



# **Martin Passarella**

**Vietnam War  
U.S. Army**

**25th Infantry Division  
HQ Company  
2nd Battalion 34th Armor**

**Specialist 4 E4**

## **Martin Passarella**

**Veterans  
History  
Project  
Transcript**

**Interview conducted  
June 7, 2017**

**Niles Public Library  
Niles-Maine Library District  
Niles, Illinois**



Niles-Maine District Library District

**Veterans History Project Transcript**

Veteran:       **Martin Passarella**     Rank:     **Specialist 4 – E4**

Branch of Service:     **U.S. Army**     Theater:   **Vietnam**

Unit:   **25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, HQ Company**  
          **2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 34<sup>th</sup> Armor**

Interview Date: June 7, 2017

Place: Niles-Maine Public Library  
Board Room

Equipment: Philips Digital Pocket Memo Recorder  
Sony Camcorder

Interviewer: Neil O'Shea  
Transcribers: Zachary Hindmand/Neil O'Shea

This Veteran's Victory Project interview is being conducted on June 7<sup>th</sup>, in the year 2017, here at the Niles Public Library in the third floor board room. My name is Neil O'Shea and I'm a member of the reference staff here and I am speaking with Martin Passarella. Mr. Passarella was born in Chicago and now lives in Niles, Illinois. Mr. Passarella learned of the Veterans History Project through contact with some of the staff members who have been interviewing veterans since 2005 when the Niles Library joined with the national effort coordinated by the Library of Congress. Mr. Passarella, Marty, has kindly consented being interviewed for this project and here is his story. By way of preface, Marty is our first Vietnam veteran to be interviewed since 2005. So we really appreciate his coming in today and being the first of the local Niles veterans from the Vietnam War and to speak in this decade with us.

*So Marty, when did you enter the service (Interviewer's words)?*

I got my draft notice, my induction notice, and I entered the service on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of July, 1966, left from Chicago, Illinois, by a train to St. Louis, and I went for my basic training at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. (Veteran's words)

*Marty, where were you living at the time?*

I was still living at home with my mother; I was 22 years old.

*In Chicago?*

Yes.

*Did you attend high school in Chicago?*

No I didn't, I actually have a different background. My father passed away when I was seven. My mother when I was growing up, to prevent me from growing up a juvenile delinquent sent me to a school called Glenwood School for Boys in Glenwood, Illinois. It was for a school for boys from broken homes by death or divorce. It just so happened to have a military background. So when I went into service, I knew close order drill. I knew everything about a rifle, how to drill with a rifle, I could disassemble a M1 rifle

when I was 12 years old. So when I got the basic training, I adapted more readily than someone who did not have a military background. While everyone else was learning how to be a soldier, I was doing construction stuff for the drill instructors. What they were learning, I already knew and I didn't need a refresher course. It's like a bicycle, once you get on...

*Marty, did you live in any particular neighborhood of the city?*

I lived in the Humboldt Park neighborhood. We lived on Iowa Street, north of Chicago Avenue, and Wood Street.

*So, did you say you were drafted at the age of 22?*

Yes, 22.

*And you had a draft number?*

There was no lottery number at that time. You registered at 18, and were called when needed. "We need you, maybe 40,000 this month," and off we went.

*And when you were drafted, what were you doing? Were you working?*

I was an apprentice auto mechanic.

*Were some of your friends, some of the people from the neighborhood also drafted at the same time?*

They were in. I don't know exactly at what time. From my neighborhood, I only know of two other guys who served in the Vietnam, one was killed in Vietnam and the other one had a totally different type of experience than I did.

*So you wound up in the Army, so that was because you were drafted. You didn't choose the army.*

I didn't choose the army. Of course when you are drafted, you didn't get to choose the service neither, they could have said "Marty, you're going to the Army, Neil, you're going to the Marine Corps." They split it up like that.

*The fact you had a background in the auto mechanics, that didn't affect the army's decision of how to, where to direct you?*

That's what I ended up being in the army. Trying to expand this a little bit. I finished my Basic Training, normally you'd go through your AIT (Advanced Individual Training), but I was assigned to a permanent party unit in Fort Bliss, Texas. I had no AIT, no additional training at that time. As a member of this light right direct support maintenance company, they were sending people to the Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland, wheel and track school. I was in the first group that went to Wheel and Track School; but when I got out of Wheel and Track, my Military Occupational Specialty was a 63 Charlie 20, which was a wheel and track mechanic.

*63 Charlie 20?*

63C20 or 63Charlie20.

*Sixty-three C Twenty*

So I became a wheel and track mechanic, I returned to my stateside unit, but I was not in my stateside unit, I was put in a holding company with a signal company was right next to my old unit. My old unit was on orders for Vietnam. So the people they had out there, in school, were being replace in the company so when we came back from Aberdeen, Maryland; there wasn't a slot for us. We were, you know, just excess until we received our orders. We knew we were going to Vietnam, just didn't know exactly when.

*Were you an only child?*

Yes, I'm an only child.

*Only child, so unless you were-*

I shouldn't have been there to start with, if you really want to think about it.

*Yes, you couldn't have been a-*

I mean you don't see two brothers at the same time, and I never really thought about it or made a stink about it or when you think about it, it was just; I went.

*It must've been a hardship for your mom.*

Oh, I'm sure it was.

*Yes.*

It was just my mom; my dad had passed away.

*So, the fact you were prepared in a way for the military, because of your high school experience, did you find-*

Grammar school too.

*Grade school too? Oh, Wow.*

I started in 6<sup>th</sup> grade right through - for six years.

*You were ready-made. So did it seem like a big adjustment to this; being in the army?*

Just the fact it was military all day long, you would go to school and you still had your parade formations and your inspections and your drill stuff. It was military 24 hours.

*So you were in Fort Leonard?*

Fort Leonard was for basic training; Fort Bliss, Texas, at El Paso was my permanent party assignment.

*Was that the first time you were away, of course, it wasn't the first time you were away from home for a significant period of time, so*

Well, the first time I was away from home was when I went from Chicago to Basic Training and I said we went via train, but when I came home for leave after basic, that was the first time I was ever in an airplane. So I sat there with my mouth open with the air conditioning on my face to calm my nerves. Flying was quite different at that time; you got lunch on the plane, and you could smoke on the plane.

*And you were meeting people from all different parts of the country and walks of life.*

Sure, there was an Italian guy, from New Jersey, there were two of them in my company. I remember one, Bernard Pelligrino. He was a KIA in Vietnam. You know, he got killed in Vietnam. You leave from here and you know a lot of people from Chicago, and when you go to someplace else, you meet people from all over.

*Were you able to get along with almost everybody?*

Just about. Yes, I'm sure there was some racial tension, but I didn't feel it, I just wanted to get along with everybody. Vietnam was a different story. I'm sure there was, maybe after my period there, there was more racial tension, but when the guy next to you is black and the guy next to you is Hispanic, it doesn't matter if he was black or Hispanic, you're all brothers, you all bleed the same.

*Do you recall when you departed for overseas territory.*

It was in July; it was July of 1967, but if I was to give you a specific date, I don't recall.

*And did you know from the beginning when you were drafted, that you were most likely going to Vietnam.*

No, not really.

*When you got the news that you were going to Vietnam, did that have any impact?*

Was I ready to go to Canada? No.

*But I suppose some people got to go to Germany or the DMZ or Japan.*

People did. But it was a different time in this country. Years later, it was nobody wanted to go. It was a different time in the country. You were still living with the death of President Kennedy, and what can you do for your country and not ask what your country can do for you. So you did it as blind patriotism. Okay, it's not that "Yes, we should've been there" or "No, we shouldn't have been there", and you did it because it was blind patriotism. You really at that period of time, if you didn't get drafted, as a male individual; you owed the country six years of your life. If you went into the military for three years, you had three years of reserve. People got out of the military other than the protests and the running, they went into the Peace Corps. You can do that instead of going into the military, the Peace Corps. You can serve time in another country, some impoverished African nation and you know; helping the people, Peace Corps.

