

A Veterans Oral History
Heritage Education Commission
www.heritageed.com
Moorhead, MN

Duane Norby
Narrator

Stephanie Manesis
Interviewer

January 14, 2012
Sequim, Washington [telephone]

SM: Hi, this is Stephanie Manesis. I am interviewing Duane Norby at Sequim, Washington, and the interview is taking place on January 14, 2012. So, if you can start off, Mr. Norby, just tell me a little about where you were born, what day you were born on, and a little bit about your family size growing up, please.

DN: Well, I was born on February 20, 1945, in Webster, South Dakota, which is probably about 150 miles, almost straight south of Fargo. I had one half-brother and, of course, mother and father, that was the family. He was two-years older than I. And we lived in that area, oh, until I went in the service, I guess; then I lived two more years there, when I got out; then came to Washington State. So that was pretty much it.

SM: When you graduated from high school that would have been 1963, if my math is right?

DN: I actually dropped out and I got my GED in the service, and then I went to college later on.

SM: So tell me about your decision to join the military.

DN: Oh, I think it was just to get out of home, and get away from there and things. Parents were having some problems and I just decided to go some other place. You know, there weren't jobs around for 17-year-olds, so I thought I would join the service and that's what I did.

I went to Fargo and went to the recruiting station, and went to the first service I saw, which was in the Army, and he was out to lunch. And went to the Navy and he had some problems because I dropped out of high school.

The next one on down the line was the Marine Corps, so I went in there, and I became a Marine.

SM: And so at the time you could become a Marine at 17 years old?

DN: I would say half our platoon was about 17 years old, maybe more than that, maybe like 60% was high school dropouts. You know, this was 1962; and yes, all my closest friends, I remember, were dropouts. We got together about a couple of months ago, and they were from California ... dropouts, too. So yes, there's a lot of the service people were in those days. You know, nowadays I understand you got to have a high school education; but not then.

SM: What month in 1962 was it that you enlisted?

DN: February.

SM: February of 1962, so that would have been your junior year of high school?

DN: It would have been, yes.

SM: And when did you decide to quit school?

DN: Oh, probably a couple of months before that. I think I quit in like December, yes, maybe December or something.

SM: And had you thought about getting work and just couldn't find something and that's why the service came up as an alternative, or did you think immediately about the service?

DN: I think I thought more about the service immediately, because in the middle of winter in Dakota there in a small town, which we lived around, there was not much to do. And you were outside a lot of the time it would be, or whatever, you know. I just thought that going some other place and leaving there, so yes. No, I didn't think about staying around, really.

SM: Tell me about what happened after you enlisted in Fargo.

DN: Well, I went home for a month and then, I think, we went up to a small town somewhere about 40 miles from where I lived and took a bus to Minneapolis. They give you a ticket and told you how to get there. They said take this bus here, whatever. Went to Minneapolis and stayed for a night and then got

sworn in the next day, I guess. And that evening, I took an airplane to San Diego.

SM: And from there you went to Camp Pendleton?

DN: Well, no, boot camp for three or four months at MCRD in San Diego. Then after you get out of boot camp you go to ITR, Infantry Training Regiment, for like a month. Then you take leave and then you go to Camp Pendleton and get into whatever unit they may assign you to. It could be, you know, some other place in the United States but, anyway.

SM: So with boot camp, what does MCRD stand for?

DN: Marine Corps Recruit Depot.

SM: So that was in San Diego where you did your boot camp?

DN: Yes, there were two in the United States. Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, and MCRD in San Diego are the two boot camps for the Marine Corps.

SM: And so how long were you in boot camp?

DN: Oh, it's been many years ago, but I think it was probably about three months of boot camp. And then one month of the Infantry Training Regiment and that was held in Pendleton in that last month. It's kind of like boot camp, yet they treat you almost like recruits yet, so.

SM: Where was the ITR at?

DN: Camp Pendleton and I think it was Las Pulgas. Camp Pendleton is made up of a bunch of smaller camps, but it was on the Camp Pendleton base.

SM: So what was your most memorable experience during boot camp?

DN: Well, I probably couldn't tell you. I'd get people in trouble, I think, ... seriously.

Probably mine was getting really sick one day, probably as sick as I ever was when I was younger. And they thought I had bronchial pneumonia. And I got put in the hospital right away. My drill instructor came about three hours later and said none of his "blankety-blank" recruits ever stayed in the hospital, and took me out of there. And it wasn't just to go to the barracks – we were at the rifle range at the time – to go to the tents, but to go out and

run with the platoon. And I remember running for like two minutes, and I just passed out on my feet. I'm surprised that I can even remember that but that's what had to have happened. So I woke up in a ditch vomiting. And I remember he didn't even slow the platoon down. I had to catch up to the platoon running up some small hills and running like a drunk. I had no energy or anything. But that was probably the worst memory I had in there. That you just did it, you know. Probably the sickest I ever was when I was young; and that's what I had to do. And other people did, too. It wasn't just me.

SM: Did you think you actually had bronchial pneumonia at the time?

DN: Well, that's what the corpsman said. He said, "You," he said, "You were so close to bronchial pneumonia." You know, they don't put you in the hospital very quickly in the service. And he almost immediately ... after they did some tests on things and put me in. But I think I was in there like two to three hours and then the drill instructor came and, you know.

SM: When you were in boot camp, did you have any second thoughts about your decision to join the military?

DN: Oh, probably 4 or 500.

SM: That's pretty common, I hear, in boot camp.

DN: Yeas, it is. Well, I think especially being – of course a lot of us were 17. I think if you came from Chicago or came from New York or something, it's a little bit different. But for all of us that came from smaller towns in the Midwest, we really had no idea what the military was like.

