

Edgar St. John, Part II

Interviewer: So you did this for three years that made it what 1955/56?

Ed St. John: Yeah that was '55 or '56 and then I got my replacement as they brought in a Major Forest Edsel from Europe and he replaced me as Battalion Commander because he was to be soon made a Colonel. So he replaced me and I went over to Germany at...over there at, Jesus...Strassburg Kaserne and Nahbollenbach and I replaced him as Headquarters Company Commander and they had two units, so they had 7th Army there and they had the United Army Europe, USAREUR command was over there and I fell under the USAREUR Command, General Hastings, Four Star General. So I went over and took over the job as Headquarters Company Commander and stayed there as Headquarters Company Commander and...

Interviewer: What did that job, what did you do in that job?

Ed St. John: Well, as a company commander you're actually in charge of the troops that are servicing the operation there and you just, you have a First Sergeant and you have them...and my, Nahbollenbach was a, was a depot there that had to be operated by the military and they were quartered at a barracks, an old German barracks at the top of the mountain area in Idar-Oberstein, Germany which was...Idar-Oberstein was called...you know I had some...I hadn't shown you any of these pictures. I've been talking through all of this stuff here and...

Interviewer: That's alright you can show us the pictures after we're finished with the interview.

Ed St. John: Oh, okay well, that's probably the best thing because I...

Interviewer: How long were you in Germany?

Ed St. John: I was in Germany about three years, three years and then I came back to Fort Lee again after Germany and we had this...in Germany there we had...we had a...we reported there at Strassburg Kaserne up on them mountain top and you don't realize this, but you probably...Idar-Oberstein is the semiprecious stone jewelry center of the entire world. They got in all these old ancient caves they went in the little streams and mills and that's where the cutting of precious stones started there in Idar-Oberstein over three hundred four hundred years and you go around these old, every Sunday afternoon the Germans would break and go to the cheese houses and drink beer, excuse me, and do whatever, drink their and enjoy themselves on Sunday afternoon and then they had these paths that they would walk and they do that religiously every Sunday afternoon. Germans are all walking paths all over the mountains up there. That's all they do and as you walk you see these little caves going back in there into the mountain and you can go in there and you can knock out geode and if you want to crack it open you can see the tourmalines and the gems in there. They have raw stones themselves you know, but the labor costs more than they could by the time they polish the stones was worth, so they started getting their stones from down in South America where it

was very cheap, the emeralds and all that come up to Idar-Oberstein and in the mornings about four o'clock in the morning and the snow was up there you'll see the lights out on the snow and you'll see them in there and you'll see all of these stone cutters on these wheels cutting and faceting these stones at four/four-thirty in the morning. I know when I would go to down to Nahbollenbach there why I'd see and I'd see all the little apprentices in there laying out their tools for the auto Myers, they built cars there also and these little youngsters twelve and fourteen years old were learning how to be mechanics. That's why the Germans have such good, excellent work over there is because they train their children from twelve and ten years old. If their going to be a tradesman they train them to how to be a professional tradesman, exact tradesman and in fact, I got a little tractor out here with a Kohler engine and that little engine is worth more than a Briggs & Stratton or any of this other stuff that we have. We've lost our technique over here. Pennsylvania has a lot of Germans in it. Germans are precise people. They're very, they don't turn out anything unless it's quality. When they do a job there, I'll respect, I'm not German, I'll respect them for that. [##] 0:06:59 I'm Scotts, so I admire that quality they have.

Interviewer: So you left Germany and went back to Fort Lee?

Ed St. John: And then I went back to Fort Lee and they, they, I got in an argument over there in Germany where the, our Colonel there was Commander of the Seventh Army Unit over there, Colonel Traeger and when you take over a command as a company commander you must personally sign for the property of that company. You're responsible for every mattress, bed sheet, pillow, everything, your pocketbook is on the line because if any of that is lost you will pay for it out of your pocket. Well, I was handed a, normally a property book is about that thick, about an inch and a half with all the different property listed. I got a property book about like that signed for the hick because it was Headquarters Company, which was all of the basic loaded company, all of the motor pool. The motor pool and the, all of the various ammunition, rockets, the grenades, the thirty-caliber ammo, and everything else, mortar shells, so when in that motor pool you're signing for the trucks, the buses, all the spare parts, millions of dollars of property you sign for. No way in the world you're ever going to pay for it if it's...so the company commander, which Foster had given it to the [##] 0:09:02 the senior over there the property officer to be held till I got there. And I had made it a practice that if I ever took over a command I assessed my pocketbook, I personally inventoried, get a supply officer, sergeants and all of them lined up. I count every item when I take an outfit over and I've seen people relieved out of the Army for losing a hundred and thirty bed sheets. My friend, Captain Arvanson, has got an envelope right out and just wrote me over there he was relieved out of his, broken out of the service as a captain because he lost a hundred and thirty bed sheets. So that's how strict they were on that, so anyway at Strassburg Kaserne they have the barracks are lined up at the top on a line. There was four barracks like that. One, two, three, four, headquarters company was here, Seventh Army here, a medical unit was down here, but they had a tunnel, since it is a country over there where they have snow and all of that bad weather, there is a tunnel between these where they go underground where they have the, they goes in the basement about the size of this cabinet here that goes straight through with all of the cables and the pipes and everything that services these four. And the supply rooms are located