*So Marty, how did you make the journey to Vietnam. Was it by boat or by plane?*

I flew over on TWA, but I flew out of Travis Airbase in San Francisco, California It was a night flight, and I swear to God, it seemed like all we did was sleep. Sleep and eat the whole time. It was dark, we had a one-hour layover in Honolulu, because the flight couldn't have made it all the way and we had another one-hour layover in Kadena, Okinawa before we landed at Bien Hoa Airbase in Vietnam. Coming back, it was in reverse, but I flew PanAm coming back and that 20 some hour flight was daylight the whole time because you're crossing the date line. I left Vietnam at 1:00 in the afternoon and landed in San Francisco at 6:00 on the same day and we were 20 some hours in the air.

*So when you landed in Vietnam, was there a particular camp or.*

We landed at the airbase, we got on these buses.

*Is that near Saigon or North?*

Ton Son Nhut airbase was in Saigon, and Bien Hoa was a little further up, a different airbase. You know, you could probably have flown into either one Bien Hoa, earlier the flights were going to Ton Son Nhut. We flew into Bien Hoa, we got on these big buses. They had heavy metal screens over the windows so they couldn't throw hand grenades inside the bus, and we went out to Long Binh Post, which was the largest post in Vietnam. We went to the 90<sup>th</sup> Replacement Battalion-Camp Alpha. We got there in the afternoon and all you had to do was to make the formations. So the evening formation, they were going to have people do kitchen police, KP, right all night. So this one guy I was stationed with back in Texas, he says, "We'll go to the back of the formation to hide." What do they do? They pull the back of the formation for KP. My first day in Vietnam all day long and I'm on an all-night detail. Next day, because of all the KP, was to make daily formations. First morning formation, gone, I was sent to II Field Force. II Field Force then sent me to my unit. That was day one and two in Vietnam.

*What was the weather like?*

It's a strange -even in a letter I wrote to my mother- this country just smelled like crap. It really did; it had that stench to it. The fertilizer.

*Human fertilizer?*

Yes. It had that stench. It's a tropical climate, you had a monsoon season and I got there in the wet season. Ironically, people think when you hear monsoon, it's pouring like hell. It starts at 3:00 in the afternoon, rains like hell, at the same time every day, you know. And it is six months of rain, six months of dry.

*When you, after you had the first day of the KP duty, then they sent you out two or three days later?*

No, it was the next day. From the 90<sup>th</sup> Replacement Battalion, you were sent to Field Force. II Field Force took in a lot of units; in that area of Vietnam we were all under II Field Force. And then II Field Force sent me to the 2/34<sup>th</sup> Armor which, at that time, was detached from the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division and Headquarters Company was attached to II Field Force. So I was still in the Bien Hoa area in August of that year. What they did was they took my battalion, which came over with the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, and changed us with the Armor Battalion that came with the 25<sup>th</sup>. So 1/69<sup>th</sup> Armor went to the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, 2/34<sup>th</sup> Armor went to the 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. Only thing was 2/34<sup>th</sup> never worked as a complete battalion. Alpha Company was at Cu Chi; Bravo Company was with the 1st Infantry Division at Lai Khe, and Charlie Company was up in the DMZ. We were never as one solid battalion unit.

*Were you at one particular location?*

Well, after we left, after we got flipped, we left Camp Ashley in the Bien Hoa area, we went via convoy through Saigon, went up Highway One, QL 1 turns into QL 22, it splits. We were up near Cambodia, at Tay-Ninh. Alpha Company was at Ch Chi.

*So when you were in near Cambodia, at night; did you sleep in a barracks?*

We had regular, a barracks; that's the "hooch" in that photograph. When we initially got there, because we came in the dark, there was no roof, we had to pull military tents over the top the first night so it was covered. And then when I went to the field and when I came back; they were done like this. I was in the Battalion Maintenance Platoon when I got there, but I was sick and tired of fixing trucks. I didn't want anything to do with it so I schemed my way into being assigned to a Model 88 VTR which is Tank Recovery Vehicle. It is a 54-ton tracked vehicle tank recovery with four crew members. So I was on that August, September, October, November, and December of 1967.

*So you are out in the field, recovering tanks?*

Oh yes. We supported Alpha Company, so I worked with Alpha Company. I worked with Charlie Company. worked on all the operations I listed on the Biographical Data Form. In December, 1967, Charlie Company came back down from the DMZ to Tay-Ninh Base Camp hooked up with the Battalion Headquarters and Headquarters Company. We had to give them our tank recovery vehicle; the battalion had two of them because they lost their VTR in a river. The Tet offensive started on January 31<sup>st</sup>, '68 and, I had heard a friend of mine from Alpha Company got killed. Our Scout Platoon, Recon Platoon, took casualties and needed some replacements. I volunteered for combat, finished my tour of duty in the recon platoon; and it turned out that Skip who I thought was killed wasn't. What I got, maybe stupidly or however you would put it, I asked for it, I can't complain about the outcome.

*So you list the battles and campaigns you were involved in; was Kunia?*

Kunia, that was a land-clearing operation to take away the hiding areas for the Viet Cong. Kole Kole was a lot of that stuff was search and destroy. You look for them and you know.

*So when you were in those campaigns or actions there; was that when you were in the vehicle recovery unit or was it after you volunteered?*

I was in Battalion Maintenance until Operation Saratoga.

*Until Operation Saratoga.*

Saratoga was when I joined the Recon Platoon. Then it was fun and games, "a pun" for the rest of my tour. What it really was, was fighting against the North Vietnamese Army and the Viet Cong.

*Then it was Operation Quyet Thang.*

Operation Quyet Thang and Toan Thang.

*And then the Tet Offensive of 1968.*

Well, those operations, Quyet Thang and Toan Thang took place during the Tet Offensive in 1968.

*The Tet Offensive of course, as you know better than I do, had a great effect on the general American population's view of how the war was going.*

Oh yes, because we were under the assumption that there was "a light at the end of the tunnel."

*Were you surprised at the Tet Offensive when you were there?*

Oh yes, it caught everybody by surprise.

*Everybody?*

I mean they were really slick about it, I tell you. I'll tell you the God's truth, I was at that Half-Price Books store and I saw this book and it had the little tropic lightning badge, you know.

*You're referencing the 25<sup>th</sup>*

Yes, it looks like a strawberry with a lightning bolt. I picked it up and it says "A 100 miles of Bad Road," well it was about a 3/4 Cavalry, the Cavalry element of the 25<sup>th</sup> Division. So yes, I'll buy the book and pass it on to my friend Roger McGill, you might've remembered him from the meeting. He served with the 3/4 Cav 1966.

*Yes.*

Then I found out that Roger already read the book, so I am reading the book and I was like "Oh, my God." Because the casualties they took, they took between January and May of that year, they had fifty-something killed. They saved Ton Son Nhut Air Base when the Tet Offensive started, and I am thinking I traveled the same roads! I swear to God prior to the beginning of Tet I went down to Saigon. To Long Binh Post. We had a lot of, I wouldn't call it obsolescence but we had a lot of destroyed tank parts that we had to dump. A Sergeant from my platoon, a medic and myself were making this trip and missed the convoy to Saigon. We are going from Cambodia to Saigon, the three of us in a jeep via QL1 in January 1968 when the enemy was probably preparing for the offensive. My God, I was just flabbergasted, when I began thinking about this thing. The strangest thing is I got a phone call from this medic who was looking for some other guy from the platoon who was a Chicago resident and all of that. And then it dawned on me that he was the third person in the jeep while I was talking to him. When we got to the salvage yard we were able to get a crane to unload this big trailer of stuff. Now we had some free time. So we're walking around Long Binh when we ran into a black guy from Chicago, from my Company in the States. "Hey Spears, how are you doing?" and he replied that everything was good when a young kid comes around the hooch. They had better hooches than we did, they were all metal and concrete floors and he says, "That kid's from Chicago too." He walks over and I look at his nametape and the name is Domin. Where are you from?" Of course you get the same routine: "I'm from Chicago." "Where in Chicago?" "The Northwest Side." "Where on the Northwest Side?" "Kelvyn Park" and I say; "You got a sister about so tall, blonde, her name is Barbara". He replies, "Yes." As it turns out my wife was going to college with this kid's sister.

