

Eric Walz History 300 Collection

Rick Davis – Life during Vietnam

By Rick Davis

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Box 2 Folder 5

Oral Interview conducted by Cassie Lindenmeier

Transcript copied by Maren Miyasaki September 2005

Brigham Young University – Idaho

CL: I think first of all I need you to tell me when you were born.

RD: Forty-three.

CL: What day?

RD: August eighth.

CL: August eighth?

RD: 8/8/43.

CL: 8/8/43.

RD: I'll be sixty...in August.

CL: Oh, that's fun though.

RD: Yeah.

CL: Where were you born?

RD: Moscow, Idaho because my parents were going to school at the University of Idaho.

CL: And where did you attend school?

RD: I grew up in this area; I grew up two blocks from where we sit. Dad is a contractor, a building contractor and so, (phone rings) turn that off.

<Interruption>

RD: So what you want is a little background on me.

CL: Yeah, a little bit.

RD: I have a bio page out there that would have it all. My Dad's Dad came out here in 1918 to settle. He was your age; he was living in Ohio working in the steel mills, got sick of the whole thing: big city and all that kind of stuff. Got on a train and bought a ticket to the end of the line: St. Anthony Idaho. This is his brother (refers to picture). His brother telegraphed him back and said, "Get out here, you're gonna love it." So he came out and they homesteaded. And he was single and he was, you know and he homesteaded 15 miles from here up on the side of the mountain, we still have the farm. And then they grew up here and dad came along and decided to go into the building business, which grandfather was a carpenter, and dad went big and built half this campus, half the town. The building, the hospital, all that kind of stuff dad built. So I grew up here and on heavy equipment: cranes, bull dozers, backhoes, concrete, all that stuff.

That's where I spent all my summers. I didn't have any...what, ideas about teaching? I have always liked the humanities and have always been way into music or art or something like that. But it was always more a hobby than a vocation. I always planned to be a physics major and was such for my first few years. And I got a... (Pointing) that's an award for being the top science student in my high school. I came up here and I had the guy, the head of the physics department, tell me that's what I needed to do because anyway he knew my background. He said, "Be a scientist." So off I went, and that was then. Then I came back from my mission and went to Moscow, The University of Idaho. And was up there and decided to, I'd go to law school. I talked to Dad he said, "Well I am a builder," his brother is a doctor, and he said, "We need a lawyer in the family." So I said, "Cool, that sounds fun, and besides that I will make tons of money." And so off I went to law school, I graduated up at Moscow, and then I kept right on going at the U of I for their law school. I got accepted at Georgetown and some other places, but I wanted to stay here locally so I just stayed at Moscow. After one year of law school I hated it, and knew I could never be a lawyer 'cause I was too moral. Not that there aren't moral lawyers out there. But it just, it just bothered me. It just bothered me. I didn't like what I was doing. It was paper work, paper shuffle, and the only classes that were really fun were torts and I knew I probably wasn't going to do that. So I was upset and didn't like what was going on, and at that moment Uncle Sam intervened and I got my draft notice, which said, "Hello, you're going to Vietnam." I had two weeks, I had fourteen days.

CL: Where did you report?

RD: To unload everything to Seattle. First, you start here and they put you on a bus and they shipped us to Boise. And in Boise we went through the first physical, where you spend a couple of days getting poked and prodded and everything. And then they flew us out of there to Seattle, to Seatac, and I entered Fort Lewis, Washington which is just at the base of Mount Rainier. And that's where I did my all basics and my training and everything else. And I stayed there. They wanted me to go into language. I had high scores on my tests so they said you're going to be a VC (Viet Cong) interrogator, we're going to train you to speak Vietnamese, I already spoke French, which is what the Montanyards speak up there anyway. So they said, "Cool, we're just going to put you in and have you speak Vietnamese," and send me down to the presidio in San Francisco, that's where the language school is. And at the last minute (he snaps his fingers) they changed their minds. They cut the list. I was number seven on a list of ten. They took five instead of ten. So they threw me right back into the generic pool, which was army, which was infantry, which was Rambo. So I went through all the Rambo training. And got all ready to ship out, and everybody in our unit was being shipped. At the last minute...it was weird...there was a battalion, there was over a thousand men that were being shipped out on regular flights just going out and going over to Nam (Vietnam). And we had a company, our company was the last group, 150 guys, and in that company, our company just didn't get transfer order. We sat and sat and sat in this building waiting for our orders to be cut to ship out. The building next to us left, the building next to the other side of us left, I mean all these buildings, when they ship you out, when you finish your training they just put you in kind of a limbo area, a holding area.