In those days, you didn't see as much on TV as you do nowadays and stuff like that. So it was quite a surprise for me and for a lot of people. But you get through it and I don't know how you look back on it ... with some positive and some negative. I would never want to be a career service person. I wouldn't mind being in the Marine Corps, too much again. I would never want to go to boot camp again.

SM: What were the positives that you got out of boot camp?

DN: Well, I think seeing the city of San Diego, even just flying in there. And the Marine Corps Recruit Depot was a beautiful big place. I mean this [unclear] where they march the troops on that – huge. And these buildings that were

stucco, you know. They were smooth stucco, like that type of material. I don't know what you call it, but a beautiful base down there.

I think we did two or three things that I remember. Coming from the small town in the Midwest things I'd never seen before. We had a hypnotist that put on the show for the Marines and I never forgot that. It was really interesting. And we went to, I think, one movie and I've seen it twice since. I enjoyed it then and I enjoy it now. That was *Inherit the Wind* with Spencer Tracy and the Scopes Monkey Trial. Good movies, those things stuck in my mind. And the beauty of the base in San Diego and the sunshiny weather, even in March and April at times. And so, there were some positives.

I don't have a lot because they harassed you most of the time. And you had to run wherever you went and pretty regimented. The food wasn't bad. I didn't think the food was bad all throughout the Marine Corps. But, so, yes, there was, there was some positives in there.

SM: So tell me how long were you in ITR?

DN: ITR was about a month. In Infantry Training Regiment we learned to shoot different weapons, like the bazookas and different machine guns. We didn't do too many maneuvers. It was mainly, from what I remember, weapons and stuff like that. It was up on Camp Pendleton, I always remember, we had this sergeant who got us up every morning. You ever see those corrugated buildings? They would take a military baton [unclear] and rake it across that building to get you up.

And then this sergeant we had was interesting. I think he was from South America someplace, and he would holler into the barracks. You know, he didn't speak very good English. "Okay you f---ing Marines," you know, "It's time to get up and chit, chower and chive." He had a "c" on each one of those ... interesting fellow. He had trained in Mao Zedong's School of Guerilla Warfare over in China with Che Guevara. So he was quite an experienced fellow. I mean he had some push behind him. That's one of my big memories of that place was him and getting up every day.

SM: Now how old was he about at the time?

DN: I'm guessing he was probably 33-34, maybe.

SM: Did he have any kind moments of compassion or was that not part of his personality?

DN: Well, the only thing I can mainly remember was that of him. So I don't have any really negatives or positives ... just this Mao Zedong School of Warfare in China with Che Guevara. I never knew who Che Guevara was at the time but you looked up to him.

Yes, ITR was not like boot camp. It was probably only 70% as bad as boot camp. You had a little bit of freedom and you had a couple weekend passes. So mainly, I thought the sergeants up there were still strict but it wasn't like boot camp. So I didn't have too bad of memories just maybe one or two of sergeants up there. You know, it wasn't too bad.

SM: Now what did you do on your weekend passes?

DN: We went to Disneyland one weekend. That's the one I remember, of course. And for a 17-year-old, it was fascinating coming from the Midwest. What a memory going there. A couple of us paid for a cab, and took it in and got a motel, and then spent a day or two at Disneyland and had a good time.

SM: I can see where that would be memorable.

DN: Yes.

SM: Tell me more about what happened after ITR.

DN: After ITR we got our leave, of course. I took the Santa Fe train to Kansas City. And then, I think, another train to Minneapolis. And then I had to take a bus from Minneapolis to home. After ITR you got your assignments to your different groups. Of course, most of the people who graduated from MCRD stayed on the West Coast. And those that graduate from Lejeune stay on the East Coast. But some of them got into the aircraft ... went back East. But I got assigned to the infantry and Camp Margarita, which is one of the smaller camps inside Camp Pendleton, and stayed there for, I guess, a year-and-a-half and was a infantryman and training there.

SM: Tell me more about what your typical day was like there.

DN: Well, they varied. We didn't have as much physical exercises as we had in boot camp where you had physical training every day it seemed like.

We had classes at times. We had classes on infantry tactics and stuff like that, and then we'd go out in the field, practice them at times. So a day really varied. But if you took a month, there would be probably two, three times you went out on military exercises, you know, with enveloping deals of some

people shoot from the front and then some people come around from the side. Some weapons training with your rifles, a lot of classes on map reading and how to use your compass.

Like I said, each day could vary, but if you took a month there was a lot of stuff like that. I imagine probably twice a week, you did get out and go on forced marches and hikes and running but I don't remember it being that tough except for some of those hills around Pendleton we had to get up into.

Probably once every two months, we would have a week out in the field where we'd stay overnight and have exercises. Because I remember the flares, you know. You'd be on night maneuvers and they'd shoot these flares up and light up the whole area. So it really varied. I don't think I have too many memories, specifics of that. It was just stuff like that.

When I go back in memory, I guess, that's about all I can say. Its 40 years ago and I can't remember too much more. I can remember the food again. I always thought the food was good. That's right, once a year we got stuck on KP for a week and that was fine. That was kind of a break from the training that we normally did and I think most of us found that enjoyable. I remember in the mess hall where I worked, Joe DiMaggio's son was there. He was on mess duty once the night before I went on. He died probably six years ago. I don't know if you read that, but he died living in a junkyard – in a small trailer. And I think that was Joe's only child; but they never had any connection between them.

I could have mentioned at boot camp on the back of one of the walls, the Everly Brothers had been in boot camp there and each carved their name in the back of the wall.

And then the other person that was in my platoon was, if you remember, Glenn Miller Band. Yes, his son was in our platoon. Steve Miller, I think it was Steve. Anyway, photographers come in and took pictures of him and interviewed him and that. And I remember the GIs giving him a hard time of being a hero or whatever. But he was in our platoon.

