

## **Transcription: Edward Davis**

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*Today is Thursday, October 21<sup>st</sup>, 2010. My name is James Crabtree and today I'll be interviewing Mr. Edward Davis. This interview is being done by phone. I'm at the General Land Office Building in Austin, Texas, and Mr. Davis is at his home in San Marcos, Texas. This interview is being conducted in support of the Texas Veterans Land Board Voices of Veterans Oral History Program. Thank you very much for taking the time to talk to us today. It means a lot.*

**Edward Davis:** You're welcome.

*Thank you, yes sir, and first question I always start off with is just tell us a little bit, sir, about your childhood and your background before you went in the military.*

**Edward Davis:** OK, I was born and raised in Pennsylvania. I was born in '43. My father was in World War II during my early years. He returned and I went to grammar school, high school, and I went into the Merchant Marine in 1962.

*How old were you? So were you 19?*

**Edward Davis:** I believe I was. I'm not 100 percent. I think I was 18 or 19, I can't be 100 percent sure. But that was, it must've been in 1962. Then I worked in the Merchant Marine for Sun Oil Company on their tanker ships. Then June of '65 I was drafted into the military.

*So they didn't consider service in the Merchant Marine something that would get you exempted from the draft.*

**Edward Davis:** No, and I was kind of surprised because a lot of people told me you could get a deferment, but I really didn't want to get a deferment because I figured well if I'm drafted, then like I said my dad served in World War II, and I said I don't have no problem, if the country calls me, I'm gonna go.

*So at that point, had you thought at all about going in the Armed Forces?*

**Edward Davis:** No, I was working in like I said the Merchant Marine on the tanker ships for Sun Oil Company and I was doing pretty good. I didn't expect, I didn't even know what the draft was until I got the draft notice. So I had not anticipated because I was already working in the Merchant Marines so I didn't anticipate being drafted into the Army, but unfortunately that's what happened.

*And so this was in 1965.*

**Edward Davis:** '65 I got my draft notice. I believe it was around May of '65. I went into the basic training in June of '65.

*At that point, was Vietnam something you were even aware of?*

**Edward Davis:** No, not really. I vaguely, I was so busy in the Merchant Marine. You know, it's a pretty tough job and you don't really have much time when you're working on the ships. You're pretty much out of contact with whatever else is going on.

*Were you married?*

**Edward Davis:** No, I was a young guy then and full of energy. Like I say, it was tough work in the Merchant Marine. I was on the lot of the ships that were called Sun Doxfords. I don't know if you know what they are, but they were used during World War II. They were diesels but they were extremely large diesels. It was a lot of bull work, just to take nuts and bolts off you had to use a 65-pound maul. It was tough work.

*So when you get the draft notice, how much time did you have before you had to report?*

**Edward Davis:** When I got the draft notice, I was at sea and when I got back the draft notice was two weeks old. So I immediately called them up at the draft office and explained to them that I was in the Merchant Marine and I was at sea, and they were pretty adamant and they had threatened to have someone come and put me in jail, and I was surprised. I was in a state of shock.

*Sure, so that's not a good introduction then I guess to the military to have that.*

**Edward Davis:** But that didn't have any effect on how I felt about the military. That was just a young guy trying to do the right thing and being, basically they threatened me. They said you're lucky you're not in jail and we can put you in jail for draft evasion. I just kept explaining that I work on the ships. I just got back, I've been at sea.

*When you finally do get that notice, how long is it before you were in basic training?*

**Edward Davis:** I believe it was like a week, at the most a week later because I took the train out of Penn station in Philadelphia to go to Fort Jackson for the indoctrination for new recruits.

*OK, so you'd been drafted into the Army and you go down to Fort Jackson which is in South Carolina.*

**Edward Davis:** Yes sir.

*So you get down there, what are your first impressions?*

**Edward Davis:** Well, my first impressions was it was a big, new adventure. To me it was a young guy, it was all an amazing adventure. Everything was new. I mean everything going on was, I was excited. I thought it was something new.

*What were most of the recruits like in your platoon? Were they draftees as well?*

**Edward Davis:** Well yeah, but we had just got to Fort Jackson and Jackson was nothing, it was not a basic training center. It was, there's a word for it, it's not indoctrination, it's, there's a word that starts with "I", and I can't remember it, but it's not your actual basic training. I went to Fort Gordon in Georgia for basic training, but Fort Jackson, init--- I can't remember it's been so many years ago – initiation station or something like that. But all they did there was issued

you basic uniforms, fatigue uniforms, and then your actual basic training, they bussed us over to Fort Gordon, Georgia. So I was only at Fort Jackson for two weeks.

