

Seymour Levy

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Interviewed by Thomas Webb

Transcribed by Thomas Webb?

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Webb: Welcome to the Pritzker Military Library's Oral History Program, "Stories of Service." My name is Thomas Webb, and today I am here with Seymour Levy, a Vietnam Vet. How are you doing today, sir?

Levy: I am doing well, thank you.

Webb: Today is Memorial Day, actually, 2013. And we are doing a special, a series of interviews, sort of talking about different military experiences, and then what that means for The Memorial Day. So to begin, sir; can you just tell me where you were born?

Levy: I was born right here in Chicago.

Webb: What year?

Levy: Oh, gosh. It was so long ago. It was in November, 1946. Right after the war; my dad was a World War II veteran. When he was discharged from the service, a month later, he married my mother, and I came along quickly after them.

Webb: Okay. And what was it like growing up in Chicago during that period?

Levy: It was a just a different period than it is today, very, very different. It was a much quieter period. It was before the Civil Rights Movement, before the Vietnam War, after the Korean War. Most of my memories... It was a quiet time, the Eisenhower years. It was a quiet period.

Webb: And, were you involved in any kind of high school activities? Or anything like that? Football, maybe?

Levy: I love sports, but I did intermural sports. I did not participate on any high school sports teams; although, later in my twenties, I became an avid jogger.

Webb: Okay, well, if I can do some quick math here, you were in your late teens or early twenties by the time that the Civil Rights really started happening around the city.

Levy: Actually, I was in college. I do have memories after Martin Luther King was assassinated. Coming back from college, driving on the Eisenhower Expressway, figuring I was safe being on the expressway; and the Chicago Police closing down the Eisenhower and I had to get off at Independence Boulevard. And I remember crowds of angry protestors on the street there, and probably driving my car on the west side. I was probably just as scared as any time I was during the fourteen months I served in Vietnam.

Webb: So, you said that your father was a World War II Vet.

Levy: Correct.

Webb: And you were in college as Vietnam was really starting to become quite the hot-bed.

Levy: Correct.

Webb: Growing up, what was your sort of idea of the US military? Did your father talk about it a lot or...?

Levy: He talked about it, somewhat. It was interesting to really hear about it. He was in some very, very, heavy combat—Battle of The Bulge. He had mentioned most of the men in his unit died; and, as a PFC, he was actually the ranking person. They had taken so many casualties, as far as injuries, and ah, he had mentioned. I am not even sure what the rifle was that they were... I am not sure if it was an M1 or what they were using in World War II. But he had mentioned that the fighting was so fierce. A bullet actually hit his rifle. And he had to do without a rifle for a while, just destroyed his rifle.

Webb: And did that influence you at all, as you were thinking about the military? Well, you were in college, so what school did you attend?

Levy: I went to Northern Illinois University in DeKalb, Illinois.

Webb: What did you study?

Levy: Actually, I was a business major.

Webb: So you were in college, and my understanding is that if you were in school, you were sort of deferred from the draft. But you told me before this interview started that you were actually drafted. So, can you talk a little bit?

Levy: I had a deferment for college. I graduated from college. I went into the MBA program, and managed to finish all but three courses in the MBA program. My

family—neither one of my parents finished high school, so we didn't have a lot of money, so I was going full-time in the MBA program. And to pay for the costs of college, I worked as the security guard two days—nights—a week. And I also had a graduate assistance-ship in the management department at Northern, so I was working probably about forty hours a week in addition to carrying twelve hours in graduate school. So, I was kept pretty busy with just a few courses to go. I received my notice for induction. I had received a physical earlier. I was deemed qualified to be drafted, and I did go down and see if I would be able to finish my MBA work, which would probably entail another semester of study. My draft board would not let me finish. And, to be honest about it, I was kind of bitter about it. In that, not only was I drafted before I could finish graduate school, I was drafted in the middle of a semester. I had three weeks to go on a summer session, and it would not let me finish. So, I had to take in complaints that all those courses and the money was lost.