CL: That building?

RD: Well a whole series, because there are several thousand guys every month. And they just would just fly you out, each day a plane would take that many more guys out, we were the last building. Not the last building in the row, we were simply just a building in the middle of all this stuff. But everyone around us were leaving and we didn't leave. So our captain went up to headquarters finally and said what gives? I have 150 guys sitting down here and where are the orders? And the headquarters looked at their paper and said, "Oh my heavenly days, typo." They had us shipped and yet we weren't so there were a 150 guys that needed a new home so they said, "Korea." So we got shipped to Korea instead of Nam. So I wound up on the DMZ (Demilitarized Zone) in Korea. When we got there they had a special selection committee where they were going to determine who went where, and they said you got one chance to volunteer for this unit or otherwise you're going to be go to some other places. And I said I don't want to go to those so I volunteered for this group.

CL: What were the choices?

RD: Well to go into a regular army unit, driving truck, or doing whatever, and just normal situations throughout Korea, which was stable, which was okay 'cause the US has forces over there ever since the Korean War in the fifties. And we were just kind of a...what? A monitor, a referee to keep South Korea from going north and knocking out North Korea. They still hate each other. So we got a lot of troops stationed in Korea right now, still do.

CL: So what was your average day?

RD: Well there was one group that was north that went clear north and literally sat on the line on DMZ between North and South Korea. I said, "I'll volunteer." And they said, "Well you can get shot at in this one, guys get killed in this unit." And I said, "I don't care, I'm in." So that's where I went. We were literally the last camp on the line. We were one of those camps with concertina wire all around it, with mine fields all around it, with machine gun posts on it. I mean beyond us was a big-wired fence and beyond that you got shot.

CL: How many were with you?

RD: Three hundred guys on the post, two hundred yeah probably more like two hundred guys, and that was it. And then we would go into the DMZ, to the actual line itself. There is a line that goes literally that goes through Korea, from sea to sea. And whenever they have talks between North and South Korea they come to a group of buildings that are there and sit at a table like this and there is literally a line that goes down the middle of the table and you are literally in North Korea and I am literally in South Korea, it's that phony. And yet outside the building we have guys that are walking that are walking around it, now as such I was a MP, I was a bodyguard for a two star general that was

there. And so I'm walking around the outside, I'm in North Korea, technically, throughout the whole time we were there. I could go in and out as I walked around these several buildings, and they had some blue buildings and green building. Blue building were United Nations, green buildings were Korean. And all I had to do was walk into the door of a green building and I had defected. And they had North Korean guards, just like us, that were walking around as well. And you never got close enough to one of these guys to get kicked or you got kicked. There were some fights that broke out several times. You never shot anybody. It's like walking around on campus. There were groups of U.S. MPs and groups of North Korean MPs and the groups would kind of walk by each other, but never get close enough for anything to happen. We were told, we were all carrying loaded pistols, and we were told you will never take out your pistol and you will never shoot anybody 'cause if you do you will start a war. It was that tense all the time, there were a lot of incidents that were going on at this time. We had a couple of ships that were taken over by North Koreans and the guys that were released came through our camp when they got released. It was hot, it was a hot active area. I saw guys shot, we had guys killed, I mean it was...So that's where I was, but I had a very good duty because I got pulled and got put in with the general as his bodyguard, as his driver, as his everything. So I just went everywhere he went whenever he went. And they were never going to put him in harms way. So as a result I got a very good duty. And I stayed with him.

CL: So you got pulled off the DMZ?

RD: I was still on the DMZ and did everything there, but I got pulled off of just working in a check post someplace or working in just whatever area. I got to be just the personal aide, the personal chauffeur.

CL: How long did that take you?

RD: I was there two years.

CL: Two years?

RD: Uh-huh.

