

Interviewer: This is a history interview with Mr. Jim Joiner president of the 101st air borne division association. This is being conducted at the reunion in San Antonio Texas the 9th of August 2001. Interview is being conducted by Scott Shoner and John O'Brien. Sir can you had a very long and distinguished career connected with Fort Campbell and the 101st and a lot of other great units. We want to focus in though on your experiences with the 101st air borne division in Vietnam specifically the first brigade separate. Tell us a little bit about your deployment from the United States and arriving and joining that outfit.

Joiner: I was with the old guard in Washington and had been put on several sets of orders to go to Vietnam and my commander kept pulling me off until finally I got a set of orders with the 101st and he allowed me to go. I arrived in the country on the 2nd of January 1967. And having been a former E7 and master jumper prior to getting commissioned my first task upon joining the brigade in Contoon was preparing my battalion for a jump which we were fixing to make. At the time we were slated to take Operation Junction City as a combat jump and so we were training for that. And we secured C130s and the whole brigade was going to jump the first drop of any kind that they had made in country and had been in country since 1965. That was our first task here I am a First Lieutenant and I'm out there getting these Majors and Lieutenant Colonels and Captains and everybody else to do their PLFs and to do the things necessary to make jumps and to refresh their memories of what it was like to do that. And I was assigned to Bravo Company Second Battalion 327 and as soon as we finished our jumps there in Contoon we moved immediately the brigade itself moved to Banrang our base camp. It was an area we saw very little of as a matter of fact. And we took a three day stand down in Banrang where to give the troops a chance to re-outfit and get new uniforms and have a few drinks and comradeship and that sort of thing. And as you know troops that work hard play hard and we did that. As soon as that was three day period or stand down period was over we moved down to the south of Banrang to an area called Bantiette. It's a very arid desert like almost maybe like Arizona or New Mexico with a lot of scrub trees and sand and hot just miserable country. But before we went into that area up just to the north of that between Banrang and Delot there was a very mountainous area. And we had received intelligence that there was a large significant BC operation going on in this area. And we were put into that area to try to get rid of it. My first combat assault was into that area that mountainous area. It was a one ship LZ I'm a platoon leader this is my first assault we went in and I got my platoon together finally after three ships in. And we started had to cross a stream and we started up this mountain it wasn't a mountain a very very large hill and we're on a path and I'm the third member back I've got a point man with me and the platoon leader I'm the third man. And okay we come around this bend and we encounter three BC two of them are armed with rifles one of them was armed with a pistol. And of course we opened fire and we killed the three of them. And it turned out that the one guy with the pistol was a paymaster a BC paymaster and in his satchel he had not only money but he had names and pictures of all of the BC in that district that it was his responsibility to pay. It was absolute intelligence bonanza for intell guys so once that was all simulated then we proceeded on up the hill and when we got to the very top it was almost it was getting dark it was kind of dusk. And we spotted VC across a clearing at the very top of the hill and we took them under fire and I requested I called in fire I called artillery fire and we got all of that and I requested permission to follow them and they said no don't. We were on top of that hill and there was another hill here and there was a very narrow ridge almost like a bridge between the two with a significant drop off on each side. And the battalion commander was afraid that my company commander and my battalion commander was afraid that if we went in there that we could be ambushed very easily in a very limited area in a period of darkness. So we didn't go in we stayed there and the next morning we went in. And what we discovered was an unbelievable complex where there was a medical hospital there was a multi colored printing press located there for propaganda. We recovered in fact I have a picture down in the store room as a matter of fact of a Russian flag a couple of