*Wow.*

When it comes to this "involvement" in Southeast Asia, there are like these really, really strange things happening. I mean the world is such a small place.

*Marty, you received a Purple Heart Oak-leaf Cluster.*

*Yes.*

*During what campaign or battle?*

It was during the Tet Offensive. I was wounded on the 29<sup>th</sup> of February, 1968, again on the 24<sup>th</sup> of March, 1968. I was medevaced on the 7<sup>th</sup> of May, 1968.

*Were those bullet wounds?*

Shrapnel wounds. Shrapnel is still in my legs. The first two were minor shrapnel wounds. The last one was more severe. I used to sleep outside on a litter you know, a stretcher. I didn't want to sleep inside the vehicle so I slept outside. Then all of the sudden, an explosion, and I flipped off the litter and I started crawling outside the driver's compartment and all hell broke loose. Rocket-propelled grenades and automatic weapons and you know I couldn't get up. So I came around back and I stood up and I looked down. The inside of my thighs was nothing but blood. I crawled inside the APC and told my track commander to get me a medic. The Medic, who was on our left side two vehicles away, ran through all that automatic weapons fire to come and treat me. So it turns out that my closest friend in the platoon got killed that morning. Three of us were wounded and he got killed. I was put on a med-evac helicopter and his body was put in a body bag at my feet. May 7 1968 was a tough one for me. Then the irony begins. The Illinois Vietnam Veterans' Memorial in Springfield was dedicated on the May 7, 1988, that's 20



years to the date, right. Then I found out that the battle at Dien Bien Phu, where the French lost to Ho Chi Minh, was on the May 7, 1954, ironic. Truly ironic.

*That's what you said about Vietnam, there's these mysterious connections.*

Yes. I mean I saw enough, not that we lost a lot of people, killed in a platoon at the time.

*But you took serious shrapnel, that was during the Tet Offensive.*

All of them were, two moderate and one serious.

*When they medevaced you, did they lift you back to a hospital in Saigon or some other place?*

They took me to the 12<sup>th</sup> Evacuation Hospital in Cu Chi. They treated me at the 12<sup>th</sup> Evac at Cu Chi; I got on a plane and flew to Tay Ninh Base Camp. Then when I didn't have to do anything for three days while my wound drained. Then I went to the 45<sup>th</sup> Surgical Hospital on Tay-Ninh Base Camp and got sutured.

*And did you return to combat after that?*

No. I mean I spent from May 7, 1968 until July 6, 1968, which was a day after my birthday in shower shoes, I didn't have to do any duty. They had me in charge of quarters one night and I had to go to the aid station because the wound kept draining so the dressing got changed, so no duty, no boots, no anything. I was like that for two months until the day after my birthday when I put on boots and went back to regular duty and then it was only six more days until I was gone.

*And you also received a series of medals, RVN Wound Medal.*

Republic of Vietnam/RVN.

*And then you had the RVN Gallantry cross, and then the RVN service medal, and then.*

The campaign medal with four campaign stars.

*Did you have the opportunity to see the regular Vietnamese soldiers; the armies of the south, were they pretty good soldiers?*

Well, we had two in our platoon, they were our interpreters. I'm going to give you the observations and opinions of a majority of Vietnam veterans that the South Vietnamese military was 100% totally worthless. We really didn't work with them. That's the consensus type thing, not in reality and as I consume reading materials, since the parade in 1986 that we had in Chicago, I mean I think I've read everything in the library plus. My whole opinion changed and then I met and got to know and became friendly with a lot of ex-South Vietnamese military that live in Chicago than a lot of veterans did. There was a connection. I made a speech, unprepared. You make this speech; it was something like releasing balloons for people who died in the war. They caught me, by surprise, totally caught me. Everything was just free-wheeled out of my head, and the one guy said to me said "What you said really grabbed them by the heart." I mean we were talking about Ho Chi Minh City and I didn't know Ho Chi Minh City. I only knew Saigon. It was the Republic of Vietnam. Việt Nam Cộng Hòa, the Republic of Vietnam in Vietnamese. Yes, I buried that ax, I buried what was crawling around under your skin for 20 to 30 years, I buried that, buried that in the 80's.

*Any Australian soldiers you saw when you were out there?*

Oh, yes. The Australians could really put the beer down. When I was going out on R&R, some guy, some US soldier was trying to keep up drinking with the Aussies at his club, it never happened.

It's really funny. I'm doing this interview and there is a lot of things, I mean how do I put this? Vietnam is in my skin; it is in my mind. Everything is like it happened an hour ago and it is all in color by technicolor. I ran across a couple of *Tropic Lightning* newspapers, and I am reading this article about this firefight and I thought it was Ap Lon Muc where I got wounded, but in reality it was Sa Nho. It happened on March 24, 1968. An Infantry Unit got airlifted to this village where a North Vietnamese Army Unit was dug in and a firefight began. Recon got called to support them with our armor and I can remember, off to my left, the infantry was pinned down and I keyed my microphone told my track commander "Let's go get these guys out of here" so I drove my APC over, put it broadside to the village which was stupid because we could take RPGs right on the side, dropped a ramp, and got the wounded out of there by backing up.

*You had to be proud of that moment.*

I can remember sitting there that night; this stuff is going on all night long. The jets just keep bombing it, bombing it, and they are coming in and strafing with the 20 millimeter cannon. They're coming in, just strafing and NVA is shooting up at them with 51 caliber machineguns. I mean I can see this in color, in slow motion and technicolor.

*When you say APC, you mean-*

Armored Personnel Carrier, but our Armored Personnel Carriers were modified. You had the regular Armored Personnel Carriers and because it was a scout platoon, they added an ACAV kit and they turned this regular armored personnel carrier into the Armored Cavalry Assault vehicle. It mounted three machine guns, two M-60 machine guns in the back and a 50 caliber. Recon platoon consisted of ten ACAVS, but by the time of the actions in March at Ap Long Muc and Sa Nho, we had only had four operable ACAVS. Most of your mechanized infantry was just up to 50 cal. machinegun and the infantry rode on top. It was an APC, but in theory my platoon was an ACAV, a gun platform.

*While were you there always in these situations of stress and danger, inconceivable experiences, did you get some leave, some R&R?*

I took R&R in December, and went to Bangkok, because Skip from Alpha Company told me about it. So I went to Bangkok to get some R&R. The two of us were talking in the field, not knowing that we could get leave, so we got a 7 day leave and went back. But that was it, you got a five day out-of-country R&R, or a three day at Vung Tau on the South China Sea. That was it, in your period of time, 12 months for Army, 13 months for Marines.

*So three-day in-country R&R, very nice place?*

Well, it's on the South China Sea. It's on a beach, it had bars and everything, somewhere near the Saigon Area.

*Were there any famous USO or-*

I only saw Connie Francis.

*Oh.*

I didn't see Bob Hope. You had Bob Hope, Raquel Welch, Joey Heatherton, Sammy Davis Jr. and many more entertainers.

*Yes, we saw that on television back here.*

I only saw Connie Francis in person.