in the basement right opposite this tunnel and what happens is normally when one company goes to have an inventory then all of the supply sergeants get together and take their supplies up here and give it to them before they inventory and all of the losses here and they make it up and then that inventory comes up good and they come down inventory there and they all run down here and puts supplies in there. And when I saw, nobody told me that, but I saw that. I knew doggone well what was taken place, so I told my sergeant, I got myself a big fat lock and a key and I went down and supply sergeant reported to work the next morning, "Sorry sir, I can't get in my supply room." He says, "There's a lock on the door." I said, "I know I locked it," and then he got white as a sheet and he said, "What?" I said, "Well, we inventory today." He said, "Today, sir," he said, "I thought we were going to schedule that for next week." I said, "No, we're going to do it right now," and I got fought down. So I said, "I got the chalk out," I said, "I marked off on the hallway there," and I said, "I want the bed sheets, the mattresses, and everything down," and everything that's in that property room went page by page. And we come up with shortages. Certainly I expected to find that. I got over to the bunker over there on our ammunition supply and I found out that we're a hundred and sixteen grenades short. That ain't good, particularly in a country you just occupied after taking after a war and we were short rockets. We were short thirty-caliber ammunition, we were short weapons. We were nine machine guns short and could be sold on the black market and so, and now all of that stuff was under the Seventh Army and I was responsible for them on their equipment. So, I just noted everything in the book. Went back and they, handed the book back to them and they said, "Oh, okay." They said, "Why, you haven't signed." I said, "No, I haven't signed." I said, "We're short. I'm not signing for equipment that's not there." He said, "Well, you must be mistaken. It's somewhere there. It's on this post we know that." I said, "Well, bring it in and I'll sign the book," and finally I ended up before Colonel Traeger, Seventh Army Commander and Colonel Traeger says, "I understand you won't sign the book." I said, "I'm not signing for machine guns out here floating around in the black market, sir," and he said that, he got very angry at me and so, I...and the reason why I'm telling you all of this because I bent a lot of noses over there and the post commander, nobody got reprimanded because I wouldn't sign the property book because he was responsible for all that takes place under his flag and losing equipment under a flag is not good for even a post commander. So that was a black eye for him. I got sent back. I got back, sent back to Fort Lee again and on my assignment was the post range officer, so I went out there and took it and I had five men under me as a Captain and I was in charge of the range and I had taken it over right after they had lost about fourteen men were killed out on range number eight. They went in there and the idiots had them police the range after firing live rockets and they had duds in there and the kids didn't know and they picked up a dud in there and they had the kids in there all police had taken the empty rounds back and throwing them in the trash litter back there where we had it, back there on the range, and this round went off and killed about fourteen men there. Destroyed, not following...that was a HE range and a HE range you never police because we have an EODT that goes in and checks all those duds out there and then fires them off. And we have a range next to it where we fire rockets that are not HE rockets but just practice rockets and nothing but just a empty head goes out there and that range can be policed and they did not follow instructions, so ahead of me. So, I'm taking a range over where the post commander was relieved. A general, a major general was relieved for losing those men and General Dennison come in to replace him

and General Dennison called me in and he said, "Captain St. John," he said, "You're directly answering to me on that firing range out there." Well, who do I...I come in and Captain Hugby had the Seventh Army and he...back at Strassburg had the company there and I go in to take over the second of the firing range there, office, he sat in there and I said, "Oh my God," I said, "Captain Hugby," I said, "I didn't know you had the Second," and he said, "Yeah." He said, "This is the processing out assignment." He said, "You'll be the next one to go." I said, "I'm going next week." He said, "I've been put out of the Army because of what you did back there at [laughter] not signing the property book." So he says, "Now it's your turn to get out." I said, "Well," I said, "I don't think I'm going." So I took the range over and I ran a good tight operation. I reorganized that range and I took over the...oh...the S-3 Plans Officer usually had the rifle teams and that sort of thing and he...that a...I started taking over, I didn't realize it, but I went over and found myself an old mess hall over there and got the engineers in and fixed it up as an indoor firing range and I really cleaned that range up to where we...we had a tight control on that range and then I had a firing range, and then I had a, a rifle team and then I brought in the North/South which is a big event on the East Coast. They call it the North/South Shoot where it's about an event where you bring 'em in to the firing ranges and you got all of these people that react, reenact the Civil War. They all dress up in their Grays and their Blues. They all have got their muskets and they all had the range set up and they have their old, they go through all of this Civil War stuff and I opened it up and made the range the star of the post and General Dennison practically awarded me a commendation medal for it. And his wife got interested and I had the ladies, I started a ladies club, shooting club over there. Taught them how to fire a revolver for in the days when it wasn't very popular for women to fire and they had a ladies firing team. I had a rifle team. We fired well, all up and down, demonstrated for the Second Army all the way up to the Wimbledon Matches and so, I left that place and then my next assignment after that, of course, was they sent me back to, I think, oh I went back to Korea again. And this time I went up to Yongsan Compound up at Seoul and I was the Headquarters Commandant of the Eighth Army, so I was a Headquarters Commandant for the United States Eighth Army, which is a pretty responsible job. I was an Army Commandant and promoted again and then after that assignment I...oh I want to tell you...man I missed a couple of things here. You know in Korea that's a RTO down there has really bothered me to this day. They had orphans, that RTO was a Rail Transportation Office down there and during the time that that war over there in Korea they had about ninety to a hundred little orphans running around this RTO begging for food or whatever, just a little pack of animals, some of them naked, totally naked in February. I mean its cold out there, totally naked. Gray, their skin had turned gray and we as either UN or as troops it's a court marshal offense to get involved with any...I forget what they call it, but when you get involved with a...the civilian population, fraternizing, if you fraternize in any way touch this court marshal offense you can lose your rank, be kicked out of the service. And I was down there one night at the RTO and I heard this wailing, little wailing and two little kids like this and that wind was sharp. I had on my jacket I was cold and my short coat, these kids were standing there and they had over them a shawl, a gunny sack. They were totally naked under there and they had these little tin cups and there's just black muck grease in there with nothing in there and they were hungry. They hadn't been fed and they were just, just shaking and just you know, ohhhh, and just going on and I said, "Well, if I give them food," they haven't eaten, their little stomachs were bloated. I was afraid I'd kill

