Bobby L. Davis Memoir

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Davis, resident of Elizabethtown, Illinois, recalls his personal experiences in the army during the Vietnam conflict. He was drafted after graduating from high school and worked in a local fluorspar mine. Davis recalls incidents from his service in Vietnam, including seeing a man blown to pieces by a Vietcong satchel bomb and witnessing a black soldier saving a white soldier trapped in a bombed tower bunker. Photos taken by Davis while he was in Vietnam are included in the memoir.

Interview by Jennifer Humphrey, 2009
OPEN
Greetings from your friends and neighbors.
Interviewer Introduction: Good afternoon it is April 11th 2009 and we are at the home of Bob Davis in Elizabethtown, Illinois. Bob is going to share with us his experiences in Vietnam. My name is Jennifer Humphrey, I am the interviewer, and this is for the University of Illinois, Springfield for the oral history class of Dr. Deborah McGregor.

Q: Okay, let's begin our interview with some background information. When and where were you born?

A: I was born in Rosiclare, Illinois in 1949. May the 2nd.

Q: Have you lived in this area all your life?

A: Yup. My whole life.

Q: Tell us a little bit about your childhood?

A: It was just basic kids stuff. I grew up we didn't have electricity in one place we never even had electricity. We kept our milk in a cistern to keep it from spoiling. Basically made our own toys and... went to two or three different schools around in the county. Did hunting and fishing with my dad. Regular things like kids do.

Q: Okay. What was your senior year in high school like? Because I think that's a pivotal time for you, or its going to be.
A: Yeah it was a... well it was... a hard...a hard time because I knew that Vietnam was going on and a lot of people were concerned in that stage of our life, with being seniors, why it was, you couldn't really plan nothing because the draft had been, what do you call it?, enacted or whatever so people were being drafted and... couldn't really afford to go on to college so I couldn't get a deferment on that...so, I just....

Q: Did you have particular plans for after high school?

A: No. I was just going to go to work like my dad did in the fluorspar mines and that was basically my only plans but try to find a job and I pretty well had an idea I would probably get drafted, because I was in the right age category. My dad he was in World War II and my half brother he was in...he was in the army but he never did go to war. I think he went to Korea or somewhere like that and spent his term.

Q: Was he older than you?

A: Yeah, he was probably ten or fifteen years older than I.

Q: Do you have any other siblings?

A: I've got two sisters and a younger brother. One sister is younger than I am and one older than I am.

Q: So do you remember any particular events that were happening then, like in your community or the world? It was a pretty tumultuous time.

A: No, not really we lived out in the country and like I said we didn't have no television or nothing so we were kinda basic hillbillies I guess so.....(laughs)
Q: Okay, tell me about the day you received your draft letter?

A: I was working at a rock quarry or it was a spar mine, fluorspar mine actually over here just a little ways from here and came home and had the letter in the mail from the circuit clerk and opened it up there and it said "greetings from your friends and neighbors you have been selected to serve in the armed forces." So, I thought well whoever my friends and neighbors are...but...

Q: That’s pretty comical.

A: But that was kind of a downer there whenever I got that news. I didn't really want to go but I got drafted. But I figured if duty calls, I'd do like everybody else, serve my time and get it over with.

Q: What did your family think about your being drafted and going to Vietnam?

A: They were worried. Of course everybody was at that time. It was in 1969 and they were concerned. My cousin he got killed over there. He was one of the first ones that got killed, Gary Don Davis. And there was several others from the county here that got killed. They were really concerned about it. I said maybe I'll get put in a safe area and it won't be too bad. That didn't happen either.

Q: How old was your cousin?

A: I think he was about twenty or twenty one. He wasn’t very old either.

Q: How did he die?
A: I don't really know. I think he was in infantry maybe. My first wife's husband he got shot down in Vietnam, he was a helicopter pilot, he got shot down and he drowned in a rice paddy. The helicopter crashed in the water and he drowned they said.