*So, were there any humorous events? No, not too much?*

I have to think because there's some bizarre stuff when you look back it could be kind of humorous but really weren't. For instance, we had this action and we assaulted this area at night and there were basketball flares floating over and a tank pulls up next to us and shouts, "There's a bunch of Gook equipment back there." So I got off the track with the medic and it was all NVA field packs. So I'm handing him the packs and he's handing this stuff up to another track and when they shout "Gooks" and point. They backed up and left me out there by myself and I hit the ground. I had an M-79 grenade launcher loaded with a buckshot round, saw the little silhouettes and fired, 2 KIAS. Later at 5 in the morning, this guy who ended up being a gunner on my last ACAV said, "Let's go see if we can find more Gook equipment." So we're out in this area with the flashlights with the red lens to diffuse it and we're picking up all this equipment. There was a pile of AK-47 magazines in a hole and I gave my 45 cal. pistol to my buddy Tom and said "Go down there and get that stuff out of there." He said, "What if there's a gook in there?" I reply "There's nothing in there." He goes in with my .45, there's an explosion and he was blown out of the hole. There was a live NVA soldier in the hole and he threw a hand grenade. After he tried to kill Tom, who survived, he came out of the hole to surrender and one of the tankers shot off one of his fingers with a .45. It was an absolute strange thing when you look back, numerous things. "Yeah, go", it's funny.

*So he was going into a hole and there was already an enemy soldier down there with a grenade?*

He threw a grenade at us. Another guy from my first APC, this was another strange thing, my second APC machine gunner and I changed positions. I was driving and then I had to change because I couldn't hear anymore because of the 50-caliber machinegun right over my head. Well he went down in a tunnel; there's an explosion and when we pulled him out of the tunnel it looked like a lawnmower ran over his face. What had happened was he crawled in the tunnel and a North Vietnamese soldier crawled around the tunnel and shot him. His friends in the tunnel threw a hand grenade and severely injured Mark. He was Medevaced to the 12th Evac Hospital at Cu Chi Base Camp. Later that day, we had a battery of 105mm Artillery fall right on the platoon, and another platoon member was wounded, getting castrated. The two of them were at the 12th Evac in the 50-50 Ward. So 3 days later we went to go see them at Cu Chi, and Steve my track commander, nudges Mark and he says "How you doing?" Mark opens his eyes puffs his chest and said, "I'll be back in the field in a couple of days." Are you kidding me? A lot of people think they're tough, but I saw people that were tough. To me, that was one of the bravest people I have ever met in my life. And one week later, Steve lost a leg when his ACAV ran over an anti-tank mine

Things about Vietnam are a never ending strange. I had mentioned about the February 29<sup>th</sup> 1968 action when we had took the two rocket-propelled grenades. I joined Recon Platoon that morning and had all the blood off the deck of the APC because someone was killed on it the night before. After we cleaned all the blood off, we went out to support the infantry in the afternoon. We were following a tank across this dry stream. We came around the tank, and we took two rocket-propelled grenades That set the thing on fire and we got off. The driver was the first one off. Two years ago, I'm on the internet just surfing, scrolling through the internet and up pops this page about old cars and Vietnam., Some kid that lived in Michigan

had a '56 T-Bird when he went to Vietnam, turns out he is talking about this action in this place on February 29<sup>th</sup>. So I popped him off an email and "I seem to remember that circumstances were a little bit different." That was the driver of the Armored Personnel Carrier, I didn't even know his name. I met him

that day that I joined and I never even knew his name. And then he sends me an email back, "If I remember right; you offered to drive for me that day." - how life works in strange ways!

*You articulated before about the Vietnam experience. So Marty, you were shot at, you were shelled, and you were also in combat; you shot back too.*

I was in combat. You know, to be perfectly honest, whoever sees this interview, I only am positive that I killed two people in a firefight. There are hundreds of rounds flying back and forward both ways, if you happen to kill somebody, you really didn't know. To me, it was a thing, that happened at a distance of 15 feet, so I don't dwell on it. It didn't eat me alive. I was a little older when I was there because I turned 24 when I was there. I wasn't a 19-year old kid, It doesn't eat me alive, but I also understand the fact that when we saw the bodies the next day, they were trying to kill us with hand grenades.

*So Marty, the rank that you attained, Specialist Four.*

In essence, the equivalent rank to a corporal.

*And where did you receive that promotion?*

In Vietnam.

*Was that as a result of or time to move up?*

Time to move up. But what really made it bad what they did at Division at that period of time, if you had x amount of time in the military, an x amount of time in grade, you could be promoted to an E-Five and which was a Buck Sergeant, right. Well it turns out I had x amount of time in the military, I was three months short of getting out, but I only had two months not the four in grade so I couldn't even get that other promotion to move up another rank.

*So your last couple of months in Vietnam then, you were recovering from the injury.*

Yes, I spent them recovering.

*So you were looking forward to being discharged then?*

Well, everybody's got a figmo; a figmo was a little calendar where you count down the day until you leave Vietnam. You could start your Figmo at any time but mine was started at 60 days. FIGMO means "Fairwell, I got my orders," so you're blacking out the dates down to one. My figmo just happened to be a turtle, but I've seen some really raunchy ones.

*So, most of the soldiers you knew, it was few people that reenlisted or re-upped.*

Yes, I don't think there were too many, even my track commander who was a lifer; he had already served six years or nine years when this hitch ends, he's not going to reenlist again. And the strangest thing about that was there was another NCO in my platoon, my very first track commander, he went back to the states. He was sent back to Vietnam for another tour. He ends up in the same company, in the same platoon in 1969. I mean that's just bizarre.

I'll give you more bizarre, you know Roger McGill. Roger served with the 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division '65 and '66. I was there in '67-'68. Carlos Saladino, served with the 25<sup>th</sup> in '69. Well Carlos, he almost

lost a leg. A little oriental doctor saved his leg. He came back from Japan and he was airborne-qualified; he was a paratrooper, but he was with a straight-leg infantry unit and he thought he was going back to the 27<sup>th</sup> Infantry. They said, "You're airborne-qualified," so they sent him to the 173rd Airborne Brigade.

Now he gets up to Bong Song, Landing Zone Uplift, and he's looking for Sergeant Andres and Johnny (he's part of the Niles Tuesday morning coffees also.). Now he was looking for him, going bunker-to-bunker, now Johnny was short "Sergeant Andres here?" He was over in the corner with a blanket over his head and he was saying "I'm not going! I'm not going! I'm not going." But a larger percentage of these people who get together for coffee, they grew up in the same neighborhood. Johnny, Carlos, and Roger; same church, and the same neighborhood. It's crazy, even Mickey and Dennis, and people from Morton Grove knew each other. Me, I'm 100% oddball here.

*So then you flew back from Saigon on Pan-Am and you got to the USA?*

Oakland Army Base in California. When you get back, the first thing, you get the steak dinner with fries and everything; that was your welcome-back dinner and we just waited to process out.

*And then you took the train back to Chicago?*

No, I took a taxi into to San Francisco and flew. I went out to the San Francisco Airport probably around 5:00 o'clock San Francisco Time. It was mid-July, and the temperature was 50-something degrees; but when I get off the plane at O'Hare at 10 o'clock at night, it was 85 degrees. If you've never been to San Francisco, that is just the way it is in the Bay. You don't see sun until 2:00 o'clock in the afternoon.

*When you got off the plane, were you able to walk? Normally?*

Yes.

*So you get back to Chicago then and did you have any trouble re-adjusting to civilian life?*

I took two weeks off. I didn't want to go back to being an auto mechanic. When I was on leave from the military I used to work for this liquor distributor in the warehouse. I went back there and I got a job. That's where I was working when I got married. After the first six months of marriage, I'd come home at seven in the morning when my wife was leaving for work. You know it made life difficult. So I went back into auto-mechanics. I mean, you had to adjust, or try to after Vietnam. I understand all the things about people coming back and being harassed at the airport and being spit on. In my case, it didn't happen, but then again nobody asked you anything about anything. I never even told my mother about Vietnam. I talked to my girlfriend who became my wife and even she didn't get all of it. It all started coming out after the welcome home parade here in 1986.