MBA flags that we recovered out of there. Normally when you reported finding documents for intelligence purposes you would report I found two or three instances of we reported 22 feet of documents. We had 150 bolts of black silk they had a complete sewing area there all of this was underground. It was a huge complex and of course for a platoon leader this was a real coo for me because I'm a hero so it was good for the platoon and we enjoyed it. We weren't able to get anybody count because of course they had all took off the night before. But they left all that stuff there. We did have during that same period of time after we found the base camp and got everything evacuated out and on the way back down into this arid area I was talking about we did have two successful night ambushes. Those were the first successful ambushes the brigade had had in over nine months. So we were doing a good job we were doing things right. And some of the things we did right and I owe a lot of this to having been an NCO prior to being an officer. And I learned a lot as you know our NCOs especially when you're in squad platoon and company areas of operation your platoon NCOs generally run things pretty much. I mean they know what's going on and they have the experience to teach the young new guys coming in and teach what they need to stay alive and help keep them alive. And I'd had a lot of experience setting up ambushes and we did it right and we were very successful. Once we moved down into the dessert like area it was really miserable terrain and I was only with the platoon then for about a week in that area before I made Captain. And they sent a helicopter out to pick me up and took me back and about two hours after I got back to brigade base camp I got word that one of my men got killed. I had not lost anybody when I had been platoon leader in fact I had not had anybody wounded while I was platoon leader. So that touched me pretty deeply and when they brought the body in it was pretty heavy. But I became Captain and since I was the junior of course the junior Captain in the battalion they made me the motor officer assistant escort motor officer. And I was in that position for approximately two and a half months but while I was in that position I had another opportunity to get involved in a heavy action. Charlie Company the Company I later took over was surrounded and under really heavy fire and they were calling emergency we need resupply of ammunition we need resupply of medical equipment we need medevac and they were in this triple canopy area and I was told not to go out on the resupply chopper they didn't want to lose anybody else. But I felt it imperative that I do go out on the resupply chopper to make sure that these things got into where they were going. And so we went out we had I had three helicopters shot out from under us that day they weren't I mean like shoot and crash and burn but shot to the point where the pilots couldn't hold on to them anymore and had to get them out of the area before they had to set them down and somebody else had to come out and pick us up. Those pilots were just unbelievable both of them I put them in for the Distinguished Flying Cross and they got it. But they would hold that helicopter there and we had to lower the supplies down to the trees the troops on the ground and then they would tie the wounded and we would pull them up by rope we didn't even have the litters or anything to put them on to pull them up out of there. And so that was a pretty hectic action that took place and that was in May of 67. And then about three weeks after that then I found out I was going to take over Charlie Company Colonel Abood was the battalion commander the battalion commander prior to that was Colonel Rosenbloom who retired as a Lieutenant General. His call sign was Stutter Ball Colonel Abood was Black Panther. He was a fantastic combat leader probably heard the stories in Vietnam anytime you got in contact if you were company commander you'd have the battalion commander and the brigade commander and the division commander core commander all of these helicopters stacked up on top of you trying to tell you what to do and direct the action. Well Colonel Abood was not like that. I could get in contact and say come on colonel we've got to go General Jim, that's my call sign, General Jim's in contact and he'd say no no if he needs us he will call us. And we all appreciated all of us great leader he lead by example and we dearly loved the man and he was a good battalion commander. During the time I was company commander and one of the problems we had in Vietnam overall was a company size element was too large an element to work with. The 9th division well especially the 1st infantry division the 25th infantry division

