

PREFACE

February 14, 2014

2:00 PM PST

Chi Psi Fraternity House – Alpha Eta Delta Chapter

Eugene, OR

Interview duration: 1 hour, 38 minutes, 45 seconds

Interviewee: Steve Earl

Interviewers: Nate Ariel and Alex Aiken

Nate Ariel is a psychology major and a senior at the University of Oregon. He is twenty-four years old, and an Army Veteran. At the time of this transcription (February 2014), he is a Sergeant in the Oregon Army National Guard and has spent ten months in Afghanistan (2011-2012).

Alex Aiken is a history major and a senior at the University of Oregon. He is twenty-two years old.

TRANSCRIPT

Nate Ariel: Alright, we're here with Steve Earl. We're at the Chi Psi Fraternity house, it is February 14th [2014], it is approximately three o'clock in the afternoon. My name is Nate Ariel, I am twenty-four years old, I am a senior at the University of Oregon, and an Army veteran.

Alex Aiken: My name is Alex Aiken, I'm a twenty-two year old senior at the University of Oregon, and a history major.

Steve Earl: My name is Steve Earl, I'm from Seaside, Oregon. I was the class of nineteen sixty-eight at U of O, did Vietnam service [from] '68 to '69, came back to the university and finally did get a degree in 1983.

Nate: Great. Okay, so as I told you earlier, the goal for this is to establish a bit of a chronological timeline for those who go through and read this later. So, why don't you start by telling us about what you were doing in the few months before the draft ... what the atmosphere was like. Obviously we weren't around during that time period. Just give us an idea of what it looked like back then.

Steve: I got to campus the fall of 1964, which was the very beginning of the Vietnam War. Basically, 1963 was when troops went in. At that time, there were both 'Regular Army' and draftees. The draft became a very significant part of the Vietnam War. It inched its way up; there wasn't much activity on campus ... there wasn't much anti-war feeling on up until about 1967. I came from a small town and basically got here [Eugene, OR], and didn't really get involved in war or peace movements or anything ... just was involved in campus activities, just being a college kid. 1967, at the end of fall term, I'd gotten behind three hours in my classes. And at that time, there were draft boards in every county or area, all across the country. And the draft boards would get a, "We need this many people," from that draft board, from that community. The draft board was in Astoria, Oregon. They'd get a quota for April, and they needed five people, say. June, they might need seven, or eight, or ten. And that came down through the draft system. I got three hours behind, so in January of 1968, I got a notice – which I have, I've kept – it says, "Greeting..." Doesn't say, "Greetings." Everybody thinks it says, "Greetings." It doesn't. It says, "Greeting. You are hereby ordered to report for military service at such and such time." And that's a genuine, "Oh shit," moment, because in 1968, this was right after the Tet Offensive, which was January, February of 1968. And the Tet Offensive was ... all hell broke loose. Just absolutely all hell broke loose in Saigon. Basically, the North Vietnamese took Saigon – a major city in the south – completely. They took ninety percent of it, and just had absolute hell. So, draft boards got a call out; there wasn't any asking for favors; this was your local citizen draft board. And they say, "You're up." Well, I didn't know whether I wanted to go to war or not. No one knows this up to this point, but I applied for VISTA, Volunteers In Service To America, which was a domestic Peace Corps program that Kennedy had instituted. And I had my airline ticket to fly to Chicago and join VISTA. "What do I do? What do I do?" I opted not to join VISTA; that was too unknown for me.

So I got on the bus in Astoria, and went to Portland for swearing in. Kind of a startling thing at that point: you're standing in line and you've been butt-checked and all groin checked and everything, and you're deemed healthy – people with blown out parts or a bad knee or something [wouldn't go through]. They'd say, "Count off, one to ten." You've got forty or fifty people lined up, [and after we counted off, they said] "Okay, everybody number..." whatever in hell they chose, "Congratulations. You're now a U.S. Marine." Not many people knew that the Marines were drafting at that point, and that would have been a, "Oh, man..." At that point, I bussed up to Fort Lewis, Washington for typical Basic Training. Not really anything rivals Basic Training in a time of war ... it's as hard as they can make it and not break people. They need people, so you don't break 'em. If you break 'em, they go home, and you're back to square one.

Got orders for Advanced Individual Training (AIT) at Fort Sam Houston, and Fort Sam Houston is the Brooke Army Medical Center, and is medic training. It was kind of interesting that through all of that screening and stuff, my dad had been a medical officer in World War Two. Just an odd coincidence ... however, they screen for psychological variables, I fit that one, just as my dad had. So I went to Fort Sam Houston, and did medic training. Caught a super-cold slash pneumonia for a while; was in the hospital for a few days; but no big deal. Had a good group of people ... this is the time, like I said, right after the Tet Offensive, and we're going to win this war. So people are ratcheting up and becoming believers. It's kind of begun to be distinguished there; when your basic is just, you are a serial number. You don't even have a name; they don't give a shit at that time. And that's appropriate. When you get to your medical training, your Advanced Individual Training, you start getting an ID [identification], and those of us who were draftees had different serial numbers. We were "US," I'm US 56935296. Where if you had joined, you were an "RA," Regular Army, or 'regular asshole,' as they might commonly be known [chuckling]. The "US" for those of us that were draftees and doing our job, became a mark of honor: "Fuck you, you can't grind us down. We're not RA's, but we're here doing a job, okay?" And the guys that were "US" distinguished themselves. They'd try and ride us down and give us a bad time, and the Regular Army guys would harass us and stuff, but ... we hung in there. Got our orders and by far the majority got orders for Vietnam ... especially medics, for God sake ... in the middle of that conflict. So, got orders, and we had a week or so of leave at home, and then boarded the plane for Tan Son Nhut Airbase in Vietnam. Took a week off, went

with my mom ... how can you really celebrate, or get out and get drunk or party or anything, when you've got that staring you down?

