

INTERVIEWEE BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Name: Jerry Carl Curvin M/F: Male

Address: 1868 Webster Rd. Wellington, A1. 36279

Phone number(s): 892 - 3527

Approximate age or date of birth: February 15, 1945

Mothersname: Vanah Lily Curvin

Father'sname: Christopher Columbus Curvin

Placeslivedandwhen: Lived in Alexandria all his life

Education: high school, college on G.I. Bill

Religion: Babtist

Business, political and social memberships (past and present): member of VFW, Alexandria Sportsmansclub

Present occupation: Disability

Former occupations: Civil Service, Sea Board Railroad

Special Skills: fishing, hunting, + construction

Major Accomplishments: raised 2 children

National Events in which interviewee has participated: Vietnam War, and trained to go to Saudi Arabia, but wasn't sent

Local Events in which interviewee has participated: Coach of Little League Football, and Local Athletic Functions

National born U.S. citizen? Yes No Naturalized Citizen: Yes/No

Country from which he/she emigrated: family immigrated from Germany

Documents, photographs, and artifacts which are in the possession of the interviewee: photographs, patches, and Form 2-14 from Vietnam

Individuals recommended by the interviewee who might be candidates for an oral history interview: Christopher Columbus Curvin

Additional information: _____

Gift and Release Agreement

We JERRY CARVIN and Haley Curvin
Interviewee (print) Interviewer (print)

do hereby give and grant Jacksonville State University, Oral History Archive, all literary and property rights, title, and interest which we may possess to the audio or video recording(s) and transcript(s) of the interview(s) conducted at

1868 Webster Rd Alexandria, Alabama. 36279

on the date(s) of April 1, 1996

for the oral history collection being compiled by Dr. Marshall.

[Signature] Date: April 1, 1996
Interviewee's Signature

Address 1868 Webster Rd

Wellington, Al. 36279

Phone 892 - 3527

[Signature] Date: April 1, 1996
Interviewer's Signature

Address 1868 Webster Rd

Wellington, Al. 36279

Phone 892 - 3527

Oral Research History Proposal
Haley Curvin

Interview Date: March 10, 1996.

Interviewee: Jerry Carl Curvin. (2-15-45)


My reasons for choosing Jerry Curvin for this project are many; one of the primary ones being that he has a realistically vivid recollection of the time he spent fighting in the Vietnam War. He has much to reveal concerning how he felt about the war and under what conditions they were fighting ~~in~~ the Viet-Cong. The Vietnamese Conflict has always been an extremely controversial issue, yet the topic was much more dangerous during the actual time period.

By interviewing Jerry Curvin, I feel that I will be giving a realistic portrait of how the active soldiers in combat felt about their use by the government, conditions on the front lines, and a rounded view of the entire experience, in general. I also intend to focus on the remarkable contrast he may have experienced in having to change from a carefree young man, to a seasoned veteran of war in such a short span of time. In conversation, I have heard him say that war would change a man's life like nothing else, and I would find it interesting to elaborate on some of the changes he had to adapt to.

In the closing of the interview, I plan to ask Jerry's opinion on the hostile feelings many American citizens felt toward the soldiers on their return home. I would like to know what this welcome did for the soldiers' morale, after returning from the cruel, hellish conditions of fighting a

war in a foreign land so far from home. This war was definitely a life changing experience for many young men in this country, so I would like to glean some information that would help us today in understanding how Vietnam altered this soldier's attitude toward our country and how the experience may have followed many of them throughout their life. I feel that Jerry Curvin will be extremely beneficial in helping anyone who may listen to my tape gain a new clarity on what actually happened in Vietnam.

*Excellent
proposal*



Sample Questions for Oral History Project.