those guys would move online with APCs and tanks and crap. They would stop at 3 o'clock in the afternoon and dig in bunkers and they'd have hot chow flown out and so the VC knew exactly where they were every minute they didn't have to look for them they knew where they were. Our motorist operating guide was totally different we would be flown into an LZ and if it wasn't hot then I always gathered my platoon leaders together and made sure they understood where they were on the ground because one of the biggest problems we had there was them calling artillery fire or air support in on cell not knowing where they are and getting our own man killed. So I made sure they knew where they were on the map before we ever split up then as I said we had a time the company was too big. So we'd split up normally into two platoon elements I'd put my executive officer in charge of one and I'd be in charge of the other. Sometimes we'd split all the way up into four individual platoon size elements. We'd drop our rucks and we'd go out and setup ambushes. And one of the biggest actions I had as company commander involved we moved almost all night climbing up the back side of a mountain. When we got there that night about a quarter to twelve we dug in everybody dug in that's pretty SOP. And the next morning these three NVA not VC but NVA came walking into our line as sling arms. Laughing joking smoking a cigarette had no idea that we were there. And of course my guy instead of capturing them fired up and killed them. So I immediately called the squad leader forward and said please go out and check see what's going on. They hadn't been out there more than five minutes and man the whole world opened up. And he radioed back and said sir we've got a reinforced company maybe even a battalion out here said it's unbelievable they're everywhere they're in the trees they're everywhere. And they were up in the trees because they were trying to get up high enough to find our positions we had high ground. So it took us all day fighting until we, my other two platoons I was there with two platoons, the other two platoons were not within reinforcing distance they could not get to the jungle we were in at that time in time enough to help us. And what broke contact was F4 Phantoms with 500 pound bombs dropped almost on top of us and that's what broke contact. And I had four men killed during that time and that was the only men that I lost as company commander in five months. So I was pretty proud of that because some of them last a lot of men. And after that action was over we then moved out of the high country we were in and our mission the ultimate mission of that was we were going down into this valley and it was a really beautiful valley and the 327 was up on one ridge line and the 502nd second battalion 502nd part of the 1st brigade was up on the other ridge line. And we moved down into the valley and there was this beautiful village with this unbelievably beautifully clear river running down through the middle of palm trees and the thatched huts in the village had wheat and everything growing and they had about 1,000 of cattle. That's my view of it the first time we saw it from the hilltops before we moved in there. Our job was to go in there and we drove all of the cattle out the South Vietnamese Army came in and took over and moved them out. We loaded up all the women and children and old men out of the village that was all that was there. Took them out by schnook helicopter we then burned the village to the ground and then they came in with Agent Orange and sprayed the entire area. I remembered seeing that same area about two months later and it looked like the face of the moon versus what I first seen when I moved in to it. But it was an area that had been causing significant problems in I Core and at that time we were in Duck Foe. I'm sorry I skipped a whole bunch there. We had moved up from the south up into I Core up into Duck Foe was our base camp at that time there. Then after the division came in they opened up Camp Eagle and the other camps for the north. But at that time Duck Foe was our base camp right on the ocean. But that area that central area of that village had been one of the sticking points in that whole that southern beach I Core for NVA and VC activities. So that's why it was designated to be eliminated. Another incident was shortly after that we had discovered an extremely large rice cash several tons of rice. And my policy and one of the things I think I'd like to pass on to under combat leadership area I guess is things like I is SOP for instance. When we were moving in the jungle we would stop like about dusk and my people would set about doing the things they would do to set up night camp. But I had somebody out already on patrol selecting a night

location as soon as it was dark we moved and I moved every night. And many times our former positions were mortared or rocketed and because they knew they had somebody who had been watching or whatever. So that saved a lot of lives I thought. And those are the kinds of things I never allowed in on the same or spent the same night two nights in the same place except for one time. And we got hit and that's the time with the rice cash. And we got in there and found it and that night I requested permission to move and was denied permission to move because they wanted to make sure they got all of the rice out of there successfully. You stay there and guard the rice until it's out of there. And so we stayed there a second night and the second night we got hit. It was just a small BC type plane where there was one hooch in the middle of our perimeter. And myself and my field artillery LNO my RTO and my first sergeant were in that hooch sleeping. And all of a sudden there was a crashing sound to the roof not loud but coming through the roof and it was grenade. And it was all of these hooch's have grenade sumps or little places where the people could get down in to get away from artillery fire or whatever. And it fortunately happened to go down in there and went off so none of us got hurt at that point. But immediately we're out of there and we're crawling across the ground and I had a grenade go off between myself and my artillery man. And wounded both of us and but that was not a very big accident just one of those things that again if you don't watch out for those little rules of combat. I mean if you try to get complasive stay in the same place for two or three nights you're going to get hit. And I'm sure this wouldn't apply like fighting maybe in the Middle East or something in open desert that may be different. But here in the jungle like that then you need to be on top of those kind of actions to make sure you adhere to them. I know it's a pain and a lot of times the men would really complain about having to get up and move they were getting comfortable or they want to get their chow cooked and whatever. But after the first or second time the former position got hit they quit complaining and they saw that the old man seemed to know what he was doing and let's do it.

Interviewer: Now was that something different than what previous commanders had done with the unit is that the nature?

Joiner: In my unit in my company specifically and I know a lot of other companies did not do that or platoons for that matter did not do that. So that was just something that I had done and that was the reason they were complaining because they weren't used to doing that sort of thing.

