging with the American soldiers? (4:35-5:20)

-Yes it's very hard, besides that my first foreign language in my high school was French and after 10th grade we had another choice of English so that's what I did but it's very hard because from the time you learn from school and the time you practice and the time you face a GI , it's very difficult time . But luckily for me because I had a chance to go to language school before I went to school over here, go back in 1970. So that's why I learned a little bit more but still it's very hard.

Question: What was it like when you first arrived in America after the war and what were the feelings you felt? (5:30- 6:07)

-Well let me go back just a little bit I escaped by boat with my wife and after 12 days and 11 nights in the open sea and directly landing in the Philippines and I stayed over one year before I came over here but anyway the first thing I feel the freedom I feel totally relaxed things like that name and after the first day when I came over here in 1992 in the USA it was totally different yes.

Question: What was it like when you came from the Philippines? (6:45-7:50)

-Well think about this and if you took a trip in a small boat of 50 feet long 15 feet wide and that fishing boat with no sanitation station or anything like that and you talk about 128 people put them together in the small boat like that and after 12 days and 11 nights in the open sea with no food and no water, nothing . And even no one rescued us and luckily we all survived and landed in the Philippines, so anyway. Nothing you could tell and nothing you can express your emotions or anything like that it's totally terrible and if you never went through it you never felt it you will never know how hard we went through

Question: What were some of the messages you would send over in a typical day on the radio?(7:58-8:22)

-This question is very weird the reason why because in the army system I cannot send any messages to the army we do the radio station * cell phone rang*

9:08-9:31 -For myself I cannot send any messages to my people or to my army because I work in the radio station. The radio station we don't do you that. We are just the one single radio man in the unit. The big radio station is totally different. it's very hard to tell you what I did before yeah .

Question: Did you have any free time during your time in the war? 9:37-9:56

-Yes we do . Just like the people we had army people over here we do exactly what we do everyday and after that we still have free time and we still have leave time. We still do just like that.

Question: What would you do during your free time?9:58-10:05

-Go back and stay with my family and at the time I was still single.

Question: Was it different from the time when you were not in the war when you would come home from leave?10:12-10:18

-Honestly we do just the same, almost the same yes .

Question: What was the most crucial part of your time in Vietnam?10:25-10:50

-The time after April 30 1975 after the fall of Saigon and we lost the country to communism and at the time they put us in labor camps

Question: How many people worked in the radio station with you?10:56-11:03

-At the time almost 100 people

-11:16 same question -11:24

OK how many people work in my radio station I think around about 100 people

Question: So why couldn't you send any messages to the radio ?11:26 -11:51

I think with that question I don't want to make you feel unhappy but it's not the right way to ask a question and it's not related to anything we do in the army

(7:40- 8:00)

Karlee: So, uh, how did you meet your wife?

Tony: Good question, too. I met my wife after I came back from reeducation camp, yes.

(8:01- 8:39)

K: So what was it like landing in America after you'd just come from these labor camps in Vietnam and being in the war and then being in the Philippines?

T: With so many people that came over here, it was very, almost like, totally from, no way I can tell you, I mean how surprised and how difficult time to get adjust with the new life over here. But for myself, I have just a little bit experience over here before. So, it's not too much, too hard for me to adjust, with a new life here.

(8:40- 9:01)

K: So with all those people on the boat, it was close living quarters. Was there any diseases that were spread around there?

T: That's a very good question too, but luckily we don't have nobody die during the trip and nobody got any sickness or disease or anything like that. No, we, all of us, we okay.

(9:02- 10:03)

K: Can you, uh, tell us what the pins on your uniform, or, uh, your jacket mean?

T: Okay. The one over here, right (points left), that you can see that the, in the left side, that's my old flag of my country, Republic of Vietnam. And on the next one you see the U.S.A., right.

Peyton: I'm sorry can you re-do that, just not touch the mic? Just try to go over the mic. Do you see the mic's on your tie? Just go over that, not rub your shirt.

T: Okay. Okay. Okay. Right over here you can see it, on the left hand side, that's my old flag, the Vietnam flag, Republic of Vietnam. And the U.S.A., right? And on the right hand side (points right), over here, is the pin from the school I went to Fort Monmouth, New Jersey US Signal School.

(10:04- 10:18)

K: So how did you get those pins?