I think our first really rude awakening for us, we went to a replacement battalion at Tan Son Nhut, and that's basically where units would send a request, "I need this, that and the other thing." It was the shock that you knew you were replacing somebody that either went home or was injured or killed. So it's kind of an interesting situation to be sitting there waiting for somebody to order you up. I had given blood before I left; you gave blood all along in the system, whenever you were able to give blood. Several of us had given blood back at Brooke Army Medical Center, and one of the guys that didn't, went and gave blood and he came back and was whiter than a sheet ... he was deeply shook, unbelievably so. Well, they were doing live transfusions. You're hurt, you're giving [motions to two different people], you matched blood types and you got the blood. It was needed now. And the guy who he was giving blood to was the guy he sat next to on the plane [laughs in amazement]. That's an "Oh, shit" moment. And at that point, three of us got called for the Eleventh Armored Cavalry (11th ACR), three of the medics. And we got in a deuce-and-a-half (troop transport vehicle) with our gear and started out. The base camp for Blackhorse, the Eleventh Armored Cavalry, was about forty miles east of Saigon, and just a hole in the jungle that had been cleared out, and that was their base camp. Vietnam, at that point in the middle of the war, just the trip over there we did go on ground and then fly in, was unbelievable. I mean, going through streets where the sewage was rolling down the street, and it's really a very ugly country drive. When we got out to base camp, I had reasonable mechanical skills and stuff, so I became a motor pool honcho and was in charge of the motor pool. We had a fleet of ambulances, deuce-and-a-half's, five-tons, jeeps. And our hospital unit, we had a major surgical hospital, the 7th Surgical Hospital, and it was straight out of the MASH [Mobile Army Surgical Hospital] TV show. I mean, just unbelievable to be a part of something like that. You have soldiers that are out to do a job, and then you have people coming in by helicopter, usually that are medevaced (Medically Evacuated) in. Seventh Surgical Hospital was unbelievable, just like MASH, I mean talk about skillful, precise ... [motions to Nate] You've been around military systems. When the system says, "Go!" it's like nothing you could ever see. It's like an emergency room over here when all hell breaks loose. Just unbelievable, how good medics and their doctors can be.

We lived on plywood decks that were probably six or eight inches high, and surrounded by sandbags to about four feet tall. The structure was made out of two-by-fours or two-by-sixes with canvas tents thrown over it, just like you see in the MASH TV show. We lived and worked in those. That was our hospital, too. They were just canvas hospitals. It was unreal. It was kind of primitive, yet incredibly directed and efficient. We had times when we'd sit on our ass and we'd have great volleyball games, and about then the PA would go off, and that's it. We're off to work. Two or three o'clock in the morning, you'd hear choppers coming in. They [the enemy] didn't fuck with our base camp very much; we were forty miles out in the middle of nowhere, a place called Xuan Loc. It was a few miles away from a village. The 101st Airborne, and Big Red One were two major divisions over there. Big Red One is the 1st Infantry Division, and they suffered humongous casualties over there.

I got there in the first week of September. One of my best friends from high school was a year or two younger than I, and really handsome, really nice guy. We grew up in the neighborhood, and we'd sneak out at night and steal booze from his family or mine, and go hang out and drink. He was just literally the troublemaker, the good guy, the Steve-McQueen type of character, the James-Dean type of character. And he'd gotten drafted about three months before I did. And he had been a log truck driver right after high school and he became a tank driver. Well, I got over there in October, and we'd had a bored few weeks at base camp, so I thought, you know, I'm gonna write to Mel - his name was Mel Hebert - and see if I could either join his unit or if he could come join mine. And literally a few days or a week later, my mom sent me his obituary. He had driven over a five-hundred-pound mine, and literally they spent two weeks looking for pieces of the tank ... and him. That one laid me away. That was an, "Aw, fuck." That was a tough one to take. But you glue it back together, and during the holidays, Christmas time, the military would go to great lengths to have holiday meals. And they had a good supply sergeant and supply lieutenant, damn good ones. They'd get pallets of beers from God knows where. They'd be gone for two or three days, and come back with a whole pallet of beer. They'd come back with things, we had a fantastic Christmas dinner. And as we were doing it, a Freedom Bird, as they were known [aircraft taking service members back to the US], flew over us on its way back to the States [laughs]. And everybody just froze. It was unreal.

At that time, of the three of us – there were three – Otis J. Bailey was a draftee, big black guy, former football player at University of New York, Rochester, if I remember right. Otis was a very intimidating looking man. He was about five foot ten, five foot eleven, probably two hundred forty, two hundred fifty pounds. Not a handsome guy, wonderful gentle soul though. And he and my friend from quite literally next door over in Astoria, his name was Mike Cassidy. And Mike Cassidy, I had known in my childhood days, but we hadn't been best friends. Mike and Otis both got orders for out to the field. Which for the 11th Armored Cavalry meant ACAVs, Armored Cavalry Assault Vehicles, and tanks, including Sherman tanks, which were sixty tons, big tanks. So they went out to the field.

We got orders in March that Otis was going to be presented an award. A draftee. Let me roll back just a second. June of 1968, while we were in Basic Training during the Olympics was when Smith did the "Black Power salute" at the Games. There was a very real racial component in American society but also in the military. The "Black Power salute" said a lot and ... Karl Marlantes in his book *Matterhorn* describes ... he's probably the only writer that has ever spoken of the racial tension in the military during Vietnam. Otis and other black guys hung out by themselves in the military and there was tension. That's the best way to describe it. Anyway, they called a company meeting and Otis was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, which is second only to the Congressional Medal of Honor. And to find the award and go back and read it, it's un-fucking-believable what this man did. He crawled under live machine-gun fire three times to pull people back out. And you have to remember, this guy is huge! He crawled within six feet of an enemy machine-gun nest and pulled people out. Unbelievable heroism. So we lined up the company, and we're all standing there in formation, and the general flies in. Otis stands out in front of us, and somebody reads off the award citation, what he had done to get the award. And you kinda went, "Oh fuck ... he must have been out of his mind!" And Otis turns around quietly to the rest of us and says, "I did all of that? God, I must have been stoned." Well he wasn't, but this is the demeaning character that he was. Unbelievable man. Just to roll the story forward for a second, I left there an E-5, Otis left as an E-3, Private First Class [chuckles in disbelief]. Guy that gets a Distinguished Service Cross and leaves as an E-3. Tell me again about

this racial tension in the military? Yeah, Otis isn't the most lovable, likeable guy, but he sure as hell was not a bad troop, and he sure as hell deserved to have promotions. Isn't that a trip?

At our base camp, just like MASH we oscillated from horrible times to good times. Back and forth, and it was just ... playing volleyball once and having hell on Earth the next time. We had our helicopter pilot come in, and unbeknownst to me it was a fellow "duck" (University of Oregon student) and good friend. And that's a guy named Tom Norton. *The Oregonian* wrote a front-page article on him and his long-time partner boyfriend.¹ Tom flew 1,600 medevac (medical evacuation) missions [laughs in disbelief]. Off the scale. He crash-landed, or parked hard as he described it, seventeen times. When you flew, you folded up your flak vest (bullet resistant vest) and put it under your ass for bullets coming through, from below. Tom joined and was a warrant officer but he joined because of the draft. Tom was a wild and crazy guy.

