

Transcription: Sid Medford

Today is Monday, June 3rd, 2013. My name is James Crabtree and this morning I'll be interviewing Mr. Sid Medford. This interview is being conducted in support of the Texas Veterans Land Board Voices of Veterans Oral History Program. I'm at the General Land Office Building in Austin, Texas, and Mr. Medford is at his business in Lufkin, Texas. Sir, thank you very much for taking the time to talk to us today. It's an honor for our program.

Sid Medford: Well I appreciate the opportunity.

Yes sir. Sir, the first question we always start with in these interviews is please tell us a little bit about your childhood and your life before you entered the service.

Sid Medford: I would say it was a very normal childhood. I grew up here in Lufkin, Texas. I graduated from Lufkin High School and then went to Texas A&M University, and graduated from Texas A&M and was commissioned because I was in the Corps, a Second Lieutenant, upon graduation. I had decided at the time that I wanted to pursue a law degree, so I actually asked for a deferment from active duty to attend law school. They granted it to me and I completed the first year of law school and then I got the forms that said OK, you've done your first year, you must reapply for your second year. I did that, and instead of getting an OK, I got orders to report to active duty.

Geez, that's not a good surprise.

Sid Medford: Yeah, I mean I was under the assumption, which was wrong, that once they granted it, it would be good all the way through law school.

Sure, that seems like the common sensical thing.

Sid Medford: But they said there was a shortage of officers in my branch. My branch was Armor, and I was to report to active duty in October of that year.

To back up a little bit, what was it that attracted you to A&M, the Core Cadets, and wanting to be commissioned in the military?

Sid Medford: I actually, none of my family had gone to A&M, I went with a friend of mine my senior year in high school, we went to A&M for final review, and when I saw the Corps and the spirit and everything that went on there, I absolutely just fell in love with it, and said that's where I'm going.

And so then when you got there, at that time in the Core Cadets, did that mean you had to enter the military after you graduated?

Sid Medford: No, when I went, James, it was mandatory your first two years that you would have to be in the Corps, as at that time it was still an all male university. Actually it was A&M College of Texas at the time. You had to be in the Corps for two years. If you chose to go on, then you actually signed at that time actually an advanced contract saying I want to stay in the Corps another two years and agree to serve after that. That's the route I took. My senior year is when they changed the name from A&M College of Texas to Texas A&M University, and we

had the first females in school, but they were limited to being either daughters of the faculty or married to a current student. I had one girl in one class the entire four years.

Quite a bit different then from Texas A&M today I would guess. In fact a majority of the students there now might be female, I'm not sure, but I've seen some of those stories.

Sid Medford: Yes, if the university was going to grow, they had to open it up, and we've just grown since then and I still stay pretty close to the university.

Now this was in the 1960s, mid-1960s I guess?

Sid Medford: Yes, I graduated in 1966.

And at that time did you think that Vietnam was some place you might be going, or was that something that you weren't even thinking about?

Sid Medford: No, I was fairly certain that I would go to Vietnam, but I actually thought I would get through law school and work by then, go from a Second Lieutenant to a Captain and probably go over as part of the Jack Corps.

What was it that made you pick the Army instead of the other branches of service?

Sid Medford: I'm a pretty good history buff, and of course I've studied all the way to the Civil War, all the wars, and I guess if anything, the study of Patton, he just fascinated me and I said that's what I want to do, I want to be an armor officer.

That's great, so when you get the notice that your deferment's been declined and you're going into your second year of law school, how long did you have then before you had to ship off to some sort of training?

Sid Medford: I got that notice right about this time of year, as the regular session ended, you were entering summer school, and I had until October.

And were you married at the time?

Sid Medford: I was.

So how did your wife feel about that news?

Sid Medford: Surprised was the best word, and of course we were living in Houston at the time because I was working full time at American Journal of Insurance. I was assistant personnel director, and going to law school at night. So obviously we had to pack up and I had to move her back to Lufkin. We actually bought a mobile home at the time and put it in a trailer park here, and got her settled. I had a daughter, got them settled, and then I had to report to Fort Knox, Kentucky, initially.

