

Fall 12-11-2015

## Oral History Dick Benjamin

Ana L. Bechard

*Southern Adventist University*, [abechard@southern.edu](mailto:abechard@southern.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: <http://knowledge.e.southern.edu/vietnam>

---

### Recommended Citation

Bechard, Ana L., "Oral History Dick Benjamin" (2015). *Vietnam*. Paper 1.  
<http://knowledge.e.southern.edu/vietnam/1>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Oral History at KnowledgeExchange@Southern. It has been accepted for inclusion in Vietnam by an authorized administrator of KnowledgeExchange@Southern. For more information, please contact [dbravo@southern.edu](mailto:dbravo@southern.edu).

## HIST 155, Fall 2015 / Ana Bechard

**Student Interviewer's Name:** Ana Bechard  
**Interviewee name** Dick Benjamin

### **Time and Location of Interview:**

The interview was conducted in one session on October 25, 2015 and lasted approximately 50 minutes. It was conducted outside at Southern Adventist University, Tennessee. The interviewer, interviewee, and interviewee's spouse were present.

### **About Dick Benjamin:**

At the time of the interview Dick Benjamin was 67 years old. Dick Benjamin was born in California, USA in 1948 and has lived most of his life in Holland, Michigan. Dick Benjamin now lives in Tennessee and is currently married to his second wife, Ruth Benjamin. He is a Vietnam-era veteran who served from 1990-1991. While serving during the Vietnam War, Dick Benjamin was stationed in South Korea. This interview covered topics such as serving as a dust off medic, serving as a mail carrier, as well as being discharged early. This interview was conducted on October 25, 2015 at Southern Adventist University in Collegedale, Tennessee.

*Interviewer: Ana Bechard (AB)*

***Interviewee: Dick Benjamin (DB)***

*Interviewee's Wife: Ruth Benjamin (RB)*

AB: Thank you for coming out today. Thank you for coming out too Ruth. Let's start with just who you are, your name, when you were born.

**DB: Dick Benjamin.**

*RB: Your age. When you were born.*

AB: Yes, date of birth.

**DB: Oh, I didn't hear that. Sixty-eight, sixty-seven.**

*RB: What?*

**DB: Age**

AB: 1967?

*RB: You were born in '48.*

**DB: '48**

AB: Oh, '48, okay. Where did you grow up?

**DB: California**

AB: Oh, okay.

**DB: Native Californian but most of my life was in Holland, Michigan.**

AB: And when did you get married? I'm assuming you're married, your wife is here.

*RB: I'm his second marriage.*

AB: Oh, okay.

**DB: June 20 of '99.**

AB: 1999.

*RB: For us.*

**DB: For us.**

AB: Okay. Were you married at the time you had left for Korea?

**DB: No.**

AB: No, okay.

**DB: No, 'cause I was—**

*RB: He was dating my younger sister.*

AB: Oh, okay.

**DB: Yeah, she's now my sister-in-law and our landlord. Husband is landlord and she is the landlady. No, I, my dad was a career man and in the Navy and he passed away at something like, I believe it was six weeks left and he could retire. And when he passed away. And so I was going to get the military obligation out of the way before I even thought dating, settling down, getting married, things like that. I saw what it was like to raise kids on the Navy pension and social security until we were eighteen years of age then my mother lost social security and it was a tough go. So I was going to have that out of the way so I didn't put, you know, a wife through that. I saw it from both**

**sides of the coin. And that's why I passed up promotions while I was in the service to give to the married families so, you know, needed it.**

AB: Yeah, right. Never heard of that before, that perspective.

**DB: Well, I couldn't a—**

*RB: It's a good one.*

AB: Yeah, I think so.

**DB: 'cause once I got to my permanent duty station I knew it was dangerous duty and we all shared the same sentiment. We all, the four of us medics, shared the same feelings that we just, we wanted to go home (chuckles).**

AB: Right.

**DB: Home, alive and in all one piece. And not all of us did. But, I just, while I was there I was going to be the best medic and we—**

*RB: And mail clerk.*

**DB: Yeah.**

AB: What was that?

**DB: In addition, mail clerk.**

*RB: Mail clerk.*

AB: Mail clerk.

**DB: In addition to flight medics we, everybody had another obligation. And I was the mail clerk for the compound. Another one was a training clerk and another one, well two of them were training clerk, training clerk and an assistant clerk. And I handled the mail and every single day. And on my day to fly, I had one of the other medics covering me until I could get back with the mail.**

AB: So, the mail work was only at the compound?

