

Grossman, Robert US Army

[00:00:13.12] MARC HENDERSON: So when were you born?

[00:00:14.86] ROBERT GROSSMAN: 1/19/51.

[00:00:16.63] MARC HENDERSON: And who were your family members?

[00:00:21.31] ROBERT GROSSMAN: They were, well, my mom and dad and four brothers and two sisters.

[00:00:26.09] MARC HENDERSON: Where did you grow up? What do you consider your hometown?

[00:00:28.73] ROBERT GROSSMAN: Bosworth, Missouri. I grew up on a farm-- without running water, either.

[00:00:34.16] [CHUCKLES]

[00:00:35.18] That was an interesting life. Well, we were poor. We were poor farmers. There was seven kids in the family.

[00:00:43.94] We milked cows. We hunted, fished, did whatever. That's what we've done.

[00:00:51.28] And then the economics changed. We couldn't do that. We couldn't make a living. Well, we could make subsistence living farming, but Dad went to work on the railroad. And then it became a beef, cattle, grow crop operation.

[00:01:10.00] We got rid of the milk cows and the hogs, and that's what happened. And when I was 16, we got running water. That's magic stuff, that.

[00:01:20.16] [LAUGHS]

[00:01:21.15] You didn't have to run out to the well and get it and run back.

[00:01:29.19] MARC HENDERSON: How old were you when you began your service? And what year was it?

[00:01:33.04] ROBERT GROSSMAN: 1969, and I was 18 years old.

[00:01:37.10] MARC HENDERSON: So what was your sense of the Vietnam War before you entered the military? It was past its height in '69.

[00:01:45.54] ROBERT GROSSMAN: We had-- Gary Cooper died there. Kenny Calvert was-- we had several people go and come back. Cooper died in with the 173rd Airborne in '67 I think it was.

[00:02:02.22] I forget the name of that battle he was on. But it was a famous battle that all those airborne guys died in. The Marine Corps bombed the wrong ridge, and we think the Marine Corps killed him, but we don't know for sure. Calvert was in the 173rd shortly thereafter him.

[00:02:19.14] MARC HENDERSON: And those were guys from your hometown?

[00:02:20.94] ROBERT GROSSMAN: Yeah, they were all from my hometown. Some guys went into the Navy. All my buddies that went into the Marine Corps, not a damn one of them served in combat arms, though they all say, we're riflemen first. They were bulldozer operators, MPs, clerks, et cetera. Not one picked up a rifle and shot it--

[00:02:41.94] [LAUGHS]

[00:02:43.02] --other than training. So yeah, the feeling was it was your patriotic duty to go to war with-- we were a rural Missouri county with about 10,000 people in it. And everybody-- for the most part, everybody went into the military. The smarter ones, I guess, tried to go into the universities. But I didn't have enough money to do that, so I went to the military.

[00:03:10.55] MARC HENDERSON: What was it like in your hometown when news spread that someone local had been killed in Vietnam?

[00:03:16.31] ROBERT GROSSMAN: Well, it jerked the heart out of them. Gary was a very well-liked guy. And they announced it in school.

[00:03:31.67] MARC HENDERSON: When you entered the military, were you an officer or enlisted? You enlisted?

[00:03:36.35] ROBERT GROSSMAN: Mom, God, apple pie and all the rest of it. But when I enlisted, I took this test. And these guys come up to me and they said-- and I deliberately-- when they ask you all these questions, I deliberately put the outdoor stuff in, and I answered all the rest of them.

[00:03:51.47] So I got called for an interview, and they asked me, do you want to go to West Point. And I thought about that a moment. And I said, if I do that, the Vietnam War is going to be over with, because that's a 10-year commitment. Four years of it's going to be at school. And by that time, this war is over with. So I decided no.

[00:04:10.03] Well, that's not true. My high school teacher got a hold of me when she heard that they interviewed-- because my buddy I went with, Thurow-- Bruce Thurow I went into the Army with, he sent a letter back home telling--

[00:04:22.66] And I've never forgiven him for that. He's dead now. He said, Bob's going to West Point.

[00:04:27.82] I didn't tell anybody. And so my high school teacher got a hold of me, said you sign up for West Point. She wrote me a letter, so I did.

[00:04:37.85] And then I get down into AIT. And I got this-- I can't remember that first sergeant's name. And he said the war is going to be over with here shortly.