*So that welcome home parade in Chicago in 1986 that was an important experience for Vietnam veterans*

I was at a postal bowling tournament in Buffalo, New York. When we returned and there was a bag of equipment for our girls' softball team. Also in the bag was a flyer about the Welcome Home Parade, so I contacted a couple of Vietnam veterans here in Niles and we went to the parade., It was the first time I saw the 1/2 scale replica of the Vietnam Memorial in Washington DC. The memorial is commonly known as "The Wall". It grabbed my heart and helped to begin the healing process and I got involved. I went to Washington, DC in '88 and saw the Wall for the first time, and it emotionally ruined me. Have you ever been to the Wall?

*No, no.*

The Wall's in the shape of a "V." It is polished Black Granite and recessed into the ground. You begin at one end and as you walk down to the apex, the Wall gets taller. Well by the time I reached the apex, the tears were rolling down my face. But I had to walk around almost to the other end for my buddy Bob's name. You as a civilian can't really understand the emotions. Me, as a veteran; when I see my reflection

in the highly polished granite, I become part of the Wall. So every time I go there, I'm a blithering idiot, and I've been to the Wall three times. Last time I went to the wall I went with my son-in-law in December 2012. I have left items at the Wall as a remembrance and it's time to go again before I die.

*The gentleman who you thought had been killed, and that's when you decided to join Recon?*

Yes.

*That gentleman, did you ever see him again?*

His name was Skip Cooper and I only saw him once after Vietnam. He was from Detroit. He called me up and came to Chicago with two of his fraternity brothers and we went out drinking. I lost his telephone number and never saw or heard from him again. Such is life!

*Did you stay in contact with any of your wartime buddies after the service?*

Well, I didn't stay in contact with anyone. We never really exchanged contact information. But as I say, strange things happen and never stop. At the Parade in 1986, I was at a hotel on Michigan Avenue and I'm on the escalator going down; and I spot two guys in front of me. One looked familiar and I said, "Hey Farvini" and he turns around. We were in the Recon platoon together. The other guy was in the Recon but wounded and Medevaced in November, 1967. That was two guys who I served with who lived in Chicago and I never knew where they lived. My wife, daughter and I used to go to the Milwaukee Summerfest and I thought I'd try to locate the machinegunner from my last ACAV who lived in Milwaukee. I found him in the phone book, went to his house, and spent an afternoon looking at photographs, remembering, and talking about the past.

In 1990, my Battalion started an Association and I received a list of names of battalion members that had been located. I found a familiar name on the list, located his photograph and sent it to him. He was my track commander on my last track. He lived in New York and while traveling, came to Niles with his wife and daughter and spent a few days here. I hadn't seen or talked to him since July, 1968. We still keep in touch. A guy, I served within Vietnam, called me one Sunday. He said, "I don't know if you remember me, but I went with you one night and I learned to love the earth." And I replied, "That's the night when I shot the two NVA." He was the same medic who came, through automatic weapons fire and treated me when I was wounded on May 7, 1968. He called me from California. They were the only people I served with that I either saw or spoke with since 1968. A little known statistic, Illinois had either the third or fourth highest number of people that served in Vietnam.

*Did you join any veteran organizations?*

Well, I had uncles who served in World War II that told me I couldn't join the VFW because Vietnam wasn't a war. I did not join the VFW or the American Legion. In fact, I never joined any traditional Veterans Organizations. Policies changed as the Greatest Generation aged and passed. So basically they got a little more liberal after '86 but by that time I already had kind of a bad taste in my mouth about being snubbed when you could've used some support.

*By serving in the army then in the late 1960's, was the GI Bill still in effect then?*

Our GI bill was only good for ten years. The one from World War II was good for, I think, life. I didn't go back to school in the ten years. I didn't get a loan or use it to buy a home. I just didn't use it. Probably a mistake on my part, I mean people came back and went to college. I didn't go and I am not a college-educated individual, but I'm far from being an illiterate individual.

*Yes, sir. I sense that we are coming to the end of our formal conversation as outlined here, and there's always two questions that we ask the Veterans: How do you think your service and your experiences in the military affected your life, and I think you already talked about that a little bit.*

I hate war. I don't feel that we should get involved in another military conflict. I thought that the Iraq War was a mistake. Go after Bin Laden because of what happened at the towers in New York, yes, but when you had a chance to get him, you didn't. Instead we start an unnecessary war with Iraq that cost a loss of American lives, American youth, a loss of a huge amount of money; the politicians call it, treasure? You had your people who protested the Vietnam War and are now all your CEOs and all your wealthy people in Congress, even in the White House. I don't want to say, Obama wasn't at that age, but Clinton was and didn't participate in the military. Ironically I had a t-shirt that I bought way back in the 1990's, I recently found it I put it away and as I was going through a bunch of t-shirts I found it. The t-shirt was brand new that I never wore. The t-shirt has a picture of the White House, and the POW emblem on it and the statement, "Only in America can a veteran sleep in a cardboard box while a draft-dodger sleeps in the White House." It was referring to Clinton, and it is also appropriate for Mr. Trump. So how did it change my thoughts and my theories? You have to earn my respect; I can't just give you my respect.

*The other question, I think you may already have touched on this, is how do you think your military experience influenced your thinking about war or about the military in general.*

Well, to start with, there should be a draft. Everybody should be compelled to do some form of service for their country. When they did away with the draft, it ended civic responsibility. The protestors didn't want to die in Vietnam; they just didn't want to do anything except party. You're a citizen and you should do something constructive for your country. I mean you should be compelled to do some service, Peace Corps, etc. for your country. War is not the answer and I can't believe the fascination with guns. I have not picked up a gun or fired a gun since 1968. I want nothing to do with them.

*Marty, when did you move to Niles?*

1978.

*So here at the Niles Library, we have those Veterans Walkway benches.*

Yes, I was part of the organization that installed the benches. Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter 311, it was based in Niles. In fact, I was one of the major reasons it started after the parade in 1986. We tried to be community involved but it was more about helping other Vietnam Veterans. It slowly became a "what can I do or what can I get for myself." This wasn't what it was supposed to be and I moved on

*Is this organization still going?*

Yes, but they moved to Des Plaines. First they moved to Park Ridge VFW.

I along with 2 other Vietnam Veterans started an educational program called the Vietnam Veterans Educational Program. It was incorporated but it's nonexistent now. We used to go to high schools every week, every spring for three months. We would talk about our experiences in the war and bring ex-South Vietnamese soldiers to the schools to add a different perspective. We would finish each class with a question and answer period. We spent the entire day at a school giving the students something not in a textbook.

As the years have passed, I realized the Vietnam War is past history and might not be important enough for the present day educators. We're doing this for the History Project for the Library of Congress and it

will be there for eternity. Whatever you keep here at the Niles Library will be here for eternity. I collected a moderate amount of items from the Vietnam War. My wife asked me what I was going to do with this collection and I couldn't give her an answer. I am an only child that had an only child and didn't have any grandchildren. I sold almost everything including my own combat uniform. Two years later my daughter had a baby boy and all I have left for my Grandson are my medals and my South Vietnamese money. I acquired all the coins and paper money that covers a twenty-year period of South Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. I also have military tokens used in Vietnam. Started with 8 and have over 400.

*Wow!*

*How old is your grandson?*

Two.

*You got a little time.*

He does. But I don't. I'm astute enough to know that when you hit 73 -which I will be next month- you're on borrowed time. It might be next year, or maybe ten years from now, maybe 20 years, but you're still borrowed time. Because of the tokens, I can't get it back to the pictures. Meanwhile I started compiling music of the Vietnam War, right? Some of it is rock music from the era but there was so much music about the war. Then you got into the other aspect of it.

In the 1980's, when it was the veterans talking about Agent Orange and Post-Traumatic Stress and then the Wall. So I did six CDs, I handed out three sets of them. Then I did another one for a silent raffle at the Veterans dinner, I added another CD strictly about the wall. The total was now 7 CDs with 175 songs. I have another 75 songs to add to the 175 - another project, because I placed the songs according to year. I look at everyone who is still trying to make money off the Vietnam War and the Vietnam Veterans. My God, I've recently seen someone in Germany selling for \$400.00 a set of 13 CDs about Vietnam.

