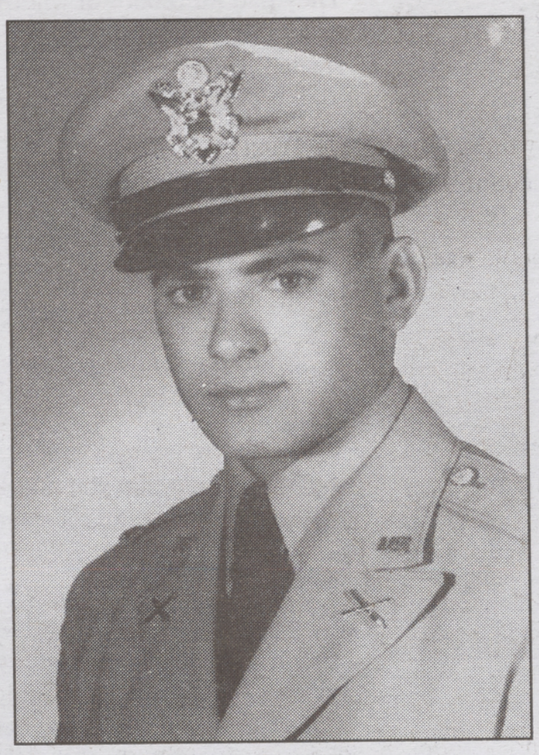


VETERANS, from page 9

A.L.

called the coordinates to my artillery. If there were casualties, I have no idea." That's how I (get) out of that question.

Has serving in the military affected any decision-making today?

I think so. As I say, I think I'm disciplined in a lot of ways. I try to be careful. I think the experience was helpful to me in the long run. I didn't think so at first (*laughter*). I enjoy going to the service clubs, and talking about the war and my experiences. I really enjoy going through all these thank-you notes. I think I'm doing some good.

I would like to include the following observation: we enjoy our freedom, as long as we have young Americans who are willing to look beyond their own comfortable lives, go to dangerous places, (and) hunt down those who would do us harm. They are to be respected and admired.

G.E.R.

Age 74
Service: United States Army. First lieutenant. Vietnam and Fort Benning, Ga.

What were the most trying and difficult moments of service?

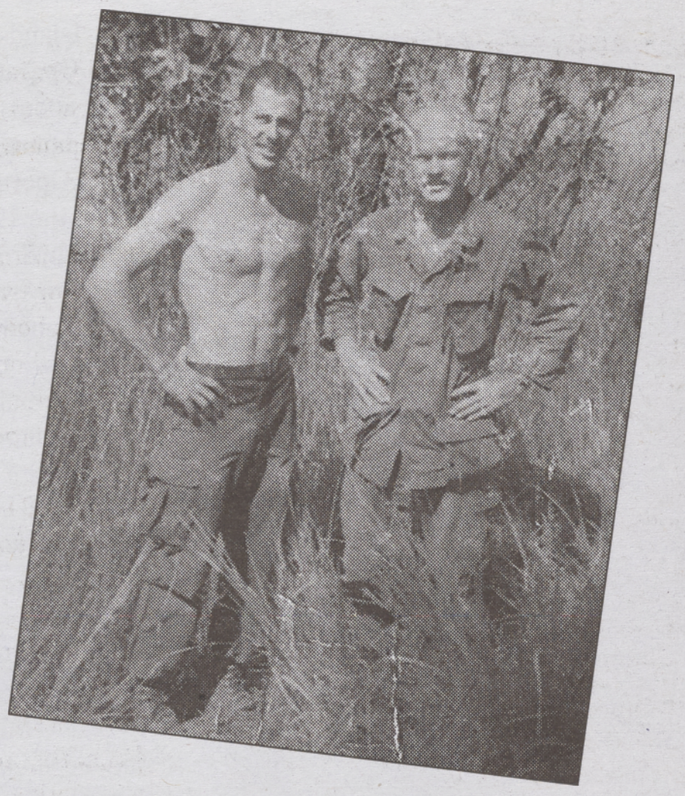
The firefights, because that was always hard. You're in an extremely high state of activity and anxiety. Being a platoon leader, the job was to maintain your cool, organize your guys, direct fire and do all those things. You're trying to concentrate on what's going on, and the noise is pretty horrific. It's very disorienting. That's one of the hardest things about the firefights. It's so disorienting because of the noise. All the guns going off. You had machine guns, small-arms fire – you sometimes had rockets. If we called in gunships, we would have just an array of rockets from the gunships. (We had) mini-guns that just sounded like a roar. You don't hear any individual shots being fired. My recollection is, they would fire something like 3,000 rounds a minute. It was just literally a roar coming from the helicopter. Or you'd have artillery being brought in. When you had artillery being brought in, it was always very close to you. Our artillery guys were crazy. (*Laughs*).

Did you have a family after the war? How did the war affect this?

I did have a family after the service – two boys. I don't think it impacted me that way; (but it) certainly had an impact. You have a kind of come-to-Jesus moment. It certainly impacts your view of life, and what's important, what's not important. The frivolous kinds of things became even more frivolous to me, and had no meaning whatsoever. I didn't tolerate that very well from other people.

How did your military service affect how you think about wars today?

That war achieves nothing. I just couldn't say it any clearer. It achieves nothing. Unless you are defending your own country from assault, then there is no reason for us to be there. I see the Iraq and Afghanistan (wars) as totally worthless. They're the same stupidity that we exhibited for Vietnam. I don't think they have a rational basis. It would take a lot for me to justify going to war again.



What do you think the general public should know about war?

That's a double-edged sword. In my mind, I think everybody should go through a traumatic experience such as that to give their own life some meaning, give them a stronger moral compass perhaps. A political compass, I suppose, so that they have some idea of what a real war is like and what it does to people – which is not a good thing. They just need to know that.

PVP
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ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF PARTICIPANTS IN THE PORTLAND VETERAN'S PROJECT

22 SW 3rd Ave.

voodoo DOUGHNUT

1501 NE Davis

WORD JUMBLE

EMLPA

IPLF

MEOHR

ASMMOI

Which doughnut is named after Elvis Presley's entourage?

Print answer here

THE

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