

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAME: Jimmy D. Coins

COLLECTION: 4700.0943

IDENTIFICATION: Vietnam veteran

INTERVIEWER: Bailey Vinson

SERIES: Americans in Vietnam

INTERVIEW DATES: 5/8/77

FOCUS DATES: June 12, 1968-June 12, 1974, Jan. 1969-Dec. 1971

ABSTRACT:

Tape 1379

Family life in Seminary, Mississippi; education; drafted, chose Air Force because it seemed easiest; training in Amarillo, Texas; tech school at Chenault? Air Base; jungle survival school at Clark Air Base; US military propaganda about war was bullshit; landed at Tan Son Nhut Air Base at Saigon; arrived during Tet of 1968; served with 834th Air Division, communication electronics branch, at Cam Ranh Bay; worked 12 hours per day; meals; ammo dumps blown up at Danang and Cam Ranh Bay; huge C130 bombs; fighting, racial hostility; machine gun fire between blacks and whites; black soldier shot and killed mess sergeant when he told them to check arms before entering mess hall; fragging was common; Vietnamese women who cleaned their barracks; Saigon was like Old West; Cam Ranh was a closed base; about 15 prostitutes lived in barracks with men; drugs easy to get; swimming in South China Sea; worked long days, not much to do in free time; movies, drugs, alcohol, and prostitutes for recreation; Viet Cong overrunning bases; learned a little Vietnamese; most older Vietnamese spoke French; black market; men who traded truck for warrant officers' helicopter; low opinion of Vietnamese; wide gap in culture and lifestyle between US and Vietnam; only way to have stopped war was to kill all the Vietnamese; war changed him; seeing someone killed by rocket right in front of him; couldn't sleep for six months after returning to US; MPC, Vietnamese money, US currency, and the black market; black market trade in goods such as combat boots and poncho liners; popularity of Salem cigarettes among Vietnamese; army not allowed to have liquor, so traded with them; swiping fruit, vegetables and steaks off aircraft; got caught by air policeman with two cases of stolen steaks, bribed him with one case; grilling steaks outside his hutch on Herky Hill; Coins charged with stealing travelers' checks; not much to spend money on; Coins had bought stolen travelers check from bank; suspects bank teller stole checks, pocketed his money; could only get Black Label beer, which made people angry; graft and corruption was game to keep people occupied; turning in missed meal slips for money; illegal trades of jeeps and gasoline.

TAPES: 1 (T1379)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 44 minutes

PAGES TRANSCRIPT: 17 pages

RESTRICTIONS: None