I think one of the hardest things that I saw, we'd have people that would die and we'd call the morgue and they would transport bodies out. And the hardest thing was the grunts that were working the area, the infantry out there during the rainy season, which is May or June through September or October, you'd have just insane monsoons. Insane. And they [the infantry] would be walking and sloshing, and you'd have them come in with literally gangrene on their legs and feet. I mean, the smell of rotting flesh on living people ... it was an unbelievable. The smell of death isn't anything great, but to have three, four, five people come in that literally had their feet rotting off, that was ... and that happened fairly regularly. We'd have the artillery actively shooting out from our base camp on a regular basis. That was just part of being there. And you have the unbelievable ability to recognize two different sounds. "Boom, sheeeow," [outgoing artillery] or "sheeeow, boom" [incoming artillery]. Your brain can tell the difference really well. If you have outgoing all night long, you'll sleep like nothing. You get one incoming, and you're under your bed before you can blink. Before it even hits the ground! [Laughs] It's kind of funny. And fortunately they didn't shoot at us too much. We pulled guard duty; occasionally there'd be somebody out fucking around on the perimeter wire.

¹ This article, "Portland gay couple, survivors of Vietnam War, now find peace" by Julie Sullivan, appeared in the February 27, 2010, issue of *The Oregonian*.

The mud would get so slick that it would literally go over the top of your boots if you tried to walk in this red clay mud. Monsoon season, we had an ambulance that went to deliver something or pick up something, and this is just inside the base camp. It slid into the ditch ... we got out, pushed it out sideways, let go of it, and it slid down again just like it were on ice. Just crazy slosh. Fine, fine red clay. And then during the summer, the dry season, it would be dust ... up to your boot tops again. You'd literally be walking and the wind would blow and it just ... it got everywhere. It was in your clothes, everywhere. Like Desert Storm. You just couldn't do anything to get away from it. Unbelievable place on Earth to be fighting over.

My unit was the medical unit for the 11th Cav., and we had a fella that was about a week or ten days short, almost ready to go home, processing out. And he went down to the nearby village and was getting rowdy and drunk, but wasn't chasing after any prostitutes or anything. And an MP threw him in a shipping container; a steel shipping container was the brig. And he locked him up in one of those during screaming hot weather. And our CO [Commanding Officer] had to go to get him out. And the CO just quietly said, "I want retribution." "Oh, okay." So several months later, the MP that had been such an asshole came to go through the medical unit to check out. And be damned if we didn't know that, just by accident, his shot record "disappeared." So he had to take all of his shots from the very beginning all over again. Smallpox, diphtheria, the whole thing. So he was held in medical isolation [chuckles] while they took his shots. The MPs learned real good not to fuck with the medics. The best one was they said he had an infection, so they got some penicillin out of the refrigerator, and penicillin when it's cold like that is about like whipping cream. It's thick cream and it takes a needle about the size of your finger to get it into you [grimaces]. And so they took the needle and dulled it, made him stand on one leg with the other leg hanging limp, and then nailed him in the one he was standing on. [Laughs] Just fucking with him, you know? The guy needed it. So there were fun moments in all of it.

Our pet duck was known as "Hippie." He snuck into somebody's barracks one day and ate a whole baggie full of marijuana. Talk about a fucked up duck! [Laughter from all three] He would just go nuts and everybody knew why. It was just, "Oh God ... Hippie the duck, stoned again!" There was a lot of fun stuff like that. At one point, a snake slithered across during the wet season and it literally went all the way across two and a half lanes. It was a big black rubber snake,

humongous thing. So it wasn't a very hospitable place to be.

My unit was working on the other side of Saigon. And you'll see books and articles about it, the 11th Armored Cav. was working in the Michelin Rubber Plantation. And the enemy would use it as a hiding place, because you weren't allowed to destroy the Michelin. That was French, part of the old French Vietnamese holdings. It was part of the French Empire, and you didn't go into the Michelin. But the 11th Cav. was in an unbelievably difficult location between Cambodia and Saigon, where the underground railroad would bring in supplies for the Vietnamese. The tunnels, everything. The whole war was going on north and west of Saigon, and the 11th Cav. was part of that.

One of the stories that no one ever admitted to in real life was that we had captured a North Vietnamese [soldier] and had gone up in a helicopter with this person, and my CO [Commanding Officer], Colonel Patton² had held him out of the helicopter and said, "Start talking or you'll learn to fly." It's neither confirmed nor denied [chuckles]. I suspect ... well, it's war. There were four hundred twenty-five thousand of us there then, which is a lot of feet on the ground. It was a wild, very unruly, very nasty war. The *Stars and Stripes* [military periodical] would come out and it would have casualties in the corner, and they could be anywhere from ten to a hundred on a given day. You'd look through it for friends or hometown people. The casualty list was just unreal. My little unit puts out a calendar every year; it's highly active. But here's the kind of interesting thing [pulls out calendar and newsletter], these are the "Killed in Action" from that period of time. Headquarters, Air Cav., 37th Med., I did know Jerry [pointing to a name on the KIA list]. He was killed right after I left. Think that's a lot? [Flips the page to another full page of names]. It's unbelievable, isn't it? That's war.

Nate: We're looking at three plus pages of 11th Cav. KIA.

Steve: It's in the neighborhood of eight hundred and sixty killed-in-action. In our little unit. So it's rather unbelievable. Isn't that something? But that's what you saw everyday in the *Stars and Stripes* over there. There were what, fifty-five thousand killed, give or take? Something like that?

² George S. Patton IV (1923-2004).

Nate: A little more than that, I believe.

Steve: Yeah, maybe a little more than that. And we were eight hundred and sixty of them, our little unit. So a rather unbelievable intense level of wartime living. It's something that veterans of all wars are familiar with but it was kind of a peculiar agony for a war that drug on like that ... and you weren't winning it. At the same time, back here at home, summer of 1968 while I'm at Basic Training, Robert F. Kennedy is assassinated. Democratic National Convention has riots in the streets. Has anti-war protests, Richard Nixon is still president.³ The tension all across the country was just ratcheting up, and it was gaining big time here at the U of O campus ... I'll get to that in a minute. I came back in November of 1969 with an early release so I could start school in January. I had a decision to make while I was over there [Vietnam] of extending and staying for an extra three months, or leaving and getting reassigned and doing my full two-year term with the military. I chose to stay over there for the three months. We got out of our base camp and wound up going to another assignment, so we were just in limbo for a while. So it was a fair decision on my part because we weren't mixing it up big time. Just before we left, we had a cook that had about two weeks left, ten days maybe. He was up at five in the morning fixing breakfast, and literally kitty-corner from the mess hall was the church tent. And we took a big incoming artillery round, a one twenty-two [122mm] which is a big son of a bitch, and it lets off a hell of a bang. Well of all the things it could hit on the base camp, it hit the church, and it was no more. There was a good sized hole in the ground but the little black guy that was the cook went into one of the bunkers, and said, "I'm not coming out until this fucking war is over for me. You can bust [demote] me to whatever, but I'm here. I've got ten days left." I mean that would have been like from here to just over there [pointing out the window]. A one twenty-two ... nothing you'd stand around for either. But we had fantastic surgeons, we had fantastic skillful people.

