

## Transcription: Pastor Floyd Perry

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*Today is Thursday, November 12, 2009. My name is James Crabtree, and I'll be interviewing Pastor Floyd Perry. Pastor Perry is at his home in Houston, Texas, and I'm at the General Land Office Headquarters in Austin, Texas, and this interview is being conducted in support of the Texas Veterans Land Board Voices of Veterans Oral History Program. Sir, thank you very much for taking the time to talk to us today. It's an honor for us. And this whole program is about honoring veterans and trying to preserve their words for posterity, and I guess the first question we usually start off with is ask you just to tell us a little bit about your childhood and your life before you went into the military.*

**Floyd Perry:** Well, I was born and raised in Kansas City, Missouri, and I joined the Marine Corps in high school at age 18.

*Out of Kansas City?*

**Floyd Perry:** Out of Kansas City, and that was in June of '66, and I was in Vietnam starting December '66.

*Wow. And what was growing up in Kansas City, what was it that made you want to join the Marine Corps?*

**Floyd Perry:** I'm going to be frank with you. I watched too many John Wayne movies.

*So what did your family think when you told them, or did you tell them that you were signing up?*

**Floyd Perry:** Oh, they were fine. My father was in the Army. I was the first to be in the Marine Corps. My grandfather was in the Army.

*Oh wow.*

**Floyd Perry:** Yeah, and so I was supposed to join the Marine Corps, then I had a brother behind me, he joined the Army, and then the last two joined the Marine Corps.

*Wow, so definitely a tradition in your family of military service, and so as the first one going into the Marine Corps, what did you expect, or was it what you expected when you got to boot camp?*

**Floyd Perry:** You know we have a documentary on YouTube, and it's called Ottoman Brothers

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*I've had a chance to watch that. It was good.*

**Floyd Perry:** Yeah, and I'd like to make a statement that going to boot camp was a culture shock. But it was a great experience.

*Did you go to basic training in San Diego?*

**Floyd Perry:** Yes sir, I'm a Hollywood Marine.

*Oh that's the same with me. I went to the same spot, so I'm sure it probably hasn't changed very much from when you were there when I was there, since it's such an old depot. I know it opened in the 1920s.*

**Floyd Perry:** Yeah, well I got a chance to go back to see a graduation with my company 31. We did our reunion there in San Diego, and we got a chance to go to the MCR and see it.

*That's great.*

**Floyd Perry:** And we even got a chance to go back up in Camp Pendleton to the rifle range. It was an awesome trip. But the Marines that are out there now, they are livin' it up. They are livin' it up. They don't have any, we seen a building hut, but it was only ancient stuff. They live in dorms.

*Yeah, now you're talking about the Marines at SOI, School of Infantry?*

**Floyd Perry:** Yeah.

*OK, yeah, that's different. I know at boot camp though they're still in the squad bays with the racks and -*

**Floyd Perry:** Yeah, they had, but see that's still a squad bay instead of a building hut.

*Yeah, that's true.*

**Floyd Perry:** So they're definitely living it up. But it was an awesome privilege to see those Marines graduate. It took us back.

*When you went to boot camp, did they put you on a train, or did they fly you out there? How did you get to -*

**Floyd Perry:** They put me on a train.

*On a train. And how long was that train trip from Kansas City to San Diego?*

**Floyd Perry:** I couldn't tell you. You know, we were there, all of us were just having such a great time.

*Yeah.*

**Floyd Perry:** Until they picked us up with the bus.

*And do you remember when you got to the recruit depot if it was in the morning or if it was night time or any of that sort of thing?*

**Floyd Perry:** It was in the morning.

*In the morning, OK. And tell us a little bit about your first thoughts when you got on that, when you drove into the recruit depot.*

**Floyd Perry:** Well, you know, in the Marine Corps, they have like I said, it's a culture shock. All the boys the very first day, it scares the daylight out of you when the commander gets on the bus and hollers "stand asshole to belly button," and you say what? You say what? And the next thing you know you have to be indoctrinated in the Marine Corps way.

*That's right.*

**Floyd Perry:** And I'm telling you, but I do remember this on my first day. After we got our haircuts and our one phone call and we had our yellow t-shirts on, and we were all in a group holding hands, and there was a graduating class there and they had just graduated, and they looked at us over there, and they yelled out, "you're gonna be sorry!" It was an awesome time.