*So you're going through this training. Describe maybe a little bit, just kind of in a nutshell, what were some things about that training that stand out to you.*

**Edward Davis:** Well, once I got to basic training at Fort Gordon, basic training I believe was about six or eight weeks long, I'm not sure, but basic training was a big challenge. I had no military background or training or anything and basic training was a tremendous challenge but I really enjoyed it. I was just happy. I was glad to be out and doing something in the sunshine, because I believe it was July and August that I was in basic training.

*Pretty hot then.*

**Edward Davis:** It was real hot. Yeah, it was extremely hot, but I didn't mind that because I had just come off the ships and the ships are ten times hotter than what you find in August in Georgia. The ship's temperature ranges about 160 degrees all the time, and you got to work in that. We actually worked inside the engines. The engines are five stories high. These are gigantic diesels. They're called Sun Doxfords. So being out in the fresh air in August in 100 degrees was nothing for me.

*That's great. So at what point in your training did you find out what your MOS was going to be?*

**Edward Davis:** Well, they just make that determination apparently, I really don't know, but after basic training they sent me to AIT which is Advanced Individual Training. They sent me to AIT which is right close by at Fort Gordon, and that was for military police training. So I left Fort Gordon from basic training and went only about an hour away for what's called AIT training, and that was also at Fort Gordon. I believe that was four weeks. I'm not 100 percent sure, I have to check my records but I think it was about four weeks, and that was for military police training.

*So you were assigned as an MP. You finish your training there, where do they send you next?*

**Edward Davis:** Then they sent me to Fort Bragg for jump school and that was voluntary. They came around asking for volunteers. They said it was an extra \$65 a month, and that sounded pretty good to me, so after AIT I went to jump school at Fort Bragg. No, wait a minute, Fort Benning.

*And when do you finally get assigned to a regular active duty unit?*

**Edward Davis:** Well after Fort Benning, they came around at Fort Benning and asked for volunteers for Special Forces. So again, they said it was more money, so I said OK, fine, I'll take that. So I volunteered for Special Forces. I think the Special Forces training was around 15 months. I'm not sure. But after Special Forces training, then I volunteered for Vietnam.

*OK, and at that point, what had you heard or what did you know about Vietnam? I'm assuming this was about '67?*

**Edward Davis:** No, this was '66. Yeah, I went to Vietnam in September, oh, actually this was October of '66. I got to Vietnam in November '66.

*What did you know about it before heading over there?*

**Edward Davis:** Well, I knew about booby traps because they had just finished, I'd just finished all this training in basic and AIT and Special Forces, so I was aware of a lot of things like booby traps, who the enemy was, which was defined as the Communist, the Viet Cong, and I knew basically what the war was about. There was an insurgency by the Communists, and being a young guy, I think by that time I might've been 20 or 21, I'm not sure, but I didn't really know anything about Vietnam until I got there. I knew about the enemy from my military training.

*And what did it seem like to you amongst the American public? Were they paying attention much at all or was it still - ?*

**Edward Davis:** Oh, at that time in '65 and '66, everybody was for the war. I mean everywhere you went, family relations, I mean everybody was just patting you on the back and saying good, you're going to Vietnam, great. The whole country in '65 and '66 was for the war. They were backing our guys 100 percent. It was like World War II. People were really great and nice and they were just, they didn't want to see you get hurt or killed or anything, but they supported the war 100 percent in '65 and '66.

*So when you get over there, what are your first memories of Vietnam?*

**Edward Davis:** It was fantastic. It was beautiful over there. I mean we landed at Tonsenut airport in Saigon, and I mean it was just beautiful. Before you landed, you kind of got a view of the country from the air at 20,000 feet, and it was green, blue, it was just beautiful. The forest, just, most of the country was vegetated at that time with 200-300 foot canopy of forest, and the coastline, the water was so clear. Even flying over Vietnam you could see down through the water right down to the bottom of the water. It was amazing.

*What was the temperature normally like?*

**Edward Davis:** Well it wasn't bad at all. When we landed, it was humid, but compared to what I had been through, it was, to me it was pleasant. It wasn't too bad. It was maybe 90, 85, but it wasn't a really hot place unless you were on the tarmac waiting for a ride or something. If you were on the airport runway waiting for a ride, then it could be pretty hot.

*So you arrive in Vietnam in November of '66. Where are you assigned? What do you go to do?*

**Edward Davis:** Well first thing they did with everybody is they send you to the replacement, I think it was 90<sup>th</sup> Replacement Detachment. It was at Benwa. It was a very, very big installation there. You wait there until they assign you to a unit. And I went to Benwa and I was there for about two weeks, and during that time they were assigning people to different units and they later explained to me that they had, the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division had some really, took some heavy casualties and they were at that time, they were sending everybody to the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division because of the high casualty rates they had. I mean at that time that's what they told me.

