

Interview with
RAYMOND MORLEY BLACK

February 19, 2019

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RAYMOND MORLEY BLACK

Raymond Morley Black was interviewed on February 19, 2019 by Randall J. Bunn at the Southern Utah Veterans Home in Ivins, Washington County, Utah. He related his military experiences. Brady Fronk also participated.

RB: I want to learn some of the stories that Raymond has about his life, his military experience when he was in Vietnam, his life after the military and the things he has been involved in. Raymond, tell when you were born.

RMB: [I was born] November 4, 1942.

RB: Where were you born?

RMB: I was born in Blanding [San Juan County] Utah in the house that I was raised in.

RB: So you were not in a hospital, but —.

RMB: Not in a hospital.

RB: You were one of how many children?

RMB: [I was] one of seven children. The last one was born in a hospital.

RB: You were number six of the seven?

RMB: Sixth of seven, yes.

RB: What was your father's name?

RMB: [His name was] [inaudible] Black.

RB: What did he do for a living?

RMB: He started out with his father in the flour mills in Old Mexico [Colonia Juarez]. [That is where] he came from. They moved up into Granado, Arizona.

RB: When you say, Old Mexico, was he in Mexico because of the Mormon migration there?

RMB: Yes.

RB: Where was that?

RMB: Juarez, Mexico.

RB: Across the river from El Paso [Texas], more or less?

RMB: I don't remember the exact name of the flour mills, but it is in my book.

RB: What was your mother's name?

RMB: My mother's name was Verda.

RB: Verda, what?

RMB: Verda (Brown) [Black].

RB: Where was she from?

RMB: She was from Grayson, Utah which was later named Blanding, Utah.

RB: How did your dad and your mom meet? He was from Mexico/Arizona?

RMB: They moved on up into Kirtland, New Mexico and later on that was where my grandpa established his big flour mill, making flour for the reservation, and of course all of the area of New Mexico at the time. My dad drove an old, old truck — he never got that off the reservation. And he delivered to places on the reservation and close around. He and his one brother, [William Morley Black] met my mother's sister to start with.

RB: Do you know [which] brother that was? What was your uncle's name?

RMB: Yes, his name [was] William Morley Black. His spouse was Elda [Jane (Brown)] Black whom I lived with for quite some time in Salt Lake [City, Salt Lake County, Utah] after the service. During that time that my mother and dad met, her sister, Elda Black, met my dad's brother. Between the two of them, they got together later on. It was double-cousins all the way down the line. The oldest one [of the cousins] just passed away in December at ninety-five years old in Salt Lake [City]. It got to where I lived with Elda for so many years, that I had two mothers in a way. All the families have always been very close.

RB: That is nice.

RMB: Not just because of me, but because of the ages and living close to us when their dad, my dad's brother, passed away at a very young age.

RB: Oh, he did?

RMB: Just after the last child was born. I can get you that information from the book.

RB: Okay.

RMB: Going on in life, my dad eventually left the flour mill and moved over to Blanding. It was called Blanding by then.

RB: Why did he move to Blanding?

RMB: Mainly, because that was where his brother had moved.

RB: Okay.

RMB: My mother and dad decided, after they were married, that was where they wanted to live. My dad started out in the timber working, making a whole \$2.50 a week!

RB: Wow! [Laughter] In the timber mill? They cut the lumber?

RMB: They cut the lumber and gave my dad \$2.50 a week. He got lumber given to him to build the home we lived in which he built with a rock foundation. A lot of things have gone into the house since I lived in it for two years. After my parents passed away, my wife [Verda Black] took over, but it was just too warm to stay down in Blanding so we moved back to Hurricane [Washington County, Utah]. Which is where I spent most of my married life — thirty- three years was spent, forty-eight and a half years, excuse me, thirty-three years was probably spent here in St. George [Washington County, Utah]. She has been gone six years, so it would be less than that. Most of the time we were married we spent here. I was in the grocery business, most of the time down here. I [came] here from Salt Lake [City] after being in the grocery business in several places. I managed a grocery store in Bloomfield, New Mexico for ten years.

RB: Let's go back a little bit, if you don't mind to — you were born in 1942 in Blanding. What was life like in Blanding? It is a pretty small town, isn't it?

RMB: Blanding was a great small town. [Youngsters] didn't have back then what these [youngsters] have now, especially electronics, which is one of the biggest things, I think, is a downfall for children nowadays. Our days we would spend — my dad had one of the biggest front lawns in town and the [youngsters] would always come over our house and we would play Hide and Go Seek, No Bears Out Tonight and these [games].

RB: What did they call, No Bears Out Tonight?

RMB: No Bears Out Tonight.

RB: What was that game like? How did you play that?

RMB: That was where you would hide and say, No Bears Out Tonight, and when they would find you, they would grab you and you were caught.

RB: Okay. So that is kind of like Hide and Go Seek.

RMB: Kind of and also there were several games like that we played that [youngsters] don't know a darn thing about today.