*That's great. So you went through basic training. What were most of the guys like in your platoon in boot camp?*

**Floyd Perry:** Well, I'm gonna tell you, I have been blessed all the way through my Marine Corps experience. My platoon, 3,065, was honor platoon. We were honor platoon. So you know we were loyal. And everybody was like that, you know. Everybody was, we had, it was good.

*I guess at that time were most of the guys in your platoon, did you know if they were draftees or if they had volunteered?*

**Floyd Perry:** Volunteers.

*Volunteers, yeah. And so you get through basic training, and when was it that you found out or did you know ahead of time what your MOS was going to be?*

**Floyd Perry:** We found out, you know, we take those tests in boot camp, and I came up 03-11.

*And did they tell you when you were still in boot camp?*

**Floyd Perry:** Right. On the way to ITR.

*ITR. OK. So you were going to the infantry training regiment, and then when was it that you finally found out what unit you were going to be going to?*

**Floyd Perry:** Well, we didn't find that out until we hit Vietnam. We went over on the USS Walker, a troop carrier. Now that was another experience. You know, you eat breakfast, then you line up for lunch. Yeah, and then after that, you line up for dinner. And then you get a little rest.

*Yeah, I've heard about some of those long travels on transport ships and just you get seasick and then you're always in line to eat.*

**Floyd Perry:** Yep, it's a real experience.

*So you were heading over with was it a group of Marines that just finished going through their final training?*

**Floyd Perry:** Right.

*So all new Marines.*

**Floyd Perry:** All brand new Marines.

*And on your way over there, what thoughts did you have in your mind? Were you worried about anything or were you eager to see action, or what?*

**Floyd Perry:** Well you know, being a young Marine, you're always eager. The thing that I had in my mind was like I had a friend of mine, and he was kind of scared. And he said I don't think I'll be coming back. And I used to tell him to get away from me, because I got a roundtrip ticket in my back pocket, and I said I'm coming back.

*And at that time, I know you're a pastor now, at that time were you a religious person as well?*

**Floyd Perry:** Yes, I had been saved and yes, I believed in Jesus Christ even then.

*So I imagine then that probably gave you a sense of peace and helped you deal with things maybe that other Marines might not have been able to deal with just because of that?*

**Floyd Perry:** Well what it did, it helped my conduct. Now you know in war, there is still conduct. There are things you do and things you don't do. You know, I tell the story of times I had this one time I'll mention, I was running through a village. I was a point man, and we were told when you go through the field, the bomb shelters, the VC sometimes hide in the bomb shelters, and we were told toss a grenade in it. And so I was running through there, I had pulled my pin on my grenade, but when I looked, I seen Mama San, and four little Baby San's in there, and I put that pin back in the grenade and kept going. See, that's the kind of things that will save your mind, you know what I'm saying?

*Absolutely. So when you get to Vietnam aboard the ship, how long was it at that point, how much longer did you have to wait until you got to your unit?*

**Floyd Perry:** Well, we disembarked in Da Nang. We went straight to our unit, and it was right outside Marble Mountain, in a state hospital to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion 1<sup>st</sup> Marines, that's where we were based at. And I went to the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon. In December, just before we got there, they were up at a place called the Desert Position, and they had been overrun, and they had lost about 12 or 22 Marines I think half wounded and half dead. So I was a replacement.

*What did they tell you? Did they give you any words of advice or warning when you got to your squad?*

**Floyd Perry:** No more than to obey the people that been there, your squad leader and your fire team leader, and you just had to obey orders.