Yes sir. Tell us a little bit about the training you had then at Fort Knox and the armor -

Sid Medford: It was officer's basic school and to me it was fun. I liked that stuff and I got to play everything from a loader in a tank to tank commander, and I thought the training was very good, and I was excited. Once I completed that, again, dealing with the Army, I erroneously assumed that I would be stationed somewhere and have a tank platoon. Instead, when I got orders, it was to go to Fort Polk, Louisiana, as an infantry training officer.

I've been to Fort Polk. I know what type of place that's like especially in the summer. Tell us a little bit about what you did then at Fort Polk.

Sid Medford: At Polk, I was a training officer for basic trainees. There were two of us there, two lieutenants, and then I had a Captain Simpson was our company commander, and we would get a cycle in and we had 'em for eight weeks and we actually put them through basic training. At that time, the majority of them would be classified infantry and they would get a little leave and then they'd come right back to Fort Polk for AIT, which was called Tiger Land, which was basically the second step before they went to Vietnam.

Were most of those young men draftees?

Sid Medford: Almost exclusively. In fact we even, I was there when they had what they called McNamara's 100,000, which were low IQ draftees, and we trained a lot of those kids at the time, and some just weren't real bright, and we had a few problems with some of them going AWOL.

Yes sir, I was going to be curious about that because my experience, obviously it's been an all voluntary force, so everyone that's there at some point in time said hey, this is what I want to do. In your situation, having to train folks that more often than not were there because the government told them to be there, I imagine that would pose a unique training environment for you and your soldiers.

Sid Medford: Well it did, and my best example of that is, I happened to be the officer on call when we were about to receive a new cycle in, and they'd bring 'em from the reception station literally in cattle trucks down to the company area, and it may be 3 o'clock in the morning when you get 'em in, and so I got a call, we got a new cycle coming in, and I called my designated drill sergeants and that sort of thing, and got to the company area, and loading them off the cattle trucks, the drill sergeants are yelling "get in formation, get over here, there," and somehow they missed this one kid, and he came walking across the company area and I was standing in the orderly room door, and he walked up dragging his duffle bag and he said who's in charge here? And I went, well, I guess I am right now, why? He said, I don't like this Army, and I'm going home. And I said I'm sorry, it doesn't work that way. You're drafted and you're here. And he went no, I'm going home, and about that time, well the drill sergeant jerked him up and got him over where he was supposed to be. We get him squared away, we get to the first day of training, the second morning, he's gone. And I had a company commander at the time when we had 'em go AWOL, and most of them were drafted from areas around us. He believed instead of immediately just sending the MP's after him and getting a bad mark on their record, he would usually send me and Corporal Bradley to see if we could go get him, and if we could do that he would sit down and try to counsel with him and say you've got to stay, etc., and not have that go against their record. And this kid's name was Marlborough, I'll never forget him. He was from Hattisburg, Mississippi, so we drove to Hattisburg, Mississippi, and I would go to the local sheriff and tell them what we were there to do, and the sheriff said I know that bunch out there and ya'll are on your own, I'm not going. I went, well if you're not going, neither are we. So we drove back and told Captain Simpson I couldn't get this one, and they sent the MP's and we got him back. Then about a week later he was gone again. And they sent the MP's, and this time they put him in the stockade for about 30 days. We actually got him again the next cycle.

Geez, so he was a recurring problem for you.

Sid Medford: Well the second time, he hung in there and he went to AIT there at Tiger Land, and it's ironic, when I got off the plane in Saigon, one of the first people I saw driving one of the mules there at Tonsenut airport base was Marlborough.

That is a small world.

Sid Medford: It is. And he saw me and came running up and said Lieutenant Medford, said I hated this Army when I was at Fort Polk, but this is not a bad deal. I may stay. And I don't know what happened to him after that. He could be retired as a Master Sergeant now, who knows?