RB: No, of course not! [Laughter] Did you play sports at all? Any kind of ball [games]?

RMB: I didn't play sports because I broke this collar bone twice and this one once [gesturing to his shoulder blades] playing backyard football. So I was not able to play sports. I did play basketball for The Church [of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints]. I played softball for the church growing up. The high school was a lot of fun. Like I said before, our class was the largest class to graduate from San Juan High school at the time.

RB: When did you graduate?

RMB: [I graduated in] 1961.

RB: Where did you go to elementary school? What was [it] called?

RMB: [It was] Blanding Elementary [School]. The old building was there for many years. There is a very interesting [experience] about that building. The bottom part of it was the jail house for the Navajos renegades during the earlier years when my mother went to school [there].

RB: [Laughter] That is amazing!

RMB: That tells you how old that school was. That school was still there and used for many years, up until, I am not sure of the exact year, but they eventually built a new school and tore [the old one] down. The bottom part was used for the renegades when they were caught and put down in there. My mother can remember them being down underneath when she was going to school there. It wasn't used for that when I went to school there.

RB: [Laughter] What do you mean by renegades?

RMB: Back in the years when Blanding was — there were a lot of Indians that would terrorize the Mormons and terrorized the people there. The leader of the Navajos renegades was called “Old Posey.”

RB: “Old Posey?”

RMB: He was chief of the Indians, the Navajos, around that area there for many, many years. He caused a lot of problems. My mother remembered meeting one called “Old Poke.”

RB: “Old Poke?”

RMB: He was a scary Indian. As we go into my youth, and the grocery business, we used to have a lot of them [who] would sit around the grocery store all day long and drink whatever they could find. One of their favorite drinks was to steal our pure vanilla and bay rum. We finally had to put it in the safe to keep it away from the Indians.

RB: [Laughter]

RMB: The Navajo people still are — [emotional] this is hard for me to tell because, as far as I am concerned, the Navajo people are the most wonderful people on this earth as far as another race of people goes. [Emotional]

RB: Why do you say that?

RMB: We will get into this later [when we talk about] my trip across the country on my electric motor scooter.

RB: Yes, that is amazing. Was the reservation near Blanding?

RMB: Yes, and the Ute Reservation.

RB: What was the second [tribe] called?

RMB: The Ute [Indian] Tribe.

RB: The Ute. There were two reservations out there.

RMB: The Navajos lived right, we called it — there was a creek between us and where the Navajo people lived. They lived right close and a lot of the [children] came to school with us. They were very wonderful people. The Ute Reservation is White Mesa, which is right below and it still spoken of many times. It is on the map. Maybe the name of the other place of the reservation will come to me — I am not sure now. The people are a part of my life and I will tell you three experiences which is the reason I brought this out.

RB: Let me ask you, what do you remember about your elementary school years.

RMB: Mostly what I remember about my elementary school years is my second grade teacher, Mrs. Winters. She was [emotional]. It still bothers me to tell about these things. Mrs. Winters and also the principal. He came as a teacher to start with. In

fact, my very best friend recorded CDs [compact disc] of his own now, has a CD talking about Mr. Rigby who came to town in an old Chevy [Chevrolet] and lived behind me for years. During my grade school years, we played marbles together. [Youngsters] don't know what that is nowadays, where you draw a circle and you try to knock the marbles out of the circle.

RB: [Laughter]

RMB: It is the game when you start shooting with a big taw [a shooter marble] until who gets the most marbles out of there wins. It was another fun game from my growing up years. Before I started in the grocery business, I was thirteen [years old], and before that I did a lot of playing. One of the things we youngsters did was at a little place west of us called White Rock because there was this great big white sand rock. We would go out there and play Indians and cowboys, running around in the hills, making forts and finding caves we would live in, playing all the time. [There was] the creek between us and the Navajo people. [We would] kill frogs, build a little fire and cook the legs. That was one of the good things in life back then.

RB: Did you ever go hunting for arrowheads or any other pioneer —?

RMB: I did. My dad had an eight by ten, or maybe even a little bigger, very, very special arrowheads that he, himself, had collected. As he walked out in the hills, he would pick them up. I couldn't see them, but he would look over and say, "There's one." And he would pick them up.

R B: [Laughter] He was good!

RMB: He was very good at collecting them and he had a very nice collection. My brother still has it.

RB: Nice!

RMB: I can't remember which brother it [is], but one of them.

RB: Tell about the experience you had in the grocery store that caused you to get into the grocery business later on in life.

RMB: When I started at age thirteen, I would go every night after school and work for three or four hours, until the store would close. Then I would go home and do my homework. The thing that really excited me about grocery business — and I worked on weekends — is that I am a people person and have been all my life. I always liked to visit with people, talk with people. I probably spent half my life joking and talking to people. In fact, I raise quite an uproar in here mornings!

RB: [Laughter] You told me you got caught —.

RMB: Stealing a candy bar, a nickel candy bar.

RB: What kind of a candy bar was it? Do you remember?

RMB: Butterfinger!