Webb: And how about with the lost money at all?

Levy: No, not at all.

Webb: And, what year was this?

Levy: 1969.

Webb: '69.

Levy: Actually, I went into the army two days after we put a man on the moon.

Webb: Oh wow... So, let's talk a little about what happened once you were drafted. Where did they send you?

Levy: Well, my first day I reported to the Chicago Adoption Station, and first time in my life, I went on an airplane. I flew from Chicago to St. Louis. And then from St. Louis, they took us by bus to Ft. Leonard Wood, Missouri.

Webb: And how long were you there?

Levy: I was in Ft. Leonard Wood approximately nine weeks. Basic training was eight weeks. There was a few days before basic training where we went to reception station, where they give you your army haircut, they give you a ton of shots, and just harass you pretty good.

Webb: Had you had friends at this point that had also been drafted, or were you in kind of a unique situation for your group growing up?

Levy: It's kinda funny you ask that because I had one friend I went to grammar school with him. Went to high school with him. Went to the same college. This was all just a coincidence. We wound up being drafted the same day. We both went to Ft. Leonard Wood for basic training. So, it's kinda nice having a friend. And we were assigned to the same unit—training unit—at Ft. Leonard Wood.

Webb: That does make it a little easier as you are getting acclimated to a new life.

Levy: Although, it is still a little difficult adjustment because college life is so unstructured, and army life: everything was structured as far as when you eat, when you go to the bathroom, when you go out on maneuvers. It was an adjustment that took a couple weeks for me.

Webb: What did you think was the hardest part to adjust to? Any particular...?

Levy: Probably just listening to my Drill Sergeants. I went away to school, and I was fairly independent of my parents, kind of did what I wanted to do, and it took a little while to adjust to them. But I have to tell you, I did respect them because any physical exercises they put us through, they would do 'em with us. So, if we go out on a two mile run, they wouldn't be in a jeep. They would be running with us.

Webb: Yeah, that does make it a big difference. I plan to ask you a question, and you might not remember. But, what did you think the first time you put on your boots? Do you remember having any kind of feelings about it? Or...?

Levy: I didn't like the military uniform the first time I put it on. I was used to clothes that were more comfortable. And I just didn't like all the green. That's what I remember. Not specifically all the boots, but just all the green uniform.

Webb: So, as you are doing your training, did they start to separate you to certain focuses, or what kind of regiment did they put you through with the training?

Levy: A lot of it was physical conditioning, but a lot of it was just...I would almost describe it as mind games. I would almost describe it as mind games; where they did put you under pressure, and I guess at that time, I was young, and I didn't understand why they were doing it. But kinda looking back now, I do understand why they did it. Because if you were going to have problems, emotional issues, better to have it at Ft. Leonard Wood than maybe in combat when other men are counting on you. And I do remember from my experience at Leonard Wood, when we're going through a period of probably greater harassment than at other times, coming back from dinner, from chow, back to our barracks, and we found one of the trainees in the process of hanging himself. He was hanging... He had tied up some rope to a...to, like, an overhead, and he hadn't died or anything.

They got him down. He did get a discharge from the military, but again, that's one of the most vivid memories to this day I have.

Webb: Yeah, that's very shocking, and I'm sure hard to process at that point. And sounds like you are still a little bit... You were there for nine weeks?

Levy: Correct.

Webb: And then what happened?

Levy: And then, I received my assignment. And I figured it might be something in business, having an undergraduate degree, and in business administration, having a year in the MBA program. And I received my assignment as a medical corpsman, and I was really surprised because I always disliked science, and that I would be assigned as a medic. But I was told later that there was a reason to that. A lot of times, college graduates were assigned as medics. So, I went to Ft. Sam, Houston, Texas. And I was there for ten weeks of medical training, but it was after being at Ft. Leonard Wood. Ft. Sam Houston was like a resort.

Webb: They treated you a little bit nicer.

Levy: A lot nicer, and just a lot easier being there.