*RB: The mail work was only at the compound.*

**DB: Oh yeah, yeah.**

AB: Is that where you guys were stationed, where you stayed as a—

**DB: We were stationed at, it was, the base was called ASCOM, which was just over the hill from Incheon.**

AB: From where?

**DB: Just over the hill from Incheon.**

AB: Oh, okay.

**DB: Incheon is not very far from the DMZ on the western coast of Korea. The western coast of South Korea.**

AB: Earlier when you were talking about the obligation of serving, was it an obligation back then? Every male was required to serve?

**DB: The draft was in—**

*RB: It was, draft. The draft is not voluntary.*

AB: Oh, okay.

**DB: I wanted to make sure that before I planned for marriage or anything like that. I wanted to make sure I was going to, I wasn't going to have to worry about the draft. I wasn't going to enlist in the service but if my country called I wasn't running to Canada either.**

*RB: The draft was discontinued around 1970, 71, somewhere in there, around 71.*

**DB: Yeah, I had, about the time I got out, I got my six month early out, I—**

AB: So, how did the process go about? You got drafted. How long was it after you were drafted that you went out as a soldier?

**DB: I'm trying to remember how long basic training was and AIT. I'm thinking AIT.**

*RB: What is AIT?*

**DB: Was about 10 weeks, 10 to 12 weeks. And I'm thinking basic training was 6 to 8 weeks.**

*RB: So roughly four to five months?*

**DB: Yeah I was, well, I was inducted September 11. Of all days in our country's history, September 11. And I got to the duty station January.**

*RB: Sounds about right.*

AB: Like about four months.

**DB: About mid-January I'm thinking.**

AB: Did you work with, when you were in Korea, right away you worked as a dust off medic?

**DB: Yeah.**

AB: And did you work with the same guys?

**DB: Yes, that's one of the few things I think the military did right, outside of letting me go when it was time to come home. They had the same, each flight crew was made up of a pilot, a co-pilot, a crew chief, and a medic. And the same crew all flew four guys.**

AB: Four guys, okay.

**DB: The same crew all flew together so they could best function as a unit. And when you had to, under hostile fire, not actual combat condition, but you were shot at.**

*RB: By North Korea.*

**DB: Yeah, they, there were often times fire fights across the DMZ. Officially it was harassment, harassment fire, but when fellas were dying I didn't, I didn't think of it as harassment fire.**

AB: What'd you think of it as?

*RB: Someone's dying.*

**DB: Someone's dying, I mean, it's not practice or well, hi, just letting you know we're here, you know. It wasn't that kind of thing when fellas dying and the very real possibility of choppers going down.**

*RB: Which a buddy of his did go down.*

**DB: That's combat to me. Just 'cause the enemy isn't right down below you doesn't mean that it's not. And I think that's why I got qualified my flight wings here. Got the little wreath around.**

AB: What is that for?

**DB: I really doesn't know officially, it just signifies enough hours in to qualify as like a master crewman. Not just a beginner but a glorified term for an experienced dust off medic. I mean, the military would have all kinds of fancy terminology for something but it would just boil down to...**

*RB: Just like a flight attendant, they're called flight attendant or stewardess or whatever it needs to be called. It's just glorified waitress.*

**DB: Yeah, all that's the same thing with the, this.**

AB: So you were saying you were a mail clerk and on your days, you said somebody would cover you, cover for you on what days?

**DB: Would cover for me as a flight medic on every day when I go to get the mail.**

AB: Oh, okay.

**DB: Well, oh, okay! On my day to get the mail on, when it was my day to fly. 'Cause every, yeah, every third day was my day to fly. You had four crews but for some reason or other the one crew didn't fly. Every third day was my day to fly. So every third day someone would cover for me in case we got an evacuation, a call. And I would go get the mail 'cause only licensed mail carriers could handle the mail. And you couldn't drive so you had to have a weapon, and I was a 1AO so I had someone sitting in the backseat that was armed. And I had the mail bag and a driver.**

AB: So there you were able to switch that around? I remember you telling me that you were a 1A without the O to begin with.

**DB: Yeah, I was—**

*RB: That was a typo.*

AB: Oh, that's a big typo.