*OK, and then that's where you got sent was 1<sup>st</sup> ID?*

**Edward Davis:** Well, I went to 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division and they trucked us up there in Dussenhalf's and I got there in November I believe it was. Like I said, I have to go back and I don't know the exact months, but I think it was around November of 1966.

*So what are your thoughts at that point?*

**Edward Davis:** Oh, I was excited. Man, I was excited. Like I said, it was like just everything was new. The country was new, the people were new, the uniforms were new, everything you saw was new and I was just excited. It was being like Alice in Wonderland.

*Tell us a little about the men in your unit and your leadership sergeants and that sort of thing.*

**Edward Davis:** Everybody was basically the same as I was. I mean most of the guys were all draftees. I was a draftee, they were draftees, and we all came from basically all over the United States. A lot of guys from Arkansas, Texas, Oklahoma, and then we had guys from the northeast. I can still remember a lot of them, Massachusetts, it was a pretty big combination of just basically from everywhere.

*Do you remember your first mission what it was or where you went?*

**Edward Davis:** Of course you got a little bit of training before you went out on a mission, but they were in a big operation, I believe it was Cedar Falls or Junction City, and I'm not sure which. I'm not sure if Junction City came first or Cedar Falls, but we immediately went out and they assigned me to the scout section of the 1<sup>st</sup> or the 4<sup>th</sup> Cavalry, and they reviewed my records and because I was Special Forces qualified, they said we need scouts, like recon. I don't know if you know what Scout section for the Cav is or not.

*Sure I do, but go ahead and tell us a little bit.*

**Edward Davis:** We rode APC's, armored personnel carriers, and then at night we would go out beyond the perimeter and before daylight and after daylight we would go out and run patrols, basically recon patrols. I was part of the Scout section for headquarters troop, 1<sup>st</sup> Squadron, 4<sup>th</sup> Cavalry, 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division.

*What are your memories about your first patrol or the first patrols that you did?*

**Edward Davis:** I hate to keep repeating myself, but being a young kid, I mean I just was amazed. I went out as part of the Scout section and I mean I had no fear, I had absolutely no fear, but I was extremely cautious. I actually would go out prior to sundown. We'd be on what's called an NDP, night defensive position, and myself and a couple of other guys would go out prior to the sun going down and we would put our claim \_\_\_ and our flares out and then we would do patrols around the NDP and NDP for Cav unit, you're talking about 360 degrees in what's considered to be hostile territory in the middle of a jungle. You're talking about an area probably you take three football fields 100 yards and put 'em together, that's how big of an area you got. So we covered a pretty wide area with a CP in the center.

*Do you remember the first time you made contact with the enemy?*

**Edward Davis:** Oh yeah, I made actual contact on the way out there. We got a lead element got ambushed, it hit a road mine and got ambushed. So we had initially made contact, and then my

actual contact time was the next day I believe it was when on a night ambush position we made contact. Of course in the morning there was some casualties, and the first time you see people killed by automatic weapons, it's a shock, because the automatic weapons they don't put holes in you, they cut you like a big buzz saw. That was a big shock and that was a big eye opener. That kind of snapped me out of my childish adventure, you know what I mean? And within a short time I was looking at the real world.

*I know you were there and I know you spent, because we talked before this interview, you spent quite a bit of time in Vietnam.*

**Edward Davis:** Yeah, I sure did. I went there November '66. I left there in April of '75. Now in the interim I did go home a couple of times in '69 and then I went back in '70.

*Why was it that you were there that long? Was it because you volunteered to continue to take assignments there?*

**Edward Davis:** Yeah, because for reenlistment at that time it was \$3,000, so I was a draftee, and they offered you \$3,000 if you would reenlist. So what I did is I enlisted as a reserve, and that was in '68. So as a reserve, my serial number changed from US to ER, from draftee to reserve. When I was with the quarter Cav Scout section, they came out asking for more volunteers, for what's called long-range reconnaissance patrol. I don't know if you know what that is.

*I am, I'm very familiar with that.*

**Edward Davis:** So then I said yeah, OK. Remember, by this time I had not thinking my reality, because I had been in several fire fights during the month of November, December, January, February was the Operation Cedar Falls and Junction City -

*Can you still hear me OK? You're kind of getting garbled—*

**Edward Davis:** I'm fine, like I said I have cancer and sometimes it cuts me up. Are you hearing me OK?

*It sounds like your phone got moved or something.*

**Edward Davis:** Oh, I hope this battery is not running down.

*That's better. It's like you weren't talking into the mouth piece.*

**Edward Davis:** Oh, OK, yeah, well I'm right here. So in my time with the quarter Cav Scout section, we had several fire fights up around what was called the Black Virgin Mountain by then. I don't know if you've heard of it or not.

