

Roberts Memorial Library, Middle Georgia State College
 Vietnam Veterans Oral History Project
 Interview with Retired Col. Theodore C. Robinson (Ted)

May 2, 2013

Paul Robards: The date is May 2, 2013. My name is Paul Robards, Library Director at Roberts Memorial Library at Middle Georgia State College. I am interviewing Col. Ted Robinson about his Vietnam War experience.

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

Robinson: I was in the Marine Corp Reserve.

Robards: Why did you join the military?

Robinson: I was going to be drafted.

Robards: How old were you when you joined?

Robinson: 21

Robards: Where did you go to receive military training?

Robinson: I went to Quantico. I was with the Marine Corps at Quantico. The Marines normally send Second Lieutenants to the Basic school, but I was an aviation candidate. I was already preapproved to be a pilot, and so they eliminated basic school for all pilots at the time; so I went straight to Pensacola. I spent a little over a year in Pensacola and was designated an able aviator.

Robards: How did the training you received prepare you for your experiences in Vietnam?

Robinson: It was excellent [training], because after I left Pensacola, I went to Camp Pendleton and was in Mine Observation Squadron Five, which became Marine Light Helicopter Squadron 267; and so I got ample training to be able to become a pilot when I got to Vietnam.

, and I think that is how pilots learn. I remember an instructor, I asked him if he would teach me how to

realize, even after watching the Blue Angels, that to do an airline roll, you need to pull the nose up thirty degrees, so I'm over the Gulf of Mexico, and I just did it level, and turned it immediately into a split. When I woke up, I was headed to the Gulf at maximum air speed. Fortunately, it was high enough that I could pull it out, but I felt like I was at Livingston Seagull right before he hit the brick wall.

Robards: Please give us some examples of how discipline was enforced during your training.

Robinson:

Robinson: I was a First Lieutenant. I was a First Lieutenant for the whole time.

Robards: Since you served with a combat unit, please describe your first encounter with the enemy.

Robinson: It was amazing! And a paradox! First of all, as I said, my background was as a musician and a bartender. My first combat ~~rise~~ I was awakened at 3:30 in the morning

Robards: What did you do to relax?

Robinson:

Robinson: I ran into some really great leaders. Truly great leaders; some were Majors and there was one Lieutenant Colonel who was the Squadron Commander right when I got there. Command changed to the next guy, who was a horrible leader, and he was an alcoholic and I probably got promoted from left seat (copilot) to right seat (pilot) because I carried him home three times, not because I could read maps well. I think, and I

And he remains to this day one of my great heroes. He was an incredible leader and taught me things that are my business to this day. I thought that the Wing Commander was really good.

I thought that the senior leadership from Westmoreland down was really inept, and they

Robards: Could you tell me about the most memorable event that happened to you or your unit while you were serving in Vietnam?

Robinson: There's some humor her

Robinson: Lots of it. The Mamas and the Papas. That was the first time I had ever heard The Mamas and the Papas. And then Country Joe and the Fish, and certainly the *Ballad of the Green Beret*