**DB: From the state of Michigan when they sent my records down to Fort, I should have gone to Fort Sam Houston but I ended up going, because of the**

**typographical error, I ended up going to Fort Knox. And so I was under the gun right away while standing for my religious convictions.**

AB: You were talking about someone being armed with you because you were not armed, and this is when you're carrying mail?

**DB: At my permanent duty station 'cause if someone... 'cause part of the time you had, part of the route you had to go through villages and who knows they could, some drunk could get really liquored up and or a riot could happen, not really a riot. Trouble could erupt without really a warning and you were expected to shoot to kill.**

AB: So, the mail carriers that did bear arms, would they travel by themselves?

**DB: They weren't mail carriers, they were just soldiers who could bear arms who had the 1A.**

*RB: But say if there were other mail carriers.*

**DB: No, I was the only licensed mail carrier 'cause at the, it was quite some time before I could get an alternate carrier. Someone to take my place if I should die or something like that, for some reason be no longer able to carry the mail. But in the event that, military regulations, commanding officer could go and get it, could go and get the mail. And he could designate someone to sort it out and hand it out once he got back but the company commander by military regulations could do it.**

*RB: They were the only other ones.*

**DB: Yeah, if they didn't have a licensed mail carrier. And because it's the lifeline, I mean, you have to be in the situation to really understand what I mean by lifeline. It's the only communication with the outside world.**

*RB: No cell phones.*

**DB: You didn't, they had a mail carrier. They made sure they had someone who was licensed to carry the mail.**

AB: Was there a lot of mail coming through? In and out?

**DB: Yeah, often times I'd have two mail calls a day.**

AB: And what about the days when your crew is assigned to fly out? You said every third day you guys would fly out.



**DB: Every third day was my day to fly then I would go. When I wasn't handling the mail I would be down at FLOPs, what we call FLOPs, which is short for flight operations. 'Cause it was down by the helicopters and that's where the calls came in and the crews were right there ready to go on a moment's notice. They spent the day down there, they had pool tables.**

AB: Just like firefighters?

**DB: Yeah, along that line. There were pool tables, forms of recreation down there, TVs, 'cause you just couldn't, and meals would be brought down to you.**

AB: You had to be there when there was a call.

**DB: You had to be there when a call was there. 'Cause if I was gone getting mail then my cover was down there to take my place til I got back.**

AB: Was it often that you guys were called daily, meaning the days that you were there.

**DB: We had calls every, I mean, we could expect sometime during the day to go out at least a couple times.**

AB: Wow.

*RB: Really?*

**DB: Yeah.**

AB: How much distance would you guys cover when you fly?

**DB: It varied where you were going..**

AB: Were you guys up there for a while?

**DB: ..'cause we weren't very far from the DMZ. It was just a hop, skip, and a jump. But if we when down to Pusan it was oh, an hour and a half flight I think it was.**

AB: One way?

**DB: Yeah. Pusan is on the very southern tip of South Korea. Any further south and you're shark bait in the Pacific. It's right there on the shore. Any father south and you're in the water.**

AB: What's it like when you're up in the air?

**DB:** It was an experience. Each Medivac was different but there was such vibrations you had, every helmet you plugged in so that you could talk the each other. The crew chief, of course the pilot and co-pilot were operating the craft. The crew chief would prepare the chopper for take-off and he would take care of it when he got back. So, in flight he was an assistant to the medic, depending on the person. If it was somebody who we were dropping off the evacuation hospital, nine times out of ten, oh probably I'd say ninety-five, ninety-nine percent of the time it was like a ride. Just bring 'em down. They were in serious enough condition that you had to monitor solution, clothes, and keep tabs on BPs and vital signs. Unless it was one of those flights where it was an expectant mother, often times when they called in a flight, made a call in, they didn't give full information. Like one time they had, they just called in a pregnant, expectant mother, pregnant lady, and that's it. But something told me I should take everything along that I possibly could. They didn't say she was in labor. They didn't say that, anything along that line. I took one look at her when they brought her up to the chopper (laughs) and said oh no. And I says, "Okay, it's when I give the word." Get her inside and I gave the word. I said I want full throttle. Which medic was in command even though he was low in rank 'cause the whole function of the unit is medical evacuation by air. The pilots don't know how bad the patients are, the casualties. And so he relies on the medic. If he says go then full throttle to the hospital. Well this one, I was furious. This was (chuckles) an opportunity to make history in the company. Let me back up a bit. A fighter pilot, if he shoots down an enemy aircraft they paint, they put a flag of the opposing country. Japan for example, a fighter pilot might have so many rising sun, Japanese flags, the rising sun, so many of them. One flag for each one that he shot down. Well, (laughs) in 377 if they had a baby delivered in the helicopter, they'd have a stork, flying stork. You know how they have the baby hanging down from the bill? One of those painted on the side (laughs).