That's a pretty wild story. So how long ultimately did you spend there at Fort Polk?

Sid Medford: About eight months. And then I came down on orders, and the other lieutenant with me was named Thomas Anthony Ciccolini from Ohio, and we came down on the same set of orders to go to Vietnam, but prior to that they sent us both to jungle school down in Panama.

OK, tell us a little bit about the training you went through down there.

Sid Medford: When I got to Panama, you knew it was en route basically to Vietnam, but I wasn't even worried about Vietnam. I thought I was going to die in Panama. The training was very intense and it was stuff I'd never done anything like that, repelling down mountains and swimming in the Chagras River, and escape and evasion courses and stuff like that. But hindsight, especially when I got to Nam, it was all worth it because it did really increase my confidence that I could handle just about anything that comes along. But it was an interesting training.

And how long was that training for, sir?

Sid Medford: I think we were there if I remember right for two weeks.

So you do the two weeks in Panama and then I guess you have some time with your wife and young daughter.

Sid Medford: They gave us 30-day leave and then flew to Vietnam.

Did you know what you were going to be doing once you arrived in Vietnam?

Sid Medford: No, I had no idea, and I went over unassigned, and again, I assumed surely I'd go to one of the Track companies, get me a tank platoon or something. And you report in to the little training that they went through for the officers there for, it could go anywhere from two days to a week, and you just checked the board every day to see if you'd been assigned. The third day I was there, I was checking the board, and there I was going to the 1st Cavalry Division, the 1st of the 9th, and I went, I don't think they have any tanks, and that's when I learned that armor and infantry are interchangeable. But yeah, I was assigned to the 1st Cav and I flew from down there at Saigon to at that time the Cav was up north up at Odkay, up in the highlands, and flew me up there. They give you an M16 at the reception station, never fired it. And a few clips of ammo and that's basically what you went up there with. I reported in to the Colonel there at the 1st of the 9th, and gave him my file and he looked at it and he said oh, good, jungle school. And I went, oh no. And he said you're going to be the recon platoon leader. I went OK, what's that? Well that's our white platoon for the 1st of the 9th. We had a white and then a red, white, and blue, and white is the recon element. He said in fact, your platoon is on the helipad right now. We've been without a platoon leader for a month or so, and Sergeant Shaffer had been running the platoon, the platoon Sergeant. I'm going to call and have them hold the choppers until we can get you through supply and get you out to the helipad. I literally just put my stuff in a hootch, went down to supply and got issued everything. By the way, we got to take this M16 back to reception station. Here's you a new one, here's 20 clips of ammo, here's some smoke grenades, frag grenades, two canteens of water, basically pat you on the head and say get in there, boy. They drove me in a Jeep down and I shook hands with Sergeant Shaffer, and got on a helicopter and went on my first combat assault.

Geez, that's got to be an odd feeling and definitely unique I think compared to what you see today in terms of all the training that's done and of course today they go as units and not

individual replacement. So in your case, you're following in on a platoon that's been there for quite some time.

Sid Medford: I told Sergeant Shaffer until I figure out what's going on, you're in charge. You just tell me what to do until I can get a grasp on things.

What were your first impressions, sir, of Vietnam and the new billet you'd been put into?

Sid Medford: I guess a good word is apprehensive because I really wasn't sure, I don't think, what I was really getting into. I mean obviously you'd seen the films and you'd seen everything else, and you knew this is not a good situation, but you better figure out what's going on in a hurry. And I was very fortunate in that Sergeant Shaffer had the platoon for a while. He was I don't know how many years he'd had in the Army at the time, but he was a lot older. I was 23, something like that, 22, 23, 24, and Sergeant Shaffer was pushing 40. He'd been in for quite a few years. And I had two other Sergeants that were both 10 years plus. That was Sergeant Shaffer's first tour, but Sergeant Duran and Sergeant Hicks were on second tour. Everybody in my platoon from the enlisted guys with the exception of two were on either their second or third tour. So I inherited a very experienced bunch, which helped.