Q: Did you know him?

A: No. Deon Lowry was his name, him and two or three others here in the area here. I heard of him but I really didn't know him.

Q: How did it change your life? change your plans for the future?

A: It makes you grow up quick. Basic training and advanced individual training it really changes your life dramatically really because I was always brought up in church you know, and thou shall not kill and all this and that was one of my concerns that I didn't want to do that. I didn't want to be a conscientious objector or none of that stuff. But I thought well I don't know what I'll do when the time comes if I have to so I was worried about that. When it comes down to it they prepare you for it and...umm things happen its either kill or be killed. So it changes your whole outlook on the whole, you think one way but when you get in a combat situation you have to do what you have to do.

Q: You were telling me the other day about draft dodger stories?

A: Yeah. We went to St. Louis, Missouri and there was people that was there doing all different kinda acts trying to get out of it. (laughing) At that time (pause and laughing) they wouldn't take uh... what do you call it, gay people they called them then I mean they wouldn't take those so they was a lot of them wearing dresses and doing all kinda feminine acts and stuff just trying to get out of it.
Q: Like Klinger on Mash? (laughing)

A: Yeah. Just like that. And then you had people who were overweight and when it came time for their time to be inducted why they would eat a lot of food and they'd just keep piling on the weight so they'd get rejected. Then you had people who was too skinny, they wouldn't and didn't so they would starve themselves. Because they knew their time was coming to be inducted so would get to skip out on that. I couldn't gain or lose either one I didn't even try to so I just stayed the same. I had people that was on the bus that was crying you know my age they was crying. They knew they was going to get drafted. It was sad because lot of them was leaving their girlfriends and some of them was married. I felt sorry for them but I thought I wasn't married and I was single. I actually seen some of them out there crying on the way out there for their physicals and stuff.

Q: So after you got your draft letter then you went to St. Louis, is that where you go?

A: Yeah. You go there for...they check you all out and give you your physical and stuff. We took a gulf transport bus or something they send you there.

Q: And so after you go there how much longer was it that you had time to see family and stuff before you had to leave, actually go to training?

A: I think it was like two or three weeks or something like that. It might have been two weeks. I let my employer know I'd been drafted and they saved your job for you and they still do I guess now. It was law then that they would keep your job open for you when you got back, if you got back. That was a hard time to go though, I had to go to Chicago and catch a plane, after I went to Fort Leonardwood Missouri and got my training then I had to fly out of Chicago out to California after we received our orders where we'd go and what company we'd be in and all that.
Q: What were your feelings about Vietnam before you were drafted? Did you know much about it?

A: I didn't really know a whole lot about it until after the fact. I knew there was a lot of protesting and a lot of riots. People organizing things against it you know. I really kind of got a lot of my feelings I guess from watching the news and T.V. on how it was bad. I knew it was, of course it had been going on for quite a while so I had a little idea about I didn't think it was a good idea.

Q: You didn't have a choice did you?

A: No. I didn't have a choice. Like I said knowing now what I didn't know back then I'd probably have second thoughts about doing it even and not to be unpatriotic but its just the idea that...of politicians making choices... that I'm just not in favor of I just didn't agree with. It was like they said like 30% of people wanted us over there and the other 70% didn't want us over there. So it was kind of...you had to watch your back on the people that even was supposedly friendly forces. Because they didn't like us over there either so that's why I said about this Iraq war I said its just going to be another Vietnam all over again. It was really a hard time and there was really a lot of racial things went on back then. I never was a prejudice person but there was so much fights and stuff going on in our own forces there. It was bad. That's what was worse, you couldn't even go to the EM club where enlisted men went to drink and have a good time there was always fights and stuff and they were always over race and stuff. It was really a big thing then.

Q: Like soldiers against each other? Particular groups or something?