*This Ken Burns series on Vietnam coming out this fall will probably generate more interest.*

You never know.

If I ever get a chance to assemble this music, I will ensure that the library gets a copy of these CDs

*Thank you.*

I'll give them to you whether you keep them for yourself or give to them to the library, to ensure that this music is part of history.

*Well it's wonderful that you are participating in this project because its mission is the same as yours.*

*Marty, the Missing in Action Flag that is flying outside the library*

It flies at the Village Hall, too.

*Are you responsible for that in any way?*

No. The first time I ever really saw the POW MIA stuff was at the parade in 1986. In Chicago and other places, it's almost like a government rule that they have to fly the POW flag.

It emanated from that period of time in the 1980s. There was a woman we know whose husband was in Special Forces. He was listed as Missing in Action and 4 years ago, 40 years later, she finally found what really happened to him. He was in a FAC aircraft and it was shot down in Laos. It was highly sensitive



stuff and we weren't supposed to be in Laos. To ensure that no sensitive material could be recovered by the enemy, the site was bombed.

*When you say FAC?*

Forward Air Controller

*You mentioned collecting those tokens from Laos and Cambodia. Were you in Laos and Cambodia?*

No, but our military was. I picked them up over the years. Laos had only three coins for an entire 20-year period, 1953. Cambodia had two three-coin sets for the same 20 years, 1953 and 1959. I only have the set from 1959. I have all the coins from the Republic of Vietnam, South Vietnam. The paper money is from 1955 to 1975 for all three countries before they became communist. One day I should just come over and show them to you

*Please do.*

*Yes, I have been a librarian for 42 years but this Veterans History Project is the best thing I have ever had the privilege of working on.*

You need to find more people who have the desire to talk about this.

*Marty, is there anything you would like to add that we have not covered in this interview?*

No, I am going to look like hell on this video because I'm fidgeting.

*No, you're terrific.*

Well, we covered going in. We covered Basic Training. We covered AIT (Advanced Infantry Training). We covered coming home, the parade, and the aftermath. The aftermath is everything post-Vietnam. It covers what was buried inside (our emotions) post-traumatic stress, Agent Orange exposure, alcoholism, drug abuse, and suicide. Over 100,000 Veterans killed themselves after 'Nam.

*Suicides among veterans was a great issue of Mr. Amirante. (deceased former VFW Post 7712 Commander)*

Yes, I knew Tom. Tom was a friend. I went into the hospital for spinal surgery on a Monday and on Tuesday Tom came to see me, after morning coffee. The guys sent a large box of donuts and he became the delivery boy. After he left, I took one donut and told my wife to take the box to the nurse's station. On Friday of the same week, Tom went into the hospital for heart surgery. It was the same type of surgery that he had prior. After the surgery, he was on life support. He never came out of the hospital and I never saw him again. I met Tom in 1986.

*As a result of the Welcome Home Parade?*

Right.

*If you're living in Chicago and you want to understand the Vietnam experience particularly as it was lived by the veterans, that 1986 parade is really important.*

The 1986 parade in here Chicago was very important. The parade organizers hoped to have 80,000 participants but had 200,000. It was an emotional outpouring of Brotherhood. Also important was the dedication of the Illinois Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Springfield. I participated in that parade, too.

The Vietnam Memorial in Washington DC 'The Wall' is the most important one. It has become the most visited monument in Washington.

*Some of the Honor Flights from Chicago, I think, may soon be moving to involve the Vietnam Veterans.*

Tom Adams, another back story, did an Honor Flight but he had to fly from Mitchell Field in Milwaukee. Now I've known Roger since 1986 and Carlos and Johnny since 1987 but I've known Tom Adams for a longer period of time. One morning Tom comes to coffee and introduced himself. I then asked him if he was an auto mechanic. He replied, "Yeah, I used to work with you at Davy Cory Ford in Niles That was in 1977. I hadn't even spoken to him since 1980 I never knew that he was a Vietnam Veteran and he never knew that I was one. Life moves in strange ways. I'd like to see the people from my platoon again before it's too late. I wish the hell I could just tell everyone, "Let's all meet at the wall."

It's tough – when I talked to the kid in Milwaukee, I mentioned photographs and he said that he didn't have any. I told him that I was at his house and we were looking at slides from Vietnam. He said to his wife, "Karen, do I have any photographs from Vietnam?" It was the onset of Alzheimer's; and he is my age. My Track Commander, who was in Chicago in 1990, lives in Pulaski, New York. I haven't seen him since 1900 but we still talk on the phone. We must get together one last time before we're ashes and dust.

I worked at the Niles Post Office as a letter carrier for twenty-eight years. At the P.O. we picked our vacation s in December for the next year. I was unable to attend any Battalion Reunions except the one that was held in Wheaton, Illinois in 2009. Hoping to reunite with people that I served, I attended the reunion. Unfortunately, the one person that I served with was my Company Commander. I had dinner with him and his wife and we talked about our involvement in Vietnam. There other members of the Recon Platoon but they were in 1969, after my time. It was at this reunion that I found out that nobody from Recon, 1967 or 1968 ever attends. Wow? What a stunning revelation Did we have it harder than the people that followed us did? I mean , did we have it that much worse with the combat, the mental aspect and our emotions? Was it harder for us then it was for them afterward? Did we live on a razor's edge? Maybe, the people I knew can't get out from under the mountain that's in your head, in your mind, on your shoulders or whatever. In Vietnam when grief struck we lived by the axiom "Don't Mean Nuthin". But it did mean something.

My suggestion, Neil, is take a trip to Washington and visit the Wall. You will never regret it and after doing this project with Vietnam Veterans your understanding will be profound. At the same time you'll be able to see the statue of the Three Soldiers and the Nurses' statute. My daughter's first husband was highly interested in the Vietnam War. He was overjoyed when he found that I was a Vietnam Vet and he picked my bran. In December 2012 I took him to the Wall of course I cried. After I finished crying and composed myself, total strangers began talking to me about the Wall and Vietnam.

*I will*

Good.

*Before we close have you ever wanted or have you been back to Vietnam?*

I wanted to go but my friends have no desire to go. My wife doesn't want to go; I think it's because of the long flight. Once when we were on vacation my daughter said, "Next year, we're going to Vietnam and Cambodia for vacation." My reply was, "Your mother is never going to go." She said, "She'll go." My daughter now has a son so the trip is now out of the question. Such is life.

Now Dennis, whom you know, has been back. And the trip cost was airfare, hotel and in country travel for \$1,300. About the three years ago, the airfare was \$2,000 to \$3,000 alone. Times have really changed. For that price, I'd go but I don't want to go on a tour. I'd like to see Saigon, Nha Trang, Vung Tau, Hue, and Dalat. You won't be able to get to the places where you were stationed during the war because the base camps are being used by the present government. I've seen photos of the area near Trang Bang. In 1968 it was a two-lane road, with rice paddies right up to the road and now it's a four-lane high way. I would want to stay in the South because I have no desire to visit North Vietnam especially Hanoi.

When I reflect on everything I knew about the Vietnamese in 1967 and 1968, I along with many Vietnam Veterans thought that Vietnamese men were Gay because they held hands. Holding hands was the way that they showed friendship. In 1990 our organization was participating in a POW remembrance program with Vietnamese Veterans and there I was, standing on Broadway Avenue, in Chicago, holding hands with a former Vietnamese soldier. He was an old man with a long white droopy mustache and his name was Colonel Lan. The younger Vietnamese Veterans used to kid him by telling us that he was only a policeman. He might have been a policeman but there were different types of police. The Vietnamese Field police were the "Canh Sat" and the military Police were the "Quan Canh."