Did you know what had happened to your predecessor, the previous platoon commander?

Sid Medford: I found out from Sergeant Shaffer after we got to know each other and had some time to visit and this sort of thing, and he said that he'd gotten shot, didn't get killed, but they had to Medivac him out. That was actually his second platoon leader that he'd gone through since he'd had the platoon.

I know that's something I've always heard and read about, that young lieutenants in Vietnam were highly targeted and had a very short time a lot of times unfortunately in the field, and I'm sure you probably knew that going into it, but then how did you deal with that sort of situation, that circumstance? Did you just try not to think about it?

Sid Medford: Basically yeah. I just thought OK, this is my new job and my job is to take care of me and take care of my guys. It only took me because I had good training, I mean the Corps day in was pretty dang good training to start with. But with going through the basic training with all the troops and then jungle school and all, yeah, I felt pretty confident that I could do the job, and it only took a couple of times in the field where I basically said OK, Sergeant Shaffer, I'm taking over. It was an experience, even the first time we went out we were supposed to find a bunker complex, which we found, and then I questioned what do we do? Well, we blow 'em up. Well good, I like blowing stuff up, and I loaded up a bunch of grenades and I went down the line and then all of a sudden there was a secondary explosion and everybody is on the ground shooting at a wood line and I'm still standing there and I realized whoops, I better get down. And it didn't take but a couple of instances like that that I pretty much felt confident that I knew what I was doing, and like I say, I inherited an experienced bunch of guys. My point man was a first tour kid, was 19 years old, but he had more guts than he had sense, and he was great.

What was a typical patrol like if there was such a thing?

Sid Medford: Well, we'd get airlifted in to a certain area and our job really if we had a specific mission, like sometimes, OK, we'd think there was a bunker complex in this area, we need you to go find it. Other missions would be intelligence says there's enemy activity in the area. We

need you to go out and see if you can find 'em and make contact, and we could start a fight. We couldn't hang in there very long because recon only had on the average about 25 guys. But they kept a basically a company of the blue platoon, infantry platoon, they kept a company almost all the time sitting on the helipad ready to get out there to help us if I called and said help. We would stay out sometimes a week or 10 days at a time, and you couldn't last for long in a fire fight if you had a real serious one going on because you'd run out of ammo. You just couldn't hump that much ammo. So they would get us some help pretty quick.

I think being out in that sort of environment for 7 and 10 days at a time, did you ever at some point become more used to it or acclimated to it, or is it always, I guess you've got to be kind of on edge because of the circumstance, but does it ever become more simple, or do the days start to kind of blend together?

Sid Medford: Sometimes they did. The biggest problem we had if we were on foot this whole time, you'd cross some of those little streams and you'd get leaches on you and stuff like that, and you'd have to pair off and have a leach break, but you stayed on edge all the time because you never knew. I mean they could pop up out of a spider hole anywhere, anytime. And you tried to stay off the main trails because that's where they'd set their booby traps and ambushes and stuff like that. So you pretty much worked your way around the trails. And sometimes with my platoon we would actually go out like rat patrol, especially after we moved south, down around Quadloid and there, we would go – I had Jeeps with M60's mounted on it. I had one Jeep had a 106 recoilless rifle. I had a three-quarter ton truck that carried my entry squad, and most of the time we used those, we were working a rubber tree plantation. You were basically confined to the road anyway, and we would run the roads like rat patrol. And saw some interesting sights. In the middle of nowhere you'd see an old French plantation with a swimming pool, a tennis court, all cordoned off. We had one instance one night where the French plantation owner, we were camping out in his rubber trees and he came down there to chew us out because they were getting ready to harvest that area – ya'll don't need to be in here, etc., etc., and I just had to tell him you need to go on about your business and let us go about ours. He came back the second day doing the same thing and we had found a couple of mines in the road the day before, and I told him that, and he said no, they don't mine this thing, and I still have pictures of his little French car in two pieces where he hit one. We were just going better him than us.