All three of us came back on the same airplane, which is incredible. Mike Cassidy came back, and Otis came back on the same airplane. Same orders – still got those orders. Funny thing about

³ Nixon was elected president in fall of 1968, so he was elected president during Mr. Earl's tour and was president upon his return [editor's note].

the psychology of medics, very few of them are very active in any of the veterans' groups. It's very hard to treat casualties and then go be social. You've treated the wrecks of things. I've gone to a rally in Eugene, ten or twelve years ago, and there were three medics there, I think? Out of all seven or eight hundred people that were there. It's hard being a medic. It's hard being something other than an infantryman that kills people. I'm not making a statement but there's a bonding among people that have gone out in the trenches and walked the line and done things, that's different than medics are. It's just hard to describe. The casualties of war leave pretty harsh imprints, and that's all you get to deal with as a medic, the casualties of war ... not real fun. Let me come back to that. I got here in January of 1970 ...

Nate: Back from Vietnam?

Steve: Back from Vietnam. I left Vietnam in November, third, fourth, fifth, something like that. And it wasn't but a month later that one of my best friends in the fraternity house, named Thomas Cooper – had graduated in 1968 on time, hadn't gotten drafted but had gone to flight school. And he was finishing flight training in Florida and his jet flamed out, he didn't get ejected, and he was killed. So that kind of ... when your best friend from the fraternity, you come home and he's killed like three weeks later, that was a real kick to me. I didn't come back with particular educational zeal ... I just wanted to get the hell out of Vietnam. I didn't have a grip on where I was going, and then spring of 1970 was a bear. You had the Kent State shootings, where National Guardsman opened fire on college students who were protesting, and a bunch of them got killed. Unbelievable thing to happen. The ROTC [Reserve Officer Training Corps] building on the UO campus was burned to the ground. People were involved in it; I went to one of the meetings like that and someone, I think my little brother here in the fraternity had told someone that I was there, and people gave me a rousing ovation. That's very upsetting. I'm not saying it's right or wrong, it's just very upsetting to be in the shoes where you've just left a battlefield, your best friend has been killed because of that, and what the fuck? Where am I supposed to stand here? People tortured John Kerry famously, for having been an anti-war protestor after his service. Walk his shoes a mile before you complain. Secretary of State Kerry was a very honorable serviceman and for him to get smeared like he did because he was war protesting after his service, what did you earn the right to do with your service? To protest the living shit out of

it, if you want to. That's what you did, if you wanted to. The student deferment people at that time were the infamous leaders of our government under Bush. You know, Donald Rumsfeld and Dick Cheney and all kinds of others who did student deferment. Get married, have a kid, and avoid the war, and they have the balls to protest Kerry? That's just unbelievable.

Nate: When you talk about going to one of those rallies where they were applauding you, what exactly were they applauding?

Steve: The fact that I was there protesting the war after having been involved in it.

Nate: Oh, I see.

Steve: It was fierce on this campus. The students took over the university president's office. They locked out Johnson Hall. I mean, they were negotiating to have the police tear gas them and charge in. It was vicious. Students for Democratic Society was active all over the United States, and they were bombing and they were raising hell. Jane Fonda went to visit Hanoi. One of the people that went with her was the UO Student Body President, Ron Eachus. Ron is a good friend [laughs], has been for many years. Ron is a tremendously conscientious man, unbelievably so. He's been president of the Public Utilities Commission here in Oregon, and on the Public Utilities Commission for the last twenty or thirty years. He's been a public servant; he was an aide to Congressman Jim Weaver too. But those people all got smeared by military-type people that wanted to go to the length and win the war.

So coming back to campus and stuff at that time was really quite difficult. One of those things where there isn't a calm place to go to. Other Vietnam veterans, if you've ever seen the movie, *Born on the 4th of July* with Tom Cruise, it's actually rather accurate. People just came back and ran home and drank. Being a Vietnam veteran was absolutely not cool. You didn't want people to know it, because the antiwar protest had gotten so fierce. Not a pretty picture.

Nate: I remember you telling me a story before the interview about students taking over 13th [Avenue], I think it was? Can you talk about that a little bit?

Steve: Yeah, 13th Avenue was a through street at the time and was on the way to a lumber mill and in fact would have log trucks driving through campus, just because it was a major street. And Franklin Boulevard and 13th Avenue hooked up over by campus, but it was a major street, and students literally built a brick planter across 13th as part of the massive protests. They stopped traffic and had a hell of a go; it was fierce. One of my fraternity brothers – and a very good friend to this day – was one of those that did that [built the brick wall]. So you've got a whole bunch of incongruent forces coming together to make for crazy. And there weren't very many people that came home and either joined the protest with a good conscience or became soldier-citizens and wanted to go kill more. Everybody fell into the hole of the impact of that war. Really, really negative, and there wasn't a way out. You couldn't avoid it, it went all the way up to Nixon resigning, Johnson takes over. The political atmosphere keeps right on, Kennedy wanted it to go, Johnson takes over. Johnson says, "To hell with it, I don't want any more war." He literally threw in the towel and didn't want to proceed. Nixon takes over, and falls under the, "We've got to win this war," domino theory of "communism expanding all the way to Oregon" type of thing. When that fell apart and Nixon fell apart, his government fell apart and there wasn't a pretty place. College campuses were wild and crazy, really severely so. I didn't fare very well, and I literally came back on campus and just kind of fiddle-farted around. I lived in three different places with different fraternity brothers, and I would get in a car and just go for drives and go do things, because I couldn't really be around my family which was away [in Astoria], and I couldn't really be here [in Eugene]. There just wasn't a place for returning veterans, and you see that now with a lot of Afghanistan and Iraq veterans who had two, three, or four deployments. And they come back, and the world that they saw before is no more. Their girlfriends, their drinking buddies, their family ... it's just not the same shit you can share with them. It isn't going to work. So you wind up kind of staggering around.

Of all things, I had actually played team golf, and in 1972 I kind of, on a whim, applied to the local PGA, the local Professional Golf Association, and I got a job up in Tacoma [Washington], which was actually really good for me because it was away from all of the variables that I was coping with. Went up there and worked really long hours, and had a couple-years career of being a professional golfer, and it was a good break for me. I didn't respect it that much at the time,

because I was still kind of flailing around. I came back, and I worked as golf professional in Roseburg [Oregon] for a while, and then Portland for a while at two different golf courses. I look back and it gave me a chance to remake my world and come up with something different. Came back to Eugene in 1976 and worked for a sporting goods store downtown and stayed here until 1982 when I decided to finish up school ... fall of 1982, and then 1983 got a degree, School of Architecture, and then stayed in Eugene. I went to work for a shelter for kids who were in trouble with jail and runaways and such. I worked for six years at the shelter, called Looking Glass Shelter here in Eugene, until 1988.

