

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAME: Eric W. Sivula

COLLECTION: 4700.0983

IDENTIFICATION: Vietnam veteran

INTERVIEWER: Jacob J. Oberman

SERIES: Americans in Vietnam

INTERVIEW DATE: 5/1/75

FOCUS DATES: 6/6/67-4/21/71

ABSTRACT:

Tape 1436, Side A

Born in Wyoming; moved to New Orleans when he was 12; parents separated, Sivula lived with his father in Houston; father is optometrist; education; attending LSU since discharge; never heard of marijuana in high school; parents moved to Panama Canal Zone, Sivula had choice between staying in Atlanta for more schooling or entering service; boot camp in San Diego; requested to go to Vietnam; would join Navy if had to do it again; rarity of Navy Seals; psychological manipulation during boot camp; esprit de corps, singing, dancing, destructive indoctrination; physical fitness and hard work led to self confidence; long distance running, calisthenics, swimming; river boats; armaments on boats; grenade launchers on boats; school in California for four months; landed in Ben Hoa; apprehension of arriving in Vietnam; arrived in staging area; comparison of bays in Vietnam; duties at bay; ethnic composition of boat crews; explanation of Vietnamization concept; idea of fighting a war was strange; extreme foreignness of Vietnamese lifestyle; culture shock; ease of killing people you can't relate to; strange customs of the Vietnamese; threat of being court martialed for using derogatory terms for Vietnamese; VC in the delta; strategy of controlling villages, supply lines; fire fight, killed 89 people; difficulty of maintaining control of an area; working out of remote areas, living amongst Vietnamese; history of US military involvement in Vietnam; taught Vietnamese how to build engines; best positions in Vietnamese life reserved for full-blood Vietnamese; discrimination against Chinese and mixed Chinese/Vietnamese; Vietnamese prejudice against certain religions and nationalities; learned to tell difference between different ethnicities; prevalence of last name "Nguyen"; prevalence of middle name "Van"; prostitution very profitable for Asians; importance of bearing a Vietnamese child before being accepted as a prostitute; forms of prostitution; signs of wealth - refrigerator, sewing machine, generator; tin roof also a sign of status; betel nut; opium dens.

Tape 1436, Side B

Corruption, black market; problem of Vietnamese people having grown up amidst war; apathetic attitude of Vietnamese; amazed that South Vietnamese hung on as long as they did; people that escaped Vietnam were people with money; opinion of American war effort, debacle; influence of China and North Korea on Vietnam; relations to other Asian countries; Vietnam valuable

because so agriculturally rich.

TAPES: 1 (T1436)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 1 hour

PAGES INDEX: 2 pages

RESTRICTIONS: None