Yes sir, absolutely. So during this time when you're in Vietnam and you're off and on those long patrols, did you get any letters or much mail from back home?

Sid Medford: Yeah, they were pretty good about that. We may go three or four days, but we'd have to get resupplied, whether it be with some more C-rations or maybe we had a little skirmish and we needed more ammo or whatever. We'd either have to blow an LC or get to a place where I could get a chopper or two in, and when they'd bring us out, they'd bring our mail, so they were really pretty good about that, even to the point of we were in the field on Christmas Day and they asked if I could get to Nail Z and I said yes, and they actually flew out Christmas dinner for us in the field.

I'm sure that's good for morale.

Sid Medford: Yeah, I will admit that those cooks they unloaded out there were saying ya'll need to hurry up and eat! Because they wanted to get back. But I mean we had everything from turkey and dressing to even ice cream.

That's surprising, that's good. How did your family deal with you being there in Vietnam? Did they know the extent of what you were doing and where you were, or did you try not to tell them that sort of thing?

Sid Medford: Well, my dad did, but never really told mother the whole story, although she was pretty much aware because she would obviously watch the news on TV, she would read every article about it, and I was pretty good about writing them pretty often, along with the wife and everything, but I would keep them in the loop, but I just wouldn't tell them everything that was going on.

Sure, and how did they hold up? Did they do OK during the time you were gone, or was there a lot of worry, or did they ever tell you?

Sid Medford: The only time that I think it really got kind of dicey is when I got wounded. I didn't know that they notified the parents, and I was down at Cameron Bay in the hospital area, and you could actually call home. You can't do it like today with the laptops and everything else and stay in touch, but I called home. Mother couldn't even talk, because I had no idea that they knew. I was just going to surprise them with a call. Then she handed the phone to daddy and he said well, you OK? And I said yeah, hit with a mortar but I'm OK. I didn't even go in 'til the next day and I said they pulled some metal out of me and patched me back up and said I'd be down here for a couple of days and I'm fixin' to head back to the platoon.

So at that point, your family just knew that you'd been wounded but they didn't know anything else.

Sid Medford: Didn't know anything else. So daddy said well where'd you get hit? I said well, fortunately it went over me and it blew me up in the air and I got it mostly in the rear end and in my left leg, and he went "damn aggie," said "I told you to keep your head down, I should've told you to keep your butt down, too."

Good that he had a sense of humor. Tell us a little bit sir then if you would about being wounded then, when and where that happened and kind of some of the circumstances.

Sid Medford: We were on our Jeeps and we were sent out, they actually attached a South Vietnamese platoon to mine, which occasionally they would do to work with ours. Some of their units were pretty good and some of them were absolutely horrible.

I've heard that.

Sid Medford: But we weren't too far from the base camp, but they said we think they may be trying to infiltrate over here, and we need you guys to go over there and check it out. Basically right before dark, we set up two defensive positions and we're basically in the elephant grass. There weren't any trees, just like being in a prairie where we were. The armored platoon was 200-300 yards away from mine, and we heard the mortars. You can hear 'em coming out of the tubes. And the first batch went way over us, and we're just trying to get under the Jeeps or whatever. We hadn't dug any holes or anything. We hadn't been there 30 minutes. Then the next one was short, and then it didn't take any time to know that there was probably somebody in that armored platoon adjusting fire, because none of the mortars hit over where they were. They all hit right in my platoon area. And I had a kid that was hit pretty bad, and Sergeant Shaffer and I took off running over there. The medic had already headed that way and then we had one hit in