I can't remember too much more about specifics, anyway, about being in the regular Marine Corp Regiment in Camp Pendleton.

We got liberty, I think, every weekend ... that's right. During the week time, we'd go into Oceanside on the bus, and you'd have the USO in there. We'd get cheap snacks and things and maybe go to a movie sometime.

I know one time we went in there and got in trouble. There was four of us and one of my buddies – he became a corporal later – but anyway, he had a fake ID. We went and bought some booze with it. And the damn operator of the liquor store called the cops on us, and they came and stopped us there. Two squad cars came, which kind of surprised me because nowadays, you know, they let people off easier. Anyway I got caught because I was the one that carried the booze after we got out of there. And my buddy got caught with the fake ID and they threw us both in jail. The other two guys got to go, but they were smart-ass cops. You're in pretty good shape in the Marine Corps and I had this pint of whiskey stuck under my belt. And they come and shined the light on me. And the cop said, "Oh gee, you pregnant?" What an asshole; he threw me up against the car and put us in jail. It was before Miranda and this was probably ten o'clock at night. And they left me in there and the other guy for about an hour and a half.

I was in this small little cell. They come and I said, "Well, when am I going to get out?" And they said, "Oh, when you sign a confession." Just like that, nothing about lawyers or anything. I sat in this small cell, I think it was like three in the morning when they came back again. And I remember this little cell I was in. Somebody had scratched on the wall, "Smile, you're on 'Candid Camera'." Well, I was 17 years old and stuck in jail out in California. I didn't have a lot to smile about. I got out at three in the morning and went back; of course, then you're in trouble with the Marine Corps, too. It wasn't a big deal but they don't like it.

My lieutenant was dealing with the courts. And we never had a lot of money then. Nowadays, they're not rich, the people in the service, but they get more than we did. We were always broke. You had to pay for your uniforms and everything, so he had me borrow money from everybody in the platoon that had a dollar or two, and I ended up with, I think it was like \$32 and something. I had to go before the judge in Oceanside and he judged me guilty; and, of course, he charged me the exact amount of money I had in my pocket, \$32.42, whatever it was, took every penny that I had. So, you know there was collusion between the lieutenant and the judge. Anyway that's one of the memories I have there.

I always look back on the food, and some people complain about the food. We had good food in our family coming from the Midwest, people I thought were pretty good cooks back there. But I always liked the food in the Marine Corps. Gosh, you got more than you ever wanted to eat. And there was a variety of stuff. That was always a good memory of mine with the service.

But I do remember in those days, like I said about money, we got paid every two weeks and you got paid in cash in those days. And as a private, I

remember we got like, I think it was \$80 a month or 82, or something like that, and everybody was broke after the first week ... after you paid for your haircuts and you paid this and that. We had a little allotment taken out so you'd have some savings when you got out. I think about 70% - 80% of the people were broke after one week. You couldn't buy cigarettes or couldn't do anything.

SM: And that was \$82 for every two weeks or for the month?

DN: That was for the month.

SM: What was Joe DiMaggio's son like? Did you get a chance to fraternize with him at all?

DN: No, he was in a different platoon, and he was on KP duty – one of the servers as we went through the line. You could see he looked like Joe in a way. No fraternization or ever talked to anybody that had talked to him. He was just kind of another guy. You really didn't get to know guys in other platoons. You knew the guys in your platoon. A company is made up of four platoons. In fact, he was in a different company.

SM: What about Steve Miller, Glenn Miller's son, what was he like?

DN: That was boot camp, and there you talked a lot with the people right around where your rack was – your bed. But you didn't get to know a lot of the other people. You had to shut your mouth most of the time; and you had a little bit of time on Sunday to read the newspaper and, as they called it, "grab-ass," which is talk with the other Marines and that. And maybe a little time after you come in, right before bed. But you didn't get to know them that much. He seemed like a nice fellow. He kept his mouth shut and went with the program, as they say, and he did. You never knew too many people in boot camp, especially.

SM: When did you have to get your GED along the way?

DN: We didn't have to get it. I just did it. They brought it up. So many of us were high school drop-outs, you know. I think it was at Camp Pendleton that I did that. It wouldn't have been over in Okinawa. Probably it could have been ... I can't remember now. But they just said, "Here's that avenue." "You can – if you didn't complete high school, you can get your GED," and so I don't remember studying for the darn thing. Maybe there was a study book or something, and I don't remember how many people took it. I just remember I passed and nobody said anything. We just did it I guess. You got a letter or something, you passed and that was about it.

SM: Tell me a little bit, Mr. Norby, about when you first entered the Marine Corps and as your time in Camp Pendleton extended over time, how did you feel about what was going on in Vietnam and your chances of being sent over there?

DN: When we entered, I guess there were advisors there then. But I only know that from in the last, maybe 20 years later. I didn't know anything about it. We were in Pendleton for a year-and-a-half and then we went to Okinawa. We were on float. When we were at Pendleton, we never heard the word "Vietnam."

I'm sure there were advisors there then. Maybe not too many, but Kennedy was President then. That's one other thing, we guarded the street for President Kennedy in San Diego, I don't know if I told you that.

We guarded the streets when President Kennedy came to San Diego. We stood along the streets, you know, along the route he was going. And it was kind of interesting. I got to be, I suppose, within three or four feet of him, because his car came on the side of the road where I was. We were kind of supposed to look at the crowd to see that nobody rushed in; but a lot of us turned, when his car came right by us to look at him. And it was funny, I can remember the car going by and a buddy of mine took the picture – a buddy that didn't have duty that day, so we'd have pictures of that. But I don't remember seeing his face at all. I remember turning around and looking and thinking, "Gosh, I shouldn't have did that maybe."