*No I haven't.*

**Edward Davis:** Yeah, it was a big area that we had several operations, several ambushes and fire fights up there. A lot of our guys got killed by road mines, which today they call 'em EID's I believe. They're having a lot of problem in Afghanistan and Iraq with these road mines, but we just called them road mines and booby traps. But we lost a lot of guys from that. And like I

said, I grew up pretty quick for a couple of months. Then I went to the LRRPs, which was long range recon, and I spent I guess all the way through until July of '68. I was in the LRRPs up until December or January of '68.

*When you talk about going on long range patrols, tell us a little bit about how long in terms of distance and time.*

**Edward Davis:** It was really, really, really tough. We had to go to several training schools which were OJT, on the job training. We went to the 5<sup>th</sup> Special Forces recon school in Datrang, if you're familiar with that, and we all came back with orders calling us recon commandos. I guess you heard of that. So I spent, oh golly, sometimes up to three days, about I would say on an average 10-25 clicks, usually within artillery range of a fire base but sometimes out of the friendly unit's AO, which is the area of operations – anywhere from, I would say on an average, 5-10-15-20 clicks. You know what I mean by clicks -

*Sure I do.*

**Edward Davis:** Meters, yeah, thousands of meters. And we would stay out for, it depends if you made a contact in the first day, you'd be extracted immediately. We only stayed out three days and three nights, and then we'd get extracted.

*How many people would be on a regular patrol?*

**Edward Davis:** We had six guys. I had lost a lot of good, real good friends. Remember, we were on our own out there, and we had several fire fights, and we lost a few people during that time. That could be a whole book written about those episodes. I've got some actual documentation on some of them if you ever wanted me to send it up to you, but it's documentation on the fire fights and the contacts and all that stuff.

*How did you deal with that sort of thing? I think a lot of people listening have no idea what it's like even to serve in the military, let alone be in combat and lose comrades. How did you as a warrior cope with that situation, especially the first time it happened?*

**Edward Davis:** Oh, I was pretty much devastated, and it makes you mad, more than scared, it makes you mad. So I was just made up my mind that I was gonna do everything I could to defeat the enemy, because I saw what they were doing not only to our guys, but to their own people, and there was a lot of what they call today collateral damage, but back then we didn't call it collateral damage, we just called it friendly being killed.

*Was there ever a time on one of those patrols that you thought you likely weren't going to survive?*

**Edward Davis:** No, I never did, but what I had to do each time, I had to talk to myself a lot because after a while, you start thinking twice about going back out, because you know the last time you were lucky to be alive, and you have to really talk to yourself, because that was in '67 and '68, and things were getting pretty hot and heavy there because TET was on the horizon. And we were in contact on a daily basis every day.

*Speaking of '68 sir, did you know at that point kind of what the moods were back home? I've read about all the turmoil with the assassinations of MLK Jr. and Robert Kennedy, and the riots*

*in Chicago at the Democratic National Convention. It just seems like a really tumultuous year. Were you aware of those things going on back home?*

**Edward Davis:** No, not in '68. Now I went home in '69 and then I became aware for the first time, I was shocked, I was totally shocked about the anti-war movement that was going on. I was extremely shocked. As a matter of fact, I drove up to Valley Forge in '69 because they had what was called the Vietnam Veterans Against the War demonstration. So I drove up there because I wanted to face these guys face to face. I just got back from Vietnam. What I was hearing and seeing on the TV was false. It was outright lies. And I went up there and I found out that none of these guys had ever been to Vietnam. They were mostly young kids with military fatigue jackets on and flop hats. None of them except for one had even ever been to Vietnam, but yet the news media was making it look like they had all been to Vietnam and they were all veterans and I, that turned the light on in my head. I says boy, this is wrong. What's going on, what are they doing? That was after I got back in '69. I'd just went through TET '68 and you know, that was hell, that was really hell, TET '68. We were in contact with the enemy, I mean daily regularly, day and night for months at a time, like World War II. When I got home in '69 I saw on the TV all of this stuff that I knew was outright, outright 100 percent lies because I had been there and I saw the tapes on CBS of a village called Ben Cat, which was on Operation Junction City and the film they were showing, I was there, I was physically actually there, and everything they were saying was a 100 percent lie, because I was there, I knew what was going on. We had a big contact with what's called a VC main force regiment and we had a contact with a battalion, and the people in the village had been caught in the middle of it. We saved a lot of those people. They were great, they were hugging us and everything, the civilians, you know. They were just glad that we were there because the VC, the main force VC were coming in and assassinating their teachers, their lawyers, their doctors, and when I saw the CBS run the film, they were calling it a civilian casualties caused by US forces, and I'm sitting there, and I could not believe what I was seeing. I said what in the hell? I said this is 100 percent, actual 100 percent lie, it's a total lie. And I was mad, oh I was mad because we had risked our lives to save most of those people and they were good people. A lot of them worked for us. They worked out of Likay, they were people that worked, contractors for our base camps, and I knew a lot of those civilians in that area, and yet the CBS guy was narrating and he was showing pictures of dead civilians and saying the pile was civilian casualties caused by US forces. I couldn't believe it. I just could not believe what my eyes, my ears were seeing and hearing.