*RB: Your chopper didn't have one.*

**DB:** And it didn't have one. Our crew, to the best of my knowledge anyway, it never happened in the company. So when we took off, they took off full throttle, but then they just slowed around and lollygagged 'cause they wanted history made.

*RB: And he didn't know it.*

**DB:** No, at that time I didn't know. But when I did find out, I didn't care what our pilot did, what rank, he could've been a five star general for all I cared. But when I found out in the UCMJ, which is the military Bible, and if you got that backing you up then you can tell a general to take a flying leap, you know. 'Cause that's the only thing sacred to the military. It wouldn't be a smart thing

to do 'cause they would come back at you in another way but it explained things in detail and made it so clear. So when I discovered that, which wasn't, either the next day or the day after that, the next day or two days later I came across that in the UCMJ about, you know, the situation. And I barged right in, a most inopportune time for our pilot because he was with his yobo, a Korean lady, and it was entertaining purposes, we'll let it go at that. And I barged right in with the UCMJ. He didn't see that at first and boy he started screaming me up one side down the other and I said, "ZIP IT!". You know, shut up. And that was like dumping gas on the fire, I says, "Look!" I showed him the UCMJ, I turned to the page and he read it. And I says, "Now, if you ever pull a stunt like that again, like you did yesterday," yesterday or day before, depending on what day it was, "I will have your bird. Rest assured, you will be court martialed." He was still furious about barging in like that. He says, "You see this bird?" (pointing to wings on uniform.) So I flipped him the finger and says, "You see this bird? And I'm not playing games. 'Cause I'm leaving now because I made, you've read what the UCMJ says. You can have your, go back to your yobo, but I just want you to know about that." And he never did it again but we never had the situation like that again (laughs).

AB: So how did that turn out? With the woman expecting?

DB: I delivered a baby in a helicopter. And it was an experience I'll never forget because I missed my class in Fort Sam Houston in child birth. I was dating her sister. I was on my way back. That was on that escort mission wasn't it? One of our choppers crashed in the DMZ, of course everyone on board was killed. And I was asked by the medic's wife to escort his body home so I came home from the other side of the globe to Fort Wayne, Indiana, which was maybe, I'm guessing, about a three hour drive from my house. And I was on my way back, and I stopped, I left early enough to spend a day, a generous day with my girlfriend saying goodbye at home with her parents. And some bad weather came in but I was able to make it just across the river in Missouri to, maybe it was still in Illinois. I was able to make it to a compound so I wasn't, a military base, so I wasn't considered AWOL. And they contacted my unit over in Korea to let them know that weather had set in where there was no flying. No one coming in, no one going out, but that I was on base and he wasn't AWOL so there wasn't any problem there. But the day that I was late in getting back was the day that child birth class was. Fortunately there wasn't any complications or trouble but. My hands were kind of a bloody mess and I had, it was a near state record deliver for size of baby. A little Korean mother and a GI. I felt sorry for that gal. Like the birth of both my sons, I felt so helpless to help someone hurting so. It was an experience I can't really describe. I'll never forget either.

AB: So, this Korean lady? They called for your guys' Army helicopter for a Korean lady who is giving birth? It's not just for soldiers who are fighting.

**DB: Oh no, for any kind of patient who calls in an air evac, calls in a Medivac. Usually for the childbirth process, they usually make sure that it's, you know, not very likely, very unlikely to not happen in the air because complications could arise and they're so limited to what you can do there.**

*RB: A bumpy, bumpy ride. That makes it very nice.*

**DB: Yeah, very bumpy. I would think that something like that vibration there would just help her to push the child out. But there again, for obvious reasons, I couldn't possibly understand. But it is very very noisy and my hearing did suffer quite a bit from it because they kinda vibrated you from the inside out. And compared to what they have nowadays, those are toys back then. No, you could expect any kind of, you know, injuries. If you were flying up to the DMZ you could really expect some really serious work that hopefully wouldn't be more than two people because the medic working on one and the crew chief working on another.**

AB: And the pilots are stuck manning the—

**DB: Yeah, they're flying the craft, it's just the medic and crew chief back there.**

AB: And you said you were there from 1969 to 1970.