*And in 1966, it still seems like it's fairly early in the war, at least in terms of I think a lot of the American people were thinking back home in the States, but your unit had already been in action. When you got there, did you have any feeling for what was in store for you, what your time in Vietnam was going to be like?*

**Floyd Perry:** Well, I tell you, it was kind of, OK I knew I was a replacement for a dead Marine, and but we were kind of like protecting NSA Hospital, and you know, it was nothing but patrols into villages, but you know, you get sniper fire, stuff like that, but the main thing and I speak about it in the documentary is the very first time I went out on patrol walking point, and that was right outside NSA Hospital, and what happened was that as we went down the \_\_\_\_ trail, the VC blew a \_\_\_\_ in the middle of our squad, and you know, I was walking point, so he let me get by and my first fire team get by, and then he blew it in the middle of the squad. So when I hit the ground, I was looking for somebody to shoot, but there wasn't nobody to shoot, and we heard the groans and the moans of the people back there, and so we formed a perimeter and we called in a Medivac and we got 'em out, but one of the guys that I had came up on the ship with me, he took a piece of shrap metal through the chin, and it took out the top of his head. And the reason why I remember that so clearly is because we had just congratulated him on having a baby boy, and me being 18 years old and going, this was my very first experience, man, I cried like a baby.

*Oh, I imagine. That's just horrific.*

**Floyd Perry:** I cried like a baby. But I had a sergeant, Adin McGee, let me tell you about this Irishman.

*OK, please do.*

**Floyd Perry:** This Irishman walked up to me and slapped the tar out of me. And I had my rifle in my hand, and he slapped the tar out of me, and he told me this. He said the only reason why you're crying is because you're so glad it wasn't you.

*Wow.*

**Floyd Perry:** And I'm gonna tell you something, I dried my tears and I never cried for another dead body over there, and I carried 'em for days. But that was the reality of the situation.

*Wow, so that was very quick wake-up I guess for any new Marine in your situation.*

**Floyd Perry:** Oh yeah. And you have to think fast. You can't get rattled and you just have to use all the training that the Marine Corps gives you. I remember this one incident where this boy named Charlie. Now Charlie, he was a good guy, and we were on an LB, and we were out in front of the platoon, and we looked on the ridge line and we seen a movement, and it was a lot of 'em over there, and Charlie, he kind of like wanted to panic, but by the time we seen 'em, everybody behind us saw 'em, too. So they started shootin'. And I had to lay on top of him to keep him on the ground because I'll tell you, the boy would've jumped up and that would've been it.

*Wow.*

**Floyd Perry:** Yeah, but the real, I just got a call yesterday from a guy that lived, that was born and raised in Texas, and his name was Water Boot, his names was Charles, and we called him Water Boot. Water Boot! \_\_\_\_\_ him now on Operation Union 1, Water Boot got shot in the head, and laid out in a rice paddy all night long. We couldn't get to him. When we finally got to him, his brains was partially in his helmet, and the thing that saved the boy's life was the blood filled up in the helmet. Water Boot is paralyzed on one side, and he talks but his talking is good and his mind is good.

*That's amazing.*

**Floyd Perry:** It's a miracle.

*Yeah, absolutely.*

**Floyd Perry:** I was there when the doc pushed his brains back up in his head and wrapped him up. And when I went to NSA Hospital to see him, it was a miracle. And when you see him now, I tell you what, God is good.

*That's right. So how long did you end up spending in Vietnam with the Mike 3-1.*

**Floyd Perry:** OK, from December '66 to February '68. I left right at the \_\_\_\_\_. They tried to get me to stay, but I said I had to go.

*That's right. Wow. So you were there, that unit, for quite some time then in Vietnam. Did your mission change over time as a battalion, were there times that you were in different parts of Vietnam where you were doing different things operationally or was it pretty much consistent that you were always going out on patrols and that sort of thing?*

**Floyd Perry:** Well, it started off as perimeter patrols, in other words, we started off around NSA Hospital and Marble Mountain, and we ran search and destroy missions into the villages that were around there, and we protected NSA Hospital, and we were on call in case they needed some reinforcements anywhere. And that's how we got into Operation Union 1. \_\_\_ fire was almost totally annihilated, and they needed help and so we got on the birds and we went to the rescue, but we ended up getting blown away.

*And when was this? Do remember roughly?*

**Floyd Perry:** April the 26<sup>th</sup>. I remember because well, they gave me a Bronze Star and a Combat B because I helped evacuate the wounded that was pinned down.

*That's amazing. That's quite an honor to receive, especially anybody that knows anything about military decorations.*

**Floyd Perry:** I was 18 years old. I didn't even know what a Bronze Star and Combat B was.

*Sure.*

**Floyd Perry:** And if it wasn't for Adin McGee telling me to come on the hill, I probably wouldn't have got it. But he told me to follow him and do what he did, and I did, I just you know, I followed him and helped him evacuate the guys.