Interviewer: Was there an opportunity in the command climate that you were operating in for when company commanders learned lessons like that professional exchange?

Joiner: Not really it wasn't a matter of a climate it was a matter of no time. We spent normally three to four weeks minimal in the jungle before they'd ever pull us out. And then we were never out more than two or three days max and then we were back in again. So we were never out long enough really to ever have any kind of a get together for professional development session or anything like that. Stayed drunk for three days but there was no time for that there really wasn't at that time. And it's unfortunate but.

Interviewer: If you could go back and let's say you were the battalion commander would you change that? Do you think that you would insist that company commanders, platoon leaders and NCOs get together and exchange lessons learned?

Joiner: I think it would be a good idea if the opportunity was there yes there is no question about it. Because each of you could pick up a little bit here and a little bit there and when it's all passed along amongst each other it could help save lives all the way around. Because you pick up I mean we come from different backgrounds you have West Point you have ROTC you have OCS you have a lot of

different backgrounds in your officer core. And some of them like I said I was an E7 before I got a commission so therefore I knew I had a jump on most of the lieutenants and probably captain. By the time I made Major I better have my stuff together because by the time you make major then the West Pointers and those guys are caught up with you they know what's going on then. But up until that point you maybe have a little bit of a lead because you've got a lot of experience in the army that can be useful and so. That's why it would be a good idea to share some of those experiences.

Interviewer: Just to follow up on something here make sure that I understood this correctly. You said that when you came back in that you would stand down for three days?

Joiner: Yes

Interviewer: As a company?

Joiner: The whole battalion would come in as a battalion.

Interviewer: And then you said drink beer and stay drunk.

Joiner: Yes

Interviewer: Was that pretty much the routine when a battalion

Joiner: Well you'd go to the beach you'd go to the beach because we were right there on the beach and let the guys go swimming. There would be a big barbeque there'd be hamburgers and hotdogs and beer and volleyball games and that sort of thing. And the officers would get together and drink beer and sing songs and that sort that comradely type thing. That was normal

Interviewer: You were put in a couple of positions that were almost like sink or swim when you first got in country. Assigned as a platoon leader immediately going out on a combat assault and then again as a company commander probably with not a lot of time to you know come in and assess your units readiness before you were out in the field with it. How did you beside your previous experience as an enlisted soldier was there any kind of mentoring that was going on from your company commander or your battalion commander or were you pretty much left to figure things out on your own?

Joiner: Totally on my own in Vietnam there was no mentoring. In fact when I took over my company I didn't know anybody in that company. The former commander turned over the company to me and he was out of country the next day. I didn't know my first sergeant I didn't know my platoon sergeants I didn't know anybody. Fortunately I had some good people. I don't know if you're familiar with same mud same blood I'm sure you are. That TV documentary made by CBS named Same Mud Same Blood.

Interviewer: No

Joiner: Oh well that's a big whole we need to get you a copy of that. There is a whole tape that was made by CBS that was about my 3rd platoon. Sergeant Larry who's a black NCO one of the finest NCOs in the army I've ever come across. And that's what it's all about race Same Mud Same Blood. And it's an hour documentary I was not the company commander at the time. I left the company in September after I got hit and then Tony oh man Greek I can't think of his last name took over. And he was company commander when they made this documentary. But that would be good for your achieve you should

have that. I had good people once I got to know them. I had one of the best first sergeants there First Sergeant Henry the company commander and first sergeant the company commander that replaced me Tony Manrunous were both killed about two months after they took over the company. He followed the same thing I had done he would get together with the platoon leaders on a combat assault and make sure they knew where they were at on a map. And they were in that sort of configuration when they booked the men up. The first sergeant stepped out of the circle hit a Bouncing Betty it was a marine Bouncing Betty not even an enemy one. And it killed him killed the company commander and wounded two platoon leaders all at the same time. So that was really sad he was a fine man both of them.

Interviewer: In the records that we have back at the Pratt Museum these operations that you're talking about all had names at least in the operation order which is typical for the army.

Joiner: They did.