**DB: Overseas in Korea from, I'm pretty sure, January of '69 to April of '70.**

AB: What was the process like of exiting the military?

**DB: Well, it was a little different for me because knowing the UCMJ like I did, my CO wanted to get rid of me.**

AB: UCMJ?

**DB: United States Code of Military Justice.**

Ab: Yeah, that's the Bible you were talking about?

**DB: That's the military Bible. So, it's a little different for me because I knew what the sergeants and the drill officers could do and what they couldn't do. I wasn't going to club them over the head with it and use it to my advantage but I wasn't going to let them bully me around either. And our XO acted like he was the Lord's gift to the military. And to have a fella who didn't have a stripe on his arm, he was so low in rank he couldn't stick with an Article 15, which and Article 15 is punishment that stays in the company. I mean, it's not like something that will follow me. If I were to get transferred to another unit, it**

wouldn't follow me to the next unit. It would be like I come, go to that new unit with a clear record. It's just non-judicial punishment that stays within the company. And he was able to get everyone in there with an Article 15 except me. And, I didn't know anything about a six month early out until he came in with the papers with his portion of the papers all signed.

AB: And that was his request to get you out?

**DB: He wanted me out of there. He wanted to make sure that I was going to get an early out. He had the old man, as we called the Company Commander, explain the situation to him. I can only imagine how he explained it. But he signed it too. And then you have to clear supply, you have to clear the dispensary saying that your shot records were up to date and you didn't have some kind of VD. 'Cause over there, even back then, they had VD they didn't even know a name for, let alone a cure. . . .**

AB: . . .

**DB: . . .**

AB: . . .

**DB: . . .**

AB: . . .

**DB: . . .**

*RB: . . .*

**DB: . . .**

AB: So when you were leaving you had to make sure you were fine, good enough to leave?

**DB: Make sure your shots were updated, didn't have some kind of disease, finances you had to clear to get your final pay for overseas. 'Cause very very rarely did you get your final pay and then leave the next day. You know, there was that portion of the month's pay that you had coming. So you had to clear finances and you get your final pay period once you got state side. And once you were cleared you were free of any duries. You didn't fly any more. I still handled the mail because for some reason or other we didn't have an alternate mail clerk yet. So the battalion commander asked me if I would still handle the mail. He said, "You do not, you will not be doing any other detail. You'll handle the mail, you'll hold mail call, and then the rest of the day is**

**yours. Anyone goes to hassle you or give you trouble over that, you got my number and I will take action.”**

AB: How was that for you? Were you okay to leave six months early?

**DB: Was I what?**

AB: Were you okay to leave six months early?

**DB: Oh yes! (laughs) Yeah, I mean going home? Yeah, you don't have to ask a G.I. a second time if he wants to go home.**

*RB: Unless they had nothing to go home to.*

**DB: Yeah, I didn't know of any that was in that situation but I have no doubt there was people like that, fellas like that. But even then they would be glad to get to the states and get out of Korea there. Especially if they occasionally, you know, saw action in the DMZ. They'd want to get away from that and be safe.**

AB: Last question. Anything at all that you'd like to share? You shared so much but one last thing.

**DB: An experience that, I can only imagine how many times the Lord's angel intervened on my behalf, but this is one time where it did. The U.N. forces of which American generals commanded, 'cause they had the most fire power, the most armament and backups, the strongest military force. So they commanded all the U.N. forces. They showed, there was an exercise showing the South Korean government how fast troops could be transported from Japan, from Okinawa, which wasn't that far away. And from mainland United States in the event of an invasion from North Korea. So skeletal crews were left behind and being as I was the only licensed mail carrier (clears throat) I was one that was left behind. And one flight crew, of course, was left behind, one other than mine, you know, skeletal crews period. And the rest of the company was out there. And there was one day where the only time while I was over there that mail was late in coming in. It was over three hours late. One of our ships crashed in the DMZ (starts to cry). Everybody on board was killed and I was supposed to, I was training under the medic who was killed for my flight pay, for my flight wings. 'Cause you had to train under a licensed, not a licensed, but one who had already qualified for flight pay in order to get your wings. And I was in the process of qualifying under this fella when he was killed. And I would have been on that flight if the mail had been on time that day. So I knew it was the Lord's intervention there. And it was his body that I was asked to escort home. And when the ships took off they were fully fueled of course 'cause you never really knew, the faster you had to go the more fuel was burned so it would be fully fueled. And when the ship went down, there**