*And how long was he your platoon sergeant for?*

**Floyd Perry:** He was like a squad leader.

*Squad leader.*

**Floyd Perry:** Adin, at least six months. Yeah, and then he got out.

*He left the Marine Corps at that point?*

**Floyd Perry:** The last I heard was Adin McGee, he was working Irish Airlines in New York City.

*Wow, have you tried to track him down?*

**Floyd Perry:** No, I haven't. I was thinking he was going to make some of these reunions, but now I've been to three of them, and they did fantastic reunions.

*I was impressed by that video that you guys have on YouTube of just all the Marines that were interviewed from your unit, and just I thought that was really moving that you guys all get together like that and it just seems like a great group, and it's kind of contrary to the stereotypical image that people have of Vietnam veterans which I think is pretty offensive, that all the Vietnam vets were crazy or that sort of thing. When I watched that, I mean it just, I kind of got choked up with it because there was a bunch of patriotic Americans that served over there. What are your thoughts about how veterans of the Vietnam War were treated then and how they're treated today?*

**Floyd Perry:** Well, of course you know, we've been the stepchild of the wars, you know what I'm saying. We got treated the worst, I do believe that. But I must say that in the last five years they started to treat us a little better.

*That's good.*

**Floyd Perry:** And that's good. The major thing that you understand in war, you know, people have to understand that this country is built on bloodshed.

*It's true.*

**Floyd Perry:** I had the privilege to say a prayer at the Vietnamese and Marine Corps statue here in Houston. I didn't know we had so many Vietnamese in Houston.

*Oh yeah, that's true.*

**Floyd Perry:** And they honored me by asking me to say the prayer. But you know, I did a little history. Now we know that it's about 58,200 plus Americans died in Vietnam. And over 75,000 wounded. But see, I never knew that there were over 3 million Vietnamese killed.

*Yeah, it's horrible.*

**Floyd Perry:** So there is a price paid for the freedom that those Vietnamese have here in Houston.

*Sure, absolutely.*

**Floyd Perry:** And when I'd seen those Vietnamese, the babies and the teenagers going to, they've got their own schools and stuff, it was just a real blessing.

*Oh absolutely.*

**Floyd Perry:** I mean you know, at least you could see some good that came out of this thing.

*Oh yeah, that's true.*

**Floyd Perry:** And that did my heart good.

*That's good. When you were in Vietnam, were you able to get many letters from home or care packages or anything like that?*

**Floyd Perry:** I got a few letters and I got a care package every now and then.

*And when you were there and you were serving, was it sometimes easier to just not, did you think about home a lot, or did you just kind of focus on where you were, or how did you cope with, I guess what I'm asking is how did you cope with some of the things that you were dealing with? I know you mentioned you are a devout Christian. What helped you get through some of the more trying times when you were there in Vietnam?*

**Floyd Perry:** Well one thing, I never did anything against my conscience. That's what saved me. That's what saved me.

*That makes sense.*

**Floyd Perry:** Because once you violate your own conscience, then you're in trouble. Yes, I shot at folks that was shooting at me, but I did not abuse nobody.

*Sure, no that makes sense.*

**Floyd Perry:** Yeah, yeah.

*What did most of the guys in your unit, how did most of them deal or cope with combat being in the situation you guys were in?*

**Floyd Perry:** Well, a lot of 'em, it was different, it was different. I looked back over this one guy, and you know, we called him Tank, and he was from Tennessee, and you know, Tank was a good guy. But Tank, he had a bad experience in the Philippines when we were regrouping, and after that, Tank was not the same. He was not the same. And that's the way it was with a lot of guys. When you went through a lot of stuff, like Operation Union, after that nobody was the same because that was war. Now that was our first major combat.

*And tell us sir a little bit about that for people that aren't familiar with Operation Union.*

**Floyd Perry:** Well, Operation Union was started in April. I think it started April the 20<sup>th</sup> of '66, and what happened was, Fox Trot 25 got pinned down by estimated battalion size enemy force, and so they saddled us up and we went to their rescue in helicopters, not knowing how many the enemy were. And we landed in a hot LC, and we were caught in a crossfire, and we lost half of our men on the landing.