Haley Curvin

- 1.) Can you remember what you were doing at the exact moment you recieved your draft summons? If so, how did you feel upon recieving it?
- 2.) Where did you attend bootcamp? What was it like, and how well did it prepare you for actual warfare?
- 3.) Was it very isolated while you were overseas? How often were allowed to recieve mail from family and loved ones?
- 4.) Could you give me some idea of the scenery and environmental surroundings in Vietnam? Did your surroundings improve fighting conditions, or make them more difficult?
- 5.) How clear of a view did you recieve of the Vietnamese people, through the duration of your assignment? Did you find that they were a stark contrast to how we live in the U.S.?
- 6.) Without causing you dicomfort, could you give me a brief description of the actual combat in Vietnam? Would you care to give any particular experience as an example?
- 7.) What did your platoon do to occupy yourselves when you weren't fighting? Were there any particular good times that you can relay ?
- 8.) Do you feel that you gained any close friends during your time in Vietnam? If so, do you still keep in touch? Would you say that your platoon had a close comradship during the war?
- 9.) What was your understanding of why you were in Vietnam when you were fighting for your country? Did you agree that the South Vietnamese needed or appreciated U.S. intervention?
- 10.) What are your feelings toward Richard Nixon, and the government's role in what happened in Vietnam? Do you feel that they were looking ouy for the soldiers' best intere
- 11.) What were you doing when you recieved word that you were being sent home from Vietnam? Why were you released, and how did you feel upon hearing the news?
- 12.) Upon returning home, how did it feel to be back? did you feel that the attitude of the American people was as it should be?

- 13.) Did it take you some time to adjust to a normal way of life, after fighting a war for almost 2 years? Does the experience affect your life at all today?
- 14.) How has your time in Vietnam influenced your feelings on war, and has it changed your feelings toward fighting for your country?
- 15.) Do you feel that you recieved the honour that you deserved as a veteran upon your arrival home, and even today?
- 16.) What are your opinions on modern day war mechanisms? Do you feel that there will ever be another war like Vietnam, in the form of hand to hand combat?
- 17.) Of all the time you spent in Vietnam what is the most vivid memory that stands out in your mind, from the events experienced while there?
- 18.) Did fighting in such a deadly war change your outlook on life? What were your plans for the future after you got out?
- 19.) Being a veteran, how does it make you feel to know that we have political officials that dodged the draft?
- 20.) In closing, is there any opinion or peice of advice that you would like for people to know, or understand about the war in Vietnam?

Excellent
questions

VIETNAM WAR-JERRY CURVIN

By Haley Curvin

The Vietnam War was a very dramatic occurrence in history. Many young American men were sent across the ocean to a foreign land to be put at risk of death. Of the men that survived the experience, very few were without scars, whether they be physical or mental. I chose Jerry Curvin as my interviewee because he spent 14 months in Vietnam fighting the Viet-cong. This particular conflict has always been a source of interest for me, and I was able to absorb a more clear picture of what the experience was like for those young men ^{who} ~~that~~ were sent overseas by interviewing Mr. Curvin.

The time that Jerry spent in Vietnam is not something that he likes to openly discuss, and I could clearly sense the emotion that was tied up in the common answers that were giving ^{en} ~~ing~~. I made it a point not to ask anything that might have caused him discomfort, but I could tell that there were probably many unpleasant images filtering through Mr. Curvin's mind. He even stated during the interview that some of the events that they witnessed in Vietnam could not merely be explained, but had to be lived. I, personally, have known Jerry for 21 years, and this was the most I had ever heard him relay on the subject. Mr. Curvin was very cooperative, and I thought interesting, but I was immensely relieved when the last question was answered. I was beginning to feel a little guilty.

Jerry Carl Curvin was born on February 15, 1945, and stated

that he had a fairly normal upbringing. He had eight brothers and sisters, the oldest brother ~~which~~ was killed in a car accident at the age of 6. Nothing that Jerry had experienced in life had prepared him for actual warfare, not even his time in bootcamp in Ft. Kansas. I did not feel comfortable asking Jerry about any actual combat experiences, so I tried to stick to general information. He said the weather was very hot and beautiful, but he seemed to have developed a prejudice against the Vietnamese people. He felt that they were nasty and cowardly. He also believed that the South Vietnamese did not appreciate American intervention. Jerry recalled some good times that were had ⁱⁿ among his unit, and gained many close friends during the war, but regards them as friends from the past and has not kept up contact.

I gathered the impression that he doesn't see them because it would bring back unpleasant memories of Vietnam, and that was all they had in common.