But anyway, going on about Vietnam ... nothing in California and I don't think we had any training for it either. When we got to Okinawa, we did guerilla warfare training, because there was jungle-like area on Okinawa. I imagine they were getting us ready in case something happened in Vietnam. But even over there, I don't think I ever heard the word.

We had a company go over there to do a little scouting work one time, and I remember it was Tiger Tooth Mountain they went to and stayed like maybe a month and worked with the Montagnard people, I think that's how you pronounce it. But even then, we didn't hear the name Vietnam or anything; and that anything bad was going to happen or could happen. It was peacetime as far as we were concerned; and I didn't know there was advisors there until later. And why that company went there, we didn't know. We got sent all over on float battalion. We went to the Philippines. We went to Formosa. We went to Philippines three times and did maneuvers and things; and Formosa the same thing a couple of times, so it wasn't anything that much out of the ordinary ... didn't know anything about Vietnam. We didn't have TV over there; and if radio – a couple of the troops had a radio, but it was always on to music or something. And newspapers, we hardly ever

read a newspaper over there, so we were pretty much unaware. We had no idea that anything was happening, because that was '63 and '64 when we was over in Okinawa. But, yes, Vietnam I don't think I ever heard the name until we were offshore on a ship was about it.

SM: What month in '63 did you go over to Okinawa?

DN: Well, we were in Okinawa about a year, so if we left around November of '64, I think we left like November or December of '63.

SM: And had you already been in the Philippines and Formosa before that, or . . .

DN: No, we went over and got set up in Okinawa itself at Camp Schwab, the Marine Corps base over there. It would be from there, we would go on ships, at least like the Philippines, I think three times, and to Formosa and then to Hong Kong. Not on the same trip a lot of the time.

We'd go and pull a two-week maneuver or a three-week maneuver on one of those places, and then go back to Okinawa for a couple of months, and then stuff like that. But that was after we got established at our base over there. We were called float battalion ... 1st Battalion 3rd Marines. And that's the one that they – I guess to get ready for landings, so they have all the training aboard ships, and how to get the troops all around or whatever.

SM: And when you left for Okinawa, where did you take off from?

DN: Long Beach, California.

SM: Tell me about your jungle training in Okinawa.

DN: We did that maybe twice for a period ... maybe a week each time. It's been a long time ago. But a lot of it was night training in the jungle using compasses. You start out here and you got to go through this jungle area, and you got three, four hours to go through it and to keep quiet. And they made punji traps; they talked about punji traps and showed us. They had set up ones there. But it was mainly getting through the jungles at night with using just a compass and stuff like that.

Maybe have to go five miles through the jungle in so many hours, and hopefully, get from point A and end up at point B where they wanted you to end up at. It was that type of stuff. I don't remember having people dressed up as guerillas or anything. Mainly, it was mainly night training. And you

know, it wasn't too hard because you couldn't go very fast; and it was at night, so it wasn't very hot. It was halfway enjoyable training.

Looking back on it, I'm guessing that because there were advisors in Vietnam at that time. And being how much it was starting to heat up, so we had that over there. But the main thing I remember is the punji traps, you know, to watch out for punji traps, and they had some built there, and showed what they were like.

SM: And what were punji traps?

DN: Punji traps are where the North Vietnamese or whatever, they dig a hole in the ground, maybe three, four feet deep; three, four, five feet wide. And then they put sticks in the ground in the bottom of it. They sharpen the top of the sticks and then they put human dung on them. So when you fall in there, they stick in you; and then, of course, you get infected and that.

SM: And then would they set up these traps when they were ready to ambush you as well, or was it more that it would just injure you and get infected and slow you down?

DN: From the training there, I took it to be just that you were injured and slowed down. We had no set-up of ambushes there. We did have ambush training up there, too, I had forgotten about that, but not around the punji traps, that I remember.

SM: Tell me about when you first discovered that you guys might be sent to Vietnam.

DN: We were on float battalion. I forget where we'd been – if it was the Philippines that time or Formosa, or whatever. We were on the South China Sea area someplace. And we'd been on the ship for like a month-and-a-half, and for us it was peacetime. We never had any idea – there had been no big combat since the Korean War. The only other worried time we had was – well, when the Cuban Missile Crisis popped up, we thought things would get hot then.

But, hey, we were out on float battalion for probably a month-and-a-half or so and there was nothing new about that because we had done that a lot of the time. That was what we were a float battalion over there.

And then one day on ship, this communiqué comes through; and, of course, they give us a copy of it that President Johnson had started bombing North

Vietnam. That's when we first started to think, "Hey, something's happening here."

About two or three days later, I guess it was, we get up in the morning and there was this big country off the side of the ship. I don't know, four or five miles off that side of the ship. And somebody said, "Well that's Vietnam over there." And we thought, "Oh, well, green." That's what I remember about it. It was just so lush green. There was no town where we were. It looked beautiful from the ocean out there. And so that made us think a little bit more; and I think they talked more about the bombings that were happening and stuff like that.

And then twice, maybe three times, they got us loaded up with live ammo and hand grenades, live grenades and things; and we'd been on many training missions with the helicopter, but we were on a helicopter carrier, I think it was the Valley Forge, many of the big choppers up on the flight deck. And got us up there, and then they revved the choppers up and never told us we weren't going in. We assumed we were. And they got them all going and they're noisy as heck. But when we'd gone on those before, we'd usually hollered at each other about, "Well I wonder where we're going now," and BS back and forth, you know.

I'll never forget this, nobody said anything to anybody else. We held our rifle in our hands and looked straight ahead. You know, thinking within an hour we could be dead. Because they never said we weren't going to go in. They talked about the LZs, landing zones, that were in there, where we might be hitting and stuff like that before we went up to the helicopters. I don't know if they did that to just train us to see how long it takes to get the people up to the copters or get us used to that we might be going into combat when there had been peacetime for a number of years. I have no idea. But we did that at least twice, maybe three times.