them. I said I could give them food, but then if I do give them food the older kids twelve years old, these were little four year old and five year old kids, four year old, I would say more four and there will be other kids that come in there and kill and get their food you see. If I put a candy bar down there or something and first and more they had gone so long without food that if they eat the candy it might kill them because they were already bloated. I turned around and then I went back I said, "Something I can do," and they were dead, had died right there, right in front of me. So I just remember that and it just bothers me when I see my granddaughter or something not eat her food over there and she doesn't understand, but that really bothers me. And then I, when I bet my back this other trip over there when I went back to Korea again and I had a staff call because I was a Commandant and I had to go down to Osan because we were going on a field operation. I just set it up down there and Mr. Chay was my driver and I was in a sedan and we were driving down the road and I looked over and there was a great, giant ditch over there you could fall down it. I turned around and I saw this little three and a half year old little girl sitting there and just crying you know and she had on this see-through silk, look like silk, it wasn't, blue dress. She was totally naked under that, again winter time, and she was just crying and sitting there and I said, "Well, somebody must have, she must have fallen down or something." I went down to Osan and I was coming back and the little girl was still sitting there and crying and her tears had turned to ice on her cheeks and the dogs were circling around waiting for her to die I suppose and going to eat her. And I said, I told Chay I said, "You stop the car and you get that girl... [silence] and I...we got her in the car and I took her out to the policeman, next police stop, and I gave him five thousand yen or won and I said, "You take this child home and you see she's taken care of and I'll be back tomorrow and I want her then," so we did that and there was an orphanage over there with some twenty-six hundred children in it that were all orphans and they could keep her in there for a week. So what I did was I started my own orphanage and I put her in my own orphanage, well, I didn't put her in there, but I, the following day I took her back I said, we found out through my interpreter what her name was and where her home was, and her home was there in Tonay [sp] (00:27:07), not Tonay, but Yongsan and the poorer you are in Korea the further you live up on the hill. The rich people live down near the base, but the poor folks live up here because they have to climb the hill all the way up just like people in France and their apartments over there. So we, I got their names and their address as such and we climbed this hill and we got a crowd of people following us up there and I had this little girl, by then we had her clothed and had her taken care of and fed and took her back up to the family and we got up there to the family, the family was there and they had three other children. They were living in an old Army packing box that had been turned over on its side and they had a piece of tarp hanging over the outside of the box. That was their home and it was about a little bit bigger than the size of this table and they were huddled in this box and that was their house. They didn't have enough to eat, so they had to put their daughter out on the side of the road hoping that somebody would pick her up or whatever, but they couldn't feed her. She was the oldest, so she had to go and that's the way those people had to live over there during the war and those stories ought to be told you know. I think, those are good stories that we are so lucky to be in this country. We don't know what a tough life is you know. I ended up with about ninety-six children in my orphanage over there I started and...I was not too popular with the General Davis and he said, "You do well to keep your mind on your job instead of getting into this social work," but you...sometimes I, have to do your own

thing. Get all weak, the older I get I lose my strength. So, that was my second tour over to Korea and then from there I think, I believe that I went down to Vietnam. I took a hardship tour. I just took another hardship tour and went down and I said to [##] 0:30:15 I'll go down to Vietnam and see what's going on." So that's when I went down there and ended up out in the, I was on General [##] 0:30:26 old Captain, my old friend Captain White. He got promoted to Lieutenant Colonel, I was a Major and he was spilling this stuff, "Ah you're going to work for me now." I said, "Good, I'll do that," and so I reported in. I took an old C-130 out of Yokota Air Base and it was an overnight flight down there. I got down there about four in the morning or five, dark anyway. Just put my feet on the ground out there on Tonsanute Air Base, thrown my belt pack out there and literally that Tonsanute Airport is about sixteen miles outside like down at the strip down there and the ground literally jumped out from under my feet and I went "Katoom," I said, "Geez," that was a real charge. What I didn't know was the VC had gotten into town and blown up the Majestic Hotel where the officer troops reported down there and that charge went off. That was my welcoming charge to Saigon and I went down when the hotels got quartered in down there and they started evacuating the hotels down there and bringing in those that survived the charge down there. There were about a hundred and eighty officers in the Majestic Hotel that they blew up and the hotel, they thought it collapsed, they blew out the bottom, but it was built pretty good and the rooms were like that all the way down the face of the hotel and it looked like that thing in Oklahoma City. All the frontage was gone, but the...and they were bringing out the officers all the ones that survived, which was quite a few and put them over there in the...so anyway, I reported in and I went down to the headquarters and there was a headquarters building was a great big private residence there, beautiful...villa and that was were the General was set up, General Ikewood, so I went over there and they told me he said, "Well, you're going to have to get your quarters. We don't have BOQs here for you so you're going to have to live off folks." I said, "Well, okay. Where is everybody living at?" He said, "Well, usually across the street. There's a bunch of apartments up and down the streets." "Oh, okay," I went over there and they had these shotgun [##] 0:33:07 from the street, so I was in there trying to negotiate with this guy to get my, give me a room there, so I'd have a room to work my job over across the street there and I couldn't...I didn't speak Canta...Vietnamese speak Cantonese, Chinese, so I didn't speak any, I speak Japanese and Korean, but I didn't speaker any Cantonese, so I said, "Ok, I'll get myself an interpreter. There was this girl standing out there probably in her twenties, maybe younger, eighteen to twenty something, beautiful, beautiful girl with gold [##] 0:34:01 all the way down, man she, and I was scratching my ear trying to figure out what I was going to do next not having any luck at all with this guy trying to, how much he was going to charge me and this girl turned around and faced me and she said in perfect English. She said, "Do you need any help?" I said, "I certainly do," and I didn't have to ask her if spoke English better that I speak it myself you know, so she'd come over and she was over there interpreting. She had a parasol, parasol and immaculate and just like she had stepped off the stage out of a book you know and she got me the room. I gave them a little down payment there. I started to offer it to her. She looked like she didn't need it. About that time Captain Wright [White?] come by and stopped the jeep out in front, skidded to a stop and dust flying up and he says, "What do you got there?" and I said, "What do you mean?" and I said, "I got my apartment." "No, I don't mean that. What do you got there?" And I said, "Are you talking about my interpreter?" "Oh, is that what she is?" I said,

