

The date is March 19, 2012. My name is Paul Robards, Library Director at Roberts Memorial Library at Middle Georgia College. I will be speaking today to Julian Alexander from Warner Robins, GA about his experiences in the Vietnam War.

Mr. Alexander, what branch of the service did you serve in?

United States Army

What did you join the military?

: I was drafted.

How old were you when you joined the military?

I was sworn in on my 23rd birthday.

Where did you go to receive basic training?

Fort Benning in Columbus, GA.

Describe your basic training experience. What was your daily routine and what kind of training did you receive?

: Well, basically you would get up at like maybe 5 o'clock in the morning, could have been sooner; go on 2 or 3 mile runs; come back, eat breakfast; clean up the dorm; make your bed, clean the bathroom; spend the rest of the day until lunchtime going to classes or some kind of physical training. You would eat lunch, and then after that, you would either have classes or more physical training depending on the schedule of the day. PT exercises, hand grenade practice or rifle range. At night you would have distant runs or you would go through what they call the night crawl under live fire, through barbed wire, through mud, over logs, through trenches, More PT exercises during the day, and classes during the day — general military procedures.

What lessons did you take away from basic training?

I think I became more disciplined, because of the structure. I think I became more responsible, because I was 23 years old, but I had never done anything with my life up to that point, even though I was married to my first wife at that time. I think I became more aware of the world around me. I think I became more aware of what military life was all about, because

How did your understanding of the situation effect how you did your job?

Alexander: I don't think my understanding of the situation effected my job as much as the fact that I wanted to survive and go back home. So therefore, I did what I had to do to survive, so that I could get back home. I performed my job as ordered to perform, no matter what I was told to do, and I was never told to do anything that was like Mi Lai or anything like that. I did what I was told to do by my superiors, because I knew that what I was being told to do would help me get through this thing, and get back home to the people that I loved, and who loved me.

: What did you think about Vietnam when you first arrived?

Alexander: Oh, Lord. When I first arrived, I was scared to death. When I got off that plane at Tan Son Nhut Airbase, I was scared to death. It was in the middle of the night. All you saw was machine gun bunkers along the runways and jeeps and 50 caliber machine guns and soldiers everywhere and you thought, what have I got in to? I'm never going to get out of here alive. Daylight came and you were assigned to a unit, and in daylight, things didn't look as bad. So, it is just something that grows in you, on you and you learn to deal with it; you learn to live with it; you learn to survive.

What was your opinion of the Vietnamese, and did your opinion change over time?

Alexander: To be perfectly honest, my opinion of the Vietnamese was the same as my opinion of the Japanese in World War II. Even though I wasn't around in WWII, I know enough about it from the history books and movies and talking with my father. I didn't have a very high opinion

I can only base a "yes" on wh

