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Oral History Project/ Dave Casey

D'arce Peter

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Student Interviewer's Name: D'arce Peter

Interviewee name: Dave Casey

Time and Location of Interview:

The interview was a phone interview which began at 10:30 est which was at 7:30 for Mr. Casey who was in Chula Vista, California. The interview lasted around forty five minutes.

About Dave Casey:

Dave Casey enlisted with the navy during the Korean war and was a navy seal during the Vietnam war. Much of his work was clandestine, and he was in vietnam for roughly six months. A good chunk of his education was with the navy learning how to detect sonar, underwater demolition, and other special skills specific to the military. He later finished by getting degrees in American and South American Histories.

He married his current wife (who shows up at the end of this interview) before joining the navy and has had one daughter with her after he had retired from the military. He is currently retired and lives with his wife in sunny Chula Vista California.

This interview goes over the course of his career with the navy as an enlistment to becoming a master chef in the navy. This interview also talks briefly about what happened after he left the military and became a civilian again and some of the challenges that came with that.

Interviewer: D'arce Peter (DP)

Interviewee: Dave Casey (DC)

Interviewee's Wife: Barbara Casey (BC)

DP: Hi, so let's start with what war were you in?

DC: I was in the vietnam war, well I was in the Korean war and the vietnam war but I spent most of my service in the Vietnam war.

DP: Alright, when did you join?

DC: When did I join the service, I joined the service in 1949.

DP: Okay. And how did you end up being a part of the war, drafted or enlisted?

DC: I was enlisted, I was an enlisted man to start when I went in the Navy. And my first tour of duty was in Key West Florida and was on a patrol craft. Are you writing this down as I talk to you or are you tapeing it or what?

DP: I'm taping and trying to type up.

DC: Okay, slow me down if I get started

DP: No worries.

DC: Okay.

DP: If anything comes to your mind you can also just go.

DC: My patrol duty, my station. My first station was in Key West Florida. I was on a patrol craft. Okay. That was, well first of all let's back track. You gotta know I got in the navy. I went to boot camp in great lakes in the fall of 1949. and I was assign to a patrol craft in Key West as my first tour of duty in the navy. And we worked in key west, we worked with the submarines training guys. The navy had a sonar school in key west florida and we were training them how to use sonar in a detect enemy submarines. Thats pretty much what we did as touring in key west.

DP: Did you spend a lot of time in submarines

DC: Pardon me?

DP: Did you spend a lot of time in submarines?

**DC: No, I didn't spend a lot of time in submarines. I just worked with the submarine force in our patrol craft. And we were training students in the sonar school in key west
Tell me when you're ready to go and ask the question. It will be easy for me that way.**

DP: Okay yeah, did you ever go overseas or was it mostly in the area.

DC: Oh, no no no. In uh in 1951 late 1951, we found out our ship was going to be given to the south korean navy and our commanding officer wanted us to get off the patrol craft. You know, put our equipment for training in another area. that time I had put in a request to go to submarine school in New London Connecticut. And uh, I didn't get my wish as far as going to New London Connecticut, and at the same time the navy was seeking students to go to underwater demolition training in north virginia. At which time I applied for that and was accepted. And in April 1952 I graduated from underwater demolition training, and was assigned to the demolition team 2. And it became the, and at that time it was called the progment okay. When I was in the teams I did a lot of work up in newfoundland and alaska. I did a lot of training in St. Thomas and the virgin islands. I also took many deployments to the mediterranean, all while i was going to school you know. going to better schools and learning new skills. Some high points in my career in the early 50's was I went to parachute training in uh fort benning georgia in 1958 and uh. I was one of five navy men that went in our class of 110 army people. And that was quite an honor for me particularly. During this time I was also selected, I became a chief petty officer in 1959 which was a high enlisted rank at the time. And I was assigned to train quite a few underwater demolition teams training classes with other individuals as part of the training. I'm going to jump forward quickly because I'm going to go from enlisted status to officer status. In the enlisted status I become been promoted a couple times until I was a master chief in the navy. And then in 1967 I was, I had an opportunity to apply for commissioned status and I did. And I was awarded with a commissioner chief. And I went to school in connecticut. And it's called officer training command.

And at that point this was 1967 I was assigned after I graduated from officer training school. I went to seal team 1 in coronado here.

DP: What was the hardest part about seal training.

DC: I really didn't go to seal training because I had already to demolition was close to the seal team training. I was working with them, and I actually didn't go to seal training because the seals came into operation in 1962 okay. And I wasn't assigned to the seals until I was commissioned in 1967. So I went as a commissioned officer and I was assigned to the seals so I never actually went to seal training. I guess because my skills and my intelligence level and all that, I guess they didn't feel it was necessary, and I was in perfect shape physically you know. Anyways, After I got to coronado with seal team 1, that was in october of, excuse me September of 1967. I then was assigned to a couple of schools run by marines for artillery training artillery spotting and a lot of medical work. And then I went to vietnam in november of 1967.

DP: How long were you out there for.

DC: I come back at the end of June of 1968.

DP: Okay, so about half a year.

DC: I was working in vietnam. I was working at a place called Nha-be and that's spelt n h a b e. The first word is N H A and the next is B E. So if you're going to recite this it's pronounced Nha-Be okay. And uh, In vietnam I was responsible with a platoon of men, there was 14 officers enlisted in our small platoon. They called it a platoon because we were doing reconnaissance work, intelligence work, and uh, at the same time doing things like ambushing and kidnapping and bad guys. Generally work a lot of people don't like to do you know. Anyway, I come back in late june of 1968 and uh then I went back to team 1 and sort of trained there for a couple months then I went back to the seal training unit in late 1968 and I was an instructor there in coronado. It was seal 1. It was a training unit. It was still seal 1, but I was assigned to the training unit. And uh my capacity there was a demolition officer instructor. Explosives and all, you know. And I did that from 1968 1969, then I went back to seal team 1 until july of 1971 to which I decided to retire from the navy.