A: Yeah. They even had...they even had bounties out on our own people. You know. Maybe I shouldn't being saying this but I can't prove it but that's what they said that if you had a bad captain or company commander and you were out in the field on a fire fight or something.
Q: What was your training like and where did you first begin training?

A: Fort Leonardwood Missouri they used to call it Little Korea I think's what they named it cause its so cold down there in the winter time. That's where we did our basic training and also did my second eight weeks of training was advanced individual training so I did all my training at Fort Leonardwood Missouri. During the winter months it was pretty rough. (snickers) I didn't know if I'd make it or not but I did.

Q: Were you trained for any particular specialties?

A: Uh...It was really...it was light vehicle driver is what it was...it was like transportation that was my primary MOS they called it. That was what I was really trained for is uh... from a jeep up to a five ton truck.

Q: What were your thoughts or feelings on the long plane trip to Vietnam?

A: Uh... it just seemed like it was forever getting there. I don't know how long it did take us but we were several hours from when we left till the time we got there. It was just uh... lot of thoughts run through your minds while you're up there in the air. It was just a time for a lot of thinking. You know... your just thinking wonder if you'd make it back or not so... you have a lot of thoughts, a lot of different thoughts in your mind and I... don't remember everything I was thinking but I knew that one time I thought boy its taking forever getting there. Probably its half way around the world I guess. It was a quiet time most of the people wasn't talking a whole lot. It was just a quiet time I guess.

A: Well when I first arrived we uh... we were coming down... when we were getting ready to land... they were bombing... the Vietcong... the Vietcong were sending rockets in, bombing the airstrip there...mortaring the airstrips or sending rockets in trying to destroy the runway there...trying to keep new troops from landing there and they did it successfully two or three times I think. But there were engineers there constantly building the road, building the airstrip back and paving and patching the holes so that big planes could land there. I remember the scariest part was when we started to land the pilot was telling us, you know...if we should happen to get hit coming in or crash, if we should get hit with a rocket or something on our way down, all the steps we had to take to prepare for crashing. I thought this is great I'll get killed before we even get there. So...it was, it was a scary moment. You could look down and see the smoke and stuff coming off the runway. So...they were getting hit pretty hard when we landed. It was a scary time from the time I hit the ground running just practically when we got there.

Q: Where did you land?

A: It was in uh... Long bin I think they called it. I think that was the name of it.

Q: Was it a remote area?

A: It was a big base there. That's where all the new troops usually landed and uh... and I'm not sure I think a lot of them that's where you left out too on your last departure from there. That's why the Vietcong were so busy trying to keep that tore up so...

Q: What did you think of the people, as far as the people in Vietnam?

A: Well I didn't know their language that's for one thing. (Both laughing) I mean you learn... you learn little things from the kids and stuff over there cause they were always begging for your food and stuff. They was really a poor country and it was... it was sad to
see children that hungry. They would take... scraps you know and uh... and things of that nature. It was just as really poor... it was a beautiful country. I mean the tall mountains and the rivers and stuff they called them rivers but they was like our creeks here... small streams but they called them rivers. It was really beautiful country over there. All the terrain was beautiful but... the people were really poor but they lived in grass huts and dirt floors and they even had places dug up under their beds... they had bamboo places where they slept like a hammock inside their building and if they'd get fire... uh... like they were in a fire fight or something and the bullets started flying they could roll right out of their and they'd roll down into the low place in the ground and they'd be okay. Out of the bullets range. They was living in a lot of fear too. The people that was for us too. It was hard for them also.

Q: while you were there did you go to any of the cities in Vietnam?

A: Uh... I went on one in country R&R... I can't even remember... I think it was in Da Nang maybe. It was like a three day R&R. Just to get away from everything myself. It was uh... we flew on an old cargo plane. You know it wasn't nothing special, no plane... motor was leaking oil when we was out there. I'm liable get killed going on R&R (laughing). It was an in country thing and we spent three days in there just mostly sleeping and relaxing. It was worth the thing just to get away from everything, all the noise and the bullets and stuff. Yeah...