Webb: May I ask, were your parents still living at this point?

Levy: They both were. Correct.

Webb: And what did your father think about you being drafted and going into the service?

Levy: He was not real happy about it. He had a feeling that he gave four years of his life during World War II. He had very mixed feelings about Vietnam. He thought it was very different than the war he fought in. So, he wasn't real happy about it. And I think his biggest issue was the unfairness of it all, where it wasn't equal as far as who was drafted; and it was mostly people from the lower class, lower-middle class families. The rich people either were able to get them deferments, get doctor's notes, or at the very worst, go into the National Guard or Reserve. So, even though he was a military man, he never saw the purpose in the Vietnam War, and he was very much against the way the draft was handled.

Webb: That's interesting. Did he give you any kind of advice or...?

Levy: He said I should do what I feel's best. I actually...in anticipation of the draft, I—about six months—I just took a vacation in Canada. And I did consider ever option, but I decided that wasn't going to be an option.

Webb: Okay, so you're getting medical training at this point. Did it prepare you? Did you feel like it was...?

Levy: Oh, absolutely not. Ten weeks of training does not prepare you for what happens. What happened in Vietnam...Just so much of the training was just wasted training, where they taught you how to make a bed with an injured soldier. And I just thought the training could have been a lot better. It probably didn't prepare you psychologically, emotionally, or being a medic.

Webb: And then, after your training in Texas, what happened next?

Levy: Well, about a couple days before the training was over, they posted on inter-room, the assignments. And I looked at my assignment, and I saw I was being assigned to a unit in Vietnam. And then, it was kind of like a—just a general unit. And once I got over in Vietnam, I would get specific orders. So, I didn't know really where I was going. I just knew I was going to Vietnam, and before I went over to Vietnam, and after Ft. Sam Houston, they gave me thirty days to spend with my family.

Webb: And what did you do with that time?

Levy: I drank a lot. Just kind of relaxed; spent some time with my friends, spent time with my family, every day was precious. I didn't know if I would be coming back. And I did drink. I didn't drink myself to unconsciousness, but—never a big drinker—but I did drink a little more than I technically drank...

Webb: Yeah, what kind of feelings were you having once you saw the general orders being posted?

Levy: I am not ashamed to say I was kind of afraid. Afraid maybe of what would happen to me. That maybe at twenty-two or twenty-three, my life would be over. And I just felt that I was really just starting life, getting out of school; so, it was just fear –bitterness. You know, why me? Why is this happening to me?

Webb: I'm sure... So, after your thirty days, then they sent you to Vietnam?

Levy: Well, I flew from Chicago to San Francisco—there was a processing station there—and then, from Chicago to Hawaii, refueled in Hawaii, then to Japan, where we refueled again. And then, I flew into the big base, at Long Binh... and after it was Beinh Hoa and that was my... It was kind of interesting flying into

Vietnam as the plane was going down. I was expecting to see fighting, but all you really could see, you'd see farmers, and farm animals, and moms, and water. And in a way, it did look any different than in any other country. I was kind of surprised.

Webb: Yeah, That is interesting. What was...Did you have any interaction then with some of the locals that you could see as you were flying in? Or did they keep you pretty separated?

Levy: Not really, 'cause again, we were on Bein Hoa is big army base. I didn't stay long in Bein Hoa. That's where we flew in the base right next to Bein Hoa was Long Binh, and which was I believe the biggest base in Vietnam. And I was at this this center where they gave you your assignments, where you were going to go. And in a way, I kind of lucked out, because being a medic, I could have wound up in the infantry, and thought I was really ill prepared to be really right in battle and taking care of serious injuries in battle. I wound up with a M.A.S.H., which was a Mobile Army Surgical Hospital. I was assigned to the 45th surgical hospital out of Tay Ninh which was three miles from the Cambodian border.

Webb: Wow.

Levy: And it was kind of an interesting trip going from Long Binh where I was initially, to my unit in Tay Ninh. I went with two twenty-year-olds: chopper pilots, warrant officers. They just took me, and it was kind of an interesting experience. Where—the helicopter we went on was open, so my feet actually dangled out of the helicopter, but I was strapped in with the seat belt. And I really wasn't nervous, heights never really bothered me. And I knew the higher we were up, the safer we were. And these warrant officers were kinda immature, and they decided on the way from Long Binh to Tay Ninh, they were going to have some fun. So they actually kinda swooped down on a farmland, and they started dropping smoke grenades and tear gas on some of the animals. And they could see I was terrified because they were going up and down and up and down. That was kind of nerve-racking.

Webb: Yeah.

Levy: Like I said, very immature. They probably weren't more than about twenty years old. I don't know if they were enjoying more doing what they were doing to the animals, or the absolute fear on my face.

Webb: Yeah, well, for somebody that had just been on their first airplane ride not to long before...

Levy: ...This was my first helicopter ride.

Webb: That's quite the experience. So, once you landed then, not far from the [Cambodian] border, what happened next?

Levy: Well, when I came into Tay Ninh Base Camp. I came to the 45th Surgical Hospital. And they said, "Welcome to Rocket City!" And I said, "Rocket City?" This is Tay Ninh, and I said, "Why did you say Rocket City?" They said, "You'll find out soon enough." And the first night that I was in Tay Ninh, it was a base camp, however, we experienced mortar fire, and also we were hit with 240 millimeter rockets, were coming into the camp. We didn't have anybody injured or no one was killed that night. However, it was kinda scary. They were close enough when they were hitting, you could hear like we were little hooches, you could hear the dirt hitting upon the hooch from the rockets and mortars. And maybe the attack lasted for a half hour, but it seemed like an eternity.

Webb: Yeah. We had another medic in a while ago, and he talked about the reinforced structures, about some of the buildings that they were working in. What kind of facilities did you find at this base?

Levy: They definitely weren't reinforced. They were bubbles that were inflated. And very, very flimsy. But, again, maybe he was somewhere else. The whole idea of a Mobile Army Surgical Hospital is: you're not going to have fixed structures because you're going to pull up and maybe go somewhere else, where the need is the greatest. So, these were not well enforced structures.

Webb: Okay. So, what were your feelings then the first couple of days, other than being scared by all of the rockets? Did adrenaline take over at any point? Or...?

Levy: Yeah, initially, the adrenaline for the first few days, [but] as time went on, I became more comfortable and more relaxed. When I just came there, I could not tell the difference between our outgoing fire and incoming fire, so I would get nervous anytime I heard the fire. But then, after a while, one was able to distinguish between what was friendly fire, which they called, and unfriendly fire.

Webb: Okay, so can you describe the sort of the day to day operations of what you were involved in?

Levy: I wound up working for the 1st Sergeant in the headquarters; however, if there were... we gave support. Really, it was two primary units, the 1st Air Cav, and the 25th Infantry. And especially, the 1st Air Cav, we were always getting a lot of casualties from them. And regardless of what you did, when casualties were coming in, sometimes a medic or two medics could make the difference between life and death. So, what we would do is: a lot of times we would line up by the

helicopter pad, and we would be ready with litters to get the wounded into pre-op. And being—we were a MASH unit, a surgical hospital; we were getting 'em right out of combat, as opposed to evacuation hospitals, where they're all cleaned up. And they're not coming out of combat directly, but maybe our hospital or another surgical hospital, so it was kinda difficult, kinda seeing these guys. Seeing a... Just...just really, really difficult. One memory that I have that'll always be with me is, the first time I picked up the litter and there was somebody who was already dead, was killed in combat. And to this day, I remember his name. His name was Jergenson, and I remember it so well. I remember his face. To this day, clearly, because I looked at him, and he looked like the All American Boy: blonde hair, long—you know—long, blonde hair. Just out of combat. He didn't even look—like he was just sleeping, but he was dead, and looked like about twenty years old. Looked like maybe he should be at the sophomore in college, having a few beers with his friends, and it was really... It was really, really tough dealing with that. And I found really to cope, it maybe sounds callous, but I try not to take it personally. I try to kinda isolate myself just for my mental well-being, and that kinda helped deal with it. Not thinking a lot about it.