front of us, and we basically got the backwash from it. It blew us both up in the air and we both got some shrapnel, and back then, I wear contacts now, but back then I wore those old Army issued black glasses that I had tied on with two rubber bands because if they ever fell off I didn't know which direction to shoot. It kind of knocked you out for a minute and then you kind of get up a little dazed, but you go OK, I feel like I stepped on a fire ant bed, but other than that I think I'm OK, except I couldn't see out of my left eye. So I started yelling for doc, and I didn't realize it, but I had a piece kind of cut me up above the eye and it had bled in my lens of my glasses. He took the glasses off and wiped 'em and put 'em back on and I went "it's a miracle, I can see!" But I said we've got to stop the mortars, and I climbed up on a Jeep and I could see the flashes coming out of the wood line. So I'm standing on the Jeep with the radio, getting some gunships on station, and I had to hold up a strobe light, and it was giving them a pretty good target. They blew me off the Jeep twice, just concussions, I didn't get any more shrapnel. But I finally got the gunships out there and they could, they got the strobe light and I told 'em where they were, and I mean they put 'em down.

Were these the AC-130 gunships?

Sid Medford: Cobra's.

Cobra helicopters, yes sir.

Sid Medford: Yeah, I had two Cobra's and a Scout Bird, but they got on it pretty quick.

I guess after everything was settled then they Medivac'ed you out of there?

Sid Medford: No, I Medivac'ed two guys out that night, but I had doc look at me and I didn't force it, I was very lucky. I had quite a bit and I blew some veins loose and that sort of thing, but he just kind of patched me up and I said we're going back in in the morning anyway. I'm going to stay out the night, and I reported in the next morning, went to the dispensary and they just kind of lay you down there and what's still sticking out they pulled out. You could hear it throwing in a little metal pan and they basically just patched you up and said we're going to send you down to Cameron, just to get some more x-rays and stuff.

When did they call your family?

Sid Medford: I don't know, my dad said they got a telegram.

So they get kind of an impersonal telegram from the Department of the Army I guess, or Department of Defense, so how long was it before you were able to call them?

Sid Medford: It was like three days or four days, I don't remember exactly.

I can imagine that was probably a very difficult three or four days for them, and then the fact that you didn't even know that they knew.

Sid Medford: No, I had no idea, and then finally when I was talking to daddy, he finally put mother back on the phone and said he's OK, he's OK, and I went yeah, I'm all right, mother, I'm just fine. When you coming home? Well, not real soon. Well you're supposed to spend, or at least the program they had set up for officers, you spent six months in the field and you spent six months in the rear, normally. I don't know if that was just the Cav's policy or that was the entire

policy over there, I never knew that. But I went to the field first obviously. I went through my six months and then they sent me a replacement that I was supposed to spend two weeks with, but he didn't listen to me and we went on an assault and I tell him we're going to be in this high grass and I can't get the chopper all the way down on the ground, so you step down on the skids and then you jump and you got about a 3- or 4-foot drop. He just bailed off the chopper and broke his left leg in two places.

Geez, how high up was he you think when he jumped off?

Sid Medford: Jumping out of the chopper he was probably 10 feet up there, with all that gear on your back. So we just picked him up and loaded him back on and sent him back. Then I was out there for, well I spent eight months in the field.

That's a long time.

Sid Medford: And we found a huge bunker complex on this mountain. Heard a warning shot, but never saw anybody, but we went down in it and I mean it was a setup like a hospital. It had Chinese medical books, operating tables, generators, everything underground. So I had called and said I'm sure they know we're here, we need some help now. And they airlifted a company out there to cordon off the area and get us out, and it was just ironic that General Shed who was the Assistant Division Commander at the time, flew out and off his helicopter who is now his aid is Thomas Anthony Ciccolini, the guy that we were training officers together and got going over there together. Cicc had spent his first six months in the field with Custer's old outfit and then went into the rear and got assigned as General Shed's aid, and he said what are you still doing out here? I said, well Cicc, they can't find a replacement I guess. He went over and talked to General Shed and he came over and introduced himself and said pack your gear and get on the chopper. That was on my birthday, on April 18th.

What year was that, sir?

Sid Medford: That was in '69. And I got on the chopper, flew back in to division headquarters, and he walked in and there was a lieutenant sitting behind the S1 desk and he said you're the new recon platoon leader. Medford, this is your desk. So that's how I got out of the field.

I'm sure that had to have been a bit of a relief after that long of a period of time out there.