Q: Where were you stationed when you arrived in Vietnam?

A: They sent me to uh... engineer outfit that uh... Americal Division. It was Company B, the 26th engineer battalion and it was in Chu Lai, outside of Chu Lai about five miles. It was on an LZ, they called it a landing zone, it was just a small place with enough for about one company of people or might have been two. I don't remember... I think there wasn't very many people there. It was just a small place out away from the main... off the South China Sea coast. They had the USO up there
and it was about five miles from there. So... that's where our home was for fifteen months.

Q: What were your initial orders?

A: Uh... that's all... we did mostly we built culverts and put in culverts when the enemy would blow them out. We tried to keep the roads open that went back in the mountains, back in the jungle. Our bases they had huge guns up in the mountains. They had a twenty two mile range on them. I don't know what they have now but I thought that was a long way to fire a weapon then. They had gun tubes that looked like they was seventy five feet long but they would shoot twenty two miles from where they was at... you know. They had ten, maybe fifteen, guns there and we had to keep the road open so they could get ammunition to um... and that was basically our main job, building roads and replacing bridges and culverts where the Vietcong would come in and blow them out. They tried to keep the ammunition from getting to the guns. We were just trying to keep the roads open and that was a constant... bad place to be... uh... Trai Bong Road that was our main objective, was to make sure that road stayed open. So they could travel on it and bring tractor trailers of ammunition and stuff on it. It was constant fighting and land mines and things of that nature.

Q: Can you tell us about some of your fellow soldiers, your commanding officers, such as Sergeant Pippen?

A: Uh... yeah... he was one of the platoon leaders. He came over uh... I was probably over there six months or eight months somewhere in there and he came over from the states. New from over there and he was a tall, he was probably about 6'2" and he was a real big tall black guy. Just a real nice guy, unfortunately he got killed whenever I was getting ready to come back home. So... and we had Sergeant Rags, he was a black guy who was our platoon sergeant. I couldn't get over his name, Rags, like the rags you use. I remember he was telling he was drawing full bird Colonel pay all the time he was over there. He even went to battalion headquarters and division and tried to tell them I'm just a staff sergeant but they just kept paying him full bird Colonel's pay so he just took out what his base pay would be for a staff sergeant and he just put the rest
of it in the bank and drew interest on it. I don't know...he said he just kept trying to tell them but I just told him hey your making money. He was making lots of money (laughing).

Q: At least he was trying to be honest and tried to make amends. How about your fellow soldiers, did you have any particular ones you were close with?

A: Uh...probably Edward C. Hill, he was from Michigan City Indiana and uh...John Nolan, he was from Texas I think. Matt Berta he was another one. I think he was from New York. There was lots of good friends that I had but uh...I just can't remember all of them right now. I made lots of friends and you made a lot of them pretty quick, you know. Phillip Burns, he was another one, I think he was from Pittsburgh or somewhere...

Q: Uh...I'm going to pull out some of these pictures you had given me previously and uh...we'll look at them and see if they spark some memories. Lets see...(long pause as interviewer pulls up scanned photographs on computer which narrator had given her prior to interview) can you explain what these pictures are of, are these just scenic pictures?

A: No, this one there on the right was one when we were just in the jeep and just took a picture. Uh...one of those little lambrettas (See photograph #2A appendix) they travel in, there was a lot of those over there in the country and these other three (See photographs 1A, 3A, & 4A appendix) is a bridge that's on Highway 1 they call it, that's the only black top road I seen over there. And the Vietcong had it was uh...they thought it was NVA cause they had underwater swimmers...they said they would come and put charges...see they got bunkers on those bridges and I don't know if you can see them but there's little bunkers on the bridges...

Q: In here? (Interviewer points to area under the bridge)
A: Up there on top. There's little sand bag bunkers on them and the South Vietnamese are the ones that uh...that uh...guarded that bridge. But the...the NVA came in underwater and they put charges underneath that bridge and blew it up. And that was one of the main highways over there and that shut off the crossing there. That was pretty good size little river they call it but that's one of the biggest ones I'd seen over there. That was up toward Tam Ky I think was the name of that and that's another picture of it. Some officers had been up there.

Q: Right in here? (Interview pointing to photograph #1B See appendix)

A: Yeah...that one there is up on the hill from our LZ, LZ bayonet. (Narrator pointing to picture #2B)

Q: So you did a lot of heavy equipment operation, did you drive a...?

A: Uh...I never...I never ran a lot of...I drove an in loader and I drove a trailer. I drove a front in loader and I drove five ton trucks. But this is one night I was on uh...charge of quarters, they call it CQ duty. (Narrator pointing to photograph #3B) and I stayed up all night with the guy that was in charge that night. We was monitoring the radio when we heard people up in Tam Ky which is up north of us but we heard them hollering they were getting hit up in their bunker line and they were getting enemy activity. A little bit closer and they was some more saying were getting hit also. And then they kept getting closer and closer and then directly I heard our bunker line open up and we started firing and so I had to run and get everybody up and...and make sure we were ready. We had people on the...this up here... was our main bunker line (narrator pointing to picture #1 & 2C see appendix) and this area maybe back about fifteen hundred feet that we had another bunker line. All around our perimeter there where we slept at so...but what they'd done, they'd broke through and they over ran that main bunker line and got through that bunch there and burnt...there we had just built a big mess hall up there out of 12x12 oak lumber down around this level. They shot a rocket propelled grenade at it and burnt it down. And they tore down some tower bunkers
and they just uh...broke through that bunker line right there. I know there was a black guy...there was a lot of prejudice stuff going on there when I was in that...in 69, a lot of racial problems...

Q: Within the units?

A: Yeah. In all of them. And uh...but that particular thing right there...there was a black guy who saved a white guys life and that changed a lot of them. attitudes about race and that. I mean when it got right down to it...uh...one of your buddies well it didn't matter if you were black or white. I thought that was a good thing. He went in a tower bunker and saved a white guy there. He was trapped in there and I guess he drug him out. He kept him from dying actually.

Q: So he owes him a bit of gratitude. How about this picture down here on the right? (Interviewer pointing to photograph #4B)

A: That's a picture...a picture of a Vietcong scalp right there...that's his hair on that stick there (narrator pointing to photograph 4B). I took a picture of that uh...I kept a little uh...35mm camera in my pocket all time, a small one and I was up there looking and I...what he'd done is there was a communications building there where they had their radios and they'd transmit and receive messages and umm... the Vietcong had a satchel charge and it was just full of like glass and nails and explosives and it was just like a satchel and they would just open the door and sling it in there. It would go off and it would just blow shrapnel and metal and glass and everything and it did a lot of damage. The guys that was inside the building there knew they were getting over run so he's... thought it was time to get out so he kicked the door open at the same time the Vietcong was outside the door getting ready to open it and it knocked the Vietcong backwards on his own charge and he blew his self up and that's the biggest piece of him I found there and there was pieces of body about the size of your thumb all over the side of the building there. It was just...just bad but I seen something black laying down there and I thought what in the world is that and I walked down there and seen that it was his hair. I just picked it up...the stick there and took a picture
of it. It looked like somebody just took a knife and scalped him. He did it his self (laughs).

Q: Not a glorious way to go. Okay. How about this group of photographs?

A: Those are some I took when we were out uh...I think that was when we were out on a search and destroy mission (narrator pointing to photograph series 1-6D). I think some of these are infantry men. They sent some of us engineers out with em...they would find a...this is just a picture of a place we walked by...I just seen where it'd been hit by an air strike or something and it was probably blewed down (narrator pointing to photograph #1D). There's an airstrike going on in that one picture but you can't see the planes(narrator pointing to photograph #3D). I thought you might be able to see it but you can't see it. On up ahead of us there was a group...but you can't see the planes. Reason I took a picture of it there was a F4 Phantom jet I think went in for an air strike. It didn't pick him up. They made us walk like that with intervals in between them so if somebody hits a land mine it wouldn't kill two or three(narrator pointing to photograph #2D). You had to keep a distance in between...between each one of them. That's when we stopped to eat dinner there (narrator pointing to photograph #4D).

Q: Is this you? (Interviewer pointing to man in black tank top in foreground of photograph #4D)

A: That's me there when I was just a pup I guess (laughs). A nineteen...a nineteen year old Rambo I thought...I guess.

Q: Who are these gentlemen? (Interviewer pointing to remaining men in photograph #4D)

A: That's Phillip Burns right there. I think he's from Pittsburgh Pennsylvania. I believe is where he's from. I'm not sure where...I think Maine is where he was from but I can't remember his name. He was a demolition
expert. He did...he did our land mines. He would blow them up if we found them.

Q: Do you have any contact with any of these gentlemen?

A: No. I did one. This guy here was from, Jamie Abreu, that's him there too. He was from Puerto Rico and when he first came over there he couldn't speak very little English and uh...he learned English about like I learned uh...what is it...Spanish or whatever. Yeah...so...we was good friends. He was...I liked having him on my side. You can see he was a pretty good sized guy. He was really a nice guy too.

Q: How about this aerial photo, is that the bridge that was blown out in previous pictures? (Interviewer pointing to photograph #6D)

A: Uh...no that's a different bridge. That's further down from where we were. We were actually flying out...there was fourteen helicopters...that's when we were going out on that search and destroy mission. I was sitting there by the door and I was just taking pictures...while we was going out there taking all the different views. I have several aerial shots of just different things (See photographs #E1-6). Just basically killing time while we was flying out to where we was going but...that's when...

Q: Did a lot of the soldiers take camera's and take pictures?

A: No. Actually a lot of them didn't even like me taking pictures but they got kind of...well I thought it's not doing any harm but some of them didn't like pictures taken...disasters...I just looked at it a different way, something to remember how close you came to getting killed. You know it could have been you, whatever, or somebody may want to see what actually happened in some of the places. I didn't do it to...I just did it for my own self really.
Q: Had you ever travelled out of the country, out of the United States?

A: No. That’s my first trip out.

Q: These are interesting landscape photographs (interviewer still discussing photograph series E1-6).

A: Now those women there was from a village there they suspected was Vietcong that owned... lived in that village (narrator pointing to photograph #4E). So the government or company or whoever it was decided that they could take all the women out there and maybe the men would come out there and try to get their women back or something and try and draw them out in the open. But...uh...that’s what they told me. I don’t know if that’s the truth or not. I was wondering why they had just all the women there but there was supposedly one village there that was all Vietcong so they kept them all there in a bunch for interrogation or something.

Q: Well I’m sure it was pretty hard to tell the Vietcong from the...

A: Yeah. They always told me to watch for the ones in the black pajamas but all the good and the bad all wore black pajamas so... you couldn’t just go by the color of their pajamas. I mean the farmers, they wore black pajamas and they were South Vietnamese. They wasn’t really enemy.

Q: Okay. How about this group of pictures, this was a prisoner wasn’t it? (Interviewer referring to photographs #1-6F)

A: Uh huh. That was...again we was on that search and destroy mission and they captured two of them. I think one of them was like eighteen years old and the other one was like sixteen and they were actually caught in the act of making a land mine. They was taking a shell casing and stuffing it full of explosives and shrapnel and stuff. They caught them right in the act of doing
it. That's the South Vietnamese, they call them RVNS, they were interpreters.

Q: RVNS?