T: Oh that's easy. Right now you can buy it anywhere you want to. The same thing over here (points right). I went back to the Fort Monmouth about 18 years ago.

(10:19- 10:28)

K: So did you enjoy being a Signal COR officer?

T: Yes I did. Yes I do. Yes.

(10:29- 10:54)

K: So, you said a little bit about coming over here and making that kind of adjustment. Do you remember where you landed in America?

T: The first place we went to that I stayed over was Glendale, California and after that around there in South of California for almost 16 years before I came over here. Yes.

(10:55- 11:08)

K: Was it easy to find work once you came to America?

T: I don't think so. But, at that time, there was many jobs available for you. Yes. If you try to work hard, yes.

(11:09- 12:00)

K: So, you said that you first landed in California. How did you end up here in Maryland?

T: Do you remember that I said, I stayed over there for 16 years before I came back over here. The reason why I came over here is because I prefer the 4 seasons. California is just like, you can tell that you don't feel it. Especially around, in, um, Orange County. You don't see the 4 different seasons. I mean, totally different from over here. Like, over here you can see that, snow, rain, and cold weather, and stuff like that. But not in the California, Southern California. That's why I came back over here.

(12:01- 12:10)

K: So, you said you came back over here for the seasons. What's your favorite season?

T: 4 of them.

K: All 4 of them?

T: Yeah.

(12:11- 12:38)

K: Did the war have any impacts on your body or mind?

T: Not the war. But after many years in the concentration camp, we especially, we have so many effects, related to, up to now. Just like many of my friends, we have the same problems, just like that. Yeah. You can see that I don't have enough teeth right now. That's what happened.

(12:39- 13:13)

K: How did you end up losing your teeth?

T: Because you don't have enough food to eat. The water. The condition of where you stay. Think about that. And you don't have toothpaste. You don't have a toothbrush, things like that. That's what happened. Yeah.

(13:14- 13:56)

K: Can you describe the conditions of what it was like, living there in your barracks and where you stayed while you were in the war or the camp, whichever?

T: In the camp, again, it is hard to tell you. But you talk about here what we can do and what we can leave and where we can lay down and sleep every day. Just about that big (motions with hands). See that here. Just enough for you. And every one of us, just like that.

(13:57- 14:16)

K: So, if you had to estimate about how many if you were in the camp?

T: At the time, my, my camp, I think over 2000 people. Yeah. At just one. Remember just one camp only. They have so many camps like that everywhere.

(14:17- 15:14)

K: What would you have to do to get the food and the water and what you would need because it was so difficult?

T: Remember, I said before, that they tried to punish us. That's why they tried to put us together in there. So they hope that, if we don't have enough food to eat, if we work very hard everyday, so we slowly die one at a time. They don't want to kill us right away. But slowly, they want to kill us that way. And remember now, they don't want to give us enough food, and we don't even have enough even rice to eat everyday. And you talk about, if you don't have enough to eat and you work so hard; what happens then? What do you end up with? You may die. Sooner or later.

(15:15- 15:42)

K: So what kind of work were you doing when you were at that camp?

T: They gave us anything they want us to do. They don't even care. The main reason because they just want us to work hard. Not for anything good for them or us, but they just want to punish us. They gave us something we can not even do.

(15:43- 16:23)

K: So you said that you had to leave your mom, your dad, and your ten brothers and sisters behind. Did they ever come over to the Phillipines with you or come over here to America?

T: No. Luckily, because you know my father, after more than 10 years in the reeducation camp and after that he got a very special program offer by the U.S. over here. They call it H.O. That's why they bring the, all his family come over here about 20 years ago. Yes. Officially yes.

(16:24- 16:35)

K: Can you tell me a little more about this X.O. program?

T: Do you have a piece of paper?

Question: Have you had any encounters with Agent Orange or any of the other chemicals they used during that time or were you in a sacred place? (11:50)

-Related to the question that orange stuff, no I don't for myself, remember I told you earlier I work in the close to my capitol Saigon, and I worked in a very big radio station so I don't have nothing to do with outside in the field yeah.

Question: What was the scariest part of the war for you? (12:24)

-Okay that the time very close to the time we lost to the country to communist because, you know when the communist came closer and closer to my capital and you know, closer to Saigon, yes that the time we need to think about the one day if they take over my country yes.

