

Interview with
GREGORY “GREG” WATSON BEESLEY

March 5, 2019

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INDEX

A Shau Valley, Vietnam [contested place]	24
Anderson, Edward O. [related to LDS President]	13
Apache [tribe]	13, 15
Bamboo Curtain [Demilitarized Zone]	36
Beesley, Ebenezer [original settler, wrote many hymns]	7
Beesley, Hilma Orabell (Brown) [mother]	7
Beesley, Joseph Washington [father]	6
Beesley, Marva Jean Gordon [wife]	16
Buddhists [predominant religion]	27
Catholic [placed in charge over Buddhists]	27, 30, 33
C-rations [food packs for the military]	28
Detchiko [what whites called the Native Americans]	13
DMZ [Demilitarized Zone]	24, 25, 36
Ernestine “Ernie” [Navajo placed in his family]	12
Fort Benning, Georgia	16, 21, 22
Fort Bliss, El Paso, Texas	18
Fort Lewis, Tacoma, Washington	23
Fort Polk, Louisiana	19, 20, 23
Gallup, New Mexico [served his mission]	12
Gunderson, Lamont [stake president]	18
Highway 1, Vietnam	37
Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam	27, 34
Hong Kong	35, 36
Hymn book [story of where some of the songs came from]	8
Indian Placement Program [LDS placement program]	12
Khe Sanh, Vietnam	24, 25
Kimble, Spencer W. [apostle]	14
Kissinger, Henry Alfred [former US Secretary of State and National Security Advisor]	25
KKK [Klu Klux Klan]	19, 27
LDS mission	12

M-16 [rifle]	27, 31
Macon, Georgia.....	21
MACV, military assistance command	24, 25, 35
McKay, David O.[president of the LDS Church]	13
McConahughey, Colonel [Judge Advocate]	16
Meyer, Gil [wrestling coach]	11
Native Americans.....	14
Navajo [Navajos]	12-14
Nelson, Bill [photographer]	38
Ngoc, Thomas [Vietnamese friend]	30
94A [maneuver]	31
North Vietnamese	33, 34
101 st Airborne [a.k.a. Screaming Eagles]	24, 25, 31
Polygamist marriage	7
PTSD [Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder]	42S
Qui Nhon, Vietnam	25, 31, 34
Regalotto, Captain Kenneth L. [commanding officer]	24, 25
Richards, Stephen L. [Steve]	12
Saigon	38
Salt Lake City, Utah [SLC].....	6, 8, 18, 40
San Francisco, California.....	38, 39
II Corps [second corps]	25
South Vietnam	32
Southwest Indian Mission.....	12
Tan Son Nhut [Air Base]	38
TET Offensive	33-35
United States Army.....	19
University of Utah.....	12, 15
Viet Cong.....	25, 26, 28, 34
Vietnam.....	21, 23, 27-30, 35
Vietnamese interpreter	28
White Ditch.....	9
White Mountain Apache Reservation [Arizona]	12
White River Apaches	13
Woodger, Edward Winston [teacher]	8

GREGORY "GREG" WATSON BEESLEY

Gregory "Greg" Watson Beesley was interviewed on March 5, 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 talk with you about your early childhood before we talk about your [military experiences]. Where were you born?

GB: [I was born] in the East Millcreek area.

RB: Of Salt Lake City [Salt Lake County, Utah]?

GB: Yes.

RB: When were you born?

GB: [I was born] March 9, 1943.

RB: What was your father's name?

GB: [His name was] Joseph Washington Beesley.

RB: Your mother's name?

GB: [Her name was] Hilma Orabell (Brown) Beesley. She comes from a Swedish family.

RB: You were born in the middle of World War II. Was your father in the war?

GB: He was in [military] service, but he was [stationed] stateside. His background was [in] construction [so] he was in the engineer corps.

RB: How many [children] were in your family [when you] were growing up?

GB: There were six of us.

RB: Where did you fall in the mix of that [group]?

GB: I was the second to the oldest.

RB: What did your father do for a living?

GB: He was a contractor [and] owned a lot of commercial property. He decided, at one time in his life, he wanted to get out of the construction business so he took all of his assets, one asset was a cherry orchard across the street in weeds from the old tithing house. He had ten acres of cherries there, but in order to get into the music business, the old Ebenezer Beesley music, he had to sell that in order to buy out the stock that was spread among hundreds of [descendants]. He did that and lost a perfectly good cherry orchard.

RB: Is Beesley a long standing Mormon family that came to Utah?

GB: Yes. Ebenezer came here in the 1850s, I think, sometime between the 1840s and 1860s. He came here as a single man and the woman he married had an old maid sister back in England. They invited the sister to come and live with them. The wife told him, "You are going to marry my sister." He said, "No, I am not." She said, "If you want me for a wife, you are." So he was forced into a polygamist marriage.

RB: That is interesting because frequently, it seems like, the wife is resistant to have another one, but in this case she wanted them both.

GB: Here is the whole secret: you are looking at [The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints] [hymn] book of today, he has some fourteen songs —

RB: I have heard the name.

GB: — "he wrote the music for." This is a family secret: [laughter] I don't know how you want to say it because I don't know how offensive you want to get. He stole the tunes from an old bar-room hymn [book] back in England.

RB: Is that right? Oh, my gosh!

GB: That is the big family secret!

RB: A little known secret about some of hymns in the church hymn book. What is the earliest memory that you have from growing up in Salt Lake City in the 1940s?

GB: I could only be two or three years old, back in those days that [area] was the country. We lived on a third acre and had so much fruit that we couldn't take care of it all. My mother used to put up [canned] peaches, pears until the cows would come home!

RB: [Laughter]

GB: The earliest memory I have is crying because my mother left and I was standing at the front window of the house crying through this open window. A neighbor, who was building a house directly across the street from us was finishing work

because it got dark on them, came over to see what the matter was. I told them I had lost my mother.

RB: [Laughter]

GB: I don't remember if they stayed there.

RB: But you never forgot that.

GB: No, I didn't. The neighbor was a [fellow] by the name of Ray Jensen.

RB: I guess you went to school in that area? What do you remember about going to school?

GB: [It was] at the old Sherman School. It was up on 23rd East [Street] and about 3350 South [Street].

RB: What do you remember from your early school years?

GB: There was a teacher by the name of [Edward] Winston Woodger [4 May 1923 – 17 May 1981]. I remember that I wanted to make sure everything was copasetic. I had been taught at home: use up, use over, turn over and do again. I was getting some extra paper and was fiddling around trying to get one piece to work instead of two or three. He reached down and slapped me on the side of the head. He said, "You fussy little burr." I handed him the paper, went back and sat down.

RB: [Laughter]

GB: He was kind of an ornery old [fellow].

RB: Oh, gosh! Do you remember any schoolmates from that time?

GB: One of my closest friends was killed in a bicycle/automobile accident.

RB: As a child?

GB: Yes. He was helping a neighbor deliver newspapers after dark. He was on his bike. Apparently got too far out into the [traffic] and the [car] hit him and killed him.

RB: That was awful. What kind of [activities] did you do for fun as a youngster? Did you play games?

GB: The most fun we had was when we went over to the park, especially on the fourth of July. There was a [fellow] named Davis was his last name. We called him

“Aerial Davis” because he would shoot off these bombs. They would go up in the air and explode. If you were asleep, you weren’t asleep for long.

RB: What kind of bombs were they?

GB: We called them aerial bombs. They would put them down in a pipe and blow them out.