*How about the way you were treated by civilians back in the United States, especially if you were in uniform?*

**Edward Davis:** Yeah, it really, really changed from when I first went to Vietnam in '66 and I came back on leave in '69, and then I actually stayed back during '69. They wanted me to go work as a drill sergeant which I did in '69. I was just stunned by the attitude. Everybody was just adamant about everything was anti-war. It was a 180 degree shift from what it was – and that was only a couple of years, but it was all being fueled by the media, and I know because I was actually there involved. It was being fueled by this lies, lies and lies, but very cleverly contrived, deceitful way of making people against the war is what they were doing.

*How about did you ever, I've heard the stories, I've interviewed veterans that served in Vietnam and they talk about the mistreatment that they had, especially in airports and things of that sort, of being spat upon – did you have any of that happen to you?*

**Edward Davis:** Yeah, in California, I landed in – let me see if it was San Francisco or Oakland – I can't remember it's been so long ago – but when I came back in '69, I brought a Vietnamese girl back with me because I had like over the years I had already been there for over two years, and I brought a young Vietnamese girl. She was only 15 at the time. And I did that because I wanted to get her out of the war zone. The people at the airport made gestures to try to rape her, and I was in uniform. Whether they call them the people hanging out at the airport, the hippies. Oh man, I tell you what, that was my first instant shock about what had happened to our country and I just grabbed her and we got out of there, but they were nasty. I mean they were nasty. They were spitting at us and everything. Then I just, I was in a state of shock. I really didn't know because this was right at, I think it was San Francisco airport that we got off the plane there.

*So you were able to bring this young lady. Was she able to remain here?*

**Edward Davis:** Oh yes, she's been here 40, what is this, about 45 years now. That was in '68. Let me see, that was in July of '68. I'm sorry, it wasn't '69, it was July '68. But I stayed in the States, got married with her, and then had two kids, and then both of my kids are in their mid-40's, and my wife, I guess she'd be in her 50's now. But she done fantastic. She has her own business. She's a big executive at a corporation, and she did fantastic.

*That's great. So at some point then, you decide to go return to Vietnam.*

**Edward Davis:** Yeah, I got so mad, I mean I was just so mad at all of this anti-war stuff going on and I knew it was false, I knew it was phony. Like I said, I went to Valley Forge in '69 and none of these guys had even been to Vietnam, and yet it was plastered all over the news media – every channel, CBS, NBC, and ABC, only three networks then, and it made it look like there was thousands of them, and I was physically there and there was like 100 at the most. So I got so mad. I mean I was so mad I said I got to get out of here before I kill somebody. And I volunteered and I went back to Vietnam.

*And you had gotten married to that lady?*

**Edward Davis:** Yeah, she stayed. I had a home, I had a nice house, and by that time I had two kids and they were 1 and 2 years old.

*Where were you stationed?*

**Edward Davis:** I was at Fort Dix as a drill sergeant.

*OK, so she stayed there and you returned to Vietnam.*

**Edward Davis:** Yes sir, yeah, I went back in '70.

*What was it like leaving your family and returning to a war zone?*

**Edward Davis:** Well I felt good because they were safe. My main concern was their safety. If they'd have been in Vietnam, I'd have been going out of my mind with worry. But they were safe that I had a nice home, 1 and 2 years old, and my wife and kids were in the States, they were safe, and I went back to Vietnam and I stayed until '75, and I went back in '72 and brought my wife and kids to Vietnam. They were all American citizens then.

*What were their impressions of Vietnam at that time? Were they old enough, the children old enough to remember any of it?*

**Edward Davis:** No, they're in their 40's, and they remember from pictures. My wife has took a lot of pictures over there, and in 1970, I was working as what's called a PSDF advisor. I don't know if you know what that is – people self defense forces – are you familiar with that?

*I wasn't familiar with that term.*

**Edward Davis:** It's called PSDF advisor, and I had to work out in the countryside with the people's self defense forces, and I spent over a year out there. There was only five of us. We were a five-man team, and we worked physically every single day, helped defending small villages in certain what they called hamlets. So I did that for a year. I spoke the language fluently. You know, after a year, you have no choice but to learn it. I went back in '71 and brought my wife and kids over and we flew back to Vietnam in '72. They put me in the MACSOG. I don't know if you know what that is or not.