CL: Before you...Two years total or two years before you were...?

RD: With him?

CL: Uh-huh.

RD: Well, your basic training and all that takes couple, three months. When you're drafted you go in for two years. So I take three months of training, then I got shipped to Korea, and I am there for another month, about two months, I guess. I was on regular guard duty, regular everything else and then they pulled me and said you go to work for the old man.

CL: And you did that 'til the end?

RD: I did that 'til the end. That silver plate right there is what he gave me. (Pointing)

CL: What is it for?

RD: That's just what he gave me for being his aide.

CL: What does it say?

RD: Thanks (laughs). That's all, it just says to me, and then it has his name and rank on the bottom and where we were. And then I came home. But before I came the last you know, month that I was there I got a call from this place. Which said—

CL: In Korea?

RD: Yeah, but they wrote me a letter. They said, "What are you going to do when you come home." And I said, "I don't know. I hate law school, and I guess I'll find something," and they said, "We want you to come teach at Ricks College." And the person who was putting the wheels in motion was my piano teacher, Ruth Barrus, after whom Barrus Hall is named. She was my piano teacher all through my teenage years. I started clear when I was about twelve, and I didn't quit 'til I left on my mission. So she was like a second mother to me. But she was the one who said, "I want you to come teach humanities." "I don't have any classes in humanities, I don't have a degree in humanities, I don't have anything. Yes, it is a hobby, but that's all." They said, "That's alright, we want you." So I came in here and interviewed. And they said, "Go down to Provo for one year, take the following classes, get married, and you start here next September. Goodbye."

CL: Wonderful.

RD: And that's how I came and that was 31 years ago.

CL: Wow.

RD: So your next question is what?

CL: How did you feel about the draft? Did you want to go? Or were you...?

RD: Was I opposed to the draft or was I pro?

CL: Just what were your feelings about it I guess? Do you remember the day you got yours?

RD: Oh yes. I still have the letter too. You're upset because it's going to change your life and there is a good chance that you're going to be dead in two months, three months. I guess one of the very sobering moments in it is part of the letter said get your affairs in order and your life insurance policy and contracts or rentals or anything else that you have because you may not be coming back. And since we lost over 50,000 men over there it was a real possibility. Plus in 1968, the fall of '68, when I got drafted was the Tet offensive, where we were getting our tails kicked, big time. And it was not going well for us over there. And there was a awful lot of... Well let me back up. The reason it wasn't going well was because the politicians would let, is have a war. Everything that was going on had to be second-guessed by the politicians in Washington before the army could do something. If they would have just said go over and win the war it would have been over in a month. But it wasn't. You would have guys shoot at you and you could not return fire until somebody okayed it.

CL: Even in the DMZ?

RD: Now the DMZ. No let's go down to, well let's go, well the DMZ there wasn't—that's different. Let's go down to Vietnam. If you are in Vietnam and if you are [in] certain areas, like Cambodia is right across the river and so if I am on this side of the river and you're standing on the other shooting at me I cannot return fire, because technically we're not in Cambodia. So the politicians were running a lot of things that way that bothered the army and the people who were in the army. I said let's go over there and fight and win it, come back, that's fine. But let's not go over and be handcuffed, be handicapped when we fight the war and yet that is what happened. And that is, was ultimately what happened. And why we finally turned around and pulled out with any kind of a win. I mean we did not win the Vietnam War. And that's just because of politics, not because of military abilities.

CL: So did this Vietnam War change your views of politics afterwards a lot or did you already...?

RD: No, I was...my father fortunately discussed a lot of things around the dinner table, and I grew up at a time when families still had dinner together and we still discussed things openly and thank goodness I was raised that way. And I have tried to raise my kids the same way and class as you know is very much that way. But you only learn when you discuss and when you hear other views and compare those views with your own. And so the Vietnam War was obviously very real and had been going on for several years. We got involved in '64 or '65, is when things got actually pretty active. By '68, when I got drafted, it was really active, and the anti-war movement was huge. We were burning buildings, we had campuses on fire, we had burned down parts of half a dozen major cities, there were peace marches, but there were also pro-war marches. There were just as many people, well there were more people I think that were pro than anti.