was the flight crew and three patients. So it was loaded to the max. And if that third patient had been on a litter, we would have had to bring another in. They had out there at this site where this exercise was going on, they had a standby crew, just in case, you know, for a situation like that where they would have been needed. And that's all they did. They were just on standby so they could go at a moment's notice. But the Lord intervened in my behalf then. (chokes up on words) Otherwise you wouldn't be interviewing me now. (laughs) But I had other close calls too but this one was the first one that popped into my mind.

AB: So that was the only time the mail was ever late.

**DB: The only time the mail was ever late.**

*RB: God knows how to intervene.*

**DB: And having two mail calls a day every single day. And her sister, I always had a mail, always had a letter waiting for me, or a card. And she had some little perfume that she, I could smell it in the bag before it even got up to the counter. She never, always had a letter. Every single mail call, at least one. Sometimes I'd have two. For some reason or other. I guess maybe they couldn't, the mail couldn't get out back home 'cause of weather. So she had a letter, a card or something written.**

*RB: If one was ready to go on, say a Sunday, of course she couldn't mail it out. Then she'd mail another out on Monday and that would be two at the same time.*

**DB: Yeah, and if I ever called home then I could say well, here's what I did tomorrow. 'Cause to them, okay, if Ruth and I were married and I was in the service, she was back here and I was overseas, I'd say "Well honey, this is what I did tomorrow." 'Cause for her, its tomorrow. For me it was what I did today.**

AB: I have a question about the, you called it a ship that went down. You're talking about the helicopter?

**DB: A ship, a chopper. There were several titles that we called the helicopters.**

AB: Do you know why it when down? Or how?

**DB: It was a mechanical mal—**

*RB: You thought at first it was something else and then the article said something about mechanical—*

**DB: Mechanical malfunction. I have a scrapbook at home that has the article and a picture of the crash on the hillside. And of course I took it out from Stars and Stripes, the paper that the military had overseas there, in Korea anyway.**

*RB: He said he had a dream in the night before, the exact happenings.*

**DB: Yes, I saw the site. I tried to talk 'em out of going because I says, "You're not coming back, none of you are coming back." I can still see that look that he gave me. "I don't even want to hear that kind of talk," he says, "We all know that we're gonna, there's always that possibility." I says, "It's not a possibility, you are going to, everyone on board is gonna be gone." So then when I held mail call, when it finally did come in, even when I left on mail to get the mail, they were late in getting back. I says, "They're gone, they're not coming back." "Oh, let's not jump to conclusions here!" And, I don't blame them. They couldn't read, they couldn't make contact on the phone for obvious reasons. What parts of the phone were probably left were definitely out of commission.**

*RB: And his friend was right in front of the gas tanks.*

**DB: Yes, pilot and the co-pilot and then the medic, well and the two casualties on litters, and the crew chief, they were all right back there, and then the one patient who was ambulatory, which means he could walk but he wasn't on a litter, wasn't bad enough for being on a litter. So there were three casualties, three patients that ended up being casualties and all seven people, course, were killed. He, Ed, was the medic, caught the brunt of the blast. And there was, all that was left of him was put in a bag.**

*RB: His wedding ring.*

**DB: Yeah, that's the only way they were able to identify him, that was his wedding ring. And was about that long and maybe that wide.**

*RB: And he told them where to find that.*

**DB: And they didn't find it right away so he was listed as missing in action. And course I just knew he was.**

*RB: You said you told em where to find it. 'Cause of that dream. Dreams are not funny when they come like that.*

**DB: And they matched it up with a photo that showed his ring, along with his wife's ring, 'cause they had matching rings. Then because of the blast, you know, them not finding so much, when I got to Fort Wayne, she asked me if I would go down to the funeral home, down in there and the director would unlock the casket. She says, "Just make sure something is in there so it's not an**



empty casket going down. That's all I ask." I thought for second 'cause I didn't stop to realize that it would be air tight sealed. If you ever smelt burning flesh, you will never ever forget it for the rest of your life. And I always considered myself to have a cast iron stomach but it made me want to puke.