*Oh man.*

**Floyd Perry:** And by the time we got them situated and got up to the bagoda, and that was just a short distance to get cover, it was phew, I'm telling you it was hot and heavy. That was a day I'll never forget. The major thing about it was that you know, the main thing is so awesome. We called it Puff the Magic Dragon.

*Oh yeah, the gunships?*

**Floyd Perry:** If it wasn't for the gunships, we would've got overrun that night. But they stayed with us all night, and by the time they got, when the morning came, the reinforcements got there, and then the cleanup started. Now that's something that, that's hard to deal with because these guys in Fox Trot, they had been dead for at least 24 hours, and people don't realize that dead bodies are heavy.

*Oh sure, that's right.*

**Floyd Perry:** And then it was only a few of us left, so we had to collect all the dead bodies and that was an experience because they just literally bagged 'em and tagged 'em.

*Wow, yeah. Yeah, that's got to be horrific.*

**Floyd Perry:** Well, and that's what we're talking about. My last experiences at Vietnam, I was on the Iwo Jima. I thought that was a real, real experience, being on the Iwo Jima, World War II aircraft carrier that they made it into a helicopter carrier, because I didn't realize it was so small.

*Yeah, that's true.*

**Floyd Perry:** They made it into a helicopter carrier, and the \_\_\_ on the ship was small. And we had just went through two or three battles up there in the DMZ, and I was on the Medivac part of taking the bodies off the helicopters, and I'm telling you, there was so many bodies that we had to stack 'em outside the morgue. Now that was traumatic.

*I bet, yeah. When you're going through something like that and you have your faith to draw upon, do you just tell yourself that eventually what you're dealing with will pass, that all things shall pass, eventually that'll be over?*

**Floyd Perry:** Well no, what I do is I live for the minute. The way I did it, I lived for the minute. I never did go no further than the time that I'm there. I didn't analyze, theorize, or try to figure it out because it wasn't productive.

*So the last time you were in Vietnam then was aboard the Iwo Jima?*

**Floyd Perry:** Right.

*And then shortly after that you were on your way back to the States I guess?*

**Floyd Perry:** Right, now let me tell you about that. Now that was an experience. OK, Tom had just came in from a helicopter, and he had just come from a battle out there, and they had so many wounded, it was looking for recruits to go out there and replace the ones that we were

bagging and tagging. So he looked at me, and I told him, Tom I'd go, but I'm short. And he said you short? And when I said I was short, my orders came in. A guy comes running up there, Perry, your orders are in. So I headed for Da Nang. I got to Da Nang, and I thought everything was gonna be all right. I said I'm on my way home. Well when I got to Da Nang, the atmosphere was different because it was the beginning of the Ten Offensive. I felt it was different, but that night I was laying on a picnic table, I think I was drinking a Budweiser, and the mosquitoes was chewing me, and I'll never forget it. I heard them whackers go off and I said oh my God. They're following me. I jumped up and I ran and I seen the bunker and I got in, and the banging was so loud, the new guys that had just got there, they were walking around, what's goin' on? They all got in behind me, which was good, but the last one he hadn't been in country a good day, he got shrapnel in his butt.

*Wow. And that was that day I guess you were getting ready to fly out the next day?*

**Floyd Perry:** I flew out the next day.

*Wow, so they didn't cancel your orders. You were able to return stateside.*

**Floyd Perry:** I made it back.

*Wow. And where did you fly in to?*

**Floyd Perry:** We went to Oki, Okinawa.

*Okinawa. And were you, was your unit based in Okinawa full time?*

**Floyd Perry:** No, my unit was still in, my Company 3-1 was still in the DMZ.

*What I mean sir, when they weren't in Vietnam, where was their home base?*

**Floyd Perry:** I couldn't tell you. Probably Oki.

*And so when they sent you to Okinawa, I think you mentioned previously that you were in the Marines until '71, is that right?*

**Floyd Perry:** Yeah.

*So where did you go from the time you left Vietnam until the time you got out of the Marine Corps?*

**Floyd Perry:** Well, I went back to California and from there, I went to Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. And I did a man cruise, and I was in sniper platoon.