CL: Would you put yourself in the pro?

RD: Oh, I was totally pro. I was very definitely pro. I just very definitely felt that yes we had a duty to go over there and stop the advance of communism from North into South Vietnam. Ho Chi Minh was a very real threat to those people, and we saw it as our role to go over there and stop it. And that of course has been debated for thirty years since. But at the time that's what it was. Society was very definitely polarized. You knew where people stood very quickly on their politics. I guess that is what made me a hardcore conservative. But I firmly believe it was the right thing to do, I would do it again. Yes, I would. The school where I attended had rallies, had peace marches, there were fights on a regular basis right outside on the campus.

CL: At Ricks campus?

RD: No not here, but I mean on the campus where I was.

CL: In Moscow?

RD: But you could imagine how life would be if you were attending school and as you walk from one class to another suddenly a fight broke out between two groups of people. That was a normal day, and you would see in on TV every night on the news there was always some place that was on fire and somebody that was mad, politicians were on both sides. So it was a very troublesome time. We had just shot Martin Luther King; we had just shot Bobby Kennedy. So the high end of society was every bit as much involved as just the average student was. And in the middle of it all you, why you get your draft notice. This was before the lottery. So there was no lottery number where I drew and said I got a number like a 300, which means that I'll never get called or that I got a 30, which means chances are almost certain I'm going. This was when you simply got drafted. And I knew exactly that I was going.

CL: How old were you?

RD: Nineteen. Well, not at this time. Don't put that in. I was...what...twenty-two, twenty-three? Twenty-three.

CL: When you got drafted?

RD: Yeah, because I was an RM, I had just come back from two and [a] half years. This was when we had thirty-month missionaries, two and half year missions. And I had been back from that, from that year and finished up school, and gone to law school. Guess I was twenty-four and then got drafted anyway. You had...the draft was split up basically into four categories. 1A meant that you were prime and you could be drafted at any moment. 2S was a deferment, a student deferment, which says that as long as you are in school you won't be drafted. Unfortunately, Uncle Sam didn't account for graduate school so once you got a four-year diploma, your bachelors, he said you are now eligible. We said, "What about graduate school?" He said, "It doesn't count." So a lot of the guys that I went in with were from graduate schools. The basic group of the guys that went through basic training with me represented almost the two ends of society. There were a

lot of college graduates who were very smart, very well educated, very articulate, and knew what was going on. And right next to them were guys off the streets in California who had completely blown their minds on drugs. We had one guy in our outfit who couldn't say three sentences coherently because his mind was so fried.

CL: And they kept him there or did they ever send him home?

RD: No, they kept him.

CL: How did you feel about that? Did it bug you guys?

RD: It bugged us only in the sense that we didn't want to be in the unit with him, because we couldn't trust them. But of course it didn't bother me that they was being drafted because if I get drafted it is only fair that he get drafted. What else?

CL: How do you feel about the military?

RD: I totally support the military. I think that basic training is very good for teaching a person self discipline. As a church member we all know what good comes from serving a mission. The military is one step up from that, I think. In that it teaches you to do things which you don't think you can do, and yet you do them. It's wonderful training for bringing out the best of a person. There are also people who need to learn how to obey some rules, people who have never been told "no," people who are problematic in society because of that, and the military fixed that also. I saw that happened to more than a few people, I had one guy that went in with me who was given the option of going into the army or going to the state pen. That was it, prison or the army. And yet the only problem with him is that he had never been told no. He had a very wild life up to that point. We got him in basics. A drill sergeant straightened him out behind the barracks one night. And he became a wonderful person, a good soldier.

CL: Did he go with you?

RD: No, we got split up later on. But, he was a guy that simply needed to be told where things were and suddenly says, "Oh," and fell in line and became a good person. And I think that society today is far too liberal, far too accommodating, far too forgiving in what it allows what people to do. Basically saying, you do what and as long as it doesn't interfere with what I am doing why you can go ahead and do your own thing. I don't agree with that. The church certainly doesn't agree with that. The church has a set of rules, which are very well defined, and I don't care what you want. This is the rule, and we have to do it. Society is not that way, and that's why I think we have many of the problems that we do today.