Interviewer: Do you recall the names of those operations?

Joiner: No I have a lot of stuff in a foot locker. I got a divorce after 20 years of marriage and a lot of that stuff went away during the divorce and I don't know what happened to it, it got destroyed or whatever. And so I may be one of those coming to you one of these days saying can you show me a map of where I was located.

Interviewer: Well one of your former soldiers actually called and an incident you described during this interview was this question and to keep my mind to it is the three NVA or VC that became two on the trail he remembered that incident very clearly. And he wanted to know more about that particular incident.

Joiner: Who was asking?

Interviewer: I cannot recall his name right now but I am going to make sure that he gets in contact with you. And I think there was a Screaming Eagle Magazine article about the same time he made the request and I think the interview was with you as a matter a fact or the battalion commander at the time. The incident with the three VC that night there was a very large amount of fire support that went in am I correct?

Joiner: Yes

Interviewer: Okay I guess it was the same Puff the Magic Dragon was flying and a lot of attack air coming in.

Joiner: Yes they were up all night.

Interviewer: That's an example of the linkage here he needs to know about and he does remember the man Greek and he was killed as we were trying to locate the time this incident occurred.

Joiner: Well my radio operator when I was a platoon leader when the three VC incident happened he will be here. He is now an executive with Delta Airlines in Atlanta. But he'll be here Doug Fields he's another he was there he was my RTO at that time.

Interviewer: One thing we like to follow up on is coming into a leadership position you didn't get much ability to train or do a good battle handoff with your predecessors. What did you do and your NCOs do when you got new replacements coming in new soldiers. How did you integrate them into the unit and get them trained up and ready to go?

Joiner: Again there is not a very good system for that either. They went through P training at Bat Rang which all of our soldiers coming in did. But once they got to the unit depending on when they got to the unit it might be in the middle of a fire fight or just prior to a fire fight where you would have no time at all to talk to them. I mean some of these kids I guess would come in and they could be wounded and medevac'd and you never knew their name. So there was no real system for that. Each squad leader each platoon sergeant had the responsibility of taking these new guys like I said as company commander I rarely I saw my whole company at any one time during the five and half months I commanded it. Except when we came in for stand down that was the only time I saw my whole company. It was one of the points I feel very badly about a lot of these guys I never really got to know. It's not like being a company commander in WWII where you stayed with the unit until you got points or got wounded I mean you might have spent four years with the same company. Over there you were constantly changing I mean commanders were changing troops were changing and you had to make do with that you had. Not the best of situations but.

Tapes were flipped

Interviewer: Okay this is the second tape with Jim Joiner and Jim if you can describe for us what happened after you were returned to the unit after being medevac'd. What assignment that you went to.

Joiner: Okay yeah after I got out of the hospital I reported back to my battalion was informed by the new battalion commander Lieutenant Colonel Yurks that I was no longer to be with the battalion but that General Matheson the brigade commander wished to see me about an assignment. I reported to General Matheson and he told me that he was having some problems with the P training in country training down at Ban Rang our base camp. And he would like me to go down and take over that operation. And I said yes sir three bags full and I went down to Ban Rang. Now one of the things at Ban Rang that caused a lot of moral problems for our soldiers was when we came in country their dress greens and other kind of civilian clothes or whatever they had with them remained at Ban Rang and were thrown into codex containers. And you can imagine what happens in the jungle type atmosphere to that kind of stuff without air-conditioning and everything. They come back from going to R&R and everything was mildewed or rotted and it was terrible. They were in tents I mean they come out of the jungle after living in the conditions that they did and they had to stay in tents. So the first thing I wanted to do when I got down there was try to establish a decent base camp and facilities for these troops so they when came on R&R or when they were rotating out of country they would have decent clothes and food and shelter. So what we did was we did a lot of innovative requisitioning with the air force base that we were co-located with Ban Ring air force base. And we took three codex containers full of NVA VC weapons Russian weapons Chinese weapons. That we had captured and we had no use for because we couldn't do anything with them and we traded them to the air force for a lot of very useful construction materials. And we constructed 20 barracks and an 800 man mess hall and a 45 foot repelling tower. And then when the troops came out of the field they had their uniforms there they were clean they were still nice there was no mildew there was no rot. They had hot chow with a hot serving line they had barracks to stay in and it helped a great deal with moral with the brigade as a whole. And the other thing that was there was the realism of the training that we were going through. And that was one of the areas

that the general wanted to concentrate on make sure that the training was being realistic. So we concentrated and we used the cattery that I had at P training were the Black Hats that everybody is familiar with at Fort Benning and Fort Campbell also had a jump own school previously. So these were all ex-Black Hats and they were good men good sharp

Interviewer: Is that where your picture is from?