BF: [Laughter]

GB: It was fun place to live!

RB: I guess! [Laughter]

GB: It was out in the [Salt Lake] County enough that neighbors didn’t give a damn what you did.

RB: [Laughter]

GB: Yet we had [on this] third of an acre thirty minutes of water [usage] out of the “old white ditch”. They called it the White Ditch. You can go down there and still see it in places, right there on the southwest corner. In the spring a lot of the old leaves would come down and get clogged up. It would flow over onto the road. Another big name was Rudd, R-U-D-D. A [fellow] named Cal Rudd, for Easter, brought around and sold to the people, little ducks. I had three ducks. They got away from me one time, got into the ditch and the ditch was swift. Shooo! [They] went right down the ditch. Oh, man! I kept looking up the road to see if I could see them, [but] they were gone. Come night time the ducks came quacking back across the street. They came home.

RB: They came home because they knew where the food was! [Laughter] What fun!

GB: I put one of the ducks in my arm and yelled to my mom, “The ducks are back! The ducks are back!” Apparently, they were all females. They used to give us these really big duck eggs, but for some reason a duck egg is a little bit thicker than a chicken egg. When you stir them up [to] make a cake, [it] makes a cake very light.

RB: Interesting. You had ducks. Did you have any other pets around the house?

GB: I had a sheep one time. The sheep got in that same ditch. It hadn’t been shorn for that spring, so it got down in the ditch it got so heavy, it took three of us to get it out. All we did was get it on the edge so it dried out, so we could get it out.

RB: [Laughter] That is funny! Did your parents grow a vegetable garden?

GB: Yes, we had a big vegetable garden.

RB: Did you help out with that?

GB: Help out? I was the one who did the work.

RB: [Laughter] Okay!

GB: It was a big yard. I was the only one who would stay around long enough to do the work.

RB: Did you have other chores growing up? That you remember?

GB: We had a double garage. My dad was a collector of old cars. He had some really nice cars. We had a 1904 Oldsmobile. I spent two or three years attempting to get that [car] together. I didn't get it all together, but eventually, we sold it to a fellow over in Denver [Colorado].

RB: So you learned to work on cars at an early age?

GB: Well, I worked "at" working on them.

RB: Okay. [Laughter] Did your dad know how to restore cars?

GB: No, he wasn't a mechanic either, but he had enough money from his construction business, you name it, in that shop, and we had [it]. It was separated from the house and in that shop there was every tool you could think of.

RB: That was kind of interesting. So you learned a little bit about working with tools and working in a work shop.

GB: Yes.

RB: Where did you go to high school?

GB: [I went to] Olympus High School.

RB: Was that a three year or a four year high school?

GB: [It was] three years.

RB: What do you remember about your high school years? Did you like it?

GB: School was school. I wasn't ever much of a student. At the high school there was a coach named Gil Meyer. He had coached the team to the state wrestling championship for six years in a row.

RB: Wow!

GB: You couldn't touch the [fellow] with a ten foot pole he was so demanding, not only of the students, but of himself. He was building a house. Come the New Year, Christmas and all, he spent a lot of time working on the house. He would come over to the high school where we were supposed to work out during the vacation time. If we weren't ready to roll, he often times would lose his temper to the point where he would just go back home. That only has to happen two or three times, then the [students] wise up and come to understand that you are missing out on a good thing if you don't shape up.

RB: He was serious. [Did] you wrestle at this high school? Were you any good at it?

GB: I took fourth place, which wasn't a big deal, but [the] training was enough that I had to walk on at the university. When I got to the university, the number one pick for that weight had quit. The number two weight I beat out. I think I had a scholarship for three or four years at the university.

RB: Wow! Good for you. When did you graduate from high school?

GB: [I graduated] in 1961. It was an upside down class.

RB: Oh, '61 and turn around and it is still 61. [1961 turned around is still 1961.]. [Laughter] You were the upside down class. [Laughter] Did you go to the University of Utah [Salt Lake City, Salt Lake County, Utah] right after that?

GB: I did. I went there [when] they were under the quarter system at that time. At that time you had to be nineteen [years old] to be called on a [LDS] mission. My birthdate was in March, right after the wrestling season had ended at the university. Man, I was gone on a mission! A [fellow] named Charley Merrill was —.

RB: What was his name?

GB: Charley Merrill. He was a dairy farmer for Stephen L. Richards. At that time, they had the graveyard on about 33rd and 15th East [Streets] that was a big hay field. Charley must have had 1,500 cows there. They had the cows trained [so that when] they called a name or number, the cow would back out of the stall where it was feeding and come down to where they had the milk machine.

RB: That is amazing!

GB: It was incredible!

RB: You mentioned Merrill, who was he?

GB: This Charley Merrill was apparently the nephew of Steven L. Richards. He was very closely related to him.

RB: You mentioned his name because he was what, the mission president?

GB: No, no, no, when Charley Merrill was around, [you] knew that something he was basically an authority for Steven L. Richards. The minute I turned nineteen [years old], even if I wanted to finish out the year like the rest of the [students] did up there, I was gone by March of that year when I actually turned nineteen.

RB: Where did you go?

GB: Down to the Southwest Indian Mission. It was headquartered in Gallup, New Mexico.

RB: [Did] you work on the reservations?

GB: I worked on the White Mountain Apache Reservation [Arizona] to start with and I eventually ended up with the Navajos.

RB: You mentioned that there was another child in your family, Ernestine “Ernie”, who was placed in your family [from] the Indian Placement Program.

GB: They had a placement program and they wanted to get the young [children] as soon as they turned eight [years old] up into — at that time I think it was just Utah — but it ended up being Utah, Idaho, maybe parts of Nevada and even into California. They liked to get them up [there] so they could get a head start on education. She married a very famous Navajo [fellow]. I am trying to think of the woman who wrote the book. She married this Navajo from — I can’t think of the name of the place now — but that didn’t work out.

RB: She wasn’t Navajo.

GB: No, she was Apache.

RB: You said you worked with the Apache Tribe?

GB: I worked with the White River Apaches for about nine months. That was a strange situation. The [fellow] who I was working [with] before that was Edward O. Anderson. He was the brother-in-law of David O. McKay, and he had a lot of pull. He liked Indians [and] was from Central Utah where there were some Indians living in his town. He [sent] me a set of drawings that he had figured out-- the [fellow] was a first class architect. He figured out a system to build houses out of native material. He gave me this set of drawings.

RB: That is interesting.

GB: He said to give these to your mission president when you get down there and see if he has an interest. The [fellow] was named J. Edwin Baird. When I handed them to him, he just tore them up and threw them in the garbage. He said, "But with your experience, we have a place where we are going to try to get the church to give the okay for a chapel to be built because we have try to accept it to be built." It was in a little town called Siviki. That is what the white people called the Native Americans. [They] were called Detchiko.

RB: Detchiko?

GB: Detchiko. I was down there, gave those [drawings] and nothing happened. I thought to myself: I have been around enough people in wards [and] most nineteen years olds have no connections. First, when I came down, ol' Edward O. Anderson said to me, "If there is anything I can help you with, just call me." So when the mission person put me down there, [I thought:] why in the hell should I bother him. He has a lot of things to do. I just called [Edward O. Anderson] and he was the brother-in-law of David O. McKay.

RB: He was president of the church at that time.

