

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAME: Ronald Terry

COLLECTION: 4700.0985

IDENTIFICATION: Vietnam veteran

INTERVIEWER: John Davis

SERIES: Americans in Vietnam

INTERVIEW DATES: 4/1/74 **FOCUS DATES:** July 1 1968-July 1, 1971

ABSTRACT:

Tape 1439

Shreveport native; upbringing, education in Shreveport; came to LSU on track scholarship to study pre-law; parents' occupations; sister; extracurricular activities at LSU; ROTC; membership in scout troops helped prepare him for military; considering a military career; joined Bengal Raiders, the ROTC special forces group; Ho Chi Minh's book on counter insurgency; knew more about Vietnam and guerilla warfare than most soldiers who were sent over; Scabbard and Blade; chose combat infantry branch of Army; thought he could work his way up to general; training at Fort Benning; learning leadership; rigors of ranger school; enduring mental and physical anguish; difference between special forces and rangers; airborne school; thoroughly trained and indoctrinated; reaction to Tet 1968; camping trip with parents and wife while on leave just before going to Vietnam; Nixon's election; hassle of absentee voting; he knew he wouldn't be killed in Vietnam; arrival in Vietnam in August, 1969; enlisted men didn't salute officers because that would clue in snipers; surprised by casual atmosphere around airbase when he arrived; reticence toward Vietnamese; discrepancy between lodging of enlisted men and officers; division of new recruits into units; assigned to Third Brigade of the Ninth, guarded Dong Tam base camp south of Saigon; encountering enemy under swampy conditions of Mekong River delta; lots of VC in area; description of base camp; surprised by lack of contact with enemy; VC infiltration of base; ARVNs who brought family to war, lived in barracks; feet rot from constant wetness; enlisted men who sold ammunition to enemy; men court martialed, sent to Long Binh jail; made platoon leader of 26 people who checked out the hard intelligence; making helicopter insertions; respect for NVA; booby traps; how to elude grenades; Kit Carson scouts; VC tunnels; involvement in Cambodian invasion; VC tax collection; B-52 bombers; capturing the enemy; treatment of Vietnamese prisoners; torturing prisoners; routine of daily life; ice cream and ice milk; nighttime movements, ambushes; night vision devices; the worst day of his life, when his platoon got in a contact that resulted in injuries for several of his men; how it feels to command when people are getting hurt; raiding bodies for souvenirs; finding book on how to shoot down American Phantom planes; hunter-killer helicopter teams; helicopter shot down, trying to save man on board; pilot killed; backups came and leveled area; returned to find huge crater, pieces of bodies; VC got better treatment if they surrendered rather than were captured; making bad decision and leading his men on a trail with booby traps; three men, including Terry, injured by booby trap.

TAPES: 1 (T1439)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 1 hour, 30 minutes

PAGES TRANSCRIPT: 42 pages

RESTRICTIONS: