

Mr. Frank Kawa

Vietnam



**When did you enter the military?**

“I was drafted in the end of 1967”

**How old were you when you entered?**

“I didn’t enter, I was drafted. I was in college when I was drafted and I was 19 at the time.”

**How long were you in the military?**

“Two years”

**What boot camp did you go to?**

“Fort Dix”

**How long was the boot camp?**

“It was 16 weeks”

**Did you go to a second Boot camp? Why?**

“Yes it was for radio training, I was trained as a RTO, a radio telephone operator. I was basically like one of those characters in the movie that carry the radio on the back. I was the second target after the officer in charge.”

**What branch of the military were you in?**

“I was in the Army”

**What equipment did you use on a daily basis?**

“I used a back pack radio. For a while I was a radio teletype operator. I was stationed in Vietnam and they didn’t always use you for what you were trained for.”

**What rank did you achieve?**

“E5”

**What does that stand for?**

“It’s the equivalent of a sergeant, but it’s a specialist.”

**Were you wounded while you were in the military?**

“A few scratches here and there”

**Were you in any famous campaigns or battles?**

“Not any particularly famous ones.”

**Did you receive any awards or medals for your service?**

“No”

**While in military what would an average day consist of?**

“Staying out of the way of mortars, getting enough to drink”

**What was your normal or most common routine while you were at war or battle?**

**“prayer (laughs) a combination of fear and prayer.”**

**What type of firearm did you use while in Vietnam?**

“I used a M14”

**Did you use any heavy weapon artillery?**

“No”

**While at war, what helped you pass the time?**

“No one thing. We did all kinds of crazy things to pass the time. We had crazy senses of humor. It’s a combination of boredom and fear.”

**Did you get any care packages?**

“My parents sent me packages all the time. We didn’t always get everything. A lot of times, by the time it got to South East Asia it was rotten or broken.”

**After you came home from war, did your perspective on anything change?**

“Oh yeah, my whole world was upside down”

**Did you carry anything from the military with you after the war?**

“Health wise?”

**Anything in general, some people took military perspective and kind of kept with it you know stand up for each other etc.**

“When I came back most of us just didn’t mention being in the military it was a very unpopular war and a very unpopular time to be a GI”

**Is there anything you would like to add or say that I missed or is there anything that you would like to talk about?**

“My life did change from my service due to exposure to Agent Orange.”

**How has that affected you?**

“it caused a lot of health problems, cognitive problems, memory problems, health problem, I am still being watched by doctors. They are monitoring my t-cells which is my immune system.”

**I am sorry to hear that you are in poor health.**

“A lot of the guys I came back with passed away by the time they hit thirty so I am lucky to be around. “



This photo was taken in the Replacement center in Long Binh, Vietnam in January, 1969. AT the time he was 20 years old and was assigned to the 1<sup>st</sup> Aviation Brigade, in Dong Tam