GB: Yes, and if you follow the church, they were strapped for money. But he had enough pull and or McKay was senile and he pushed it through. It really pissed some people off. They called down to the mission president. He came over to see me. He said, "Well, don't let that kind of thing happen again or you are gone."

RB: [Laughter]

GB: I didn't say anything. "Don't ask me to do things." [Laughter] Frankly, after that I just let [things] coast. Before the thing was over, Spencer W. Kimble was an apostle to the Lamanites [was involved]. He even picked me up in Shiprock [Arizona]. He was riding with the mission president and he made the mission president come and pick me up. We went down for the dedication.

RB: Really? So the chapel [was] built?

GB: Yes.

RB: Wow! That was kind of cool.

GB: At the time they were building the chapel so it could be used for a dual purposes - - either as a chapel or as an expanded chapel with the recreation hall hooked into it. Then they had the basketball court in there with the hoops at both ends.

RB: Was that a different kind of a thing?

GB: Yes.

RB: Because later on that was the standard in most of the churches in the 1960s and 1970s? Right?

GB: I do remember playing basketball in our ward, but for a reservation, man, that was cool! It was a real draw for the church.

RB: Did you like working with the Native Americans?

GB: I enjoyed it.

RB: Did you have any other interesting or good experiences on your mission that you recall?

GB: Not really.

RB: Did you have to learn to speak —?

GB: They have what they call Navajo speaking and English speaking. The Navajos were so spread out at that time. The generation just before me, didn't understand English at all. The Apaches were all crunched in together and they could put them in a day school and teach them.

RB: Because a lot of them could speak English?

GB: Yes.

RB: You didn't learn Apache or Navajo?

GB: A little, I could get directions and that kind of a thing.

RB: You graduated in 1961, went on your mission in March of 1962, thereabouts, for two years?

GB: Yes.

RB: You [came] home in 1964?

GB: The spring of 1964.

RB: You went back to the University of Utah?

GB: Yes.

RB: What were you studying at the university?

GB: You name it, I studied it!

RB: [Laughter]

GB: I was having a good time on a scholarship. Because I was in construction, I went out and [secured] another job with an outfit, Bothwell and Swaner Company. At that time, [this] company was a big, big company. They built the dam up in Idaho Falls [Idaho], not in Idaho Falls, but in a little town called Bothwell [Idaho].

RB: I have heard of the name of Bothwell. It was Bothwell and what?

GB: Swaner. They were a multi-million dollar corporation. I will tell you a funny story. The old man was in tight control of the family [company]. It was organized so that all of the [children] and extended relatives had a stock in the family business. When I got drafted -- old Roy Bothwell was really a gruff talker. He said, "Beesley, I want you to put the tool away. I bought a new car. You are going to drive me around town." He had this pink Lincoln.

RB: [Laughter] A pink Lincoln?

GB: Bothwell was waving at everyone. He knew all the hot shots. He had me wave to everybody and he waved to them. It was fun!

RB: You were the driver?

GB: I was chauffeuring. When I was drafted he said, "Hey, Beesley, if you ever get to Fort Benning look up my nephew Col. McConahughey." I said, "Yes sir, I will do that."

RB: [Laughter] That is funny!

GB: I ended up going to Fort Benning.

RB: You did?

GB: I forgot all about it. It was a brand new program where they turned out instant NCOs [non-commissioned officers]. We were really looked down upon [by] those who had earned the [rank] the hard way.

RB: Yes.

GB: When I got down there, there wasn't any SOP [Standard Operating Procedures] so we didn't know whether to take wives or not. I took my wife down [Marva Jean Gordon Beesley] however they kept us on base. My wife stayed with another

Beesley that we ran into down there. She was so homesick that she stayed at the home; I would sneak off of the base at night and go see her. When this all happened, the company commander called me into his office, "Beesley, the judge advocate, Colonel McConahughey wants to see you. By damn, when you get back, you come and see me because I am going to fix you up." I [went] over there and in his office [there] was a civilian secretary. I told her what I wanted. She said, "He is waiting for you. Just a minute." She went over and opened the door and she whispered to him. Then he said [loudly], "Show him in! Uncle Roy wants me to talk to you." [Laughter]

RB: [Laughter]

GB: So I went in and saluted him. He said, "Don't salute me, Uncle Roy said to get ahold of you."

RB: Oh, my gosh!

GB: He gave me a ride home in an antique Rolls Royce that he just brought back from England.

RB: My gosh! [Laughter]

GB: The judge advocate is second in command on the fort. The [car] had crossed flags on all the corners. There was a glassed in area where I sat in the back and he chauffeured it.

RB: Oh, my gosh! [Laughter]

GB: Everybody was saluting me! [Laughter] I had a lot of fun. We get to the [Army] Company, and [the men] were drilling on the lawn. He drove the damn car right up on the lawn, jumped out of the [car], opens the door for me, takes two steps back and salutes me.

RB: He salutes you? And you are enlisted!

GB: The Company commander never said "boo" to me after that.

RB: Oh, my gosh!

GB: The next night I took my wife over to meet him. His wife, the judge advocate's wife, answered the door. When she saw that I was a corporal, she shut the door, went back and told her husband. [He] said, "Show him in. Uncle Roy [wanted me to take care of him]."

RB: [Laughter]

GB: I have had a lot of fun with that.

RB: That is great! You have hob-nobbed with some of the important people in your life — from Spencer Kimball to [Roy] Bothwell and now to the judge advocate.

GB: Yes.

RB: [Laughter] You have had a charmed life in some ways. Getting back to when you [were] drafted, when was that?

GB: As I remember, it was sometime in March of 1966.

RB: Okay. How did that work? Did you get a notice in the mail?

GB: Yes. They had a system where you drew a number. If you kept your grades up, even though they drew your number, they would let you go [continue going] to school.

RB: Yes, you could get a student deferment. Why didn't you get a student deferment, you were at the university?

GB: Do I look like a student? [Laughter]

RB: Oh! [Laughter]

GB: No, I was up there chasing girls.

RB: Okay! Did you have to keep a certain grade point average to keep a deferment?

GB: Yes.

RB: So the draft board caught up with you.

GB: Yes. The day I [was] married, I had to report to the draft board.

RB: Really? So you were married about March of 1966? The same time you [were] drafted?

GB: Yes.

RB: You said you conceived, about that time, your first child? Yes. You were drafted — how did that work? Did you have to report on a certain day?

GB: Yes. I had to report on the day I [was] married. There was a very famous sports writer [at] *The Desert News* at that time, [who] was on the draft board. I can't remember his name. The stake president, Lamont Gunderson was my sister's

father-in-law, was a [Salt Lake] County commissioner and he did everything he could do, but he couldn't change it.

RB: He couldn't change it. They got you! You [were] married in Salt Lake [City]. [Were] you married in the temple or not in the temple?

GB: In the temple.

RB: You did. So this would be a big day and you [were] drafted! Wow! You report and how long before they ship you [out]?

GB: I think it was it was two or three weeks. It put me into the middle or three-quarters way into March.

RB: Where did you go for basic training?

GB: There is another fort in Texas that starts with a "B" right on the border of Mexico and in the west part of Texas. I can't remember the name.

RB: Fort Bliss [El Paso, Texas], yes,

GB: It is a military fort and [known] for artillery [training]. The buildings are nice and new. Relatively new at that time. [The Army] was still trying to get me a MOS [Military Occupational Specialty] to lighten up my load and not put me right into direct battle. It couldn't be done.

RB: You went there for basic training for eight weeks or so?