But I never forgot that. When we got on the helicopters and nobody ever said anything. Where we'd always holler and BS with each other and those times nobody spoke, you know. It was scary. I was 18 then, I guess, or 19; and so were a lot of the other guys. And when we got off the helicopter, we never really talked about it, you know. Nobody said anything. You would think you would. Well, boy, "Are they going do this, or are we going to be in combat in a day?" and kind of kept quiet about it. And we were kids, when you look back on it ... 18-19 years old.

SM: That must have been pretty scary?

DN: Well half of us were due to get out in six months. We were on a three-year enlistment ... the bombing was August of '64. September, October, November, yes, five or six months we were due to get out, too. And that's the main thing, I think, that was on our minds while we were there. You always talked about that, when you're getting out of that damn Marine Corps. We really didn't want to get extended into anything.

I think the other thing I told you about are huge ships. We never went to church; but when that came up I thought, you know, God I'd better get to church, you know. And start thinking about mortality or whatever. I went down that Sunday morning to get a little solace from that; and there was such a line trying to get into church that Sunday ... I think twice I did that and couldn't even get near the chapel. Before nobody ever went, after that, a lot of people were trying to get in there, and make a little peace with God or whatever, I guess.

SM: They were thinking of the same thing you were thinking, or similar.

DN: Yes, I remember being quite disappointed that I couldn't get in there and then say a couple of prayers, you know. Oh man, that was important to me that day.

SM: And how much did church play a role when you were growing up?

DN: I guess, a two-year period my parents went for a while and went fairly regularly. But that was about all, a two- or three-year period, I think. After that, it didn't play any importance whatsoever, it didn't seem like. Yes, nothing at home, mentioning about religion or whatever and so it wasn't much.

SM: Before you had these two or three times when they got you on the helicopter and you thought you were being taken over to Vietnam, what were your thoughts at that point about being in the Marine Corps? Were you happy with it, disenchanted with it, just counting the days to get out?

DN: Well you made a lot of good friends in there. And the infantry part, again the food I liked; and there were some training sessions that I didn't like. Some of the forced marches we'd go on where we'd go on a 20-mile hike in the morning, and they were really fast marches. People with shorter legs would have to run every so many steps to keep up. And that I never cared for, too much, because I was flat-footed. My feet hurt so bad, but you just passed the pain aside and forgot about until you got back to the barracks when you could hardly walk. But other than that, no, it was good, you know.

We got to the Philippines. We got to Formosa. We went to Hong Kong on those floats on the ships out in the sea. They sometimes showed movies at night on the decks. And it was good. It was really a good experience, the whole part of that. Like I said boot camp no, but the other part of it was. There was a lot of good, a lot of good things happening in there. Okinawa was beautiful. I still like Okinawa and miss it. It was a nice experience, the whole part of it ... overseas much more so than Pendleton, I thought.

Things were a little more lax over there. You didn't have to be quite as spiffy as you did on Camp Pendleton. You never shined your boots as much and your clothes didn't have to be quite as starched. It was more relaxed overseas. We just went so many places. We went to Japan a couple of times. We were in Hawaii a couple of times; it was good. Yes, I enjoyed the whole thing.

I think the thing that I was mainly worried about off the coast of Vietnam, one was getting killed but the other were we going to get extended and not get home. We were waiting to get out in six months. That was the important thing on our minds. I think most people bitched a lot ... 14 months I'm out of it this damn thing. You bitched and bitched about the service.

We had a Lieutenant Perry, a short little guy. We called him "Little Lord Fauntleroy." He was from the East Coast. Once in a while, they'd have us do these cleaning sessions ... but this was in Pendleton. One of our guys from Detroit made up this song which we'd sing at the top of our voices. And it was a short little ditty that we'd sing. I'm surprised they didn't jump on us for it. But it went this way you know, "The Marine Corps flag is a dirty old rag and the commandant is a fairy. How I hate to work that dirty little jerk, our Lieutenant Perry." We'd sing that over and over and over.

SM: Did the higher ups hear this?

DN: The sergeant sure did, because they were having to watch to see that we did the cleaning. This is when they'd make us clean at ten thirty, eleven o'clock at night, which would piss us off. We'd break out with that one and sing it over and over.

SM: And the sergeants would not be singing along, would they?

DN: Oh, no. I'm sure they didn't. But I thought the guy who wrote that, he did a pretty good job on that with getting Lieutenant Perry in there and then the commandant and the flag and everything. That was pretty good. Since you're in the Marine Corps you can bitch about the other things ... USMC stood for "Uncle Sam's Misguided Children" and then the other was

“Unorganized Shit and Mass Confusion.” You denigrated the Marine Corps every chance you got when you were in there. It was never anything. It was a great organization to do that.

SM: Would happen when you were overseas in Okinawa as well, or was it primarily in Camp Pendleton?

DN: It was more in Camp Pendleton because they were stricter then; and that’s where we had many of these midnight deals of cleaning the barracks. No, not as much in Okinawa. We were on ship a lot. We were traveling around and, like I said, it was more lax over there. They told us that before we went over there. When you get overseas it’s getting to be a little more lax duty and it was. Pendleton, that’s kind of the show place of the Marine Corps and I guess the Marine Corps Recruit Depot in San Diego is the real show place but Camp Pendleton for the infantry place, so it’s a lot more spit and polish there.

SM: What were your favorite places that you went to once you were on the ship?

