

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAME: Sergeant Neal Verrette

COLLECTION: 4700.0990

IDENTIFICATION: Vietnam veteran

INTERVIEWER: Mike Humphreys

SERIES: Americans in Vietnam

INTERVIEW DATES: 4/25/75

FOCUS DATES: Jan 6, 1971-Nov 9, 1973

ABSTRACT:

Tape 1445, Side A

Assessment of his officers; promotions; rank in basic training; sent to Germany first, later volunteered to go to Vietnam; torture in Vietnam; saw company of Marines get slaughtered while crossing field; methods of torture he saw; ease of getting drugs; officers who were heroin addicts; poppy and marijuana fields; Verette's involvement with drugs; attitudes toward drug users there; Verette's alcoholism; early training in Vietnam; assessment of basic training; Special Forces training in Panama; adaptability of training to Vietnam; paid assassinations; America profited from war; war was waste of time and lives; US should help poor people at home; Verette would rather be poor with peace of mind than rich without peace of mind; changing moods; usefulness of faith in God; lies government was spreading about Vietnam; lies about causes of death; beauty of Saigon; businesses that were fronts for the syndicate; worked his way up to squad leader; responsibilities of squad leaders; status as non-commissioned officer; Verette's talent at killing; became a platoon leader; started off as regular infantry; using APCs; Verette's tank and private arsenal; misses killing people; considering re-enlisting; bases he's worked at since returning from Vietnam; practicing shooting on range; casualties in field; day of trying to capture bunker, lost 15 men; war was like a chess game; got shot in shoulder; shot medic for not treating him fast enough; citing shell shock or battle fatigue to get away with murder; plans to kill medic; hospital in Saigon; harassing unpopular lieutenants with snakes and tarantulas; pet lion; would kill superiors if couldn't drive them away by harassment; Verette was a Green Beret.

Tape 1445, Side B

Long Binh Jail; offenses that landed Verette in jail; Verette's fluctuating rank; reasons for his demotions; revenge on an officer; NCO information network; solidarity of lower ranks; "mind war" that's going on in the US; waking up happy in the morning; would return to Army, would volunteer to serve in another war; denied jobs because of his Vietnam experience; resentment against US presidents; resentment against General Westmoreland; atrocities worse than My Lai; witnessing rape and other torture; rape as Vietnamese terror tactic; Americans no better than the Vietnamese; rape superfluous because sex so cheap; changes Vietnam wrought on soldiers who served there.

Tape 1446, Side A

Race relations; Verette's enjoyment of war; soldiers were either alcoholics or junkies; sold cigarettes on black market; MPs burned 50 gallon drums of marijuana; Verette's alcoholism; stationed in Pleiku; mamasan who cared for his hooch; Vietnamese shared everything; Verette rich by their standards; learned to sleep with eyes open; hot meals flown out by helicopter; harassment fire; search and destroy mission; size of mortar, casing; strategy of Vietnamese; inaccuracy of body counts reported in papers; amazing focus of enemy; lies in newspapers; psychiatrist treatment; got in trouble for assault; married a white woman.

Tape 1446, Side B

Not informed about war before he was sent; relations with officers; places he served in Vietnam; race relations; strategies for dealing with enemy; size of squads, platoons; capturing prisoners; getting caught by enemy; sensing presence of enemy; ways to get sent home involving spider and snake bites; deadly viper that Vietnamese put in US boots; sleeping with boots on; black gonorrhea; opinions of his officers; favorite officer, Captain Hebert; similarities between struggles of blacks and Cajuns; poverty of Vietnamese villagers; relations with Vietnamese; learning Vietnamese language; comparison of North Vietnamese and American Ku Klux Klan; feelings against Communists; propaganda; enemy taking whites prisoners, letting blacks go; greed started the war; beauty of Vietnam; wants to go back and visit; Puerto Ricans who fought in the war; soldier who committed suicide; limited war; black officers; killing officers; R&R trips; sex at massage parlor; sexual aptitude of Vietnamese girls; senselessness of Vietnam war; Verette killed lots of people there; enemy used American discards to kill US soldiers; booby traps; Korean rock soldiers; interracial friendships.

TAPES: 2 (T1445, T1446)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 2 hours, 15 minutes

PAGES INDEX: 6 pages

RESTRICTIONS: None