CL: What about your unit, the people you went over with, did you get to see them throughout?

RD: Yes. We stayed together. As a matter of fact, there is a letter right here, there's a Christmas card that I just got at Christmas from one of my best friends in the army, and we still keep in contact with each other.

CL: Where is he?

RD: In Nebraska.

CL: Were you guys at grad school together then?

RD: No we met in the army. We met, it's kind of interesting, they had a...what's the word...it wasn't a contest. At the end [of] each cycle, you go through nine weeks of basics and another ten weeks or so of advanced basics, It's called AIT, Advanced Individual Training, and at the end of that they choose the outstanding soldier from each unit, from each battalion. And out [of] a thousand plus guys I got chosen out of my unit as the top soldier and it is just for overall everything. For how you act, for how you can perform, for what you do or don't do. And my friend Ron was chosen out of his unit, and what they had is five of us that were chosen on the entire base. And then kind of had a little contest where they interviewed each [of] us to determine which of the five was going to be the overall soldier for the entire unit. He won, and I didn't know him until that point. He was just another guy that I'd met. But he and I wound up together. And then wound up in Korea together, and then in the very same unit in Korea together and became best friends. And he still is a good friend.

CL: What does he do now?

RD: Insurance. He is very rich in [the] insurance business; very well to do. Turn that off I will show you a picture.

<Interruption>

CL: Was your community... Did it change a lot? By the time you left and the time you got back did you notice a lot of change?

RD: No. This community was small enough that there wasn't really that much of a change. The community itself was always let's say a solid Mormon town, and it was still a solid Mormon town when I came back. The big cities were still rioting, although not quite as much. I think '68 was probably the peak of the anti-war movement.

CL: And that's when you left?

RD: And that's when I left.

CL: Were you subject to any of the anti-war...?

RD: Oh yes.

CL: Do you have any stories about that?

RD: We got spit on when we came back home. I remember that very well.

CL: When you got off the plane or what?

RD: We got off the plane after two years of serving your country. They out processed you is what it was called, in Seattle. And we all flew in there with the same clothes you had just left the field with. And they gave you new uniforms and there called greens, but we put on our greens, which is a formal dress uniform. To go out and get on a plane to fly to wherever home was in the United States. And as we went through the airport we got spit on.

CL: By just anybody?

RD: By some anti-war protestors.

CL: Were they there just for your arrival?

RD: Not for just us, but just for soldiers in general. I think that they're lucky that they didn't get killed that day.

CL: Were you guys really mad at them.

RD: We were very mad at them.

CL: The whole unit?

RD: And we could of...(taps his fingers)...anyway.

CL: Wow, how long did you have to walk through that then?

RD: Just in that airport is where, it was a staging area so there were a lot of anti-war protestors there, like I say I think that they were dumb to choose that spot because there were a lot of army guys who were there. But that's the freedoms that they are allowed.

CL: Yeah.

RD: But it is pretty hard when you have given two years on your life on the line for your country. And then you come back home and have people spit on you for doing it. And they haven't, they have no idea what it was like to go out there.

CL: Do you know anyone who skipped the draft?

RD: No not personally, I knew of several people who had friends who had, who went to Canada. And that was back in the days of love it or leave it. So we were happy that they went. We said, "That's fine, let them go to Canada, I don't want them in my outfit." Because when you are out there and you are standing next [to] somebody you trust that individual totally, and you don't want somebody who is going to waffle at a tense moment.

CL: Did the people, did some of the people you were with, like you said some of the people you had the top of the cream type people and then also you had people off the streets, did you have people there that would have left if they could of, like would they have skipped the draft if they could have?

RD: I think so.

CL: Was it a positive atmosphere or was it rather negative.

RD: No it was pretty positive, we...once you got in, they realized, everybody realized that they were in and simply adjusted. It's like you being in school. You're here.

CL: You have to get over it.

RD: And since you can't change that...let's say your roommates. You have roommates and whether you like them or not you simply adjust until you accommodate your roommates or being on a mission you accommodate the new companion you just received whether you like him or not is irrelevant. He's part of the group, you're part, and so you adjust. But you also had a lot of people who slacked off. Who did the bare minimum, who were not pro active in what they did. That part always bothers you, but that's just society in general. Nothing changes, that's life.