Webb: Did they give you... Let me ask it this way: what were you able to do, sort of on the down-time-moments to sort of distract yourself from...

Levy: We had a small club for the enlisted men, and everybody had their own ways of escaping. I would have a few beers in the evening, or if there—you could get casualties at any time, so obviously, you couldn't get too intoxicated. And then, also I played a lot of basketball. We had some very good basketball players, and that was a...that was kind of a distraction from what we were going through. We'd have a nightly movie that would be sent us, so that as another distraction. We had in our unit—we had a big drug problem; where, I never did drugs in Vietnam. But, probably, if I had asked them, maybe half our men were doing some type of drugs. Unfortunately, probably a lot of them were shooting heroin. Which is sad.

Webb: Yeah, but my understanding is... readily available there.

Levy: Readily available, and I really fault the army, in that I just I don't feel they adequately addressed the drug problem. All the men were there. Nor did the army or veteran's administration do anything. Afterwards—just going real fast forward for one second on the drug issue—when I left the army, my physical—I don't even want to think was five minutes. And I don't even think I was asked about drugs or anything like that.

Webb: That's too bad. Sort of going along those lines then, did the leadership there help you sort of deal with some of the things you were seeing in any kind of way? Or were they busy trying—dealing with it themselves?

Levy: Well, actually we had a... If you say leadership, you're talking about officers, but really we had 1st Sergeant, who was great. And he kind of, you know, he kind of helped out a lot as far as my making the adjustment from life in the United States to life over in Vietnam as a man in the army. He helped the officers, a lot of them were like me—they were drafted. Several of our officers were doctors who were drafted right out of, right after they finished medical school, but I had a lot in common with them. I have positive memories, and met a lot of nice people—both officers and enlisted men. And one positive is everybody was fairly close and are young. You have that common bond, unlike, say, in the United States where, even today, we have distinctions as far as: class, race, religion. We didn't have those distinctions there. We were all kinda looking out for each other, so that was a positive.

Webb: Yeah, very dependent on each other, I'm sure.

Levy: Very much so.

Webb: Were you granted any leave while you were overseas?

Levy: That was kinda the end of my tour. I went to Bangkok, and then I had another trip scheduled for Sydney, Australia. And then, at the last minute, I was bumped because a Colonel wanted to go to Sydney, and I wound up going to Bangkok a second time.

Webb: Okay.

Levy: But that was after about eleven months in country, and after about thirteen months in country.

Webb: Did you have... I don't want to spend too much time on the sort of grizzly nature of it, so I am going to sort of leave that for today, I think. Unless, there is something you really want to talk about, an experience that stands out to you. Other than the one that you've already described?

Levy: There were two. One was a very close friend, who wasn't even with me in Vietnam. But, I went through Ft. Sam Houston with him, Medical Corp Training. And we to...we went different ways in Vietnam; I wasn't even sure where he wound up. And then, one day about six months into my tour, we had an injured person come in. And we just started talking, and he had mentioned his medic, and I said, "Oh yeah, I know Roger. In fact, I hung out with him before we both