“Okay, don’t be you know I know you’re a Colonel, Lieutenant Colonel.” I said, “Don’t...I’m a...” I said, “She just helps...” “Yeah well, I want her to help me out.” I said, “Well, that’s between you and her.” I said, “I’m on my way. I got things to do.” So he took off with her in the jeep and I went over and got myself and had my quarters, got my desk cleaned out, got ready to go to work over there and next morning he didn’t show up. So Walker come in and another Major [##] 0:36:09 and he said, “You’re the senior, you’re in this division.” He said, “You’re going to have to go to the General’s briefing,” which they called the “lark [sp] (00:36:13) briefing” this morning. I said, “Well, I haven’t been briefed myself and I’m going to brief the General? What am I going to...big zero. I make a fool of myself my first day of duty?” He said, “Well, we have to have somebody there.” He said, “You’re it.” I said, “Okay, I’ll be there.” I went in there and I understood. He had two big eye teeth, one on each side and he enjoyed sucking his lower lip up to the eye teeth. If you’d seen the Simpsons and you see this old boy running around with those two eye teeth, he actually had that hang down on there and he loved that you know. I think he did it...he was air born, he was a tough General and everybody knew that, but did always had to prove his socks. So, I went to...well, that went on for two days...White didn’t show up and then finally he did show up. He had to turn himself into the hospital because the girl had got him drunk over in the...what area was that over...oh, we found the jeep chained to a tree over there. It had dust on it about that thick. The Cholan area was a Chinese area of Saigon and that was controlled by the Chinese, Cholan, and we found the jeep over there and they had a big chain around the tire and around the tree there and he was... What had happened was she had given him soup with motzy balls in it and motzy balls that she made for him were made out of bamboo strip. Now the thing is these motzy balls they go down easy with soup, but when they get down into your innards down there they began to unravel out and they’re sharp as any razor ever was and what they do they completely strip you out all the way down through your intestines and everything. It literally slices you to death from the inside out and you die and you bleed to death, literally just bleed, and of course, we lost old White over there, so he’s fooling around with these girls over there. She was a North Korean spy, I mean North Vietnam, with the North Vietnamese and she was working troops down there you know and that’s why she was speaking English and dressed just like a rattlesnake laying there for you, you know. So that was something that...I was a good first hand...I did not fraternize with the natives anyway because I was too busy thinking about making my next rank and I wanted to...that was my business. I really loved the service, the military. I grew up in it, so to me it was just a natural way of living.

Interviewer: So what was your job assignment there?

Ed St. John: Well, I was assigned, first I was assigned on General Ikler’s [sp] (00:39:33) staff as his Briefing Officer. I had to get a hold of the, he was over the Nha Trang and Da Nang and Cam Rahn Bay and [##] 0:39:54 and Kuchee. He was over all of the, all of those units that were not under MACV, under Westmoreland and I was to get the information in from them, their reports, and keep his charts and all of this information current from the senior officers up and down the line, so he could make his decisions on how to operate the war. Monk Myers was an old, he’s a Brigadier General. Monk was an old cadet classmate of Ikler’s [sp]. Monk was a hell of a good football player at the academy and Ikler [sp] didn’t like Monk. In fact, he eventually, Arthur

bought Monk Meyers into the briefing there, shoot him out in front of junior officers. It was really a crying shame, I felt sorry for Monk and relieved him of his command and it's true that Monk...the thing was that the shortfalls on the charts they were on the wire of lying when that white lies. They would find any way to take credit for anything at all to show what was being accomplished as long as the line was above the shortfall mark they got by, but Ikler [sp?] he was in his way. He was right to anyway, I didn't like the job of having to cover for these people and I certainly...I'm not in the business of lying, so I went in and told Ikler [sp?] I said, "I don't, I want out of your command," and that made him very unhappy with me and I said....he said, "Well, I suppose you...say you're not going home." I said, "I don't want to go home." He said, "What do you want?" I said, "I want MACV. I want to work for Westmoreland and I want to go out in the field. I want to surround the flag pole here and play with figures and charts and guys out there dying." I said, "I don't see any field grade out there in the field. I see all company grade, I don't see any, all the field grade is hanging around here is starting to get their steak dinner every night." I told him that and he got unhappy with me, so I got my, after about six weeks, I got transferred to MACV. Went up to my headquarters at [##] 0:42:41, they gave me an area, I went down there. They gave me nine what we call "white mice" which is [##] 0:42:49 troops, nine guys for security and they gave me eighteen mountain yards [##] 0:42:54 which were to work the area up there for intelligence. And when I was...and I went up to the highlands up there because I had asthma so bad down there that they were going to send me back to the States and I told them I wanted to, I wanted to, if I could get above thirty-six hundred feet I'd be alright because for some reason the pollen quits running at thirty-six hundred and I can do my full tour over there and they thought I was crazy because I had a direct line to go back home and I volunteered to stay and they said that's not normal, so they called me crazy St. John. That was my title from there on, so I went out there and I took my nine white mice and my eighteen mountain yards and I did my job out there and worked the area and they had a group up there called "mission alliance". A Dr. Jackson and his wife, Lidia, their parents had gone into Da Lat up there during the ...went into Da Lat during the...when the [##] 0:44:22 during the nineteenth century and they had been up there with those natives. There's five tribes of them and the [##] 0:44:33 that's one of the largest and they had, they were missionaries and they were Baptist missionaries. Northern Baptists are strong missionaries, Southern Baptists are weak missionaries. I've seen 'em all and so Dr. Jackson had spent his life, thirty-two years of his life up there getting the [##] 0:45:09 language into a written language, he had to get into writing and then he spent his life writing chapter and verse, the entire chapter and verse of the Holy Bible in [##] 0:45:29. I arrived up there at the period of time that they were preparing to have their...send their...oh a...what I want to call their dedication of this Bible and that was the greatest thing that's ever of his life and I was invited over to have tea and gingerbread, and that was the best gingerbread that I'd ever tasted in my life. That Lidia had fixed up there out of...and there are jungles up there above the clouds in Da Lat. And by the way, Da Lat is a small French village that was made into kind of a Disney World wonderland up there by the French that had the Michelin tire plantations. It's so hot and muggy down in the jungles, the canopy jungles and you come up into fourteen thousand feet and all of a sudden you drop into this beautiful little Swiss village up there and you look out and you're looking on top of the clouds, on top of the clouds around you because the clouds are around and you're up in this little, with a little lake in the center and beautiful villas around and roses growing and poinsettias growing