CL: Slackers always.

RD: Always, always. There will always be those who will lead and always those who will complain about everything no matter what. So we had plenty of those in the army. The hardest part of the army was learning how to take orders from someone who didn't know what he was doing, where you simply had to take orders. And once you understand that that's how the army works, that there has to be a chain of command, that when someone says to do something you have to do it because that's how armies function. Then you wanted to be very sure that the person who was giving you orders was competent. And it bothered you when [you] got someone who wasn't.

CL: And were there moments when you had somebody who wasn't?

RD: Yes.

CL: Like at a percentage would you say at eighty percent of the time you had good ones? Or?

RD: Yes that's a good number.

CL: Eighty percent.

RD: Uh-huh.

CL: Lucky guess.

RD: It's no different than a bishop or a stake president or a student body president or a politician, you have some good ones you have some bad ones.

<Interruption>

CL: Very true. Was there ever a chance for you to be transferred to Nam from Korea?

RD: Yes.

CL: Like I surprised that they didn't move you guys instead of having to training more...

RD: Since we had been trained, why it was a waste of training?

CL: No, not, it's not that it was a waste of training, but maybe since you guys had to shoot on occasion also that you maybe you guys would just be more prepared for it than others.

RD: But they had a quota each month of a certain number of people who were going home from Vietnam so that they had the same number that [was] being shipped in so that they could keep the numbers balanced. And since we were no longer in that pipeline, we were in Korea, then we were out of the loop, and they didn't worry about us. Excuse me (phone rings).

<Interruption>

RD: That was my coroner job.

CL: Do you need to go now?

RD: Nope.

CL: I think that I only have two more questions actually that I am curious about.

RD: Okay.

CL: Number one, you said that there people out there with you that did drugs their whole life. Did you see drug use while you were there?

RD: Yes.

CL: A lot of it?

RD: Yes.

CL: Like what type? How did they get? Where?

RD: Oh, there is anything you wanted was available, and I repeat anything. The sewage of society lives around the edge of army bases. I have never seen lower elements of society than I did in the army. So drugs were as common as candy bars. It was simply your choice...The orient is the world's supplier of opium. We had all the opium you could ever dream of. They had special cigarettes that were opium laced. You could buy them [in] five packs.

CL: And did the generals and the people in charge know about it, and they didn't have a problem about it?

RD: Do you have people on this campus who are doing no-no's right now?

CL: Most likely.

RD: And what is being done about it?

CL: Nothing.

RD: There you go.

CL: Hmmm.

RD: You know that it's there, but as long as [it] isn't a problem it's okay.

CL: Do you think that it affected the way they served?

RD: No more so than drinking, and everybody drank.

CL: You talked about how it was important to have a level of trust with whom you were with.

RD: So your group. But once again let's go back to drinking. I went for most of my education to non-Mormon schools so most of my friends were drinkers. And I knew that they could be drunk on a given night, but they could be perfectly normal and competent the next day. And so drugs were pretty much the same thing. There were a lot of people who did casual drugs. There were a few who did...what, who did drugs all the time and

were therefore not to be trusted. But the average drug user, the casual drug user was a common as could be.

CL: What would you say was the drug of choice?

RD: Opium.

CL: Opium was it?

RD: Uh-huh.

CL: Why do you think that opium was the drug of choice? Because it was the most supplied?

RD: Because this is the area of the world that produces it.

CL: It was the cheapest thing.

RD: Yeah Cocaine was not around yet. Cocaine was...

CL: Marijuana?

RD: Marijuana. Oh yeah marijuana, it was the only thing people smoked if you were going to smoke was marijuana. And this is also at a time was smoking is socially acceptable. All the airplanes of the day, smokers were on the airplanes so you always breathed smoke. I got so used to second hand smoke I didn't give it a thought. The C-rations, the meals there were called MREs today, but the meals you would receive when you were out in the bush came with the basic meals and some toilet paper, some food, and a small package of cigarettes. These were just the things that everybody needed. And for those of us who didn't smoke we could always trade those little packages of cigarettes for other things that we wanted. Tabasco sauce was another item that everybody liked.