Joiner: Yes that's right I was company commander at that time yes. And they were all had been combat leaders they had all been combat platoon sergeants squad leaders or whatever and they had also been Black Hats back in the states. So we updated the training to make it more physically demanding because we were having some problems with heat exhaustion and that sort of thing. Which we really shouldn't have if they were in the proper physical condition before they were sent forward to the front lines. We also had operator jump school which General Westmorland personally approved it had been disapproved up to his level. And this was primarily designed to train those people who had special MOSs which we needed in the brigade but weren't able to qualify who were coming primarily from units in country to the 101st brigade separate. And then we would train them in jump school. We operated a sniper school and we operated a sort of a mini recondo school. Of course Fort Campbell had the Recondo School and we operated a mini camp there. So we'd send back some of your corporals and some of our buck sergeants and during lulls and whatever. And we'd put them through a little additional NCO training and some additional challenges like repelling and that sort of thing. To kind of build their confidence and their leadership because some of these guys you know were promoted to buck sergeant from private. And they had never been in an NCO type environment they had only been in a combat environment and they didn't know what it took to be a leader or to help the men under them. They were just kids themselves. So this was also very important which we had not had in the P training before was that area. The P training lasted a week and we would run them through daily operations from a typical squad to a platoon type operation. And we would run some night ambushes and we would take them out into Indian country and actually run ambushes with them so that they'd get a feel of it have a taste of it before they all of sudden step off a helicopter in a new unit and the new units in the middle of something or getting ready to get in the middle of something. This way because when a new guy comes into a unit in a combat situation he's the cherry and the other guys razz him and give him a hard time and I'm sure you guys probably know what I'm talking about. Just like the new guy on a football team or anything else. They'd give you hard time and give you the dirt jobs and that kind of thing. And some guys handle that okay you know they understand that's part of but some guys don't handle that so well. And it can bear on their mind and hurt what they do and how they do it. So we tried to concentrate on getting them as prepared as we could in P training before they stepped off that chopper and went into a new unit.

Interviewer: Was it a brigade policy that all new incoming people would go through P training?

Joiner: Yes

Interviewer: And how long was the training?

Joiner: One week.

Interviewer: And did you send people from your detachment to the Mac View Recondo School? Do you have any connection?

Joiner: Oh yeah we worked with them we worked with them. We sent people to their school all the time and we worked very closely together.

Interviewer: What kind of benefit did that provide?

Joiner: Well that was a longer course and of course much more involved. They had more time to deal with it while we had very limited amount of time. So this better qualified those guys. That's why I've been to Fort Campbell quite a bit lately as President and I notice so many of the buck sergeants are ranger qualified. And that really warms my heart because there's no substitute for that kind of training for young combat leaders. Recondo School, Ranges School those kinds of schools there's no other schools the army has that can better prepare you to handle yourself and protect you soldiers and lead them in the right way. But P training was we were I won't say we were the only ones doing it in country but I know we were one of the few units in country that had a comprehensive in country training program while I was over there in 67. To condition their troops to the climate and to all of the things they could expect over there when they got to the front line unit.

Interviewer: Now is this something that was issued by General Matheson or?

Joiner: No it was Timothy, Timothy first had it. They had it from almost the beginning not quite the beginning. I guess the brigade had been in country about maybe six months when they started it. They found out these troops when they stepped off the boat were just not ready. They had all kinds of casualties from heat exhaustion from mines from booby traps from all kind of things. They just weren't ready for so they said we've got to do something about this. So they formed a P school and that was under General Timothy he was the first brigade commander. And when Matheson took over and they sent me down there we expanded and intensified the course. And it was worth its weight I don't think you will find anybody if you interview anybody from Vietnam ask them well first brigade anyway P training and I'm sure they'll have a story to tell you.