wild and orchids growing wild. Lovely, it's like a dream land, cool fifty-seven degrees at night, seventy-three degrees in the daytime. Or rain in the afternoon at five after three every afternoon and then it clears off. A lovely life up there and then they have three hotels there called Palace One, Two, and Three. Da Lat Palace One was where Roosevelt, the Kennedys, old Joe Kennedy, the Windsors from England, their royalty, their relation from Russia and France and Germany. The Kaiser you know is related to the Windsors and they all had their pictures had been coming there for years. I look at it on the wall up there. That was their...of all the countries all the royalty, not from all the countries, but from the Western Countries were on that wall up there going back to our...and they never speak of it. They just call it Shangri-la. No, people then thought that Camp David was Shangri-la, not so. Da Lat was a true Shangri-la and I had fallen right into it up there and I had a billet up there and I also lived with the VC, was all around me up there. It was kind of a, this is, Da Lat is a kind of a holy city to the VC, so they didn't kill anybody, wasn't suppose to, they did. I, one day was getting a hair cut, I needed a hair cut, so I said, "Well, there's a barber shop," so I gave him some [##] 0:49:09 and this guy was cutting my hair. He had a razor there and I noticed that he had black T-shirt on underneath, which means that he was VC. I said, "God, I got...," and later I found out he was a VC Captain Commander and he was giving me a hair cut in the daytime and VCing at night. So plenty more in Vietnam, I could tell you all sorts of stories up there on that. A very interesting place and so, I met the Australians up there, they were up there and I woke up one morning and my white mice, my [##] 0:50:03 said I was too nice to the, they hate the mountain yards. They said that I was too giving. I went down and the mountain yards couldn't get food because they were down in the, I had to buy food for them and they wouldn't sell them rice down there and they needed to eat so I went down and bought the doggone rice and come back and I said, "My eighteen boys out here have to eat," and they were running around with a loin cloth on them and their crossbows with their poison darts, bamboo darts, and so I...they...I woke up in a net one morning you know and my grease guns, my machine guns were stacked there in my door cell, nine of them, and the ammunition and my [##] 0:50:57 taken off. So I looked around and said, "Well, dang, if they...okay, if they want to play that game I'll just take nine of my [##] 0:51:05 and I'll teach them how to shoot a machine gun and they'll [##] 0:51:11 bang the doors on them and they may look mean as the dickens and they could shoot and they didn't mess around you know. So I, the Australian police were in there, so I said, "Can you train my [##] 0:51:30, I don't have time. I've got to go out here on the...get...do my advising." I was an advisor for two corp advisor up there for working out of [##] 0:51:43. I got to get some advising done around here or I'm going to loose my job. So I said, "Can you train them to shoot these bloody instruments here and I'll," and they said, "Sure." That's when I met old Major Lomis and Colonel Fox and the Australians were great. God they drink. They drink whiskey like water you know. Australian doesn't...they just...it's unbelievable now. Their constitution must be made of iron, but anyway, they were good people, very good people and so I got them to train my [##] 0:52:27 and I want to tell you this story about the tiger. We had tigers up there by the way. They come into Da Lat and had a mother and a couple of cubs there and the cubs are nine foot cubs now, two year olds you know and their still cubs and they, they can kill a buffalo and they eat buffalo and they were eating buffalo up there and that was very unpopular. So, Mr. [##] 0:52:56 got me one-ninety said, "I got to get you [##] 0:52:58 these mother and two cubs. I got to get them out. They're killing my buffalo up here." So, I said, "Okay," and I got a...I killed