went over to Vietnam." And, he said, "I hate to tell you this, but Roger was killed in action." And I refused to believe that... I couldn't... I couldn't believe it 'cause, like, Roger was only twenty years old. And I just thought this guy was probably an idiot, he was just playing mind games with me. So, I did go to the Vietnam wall when I...when I returned, and I looked it up, and sure enough, Roger's name was on the wall, and he died at twenty years old. And, the other experience I want to share because I think people should know about this is that the most brutal thing I experienced in my whole fourteen months there. It was when we got into the hospital—what was remaining of what we got into the hospital. There was a helicopter that was under really, really heavy fire, and it was really... I guess it was dark and it was foggy. They had to get down or they all would have been killed. The only problem was the helicopter pilots were rushing, 'cause normally it takes a while to land a helicopter. It's not real smooth; you just have to get it, so... And what happened was that he actually, like, landed in some tress that were real high up. So, the copter was kinda slamming, so all the men jumped off on one side. But it was dark, it was foggy. They didn't know they were jumping into the helicopter blades. So, what they brought back to us were little pieces of what was left of these two helicopter pilots, and the couple other men that were on the plane. And I did see that. And the reason I tell this—and again these were young men—is, like, it's unfortunate. It's very easy to say we should go to war in Afghanistan, we should go to war in Iran, we should go here, there. The people who say that, I think are just unfortunate that so many politicians now, never served in the military, and they don't consider the consequences of the action. I feel like World War II was necessary. And I feel if we are threatened, we defiantly have to go to war. But as far as my own personal feelings, based on what I saw in Vietnam, it's very easy to send somebody else's brother, sons, grandsons off to war. But are you willing to sacrifice your family for war? So, I think it's just a very, very important decision that needs to be made, and we need to consider all the consequences of war. And again, it's like somebody who's in a wheel chair; they could describe to me what it's like, but if I haven't been in their position...I just don't know what it's like. And kinda being in combat, and being in Vietnam, I could describe for... I could talk for twenty-four hours about it, but you still don't know what it's like unless you've been there.

Webb: Yeah, absolutely. You've described a couple of experiences with your fellow service members. Did you have any contact with the enemy that you were fighting? Especially as a hospital...I know that occasionally enemy combatants would be brought into hospitals and treated.

Levy: We had some, but the enemy... We had some, but the enemy comes in, and they were treated; I would say our hospital treated them as well as we treated the American soldiers, which is a lot more than what I can say for how the enemy treated our soldiers. So, they were treated well, but in all candor from what I've

seen as far as the south Vietnamese soldiers, they weren't as kind to the North Vietnamese and the VC. I did see a North Vietnamese soldier come in, and after we were done, a South Vietnamese soldier took him. And then, the next thing I saw, the South Vietnam soldier had a finger on a string, and I'm sure he...the North Vietnamese soldier that we treated. I'm sure he cut off one of his fingers as a joke.

Webb: You've said a couple of times that you were there for fourteen months?

Levy: Correct.

Webb: Did you have any idea that that's how long you were going to be staying when you were first drafted?

Levy: The regular tours were twelve months. I extended for an additional two months because I wanted to get out of the military early. If I would have served just a one year tour, I would have had seven months to go in the army, and I would had it done. I would had to have gone back, and I would have to do stateside duty, and I don't want that.

Webb: Okay. So, what were your feelings then as you were headed home? What kind of experiences did you have?

Levy: Well, I could stay there... you know, was positive and negative. My feelings were mixed because I don't wanna to get the idea that the Vietnam and the military was a total waste of time. It wasn't! I felt I matured quite a bit. It gave me a greater appreciation. And this may sound corny, but it's really from the heart. It gave me a greater appreciation of what country we live in, and how great the United States is, and how blessed I was not to be born in a country like Vietnam or Cambodia. Because, I was always—kinda growing up—in a way, I kinda felt sorry for myself 'cause my parents just...really a working class family. We never had a lot of money, and it's gee, like, "Why couldn't I been born into a rich family?" And I remember the projects in Chicago, and the poverty at the projects did not compare to the poverty I saw in Vietnam. We used to pay Vietnamese civilians a dollar for twelve hours labor, and they used to fight for those jobs. So, in a way, that was a positive that I took out of my experience, just an appreciation of being born an American. And growing up in this country, I kinda forgot about the economics status of my family. And it also, it gave me a greater value just of life in general, and how precious life is. Just dealing with death, and it's not only the death, just the injuries and just the courage I saw where American soldiers would come into our hospital with arms blown off, legs blown off, and just the absolute courage. It was just so inspiring. I mean, I remember in college, if I had a headache, you know, and that was a bad headache, a migraine or something, that was a crises. But to see the absolute courage, it was just