DN: Okinawa would be the favorite. But where we went to on the ship and other places – Hawaii was beautiful to go, too, because we went into Pearl Harbor and docked in there. And I don’t know if you’ve ever been there but it’s a long narrow way to get in there and it’s beautiful. But we only stayed in Hawaii for just an overnight each time. Hong Kong was interesting. We’d been to Formosa, but they took us up to the border of Red China and things – that was interesting. Maybe in the Philippines, just for the liberty we had there.

But none of them stand out like Okinawa itself did. Okinawa was just a beautiful island. I remember when we left it to come back to the States for the final time, most of us stood on the fantail of the ship for probably an hour just looking at Okinawa as it disappeared in the distance. We all were very fond of it.

SM: Was it just a beautiful place?

DN: It was and the people were friendly at the time; and liberty was good there. There were cheap drinks, and there was some nice bases that had slot machines that were real cheap to play and stuff like that.

One other incident I’ll tell you ... on the way over to Okinawa. When we were docked at Yokohama Harbor overnight, and we got up in the morning – they get you up at four thirty or five o’clock. Have you ever been on a big ship where it’s military-like? Where in one area there’s probably 100 service

men and then you go through a door and there's another 100 in this next bay area, and so on, in the bowels of the ship. And we woke up in Yokohama probably about four thirty, five in the morning ... you always got up early. They got you up early even if there's nothing to do. Anyway, waking up and we had this Sergeant Kennedy who was the biggest A-hole we ever thought there was. And he was. He was a total spit and polish and a jerk. We heard in about two bays down, somebody said – in the morning when we got up – somebody said, “Hey, they shot Kennedy,” you know. And they thought well, somebody shot Sergeant Kennedy when he was on liberty the night before. We went to the next bay and the guys cheered, “Ah, they shot Kennedy, hey, hey,” you know, and it came to ours and the same thing happened.

Well we found out about a half-hour later it was President Kennedy that had been assassinated. And I remember on the ship that day, it was so quiet, because he was our Commander-In-Chief, who we'd guarded the streets for him, that nobody hardly spoke for the whole day. They just kind of wandered around or sat in places up topside on the ship and you didn't even speak to your friends very much. It was kind of really a sad time for us. But for a while they thought it was our Sergeant Kennedy and everybody cheered that somebody had shot him.

SM: Interesting ... so you would say that . . .

DN: Not a loveable guy.

SM: So most of the men there had quite a bit of admiration for President Kennedy, that he was . . .

DN: Oh, all of us did, yes, absolutely.

SM: Was it primarily because he was the Commander-In-Chief and you had a chance to guard him when he came into San Diego, or do you think it was the whole image of Camelot?

DN: I think it was more that we guarded the streets and that ‘Camelot’ we didn't know too much about. We didn't have TV and we didn't read many newspapers and that and, like I said, radio was mainly music on. I think part of it was we were out of the country, and this is happening back in our country and we weren't there. And you wondered what's going on. But yes, it was guarding the streets for him and seeing him and him being our Commander-In-Chief. And then they had pictures of him in different offices. They still do in the military, you know, pictures of the president around, but not the ‘Camelot’ part. He was a youthful, vigorous person.

SM: When you were over on the ship, did you find out much about what happened when he was assassinated or was the news pretty limited?

DN: **Oh, it was quite limited. We didn't know much at all. I don't think we'd seen a newspaper until we probably got to Okinawa. And maybe read something about it and we didn't buy newspapers very often. We didn't get many of them. I think I found out most about it when I got out of the service; and there was TV reports or specials on it or something like that. But not at the time, we didn't know.**

SM: Now what about in Okinawa, did you guys fraternize with the Japanese women when you would go out on the weekends?

DN: **Maybe some we got to know in restaurants and things like that. But fraternization was mainly with prostitutes that people did.**

SM: And were there a lot of those in Okinawa?

DN: **Oh, yes. Okinawa and the Philippines and I don't remember many of them in Formosa. I don't remember any over in Formosa. But in the Philippines and in Okinawa, yes, kind of sadly, there was a lot of the girls were prostitute and there was a lot of military on Okinawa. There was an Air Force base, there was an Army base, and there was a Marine Corps base in Okinawa. It's not that big of an island, so.**

SM: And would these often times be young girls or were they adult women?

DN: **Oh, they were always adults, I think. I would say they were at least 17-18 years old at the very youngest, and some in their 30s and older.**

SM: So tell me more about your experiences in Okinawa.

DN: **We probably run once every week or something for exercise. We took 20-mile hikes probably once every two months. We'd do that in the morning. I remember they were kind of rough but then we had classes and stuff like that. A lot of training classes and then nuclear, biological, and chemical warfare, and stuff, it was more of a lax time over there, I guess. You couldn't go on liberty until I think it was noon Saturday. That was the only difference. Whereas in the States, you could leave at Friday night after five o'clock, so it shortened your liberty. But just as the whole thing itself, I don't remember it being that rough. It was almost like a tropical vacation at times, I felt. The South China Sea was right outside our barracks and it was just a beautiful place, beautiful area at Camp Schwab.**

SM: Was it right on the beach, or . . .

DN: Well, yes, our base was, you know. Some of the bases were inland, like Kadena Air Force Base was more inland but Okinawa is not a very big island. I think it is like 60 miles long and I forget how many miles wide. But yes, ours was right on the beach. It is not low but it was up higher; but the beach was just down just a very little ways, so we'd climb it. We spent so much time on ship, too, traveling around that I think that made it nice, too. We weren't stuck in one place all the time. But when we were left on Okinawa, we all loved it. I don't think any of us ever said, "Boy, we want to get off this place," or "This place is a dump," or whatever. It was fantastic, you know. It was just a nice place.

SM: Now going back to the prostitutes, was the military their primary clients?

DN: I don't know that. I would assume that there were also Oriental clients and that. But that's just an assumption on my part. I really don't know. Since there was so many military men there, I imagine that that was a big portion of their clients. But I would assume that there were also Orientals, you know, you would think so.