one of the cubs, a male cub. He's hanging on the wall upstairs there and...but that's not what I wanted to tell you about the tiger. The tiger, we were up in the middle of the road and I don't know what they were doing up there one night, but they had their tents set up down this trail and they got to drinking and one of the warrant officers, little thin guy, I can't remember his name and he got sick and had to come back and lay down in the tent. And so they all ha, ha, ha, and went on drinking and singing and everything and all of a sudden one of them said, "Well, I better go back you know and check on whatever his name was," and he went back and he said, he hollered back, "Hey, come here," and we went back there. There was a slit in the back of the tent and he was gone. So we jumped and we had a flashlight, shined it down there and here is this eighteen foot tiger with this warrant officer head in its mouth and it's pulling him down the road backwards like you know a cat pulling a mouse down the road and as we looked at each other and we didn't know what to do. We were afraid, he was still alive because his hands going, we knew he was alive, but his head was in the tiger's, the tiger's mouth is like that and he was...and he had his incisors up under here those teeth there kind of up under his mandible here, which wasn't hitting his jugular vein, was in under his jaw right there and then he had some scars up there. So one of the Aussies fired the gun into the [##] 0:55:04, fired the gun in the air and we wouldn't have let him do it, but the tiger opened his mouth and dropped him and took off like a cat. [Laughter] And we got this guy and he couldn't...he was just shaking. We couldn't stop him from shaking. He was shaking four days later. They had to evacuate him out. He didn't have, but he just absolutely...he was mentally gone and I just wanted to...that was one of the incidents that I recall up there, which I think about sometimes you know. That was a...I've been shot at up there. I eventually in working, in fact, you know Mike Wallace was a...one of my jobs up there was a...we have up there a nuclear reactor and they only went in that area that we did not want the VC to get...to find out where it was or what it was and we always went in there by chopper. Mike had heard this and I had met Mike Wallace, I was going out to [##] 0:56:25 air strip one day in a little [##] 0:56:27, which is a little French car, they're a little model A-Ford type you know what we call a [##] 0:56:35, but they had that little corrugated metal [##] 0:56:39 and I was behind it in my jeep I saw this great big head in there, I thought fairly large. When I got to the top and he got out it turned out to be Mike Wallace and I said, geez, you're a famous... Mike...no I'm not famous, he said, I'm just doing my job like your doing yours and I was all...because I'd remembered him since I was a kid. I really thought he was a great reporter. For some reason Mike Wallace you know on the...well, TV was new then and of course everything impressed me. Mike Wallace said, he said, "I got to have a place to stay." "Stay with me I got a big villa over here," "Okay," so he stayed with me two weeks. He said, "Can I borrow your typewriter?" I said, "Yeah, I don't use it, so you can use my typewriter," so he was happy. He was in there typing, but his problem was he hated Walter Cronkite. They didn't get along. They hated each other's guts. You can't believe how they hate each other and he would write something and he'd tear it out of there and he'd ball it up and throw it on the floor in there. I'd see him typing and grumbling to himself and to get on the radio and talk and trying to get his information. Well anyway, Mike...we got a chopper and he wanted to go up to the reactor, so, and I had ridden over there so much and the caribou's is outside, I got careless. I don't usually strap myself in, it's just like you, they always fly with the gates open in the back there you know because it's cooler. You cool down real fast, beautiful, but the whole back end is space out there you know and you're up there a few thousand feet

and the same with choppers. I got careless, not strapped down, the side door was open, so we went in to go in to land and by the reactor there and they took a steep bank and I slid clear across the floor and caught the dang rungers and I was hanging on out there and hanging on and he, the pilot looked back and saw me he said, "Flip the plane over that way," and flipped me back in where I could get my hand in the door and get back in the chopper because I was ready to fall out. That kind of woke me up you know, and of course, you have Wallace and the others were along the side sitting in the seats and they were strapped in and I had to...I was over there in the gunners door there on the gunners by his mount and we didn't have a gunner there, so I just took that position and slid across the other door and almost went out of it. So we got down there and got the reactor and got in there and they had the reactor shut down fortunately so they have people realize this, but the reactors are a big circular donut and it goes up. Like those stairs they will wind around it, winds around to the top of the reactor and then there's a hole up there about that, a glass that you can look down and you see these sixteen rods and they're in their containers down there, but you cannot look, you're standing right on top of the sixteen rods in the reactor. So Mike wanted to go out there and get his picture taken. He said, "Come on up," so we sit up there and put our arms over each other and stood on top of the reactor and got our picture, I never got a copy of it, but we stood up there and you can look down there and they had a light down in there. You could see that green, heavy water you know and that was one thing that he wanted to do up for some reason, I don't know. And he stayed with me and rode up a article on me or whatever and I guess they had a little, whether it was on Sixty Minutes or not I don't know, but he took it for Sixty Minutes. I was sixty-seven over in Vietnam, so that and then the other time I went off one day from the top of the, went off from the top of the...see this is a rapid descent from down from fourteen thousand feet. You go down to double canopy jungle and then there's a little village there called Lin Khan [sp] (01:01:08) out here, so I go down it's about five clicks out and you go to Lin Con there and I came up and I was down there and you're suppose to travel in a convoy of two jeeps, two man that's the code over there, you carry a little card that tells you what you're supposed to do when you're out there on patrol and you're suppose to have two people, four all together. I would drop my jeep off at Mission Alliance, I'd put on my habit over there, that's a black cloak that the missionaries wore and Jackson would let me have a missionary jeep. The VC never bothered missionary jeeps and I'd put that thing on me like that and underneath I had my grenades. I had my sixty-round and my Burke gun and my .45 and I was fully armed, fully in uniform, wasn't spying or anything, couldn't get me for spying, but I had this cloak on and a missionary jeep. I would go to the VC checkpoint you know and go through and keep my mouth shut and go bouncing through there, they didn't know whether I was a missionary or not. So as long as they didn't see my boots, so I got stopped...oh...I want to tell you about the time I went down to Lin Con dropped down there. Went through the little village of Lin Con, just a little dirt village and went to hit fifteen going West and I come around the corner there at the lookout and I got this giant, staring this giant elephant in the face. And this elephant had sauntered out on the highway and they have elephants over there, believe me, in Vietnam and this sucker didn't look too happy because he was as surprised as I was. We were sitting there looking at, I'm looking up at him and he's looking down at me and I didn't...what is he going to do with that trunk, I was really shook up. I couldn't figure, I said if I make a move he'll spook and maybe spook could get step me you know a grease spot here. So I kept, so I said I'll stare him. I just

