

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAME: Calvin Williams

COLLECTION: 4700.0993

IDENTIFICATION: Vietnam veteran

INTERVIEWER: Bailey Vinson

SERIES: Americans in Vietnam

INTERVIEW DATES: 2/77

FOCUS DATES: Nov 1, 1966- April 14, 1973

ABSTRACT:

Tape 1449, Side A

Born in DeRidder, LA; occupations of parents; impoverished childhood; lessons learned in childhood; education; decision to join Marines; induction, training; arrival in Vietnam in December; getting ambushed, losing men; explains "Recon"; explains "force Recon"; description of a day in Vietnam; altercation wherein Williams shot an officer; punishment for shooting officer; found enemy's underground hospital; weapons, M-16 with M-79 grenade launcher; starlight scopes; contact with civilians; CUPP operation; importance of water buffalo in Vietnam; battle on the 4th of July; opinions on ARVNs and Vietnamese Marines; contact with VC; VC tactics; VC trying to capture Danang air strip; VC propaganda campaign; VC exploitation of black/white racial friction; Hanoi Hannah on radio at night; Marines drinking, leaking information into enemy hands; almost starved at Khe Sanh; reduced to eating rats and lizards; would rather fight NVA than VC; pungy pits, grenades; booby traps made from American garbage; NVA fought more traditionally; VC snipers chained to trees; dedication of enemy; contact with montagnards; Hmong people; montagnards and the NVA; montagnards were cannibalistic; problems with Vietnamese society; Vietnamese civilians needed leadership; learning Vietnamese; prevalence of prostitution; prevalence of drugs; prices of prostitutes; prostitution in the field; children pimping their sisters and mothers; availability of drugs; going AWOL; joining the enemy; gold in Hue City.

Tape 1449, Side B

Williams prefers alcohol to other drugs; drugs ruined the war; racial friction; importance of good leadership; men divided into cliques based on drug use; cliques divided by race; black market; corruption; combating boredom; "donut dollies"; poor opinion of his commanding officers; ridiculous expectations of preserving military formality even in field; race relations; racial friction threatens coherence of US; positive public opinion about WWII; finding a soldier skinned by the enemy; positive impression of the Vietnamese; US could have ended war in three to six months; US war effort was failure, should have declared war; Vietnam will be a lifelong nightmare; fighting a limited war.

TAPES: 1 (T1449)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 1 hour

PAGES INDEX: 3 pages

RESTRICTIONS: None