*OK, what unit were you with in Lejeune?*

**Floyd Perry:** I can't think of the name.

*But did you go to the sniper school, or did they just make you a sniper?*

**Floyd Perry:** Well, I was decorated and that's what snipers were, decorated. It was a decorated platoon. And the deal was we had a little training, but the deal was that they was gonna send us to Israel at that time, to teach the Israeli's how to shoot. But I decided on the man cruise instead. Then I wound up at Gitmo.

*Really, wow. And tell us a little bit about your time down in Guantanamo.*

**Floyd Perry:** That was just awesome. That's the time boy, it was wild. It was truly wild. I was in 106, and I was a chaplain down there.

*Really?*

**Floyd Perry:** Yeah, I was in 106.

*How long did you spend at Guantanamo?*

**Floyd Perry:** I spent the rest of my time there.

*The rest of your tour, OK. And you said they made you the chaplain for your whole battalion?*

**Floyd Perry:** Well, you know, in Gitmo there ain't nothin' but a little corner. On the base, that's what the Marines have anyway.

*And so at that point, did you already think that you were gonna go be a priest or pastor at that point they made you the chaplain?*

**Floyd Perry:** No, I didn't have the revelation then. But the idea was that it's just like all the combat vets, you have to adjust, and coming back to America was an adjustment because we were going through I call it birthing pain.

*Sure.*

**Floyd Perry:** And a lot of people didn't, they don't get it, but it's true. The nation was going through birthing pain.

*Yeah, from everything I've read about that time, it seems like a really sad time in America's history with the assassinations and the riots and –*

**Floyd Perry:** Oh man, it was hey, and like I said, that's the reason why the Vietnam vets caused so much hell.

*Well you won't believe this, sir, but I think we're having a fire drill here in the building.*

**Floyd Perry:** I believe it.

*The light just started flashing in the conference room I'm in. We got to go outside the building, so sir, what I'm going to have to do is pause the recorder, and I don't know how long they're gonna make us stay outside. But as soon as I can get back in, I'll call you back and we'll try to finish this interview.*

**Floyd Perry:** All right, be safe.

*All right, yeah I will. They have this happen a lot because they've got some construction going on some of the floors here. I think a lot of times the construction workers trip the switch or something. But anyway, I apologize sir, and I'll call you as soon as I can.*

**Floyd Perry:** OK, no problem.

*All right, thank you.*

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*OK, I've got the recorder back on. We're back from the fire alarm interruption, so I apologize for that, and sir, you were saying you wanted to talk a little bit about the unit citations.*

**Floyd Perry:** Right. Now in 200-, I think it was '07 or '08, and we were in Vegas, yeah, October the 8<sup>th</sup>, they gave us our unit citations, and I just wanted to give my Company, 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 1<sup>st</sup> Marines, is this. I wanted to read it the best I can.

*Oh yes sir, please do.*

**Floyd Perry:** OK, it says United States Marine Corps, Mike Company, 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Regiment. By these present, let it be known by all who read this document, that Floyd H. Perry, Jr. has distinguished himself with honorable meritorious courageous service as a Marine with Mike Company, 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 1<sup>st</sup> Marines, in Republic of Vietnam, during the period of January 1966 to May 1971, in the northern I Corps from Quang Tri Province, the two I, to Quang Nam and Da Nang, and Contri Province, and the DMZ. He has fought in many of the battles that led to Mike Company, 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 1<sup>st</sup> Marines being one of the most bloody rifle companies of the Vietnam War, but also one of the most decorated, earning four presidential unit citations. The Naval Unit Citation with two Bronze Stars and two Meritorious Unit Commendations. The Vietnam Cross of Gallantry with Palms, plus numerous personal medals awarded to the Marines and Corps men of Mike Company. He has forever distinguished himself and upheld the highest tradition of the United States Naval Service and the United States Marine Corp. It is with great pride as Floyd H. Perry Jr.'s commanding officer of Mike Company, to award this document. And it's signed by Commander William M. Ward, Captain, United States Marine Corps.

*Wow, that's really cool. And so you guys go those just a few years ago then.*

**Floyd Perry:** Yes. You know what is so wild about it? You know, how you get your ribbons together for your uniform?

*Yeah.*

**Floyd Perry:** Well, I had a little bit of ribbons, you know. I had my Bronze Star and I had my meritorious, the Vietnamese ribbons there, and all of that, but I only had about five. But when I got these, I looked up, I had a chest of medals, it was like Chesty Polar.