sat there froze, which wasn't hard at the time and finally, he decided well, his head started going side to side...and he just sauntered out and went across the rice paddy there and I was never so happy as to see him. That was one time. Another time I was down there I was going down to, they had a project concern down there an old retired naval commander and this project concern was a little hospital, field hospital, with a nurse, a retired navy nurse and a lieutenant commander who was her husband and they operated this little hospital for VC, anybody that walked in there who needed medical treatment. I used to go down there and see them periodically and they were about forty clicks outside the premises there, so I went through there. The next time, just about in the same area where the elephant was and I guess I was looking elsewhere, I was looking, I wasn't looking down the road, and I went plop, plop and I went over something you know like one of these dead, these bumps in the road that's around here to slow you down. I hit that and I looked behind me and I saw this doggone king cobra snake with his head up in the air. That thing was about fifteen feet long and I said I remembered something looked, I thought it was a stream of water across the road there you know. I didn't think anything about it, but that was a king cobra snake out like this. If it had wrapped around and swung in the jeep I wouldn't be sitting here talking to you. That was when John, and then the third time I wanted to tell you that I was bouncing down that road and well, it was another time I was going down it and I got to a checkpoint out there and I was just reaching and come up over a little hump and I stopped and they looked and checked. I'm talking to the guy on this side, apparently the VC on this side saw my foot pedal down there and saw my boot and it's a military boot, so he took the butt of his rifle and clipped me in the back of the head and knocked me out and when I came to I found myself with my hands behind my back and I was in a bamboo cage about five feet tall and so wide, enough to get my body, I could hunch in there, but my knees bowed like that with my hands behind my back like that. They had me in this cage in the back of a, and they had a couple of poles through there and they had the guys carry me, so they took me down by the river down there and took a rope and hung it over the bow of the street and then they dropped the cage down in the river and let the water come up to my chin, so that if I got any lower I'd drown. They left me there, I know they were gong to come back and interrogate me and get information out of me is what they wanted because I was in there, I was harassing the Ho Chi Minh Trail at nights with my mountain yards. We were going in harassing them as they were bringing supplies into the VC and we were harassing them you see, so that was part of my job. These darts were ideal, crossbows, because if you use guns to shoot at them, they, the enemy will know where the target area is. Darts at night, they had no idea. Zip through the neck and they're dead in nine seconds, so VC is the [##] 1:07:39 were excellent shots with these crossbows and I got some bamboo darts. I'd be glad to show you. I kept some of those. Upstairs, I got the little carriers for them and there are darts in there and hanging by my tiger skin. So, I, when I woke up I was in the cage and they hung me in the water I was, in the water there and it's cool, dank, dirty, slow river and a lot of muck around there and then I heard a bunch of cross small arms fire. I couldn't tell out how far, but I was pretty sure an [##] 1:08:34 unit, there was fourteen of these VC outfits, fifteen or something like that, a dozen and I'm sure that the [##] 1:08:43 must have wiped them out. So there I'm hanging in a dang cage in a river with no help in a double canopy jungle and I'm not feeling all that great and so, about four days went by there, four, four and a half days and the dang leeches hanging on me, sucking me and down here in my groin and man

that was miserable. So, I cut my wrist, I imagine I was soaked, the thongs loosened up. I got my hands free and then I began to work with my feet. Took me about four and a half or five days, four days and I wasn't missed up at my post because a lot of times I would take off and jump into the Australian caribous that made the mail run around from [##] 0:09:50 up to Cam Rahn Bay and Chin In [sp?] and all the way back in again and I used to jump on that and go down to Saigon if I had any reason to go down there to pick up either supplies or whatever I had to go down and do. So I wasn't missed like if I had a job where I reported in daily you know and could have got help. They could have, I had a [##] (01:10:13) pilot, Wilbanks, that I could have called on and anyway, I got myself out the bottom of that dang thing and floated down river to the next little village down there, I think it was above [##] (1:10:36) there and got word and I got over to Bambituit [sp?] (01:10:38) and I got a ride back up to Cam Lei [sp?] (01:10:44) and they let me out there and then I was back home down there at Da Lat. So that was...they say were you a prisoner of war? Hell, yes, I was a prisoner of war, but not in the sense that they would consider it a POW you know. Then the other time, what was the other time that I went down there? Oh, one time I went down to see them down there at [##] (01:11:15) and I got down there and on the way back I saw all these palm leaves and brush all over the road, just like there had been one dickens of a rain storm and I said, "I don't recall hearing any lightning or any hammerheads or anything over there coming back home." I got up to the sub-sector headquarters there and at sub-sector headquarters one of the lieutenants ran out there and he said, "Sir, which way did you come up?" I said, "I come up from the West." He said, "How did you get through?" I said, "I drove through like I always do." He said, "Not possible." He said, "The 101st Airborne has come up that road and they lost A-Company and half of C-Company coming up, they're under fire and that is all booby-trapped all the way up that road. We have to go, we're going to have to go in and clear it, trip wires and everything." I said, "No [##] 1:12:32. You see me." He said, "That's what we can't...so, they thought because the 101st coming up Fifteen, [##] (01:12:39) has a Y in the road and they are over here on an off-shoot, so when I come in from [##] (01:12:47) I was in front of the 101st by a mile and a half and unaware that they were behind me. The VC thought I was the point man and now I would radio back that it was all clear and then they would, they would, that's why they let me through because they thought I was with the 101st and I wasn't and so, they wouldn't have blown me up anyway because they didn't want to screw it up because I wanted to wipe out the, they had a large force and there are probably two or three battalions in there of VC and they were ready to take that 101st on out of...I forget what valley they were in up there. I can't remember, mind's gone. What else you got? Oh, by the way, you know you always say that you have a hard time getting people to talk and I don't mind talking, but I'm going to tell you this about people talking. A lot of these, it takes nine men to support one man that's on the line up there fighting the war. Nine support troops. For some reason the support troops feel, they feel that they're degraded because their either on a typewriter or their like I was on the charts or they're in the administrative field or they're in the mess field or the medical field or whatever, they went over, they sat there, they did their time in, routine, they went back and there's really not too much to talk about. I hate paperwork, always have. I love academics, but I hate paperwork, it's really a tooth-pulling situation for me to have to fill out reports or anything like that. So I'll do it and my reports get through, but there are so many people if you ask them about it there are those that didn't even go to Vietnam that were in at that period of time that got a service medal or