GB: Yes. I think it was between basic training and advanced, AIT. I think we called it Advanced Infantry Training].

RB: Also at Fort Bliss?

GB: No, that was Fort, we called it Fort Puke. It was at Fort Polk [Vernon Parish] Louisiana.

RB; Fort Polk, Louisiana. Do you remember anything about basic training? How did you like that experience?

GB: It was tough, but like I say, I had been on a mission [and] that was really a different mission. And that didn't bother me.

RB: I am sure that you matured in that two years [you were] on your mission, being in charge, dealing with people and you had been at the university. And you had been a wrestler for a tough coach and learned how to survive in different environments. In basic training, people yelling at you and messing with you, I assume.

GB: But you didn't just have authority messing with you. At that time, the – what did you call those [fellows] who put hoods over their faces?

RB: The Klu Klux Klan?

GB: The Klu Klux Klan was recruiting. It was a strange [time]. Just [coming] off the varsity wrestling team, I felt like I was pretty good shape. I would climb in the ring with these Black [fellows] and they would beat the hell out of me. This Klu Klux Klan [fellow] about half my size would climb in the rim with them and beat the hell out of them.

RB: Wow!

GB: This particular [fellow] had been trained what and how to do it with Blacks to keep them in line.

RB: [Was he] from the south somewhere?

GB: Yes. That was down at Fort Polk.

RB: You survived that experience, basic training?

GB: By the skin of my teeth!

RB: Really! That hard?

GB: I had a Black [fellow] about six foot five [inches] — there are two ways you can spell Beesley, B-E-A- and B-E-E. Most of the Black [fellows] who were Beesleys, were B-E-A. So he mistook me for a Black [fellow].

BF: [Laughter]

GB: He came and woke me up when I didn't want to be awakened. Boy, I jumped into his crap.

BF: [Laughter]

GB: He was right on top of my bed all ready to take one of those stakes that hold up mosquito netting and stick it right down through me. I said, "Oh, wait a minute, I will say anything you want me to say, Brother."

BF: [Laughter]

GB: I met him again in Vietnam and we got along great. He was from Chicago [Illinois].

RB: That was good.

GB: It was a strange setup.

RB: You went off to Fort Polk, Louisiana for AIT,

GB: About three months.

RB: What was that like?

GB: It was really different because without the proper experience you just don't take on the job of being the intermediary between the brass and the newly inducted people.

RB: So you had made NCO status by the time you made corporal?

GB: Yes.

RB: You were a corporal?

GB: When they put you in that program they made you a corporal. When you graduated they made you an E-5, a buck sergeant. The [fellow] who graduated top in the class came out an E-6 [Enlisted, grade six].

RB: Oh, man!

RB: Six months an E-6! Unheard of! I can imagine the ribbing he took.

RB: [Laughter] For the three months that you were there, what rank did you attain?

GB: That was it. You went there [as] an E-5. If you were the top [fellow], you were an E-6.

RB: So you graduated as an E-5.

GB: Yes.

RB: By this time, it is probably late summer of 1966?

GB: Yes.

RB: Where did they send you then?

GB: They sent me to Fort Benning.

RB: Fort Benning, that is right. Where is that?

GB: That is in Macon, Georgia.

RB: Macon, Georgia, southern Georgia. What was your purpose at Fort Benning? You were with a regular infantry [company]?

GB: At Fort Benning, they would harden you a little bit, then they would send you back. I went back to Fort Polk again. If you have been in the military enough, it was easy to distinguish us from the new recruits. They did that so you could get a little bit more accustomed.

RB: Okay.

GB: So when I went over to Vietnam, I went as an E-5.

RB: How long were you at Fort Benning?

GB: It must have been about three months, because the total — generally they would send you over to Vietnam in six months. I was in training for a year.

RB: Where was your wife through all of this? Did she go with you to Texas?

GB: Not to Texas, but to Fort Benning. [The Army] hadn't established any SOP for this thing [program]. Do you know who Sam Pollack is here [at SUVH]?

RB: No, I don't. I'm sorry.

GB: There is another [fellow] who is severely retarded, has Alzheimers.

RB: Dementia?

GB: I went all through with Sam Pollack. He said you go out here, take a right to the —.

RB: To the Memory Care Unit?

GB: Yes.

RB: Okay. That is interesting.

GB: His wife and my wife, we got some digs [housing] for both of them so they wouldn't be alone. My wife got so homesick. She was five years younger than his wife and five years than myself. She probably hadn't been out of the Millcreek area [in Utah].

RB: Her whole life and she ends up in Macon, Georgia.

GB: I had a relative that I didn't know was there. I still keep in contact.

RB: Were you in Macon when your daughter [Marshell] was born?

GB: No, my daughter was born nine months after I left in March.

RB: So she was born in March of 1967?

GB: No, wait a minute. My daughter was born nine months after I left. I left in March. She was born during the holiday season, Christmas [1966].

RB: But your wife was back in Utah at that time?

GB: Oh, yes.

RB: I see.

GB: A lot of the LDS people would get together and house together when they got back there.

RB: Okay, I see. You didn't see your daughter for awhile.

GB: No, she was three months old [when I first saw her].

RB: Did you get a chance to go home on leave before you went to Vietnam? You went to Vietnam, right?

GB: Yes. Most of your leave was taken up by traveling. That was a long ways.

RB: Sure. Did you take a train for a bus?

GB: I had a truck. When I was on leave one time, at home, I built a cover for the back. We stuck all our stuff in there.

RB: You went to Vietnam when? You were at Fort Polk and then went overseas?

GB: I went to Vietnam from Fort Polk. No, when I left, I left from Washington state.

RB: Fort Lewis [Tacoma, Washington]?

GB: I don't remember.

RB: From Washington state and you were in the infantry, right?

GB: Yes.

RB: Do you remember when it was that you shipped out to Vietnam?

GB: Probably late March.

[TAPE RECORDER TURNED OFF.]

RB: So it was March of 1967 [when] you shipped out to Vietnam?

GB: Yes.

RB: You were an E-5, right? Tell about going to Vietnam for the first time.

GB: I went with the 101st [Airborne]. General [George S.] Patton's unit.

RB: 101st [in the] [United States] Air Force?

BF: Yes, the Screaming Eagles.

RB: Okay.

GB: The Screaming Eagles. I called them the Squawking Buzzards! [Laughter]

RB: [Laughter]

BF: [Laughter]

GB: They had been up at the A Shau Valley [Vietnam]. It was a very contested place. If you hadn't gone through that shit with them, you weren't a soldier. So I wasn't accepted at all. Matter of fact, they hated me so bad [that] one night they were going to shoot me.

RB: Really?

GB: It happened that I had made friends with the radio-telephone operator for the lieutenant that was in charge of our unit. He didn't take crap from anybody. He told me, "Hey, you [fellows] get the hell out of here or I'll be killing you next." He had the juice, he could do it. The next morning, just like that, I was gone. They shipped me out. When they shipped me out, apparently they understood the psychological ramifications of that kind of treatment because I was placed with MACV, military assistance command for Vietnam. There I found a real home. Matter of fact, the [fellow] who was my commanding officer, Captain Kenneth L. Regalotto, he and I visit with each other all the time.

RB: Great!

GB: Great [fellow].

RB: When you hit Vietnam, where did you land?

GB: Up near Khe Sanh. Have you ever seen a map?

RB: I have. So it is up in the north?

GB: Khe Sanh was a place that was just a little bit away from the DMZ [Demilitarized Zone].