One of the ongoing struggles, and this is an important part of it for me, which happens to this day, is, for lack of a better phrase, survivor's guilt. Survivor's guilt is as strong of a force as PTSD [Post Traumatic Stress Disorder] ... it's a kind of PTSD that doesn't get talked about much. I've been around abused kids, and done counseling and stuff, and it's taught me a lot. Otis is back in Washington DC, I understand. Mike died of Agent Orange impact about six years ago. A lot of my unit was deeply affected by Agent Orange. Each time we have a yearly convention gathering, the VA sends a special representative to my unit to help people work their way through Agent Orange effects. My dermatologist wonders why I'm fucking neurotic about things in my body, because my base camp was full of Agent Orange; they flew it right out, literally, right across from our hospital. We'd have fifty-five gallon drums and the tanks and everything, full of Agent Orange. So yeah, I'm neurotic about it. Survivor's guilt would best be described as, "Why me, Lord? Why me? Why am I the survivor?" I copped out and made myself valuable at base camp a lot, I think, so that I wouldn't have to go out to the field. Would anybody in their right mind volunteer to go out there? No. I was lucky enough to stay at base camp and have a good meaningful job, deal with things that are necessary, and be part of an outstanding medical unit. At the same time, I didn't do what those other people have done.

About three or four years ago, just to jump completely off what this means, I'm working in property management in Portland for a good friend, and I'm managing about two hundred and fifty apartments. This guy comes in, he's a wiry little guy, and he's with his wife. He said, "I saw your bumper sticker on your car that says you're a Vietnam vet," and I said, "Yeah. I was with the 11th Armored Cav." And he said, "I was with 101st Airborne [Division], I worked at a

hospital unit there.” And we were having a good military-to-military veterans’ talk, and I said, “One of the things that really drives me crazy since this war, and still with Iraq and Afghanistan veterans, is the survivor’s guilt that people are going to have.” And his eyes lit up and I kind of thought to myself, “What the fuck have I done now?” And he said, “I was walking a line in Vietnam,” which is infantry talk for ... you’ve got a lead man who’s tripping over tripwires, or trying not to, and you’ve got a literal infantry line walking behind him. He said, “I was walking the line in the jungle in Vietnam and we got hit, bad. The guy in front of me was killed, and the guy behind me was wounded really badly, and nothing touched me.” He said, “It drives me crazy, I wake up in sweats and everything.” His wife is there going, “Yeah, I know.” And he wound up just a few days before that, waking up sitting straddled over her, pounding on her, going, “Wake up! Wake up!” He was reliving that “walking-the-line” experience. Survivor’s guilt is way bigger than people think. Way, way bigger. It’s the slow, death by a thousand drops, kind of thing for veterans. And I think that’s like what we were talking about earlier; you’ve gone from eighteen veteran suicides [per day] to twenty-two, in just the last three or four years. Part of it is that survivor’s guilt. It is eating away at people ... it’s really, really significant for me, and I know it is for others too.

Alex: How does someone go about coping with the survivor’s guilt you’ve just described?

Steve: It’s a tough one, because number one, you have to admit it, and number two, you have to seek help. And the guy that walked into that property management office, I told him and hooked him up with my helicopter evacuation pilot, Tom [Norton]. Tom works as a volunteer at the Veteran’s Administration [VA] hospital up there. And he stands at the door, and helps veterans transition across the step. And I said, “Here’s the name of the guy, he’s at the door of the veteran’s office.” And I pointed to his wife and asked, “Will you go with him?” She said, “I’d be thrilled to.” And they did go, and three weeks later, he came in and thanked me for it. So it has to be a deeply personal connection, and I’m afraid it does have to be military, veterans or spouses of veterans ... something like that. You’ve got to have genuine respect for what the person is going through.

People were getting stoned over there [in Vietnam], but I never did, for a peculiar reason. We had a guy that was in our unit that was coping ... he had gone out to the field, and he didn't do very well. He came back in and he was kind of fucked up; you could see it in his withdrawn eyes and sketchy demeanor. And at some point, he managed to get some pills from somebody ... he was going to get high on what he thought was methamphetamine or something. And they found him the next morning, alive but with absolutely nothing, sitting in his bed. Drug dealers have no conscience, zero. And they had given him horse tranquilizers or something, and basically erased his brain. He was alive but brain dead. Couldn't talk, nothing. They tried to help him at our hospital and finally evacuated him out. That's the extreme, but you saw a lot of people that lived next to that, you saw people getting stoned, you saw some pretty heavy shit. Odds are, you aren't going to share it with your wife or kids. Your girlfriend? Want to watch them hit the door fast? [Laughing] "I'm not going to deal with this one!" So yeah, it's a difficult one. And I have thoughts about how to help people cope, but that's for another day.

Just for fun, I'll tell you a story that I think only my partner Daniel has ever been told. When we packed up base camp and moved to Long Binh, we had a conscientious objector in the unit. And he was doing his job just as good as anybody but would not carry a weapon. Neat guy; no problem. We're out playing kick box, kung-fu fighter out there, and he kicks me right in the groin! And he scores a "double hit," big time. I mean, I'm wiped out. Well my testes swelled up to bigger than the size of a tennis ball, closer to a good sized orange or grapefruit. Here I am, wiped out, so they take me to the evacuation hospital. And I go to the 93rd Evac, at Tan Son Nhut. In a sense, it turned out to be one of the most interesting experiences of my life. Go in there, and I'm hurting. I'm really fucking hurting. You can't walk, you spread your legs out just to sit. And I'm in the hospital, there's guys there ... one guy in particular was just a fire plug of a guy. Go, go, go type of guy. He had taken a round in his thigh and his wound was about the size of a huge round steak. It was a gigantic wound. And back then, they would clean it and then sew it up, step-by-step. They'd do this so you didn't sew any infection deep into his body, which would come back and kill him. And then they'd sew up another piece, and so on. So he's there for like a week or ten days. Well they cleaned it enough to evacuate him so he's in his wheelchair, running off to see movies, going everywhere, just ... he was all over the place. The nurse would come in, "Where the hell is...?" Everybody gives the, "I don't know ... we just

thought he went to the bathroom..." And he's off, God knows where. Chasing girls or something. Neat guy but unbelievable place to hang out, where you're in the evacuation hospital. I mean we're talking about amputees; this is bandage heaven. This one is like a live MASH; just an unbelievable place. So this really attractive nurse is the duty nurse, and she's coming around at about three or four in the afternoon. She walks up to me, looks at the chart. Looks up, "How they hanging tonight, big boy?" [Laughter] You know, I got laughed at, just like the rest of them. It gives you a respect for ... I mean here's this guy with his leg missing, and this unbelievable scene, and they're just charging forward. Somebody said, "Well, if they gave you a choice of evacuating back to the States, are you going to do that, or are you going to stay here and get well?" Being evacuated for having ... I was like, "No, I better stay [in Vietnam]." How do you explain that one? But what an unbelievable place.