Sid Medford: Yeah, I was a little paranoid by then because just about every other night we'd either get rockets or mortars into the base camp, and I actually built me a bunker inside my hootch. I put sandbags all around it, I put metal on top and then sandbagged that, sandbagged the outside wall, and I had me, I strung a light up in there and I had my cot and mosquito net and a fan that I got at the PX, and I would crawl in that thing at night and pull the sheet of metal across, and just sleep like a baby. I'd sleep right through the sirens and everything.

Interesting. How much longer did you end up having to spend in Vietnam?

Sid Medford: I spent a year there.

OK, so another four months at least working in admin I guess.

Sid Medford: Yep, and in fact, as I came back from Vietnam, I had already made 1st Lieutenant when I got over there, and then I made Captain, and while they reassigned me to Fort Polk, but this time I got the job as the Adjutant for the post.

Sure, OK, and at that point did you plan on staying in the Army or were you pretty sure you wanted to get back to law school?

Sid Medford: No, I had thought at that time that I've done pretty well, I was on the 5 percent list for Major, and I said I should make Major probably after I figured my next assignment after Polk would be to go back to Fort Knox for officers advanced school, which is like if I remember right, six or nine months, something like that. I thought probably while I'm there I'll make Major, and if I have to do a second tour in Vietnam, I'll be at least at battalion level and it shouldn't be out in the bush that much. And so I actually called the Department of the Army and said I'm thinking about going indefinite, what's my next duty assignment? They said we have you scheduled for a second tour in Vietnam at the end of this year, which would put me a year back at Polk and then right back in Vietnam. I'd have gone back as a Captain and I'd have been right back in the boonies, and I went no, I'm not gonna do that. I tried to bargain with them. If you'll send me to officer advanced school, I'll stay. But I'm not pulling a second tour unless I get up to field grade level. And they went nope, and I went OK, I'm out of here. So at the end of that third year which was all I was required to do active, then I got off active duty and I had, I think I had one more year in the Reserves was all because it was total six-year commitment and they credit you for your junior and senior year at A&M.

So you got out then in 1970, and then did you go back to law school at that point?

Sid Medford: I did.

How was that? I would think that would be kind of difficult to have gone a year and be gone for a while, and then try to come back in again.

Sid Medford: Yeah, it was a little tough and of course married with a kid, I had to work, so at American General, because I was called on active duty, they had to keep my job open. So I went right back to being assistant personnel director and right back to law school at night, and it took me another three years to finish, but I did finish.

Yes sir, absolutely. Was the transition difficult to come back into the civilian world after especially such an unpopular war with the way a lot of the GI's were treated?

Sid Medford: Yeah, it was James, I mean I recall, of course you're happy that you're going home, but I can recall landing and when we disembarked there at San Francisco and walking through the airport, there were a bunch of protestors there screaming at you and calling you a baby killer and everything else, and I thought what? And then I thought, I realize now why they took our weapons away from us, because I could wipe that whole crowd out. It bothered me so much at the time that I went in because I had to fly from there to Houston and everybody's going to beat me in Houston, and I actually went into the restroom and changed out of my uniform and put my civvies on because I said I don't want to go through anymore of this right now.

Yeah, I'm glad and thankful to see that it's changed today from how you and your fellow troops were treated at that point in time.

Sid Medford: I love it when you see it on TV when a great number clapping when they come through the airport, that's the way it ought to be.

Exactly. So you get back to Houston and you're out of the Army -

Sid Medford: At that time, that was just coming back from Nam. I still had a year to go.

OK, back at Fort Polk. Did you keep in touch with many of those that you served with in Vietnam?