*That's right, Chesty Polar.*

**Floyd Perry:** Woah!

*That's great.*

**Floyd Perry:** Yeah.

*That's really neat. Of that group I noticed in the documentary, it seems like there's quite a few of you guys that get together for those reunions.*

**Floyd Perry:** Yeah we do. We're tight just like a \_\_\_\_, we're a tight group.

*That's great.*

**Floyd Perry:** We still are tight, yes we are.

*How many do you think normally go to the reunions?*

**Floyd Perry:** It's getting smaller, but we generally have between 30-35, maybe 45 with family.

*That's good though, that's a good turnout.*

**Floyd Perry:** Yeah, it is. And like every year of course somebody don't show up, so -

*Who was it that was able to track everyone down and find everybody?*

**Floyd Perry:** Well, my best friend in Vietnam, his name is Puff. I called him Puff. And he lives in Pittsburg, and Puff and he keeps track of everybody.

*Wow, that's got to be a big task to find people especially and I know just from my service how people scatter when you get back or that sort of thing, so that's just impressive that he could contact that many of you and that many would go to the reunions. That's really a neat thing.*

**Floyd Perry:** But like I said, we're a tight group. I'm so blessed, my nephew, now you know, he was a little boy when I was in Vietnam, he is now Commander Perry and he's in the Coast Guard.

*Oh wow, that's great. So he's keeping the tradition going.*

**Floyd Perry:** That's right. And then Father McLaughlin, one of my best friends in Vietnam, he's head of the highway patrol in Boston, Massachusetts. And his son's an Air Force aviator, and his daughter is an Air Force officer.

*That's neat. That's good when you see the tradition of service continuing from one generation to the next.*

**Floyd Perry:** It's important.

*Absolutely. And then sir, tell us how was it that you got to Houston because I know you said you were born and raised in Kansas City and you went in the Marine Corps. What brought you to Houston?*

**Floyd Perry:** Well, the story is, when I was a little boy, I had a friend of mine, he came from Texas, and him and his dad moved up and his mom because his dad worked for the Ford Company there in Kansas City, and so Johnny used to talk about Texas all the time. And I used to tell Johnny, I'd say Johnny, Texas is south of the Mason Dixie line. I have no business in Texas. Well, I got to working for the Union Pacific Railroad as a signalman, and in Kansas City, the winters are brutal, and if I was gonna experience time working on the railroads, it wasn't gonna be in Kansas City in Kansas. I tell you, it wasn't gonna be there. So they had an opening for Houston, and I took it. And that was over 27 years ago. And I tell you what, I love Texas with all my heart.

*That's great. So now you're in Texas and you worked all those years for the railroad, and then when did you become a pastor?*

**Floyd Perry:** OK, I started pastoring 10 years ago. And I retired from the railroad, and I started working with veterans. I'm involved in three organizations. One is called the Gathering of the Eagles, and that is a group of veterans' organizations here in Houston, and we meet twice a month to talk about the new things that are going on with veterans. And we have different things going on, like OK, I'm with them and say for instance we've got a different group that would chair the Gathering of the Eagles twice a month. And like I say, it's about 26 of us, 26 different groups. So that's good. And then I'm with the Homeless Veteran Burial Program. And I've had the privilege of burying 65 homeless vets. And I also, I work with Linda Green at the D. George Hotel as a chaplain down there for those homeless guys. And then I work with the cemetery committee here in Houston, and we have a beautiful cemetery here.

*Oh, the Veteran's Cemetery?*

**Floyd Perry:** Yes, it's a very beautiful place.

*Yeah, I've seen photographs of it. It looks nice.*

**Floyd Perry:** And they take good care of it. We got a thing that comes up very shortly, it's called Wreaths Across America.

