

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAME: Homer T. Cox

COLLECTION: 4700.0945

IDENTIFICATION: Vietnam veteran

INTERVIEWER: Paul K. Moore

SERIES: Americans in Vietnam

INTERVIEW DATES: 4/5/74

FOCUS DATES: Jan. 8, 1968-Jan. 7, 1971, Aug. 30, 1969-Nov. 30, 1969

ABSTRACT:

Tape 1381

Born in Alexandria; father was Naval officer stationed in Virginia and Georgia; father sent to Vietnam in 1964; Cox finished high school in Homer, LA; father was lieutenant commander, killed in Vietnam in 1969; mother did social work; after one year of college, recruited into Army at age 19; enlisted for three years with airborne infantry; basic training at Fort Polk; Infantry AIT at Fort Gordon, GA; jump school at Fort Benning; accepted into Special Forces; West Point prep school run by Army at Fort Fellboard, Virginia; training was Vietnam specific; first day of basic training; attended West Point prep school for a year but didn't make it into West Point; Cox's attitude toward military; Cox isn't anti-military; opted for Vietnam so he'd get an early out and could return to college; flew to Vietnam on TWA; arrival in Vietnam; peculiar smell in air; Pacification program; booby traps; constant tension; fighting Vietnamese; expense of war; spent 14 months in hospital; fighting VC in She Ranh Valley; badly wounded by booby trap or grenade; wounds of comrades; hospitals at Cam Ranh Bay and Tokyo; Cox was only person on his ward with two arms and two legs; care of guys who lost limbs; Red Cross flew dying man's wife over, miraculous recovery; Cox became bitter; disfigured people in plastic surgery ward; Cox had shrapnel wounds in face, back and arms; gets 40% disability now; Cox received excellent medical care; comparisons to TV show MASH; US should not have been in Vietnam; stayed in hospital three months longer than necessary because he didn't want to leave; evaded returning to duty; stayed in on provisional P34 status; sent to Fort Benning, GA, to process 197th infantry brigade; trouble guys had readjusting to US after Vietnam; difference of clean-cut stateside Army and reality of Vietnam; after discharge, worked offshore as roughneck to save money for school; volunteering to be medical test subject to avoid regular duty; medical test at Edgewood Arsenal, Maryland, home of Army's Chemical Gas Warfare; psychological tests Army ran there; riot gas experiment; tour of nerve gas experiment facilities; anti-war demonstration in July 1970 outside Gaseous Warfare Center; attending anti-war meeting near base; simultaneously guarding against VC and thieving South Vietnamese; low opinion of Vietnamese; father got out of service but stayed in Vietnam to form contracting company; father killed as civilian in Vietnam; booby traps made of C-Ration cans; hutches made from

ammunition boxes; Cox's father set up first R&R program in Vietnam in 1965; Cox, his father and his uncle all were in Vietnam simultaneously; father was building water purification plants in outlying villages; believe the VC killed his father, set it up to look like accident; Vietnamese couldn't appreciate democracy; spent most of his time in field; people hid their emotions, pretended Vietnam didn't get to them; idiot who wanted to bring a Vietnamese woman home to US; Cox never went with a prostitute, but dreamt of meeting woman during R&R in Australia; prevalence of drugs; guy court-martialed for raping Vietnamese woman; drugs hidden in cigarette packs; Cox didn't smoke much marijuana because of his hay fever; wasteful ways in Army; Army officers weren't thrilled to be in Vietnam; comparing waste in military to waste in big corporations; US Army was efficient compared to other armies; racial conflict at Fort Benning; racial trouble mostly in rear, not in field; no racial trouble in hospital.

TAPES: 1 (T1381)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 1 hour

PAGES TRANSCRIPT: 25 pages

RESTRICTIONS: None