*RB: Wow, even as ashes, huh?*

**DB: Yeah, and spinal fluid is the other odor that is just as bad. Yeah, without spinal fluid you wouldn't be alive. The liquid right in the middle of your spinal cord. And everybody's body was burned there. And the last thing I wanted to do was smell that burning flesh again. But I told her yes, I will go down.**

*RB: She deserved that. She needed that.*

**DB: And when we got down there he unlocked the casket. I recognized that it was an air tight bag right away. (breathes deep and laughs) And I just kind of touched it and it felt like rotten hamburger. It was soft and mushy but, yeah.**

*RB: Some of the fun stuff of military, huh?*

AB: Very real.

**DB: (begins to get emotional). I apologize for losing it, telling about that crash. (starts to cry)**

AB: I'll accept your apology, but it's not necessary.

**DB: Even that long ago, there's like a brotherhood between vets and I think about that every March 15. And October 13 was his birthday. Exactly 3 months to the day and to the hour, not quite the minute but the hour. I was born twelve minutes, or eleven minutes after midnight and he was born thirteen minutes after midnight on the 13<sup>th</sup> of October 1948.**

AB: Same birthdays?

**DB: No, mine was in July. So I was three months to almost the minute, older than he was (laughs). When he'd have an, not an argument or anything, just fun type of thing. I says, "I'm your elder so you respect your elders. I know how your mom, you told us how your mom raised you Ed. So practice what..." Back and forth we'd go like only vets could go. Every two, well, on Memorial Day too I think about him, but those three days. To this day I think about it. I got up to the crash site and saw the site too. Got as close as I could stand with the odor. It was a mess. So, if you ever look on a map of North Korea, you won't have any problem finding Seoul or Incheon, if you draw a straight line from there, over a little hill, well little because it wasn't very high, but maybe as wide as where**

the tracks, the intersection where the train is going over the tracks now at the road cross, from there to about here. Us drawing a straight line, over the hill from Incheon, that's where our base was. We were that close to Incheon but I just say over the hill and some people picture a mountain but it wasn't even close to—

*RB: Miniature hill*

**DB: Yeah, it was almost high enough to make your ears pop if you were to drive over it. You could fill the pressure building but it wouldn't pop. So it has some size to it. From Incheon to Seoul draw a straight line and that distance from Incheon on that line was were our compound was.**

AB: I'll check it out. Thanks guys!

Interview Questions

1. There were many protests against the war in Vietnam. You were stationed in Korea. What was your take on the war from your standpoint?
2. When you were drafted, were you prepared to go into the military? What were your thoughts and concerns?
3. I understand that in each helicopter was a crew of four men. Was this the case for you?
4. What were the roles of these men?
5. Did you work with the same four men during your time in Korea?
6. How did that work out for you?
7. How were you able to keep in touch with loved ones back at home?
8. Was communication frequent and sufficient for you?
9. Did you feel secure in the aircraft you worked in when considering its durability and reliability?
10. How dangerous was your time spent in the air?
11. As an air ambulance, was your helicopter ever fired at?
12. As an A01 soldier, did you ever feel insecure and unable to protect yourself?
13. You mentioned to me in our first interview that you were discharged six months early. Tell me about exiting the military.
14. We have time for one last question. If you could share with me one last experience during your time in the war, what would you share?

Bibliography

- DC. Wings Over Vietnam the Missions. Dust Off. 1998. , ed. Discovery Channel.
- Death Notices DUSTOFF Association Army Air Ambulance Flight Medic Medical Pilot . [cited October, 23 Available from <http://www.dustoff.org/closing-the-flight-plan.htm>.
- Adams, D. R., B. Riemann, J. Roarty, and M. Becker. 2010. Dust-off: Predictors of American Airambulance Losses During the Vietnam War. Vol. 83.
- Bergan, Daniel E. 2009. The Draft Lottery and Attitudes Towards the Vietnam War. Public Opinion Quarterly 73 (2) (Summer2009): 379-84.
- Dorland, Peter James Nanney. 2008. *DUST OFF: Army Aeromedical Evacuation in Vietnam*. Washington D.C.: Center of Military History United States Army.
- Wiener, John. 2015. Vietnam in the Battlefield of Memory. Nation 300 (18) (05/04): 18-22.

. I spent approximately \_\_2.5\_\_ hours reading/watching in preparation for the second interview.