SM: And were the Japanese pretty friendly to you?

DN: The Japanese? You know, at that time there wasn't the trouble that there is now with that base. You've read about the problems they've had over there; and I think the Japanese took control of the islands back there ... what in the past 10-15 years. The Ryukyu Islands they are. Yes, they were friendly at the time. I don't remember hardly any being unfriendly. They were nice people, you know. They were really nice people.

SM: Did many of them speak English?

DN: Yes, enough to take your orders in the restaurant and things like that. And that's the main thing we seen was going into the restaurant or a bar or something. If we went to the bars, we mainly went to the bars on our base because the drinks were cheaper ... a lot cheaper there. But we did go into restaurants in town and, yes, they could talk. I remember some of the girls were really just nice, friendly. These weren't prostitutes or anything but they were nice people. They were awfully friendly people over there.

SM: And what kind of a salary did you have every month, was it still the \$82 a month, or did you get paid more when you . . .

DN: Oh, I think it maybe got up to 110 or 120 a month, or something like that, when I made E-3 over there. But it still was not a lot ... things were cheaper over there, too, so we didn't spend as much money, I don't think.

SM: So there was more room to go out and socialize and go to the restaurants and bars and stuff?

DN: Yes, the meals were cheaper than they'd have been in town in Oceanside. So we went out more but then we rose a couple ranks, too, from being E-1 to E-3, and with cheaper stuff. We were on ship a lot of the time. I think we saved more money because of that, too. If you're on a float battalion – on the ship – you can't buy much at all. So there was many times that we'd have a month-and-half's pay coming when we got back and hadn't any place to spend it. We went on more trips around there to the different bases and have some drinks, or whatever, at the base bars and stuff. So there was more money available over there. And because of those reasons, I guess, mainly of sitting on a ship a lot.

SM: Now on the ships, how many helicopters did they have on the ships?

DN: Oh, it's just a guess. If you look at the aircraft carriers now, you see pictures of those on TV, and they weren't quite that big, but still they were huge carriers. And I'm guessing off top, maybe 30 choppers sitting up on the deck up there.

SM: When you had the two or three times when you thought you were being sent over to Vietnam, approximately when was this timeframe-wise?

DN: It was August September of 1964. I'm guessing probably within two weeks after the bombing started ... in August September of '64.

Now I think I told you before, they weren't going to send us in as a battalion. But we'd been on ship by that time for probably three months. They decided we were probably too much out of shape. So they took us out of the area and they brought the next battalion in, and they did go in there as a group. And, I think, they were the first large battalion-sized group to go into the Vietnam, was the one that replaced us then. But if we hadn't been on ship so long, we would have probably went in then, but they figured that hot jungle and being sitting on ship for three months, you're kind of out of shape.

SM: So when the next battalion came in and they switched you out on the ship or how did that work?

DN: No, they brought them in on a different ship. And then they shipped us back to Okinawa. Se we were the 1st Battalion 3rd Marines. There was also the 2nd Battalion 3rd Marines and the 3rd Battalion 3rd Marines. So they shipped us back to Okinawa and then, I'm guessing, it was 2-3 or 3-3 that went over there and went in as a unit then. But they were the first big military unit to go into Vietnam.

SM: For the men that were in your battalion, were they all in the same timeframe in terms of they all did boot camp at the same time, so they were going to get out at the same time of the military?

DN: I don't know that for sure. I know that a lot of people in our battalion were, but I don't know that the 2nd Battalion or the 3rd Battalion were the same thing. I have no idea. Although talking to some of my friends later, they did talk about some of the people who were automatically extended ... it was wartime. So they just said, we were due to get out in such-and-such a time; but sorry you're six months more over here. I'm not so sure about the other battalions. We mainly got to know the people in our own platoon and some in our own company but not hardly any in other companies.

SM: Everybody in your platoon was scheduled to get out approximately what, February of 64?

DN: No, about half of them were. See half of us were three-year people. We signed up for three years, which we always thought was extremely lucky; and the other half signed up for four years. So they had a year-and-a-half left. We had like six months left before we got out, so.

SM: Those in your platoon that were on the four-year plan, did a lot of them end up going into Vietnam?

DN: They did, but they went back to the States first. As a battalion, we went back to San Diego all of us – t hree or four guys in my platoon died over there. I know that from reading the book that shows the names on the wall and from talking to different people. A lot of them went back to Vietnam and served in Vietnam. But six people were three-year people, when we got back to the States in like November or early December of '64. They discharged us within about three weeks, as it wasn't worth their money, they said, to send all of us on to new bases for two months and then discharge us. So we actually got an early out. But those other few, many of them went back to Vietnam and fought over there.

SM: And then how many men were in your platoon?

DN: There's like 40 men in a platoon.

SM: So you – as far as you know, there were about three of them that were killed in Vietnam of the ones that went back?

DN: Oh, four or five were killed over there.

SM: Any of them were good friends of yours?

DN: I wouldn't say close friends. My close friends were mainly the three-year people but the two of them I knew quite well. I think there was Britton (sp?) and another person. Yes, a couple of them I knew quite well.

SM: So that must have been hard for you?

DN: It was probably 15 years or 20 years later, 30 years later when I found out about it so, you know, time really changes. I think your feeling is more of, "I'll be damned." For a person there, you feel sorry for him, but yes.

SM: Any other things that you would like to share with me; any other memorable experiences or anything else about your military experience that I haven't asked about?

DN: Let me think. I can't really think of anything right now that stands out. You know, we covered most of it and some of the lowlights and highlights, I guess, of telling this. No, I can't think of specifics, Stephanie, nothing at all.

SM: What would you say, Mr. Norby, to young people who have never seen war, have never been in the military? What would you want them to understand about the military?