Question: Was your family able to get out when the communist came over and took your country? (12:53)

-Umm, my family never had chance to do that, my whole family still behind after the fall of Saigon, yes.

Question: Were you able to reconnect with them after the war? (13:10)

-Umm, yes, we did and i did that. My family, my father and after umm more than 10 years in the hard labor camp and he come back and after that he umm, I think he got very lucky because you know after in the pick up by the USA and he came over here. And about 20 years ago, he died after many umm you know, many things related to times span in the camps, you know, so many sick, so this many are umm diseases, stuff like that, so he came over here a couple of years and died here, passed away, yeah

Question: You said that other people worked with you in the radio station, did everyone have a specific job or did everyone have the same task? (13:58)

-Totally different. The one of the people in my company do the different things for every single one, umm yes.

Question: Can you describe to me what some of the other jobs were? (14:14)

-We had the repair, repair man, radio repair man, we had the supply people, we had you know the against the one unit with daily activities, so many different things we can do, yeah.

Question: What was it like there and do you know anyone else? (14:41)

-In my unit? Ugh yes, ugh, remember I told you earlier and I think two or three of them are still over here with us and okay. I knew them and I still contact with them and back in the California, yes.

Question: What was it like there in Vietnam? What was the weather/climate/temperature? (15:00)

-Oh you mean, oh you talk about the weather. Okay my country, I think belong to tropical weather zone, so and beside it and the many GI came back over here to talk about them and they remember they called, talked about umm, ugh, monsoons. Yeah time that the time umm when they umm or rainy can last for a week and you know for many days, stuff like that, so hot but no humidity, yeah hot and umm you couldn't say that two different umm seasons only hot and rainy, yeah.

Question: Can you tell me a little bit more about that and go into detail about that? (15:58)

-The hard labor camp we re-educated camp that the time and the way communist try to put us together and send us to the camp and they need to ugh abuse us, revert, and they even want us to die, you know, soon or later by we don't have any enough food to eat and we work hard for everyday maybe 4 or 5 o'clock in the morning and go back to in the camp about 5 or 6 o'clock at night. Okay but just a little bit to eat and nothing just like that the way they do.

Question: Can you describe your experiences there using any of your 5 senses in the concentration camp? (16:48)

-Well you talk about in the consintration camp right? If you have the chance to see the movie, "The Holocaust," or something and you can relate something very close to that.

Question: How was being in the camp affected you today, like do you have any lasting affects from being in the hard labor camp? (17:21)

-Well that let me put it this way, I came over here, and after the first few year still scared of something in the night time. So any time I went outside in the night time still scary or still think about the time in the camp, so any way hard, it's very hard for us to remember to tell anything what we went through.

Question: Do you have any funny stories or funny memories that you would like to share with us in the Vietnam War? (18:28)

-Honestly, I don't think I have, besides something if we have what it's very hard to explain to you to understand that, yeah, right.

Question: What was the living situations or conditions like while you were still in Saigon?
(18:51)

-Again back in 1975, or after 1975? After 1975, the first few years I don't have a chance to do anything, and remember I told you earlier because we know they send us to consintration cmap, all ready that when they let me go back home and nothing, I can do but try and escape yeah.

Question: Can you describe to me what that was like when the night you officially escaped and got on that boat, what happened that night? (19:36)

-You hear one thing about the boat people, the refugee, I am the one, yeah. Remember and i after so many times, I tried to escape unsuccessfully and the last time we escape by boat from Saigon, and it's hard to explain to you and tell you how we do it because remember now we have no other choice and we don't want to stay and we must go, we rather die open sea than stay with the communist and that's what happened so anyway or we don't even know that all together we are one of 28 people together in the same boat because so many different the way to get in the boat, what we say big boat still is very small to compare with you know with different boats we have over here, and we went over there,. We went to where we went yeah. Luckily we land in the Philippines.

Question: Did they ever punish you for trying to escape? (20:41)

-If they catch me, yes, that's why we had no other choice to go back, yes. Not, me only, but everybody, if we tried to escape and if they catch us and then we would be put in jail again, yes.

Question: Were you in favor of the war or were you in protest of the war? (21:16)

-Remember, now for us we had no favor and no protest or anything to do our job. We do okay, the duty for my country, yeah.