Sid Medford: Well, Ciccolini and I stay in touch. He as I did after he got out, went to law school, and he practiced law up in Akron, Ohio, for quite a few years, and now he is an administrative law judge for the social security administration, and we still stay in touch. I had contact, oh I've had as early as two months ago a guy called me out of the clear blue and he said I just found your name on something or whatever, and he's in the real estate business in South Carolina, and he was one of the helicopter pilots over there that flew us around a lot. My point man sitting, made it through all the way, I still have contact with him. And Sergeant Hicks, he was from Marshall, Texas, which is not too far from Lufkin, and I lost contact with him I don't know, 10 or 12 years ago. We stayed in contact and then I think he worked offshore and he was going to work on some rig down in South America the last I heard from him, and for all I know, he's still in South America. But those are about the only ones out of my actual group of guys that I was with. I don't know what happened to Sergeant Shaffer. I would imagine not long after that he probably retired.

Well the one good thing today with the Internet is it's more easy to find people than in the past. I was going to ask you, sir, how did you learn about this program?

Sid Medford: We were at our local realtor association here. Once a year they have what they call the hill visit for all the realtors to go meet with your senators and state reps and all, and the new state rep from our district here, I've known him for a long time, a young guy that's real sharp. In fact he got the freshman of the year in the legislature this year.

OK, what's his name, sir?

Sid Medford: Trent Ashby.

OK, great, yes sir.

Sid Medford: And we went up to see him and I picked up one of your brochures there.

Oh excellent, I'm glad to hear that because this program, a lot of it's word of mouth and it's a lot at the local Legion post and VFW's and veteran service officers, and so I'm always curious because a lot of times we get calls from family members saying oh, you should interview my grandfather or my dad or that sort of thing, but in your case you actually sent in the postage reply card and I was like so he saw the brochure, so I was curious where you found it, so that's good.

Sid Medford: Got it in the capitol.

That's great, I'm glad to know you were able to see that and contact us. One thing I don't know, sir, if you got it out of the brochure or if I told you or not, here at the Land Office we have archives that go back to the 1700s. So we've got the original Registro that Stephen F. Austin kept of settlers that came to the state, and we have the land grant that David Crockett's widow received after he was killed at The Alamo, and what we're doing with these interviews besides sending a copy to the veteran obviously, it's a small token of thank you, because we also keep a copy here for the archives and the hope is that potentially hundreds of years from now people can listen to these interviews and study them and perhaps learn something from them.

Sid Medford: I think that's neat, yeah, and over the years, of course being in the real estate business forever, I have sold many tracts of land financed through the Land Board.

Ok great, so you know how the VLB works as well.

Sid Medford: I've dealt with it a lot, not only that, but combination VA loans and Land Board loans. It's been a good program for veterans of Texas, I'm telling you.

I'm glad to hear that, yes sir. Well I know of course Commissioner Patterson is a Vietnam veteran like yourself and we've got a lot of veterans here at the Land Office, but I know he and all of us here at the Land Office thank you for your service to our country and this program is just a small way of saying thank you. In a couple of weeks or so we'll have copies of this interview made on CD's and we're going to send those to you, and we're going to send you a nice letter and certificate signed by Commissioner Patterson and we'll put it in a nice commemorative binder. So be looking for that and hopefully in not too many weeks, sometimes it takes a little while to get the Commissioner to sign the certificate when he's really busy, but he hand signs all of those, and we'll get all the CD's made up and sent to you, too. Then also sir, if there's anybody you know, friends, family, acquaintances that they live in Texas and they're a veteran and they're at all interested in talking to me like you've done today, please just have them give me a call. I'd be honored to interview them.

Sid Medford: I will, I will.

Yes sir, well sir, I greatly appreciate it. Again, thank you for taking the time to talk to me today, and I guess in closing is there anything you'd want to say to anybody listening to this interview potentially hundreds of years from now when they go to the state archives?

Sid Medford: I think I would say what I've heard many people say in the past. Just keep in mind that freedom is not free. Somebody sometime has to go defend the right for you to live like you want to live. So when you see your veterans or you see people on active duty, take a minute and shake their hand and just say thanks.

Yes sir, good sentiments. Well sir, again it's been my honor, and we'll be speaking to you again soon I'm sure.

Sid Medford: All right, well James, I appreciate it and it was my honor, too.

[End of recording]