*Tell us what that is.*

**Edward Davis:** Well MACSOG, that means an observations group. SOG, and that was recon, where we ran recon across border into Laos and Cambodia, and then we had certain different parts. We had PTA, PTC, PTS, central, south and north. Some operations were in the north Vietnam, some were into Laos, some were into Cambodia. I stayed with SOG until we changed the name in '72 to what's called SPBAP 158 because SOG operations had been discovered, and so when any type of intelligence organization, when your operation is compromised, publicly you shut it down. But it was never really shut down. We stayed operational under a different name.

*So where did your family reside in Vietnam when you took them back over there.*

**Edward Davis:** Oh, they were with their parents, my wife's parents. I got 'em in Naitung and jogged in which is on the outskirts, like the suburbs of Saigon. They were doing great. Oh, they loved it. The kids just loved it. My wife's family, they were fantastic. There wasn't that much difference from a regular American family. They enjoyed everything regular American people enjoy, and they love their kids, I mean that was their grandkids.

*Were you there or were they there when Saigon finally fell to the Communists?*

**Edward Davis:** Yeah, and that was several years later because '72, '73, and '74 and early '75, a lot of people don't know, Vietnam was at peace. I mean you could go anywhere. At night you could drive to the beach. '73, '74, '75, I worked with an organization called JCRC, joint casualty recovery team, and we went out in the remote areas all over Vietnam and recovered casualties from the war. We flew to Hanoi twice a week, Tuesday's and Thursday's, and we sat down with the Communists. I met two, ah boy, it's been so many years, I met Jop, which everybody knew as General Jop. I don't know if you know who he was or not.

*I have heard of him.*

**Edward Davis:** Well Jop was the master mind behind the military operations in Vietnam. He was the Communist general, and I met him through his nephew because I was interpreting for the POW exchange. We had to negotiate for each guy. It wasn't that we just got our guys back. We didn't get them all back. We did individual negotiations for every prisoner. It took a couple of years. Saigon was beautiful at that time. Hanoi was still a lot of damage, a lot of bomb craters and stuff like that, but we went up there Tuesday's and Thursday's. We had meetings with the Communists every Tuesday and Thursday, and for two years I sat down with the Communists and did negotiations.

*And as things began to deteriorate later on in '75, did you know you needed to get your family out, or did you get your family out?*

**Edward Davis:** Yeah, unfortunately it was tough because it was real sad time. Remember, '73, '74, up until March of '75, Vietnam was a vacation. It was like Hawaii. You got to remember that. This is what people don't know. You could go anywhere in the country and it was like being in Hawaii, day and night, because years prior you could never go out at night. But the country was at peace. I mean it was beautiful. It was just amazing. It was like being on vacation, go to Saigon or Vong Kau or anywhere and -

*When did you get a feeling then or what was it that changed that caused you to think at some point that OK, things are starting to go bad now?*

**Edward Davis:** I got the hint in early '75 around January or February of '75 from the Communists themselves because I had been dealing with them for two years, and they were saying that they were not satisfied with the peace agreement, and their ultimate goal was to go ahead and take over the south. I also got briefings from Frank Sneps and Polgar. I don't know if you know who they are or not.

*No I don't.*

**Edward Davis:** Well, Frank Snep was the central intelligence agency and Polgar was the CIA chief in Saigon, and they were called OSA, Office of Special Assistance. So they were briefing us when we went to Hanoi about certain things that we were supposed to see and do, and I had made contact with one of our what you call a spy. He was a French guy and he would pass the information, and then I would pass the information on when I got back, which it was dangerous. It was real dangerous. If he'd have been caught, they'd have shot him on the spot. So I started to get information in January and February that the North Vietnamese were going to launch – this came from the actual Communists themselves told me this – and General Jop's nephew's name was Twee. I worked with him for two years. He was a young kid and we got to be pretty good friends. And he told me because he knew I had my wife and kids, they knew all about me. They had spies down in Saigon, so he told me get my wife and kids out. And I just took it as a joke, but he was telling me the truth. So I had to go through a big central intelligence agency debrief and it lasted a couple of weeks. They gave me a pretty rough time, and they had a lot of information on what was called at that time it was called special intelligence which was satellite intelligence, which in those years was new. But when the Communists told me that they were not satisfied with the peace agreement and they were going to go ahead and take over the south one way or the other, I didn't really believe them myself, but I did pass the information on. It turned out to be true. They launched the initial, according to General Jop's nephew who told me, when they launched the initial attack in Tukor, which was at DMT which is Bommituit, they didn't realize at the time they hadn't planned to drive all the way to Saigon. They wanted to

probe Bommituit and Blaku with an attack to see how Ford would react, because Nixon had resigned. This was all done to see what the U.S. reaction would be. When they saw, and their policymakers said that the U.S. will not do anything because of their political situation, and they saw the South Vietnamese armies were not putting up a fight, then they made the decision to go ahead and push forward, and they committed 13 tank divisions. If you know what 13 T34 tank divisions can do, I mean it just was like socking all to the South Vietnamese.