Question: You said that we escaped, as if you were with others. Do you remember the names of any of the people you escaped with? (21:33)

-Most of them right now in different country like Australia, Canada, France, in many over here but you know after almost 35 years, I had no contact and relation with anything with them anymore. Just me and my wife and just few of us in my, my family, yes.

Question: Were you able to prepare any food, water, clothes or anything before you escaped?
(22:05)

-Almost the same as anybody tried to escape. We have no chance and have no choice and we have no time to anything like that, remember I told you earlier we have no food, no water, no nothing yeah.

Question: Coming from the Philippines you said you spent a year there, coming from there you went to America correct? (22:25)

-Yes.

Question: How did you get from the Philippines to America? (22:25)

-At the time we are refugees, boat people and beside that you know I work for my country before and how in relationship with US before. I went to school here before that's why I have ugh priority to, to come over here.

Question: Did you have to leave anyone behind when you escaped from Vietnam? (23:03)

-Yes, the rest of my family, my father, my mother and 10 brothers and sisters behind at that time.

Question: Did you escape with your wife or did she come after? (23:31)

-Me and my wife escaped together at the same time, yeah, yes.

Question: If you could change anything about your experience during the war, would you? (23:40)

-Now we lost our country, we have no other choice and we must come over here for the freedom, and if you say that I held a chance, had a choice to do, we need to go back the time so we still have my country. That's when to go back before April 30, 1975.

00:34-01:36

k: "can you tell me about the program?"

t: The program was offered by the US government for anyone of us via Menees people who work for a country before. Anyone who was in a concentration camp for over three years can come over to the US with their family. My mom and dad and me were a part of that program so they came over here by airplane.

01:35-1:55

k: How did your father get into this program?

t: remember I said he was in the hard labor camp for over 10 years, anyone who is in a hard labor camp for over three years they can still qualify for the program.

02:00-02:49

k: what was the most difficult task they ask you to do in the heart

t: They wanted us to build the camp, they wanted us to make the came and do everything by ourselves. Sometimes they wanted us to do everything by ourselves. Sometimes they wanted us to do things to make them get money. after we did what we did we were told they would sell the product we made and they would make money out of it.

02:50-03:12

k:how did you feel when you heard the war was officially over?

it was about 12 o'clock April 30, 1975 when our president at the time told us that the war was over

03:13-03:22

k: did you know what you were doing or how you felt when you receive that news?

t: I was still in my uniform and I still have my weapon at the time

03:36-05:45

k: is there anything else you would like to share with us about your time in the war?

t: there was so many different things I want to share but I have one thing I want to still tell you, thank you very much for giving us a chance to give you something that we have never said before not even to our own family members. but is very hard for us to explain to you because you're so young you have no experience of what we went through but I can least give you some kind of an idea of what we went through before during and even after the war. I am here with you today because I am one of many many many of us that are very lucky and unlucky enough to stay over here in this country. Otherwise many of us would have died during the trip on the open so no one knows exactly how many of us by without the people who have died in that war. even if you read a book based on the war you would not understand on how we could've survived. think about that.

05:45-06:22

h: let me step back and tell you if you ever see those fancy boats at the marina, they are nothing compared to what we had to be on we had to be on a boat that was a fishing boat with no sanitation and nothing to accommodate to 120 people.

6:25-7:00

t: if you have seen the movies about refugees escaping to the US you still wouldn't understand because you have grown up with such an east life. my children are almost the same and I'm never tell them as much as I have told you about this.

7:00-7:35

k: So before the war I assume you have a normal life and childhood?

t: yes but remember we wanted nothing to do with the North Vietnam we just defended our country and protect it. The North Vietnam were communist and they wanted to take over our country.

7:37-08:12

k: did you spend all your time in Saigon or did you ever travel to other bases in Vietnam?

h: at the time my job at the radio station was A repair man so I visited other faces to help them repair things

08:20-

k: Do you share his empathy for the Mexicans who come here feeling the hardships in Mexico? After going through what you've been going through?

t: we don't come over here because we want to we never think about that and our lives. we come over here because communist took over a country, you cannot compare our hardships to theirs

:35): Is there anything else you want to share with us about your time?