RB: Butterfinger! Was that your favorite?

RMB: Still my favorite!

RB: [Laughter]

RMB: The grocery manager, a wonderful man, and his wife [who] ran the store — it was a little grocery store called The Blanding Merc. This store, later on, fell to the ground because it was so old that it went on to other operators before that. My brother worked there for awhile, my brother just older than me, was a butcher. The thing that was fun about it was the people I worked with, not only the owner and [his] two sons [who] were there lots of time, but also the ladies [who] ran the dry goods store. I remember them, I can't remember the names of all of them. One was my best friend's mother [probably Sue O'Neal]. It was just the fun of being with people, mingling with people.

RB: When you said you stole the candy bar, what were the consequences of that?

RMB: The consequences were: two hours of work after school until the [candy bar] was paid for.

RB: Did your parents say anything about it?

RMB: I went back on Saturday and apologized. My parents were making me do that. I talked with him [the store manager]. He said, "You have done such a good job, how would you like to work for me?" So I went to work for him.

RB: So [at] thirteen [years of age] you started your working life?

RMB: Yes, in the grocery business.

BF: What did he pay you, originally?

RMB: The pay back then was \$.25 an hour, which by the time I left there I was making \$.75 an hour, finally.

RB: What kind of [tasks] did you do?

RMB: I stocked the shelves in the evenings and later on, after I was sixteen [years old] I was actually ordering the groceries and seeing that a lot of things were done right. It was a really great experience!

RB: I bet.

RMB: The two brothers, one was named Merrill and I can't remember [the name of] the other one, —

RB: What was their last name? Do you remember?

RMB: [It was] Hurst. Parley [Oscar] and Agnes [Whiteford] Hurst. I can remember his age, exactly his age when he passed away, but he was also a farmer. He would take care of his alfalfa field as well as the grocery store. For a long time, his wife, mostly, [took care] of the grocery store while he was doing that. He would be out on the farm a lot. He was a great man. I can't recall exactly when Parley died [he died on February 2, 1995], but I know that Agnes was 102 when she passed away [on September 28, 2003]. She was still driving her car up to my sister-in-law's house, which was about eight blocks.

RB: Wow!

RMB: At age 102! She was a wonderful lady and lived a lot of years. They lived in a little tiny gray adobe house which looked like nothing for a lot of years until they were able to put more on to it. After leaving San Juan High School —.

RB: Tell about your high school [years] real quick.

RMB: My high school years were great.

RB: What was your class like? Was it a small class in 1961?

RMB: My high school class consisted of twenty-five girls and twenty-five boys. It was the largest class that graduated.

RB: [Laughter] I bet you knew every person in your class.

RMB: I knew every person! Everything they did and why they did it!

RB: [Laughter] Did you have some good friends in high school?

RMB: I had a lot of good friends. In fact, I probably had more friends than most everybody because, like I said, I was a people person.

RB: So you were pretty popular kind of a [fellow]?

RMB: I had wonderful teachers. I respected them and they respected me as well and helped me through high school. I wasn't a very good student. I had a hard time [inaudible].

RB: Did you have a favorite subject in high school?

RMB: Yes, my favorite subject was called physical education, PE.

RB: What did you like to play in PE?

RMB: I ran track in high school. I did do that in high school. [Inaudible].

RB: What events?

RMB: I ran the mile.

RB: You did? A long distance runner.

RMB: Yes, a distance runner, as well, I ran the 440 [yard dash] in the relays.

RB: What was the fastest time you ran the mile in?

RMB: The fastest time, that I remember, was about six minutes.

RB: Good!

RMB: I ran it — maybe this is a little bit off subject —, but while I was in basic training in Fort Polk, Louisiana, I ran the mile with full pack in five and a half minutes.

RB: Whoa! That is amazing!

RMB: We will get into that a little bit later.

RB: You weren't the best student in high school, but you sure —.

RMB: I had a hard time with studies. My teachers helped me along and I did graduate with, probably, about a, maybe, a low B average. [Laughter]

RB: [Laughter]

RMB: But I still [received] a scholarship to Carbon Junior College given to me by the people in Blanding.

RB: So you went up to Price [Carbon County] Utah?

RMB: I went up to Price, Utah to Carbon Junior College. I spent a half a year until I [came down with] hepatitis and had to return back home —

RB: Oh, no.

RMB: — and was not able to [return]. In fact, I was very sick clear up until October. Then I went on a mission for the LDS church for two years.

RB: Where did you go?

RMB: [To] Florida.

RB: What part?

RMB: I spent the first fourteen months in Ogalia, Melbourne, Florida.

RB: What was it called?

RMB: Ogalia, Melbourne.

RB: Ogalia?

RMB: We were really close to the air base for the missiles, where they shot off all the — in fact, I got to watch the first astronaut, John Glenn, go up.

RB: Near Cape Canaveral? Later Cape Kennedy?

RMB: Yes, later Cape Kennedy.

RB: That is pretty exciting. You saw [which] astronaut go up?