something that they were and they, or there were those that were in the for example Vicky Carr, I don't know that you have ever heard of her. Vicky Carr and Danny Kaye, I went down to [##] 1:15:38 one day, I had to go down to Kuchee, which is in the iron triangle, and they were not aware of it, but our military installation was right over fifteen hundred troops less than twenty feet from that that they had hundreds of miles of tunnels under our military installation. They would come out at night under trap doors in the jungles, in fact, while I was down there, so what I'm saying is, I got on this chopper to go down there. Not a Huey, a big chopper, and Danny Kaye was up in the front of the thing up there and Vicky Carr was in the back on the side seats. So you know when you're in choppers over there we always had flight jackets, steel jackets that we wore, and I always wanted to sit on my flight jacket. I didn't want anything coming up through me on the underside. I didn't mind my legs getting shot, but I didn't want anything else coming up. I wanted to take a round-up through, so Vicky Carr was there and I offered her my flight jacket. I said, "You want it?" No, she doesn't want a flight jacket. And this guy Danny Kaye treated her like dirt and he was so worried about his ears and his fine tuning of his ears to music. Of course, music is his business, but I just have no respect for that guy at all. He had a show down there and they had these PC carriers on each side so in case we'd come under attack down there they could run off and they were staying back so they were safe. They were bomb proof as they could be, bomb proof as they could be. But anyway, I was in the group down there. When we went in there was four choppers ahead of us that had been shot down. Huey, it's a little chopper, and so the show started about two o'clock and Vicky got out there and she sang and then Danny Kaye got out there and one of the soldiers stood up to take a picture of him and he stopped the show and chewed the soldier out for taking a picture of him and when he did that I just lost all respect for that guy and then all of a sudden a mortar round drops in on us, not right on us, but close enough like next door and he jumped and ran into the personnel carrier there and peeked out and Vicky, she's hot so she did her blouse unbuttoned down a little bit. She said, "It's a little hot out here." She said, "Suppose I do some songs for you," and everybody just cheered you know, so we sat there and went on with the show while we were under attack there and Danny said it was rough out in the personnel carrier and after that I said this guy is a bumner you know. So I often thought I would try to get a hold of Vicky Carr down here just for the heck of it and I'd say, "Do you remember me? I was that guy that offered you my flight jacket," you know. I wanted to do that before she, I passed on. Yeah, all these little situations you know I could go on with stories, but what I'm trying to say is I don't mind talking about this stuff because it's things that happened and I don't want to sit around here and use all the four letter words that they say that...yeah, they do, they use the bad...I have had to use it myself. I'm not proud of that fact, but I didn't do it, I did it to get the mission accomplished and when I explained that to, General Horner, a Three-Star General, he said, "Ed, I got chewed out by the Air Force." I said, "Who is this guy St. John up there in the highlands cussing our Air Force out to get his planes in there?" I had six airplanes assigned to me under my command, six C-130s, and when I want those babies to come in on that [##] 1:20:10 air strip I want them in. When I call in for air support, I want it and I don't care what kind of language that I had to use to get those guys' attention, I'll use it and I did and I got it and I got my mission accomplished and then I got more than I asked for. I got General Horner, a Three Star General, on his flag aircraft rolling in there, "Where is St. John?" "I'm here, sir," and I told him, "Sir, will you please take your stars off?" He said, "Why?"

I said, "Up here we don't wear rank. You're going to get your rump shot." I said, "We're under surveillance right now." I said, "We got snipers out there with scopes on elephant mountain and they're on us right this minute, so get your tags and your stars and everything else and just be another one of us and you'll have a better chance of going back down to Saigon." He said, "What's your policy St. John?" I said, "Three." "One," I said, "is mission. Two is the tax payers' money," and I said, "three is our political relationship with the Vietnamese." He said, "That sounds good to me." "Please," he said, "Ed, try to control your language if you can with the Air Force." He said, "General Westmoreland it just really upset and I have to go back and report to him and one of his senior officers up here using that kind of language on the Air Force. Those boys out of Kadina at Okinawa are scared to death when they come up here anyway and he said you scare them to death, so it's bad enough this war without having you make it any worse." I said, "All right, Charles," but he said, "if you ever need any help get that number off my tail out there on my plane and he said call it up and I'll send my plane up and bring you down or I'll come up here and he said I'll back you up."

Interviewer: Did you keep in contact with your family at home?

Ed St. John: No.

Interviewer: You weren't married at that time?

Ed St. John: Yeah, I was. Yeah, that's something I don't like to talk about.

Interviewer: Okay.

Ed St. John: I had a wife who's pretty much a spoiled girl and you probably heard of the Travelers Insurance Agency. Her uncle owns that organization and she had plenty of money. She did not like the military. She wanted me to get out and be a patsy for the...and so I could get the money so she could run around and spend it like water. My life was military and I got married with the military uniform on. She conducted herself in a manner that was found to be for [##] 1:23:17 and then got over in Europe and was sent back to the States and I was not reprimanded. I deserved a reprimand for the conduct of my dependent. Over there you're responsible for your dependent. Whatever they do it's the same as if you did it and I had a clean sheet and I was on my way on my promotions and everything. She wanted to bounce me out of the service so she could have her way and she was forbidden for ever entering another military installation for the rest of her life for [##] 1:23:58 and she wouldn't let me have a divorce because she had vengeance. So she was going to get her way or not and she never did get it from me because I just went ahead and...that's why I would take one hardship tour after another because I would just...well, I did have one tour back in the States. One of my tours, next to my last tour, I was sent back to serve at one of the Presidential sites up there near Camp David and I'm not going to say where it is, but I...one of my jobs up there was to maintain all the memoirs, mobilia, and all the administrative things for President Eisenhower and I worked for him as kind of a gopher, so I was one of his many aides I guess you could say, military aides to the late President and he knew me. I knew the President personally. I

considered that an honor. I considered it an honor to have served him. That's that time I was still tied up with the...finally when I retired I came back here and got her out of the way. I got my lawyer and got free and went back to my duty and after I retired I...when I was the Deputy Post Commander there at Japan on my final assignment, I walked out the door the day I retired there and I said, "Doggone," I said, "I'm out of the military now."