RB: Yes.

GB: The scariest experience I have ever had, because I wasn't acclimatized right --- [I saw] all these troops coming out of Khe Sanh. I mean for three days, single file, troops came by. I hadn't even been issued a rifle of my own. They had me acclimatized down at my home base – I will try and remember where. These [troops] kept coming down the line. I hadn't been issued a rifle, so. I stopped one of them and said, "What the hell is going on? I am scared." I didn't know there were still some things they could pull off. The [fellow] said, "I don't know. We didn't even tear up the landing strips. We left everything, including the equipment, right there. When I left, I was right there in the end, and I looked back and you could see the VC [Viet Cong] coming across the DMZ and they took the base over." That was all, in my opinion as I read things that was all Henry [Alfred] Kissinger's doing.

RB: Is that right? That was in March or April of 1967?

GB: Yes.

RB: Up in Khe Sanh.

GB: It was in late March. I was out by April.

RB: Where did they send you after you left that area?

GB: Then I went down to our home base in – I can't remember the name of it – but it was where the 101st Airborne had all their personal stuff. It was down by Cam Rahn Bay. Then they [would] send the troops out from there.

RB: This is March, April time frame and you are down there. Where did you go from there?

GB: When I got in that knock-down-drag-out with these [fellows] who said they were going to cause havoc, they sent me to MACV. I guess by that time they realized

there is a difference between the gung-ho [fellow who] wants to get out and kill everybody and somebody [who] has had a little bit of education. Hell, I was a good five years older than most of [them].

RB: If you were eighteen in 1961 when you graduated from high school and this is now 1967. You are an old man to these [fellows]! [Did] they put you in that program at a different location than your base or was it at the same place that you went to?

GB: No. That was up around on Highway 1— no, that was a different place. It was down at Qui Nhon. It was in II Corps. The other was in I Corps. This Spanish [fellow], Captain Regalotto, and I got along just like that right off the bat. He was a super [fellow].

RB: Was he kind of in charge of that program? Of that office for you?

GB: Yes, generally speaking, if you had a captain over you, he would have 200 men to deal with. There were five of us in that little crew. There was a captain, a lieutenant, an E-7 [Enlisted grade 7, Sergeant First Class], an E-6 [Staff Sergeant] and an E-5 [Sergeant]. I was the E-5. I ended up doing all the work!

RB: Sure!

GB: I didn't mind that.

RB: At least you were around some of the important people of the unit, the captain and the other officer. What did you do? What was the purpose of that office [or group]?

GB: That group would go out and find hamlets and villages — I have some pictures to show you — and try [to] befriend these people [who] were elected by their surrounding [people]. They would keep these midnight tax collectors out and away. If the Viet Cong had no local support, they had a rough row. They had not only us to fight, they had indigenous people and the environment to go up against.

RB: At that point, was this a fairly new program?

GB: No.

RB: Had it been around for awhile?

GB: No, it was something that was set up right from the beginning.

RB: I read about that, where even the [United States] Marines and, I guess, the Army, would go into the villages, all over, and try to develop relationships with the village [people] in hopes that they would not be unduly influenced by the Viet

Cong or the Vietnamese Army. That was [what] you were kind of trying to place your eggs, then? Did you find success in that program?

GB: Personally, yes, but I understand that it broke down afterwards.

RB: Is that right? Did you have any experiences that you remember, in going — did you actually go out to [some of the villages]?

GB: Oh, yes, absolutely.

RB: What was it like?

GB: We had a jeep, so there were the two [fellows] in the front seat, and three of us in the back.

RB: You had [been issued] your weapon by this point?

GB: Yes.

RB: An M-16 [rifle]?

GB: Yes. It was very easy compared to being with the 101st [airborne] because you were accepted.

RB: Yes, of course! [Laughter]

GB: These two NCOs were from the South and they [were] unlike the [fellows who] belonged to the KKK. I doubt they had the same feeling about [prejudice] — they were professionals. They were lifers [soldiers who were career military].

RB: Right.

GB: All of us got along real good.

RB: That is good. Describe meeting with some of the Vietnamese when you went out. What was that life? Could they speak any English at all? Or did you have a translator?

GB: We had a Vietnamese interrupter and he was a Catholic. If you remember right, the Catholics had control — I can't remember the [fellow's] name —, but they were in control of things which was a big mistake for America.

RB: Right.

GB: Because for every one Catholic that was in charge there were 100 Buddhists. Do you remember seeing pictures of the Buddhist monk burning himself?

RB: Yes.

GB: This was real life for him.

RB: There was some resentment against the Catholics because they represented Colonial France.

GB: Exactly.

RB: That was not a good deal.

GB: The whole social dynamics was misunderstood. They won. Americans didn't understand that when Ho Chi Minh said that he had been to the west and he liked what he saw and he was going to bring that to Vietnam, he meant it. That was his life's mission. From the very beginning that was what his life's mission was.

RB: I think the American mentality at the time was so anti-communist and they saw Vietnamese as being part of that domino that was going to fall, so they didn't understand the wider dynamics, I think, like you were saying.

GB: Basically, what is communism? It is community cooperation. Didn't Brigham Young, himself, establish Brigham City [Box Elder County, Utah]?

RB: [Laughter] That is right!

GB: Wasn't that a commune? And Orderville [Kane County, Utah]? What they were trying to do was to have some mechanism that they could put on a front against "Western Civilization," so it didn't come on so fast that it turned them to mush again. Let me tell you one thing.

RB: Go ahead.

GB: They used to march us through what we called a "nine klick vil" – nine kilometers [village] with eighty pounds of pack on. Man, you get tired! They fed us a hot lunch at noon. You look forward to that, everything else was C-rations. One time we were going through this "nine klick vil" and they stopped [the march]. They said, "Okay, sit down and take a rest. The hot lunch will be here in a few minutes." I didn't realize it, [but] I just backed up against a burned out –bombed out house. I slipped down, slipped the pack off because if you try to get it off, man, you --. I just slipped out of it and I fell asleep. I didn't even wait for the hot lunch!

RB: [Laughter]

RB: When it was over, I got up and turned around and put [the pack] back on. Some enterprising Viet Cong had written in charcoal on the wall [of the house]: “Ho Chi Minh, the George Washington of Vietnam.”

RB: Really?

GB: I thought: that is true. They were trying to get out from underneath colonial rule. Just like the Americans did.

RB: Independence from the French.

GB: Yes. I thought about that for a long time. It was true. The more I thought about it the more truth I could see to it.

RB: Yes.

GB: I wasn’t [there to kill the Vietnamese.] I have a younger brother who said I was a baby killer. I grabbed him by the damn neck.

BF: [Laughter]

RB: Who was that younger brother? Was that “Joe?”

GB: Yes, “Joe.”

RB: Let me ask you this question. When you were serving on a [LDS] mission out on the [Indian] Reservation, kind of working with a different culture, now you are in Vietnam — did you see a parallel with your experiences?

GB: Absolutely. I can relate very well.

RB: Here you are kind of meeting — you probably had as part of this program, I am guessing, a certain protocol or a certain way of approaching when you came to a village. You didn’t just walk in, you kind of knew what you were trying, had some objective.

GB: Yes. I will show you these pictures. We would get all these people together and we would say that the village has adopted through a democratic system some elected leaders. If all of these [fellows] and if it is done correctly, the Viet Cong won’t bug you because they know it’s fruitless.

