

Vietnam Veterans Oral History Project
Roberts Memorial Library
Middle Georgia College
Interview with Martin Avsec

May 9, 2012

Robards: The date is May 9, 2012. My name is Paul Robards, Library Director at Roberts Memorial Library at Middle Georgia College. I will be speaking with Martin Avsec from Eastman Georgia today about his experiences in the Vietnam War.

Robards: What branch of the service did you serve in?

Avsec: I was in the U.S. Air Force.

Robards:

Avsec: I was in the 459th, and the 537th. Ship troop, I guess it was. Well, we were in a [MAS] squadron, Military Airlift Squadron, so it was 459th and 537th. We were out of Phu Cat Air Base.

Robards: What was your rank during the war?

Avsec: E-4

Robards: Did you receive any awards or citations?

Avsec: Yeah, I received a commendation for service in Vietnam; a commendation medal.

Robards: Although you were not in a combat unit, were you ever attacked or close to any fighting?

Avsec: During the Tet Offensive, in March of 1968, (I think it was during the spring time), I went to Vietnam, but I was strictly a mechanic, so I was kind of surprised that I was getting an M16.

Robards: Describe the bravest action you witnessed during the war.

Avsec: We were actually out of touch with the combat veterans. We went in to a lot of the Special Forces camps to that type of situation.

Robards: As a young serviceman, what was your understanding about the reasons for the war?

Avsec: They always said it was to prevent communism from continuing on in the area.

Robards: How did this understanding of the situation affect how you did your job?

Avsec: It didn't matter to me. I was just there to work on aircraft.

Robards: Describe your living conditions, housing and food in Vietnam.

Avsec: The housing we were in is what they called hooches. They were just buildings with sandbags around them, especially in Da Nang Airbase. When I first got in the country, I went to Cam Ranh Bay, and we lived in barracks there, and then they sent me to Phu Cat and I was in the barracks there, but then they sent me to Da Nang Airbase and there was a little bit of everything [accommodations]. The hooches were just like an area where you had small little shacks with sandbags around them and a little roof. There were definite

Avsec: It varied. When I was working in the docks, that was just doing inspections on aircraft systems. That proved to be monotonous, so I told my sergeant that I was getting tired of doing that; so he assigned me to Da Nang Airbase. I was put on the night shift for a while, and we had to wear flak jackets. The biggest situation occurred when we were pulling a prop on a Caribou. It was around eleven qøenqem"cv"pk i j v=" y g"vqqm"vjg"rtqr"vq"vjg"rtqr"ujqr"end five minutes later three rounds hit exactly where we

Avsec: Yeah. It was May 25th; it was a time when the VC were going for servicemen. They were actually trying to bombard our living area in Phu Cat Airbase. When you hear a round hit, you know exactly what it was. I was laying down on my top bunk, and there was a small desk that was right beside my bed. As soon as I heard the round hit, I just rolled, not thinking about where I was going; so I missed that desk by about a half inch. That was the most memorable thing I remember.

Robards: Do you think that Vietnam vets were discriminated against when they returned to the United States after their tours in Vietnam?

Avsec: K" f k f p ø v " g z r g t k g p e g " c p { " q h " v j c v . " u q " K " e q w n f p ø v " d g " c " i q q f " l w f i g " q h " v j c v " c v " c m n 0

Robards: How has the war most affected your life?

Avsec: Well,