One day I'm talking to Col. Lan and it turns out he was a paratrooper and fought with the French against the 'Viet Minh' in the First Indochina War. On May 7, 1954 he's sitting in an airplane, on the tarmac at an airfield with the props turning when they received the news that Dien Bien Phu had been captured. This airplane was full of Vietnamese and French paratroopers who were going to make a combat jump into Dien Bien Phu to reinforce the French garrison. I met him here in Chicago, and he must have been in his 70's at the time. It was unbelievable to become friends with an ex-Vietnamese soldier who fought against the Vietnamese Communists for thirty years. I always mention the strangeness of the Vietnam experience and believe me there is always something new every day. It never ends.

Over the years I've met and become friends with many Vietnamese Veterans and learned to respect their true abilities as soldiers. Not all the soldiers were highly motivated. But there were some really excellent units: the Vietnamese Airborne (paratroopers), Vietnamese Rangers, Helicopter pilots, and the Vietnamese Marines. The Vietnamese Marines was 100 per cent volunteer and 100 per cent anti-Communist. In fact, in April 1975 at the town of Xuan Loc, the worst infantry division in the South Vietnamese Army, the 18<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division fought three "NVA" North Vietnamese Divisions to a standstill without the benefit of armor. The 18<sup>th</sup> made a valiant stand but it wasn't enough to stop the invasion of South Vietnam. The Republic of Vietnam ceased to exist on April 30, 1975.

I've read many books about the Vietnam War but there is one that is really poignant, Neil, you might have it right on the shelf. "Tears Before the Rain." It's an oral history of the fall of South Vietnam by people who lived it. What really surprised me was finding the book, unread, that I purchased 20 years ago. I opened the book and began reading and became engrossed. The first chapter was by a stewardess who was on the last flight out of Da Nang in 1975. You may recall seeing the news report. The aircraft was a Boeing 727, the one with three engines at the back. It also had walkway under the tail. That is where an employee of the airline was standing, beating desperate people off the ramp when they were trying to take-off from Da Nang. That was the 1<sup>st</sup> chapter of the book and I was hooked.

My God! It touched on the CIA trying to extract their Vietnamese employees, the extraction at the U.S. Embassy, the South Vietnamese military, the North Vietnamese military, the Viet Cong, and the Bui Doi. The Bui Doi were the Amerasian children, fathered by American Servicemen. In Vietnamese Bui Doi means "the dust of life."

Are these children not American citizens by birth? They had an American father, so why are they not a citizen? In my mind I think that they're citizens, but that has never been clarified. If an immigrant family, legal or non-legal, has a child in America the child automatically becomes an American citizen. It's kind of hard to understand.

*This picture, here, where you are surrounded by these children*

These are not Bui Doi; these are Vietnamese village kids. We went down to this village with our Company doctor and some medics to perform a Med Cap. They gave medical treatment to the villagers and we provided security. This took place three days before I left Vietnam. I sat down and was taking pictures of the kids, the kids loved having their picture taken, when one older boy took my camera and took a picture of the with the kids. My wife always says "that's your father figure image." *That's a great picture that we will add to the interview in the Appendix.*

Just look at the picture and then look at my face. I am 73 years old. I was 24. How much of a difference is there in my face?

*Not too much.*

I know I don't look like I'm 73 years old.

*No, you don't*

I thought these pictures would be appropriate

*Excellent choices.*

I have a picture of that APC that was destroyed by the rocket-propelled grenades. One of the pictures was taken from the front of the APC, and I'm one of the two people standing there.

*Wow. That might be a good picture to include.*

I just need to find it.

*Marty, I want to thank you for an eloquent interview.*

I was far from eloquent

*I learned a lot today. Thank you.*

**Reader's Note:** 8 pages, comprising a map and scans of photographs and Indochina coins and currencies shown by Marty at the interview, follow and illustrate his remarks.