RB: You were trying to, in a sense, teach or persuade a particular point of view of how to survive as a village there. That was part of your mission? Was it successful, do you think? When you were doing it?

GB: Yes. These pictures will [show you] I think. eventually, it fell apart.

RB: Did you like that aspect of your military experience?

GB: I can't say that I liked it because I was away from home.

RB: [Laughter] I imagine the environment was kind of hot, the summer of 1967. Plus the possibility of [being] shot at was probably apparent every day.

GB: Every day!

RB: So you have all of that going on, but then you are trying to do your job. How did you survive? How did you mentally kind of cope with that experience?

GB: You just struggle through it.

RB: Yes.

GB: You will see [from] these pictures [that] I will show you — the [fellow] that was our interpreter, he understood somewhat about western culture because he was a Catholic and spoke English. You and [the interpreter] could relate to that real quick. He would relate that to the people we were talking [with]. That made the situation a very cooperative situation.

RB: Did you sense that the people were open to talking [with] you?

GB: Oh, yes! You will see that in these pictures I will show you. You'll see it.

RB: Did you meet some Vietnamese that you really liked? Did you develop some sort of a —

GB: These two, they were cousins. One was named Thomas Ngoc, N-G-O-C, I think it was spelled. Thomas and Joseph Ngoc. Both very Christian first names. As a matter of fact, they had one brother who was training to be a Catholic priest down in a little place called Can Duloc. One of these days I hope to go back. A lot of these [fellows] who couldn't be re-educated, they would just shoot them. I can understand why they did that. The longer you prolong it, you let them spread what they think is right, the bigger problem you are going to have.

[RECORDING STOPPED.]

RB: "Greg," we left off last time talking about your assignment to go into the villages and kind of, I don't know the right word, not persuade, but to develop relationships with —

GB: Befriend.

RB: Befriend some of the locals in the villages. Last time went over some of [your] photographs. I would like you to explain a little bit about them.

GB: For your photographer, can you get a shot of that?

BF: Yes.

GB: This one here, basically, these [fellows] were the equivalent of our [National] Guard and [Army] Reserve. Those four or five [fellows] had M-1 rifles. At one time, the United States decided to upgrade them.

RB: Who are they?

GB: These [fellows] were just enlisted [fellows].

RB: In the South Vietnamese Army?

GB: In the Reserve.

RB: Okay.

GB: In other words, when their active army could not do everything, they would work on the home front.

RB: How did you get to know them?

GB: I was assigned 101st [Airborne]. That was an excruciating experience.

RB: You told about that. I guess these particular reserve army soldiers you met by going into the villages?

GB: This was around the town called Qui Nhon. I think it was An Nhon. I forget, they switch back and forth. We had been given the work assignment for the week. Generally speaking, I think I told you [earlier], we would get that done in post haste. Apparently, we were one of the better teams. When a higher officer wanted to get a combat badge, they would send him out with us. He would go on a 94A [maneuver] setup with us. If we caught someone that was a feather in his cap.

RB: Were these the same folks there?

GB: Yes, the same type of men. I don't know that there were the same men. You see them holding up their rifles. You can really tell when these [fellows] are hooked into a thing of pride. They will be smoking a cigarette. That was a step up and holding one of these M-16 [rifles].

RB: About how old were they, would you say?

GB: Oh, shoot! I think some would be in their late teens, others in their early twenties.

RB: Pretty young [fellows].

GB: I have a lot more pictures. I will let you take those if you like.

RB: Yes.

GB: I have a view finder and you will see that some of them would have their families with them etc., etc.

RB: I appreciate that. I would like to study them out. You told us about this gentleman who is kind of in a martial arts pose.

GB: This is their form of exercise.

RB: What was it? Do you know?

GB: Shoot! There is a name for it, but —.

RB: That is okay.

GB: One of my friends who is an attorney, he exercises the same way every Saturday. There is a little place that has a Master Lou, is the [fellow] who teaches him. But he teaches the Chinese version of it. These [fellows] are practicing the Vietnamese version.

RB: Who is this gentleman?

GB: This [fellow] is a retired, don't know if he was an officer, but he was retired from the military in South Vietnam. Apparently, he had a stipend because he did nothing but farming. You see him there cracking coconuts. You will see him later on, there are some other pictures, he has this, looks like a big hoe. He uses it to weed and also to cultivate and chop up the [ground].

RB: Was he someone in one of the villages that you got to know?

GB: Yes, he was right within — we were in about an eight to ten square mile setup that we controlled.

RB: How often did you go out?

GB: They would give us a week's assignment that would consist of what they thought we could complete in two or three days or in a week. We would get it done in two or three days.

RB: Where did you sleep at night?

GB: At times we would sleep at these people's house. At times we would go back, in those other pictures you will see our bedding, etc. We used to have stretchers that they carried people in when they are wounded. We would have a bunch of these stretchers. We just slept on them! [Laughter]

RB: [Laughter]

GB: We didn't carry those into the fields. At times we would be sleeping in the mud. Oh, those mosquitoes!

RB: Oh, gosh.

GB: Crazy!

RB: When you went [to Vietnam] I assume you had to get a lot of shots and vaccinations for Asia? Do you remember any of that?

GB: Whatever we had to have. I have no expertise in that area at all.

RB: You mentioned this woman last week.

GB: She was this little woman. Around places that we stayed there were homes of all sorts and all kinds. That was during TET [Vietnamese New Year. One of the biggest offensives by the North Vietnamese occurred during TET in February 1968]. [During] TET they would spiffy up their houses, get new clothing and that was where they would spend their Christmas [and] their New Year's money in that area.

RB: I wanted to talk to you a little more about TET. I was curious about the Buddhist that you met. Tell a little about — this was a monastery in your area?

GB: Yes. [When] you look through those pictures you will be able to see [that] it is kind of an enclosed area. Basically, they liked to maintain neutrality with us as well as the enemy. We would kind of respect that. It was fine with them and fine with us. I can remember them digging up carrots for us. Something fresh to eat. They were a very friendly bunch! [In] one of these pictures you will see [what] looks like a Christian church, it is a Catholic church.

RB: Is it this one? [Gesturing to a photo in his album.]

GB: No.

RB: Oh, it is that one. I see the cross on it. Did you encounter very many Catholics?

GB: I will tell about the ones I encountered personally, the two gentlemen —

RB: The two brothers?

GB: — and their extended family and so on and so forth. At times, on the weekends, I would go in to Qui Nhon itself and stay right in their home. That was a very dangerous thing, but they assured me that we would become aware of and notified of any anti-American forces in the area long before they ever got to us.

RB: Let me shift here now. This is 1967 and we are moving towards TET Offensive in 1968. Late January, February?

GB: Yes.

RB: I think it was February 1968. What was your experience with the TET Offensive?

GB: It was much tougher[and], much bigger there than in Qui Nhon. They set off an ammo dump. I don't have any pictures [of that]. It lit up the whole horizon at nighttime. When it [was] dark there, it was dark. Very little electricity. People would build these places to get away from the mosquitos. They would almost be air tight other than getting in and out. They would light a candle [and] put smoke in there. At that point, the mosquitos would go out [gesturing to show the mosquitos flying away].

RB: Obviously, you did have any idea that there was going to be a kind of [an] effort by the North Vietnamese to use the TET holiday as a chance to —.

GB: I am sure on previous TETs, or the 1968 TET, they did the same thing, but it was a smaller proportion. In 1968, that is when the North, Ho Chi Minh and that group started gearing up.