There were so many people and it was such a disastrous situation over there – and deteriorating – that to come home didn't make it go away. It didn't go away for me, not that it ever has, probably until I started working at Looking Glass, which was a good ten, fifteen years later, and was counseling kids myself. Doing family therapy, and observing how child abuse affects kids, and how two parents abusing each other affects kids. How sexual abuse affects kids and things, it was only then that I could begin to picture myself. "Okay, this is what I've got to deal with." So yeah, it's not a pretty curse to put on people. This is why you don't get a lot of Vietnam veterans, to this day, standing up and saying ... because they've still got shit they live with and they'd rather take it to their grave than burden other people with it ... that's what it comes down to.

Nate: I've heard a lot of people say that Afghanistan and Iraq, dealing with the insurgency there, are kind of the Vietnams of this generation. Having served in Afghanistan, I at least see the parallels. I'm wondering if you have interactions with any of the younger vets in the area, and either way, do you think that is therapeutic for somebody who has kind of done the "original Vietnam," so to speak?

Steve: Yes. The words Post-Traumatic-Stress-Disorder basically came from Vietnam veterans fighting and complaining and bitching and saying, "We are injured." And finally in the late

seventies, PTSD was acknowledged. I think that's a big step, and I think that ... those veterans, even though they've been quiet about it, are an important link to new veterans. I have thoughts, and I'd like to do a second interview at some point here, to talk about that.

Let me roll this back a bit. In the mid-seventies, after the Vietnam War, Vietnam veterans had such a bitter distaste for how things went, and we changed to an all-volunteer army. I think it's one of the biggest mistakes America has ever made. Unbelievable mistake. Talk about the subtleties of government that looked good to start with and then go to hell. It did a couple of things. The Army needs to have citizens in it. Lifers [career soldiers] can become a bunch of obsessed maniacs. People that spend twenty and thirty years in the military can get "over military," they become where the military is everything they do. They need civilians to dilute them. They need guys like me, the US [referring to the draftee serial number prefix]. They need draftees to dilute them so that they still understand what life is like in the neighborhood ... a neighborhood that's not a base neighborhood. Not the PX/BX [Post Exchange/Base Exchange] life on post. The other side of it is that the people in the neighborhood need to appreciate what the military does. It's a big deal for you to understand what's going on in the military, and when you go to vote, it's something that needs to be shared with your friends and argued about; "Yes, we should do that" or, "No, we shouldn't." Right now, fifty-three percent of the American economy is homeland security and defense. Over half of every tax dollar spent goes to the defense budget, and [President] Bush epitomized it perfectly when he said, "Don't worry about this war. Go shopping; we'll take care of it." That's not the right response at all. It's the epitome of the wrong response, and in fact, citizen-soldiers ... there should be a lot more of them. There should be mandatory public service of six months, twelve months, eighteen months, I don't give a damn. It doesn't have to be in the military but the camaraderie that you take home with you when you're done, so that you can help people. It's just amazing, the impact that the all-volunteer military has had. This drone warfare is unbelievable; you don't even have to leave Nevada, or the newest base in Des Moines, Iowa. You can go to work at seven in the morning, fly an aircraft, kill people, and go home and have dinner with your wife. Unbelievable experience. And I feel very strongly that more people in the neighborhood need to know their soldiers; old soldiers as well as new soldiers. They need to be able to be in the neighborhood, and help people coming home. Right now, "You joined, it's your problem. You got a headache? You

got a little shrapnel in your leg? Well, you signed up. I don't want to get near you, you're weird. You aren't like that when you left." Talk about a subtle effect and what it has done. You have some people that enlist but it's not nearly enough for you to take to your neighborhood. The young veterans who have returned need to be helping the next wave of people that come home. Of all of the subtleties that look so good on paper, "Oh, we'll have an all-professional army," that's not what we should have done. It has divorced people from the military; they don't touch them. The military doesn't touch people either. They're not blended like they should be. The motorcycle groups of veterans that does all of the funerals, the Rolling Thunder and the Patriot Guard ... they're groups of motorcycle guys that are the honor guard for every returning soldier. They're at the airports doing it ... every returning casket, they're there in force. Every funeral, in force. The connection has been broken between citizens and the military, and the Defense Department has taken advantage of that. Now they are doing drone warfare, they're doing all kinds of surveillance, they're spending oodles and oodles of money, and nobody out here knows about it. You should know about it! People should know what's going on. That's a huge, huge change. I wouldn't have argued against it big time when it happened, but I am really fierce about it now.

As part of that, I would love to see a traveling troupe of soldiers, veterans, whatever, with a motor home with four or five or six people, two or three of them, a caravan ... go pull into Coos Bay, Oregon and set up their camp for a week there. And go to every town around, one by one, and go to ... Clatsop county, up in the North Coast, is a county of thirty-some thousand people. It has over two thousand veterans.

Nate: Wow.

Steve: Unbelievable number. To go there and be a lightning rod in that town. The city council, the school board, the high school ... Oregon City has the most active high school in the country. They have veterans' days where they invite people in to talk. Organize that, unique to each community, so that Coos Bay is different than Oregon City, is different than Beaverton. There needs to be people there for every returning soldier, alive or dead – not just dead. I would really like to see that kind of organization get funded, and I think people would step up and would

work to fund it in their community and to activate it within the community, more and more. You watch a professional golf tournament now, and every tournament has a hole that's dedicated to the military. In every tournament, and the guy [service member] stands on the side of the greens and shakes the hand of every player as they come through, greeting them in their dress uniform. That kind of thing; you see it at football games now. We need to make up for lost time by doing things like that.

Alex: Do you think the government has done a better job since you got out of Vietnam until now, of both providing organizations like the VFW [Veterans of Foreign Wars], and of engaging in activities like you just discussed with having the veterans at football games? Just trying to ease that transition from military service back into civilian life?

Steve: I think the VA has done a better job than they have the last twenty-five years, yeah. It still takes too long for injured veterans to get enrolled. I was fortunate; I had some medical damage when I left, and I came back for some treatment. And in order for me to get treated when I came back, I needed to either stay military or I could get enrolled in the VA. So I'm a disabled vet, and I have resources available to me and it took three weeks to get it, because I was pre-enrolled. There are a lot of older people that if you live in Coos bay, and you're having troubles like the guy that walked across my desk, and you don't have a wife or a son or a daughter or someone to help you ... he's not going to just get in his car and drive to Portland, and walk over the threshold of the VA and wait three hundred days for help. And that's still the case. The government is political, by its very nature, and they're fighting right now. Veterans' benefits were cut as of January 1st [2014], and they're arguing in the Senate now, simply to restore the cuts. Politics will never pay their respects to veterans. Veterans have to fight like hell to get what's due to them. So the political side of government is, "If it gets me more votes."