*Where were you at this point, was your family already out?*

**Edward Davis:** Yeah, as soon as the attacks started, the embassy, because I worked with the CIA and another organization that was above the CIA. It was something that most people never even heard of. At the time it was called the Hanoi Watchers, and they were like super CIA guys, and they were led by a guy named Pike, and he was their, Frank Snep was with Douglas Pike. Douglas Pike, Frank Snep and Shadowlane. And the only reason I know is because one of the guys that I worked with for years in Special Forces, his name was Sully Fontaine. Sully Fontaine had been in the intelligence community for 30 years. He had been through it. But he was an American officer. When he was a young man, he was at DM Benfu. So he had been in the U.S. military for over 20 years, but back in the 50s he had been to the French Foreign Legion. So he was kind of like my mentor you might call him. I believe he's still alive. He's probably in his 80's. He lives in Colorado. But Sully Fontaine was a main link in the intelligence organizations and he knew everything that was going on and he had access to different DIA, CIA, and then these guys called the Hanoi Watchers, and they were led by Doug Pike, Frank Snep and Shadowlane. They all had a meeting once a week and I was privy to sit in on the meetings.

*So where were you then the day that, you see the famous film footage of the helicopters leaving the embassy and people trying to jump on the skid and that sort of thing – were you already out of the country by that point?*

**Edward Davis:** Yeah, I was gone. I was gone because I wanted my family out and the only way I could get my family out is if I was with them. They wouldn't let them on the evacuation aircraft unless I was on there with them. So we had left about a month before the embassy fell.

*That was just your wife and your children?*

**Edward Davis:** Right. Two kids. They were 3 and 4 years old by then.

*What ended up happening to your in-laws?*

**Edward Davis:** Unfortunately my wife, she was really shook up. Most of them were killed. Her brother was killed and she had to go identify the body before I got her out, and she was really in a state, it was horrible, it was really horrible. He had been killed prior to me putting her on the plane with the kids in a combat action. Her mother and father died shortly after that, so yeah, that was a horrible, it was a really horrible – we had hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese civilians that had worked for the U.S. for 10, 20 years.

*Just left behind.*

**Edward Davis:** Oh my God, it was horrible, yeah. And Frank Snep, the CIA guy, he wrote a book about it and I don't know if you ever read his book or not.

*No I haven't.*

**Edward Davis:** Yeah, he kept us on some of it, but we had left behind because over the years I had worked with hundreds – I was an actual platoon leader and then company commander as an NCO when I was with STDAD 158 SMF. We had NCO company commanders, and we had a battalion of 500 to 600 what's called mercenaries that worked for with. They were in Manar, Sadang, Raday – I don't know if you're familiar with any of those terms or not.

*No.*

**Edward Davis:** They were all what they called mountain yards and they had been fighting since they were kids. It was a tradition amongst their families. But they went in and slaughtered them people and that was – we did get a lot of them out. We brought them to Fort Chaffee, and a lot of guys went in during the occupation by the Communists and secretly went in and extracted a lot of them. We had PBS – if you remember the old runways with steel with holes in them, you remember them?

*No I don't.*

**Edward Davis:** We used to set up runways way, way up in the mountains like we did during the Burma, World War II Burma operations and these are runways, they were steel with perforation steel.

*OK, I know what you're talking about.*

**Edward Davis:** We had put thousands of those runways all over Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, up in the mountains, just in case we ever needed to pull these people out, and we did go in and pull a lot of them out. That was an amazing feat. The CIA did most of it but they went in with the Swif aircraft and I went in on a couple of occasions myself with them on some of the lightweight fixed wing aircraft. It was pretty scary, but we landed on these PBS, I think they called them, they are perforated steel runways, PSR – I can't remember. But we went in and picked up a lot of those people that had worked for us. I'm talking about thousands of people. We had about 30,000 at Fort Chaffee Arkansas that were evacuated out. About 5,000 of them were people that had worked directly in the intelligence field and mercenaries. The other 25,000 were people that were extracted all throughout Vietnam.

*So when all this ends and you go back to the United States, what do you do at that point? I know at one point I guess you ended up teaching ROTC at the University of Texas?*

**Edward Davis:** Yeah, but I went on another 10-year, I got back in '75, let see, I went on another 12 years just like Vietnam. I went to South America, Central America, and did a lot of the same stuff, run recon and everything.