BF: On these operations in the villages in the intervening months before TET, did you notice any buildup or anything unnatural like there was more VC [Viet Cong] than usual, things of that nature?

GB: Not that I recall.

RB: During that period, did you experience any combat action? Of what was going on?

GB: We were given a week's assignment and we would finish it up in about three days. But there was always, whenever you would go out, if you understood the hot spots and how to look for them, you could get yourself in contact [with the enemy] frequently.

RB: Were you ever fired upon?

GB: Yes.

RB: What was the procedure you needed to follow if you came under fire?

GB: I received several, what do they call [them]... badges of honor [medals or ribbons]. On that particular night that happened we were going where we knew there was [enemy] coming in at night. We called them midnight tax collectors. When I say tax, that is not necessarily money, but it would be rice, things to eat, as well as establishing a good rapport with them. We already co-opted the people, the leaders of those villages, hamlets, so they would let us know. If there was a hot spot we would go out to them.

RB: So, if you were out there and started taking fire. Did you call for air support? What was the procedure in dealing with the interaction?

GB: Generally speaking, air support would only be in the daytime.

RB: Okay.

GB: I am sure we did call in for support of some kind. As a matter of fact, I called my commander to ask him. If you thought you were in trouble, you would call in the artillery, and give them your exact location. Everything was mapped out to the "T" in square grids. You would say, "I am at this grid." I didn't do that. That was an officer's job. He would tell them exactly where we were at so they would start the artillery coming in. They [the artillery] were a mile or so out and would creep up on us. And then pretty soon the enemy would say they [the U.S. troops] must be getting close to them, but we don't want them to stay around any longer. They just take off and go someplace else. That would give [us] time to pick up and move out.

RB: Did you ever get shrapnel or wounds at all?

GB: I didn't with the MACV, but I did when I was with the 101st [Airborne] the first six months I was in Vietnam.

RB: When did you end your Vietnam tour?

GB: It was mid to late March of 1969?

RB: You mean 1968? You said 1989.

GB: My tour in Vietnam was from 1968 to 1969. I went in March of 1968 was let out in late March of 1969.

RB: Sorry, I was thinking that it was 1967 and 1968, but it was 1968 and 1969. So you were at the tail end of the TET Offensive when you got there? Okay. Your tour of duty in Vietnam was going to be 364 days —

GB: One year.

RB: — one year, so where did you go after you finished that tour?

GB: They give you what is called a R & R [Rest and Recuperation]. I saved my R & R right until the end then I went to Hong Kong.

RB: How did you get to Hong Kong?

GB: The service [military] didn't lack on anything! They sent you down there on an airplane. [Inaudible].

RB: These were military air transports and they were runs that went to Hong Kong?

GB: Yes.

RB: How long did you stay in Hong Kong?

GB: A week.

RB: Did you like that?

GB: Oh, yes. We went up to the DMZ [Demilitarized Zone] which was called the Bamboo Curtain and viewed that. The most surprising thing I saw, because of being in the construction business, in Hong Kong they were building thirty story buildings. Guess what the scaffolding was made of?

RB: I have no idea.

GB: Bamboo.

RB: Bamboo. That makes sense.

GB: They would take two pieces of bamboo like that and take a piece of green bamboo and wrap it around the two like that. When it dried out it was really as tight as anything westerners [used in construction].

RB: Really strong! That was pretty smart! [Laughter] After your R & R, did you ship back to the states?

GB: After my R & R, it was really crazy. When I got back off the R & R it was just days before my, what was called DEROS [Date Estimated Return from Overseas]

coming back, and I was with [this fellow]. I can show you a picture. It would be interesting. A [fellow] named Mark, who was a lifer [career military man]. It was time for me to go get my ticket for the airplane ride back home. I wasn't going to go by myself.

[RECORDING STOPPED.]

GB: He may not be in these [pictures].

RB: I am not seeing any other Americans. I am only seeing Vietnamese.

GB: I was planning to go [get] my ticket. This is almost comical now! I woke him [Mark] up and he was really pissed! He was a coffee drinker. I wouldn't travel on those roads [by] myself, so three or four of us went. He was driving, so pissed off, drinking coffee and steering the jeep with one hand.

RB: [Laughter]

GB: Lo and behold, he passed a truck on Highway 1 and we damned near [were] in a wreck. Another truck was going the other way — I don't know if you are familiar with those Jeeps, they were on a suspension where the wheels go down like this.

RB: No, I didn't know that.

GB: It made a cushion of a ride. We went off the side of the road. That flipped us up. When it filled us up, those wheels started going like that and pushed up even further. Honest to goodness, the thing turned over just like this [gesturing] and we all dropped out like that. It took all the skin off of my right side — totally off.

RB: Oh, my gosh! Did the Jeep fall on top of you?

GB: No, we fell out and it went over us.

RB: Wow! [Laughter]

GB: It wrecked a perfectly good Jeep.

RB: And could have killed you, but didn't!

GB: Boy, I cussed that [fellow] out! I was a junior in the team, but I let him know that I was damned unsatisfied with his actions.

RB: Sure! How did you get back to —.

GB: Let me tell you, there is traffic on that Highway 1 in a continuous manner. I don't remember who stopped and picked us up. All I remember when I dropped out of the Jeep, the first thing I was looking for was my gun.

RB: Yes!

GB: I finally located it. Because you never know who is there and what they are up to.

RB: Yes, that is your safety net.

GB: I got my gun and I chewed him out!

RB: [Laughter] So eventually you got your ticket to head back?

GB: No, they took me to the hospital.

RB: Of course!

GB: The hospital wanted to keep me and I said, "No way! I am getting out in three days and I am gone." The skin was off the whole of my right side. I will tell you another funny story. I got the ticket. I got on the airplane. I had to go back down to Saigon to Tan Son Nhut [Air Base]. When I got back to "Frisco" [San Francisco, California] and [was] on my way going home — I know that some of the pictures I have seen, they start sending the [fellows] home in a dress khaki uniform — for us it was jungle fatigues. I get back to "Frisco," [some place] in the Bay area.

RB: In March of 1969?

GB: Yes. I had a friend who was a professional photographer. When I say professional, I could take fairly good pictures but this kid could take some really good pictures. His name was Bill Nelson. In fact, I just talked with him the other day. I had these shirts that had deep pockets in them. He would use them to put film in. All your unused film was here [gesturing to one side] and when you used it--.

RB: In the other pocket.

GB: I had this duffle bag crammed full of these khaki shirts because I was wearing my jungle fatigues. I couldn't carry it, so I was dragging it across the gymnasium there in Frisco. This sergeant, an E-9 [Enlisted, grade 9] or better, yelled across, "Hey, soldier, pick up that damn bag." I said, "Hey, if you want the damn bag picked up, get over here and pick it up yourself."

RB: [Laughter]

GB: He came over fast, he was right there. When he could see what happened he turned around. There were a bunch of brand new recruits that he had picked up, he got one there and he carried it for me.

BF: [Laughter]

GB: Then they shorted me \$600.00 in my pay. They wanted to send me home and said, "We will send you the check." I said, "Sure you will. I will just sit there eating your steaks." They feed you fresh steaks when you are going home. "I haven't had any fresh meat for months, so I will just eat your steaks and stay right here." About six hours later they had [my check].

RB: They corrected their mistake and got your money.

GB: You hear all the stories about how the [fellows] were treated so badly.