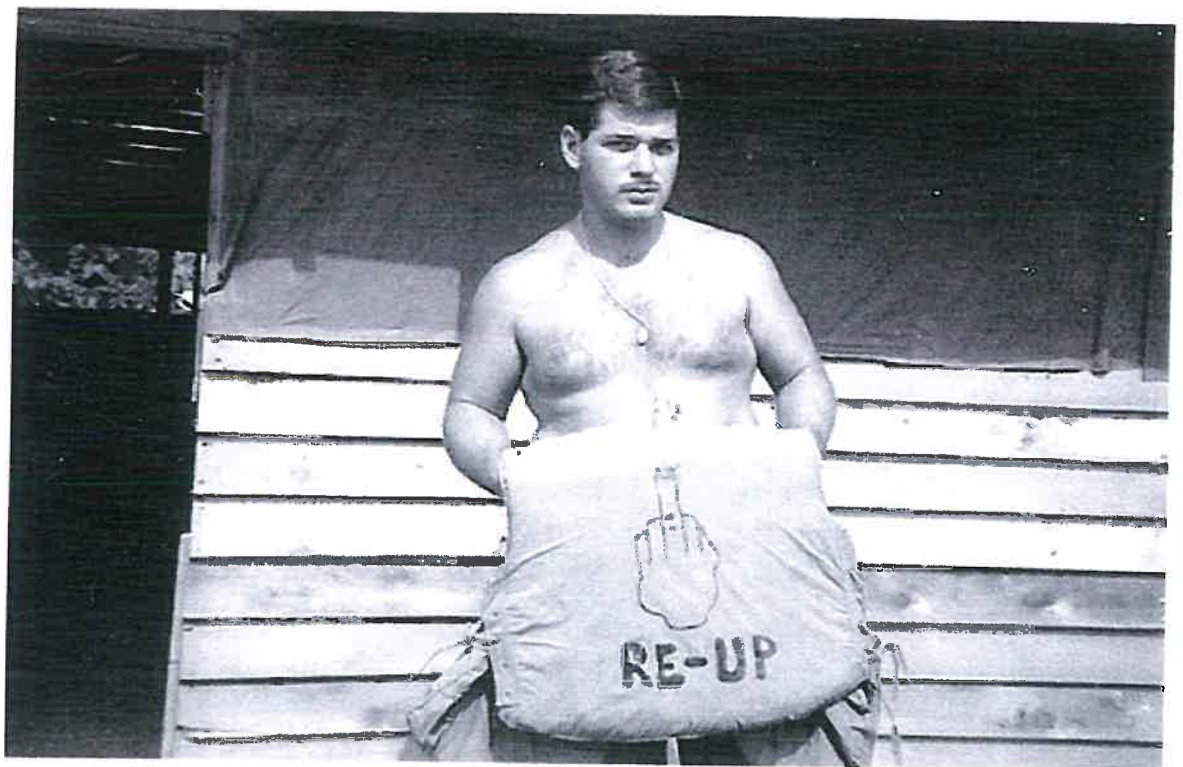


**Martin Passarella**

**December, 1967**

**23 years old**

**Mr. Passarella holding  
piece of Army body armor  
marked with re-upping  
sentiment.**





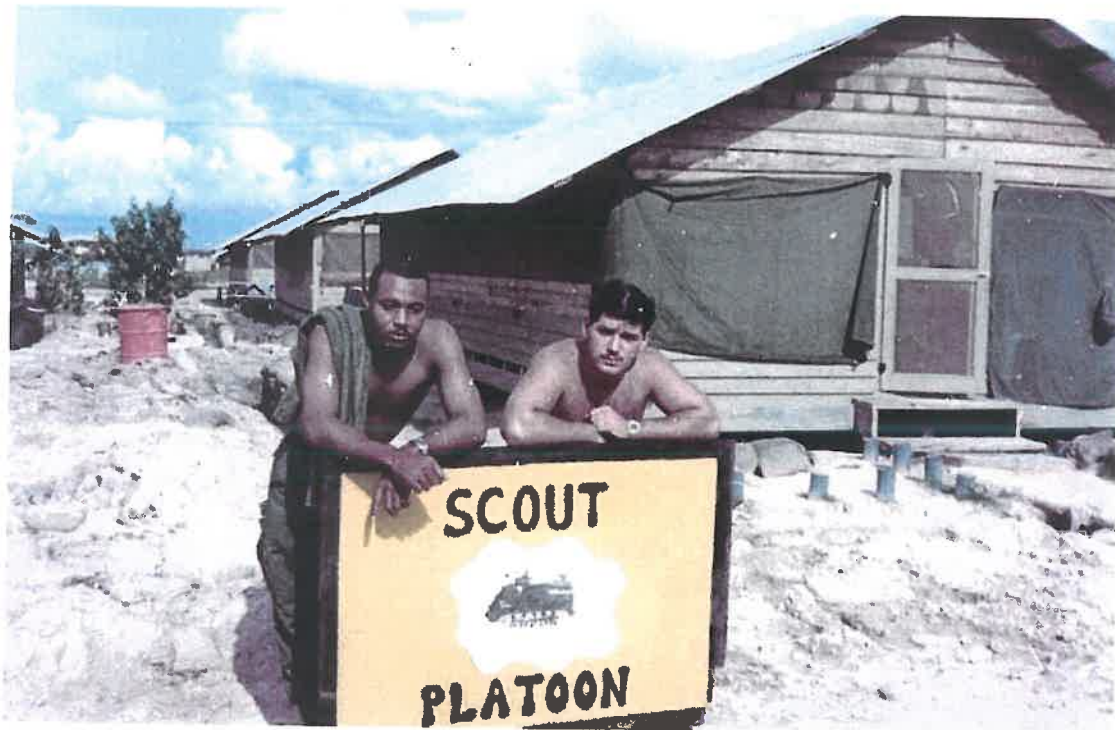


**HQ 36 Recon Platoon**  
**The ACAV vehicle was destroyed by RPG fire on 2/29/68.**  
**Mr. Passarella was the crew member on the right side M-60 machine gun.**



**HQ 36 Recon Platoon**  
**Track destroyed by rpg fire 2/29/1968**  
**Mr. Passarella is standing 2nd from the right.**





**Tay Ninh Base Camp, 2 Bn 34th Armor**  
**Note : Agent Orange barrel visible in background. Soldiers would reuse empty barrels, for example, using a half, lengthwise for a barbecue.**



**Martin Passarella, July 12, 1968, 24 years old**  
**Photo mentioned at the interview's close.**



Scans of selections from Mr. Passarella's album of money, covering the period 1955 to 1975 for French Indo-china and Vietnam.

Fronts

1966 Transitional issue of the communist  
National Liberation Front (VIET CONG)  
Dated 1966 but issued 1975 #36



Backs

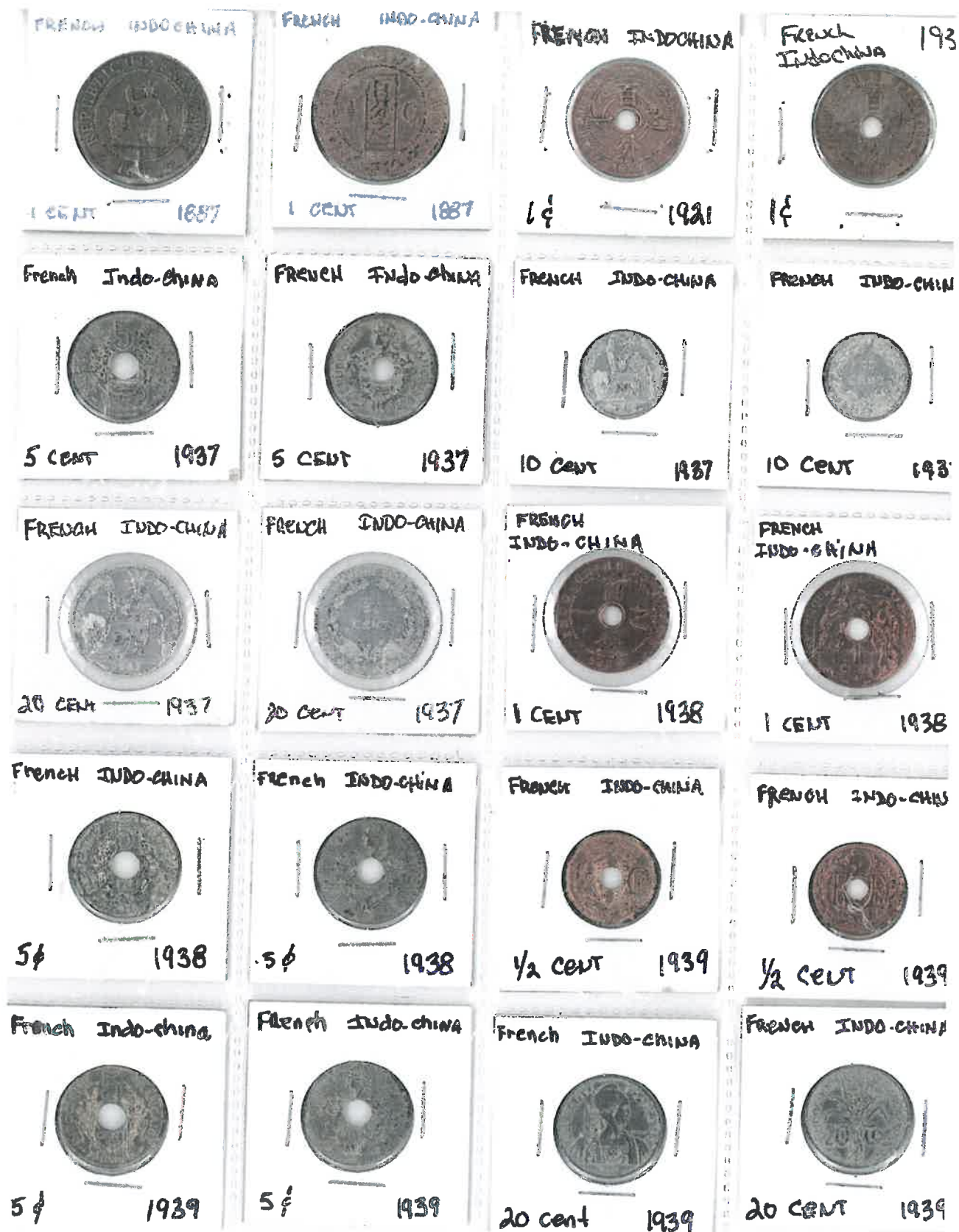




Front and back of Vietnamese notes























# Coinage for French Indochina, later separated into Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam





# South Vietnam coinage from Marty's collection

<p>SOUTH VIET-NAM</p>  <p>10 SU 1953</p>	<p>SOUTH VIET-NAM</p>  <p>10 SU 1953</p>	<p>SOUTH VIET-NAM</p>  <p>20 SU 1953</p>	<p>SOUTH VIET-NAM</p>  <p>20 SU 1953</p>
<p>SOUTH VIET-NAM</p>  <p>50 XU 1953</p>	<p>SOUTH VIET-NAM</p>  <p>50 XU 1953</p>	<p>SOUTH VIET-NAM</p>  <p>50 SU 1960</p>	<p>SOUTH VIET-NAM</p>  <p>50 SU 1960</p>
<p>SOUTH VIET-NAM</p>  <p>1 DONG 1960</p>	<p>SOUTH VIET-NAM</p>  <p>1 DONG 1960</p>	<p>SOUTH VIET-NAM</p>  <p>50 XU 1963</p>	<p>SOUTH VIET-NAM</p>  <p>50 XU 1963</p>
<p>SOUTH VIET-NAM</p>  <p>1 DONG 1964</p>	<p>SOUTH VIET-NAM</p>  <p>1 DONG 1964</p>	<p>SOUTH VIET-NAM</p>  <p>10 DONG 1964</p>	<p>SOUTH VIET-NAM</p>  <p>10 DONG 1964</p>
<p>SOUTH VIET-NAM</p>  <p>5 DONG 1966</p>	<p>SOUTH VIET-NAM</p>  <p>5 DONG 1966</p>	<p>SOUTH VIET-NAM</p>  <p>10 DONG 1968</p>	<p>SOUTH VIET-NAM</p>  <p>10 DONG 1968</p>