*Oh, I'm familiar with that, yes sir. That's a great -*

**Floyd Perry:** And then we're gearing up for that now.

*That's great. Well that's good. So it sounds, sir, like you're definitely very active with your church, but also with the veteran's community in all the Houston area.*

**Floyd Perry:** Yes I am.

*That's great. Well sir, it's been a real honor to be able to interview you today and record some of your memories, and one of the questions I always like to kind of wrap up with is in our state archives here, we've got documents that go back to David Crockett, Stephen F. Austin, things that were written in their own hand. We have Spanish land grants that are 300 some years old, and our hope is that these interviews will be preserved like those so that possibly hundreds of years from now, somebody can listen to these interviews and get a better understanding about our veterans from this time and place, and where they served and why they served and that sort*

*of thing. I guess the question to you would be what if anything would you say to future generations that may hear this interview years from now, long after you and I are gone?*

**Floyd Perry:** The thing that I would say for any generation after me is that you understand that freedom isn't free, and there is a sacrifice required from every generation, and be prepared to pay the price.

*Those are good words, yes sir.*

**Floyd Perry:** Yes indeed, because that's the reality of it. You know, from the very beginning, from 1776 on to this day. That's why we had Veteran's Day just a few days ago.

*Absolutely, yes sir.*

**Floyd Perry:** To put ourselves in remembrance of those who have shed their blood on the altar of freedom.

*Absolutely. Like they say, freedom's not free.*

**Floyd Perry:** It's not.

*Yes sir, that's right. Well and I think somebody like yourself knows that better than the vast majority of people. So we really do thank you sir for your service to our country and everybody here at the General Land Office from Commissioner Patterson who started this program, he's a retired Marine and Vietnam veteran, to just everybody that works here, we all have a great admiration and respect for people that have served, especially like yourself, who have served in combat. And what we'll do sir, like I think I might have mentioned before, is we'll make copies of this interview for you and we'll send it to you on CD's so you'll have those so you can keep, or you can give them to friends or family or whomever, and then if you have any photographs that you'd like to share with us, you can either send copies or originals that we can scan or whatnot and what we'd like to do eventually is put those on our web site. We've got several of our interviews on there, and we also get a transcribed copy made of the interview that we post as well. Our hope is that school kids and other folks can go to that web site and hear these interviews first hand and learn a little something from them.*

**Floyd Perry:** Well you know, it is good. What you guys are doin' are great. You know, one of the greatest things I have, I've kind of worked with the Land Board for a little while, a Brother McCracken.

*Oh OK, yes sir.*

**Floyd Perry:** For a while, and we had one of the guys like I was telling you, come in and give us some information about the Land Board. And by the way, I'm filling out my application to become a member.

*Oh good.*

**Floyd Perry:** But I haven't received nothing back.

*You sent this to the Veteran's Land Board?*

**Floyd Perry:** Yeah, in Austin.

*OK, was it just to be signed up on the mailing list?*

**Floyd Perry:** No, to be part of the organization. For the benefits and everything.

*OK, because as a veteran you are eligible just by living in Texas and having done 90 days of active duty, so that alone makes you eligible, and then I'm not sure what they gave you to send in, but whatever it was, I'm sure when they received it, they put you in the database, and whenever they do a mailing or something along those lines, you'll get, you should get four times a year the quarterly newsletter from the Veteran's Land Board, and you should also now start receiving the forfeited land sale booklets and those come out twice a year, once in the spring and once in the fall, for veterans that are interested in buying any land that's been forfeited.*

**Floyd Perry:** Right. I tell you what, you know my name, right?

*Yes sir, I got all your info.*

**Floyd Perry:** OK, punch me up and see if they got me in there yet.

*Yes sir, I'll do that. When I get back to my desk, I'll check with the lady down there that's in charge of the database and make sure they've got you in there.*

**Floyd Perry:** OK.

*So sir again, thank you very much for letting me interview you today. It's an honor for me and if you know any other veterans that are interested in sharing their stories as well, please have them give me a call because I'd love to interview them as well.*

**Floyd Perry:** You know, I think I'm gonna call Water Boot and have him to give you a call.

*Yes sir, absolutely.*

**Floyd Perry:** I'm gonna tell you, he's a character, but he's all right.

*I'd love to interview him, absolutely.*

**Floyd Perry:** All right, I think I'll do that.

*All right sir, well thanks again and take care and we'll talk to you soon.*

**Floyd Perry:** OK now.

*All right, take care, bye bye.*

*[End of recording]*