RMB: John Glenn.

RB: John Glenn? That would have been 1962. Wow! That is kind of neat!

RMB: That was when I was first on my mission.

RB: Right!

RMB: I served my mission from 1962 to 1964 [and] came home in November.

RB: Was your mission experience a good one for you?

RMB: It was very good. I was a supervising elder all but about four months of my mission. My first mission president was the stake president from my home town.

RB: He went to the same mission? Wow!

RMB: He was there when I [arrived]. My second mission president was Ned Winder [who] owned Winder Dairy in Salt Lake City.

RB: What was the last name?

RMB: Winder Dairy.

RB: W-I-N-D-E-R?

RMB: They also had the dairy down here in this area during the years. Then after that —.

RB: Let me ask you, you consider yourself to be a good people person, you probably did pretty well talking to people out there in the mission field.

RMB: I had a very good mission, probably seventy-six baptisms.

RB: Seventy-six? Wow!

RMB: Close to that.

RB: You did well.

RMB: After returning home, I went back to Blanding for, maybe, two weeks. One day I said to my folks, “I see you have given me the old Chevy. I am headed for Salt Lake [City].” [It was] an old 1947 Chevrolet. It didn’t run very good, but I said, “I going to get back into the grocery business where I can really get into it.” I went back to Salt Lake [City] and found a grocery company up there, at the time, called Mayfair Foods. I went to work for [them].

RB: What did you do?

RMB: [I] started out stocking frozen foods. One of the girls that I had [spent] a lot of time with her parents on the mission field and her family, introduced me to my wife on a blind date on Friday, November 28, [1964]. We were engaged two weeks later and would have been married sooner than we were, but Uncle Sam stepped in.

RB: This was 1965?

RMB: No, 1964. It was going into 1965.

RB: This was Darla.

RMB: Darla [Jean (Judd)] Black. When I first met her dad, he said, “You are not about to marry my daughter.” He was very against it.

RB: Why?

RMB: Because she was the oldest in the family and kind of took care of everybody. So he really didn’t want to lose her is what he was saying. Later on, we became the best of friends. He was a very good man. He had a drinking problem, but at the same time, he was a very good man. He raised three children because his wife left him. My wife was the oldest and, of course, she did a lot of the cooking and taking care of the [children], washing and all [those tasks]. But like I said, Uncle Sam stepped in and I was drafted. I was to report in the latter part of December or January. I don’t remember which [month]. [I] reported to [the] Salt Lake [City] draft board.

RB: You received a letter that said you needed to report —

RMB: Yes.

RB: — and it was [from] the draft board.

RMB: At Fort Douglas [Salt Lake City, Salt Lake County] Utah.

RB: So you went to Fort Douglas in January 1965. How did that work? You showed up on a particular day that the notice said?

RMB: Yes, I was still working at a grocery [store] in Salt Lake [City] at the time. Of course, we were not very happy about the whole situation because we wanted to get married, we wanted to raise a family, but we didn’t have any choice. Uncle Sam decided he wanted us so I reported to Fort Polk, Louisiana in May 1965 for eight weeks of basic training. The hardest eight weeks of my life.

RB: Really? What was it like?

RMB: We had a lieutenant who was very, very strict. It was very hard. A lot of going out in the messy field in Louisiana. And Louisiana wasn’t [any] place to be to start with.

RB: And it was summer time, too.

RMB: Yes. Upon [completion] of that I went back to Salt Lake [City] and the wife and I were married [May 14, 1965] between my basic and my AIT [Advanced Individual Training where a soldier learned the skills to perform his United States] Army job training]. She returned with me back to Fort Polk for my AIT training.

RB: Where was that? Fort?

RMB: Fort Polk again.

RB: Your advance [individual] training was in the infantry. Right?

RMB: Right. At the time though, I was a clerk typist, it was my actual MOS [Military Occupational Specialty]. After that, I [received my] orders to report to the 25th Infantry Division, at Scofield Barracks, Hawaii. I was not able to take my wife with me at the time because my situation, I [received] \$95.00 a month and she [received] \$105.00. Well, \$200.00 is not enough to fly your wife to Hawaii, not even back in those days. She went back to Panguitch [Garfield County, Utah] and worked for a moving company for about two months. She raised enough money that she was able to fly over and be with me.

RB: She grew up in Panguitch?

RMB: Yes.

RB: What was her father's name?

RMB: [Donald] "Don" Judd.

RB: "Don" Judd and her mother died, you said.

RMB: No, her mother —.

RB: Oh, she left. They divorced. What was her name? Do you know?

RMB: Oh, you ask me.

RB: It is okay.

RMB: It is in my journal.

RB: Eventually, she joined you in Hawaii.

RMB: The first apartment we were able to find was above a restaurant. We shared a bathroom with six other couples.

RB: Wow! [Laughter]

RMB: That was the cheapest I could find for \$95.00 a month, so we lived on her \$105.00 a month.

RB: Oh, man! Yes!