A: Yeah. It was RVNS or something...

Q: And they were the interpreter?

A: Yeah. They were on our side. They were South Vietnamese...the friendly...they was working with us or we were working with them, whatever...but he roughed them up pretty good but they could do that but we couldn't so they could...(chuckles) get by with it. But they was trying to make it talk is what they was doing there so they was hitting him. There's some more pictures on in there. They got pretty rough on him and I actually felt sorry for him. At one point I thought their going to kill him even before he can even talk. That's more of them there (narrator pointing to photograph #5F) they was kicking him and hitting him across the head with the rifle...in the stomach and hitting him down below the legs and...

Q: Did he ever divulge any information?

A: He couldn't get him to...I didn't know what he was asking him...the South Vietnamese...the RVN there he was asking him...I knew he was saying the same thing. He wouldn't change his story. He kept saying the same thing I thought that's the wrong answer cause he'd start beating on him again. He never actually start talking till...we had two dog handlers with us...I think...they had the scout dogs with them and they had them on a leash and they brought them out there and that dog got about two inches from the Vietcong's nose and he was snapping and slobbering at the mouth and I mean that guy was holding him and that leather was stretching and he just liked a couple inches of biting that guy's head. That made him start talking. He started talking and pointing up on that hill and said there was twenty five more Vietcong up there and they was watching all our moves. So our commanders got on the radio and called in a artillery strike on that
hillside where he said they was at...he was pointing...showing us where the rest of them was at...so they did call a artillery strike of white phosphorous which is pretty hot artillery.

Q: How about these young...these young Vietnamese up here, they look young? (interviewer referring to photograph #2F)

A: Yeah. Those are...a lot of the kids...when we'd go out in the villages...they got to wondering if some of them wasn't finding out information from us and we were kind of leery talking around them and they didn't really get specifics about any of our missions, but they could talk pretty good English and they would...this one boy here he got killed. Uh...I can't remember his name but he was a real nice kid. Every time we'd ride through this one village he'd want to ride with us and he'd just talk...he could speak really good English. But he was in between two GI's on one trip out and they shot him in the chest. They never shot any of our guys...I don't know if they shot him just because he was with us or what I said it was kind of odd being in the truck with two GI's and they killed him and didn't kill either one of the GI's.

Q: He looks like he's about 10.

A: I think he was about 13 or 14.

Q: Wow! He looks younger than even 12 or 13.

A: Yeah. That's Jamie Abru there.

Q: Do you ever wonder what happened to some of these guys?

A: Yeah. I called my one buddy in Michigan City one time. I found him when we had our computer and um...I found out where he lived at...I knew he lived in
Michigan City, Indiana so the people finder on the computer knew how to find him. And so I got his phone number and I called him and I don't know if he was drunk or what... he said something about getting hit with a tractor trailer but I don't know if he meant he felt like he'd been hit by one or he actually had been. He didn't really remember much...I don't know if he was at his right self or not. He was either drunk or maybe he'd lost it or something. We were almost like brothers or something, we slept in the same building there, you had your partitions, 4x6 square or 6x6 or something like that, we shared refrigerators, beer and all that.

Q: Are there any people in these other pictures that weren't in the previous pictures, they look like the same crew?

A: No.

Q: It looks like your all taking a rest.

A: Whenever it was lunch time we just had to stop wherever we was at... I know there's one night we were going in to Trai Bong Road. I don't think you've come to it yet.

Q: This one here? This is the land mine? (Interviewer pointing to photograph series G1-4)

A: Yeah. That's the night we came back in (narrator pointing to photograph #3G), everyone was wore out and exhausted. We had to come back in at the night time and had to drive with black out drive on your trucks and the dust was about a foot thick and you had to stay so many meters behind the other trucks and you couldn't hardly see the red light on the back of the truck. You couldn't have your head lights on and we didn't want the enemy to know where we was at so...
Appendix of Photographs