Jerry also stressed the resentment he felt towards draft dodgers and the protestors, when he was forced to go fight as his duty. When he stepped off the plane in San Francisco, there were "hippies" protesting and it was very demoralizing for the soldiers because they did not ask to be sent over there, and did not enjoy their stay at all! Bill Clinton did not seem to be at the top of Jerry's list of favorite people either, because he found it horrible that someone couldn't be a private in the army, but could be the president of the United States. At one point during the interview, Jerry made known his feelings on Jimmy Carter's decision to allow the draft dodgers back into the United States, he said

that "they were given a pat on the back and are allowed the same priveledges as those of us that fought for our country." Jerry felt that it was "like taking your fist and knocking me in the face."

When Jerry had fulfilled his tour in Vietnam, it did not come as a surprise to him that he was being sent home. He said that he counted the days, and "at the end of each day I'd mark a line and know I was one day closer to gettin' home." Jerry also stated that the main thing on his mind was just surviving. I believe that was what most of the soldiers were preoccupied with also. Mr. Curvin also said that it was like everyone in his unit was in his own little world. Upon his return home, Jerry said that "I don't think I really felt happy until our plane landed in San Francisco." ~~He~~ was just immensely relieved to be back on American soil where things were familiar to him. I felt that Jerry's sentiments on this matter were shared by a majority of the soldiers, though I'm sure their reaction and acceptance was very individualized.

After the soldiers returned home from the war, it is a commonly known fact that many of them had trouble adjusting ~~back~~ to a normal civilian way of life. Can you imagine what it would feel like to be in a jungle for 14 months, killing people at random, being forced to commit and witness unspeakable acts of violence that conflict with every moral ever taught in your society from the time you were born? Then return to a normal American life, where you smile and exchange pleasantries on the street. I can see how that would be difficult to adjust to. Jerry stated within the interview that many soldiers lost their minds overseas, and some after their return

home. Jerry said that Vietnam even effects him personally today. The first few years Jerry was subjected to what we know as "flashbacks", bad dreams, and sometimes he would wake up at night in a cold sweat.

However, these problems do not plague Jerry with the same intensity that they used to. He stated that he "only had bad dreams every now and then, but I can tell it the most when I'm mad or in a argument with somebody." Meaning that when he gets angry he feels a little crazy, and gives Vietnam credit for that; luckily, he is a very laid back individual.

These flashbacks among veterans are very common, especially with those veterans from Vietnam. Many men are still mentally troubled from what they were subjected to, and there are still also many wounded. Many solders lost their lives, limbs, and sight, and are still in V.A. hospitals today. Jerry stated that "it's pathetic how our country lets our Vietnam veterans lay up in hospitals all crowded and half staffed" and he also made the remark that "if anybody hadn't never been to a V.A. hospital, they need to go." Many veterans received some compensation on the G.I. Bill for their hardship, but Jerry stated that it was the only recognition he ever received.

The main impression that was left on Jerry from his time in Vietnam, was of running through the jungle and being scared. Jerry stated in the interview that "if they was where I was at and wasn't scared, you better watch out for them cause there's something bad mentally wrong with them!" I'm sure that are more vivid memories that Jerry could have shared, but some things are better left

unsaid, if you want to forget about them. I don't think they would be very pleasant to hear about anyway. Jerry also felt that the soldiers were merely a social security number to the government, and I agree. The average young man in this country is not on the top of a politicians' list, and this was proven in Vietnam. Jerry also felt that there was a higher scheme of things within the government, but that is something we will never know. Jerry said that they could have wiped out the Viet-Cong in 3 months, if only the commanders would have let them. He said that every time their unit would pin them down, their leaders would call them back, and the soldiers found this very frustrating. I believe that many American lives could have been saved if they had been allowed to go ahead and get it over with.

The usual pattern for American society after soldiers' return home from war is to want privacy and settle down to the American dream, as demonstrated in the Age of Conformity after World War II. This was the case after Vietnam, but on a much smaller scale. Jerry felt this way, he wanted to settle down, have a normal life, and raise a family. That turned out to be exactly what he did. He now has 2 grown children, Heath and Haley Curvin, and a grandson the age of 7 named Jared. He seems to be a very content individual, and has pushed aside the memories that used to bother him. The images are still with him, but he no longer let's them affect his life, some people are not so lucky. I thank God that there will more than likely never be another war like the one our soldiers fought in Vietnam.

Good job
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etc.
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