CL: So that's what you traded for?

RD: And so you could trade for that or for a better meal. Ham and beans was a bad meal. There was kind of a beef stew that was a good meal. There were some chocolate cookies that came in cans that were a good meal. You could trade for those things. And so cigarettes were always a very easy commodity for me to exchange.

CL: What was the meal you liked the most then?

RD: Oh I don't remember...beef stew.

CL: And the worst was the...?

RD: The worst was ham and beans; that was bad.

CL: Was it just like a sack lunch, and you just grabbed it?

RD: Uh-huh. A big sack lunch, they were all prepackaged. The big pockets that you have on your pants, today's teenagers cargo pants with the big pockets that's what it come from. You could put four days worth of food into those pockets, tear up all the boxes so you didn't have that, just strip all the boxes and put the items in your pants and off you went. So you carried everything that you needed.

CL: You were set. And then the last question I have for you. Was the native population...How do you think they treated them? How did the army treat the native population? How did the native population treat the army? Were we welcomed there?

RD: In Vietnam, not in Korea, not where I was where I was pretty safe, but in Vietnam there was no way of knowing if the person with whom you were speaking was South Vietnamese or Viet Cong. It was scary because you wanted to trust people. You were living right there and yet you had no way of knowing if this person would suddenly two hours later, sabotage a certain unit, blow up some ammo, blow up a fuel truck, be part of the underground network that got the Viet Cong in and out. I mean it was terrorism at its best. The part that scared the guys I was with the most was that women could walk up and smile and sell you something and two minutes later toss a grenade into the truck and run away. Children carried boxes for shoe shines and could toss a grenade at you as well. So everyone was the enemy and yes, we treated them badly as a result. We did not have much compassion for the villages. When US troops moved into small villages out in the middle of the bush, everyone was suspect.

CL: How was that different than the Korean area?

RD: Where I was, you see the hot area in, if you will Korea; the one only area was hot was the DMZ itself. South Korea was stable and was just trying to come out of the post war destruction. Today's Korea is very productive as a result you see today's Korea is what Japan was in the 50s and 60s, I can remember when anything that said made in Japan was something that was terrible and you didn't want to buy it. You could pick up something and turn it over, look at the bottom, and it said made in Japan. You said this is junk. Now you say made in Japan, you say this is good. Korea is going through the same cycle and today's Korea is what Japan was in the 60s. It's just coming into its own. But we're seeing major names now start to appear that are all of Korean manufacture. So Korea was pretty stable and just trying [to] find itself. Our job on the DMZ was to keep the two Koreas separated. 'Cause they both hated each other and were trying to infiltrate. We had soldiers from North Korea constantly trying to march through at night secretly to get into South Korea, to blow up things. And that was our job.

CL: What do you think they thought of you?

RD: Of us, oh they hated us because we were keeping the two nations part. This is like two kids on the playground who want to fight and the teacher is standing between and saying no.

CL: So even South Korea you don't think appreciated...?

RD: South Korea wanted to go north, still does.

CL: So they didn't like you either?

RD: Correct.

CL: So what did you think of them?

RD: South Korea? We got along with them very well, very well. We even had some South Korean army members in our unit. South Korean MPs served right along side us.

CL: They just signed up?

RD: They were in the South Korean army and to better infiltrate the two systems together and to show both sides that it was okay, that we liked you and you liked us they had South Korean MPs serving in our unit. And we got along very well.

CL: You keep saying that the south wants to go north. Would you say that the whole of them want to or is it the politicians or the people or is it a split?

RD: I think once again that's a matter of education. North Korea is one of the most poorly educated countries on this planet today. It is one of the poorest in terms of materials and everything else. And all they know is what they have been told by their government. And it's sad. South Korea on the other hand is very definitely mainstream, almost a first world nation. So they are very aware of what is going on at the north. They want to go north and help liberate North Korea from the oppression that it suffers. North Korea simply believes that they have the power to go down and stomp on South Korea and take them over and turn them into communists. Now they're foolish. But their leaders have sprouted that doctrine so long they believe it.

CL: That makes sense...I am done with questions...Do you have anything else to say?

RD: I hope this works.

CL: I think it will.