Interviewer: Now in November 1967 the rest of the 101st came over to Vietnam in Operation Eagle Thrust.

Joiner: Well the first before the division itself got there Colonel Jalousie got there started the 506th. And we trained that entire battalion through P training we put that entire battalion through at one time. And then about the time we finished up with them and they were getting ready to be deployed that's when the advanced party came in.

Interviewer: Describe a little bit for us the arrival of the 101st and also if you can tie that to the P training and what you did to kind of bring them up to speed in country.

Joiner: Well I can't do that because I didn't train the division because right as they after we walk on the mid. (a man interrupted to do something to the camera) I can speak to General Jalousie's group because that was a battalion size element and I'm sure that's how it would have gone if they had had the time to do that after the division got in country. But as you know shortly after the division arrived was Tet of 68 which was February 68. And the division was called upon to do everything from guard Consinude to be up at I Core. They were completely strung out over the entire Vietnam peninsula trying to put out brush fires causes by the NVA attacks. But Colonel Jalousie it really sticks in my mind he marched his entire battalion up to the gates of the P training facility. He had the battalion stacked behind him he was in the lead he had his colors and Colonel Jalousie reporting for P training. I'm just a captain so I'd served with

Colonel Jalousie before so we had known each other. And so we took the whole battalion and they were billeted just outside of our P training facility. And every morning they would report in and my by cats would go with each company and each platoon and we would run them through the various exercise. And we did that for about two weeks we spent over two weeks with the battalion. And Colonel Jalousie and I would get together at night with his staff and we'd review the days training and go over strong points weak points things he thought needed to be emphasized things I thought needed to be emphasized and it really worked well. It would be great if we could do all of our units that way. I think the 3rd and 506th probably acquitted itself very well during the Tet offensive because of that training.

Interviewer: Now what level of training were you doing? Individual tasks, squad level, platoon level, company level?

Joiner: We started out like the first day of P training would be more individual type thing. We would run them hard we would run them until they were I mean I don't mean double time we did that too. But I mean running with full ruck sack with five canteens of water and ammo and the whole bit 45, 50, 60 pound ruck sack. And we'd run them through an exercise see just how far you could push them. And once we got through some of that stuff we started covering mines, booby traps some of those type things and VC tactics and VA tactics. Then we moved them to the unit which would be the five team, the squad and then finally the platoon we never went higher than the platoon. Just to give them a feel for what how the five team and squad and platoon fit together in an action. And how they interacted together and how they had to clear enough to protect each other primarily. And it went pretty well that way it went from individual to the unit base small unit.

Interviewer: Did you actually take those units out into bad guy land?

Joiner: Yes we did. We took well like I say we took them out to Indian country for night ambushes. We didn't do anything else we just took them out for night ambushes. That's the biggest one of the biggest problems we had was ambushes. Guys not knowing exactly where they were not exactly how to set up their claymores not knowing exactly how to set up a kill zone. Night discipline how to keep your troops quiet and no smoking and nothing of that sort. So because a guy could be pretty proficient in daytime on guard in the jungle you take all of the lights away from him and then all of a sudden he becomes disoriented and he's not quite as good or familiar with what he's doing and therefore his confidence drops. And he's going to cause lots of problems so the more you can operate at night the more your confidence grows. In fact of the NVA the 101st was known as the night fighters because we did a lot of night moves and a lot of night fighting and a lot of night ambushes. Very successful.

Interviewer: Now when you were doing the training with the small units of the 3rd and 506th was Colonel Jalousie and his staff given any kind of battle staff training in the brigade or were they participating with you in supervising?

Joiner: The part I'm familiar with was them participating with us overseeing out in the training area serving the soldiers and that sort of thing. As far as any kind of training they got as a battalion staff from brigade I really don't know. And there were times when they were not there so it's a possibility that happened but primarily they were there on the ground with us and with the troops. Colonel Jalousie was that kind of guy he always wanted to be out there with his soldiers a hands on kind of guy.

Tape ended