RB: [In] 1969 it was moving toward the big hippie era, Summer of Love, 1969 San Francisco. Oh, 1967, okay.

BF: 1967.

RB: What am I thinking of?

BF: Woodstock.

RB: Yes.

GB: We have a potential hippie right here [referring to Brady Fronk]. [Laughter]

RB: He knows his history. How long did you stay in San Francisco? Just long enough to catch an airplane out?

GB: Yes.

RB: [Did] you go back to Utah?

GB: Yes. I got on the airplane and I don't know who the [fellow] was – I would like to find him today -- he said, "I am going to buy you a steak dinner." He bought me a steak. I had another steak coming home on the airplane.

RB: Were you formally discharged in the Bay area?

GB: Yes.

RB: So you were a civilian.

GB: I was discharged before I told that E-9 sergeant! [Laughter]

RB: That was smart! [Laughter]

BF: [Laughter]

RB: You didn't want anything to hold up your discharge! Like a court martial!
[Laughter] So what did you do after Vietnam? Was there any kind of a transition that you had to go through? Or did you adapt to civilian life pretty easily?

GB: My dad was in business for himself [with] a couple of businesses. I worked in the family businesses for awhile. I had an uncle who I was very close to and I [had] worked for him when I was going to the University of Utah. I took care of his laundromat at night. He found that his equipment would be in much better shape if there was somebody there all the time to attend to it. After wrestling practice at the university I would go down to the laundromat and watch it until midnight. I made some money on the side. Between me and you and not the tax collector, it was all cash money.

RB: Sure, nobody needed to know. Did you go back to the university right away?

GB: No, that was [earlier]. That was between my mission and [going into] the service.

RB: When you got out of the service in 1969, did you go back to the university?

GB: My dad wanted me to go to work for him in the piano business and I am not musically inclined at all. If you look in the [LDS] songbook, [you will find] a bunch of music written by a [fellow] named Ebenezer Beesley.

RB: Oh, yes! He was one of your ancestors back there?

GB: The big family secret is this: All those tunes that he supposedly wrote were nothing more than worked over bar-room [tunes] from England

RB: [Laughter] People thought they were pretty cool! They put them in the hymnbook.
[Laughter] You were working with your dad?

GB: When I came back from Vietnam? Yes. He wanted to get me in the music store. I have no musical talent.

RB: So what did you end of doing?

GB: Eventually, I bought [the] laundromat from my uncle.

RB: I can't remember, did you get married after that or before?

GB: I was married six weeks before I went in [the service].

RB: That's right — you actually had a baby.

GB: The little gal was born nine months after I left. Apparently, my wife got pregnant just days before we split company. We lived in a nice little apartment, just off of Main Street on about 400 North [Street].

RB: You came back, obviously, to your wife and child and were working. [Did you] stay in Salt Lake [City]?

GB: Yes. I worked out of Salt Lake [City].

RB: How many children did you have?

GB: [We] had eight.

RB: You were with your wife the whole time. I can't recall, is your wife still alive?

GB: [Yes], she is.

RB: Did you get a divorce?

GB: Yes.

RB: That is what I thought. All of your children are grown?

GB: Yes. I have a couple of boys who are very, very successful in the plumbing business. And you know plumbers. It takes a real plumber to do a job. You can't be a professional plumber without being licensed by the state. You don't do half-handed plumbing. They don't allow it. If I made the money they make per hour --.

RB: That would be great!

GB: They spend it, too! They make \$80.00 an hour! They have two or three [fellows] who work for them. They make \$80.00 an hour too.

RB: Wow!

GB: I know they don't pay those [fellows] that kind of money.

RB: Your time period of the 1970s and 1980s you were raising your [children]?

GB: I am raising the [children], but I [was] distracted from the laundromat. I had a five year contract [that] I ended in three years. My uncle wanted me out of it. He knew me as well, if not better, than my dad. He had been divorced and his oldest son

graduated about six years before I did from South High School [in Salt Lake City, Utah]. Long before I was ever [inaudible] and at an age where I was making money on a regular basis, he had a little store on Second Avenue between Q and R Streets. His wife, Aunt Phyllis, a great little gal, she would let myself and another girl cousin of ours, and we would go in there and shovel the candy. He would get mad and Aunt Phyllis would say, "Leave them alone!"

RB: [Laughter]

GB: The more you handle the candy, the worst shape it gets in!

RB: How long have you been here [at the Southern Utah] Veterans Home?

GB: About three months. I came down here from Nephi [Juab County] Utah. I went from Escalante [Garfield County, Utah] to Nephi. I wanted to get where it was warmer. I am not sure that was the best decision, because, man, the summer —.

RB: It gets pretty hot here.

BF: It is only 110° in the high summer.

GB: I got acquainted with a little town, Leeds [Washington County, Utah] where my dad bought a home. The tithing house became a home. I knew it was hotter than hell.

RB: That is the way it goes! Are there any other [events] that you want to share about your life, looking back? You were born in 1942 or 1943? You are seventy--.

GB: [In] 1943.

RB: So you are coming on seventy-six [years old]?

GB: I am.

RB: You are seventy-six [years old]. Now?

GB: Yes.

RB: You just went over! Very good. If you could think what has been the guiding principle for you in your life, to get you to where you are today, or if you had to give some advice to someone on how to live seventy-six years, what would you say?

GB: I don't know that my lifestyle was that good. My mom and dad were both in their early nineties when they passed away. So maybe it is genetics as much as anything. But I passed up more money opportunities because I got this damned

PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder]. I am, just now, in position where I think I can do some good on it, but who knows. I am totally opposed to war. There [it] is nothing more than a racket. I guess [Dwight S.] Eisenhower said, "Military industrial complex."

BF: Major-General Smedly Butler, "War is a racket."

GB: Butler was one of the best of the best.

RB: How has PTSD manifested in your life? How have you experienced it?

GB: Normally speaking, it has manifested in extreme hate. But to do something about the world's situation. I could be wrong, but I think we are right in the middle of a change into a new era.

RB: Yes.

GB: If Senator [Willard Mitt] Romney is a hero, you won't go for this too much, but the Romney family has been in international anti-social orders up to their eyeballs since the 1600s.

RB: Really?

GB: There was a lord mayor of London [England] who was a Romney in 1609, I think it was.

RB: Are there memories that come back to you about Vietnam related to PTSD? Or is that not something that you have experienced?

GB: When I first got back, I was told that I had to use something soft, but on a solid floor to sleep on. [Laughter]

RB: Really? [Laughter] If you heard a loud bang or something like that, did that bring back memories?

GB: I don't remember a loud bang doing anything, but I do remember the doggone helicopters, out of Hill Air Force Base [Ogden, Utah] were going someplace down the Provo way. If they are not timed right, they don't give a real crisp sound when they break the air, wop! Wop!. Boy, I will tell you, that [gets] your adrenaline going! Sky high!

RB: Have you [received] any kind of support from the VA [Veterans Administration] for that?

GB: Yes. Sorry to tell you gentlemen, I am sitting here in one of the nicest facilities in the St. George area at no cost to me at all. I have a slit from here down to my

belly button where I have had open-heart surgery. [Gesturing], they [VA] have a million and half bucks dumped into that too.

RB: Wow, good! Not good that it happened to you, but good that somebody else paid for it, not you!

GB: All I can say is they should have had a screener here that was a little wiser who knew what was going on.

RB: We will close right now. I appreciate you finishing up this week. That will do it!

[END OF RECORDING. END OF INTERVIEW.]