RMB: That was the cheapest I could find. Later on we [found] one from the same people, down below and behind the restaurant. It was \$5.00 a month more, but we were able to afford that. It had a bathroom along with other rooms. The room we lived in first was maybe a little bit bigger than this one. [Gesturing to the den where the interview took place at the Southern Utah Veterans Home] and when we got the other one it had the bathroom added on to it, was about it. It still wasn't that much bigger.

RB: Did she work while you were there?

RMB: She didn't work. She stayed home while I went to work at the base each day. A lot of times I had KP [kitchen police] work at four o'clock in the morning. We [didn't have] a car, so I did [a lot of] walking. The base was five miles away. Usually, the MPs [military police] would pick me up and take me to work because they knew me. I got to know them because I was a rattle trap in talking.

RB: [Laughter] You served as a clerk typist there at Scofield Barracks?

RMB: Yes, I did a lot of the typing. Actually, I was the head typist for the general and for the division, period. I spent a lot of time with our sergeant major. I will always remember his name, Sergeant Major Smiley. He was one of the, probably the very best friends that I had [during] my time in the service. A very funny man. In fact, I have to tell this story: how he asked me to make coffee. I never made coffee in my life!

RB: [Laughter]

RMB: I didn't know what coffee was! I went down to the room where they made coffee. I filled the pot up as full as I could fill it. A little more extra on top. He went down to get the first cup and he said in a voice that could be heard in the entire barracks, "Who in the God damn hell made this mud?"

RB: [Laughter]

RMB: Of course, I was never asked to make coffee again.

RB: [Laughter] He learned

RMB: I had never made coffee in my life. I didn't know what it was. "You didn't show me."

He said, "Well, no, I didn't. We will let that go this time."

RB: [Laughter]

RMB: It was a funny thing in the whole barracks.

RB: You embarrassed him.

RMB: Our whole division was, later, a matter of three months of my wife being over there, was shipped to Vietnam.

RB: What was the division called?

RMB: The 25th Infantry.

RB: So that is what is on your hat. [He was wearing a black Army cap that had the 25th Infantry Division, U. S. Army written on it.] The 25th Infantry Division had about, how many are in a division?

RMB: I have no idea.

RB: A battalion and a company — a company has about fifty-five [troops]. Right?

RMB: Probably.

RB: And a division is above a battalion?

RMB: Right?

RB: So a whole division gets shipped out to where?

RMB: Vietnam.

RB: Do you remember when?

RMB: Part of them flew over. As near as I can recall, it was November 6, [1966]. I sent [my] wife home, which was hard because [emotional] my wife was pregnant.

RB: With Susan [Black]?

RMB: Yes. She was born in Panguitch at the same hospital my wife was born [at], by the same doctor, while I was in Vietnam. She was six months old.

RB: Do you remember the doctor's name, by any chance? If not, it is okay.

RMB: No.

RB: [Laughter] She was born in 1966?

RMB: Yes. [No], it would have been 1967.

RB: You were in Hawaii in 1965 and you said November 1965 was when you [received] the order to ship out.

RMB: November 1966.

RB: That makes sense.

RMB: So she was born in 1967. November 1966 I shipped out.

RMB: I would have to look at my journal to be sure.

RB: That makes sense. Did you fly or did you go on a ship?

RMB: We were eighteen days on a Gold Freighter ship. I [was] sick and tired of all the vomit on the bottom part of the ship. I asked the captain if there was [anyway] I could get out of that mess. He said, "Get your duffle bag and get up here." He found me a spot, which I [was], actually, close to the top deck almost all of the time. I spent a lot of time on the deck looking out [on] the world. I couldn't stand what was going on down below.

RB: Did you get seasick much?

RMB: No, seasickness didn't bother me at all.

RB: Wow! Good for you!

RMB: Seasickness has never bothered me.

RB: Eighteen days on the Gold Freighter.

RMB: Yes, it was a God Freighter ship, but I don't remember the name. I never saw land for those full eighteen days.

RB: No?

RMB: Except way, way off in the far [distance] you would see a little tiny island.

RB: [Laughter]

RMB: That was it.

RB: Where did you land in Vietnam?

RMB: We landed in a little town called Vung Tao and loaded on trucks and to a little town called Cu Chi a little further out from there, approximately ten miles, we set

up base camp and started all over again. After three weeks of being there the monsoon season hit.

RB: That is right.

RMB: And there we were floating around in our pup tents. Pup tents floating all over our mattresses.

RB: Oh, man!

RMB: There was a good foot of water, or more. Of course, it took a long time for that to dry out. It was muddy and messy.

RB: What was your first impression when you set foot in Vietnam?

RMB: My first impression of the people there was that the people were great.

RB: Good.

RMB: The people were nice to us. Of course, through our time in setting up the base camp we brought the Vietnamese people in to help with the sandbagging, which was a mistake because a lot of them were the Viet Cong.

RB: How did you know who to trust?