Nate: Are you still in contact with Otis?

Steve: I never have, no.

Nate: Really? So how did you know that he was in Washington DC?

Steve: I think I Facebooked him or something like that. The easiest way to find him is to go to Ask.com and just type in his name, and it will go to military awards. It's just stunning. Pulling people out, repeatedly under machine gun fire. I mean, I tell you what ... as big as he was, and being six feet away, he had an angel on his shoulder. Simple as that, he was destined to live. Unbelievable guy.

Being a part of a hospital unit is both so incredibly fulfilling, and so incredibly frustrating at the same time. Base camp, I'll roll this one back a little bit, just to show you the state of things. We had quite a few Vietnamese people who worked at the base camp from the local village. And they'd bring a bus down from the village every day, and the workers would come in, and then they'd bus them back. The bus hit a mine one day and killed their own civilians, en masse. Big mine. Well, what it was designed for was as a decoy; there were other mines planted for us to drive over when we came to help. And we went out in a deuce-and-a-half, and unknowingly went straddle over a five hundred pound mine. To this day, if there's a car going down the road, I can keep my tires in their "tracks" unconsciously. There's just no way in hell you deviate from the guy in front; he made it, I can make it. That's the case over in Afghanistan now. But we just went over a five hundred pounder.

Nate: And just to clarify, it didn't explode?

Steve: No. Our tires missed it.

Nate: So how did you know it was there?

Steve: A minesweeper came back after us and found it.

Nate: Sounds like somebody was looking over you, too.

Steve: Yeah, that was an, "Oh shit." We had to go pick up remains periodically from a helicopter crash or something ... nothing like a hundred and ten degrees with one hundred percent humidity

to speed up the decomposition of a human body. Like I said, it's the greatest mixture of absolute pathos and absolute fulfillment that you can have.

Nate: So this is one of the questions that I've wondered, certainly for people who were drafted because you didn't have any control over whether or not you went, but if I could rewind back time and give you the option of either going or finishing your school and never going to Vietnam, which would you choose, and why?

Steve: Hmm, fair question. My draft board was under such a call that I don't think it would have made any difference except maybe six months. It would have given me time to graduate, but they still would have called me up. My little town of four thousand people had six kids killed in Vietnam. One pilot, my friend Mel, and four of his classmates. The call was there, and not too much longer the lottery system came in. And that changed the perspective because then if you drew a lottery number of three, you were going to go so then you'd join the Air Force or the Navy, or do something different. The valedictorian at Seaside High School the year before [me], was Karl Marlantes, and Karl ... very smart man, went to Yale, spent four years at Yale. Did not feel like he should be a privileged class of person and chose to join. Well he chose to become a Marine officer, and he went over like that. His book *Matterhorn* is basically a fictionalized version of his life, because he didn't want it to be personal. He had an unbelievable time ... he won a Navy Cross, three Purple Hearts, oh Jesus, unfathomable. He came back, they did allow him to come back and do his Rhodes Scholarship – smart guy. He spent twenty years being an international executive who wrote feverishly, divorced once and never could get it out of his system. Wrote and wrote and wrote, and his book was like eighteen hundred pages, and then it was edited down to the seven or eight hundred which I've got. What an unbelievable story of small-town people, which a lot of the Vietnam veterans were. They [small towns] got a disproportionate call because you couldn't avoid it by going to school. My older brother, who is way more physical than I, had a slightly tweaked knee and so he couldn't go. But the call was, you went and a lot of people did join other ranks of the service. They joined the Navy or Air Force, several of my classmates did that. If it came down to doing it over again, man I ... don't know what I'd do. I'd probably join a different kind of service and do that, but a lot of other

service people went to Vietnam too. I just sort of threw it up in the air and let the wind blow me where I went. It's kind of unreal.

Nate: It's an incredible story.

Steve: A lot of people of that time got shook both ways. One of Mel's good friends, my friend that was blown to smithereens, one of his good friends was named Leonard. Leonard didn't go; he chose to go to Canada and protest. He stayed in Canada, came back and served some time in jail for it, and he's had a terrible time. It's unsettling no matter which side of the argument you were on. It didn't work for anybody. There wasn't an easy way out. Robert McNamara, who was the Secretary of Defense under Kennedy and Johnson, who was the hawk of hawks, in his dying days, he apologized and regretted ever having pushed. So you had that schizophrenic of an issue, and that's the peculiarity of this all-volunteer professional military now. You've actually made that schizophrenia bigger, without the damage to the hippies and the protestors. But the impact over the next twenty, thirty, or forty years for your Afghanistan veterans is going to be hard. It's not going to be very pretty. I kind of worry a little bit for some of them; it's not going to be an easy road for them. What comes out of it, the survivor's guilt, it's pretty unbelievable. PTSD becomes part of your psyche. It's there.

Alex: I've got a fairly big question.

Steve: Sure.

Alex: As far as future generations go, what would you like them to know about the Vietnam War?

Steve: I guess several things. One, it should have never been military, it should have been political. And things political should not become military. It's a political solution somehow. I look at it now ... the Vietnamese economy is a thriving world class one, like a resort. Hmm. We buy clothes that are made in Vietnam now, regularly. So the answer to moving from then till now

wasn't military. How could the military have made that transition any better? All it could do was make it worse. Do everything political.

Number two is, when you've got a defense budget that's fifty-three percent of every dollar that you pay in taxes, that's wrong. As long as you have that kind of phenomena happening, the war machine will continue because the United States manufactures something like sixty percent of the arms in the world. Well, until we get out of that mania that the military solution is the best solution ... obviously ... fifty-three percent of our economy is a war machine. We make sixty percent of the arms in the world. We have no interest in discontinuing war. We have hundreds of thousands, millions of people living off of what we create. What would I like them to know? Back off, make it fifty-two percent, make it fifty-one percent. Make it forty-nine percent. I love the one that popped up this week. Now we have drones so you can kill people from rural Nevada, but now we have robots? Why not play chess, and the winner takes all? That's what robots would be. I'm making a chess player and it goes over and kills some son of a bitch because he can't afford to make a robot that's as good as mine? That is fucking absurd. And that people could even fly an idea like that and not have people protesting in the streets, that's crazy. Robots for war? Like I said, have a good game of chess, winner take all. Same thing, no? But there you're on equal footing; you might lose. With robots, you don't lose. So yeah, it's a big question, but the answer starts in small steps.