DN: I think it's a plus that almost everybody should be forced to go into the military. It changes your perspective on life and it makes you work and be regimented and grow up a lot. I think it'd do a lot of good for a lot of people.

Getting into combat, I'd prefer that people probably didn't have to do that because being it was such a stressor on their lives and the injuries. A lot of people get killed and a lot people are maimed, although I think we have to have wars. And we have to do things, so, the combat - no; but the military - yes. I think it would be good for a lot of young men and I think more so now, much more so now than it was in 1962 when I went in because it was a different society when I went in compared to what it is now, you know. It's

pretty, I don't know – wayward. A lot of wayward youth nowadays could use it.

SM: Could use the discipline or . . .

DN: **Yes, the discipline and I think it'd help them to grow up a lot. It's needed pretty much, you know, a lot of drug people and things like that. I think it would change the lives of a lot of them for the better.**

SM: When you were over there, were there very many men that were into smoking pot or into other types of drugs?

DN: **I never knew a person that did drugs in '62, '63 and '64, never one. A lot of alcohol but when I was overseas, we could drink legally at 18. But no, I never saw a drug in the service.**

SM: Now back home was the drinking age 21 in most states or was it 18 or . . .

DN: **Well, it was, I think it was 18 in South Dakota. But that was for 5.5% beer or something, very weak beer. You couldn't get the harder beer. North Dakota was 21. I think it was 21 in California. But overseas if you were in the service over there, you could go to the service club and drink. That was about it, so.**

SM: Now the charges that were brought against you in California, did those cause a problem for you later on in work life, or were they nonexistent, essentially?

DN: **Oh, they were nonexistent. I never, never had a problem with them at all.**

SM: Mr. Norby, my last question for you is how would you say the fact that you were very close to being sent to combat affected your life?

DN: **Well, I don't know. You know, I guess mainly it is just thinking about what it would have been like and then we all seen Vietnam on TV for hours and hours over the years, we have anyway. I think it was just probably in my thought process only a little bit. And that's like 20% of me feels I should have went there, too, like the rest of the people. And that 20% also feels I missed out on something that, you know, a lot of people don't do.**

Now the greater part of me is glad that I did not have to go and get in there, and march in those hot, sweltering jungles and get a lot of people maimed or killed, which could have happened to yourself. But, I guess, that's the only thing I think about is, "Yeah, missed out on it." And missed out on

something and the experience of doing it, but 80% of me says, “No, I’m damn glad I didn’t have to then and didn’t do it.”

SM: Tell me more about the 20% of you feel like you missed out? What do you feel like you missed out on? Was it more of a responsibility or not? Tell me more.

DN: I think more of curiosity and things, you know, all the TV you’ve seen of the shows on Vietnam where they’re filming what happened over there. There’s just something interesting and exciting about that. The experience that they went through, and being able to say they did, “Yeah, I was over in Vietnam.”

And, I guess, when you went in the service, there was no combat from 1953 or ’54 when Korea ended until the other. So when you went in the service during those years and you got back, it was kind of a big deal with them. “Yeah, well I served my time in the service.” “Yeah, he was in the Marine Corps.” “He was in the Army.” Well, when Vietnam came that kind of eclipsed, then it was just “Well, he was in the war.” If you’d just been in the service, it was nothing. You see what the point I’m getting at?

Your experience in the service from ’53 to ’64, it was kind of a big deal back then. You went and served. But after Vietnam was on for six, seven, eight years, it was only if you were in the service, only if you were in combat it was a bigger deal. I don’t know if I thought about that too much; but it was just all the TV shows where the news people had filmed this going on in Vietnam and that going on. And just something about that, you know. There’s a part of me always wishes I could have been there but the greater part of me, like I said, does not, so.

SM: And what did you end up doing when you got back after the military?

DN: I worked at a few jobs, and then I went out to Washington State where I had an aunt out here, and a grandmother and then a couple of cousins. They said they had a nice mill out here. They also had a junior college and why don’t I come out here. If you’re from a small town in Dakota, what do you do? You either go to Fargo or Minneapolis or Sioux Falls, or whatever and if your dad doesn’t own a farm or a store...

So I came out here and I worked in a mill one summer. Then I went to a junior college and eventually got my college degree in accounting. But in the summer it was interesting, I worked one summer driving fire truck, fighting forest fires out of Forks, Washington. Have you ever heard of the “Twilight” movies?

SM: Yes.

DN: Well they're based in Forks, Washington. So I drove fire truck fighting forest fires out of there ... that was the summer when I first got out here, before I went to college. Then for two or three summers when I was going to college, I came back.

I went to Eastern Washington University and over by Spokane; and I came back to the Port Angeles area, Sequim – Port Angeles-Sequim area. And I logged for three different summers ... setting chokers one summer. And another summer for a logging company, I did all the dynamiting for them building road up in the mountains. I can't forget driving a loader cat for a logging company and stuff like that in the summer. Its good paying jobs very good paying jobs.

Then I got my college degree, of course, and got married. I left the area for a while. I worked at the Federal Trade Commission in Washington, DC, and I was a federal auditor in Atlanta, Georgia, for a while. When my wife and I came back to Tacoma, I was an accountant for a federal penitentiary for a year. Then I got out of the government service and worked for the local government here for a while.

SM: As an accountant?

DN: I did, yeahs

SM: And that's where you . . .

DN: I worked six years with the state. I was a state auditor again and worked at the [unclear] and stuff like that.

SM: So you spent most of your adult life in accounting work once you . . .

DN: Yes, accounting and auditing.

SM: Mr. Norby, anything else you want to add before we close?

DN: I can't think of anything.

SM: Thank you very, very much for your time.

DN: Yes, I enjoyed talking to you, Stephanie.