RMB: The first [event] that was terrifying to me was the night. [Emotional] Excuse me. I don't remember the exact date, but the night that our base camp was hit with over 125 mortar rounds, I was supposed to be over at the post office that night to pick up the mail. The [fellow] and I that were doing the typing that night — I worked the night shift most of the time [that] I was over there. We were typing and they got through playing hearts. I said, "It is time for me to go to the post office." He said, "Aw, let them wait." So we dealt another hand and the sirens rang. There were eighteen killed at the post office, twenty-four wounded and I would have been right in the middle of them. [Emotional] The bunk that we laid in all night long had a mortar round sitting in back of it. It was a dud that never went off. [Emotional] That was one of I don't know how many. To even mention half of the things that happened to me over there — I had many, many close calls and I guess that somebody upstairs still had a mission for me.

RB: Yes.

RMB: I had children and a family to come back home to.

RB: What kept you going when you saw this?

RMB: The encouragement, I guess, of the church. I was very active in the church at that time. In fact, I was second counselor of the branch presidency and the other two gentlemen were part of the branch presidency would go out on Sundays on maneuvers. I completely took care of everything, most of the time, on Sundays. We had a small branch there of about twenty-five to thirty military men. It was a great little branch. The ones who could be there on Sundays, were. There were a lot of times, especially our branch president who was head of one of the main platoons, was not there very often, but he was still made branch president. Later on in life, he was one of the general authorities as a seventy. He was a great man and taught me a lot. The second counselor was from my hometown, so we knew each other very well.

RB: Would you say that the support that you had with other members of the church there was helpful?

RMB: It was a great thing that kept me going. Also I had a lot of really good buddies. Here again, I contribute that a lot to my speaking abilities and my association with people —

RB: Yes.

RMB: — and putting forth, a lot of standing behind, but putting forth the effort to put my two cents worth in.

RB: Right.

RB: What other close calls did you have?

RMB: Well, one in particular occurred when we were down in the little town of Cu Chi.

RB: When you say Cu Chi, do you know how to spell that?

RMB: C-U C-H-I. We were down there for several times to get our clothes washed and so on. We would sit there and drink a Coke in [this] little place. We were sitting there one day and all of a sudden [we heard] “zing, zing” over the top of our heads; bullet shells. Of course, we grabbed our rifles and already had our helmets on and [we] ran to the back as fast as we could go. [I was with] one of my buddies [there]. We ran to the back as fast as we could go. Back where all the shooting was coming from and all we could find was two twelve year old boys and they had thrown their weapons away. I could swear on a stack of bibles that that was a lot of that went on over there. You never knew why or when they were going to shoot at you. As far as Vietnam goes, I spent most of my time clerk typing, but there were many other things that went along [with] what we were asked to do. One day we were asked to go out in the field and dig grass around our divisional headquarters. General [William Childs] Westmoreland came down to see if

everything [was okay]. That was a bunch [of] bullshit, but we did what we were asked.

RB: [Laughter] Of course!

RMB: We did what they wanted us to do. But that was one of the other things that was a little unnecessary. We did get shot at that time [too].

RB: Did they train you on weapons?

RMB: Oh, yes.

RB: What did you carry?

RMB: The M-16 [rifle].

RB: What did you think of that weapon?

RMB: No.

RB: No?

RMB: The M-16 handheld carbine.

[In 1964, the M-16 entered US military service and the following year was deployed for jungle warfare operations during the Vietnam War. In 1969, the M-16A1 replaced the M-14 rifle to become the US military's standard service rifle.]

BF: The old M-14?

RMB: Carbine that you put the doggone bullets into, six at a time. That was it.

RB: Did you feel safe enough with the weapons that you had?

RMB: Oh, yes. The thing was that most of us didn't have the M-16 type that was mounted that those had when we left. I returned home and still had three months left in the service.

RB: When did you come back?

RMB: I came back in 1967.

RB: So you were in Vietnam for 365 days?

RMB: From November 1966 to November 1967. But I still had three months, I mean ninety-five days left to serve. If you have under ninety, they will release you

early. Because I didn't, they said, "Where do you want to go?" I said, "I want to go back to Fort Douglas, Utah so I can go back into the grocery business as soon as I am released." It wasn't twenty minutes later, [until] here came my orders to Fort Douglas, Utah.

RB: Hey!

RMB: So I spent the rest of the time up at Fort Douglas, Utah playing pool, reading mail and typing a few reports.

RB: [Laughter] Uncle Sam came through!

RMB: They made me an E-5 which today is called sergeant. They don't use E-5 anymore. They made me an E-5 there and they tried to get me to "reup" to go back to Vietnam because they needed people over there.

RB: Correct.

RMB: I said, "You can make me a general and I won't go back to Vietnam!"

RB: [Laughter] Probably a wise move!

BF: [Laughter]

RMB: It didn't make a bit of difference.

RB: Did you make some friends here that you have continued contact with?

RMB: Over the years we have lost contact, which happens after as many years as we lost away from each other.

RB: Did you lose any close buddies?

RMB: I don't want to get into that. [Emotional]

RB: Okay, fair enough.