Staying involved with the veterans that come back to each community so that they carry their message of, "No, don't go to war. Come up with something else." And to tell you, and the next person, so that the veterans aren't scared to come out of their shells and do things. My little community up there in Seaside, post-World War Two, had a whole bunch of veterans. My dad, and all kinds of people. They built a new high school, they built a new elementary school, they started a whole athletic baseball club association. They did all kinds of things to build a small community, because they shared that experience. Something like that needs to happen again, where we get involved beyond the military and start building our communities instead of ... fifty three percent is absurd. Absolutely, completely absurd. Robots are even more absurd. [Laughing in disbelief] Robot wars?

Nate: Is there anything else, particularly about your service, your time in the military ... any stories or any experiences that we haven't happened to cross during the timeline that you laid out for us, that you'd like to be a part of this interview?

Steve: Not that I can think of. The transition back ... I wish I'd had a chance to talk with my dad. My dad ... he was in a hospital unit and the only thing I know is that it was overrun by Germans during World War Two. My dad was shell-shocked and loud-noise-shy for years and years. He came back and basically took over my mom's family farm and I look at his life and mine as being so amazingly parallel in the strangest of ways. We didn't come back and do what he wanted; he'd been a pre-med student at the University of Oregon when he went to war. How our lives paralleled. Well I'm hoping that new veterans, of which there are as many Afghanistan and Iraq veterans as there were Vietnam veterans, I hope that there is a way for new veterans to do things like my dad did and like I didn't. It's a huge concern, and it's one that communities need to take the responsibility of addressing. I see the kinds of memorials built for the individuals [killed] on a very individual and very private basis. I don't see communities stepping up in little towns of America and medium-sized ones. I see some things happening but with more political kinds of rewards for people. I'd like to see people rebuilding things with veterans getting together and being a part of it. You can't pay your taxes and get every pothole fixed, every PTSD case taken care of, and every bad guy in North Korea taken care of, while you go shopping. Citizen involvement, that's what's missing right now. Twelve-month mandatory, service, or eighteen months or something, so people can get exposure to others, and get out of their community shell. Right now, I'm a little fatalistic about our politics being able to do things like that. They aren't going to give anything; veterans are going to have to take it. The politicians today don't give you anything unless they think it will get them a vote.

Nate: I think this has been as enlightening for Alex and me as we had hoped. There isn't a lot of opportunity for people in our generation to speak one-on-one with guys who were on the ground in Vietnam, guys who were there. It's just sort of a textbook experience for us, so it's very beneficial for us, and the hope is that the interview and the subsequent transcript that will go into the archive will create a lasting opportunity for kids to come around and see what Vietnam was about, when there isn't a benefit of having the veterans still around.

Steve: I hope so, because the World War Two vets like my dad shared among themselves, that's why there are American Legion posts all across America. That's also why they are going bust; most of them are kind of a place for those veterans to hang out when they are eighty or ninety years old, and they are diminished. We need something like that again ... those American Legion posts did that, they sponsored baseball leagues. They did all kinds of things. American Legion baseball was big, all over America. Because of veterans in Seaside and Coos Bay ... everybody had an American Legion. That's required again. Going from eighteen veteran suicides a day to twenty-two, that tells you a whole lot. There's a huge message there; it's getting worse. Veterans need jobs but they need to connect with each other, they need other veterans to reach out and touch, so to speak. This is what this project does in my opinion, it bridges that gap. Even if it's just a few people, that gap is meaningful.

I would love to have, if you could get in touch with Ron Eachus and give him my name, and get his perspective. He had his tortured side and I had mine. He's been a dedicated public servant; he's an absolutely wonderful man. From a different side that a lot of people would never see and appreciate ... I really admire the man. He's done so much and yet he was so blasphemed. He was called a traitor ... to this day Jane Fonda gets the same treatment. She was a little higher profile, but Ron was a saint, a good man. He'd be a fun addition to this project, having been a UO Student Body President right in the lightening rod times. That time was so ... I'm short for words, how bad it could be until finally the war was over and people started saying, "I'm affected," and they finally acknowledged PTSD. Now it's the Traumatic Brain Injuries [TBI], it's taken a while for that to soak in, that it's really something. You don't just have to have visible wounds; you can have some concussion impacts and get your brain rattled pretty well. I was fortunate, in a kind of sense of the word. Not completely from some of the less physical aspects. I'd love to see Otis. I don't know whether I will ... maybe. I'd like to see him standing in front of a crowd ... get what he deserves. If I were to put a reading list out, I'd put Karl's two books; they're unbelievable.

Nate: *Matterhorn* and then the other is...?

Steve: *Matterhorn* and something like, *What It Is Like To Go to War*. Just unbelievable what that man went through. Hamburger Hill in Vietnam is one of the most infamous battles of the whole war. They went to take a mountain called the Matterhorn, spent umpteen lives getting it, establishing the compound on top ... this is for real. And then they're asked to leave it, to go off on another adventure, by some West-Point-type officer, and then they had to go back and take it back again from the North Vietnamese. One of their radiomen had crawled and was up the hill and had taken massive damage, multiple rounds. Karl crawled up the mountain and pulled him down ... and the man later died. He pulled several people down but then the analysis of the event revealed that it's quite likely friendly fire killed his man. It's one of the hardest reads I've ever made, and if you can plod your way through *Matterhorn*, it describes the war perfectly. It also hits upon the racial tension; it's an interesting book. Talks about offing an officer that ... you had officers that were incompetent and were done in by their own men. And it's breathtakingly shocking, the prejudice that was there. I've never known anybody to talk about the prejudice issues of black and white in the military before Karl. I don't know that you could find a book [other than *Matterhorn*]. That wasn't long after the 1963 Freedom March. You're talking only five years later. You've got Tommy Smith doing the "Black Power salute" on the Olympic victory stand ... how wild and insane of a time can you describe? Having four hundred thousand people in a massive war like that. Oh, one senator voted against the war. Wayne Morse, from Oregon. One senator. I've known his grandson. Most conscientious senator of the period, he and Mark Hatfield [29th Governor of Oregon; 1959-1967] were peaceniks.

I'm glad you guys are doing a class like this; it's one of those that is revealing for me, revealing for yourselves. I wish I'd been able to know more of what my dad had gone through. He absolutely refused, and I'm sure for pretty damn good reasons. At the same time, if you can't learn from somebody before you, how are you going to learn? Somebody needs to be willing to give up the knowledge before you can absorb it. You can't just pick it out of the air. Thank you for doing this, guys.

Nate: Absolutely; I'm glad we were able to make this happen. Is there anything else you'd like to add before we end the recording?

Steve: No, I think we're good.

Nate: Thanks so much!