

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAME: Paul D. Fleming

COLLECTION: 4700.0951

IDENTIFICATION: Vietnam veteran

INTERVIEWER: Paul K. Moore

SERIES: Americans in Vietnam

INTERVIEW DATES: 4/8/74

FOCUS DATES: Jan. 1969-Aug. 1970; Aug. 1969-Aug. 1970

ABSTRACT:

Tape 1388

Got his education in Louisiana; joined Marines to avoid being drafted; chose Marines so he'd be sent to California instead of Fort Polk; signed on for two years; training in San Diego and Camp Pendleton; arrival in Vietnam; shocked at dirty living conditions of his platoon; Vietnamization program; terror of clearing out land mines; serving as radio operator; Marines helped the villagers feel secure; attitudes toward Vietnamese; selling PX items on black market; prostitution in the countryside; getting supplies in the field; bathing; reading and sleeping a lot in the field; drugs; corruption of the South Vietnamese; contact with parents during war; mail delivery; Vietnamese didn't care much about war, depended on Americans to fight; visiting Thailand; interactions with Thais; interaction with Vietnamese; Vietnamese laughed at Americans kissing their children; no racial friction in his platoon but noticed it in other units; transition back to US life; liked being in Vietnam, disliked war; was against the war; Americans exaggerating body counts of Vietnamese; killing prisoners; USO shows; Americans were offensive, ruined Vietnam; Americans pushing Vietnamese civilians around; training makes Marines cocky; physical abuse in boot camp; Vietnamese philosophy; lived with several Vietnamese families; Vietnamese fear of Americans and Viet Cong; giving Vietnamese gifts of canned meat; Vietnamese food at ceremonial dinners; Fleming adopted vegetarian diet after seeing how hard the Vietnamese could work on so little food; preferred Vietnamese villagers to American soldiers; housing of Vietnamese; Vietnamization program; Combined Units Pacification program; becoming a radio operator; boredom; Viet Cong attacks on village; weather, rainy season; working with Vietnamese soldiers to protect village; livestock; slaughtering pig; furnishings of Vietnamese houses; openness of Vietnamese housing and lives; religion in Vietnam; village chiefs; living in district headquarters at Dai Lanh; duties as radio operator; describes typical day of a radio operator; skirmishes in village; worked 16 hour days, mostly alone; books and supplies sent by Red Cross; having to spend last three weeks in country in dangerous area; leaving Vietnam; opinions on effectiveness of US in Vietnam.

TAPES: 1 (T1388)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 1 hour, 30 mins

PAGES TRANSCRIPT: 39 pages

RESTRICTIONS: None