RMB: [Emotional] I lost my best friend two weeks before we were to come home together. Besides many others. That was the hardest thing about Vietnam. Because our base camp was [inaudible] Medevac units. There were many, many times I saw legs shot off, arms shot off and it was hard to take.

RB: Did you ever get diagnosed with having experienced PTSD [Posttraumatic stress disorder]?

RMB: Yes and still have it. I am sorry. [Emotional]

RB: That is okay. How has that been for you [to] deal with?

RMB: When I first came home, as a lot of us did, we were called baby killers and everything else. A lot of it I tried to shove off and went to work back in the grocery business. A lot of times it was brought up and it was hard for me. One incident in particular, my youngest son asked me one day, "Dad, how come you never let us have weapons in the house?" I said, "Son, I think you know why." He said, "Did you really have to shoot people while you were in Vietnam?" I looked him straight in the eye and I said, "Son, do I have to answer that?" He shut up and never asked me again as to why I never allowed weapons in the house. Because when I [came] home from Vietnam, I sold every weapon I had. I had a nice rifle that I had bought with [earnings with] my dad. I sold that. I had [a .22 rifle and] pistols and I sold them all. I would not have a gun. To this day, I do not have a gun in my possession.

RB: Why is that?

RMB: Let's don't get into that.

RB: Okay.

RMB: I just don't like the idea of having — the idea of coming back after killing people, bothered me. I guess the greatest thing, I don't know how much more you want me to [tell], but we raised six children. We now have thirty-three grandchildren. At the time my wife passed away, we had three great-[grandchildren] and we now have fifteen great-[grandchildren]. During my years of raising my children, I felt like we did a good job. All of them are still very stable and very good children. As far as I am concerned, they have had a lot in their lives, but they have raised children and did a pretty good job of it.

One of the main things I wanted to leave with you is what I have done since my wife passed away that is taking the trips on my electric motor scooter.

RB: Tell all about that. Kate [Oursler] said you had done that.

RMB: My first trip — I left here about a year after my wife passed away, in April of that year and headed out to the east coast of Florida.

RB: In about 2013? She died six years ago?

RMB: About 2013, she died in 2012.

RB: When you said you headed out for Florida, on your scooter?

RMB: On my electric motor scooter.

RB: Just like going down the road?

RMB: I will show you a picture. I was riding down the road on the side of the highway.

RB: You are kidding!

RMB: And camping, on the side of the highway when night time would come, in a tent.

RB: By yourself?

RMB: By myself.

RB: Wow!

RMB: Nobody would go on the entire trip. The first trip I got as far —

[END OF RECORDING ONE.]

RMB: — as the other side of Waco, Texas before my foot swelled up. It is the foot I have here now. I lost a toe at that time. When I took my second trip, because my [children] were concerned because I was making \$100.00 month rent. My son oldest son felt like I should be living with them anyway. He moved me up to Vernal [Unitah County] Utah, [where] I stayed for two years with them, but that was it. I took a trip out of there and went over to Price, through the Indian Canyon. I don't know if you are familiar with that or not, but it is one of the worst canyons in the state of Utah, especially riding the electric motor scooter up through. There is no shoulder.

RB: Wow! [Laughter]

RMB: A lot of the time I rode on roads with no shoulder. I got into the way station [at] Price and I asked the girl to call the lieutenant, I needed to talk to him and tell him what I was doing. I told him about my other trip had gone just fine. He came and we talked over [that] night. He said, "You know what you are supposed to do. You [did] it before. Just [keep] to the rules and we will help you all we can." Well, I will show you a blanket on my bed and show you all my patches off of that trip. My daughter, Megan [Black] got me Utah Highway Patrol patch. They took complete care of me every night as far as making sure nobody bothered me and that I had water, ice and everything I needed the whole time I was in the state of Utah.

On that trip I went from Price down through — this was my best trip [so] I am telling you a little bit more about it than the others — my best, but they all were good. I went down [to] Monticello [San Juan County, Utah] and stayed with my brother a couple days and went on down to Blanding [inaudible] and spent some

time there and visited with friends. Then went on down to Highway 170, up to Teec Nos Pos [Apache County, Arizona] and over into Beclabito, [San Juan County] New Mexico. The reason I spent a lot of time Beclabito, New Mexico, [emotional] was the Navajo people, because my first trip I was stalled up there for twenty days waiting for an agent to come from back east for my scooter. Because at the time Pride Mobility [an electric scooter company for adults] at the time Pride Mobility was sponsoring my first trip.

RB: Who was?

RMB: Pride Mobility. They make most of these electric scooters. I like to buy from [them]. I have bought a couple which I don't refer to, but I did anyway. I like the big one that I have now. So I spent twenty days there. The Navajo people put me up in their chapter house the entire time. My flag still hangs in the room that I was in.

RB: Really!