Tony: Well there are so many different things I want to share but the first thing I want to say to you is that, I don't know how far or how wide this program or this interview could go but I just want to say thank you very much for giving me a chance to give you something I've never said before, not even to my family. Yeah, besides it is very hard for us to explain this to you because you are very young, you have no experience with anything like what we went through, so sometimes the questions are very hard to...anyway, at least I gave you some idea of what we went through during the war and what we went through after the war and even before many of us came over here. So luckily I am over here with you today, because I am the one of many of us who is very lucky, enough to stay over here in this country. Many of us die during the trip on the open sea. Nobody knows how many of us died during the hard labor camps. So if you see any of us over here right now... I don't think I can even explain to you, or any one of you, the whole

situation, the whole thing that we learned and experienced before. Even if you read the book you cannot imagine how we can survive, think about that. Let me go back just a little bit, if you right now go to any marina and you see the very big boat, the fancy boat, stuff like that, with all the equipment and stuff like that. But then you see the very small fishing boat, with no sanitation, nothing like that, and nothing to accommodate a hundred and twenty people, think about that. We have a movie that is coming out that will tell you about how refugees end up over here and everywhere in the world. It's a terrible story, but still, believe me you'll never imagine how you grow up with an easy life over here, you never think of anything else like that, trust me. My children over here right now are almost the same, and believe me, I've never told them anything more than what I'm telling you right now.

Karlee (6:59): So before the war, I assume you had a normal childhood. Am I correct in saying that?

Tony: Yes, we do the same. Remember now, the South Vietnam, we never tried to do nothing with North Vietnam we just defend our country, protect our country. But North Vietnam, the communists, they invade us, they attack us. We have no other choice we need to protect us, we need to protect our country, we need to defend our country.

Karlee (7:36): Did you spend all your time in Saigon or were you ever able to travel around to the other bases in South Vietnam?

Tony: At the time with my job in the station there were times where I went around with my country to help the people. Maybe I told you, maybe I didn't but my job was repair man. They sent me to go outside to the other stations to repair. So yes I did.

Karlee (8:14): Do you feel sympathy for the Mexican immigrants that are coming to America today feeling the hardships in Mexico after dealing with what you had to do?

Tony: You guys are very easy to have sympathy for anything, trust me I can tell this. But remember we don't come over here because we want to. We never think about that in all our lives, never. But the reason why we came over here is because the situation of our country we lost our country to the communists and we cannot come over here easier than any Latino who crosses the border. I can tell their lives over there are poor just like us. But they have a chance and they can come over, and when they do they get sent back by border patrol, just do like that. Remember now, anyone can come over here if they want to work over here or want a better life, I don't see any problem with that. But if you compare our situation with their situation, they're totally different, please remember that. We are ten thousand miles from here we cannot just step over like that and go to the USA, remember that, please understand. I just want to mention this to you because you say your father or uncle were in the service before and we just want to tell you if you had an uncle or father or family who went through to defend for us before during the Vietnam War, I'd say thank you very much for their service. Without them I think we wouldn't have lasted for nearly twenty years.

Karlee (10:47): Did you ever have the feeling that maybe if I just joined the North Vietnam and become a communist I won't have to deal with anything, like did you ever think of joining them?

Tony: Do you know anything about communist?

Karlee (11:03): I'm familiar with it

Tony: How?

Karlee (11:07): they want a very totalitarian government style, they're very controlling.

Tony: Let me put it this way, if you think about the way you live your life right now in North Korea, what would happen?

Karlee (11:32): Well over here we have a very free lifestyle, we have a very, you can choose what you want to do and with the communists it's more of the government tells you what to do.

Tony: The reason why the south and north we divide by seventeen parallel just like the South Korea divide by thirty eight parallel and you can see the difference with north and south and we over here in Vietnam during that time, we just want them to stay where they are. We don't want to do nothing with them but they just want to take over the whole country. You see how many American's went to North Korea and stayed over there and how many North Koreans, if you opened the border, the whole country would come over here, think about that. And if you think about right now Vietnam, if you opened the door for them, welcomed them openly, the whole country would come over here.

Karlee (13:01): Have you gotten a chance to go back to Vietnam since the war?

Tony: I don't want to go back, because just like myself, I may have a problem with them.

Karlee (13:15): You don't want to go back at all?

Tony: Not to take a chance.

Karlee (13:36): Thank you very much sir for coming here today and having a conversation with us and helping us learn more from your perspective. This was very educational for us and we just want to thank you once again for your service to the war because you're a big part of history for us so thank you.