inspiring. So, I just don't want to give the idea... I was bitter that I was pulled out of graduate school. I certainly—economically, I could have done better than the 90 dollars to 250 dollars I earned in the military. I started at ninety, and when I reached Spec. Five with combat pay and overseas pay, I made 250. Economically, it was a loss, but for the reasons I stated to you, I think I was a better person coming home. And to this day, I think I'm better able to deal with stressful situations than most people. Just because of the Vietnam experience, where people interpret something as stressful, it's not really stressful; it's not really stressful for me. People will come—and how low keyed and relaxed I seem. And I think it has to do with Vietnam, having gone through life and death situations.

Webb: So, once you're back, were you able to complete your schooling?

Levy: It's funny. I went back to Northern that summer, and it wasn't the same. The people I knew. It was really two years already; they were gone. And I tried to study, and I finished the summer session, but it was really, really difficult. I figured, "Well, I could have gone back in the fall." And I only needed I think two more courses for the MBA. But I wasn't ready to go back to school, even part time. So, I decided I would look for work, and I started working, and I figured, "Well, if I feel comfortable, and want to go back to school, and I'll go back to school." Never did.

Webb: Hmm... I think you've said that you've got a couple of sons?

Levy: Correct.

Webb: Did they ever have any inclination to join the military? Did you sort of keep that outside of your home life? Or...?

Levy: No, I've been pretty vocal about that. I said, "Grandpa fought in World War II. Dad fought in the Vietnam War." And I said, "What's going on now, as far as Afghanistan and Iraq..." I really can't say vocally the language I used to describe my feelings that... I don't think either one had an inclination to go into the military. But, I was pretty vocal at a young age for them, as far as my feelings about their going in.

Webb: Okay. Well, like I said at the beginning of this interview, it is Memorial Day. Do you have something that you do special on this day to sort of remember, or is it just a personal thing that you keep with you?

Levy: Most Memorial Days I just maybe... It's kind of like...I don't go to parades, generally. I maybe think a little about Roger, my friend who died. I think about the people I served with who all made sacrifices, just as I did in Vietnam. I think of my dad, and what he did during World War II. And, again, he described to me

in great detail 'cause I did ask a lot of questions of him, and just... I'm just so grateful for his generation, what they did. I can't even put into words, you know, what they did. But very, very different situations where I am very supportive of what the men did and World War II. And, you know, I have support for the other men who went to Vietnam. I guess, I just...I'm very negative about our politicians who sent us; for what purpose? We lost 59,000 men in battle, and what did we accomplish? The country fell to the communist anyway. And that's why I'm so much against what we're doing in Afghanistan. It's a much smaller scale, but it doesn't make it any better. There's still men dying there, and I am convinced when we leave Afghanistan, it's just going to be...there's always been violence there. And to think that we're going to be democracy there, it's a joke... To have democracy, you need educated people. You need stable government. You need—the government is corrupt on both sides. To me, both Iraq, and now Afghanistan, just to total waste of resources and American lives. The money would be better served by helping the older disabled veterans, or helping any veterans. Just walk the streets of Chicago and you will see the veterans just out on the street. Just the homeless people; those with alcohol problems, drug problems. Or, my God, take the resources that we're spending on the war in Afghanistan and put those men working for the veterans' administration processing that nine-month back log of claims. To me, that's sinful! It's just... Our priorities are in the wrong place. You know we're supposedly making life free for the Afghan people. You know, they don't care about that. They just care about the basic necessities: food... But, you know, I think the money would be better spent just on our veterans in this country. And, you know, I didn't mean to go off on a political rant, but I have strong feelings that this country just does not do enough for its veterans or appreciate its veterans.

Webb: I think that a lot of people share those opinions, so I am glad you expressed 'em. I think that's a great place to conclude. So, would thank you for your service, and also thank you for this interview.

Levy: Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak. I appreciate it.