Take a look at what you have now and buzz me if you need anything to straighten out or need more information about and I'll be glad to help you.

DP: Do you remember where you were when the vietnam war was over?

DC: When the vietnam war was over? I was in, Vietnam wasn't over until 1973 and I was already out of the navy, and I had gone back to college at san diego state university and I had received a degree in uh spanish american. Let me see if I can get this straight. South American history okay. Anyway, it was both american history and south american history. And I had a minor in mathematics and I taught school here in chula vista starting in uh 1970, hey barbra what was it. 1974 or 1973. Barbra says 1972 so let's go with that. (laughs) Hey listen, at 85 things things pop up quick you know. (laugh) By the way, barbra says you need to know that during my career, my stay in vietnam I had two of my men killed in

action and we did a lot of ambushing work, we did a lot of strange work where we were put in tough situations from time to time. Had to fight our way out.

DP: Were you a part of any major battles? Or did you mainly do odd j--

DC: Well we, most of our work was clandestine. Nobody knew where we were or what we were doing. So we were pretty much on our own except we would get orders to such and such a job you know. It's just like the seals do today. All of a sudden we want to get bin laden and they do the intelligence work and they go do the job you know. In fact we were one of the few people that started that stuff. Just for your information, when we first when to vietnam we went as a group to gather intelligence and gather reconosense work and just spot what's going on, what the enemy was doing. But some smart guy said, listen, while you're there you might as well kill some of the guys. SO that's the way it ended up. We ended up doing our mission but we ended up doing other things we were asked to do from time to time. It wasn't a very pleasant experience I want you to know. I just did not learn to like that kind of work. I did it because I was trained to do it. And I did it well. Um. Barbra wanted to let you know that in a seal team we were all excellent weapons people as far as using weapons, taking care of them. We did a lot of helicopter work coming out of helicopters via transport into areas with helicopters and also coming out of helicopters with what they call is roping where you slide down a rope you know. It gets. You come into an area and the helicopter is 30 ft off the ground and you slide down this rope to the ground. It was a quick way to get into an area and not have the enemy spot you right away.

DP: When you first got there was it weird being in a new area from what you're used to.

DC: No no, this was not a new area. There were units already in there, but they were mainly vietnamese units and not american units. It was called the. The area I spent much of my time was called the rung sat zone. And it was a zone of, if you could call it a comparison, it was a very marshy, it was all jungle. A lot of piracy and uh. It had things like running drugs.

DP: Wow, so what was it like coming back to being a civilian again?

DC: Well I went to school and I found it difficult. And I found it difficult because I was an old man and most of the people in my classes were young teenage men and women. And they were all opposed to the vietnam war, and this was all mid 1971. And I had a lot of. I didn't have a lot of negative interaction with them, but I didn't appreciate some of the things that were going on as far as. there was a lot of hate about the military and the war in vietnam at that time. They wanted you know. They were just listening to what the news was saying, get the Americans out of Vietnam. I had a little difficult time accepting that. But I was very fortunate that I had a couple professors that were really great people. And they pulled me aside because they knew I was struggling because I was learning how to study again too. That's not the easiest thing in the world for an old 40 year old man. So, but i was very grateful for the help at san diego state university for helping get though. And I graduated well placed and I went to work immediately here in chula vista in. what was it 1973 was my first? 1973 I was hired by the chula vista school district and I taught there for 19 years. So I've had a wonderful life and have been fortunate in many ways. You think you got enough for the moment.

DP: Yeah, thank you so much.

DC: Is it an oral presentation or a written presentation.

DP: It's a written presentation.

DC: Okay well, do me a favor. But when you get it all put together give a. You don't have to read it to me, but give me a synopsis of how it goes. And let me know if there is a part that isn't clear give me a call. Don't hesitate because I know what you're going through and it can be difficult. Barbra wants talk to you. You remember that beautiful lady I've been married to for the last 55 years don't ya. (laugh)

DP: Yeah.

BC: Hi honey, how are you

DP: I'm doing well, how are you doing?

BC: Oh, getting older by the minute. I've got a birthday on thanksgiving. Yeah I wanted to know are you still doing the magic?

DP: I haven't done it a whole lot because I've been busy with school but I do it occasionally.

BC: Yeah, but it's there in the back of your mind right? I'll always remember that. And I haven't seen you in a while but I imagine you're just as handsome as you always were. How old are you now?

DP: Well thanks. I'm 21 and I turn 22 in a few days.

BC: Oh you're all grown up.

DC: She says that to all the good looking young men.

BC: Oh don't be like that. I talked to your grandma yeah. I was we're trying to get together, we have the same birthday but we can't decide what we want to do. And you know, that's where we are right now, but we'll think of something to do.

DP: I'm sure you'll come up with something fun.

BC: Yeah, we always have fun. Well good luck, and if you need anything from. And I'll tell you the whole thing from the woman's point of view (laughs) the ones sitting at home while they did their thing. And I'll let you know I wrote to him everyday even though he didn't get them all. They came when they could reach him. Yeah 4 or 5 at a time, but it was an interesting life. And if you need anything just pick up the phone. Okay hun, bu-bye.