RMB: I had, at the time, my signature in the corner of it. I respect the Navajo people, I leave with that. One of the greatest experiences that I had on this particular trip: I was camped up on a little hill. It was about 8:30 at night and my light was still on. All of a sudden, I heard a voice say, "Mister, are you still awake?" I said, "Yes." "We have dinner for you." [Emotional]

RB: Wow!

RMB: His mother handed me a plate of pork chops, potatoes, corn and a big glass of milk. That was the way I was treated all the time. [Emotional] Not only by them, but by everybody else. I never had one bit of trouble, no matter where I camped or no matter what I did. I never had a person or a police officer, nobody ever tormented me. They asked me questions, about what I was doing and why, of course, and let me be.

RMB: My biggest reason for taking these trips was to raise money for the veterans, which I did, to the tune of \$15,000.00 from the four trips that I took.

RB: You got sponsors?

RMB: I was not sponsored by anyone.

RB: How did you raise the money?

RMB: I made up a brochure, handed it out to people and told them what I was doing. It said on it that I was traveling and what I was doing to raise money for the Veterans of America. All the money went back to them. I paid for my trips, totally. During that time, on my trips and one trip in particular, I had put over

9,000 miles on my scooter before I retired it. For an electric scooter, that is a lot of miles!

RB: Wow!

RMB: My son is still using it. During the years I have ridden a motor scooter, going back a ways, I had a full blown stroke when I was fifty-three years old and I had to quit working entirely.

RB: [So that was the end of] your working career?

RMB: That was the end of my working career. I had that in the VA [Veterans Administration] Hospital on the treadmill. Of course, I rode these electric scooters for a lot of years after that.

RB: Did that prevent you from walking on your own?

RMB: I was in a wheelchair for four years. I got back on my feet because my wife was an occupational therapist. Where she worked she helped people. She worked at Red Cliffs Health and Rehab in St. George [behind the Red Cliffs Mall]. Between her and the physical therapist there, they got me back on my feet. I still was unable to drive because — I look back at the things she taught me, the things I learned and all the things that I had, that a person after having a stroke should not drive a car again. Maybe two percent will obey that law today. I may be aggregating, but it is the truth. My wife passed away [from] lupus, fibromyalgia and other diseases. So this was one of the biggest reasons I started doing these trips, I had a lot of time on my hands. I wanted to do something that would help others. So that is what I did. Before I left on the first trip, I had to join the Veterans of America Chapter in St. George. They were in a way, what you might call a sponsor, but that is where the money went back to, the whole \$15,000.00 to them or to the American Legion. I didn't enjoy my time living in Vernal, except for the fun I had fishing!

RB: Yes! Why was that? Why didn't you like Vernal?

RMB: [It was] too cold. And my son and his wife smoked and I couldn't get [them] to change their habits. I left the church then because of several [reasons I don't want to get into.

RB: No need to.

RMB: The main reason was my wife's brother. I will say that much. Anyway, I went on working with the Veterans of America Chapter. Prior to my heart attack I worked with Dan Greathouse. He has been the commander now for a good eight years and does a very good job of it. I have worked with him on a lot of things that helped him with the chapter. So a lot of money went to the chapter. My last trip ended in

July of this last year [2018]. Most of the money came back to that chapter. Much to my dismay, in December 4, of this year [2018] I had a heart attack, ended up in the hospital [with a] two bypass [surgery] and [came] to the [Southern Utah] Veterans Home for my rehab.

RB: Just recently then?

RMB: Yes.

RB: So you have been in rehab?

RMB: Yes. One day I was coming down the hallway, I wanted to ask our social worker, Tammy if I could talk to her for a few minutes. She said, 'I have some time right now. I will go back to your room with you.' [Emotional] We went back to my room. All I could do was look her in the eye, cry and tell her that I felt bad — was there any way that I could stay here in the home because I didn't want to return to my trailer and be alone anymore. I had been alone for six years. I wanted to be where there was a little more family life, a little more livelihood. She said, "You are 100 percent disabled," which I am. She said, "You can stay here forever." So here I am! This is my home for the rest of my life. It is a great place. I cannot down this place in any way, shape, or form or anything that has happened since I have been here. The nursing staff is great. I have a lot of friends already here in the wing. As I mentioned a minute ago —.

RB: Was that Chris?

RMB: [No, it was] Dan. Lee and I are good friends. I can't say enough [about them]. All of them are great. I guess you could say that I am the clown of the group.

RMB: When I come to breakfast, I make sure everyone has heard any of the rumor mill.

RB: Do you still go to veterans meetings?

RMB: Yes, I started back this week. We have our meetings at the Elks Club. Transportation takes me there. I also attend our barbeques out at Harley Davidson every second Saturday. I also go back to my old place, King's Row in Washington [City, Washington County, Utah] where I lived. I go back on Thursday nights, with a lady who lives close by, to call bingo. That was what I did when I lived there. But as far as the home goes here and the rest of my life. God bless America!

RB: Yes! We will go ahead end here. I appreciate you sharing your stories.

RMB: You are welcomed. I hope I didn't cry too much.

RB: No.

[END OF RECORDING TWO. END OF INTERVIEW.]