*Did you see the military change much? I hear a lot about kind of after Vietnam there was kind of a down period in the late 70s where morale seemed to be low, and then in the 80s it started to come back.*

**Edward Davis:** Yeah, definitely, and that was all because of the publicity. The morale in the military was good because I was in Special Forces a lot of the time and the morale in Special

Forces was always good. It was never bad. But the exception was the regular military. The morale was not good, but it was basically because of the negative publicity that had been going on for years and years and years. That negative publicity started during '68, and it lasted, and it still goes on today. But in the mid-70s I was at Fort Bragg, let's see, I left Vietnam in '75, I was at Fort Bragg in – I got there I think in – no wait a minute, I went to the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Pathfinders in '75 after I left Vietnam and then I went to Okinawa with the Special Forces command center in Okinawa. Then I went to Fort Bragg, the 7<sup>th</sup> Special Forces at Fort Bragg. I got there in '78. I left Vietnam '75, I went to the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division Pathfinders in '75. I went to Okinawa, the Special Forces command center in '76. Then came back to Fort Bragg in '78, and then I went to Panama with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion in the 7<sup>th</sup> Special Forces in Panama in '80 up until '85. Five years I was in Central and South America.

*Well sir, we're almost at an hour in this interview, and these interviews are to be saved for posterity and our hope is that future generations listen to these and we have documents here that go back to the Spanish Land Grant days. We have Stephen F. Austin's original Registro. We have David Crockett's widow's Land Grant that she received. With that in mind, is there anything that you'd want to say to future generations that may be listening to this interview years from now?*

**Edward Davis:** Well, we're not even touching the tip of the iceberg, and I would like to say to future generations, if you ever listen to this recording of oral history of mine, Ed Davis, I have not even touched the tip of the iceberg about the Vietnam War, and unfortunately most of the schools and universities really to this day, 40 some years later, do not really teach the kids what really went on in Vietnam, and to really explain it would take hours and hours and hours and maybe five or six books to really explain the American commitment in Vietnam. This was a gigantic endeavor. You got to remember we had over 500,000 military in Vietnam for 10 years, and this was a gigantic effort by the United States government. You could put it on the level of World War II, not in the context of World War II, but for the time that it happened, you could put it in the context of World War II because Communism at that time was a worldwide threat. This was a gigantic endeavor by the United States, but it has never really been explained to the youth of our country because all of the explanations over the years – the majority of them – I would say probably 95%, have been a one-sided biased opinion of the U.S. military presence in Vietnam. So the American public has never really heard, read, or seen what we really accomplished in Vietnam, which was tremendous work that the Americans did in Vietnam from hospitals, roads, schools. I mean we built that country over 10 years. We built that country up and we did a great, it was really a great thing and we never got the credit for it.

*Hopefully sir, this program is just one small little way of thanking you for your service to our country, especially during a difficult time and Commissioner Patterson is a Vietnam veteran and there's a lot of us here that are veterans, but I know even everybody here that is not a veteran still appreciates the service and sacrifice that you've made for our nation, and this program is just one really small little way of expressing that gratitude.*

**Edward Davis:** Well I appreciate that James, and I guess you're a veteran of Iraq or Afghanistan?

*Iraq.*

**Edward Davis:** Iraq? So I hope you can understand my concern is that we could see the same situation in Iraq that we saw in Vietnam if politically we pull out all of our forces from Iraq at

some future date, the Iranians will no doubt move in and launch a major offensive like the North Vietnamese did in South Vietnam.

*I definitely understand what you're saying.*

**Edward Davis:** I mean it's a very serious concern. All of those people in Iraq that are associated with the United States would be slaughtered. I mean talking about millions of people over the years that have sided with the U.S. I'm sure the Iraqi army would put up a good fight, but you know, you're dealing with a country that now has nuclear weapons, Iran, and they are dedicated, like the North Vietnamese were. They are dedicated to destroying their enemies, and I would not doubt if we do not stay like we are in Germany and Korea in force in Iraq, if political will is given up and we pull out of there militarily over say the next couple of years, I have no doubt the Iranians will launch an offensive.

*Yes sir, I agree.*

**Edward Davis:** And it's a shame and we should've learned from Vietnam when your political will, when your enemy knows your political will is not there, they will -

*Sure, that's always been a truism in combat – defeat your enemy's will to fight.*

**Edward Davis:** Exactly, so I just appreciate your service in Iraq and I hope to God that we don't lose sight of what happened in Vietnam and the same thing could happen in Iraq, even Afghanistan.

*Well sir, like I mentioned before the interview, we'll be sending you copies of this interview on CD soon, and we'll also be sending you a nice letter and certificate from Commissioner Patterson as soon as he can sign that as well.*

**Edward Davis:** Thank you James. I really appreciate you taking the time.

*Well thank you very much sir, and have a good day.*

**Edward Davis:** Thanks again, and I am, over the years I've been contemplating writing a book because what we discussed is not even the tip of the iceberg and if I ever get my book written, you'll be the first one to get a copy.

*All right sir, I appreciate it.*

**Edward Davis:** Thank you again, James.

*[End of recording]*