[00:04:51.92] And I thought, you know, I'm going to be in school. And I'm going to miss out. So I put a halt to West Point. Now, in hindsight, that's probably the dumbest damn thing I'd ever done.

[00:05:02.76] [LAUGHS]

[00:05:05.74] But at the time, when you're 18 and dumb, you don't know. And that's how I ended up with three years, one month, 28 days on my enlistment record, because when I got out of AIT-- out of basic training, I went to AIT. And that's November, I was in AIT, and I told them to halt it. So they started my re-enlistment then.

[00:05:29.55] MARC HENDERSON: So it was longer than you enlisted for?

[00:05:32.16] ROBERT GROSSMAN: Oh, yeah, Yeah. We went in on the draft. Then they said, go to West Point. Elizabeth Eya was my English teacher who convinced me to go to West Point.

[00:05:43.89] And the first sergeant-- and I wished I could remember his name. But anyway, he was the one who came up to me and said, the war is going to be over with. And so I said, well, I better get in it while I can.

[00:05:57.80] MARC HENDERSON: You were eager to go?

[00:05:59.36] ROBERT GROSSMAN: Eager to go, dumb. Let's rephrase that-- dumb. At that time, I thought I was being real clever and real brave.

[00:06:08.30] No. But anyway, it is what it is. And I'd do it again. I'm a shooter that's what I am.

[00:06:16.43] MARC HENDERSON: So what were your impressions of the draft before you entered the military?

[00:06:20.14] ROBERT GROSSMAN: Mark, I'm one of those guys who think that you serve your country. My country right or wrong, I don't care. You serve your country.

[00:06:28.97] And those guys who went to Canada and got a deferment and claimed conscientious objector, they're what's part of wrong with this country today. The Bill Clintons, the Bill Ayers, the George Bushes, those guys all got deferments. They are pieces of crap in my book. They don't count. And unfortunately, even the John Kerrys, who did go and made a mess of it, actually, his guys didn't even back him for the president.

[00:07:06.35] ROBERT GROSSMAN: Fort Leonard Wood-- we lived in World War II barracks, and they were rickety. And the guys on the second floor, if they jumped off their top bunk, the building shook. So that's how old those buildings were.

[00:07:22.16] MARC HENDERSON: Could you tell us what your MOS was and--

[00:07:24.67] ROBERT GROSSMAN: 11 Bravo.

[00:07:25.81] MARC HENDERSON: And did you get to choose that?

[00:07:28.28] ROBERT GROSSMAN: OK, well, I did the test. They had these questions like, do you like the outdoors? Do you like to go on walks? Do you like to go for hikes? Do you enjoy the fall colors?

[00:07:37.10] I mean, a simpleton could have figured that out. So I said, I'm going to go into the infantry. I'm going to like all this.

[00:07:44.72] And I will tell you, before that, I went to be an electronics engineer. So I took a course on electronics, and I was well on my way to being an electronics guy. And I thought, no, I'm going to shoot some people, as crazy as that may sound. And that's how I chose it.

[00:08:04.91] The tests were-- how do I say? There was a section of it about the outdoors, what you like and what you didn't like and all the rest of it. And that's how I answered it.

[00:08:16.40] MARC HENDERSON: So the Army chose 11 Bravo infantry based on your answers--

[00:08:21.13] ROBERT GROSSMAN: Yes, that's how they did it.

[00:08:22.61] MARC HENDERSON: Did you receive any specialized training for that?

[00:08:25.16] ROBERT GROSSMAN: They threw us in the AIT in Fort Polk, and that was your training. That's another story.

[00:08:33.85] MARC HENDERSON: Let's hear it. Tell us about tell us about AIT.

[00:08:36.45] ROBERT GROSSMAN: We were out at Pea Ridge. And I want to tell you something about Louisiana in the wintertime. It's cold, and it's miserably cold. And the humidity in the air, regardless of how you bundle up, just soaks you.

[00:08:56.01] So anyway, one day we're out walking through Pea Ridge-- that was pine forest. And there's this stream about like this. You could jump across it.

[00:09:05.82] So everybody was jumping across it except one guy. And he decided he's going to step in it. He damn near drowned before we got him out of it.

[00:09:13.86] [LAUGHS]

[00:09:15.67] He went in. It was deep. It was hole is what it was. He stepped in it. And we heard this splash. They had to call a truck to take him back.

[00:09:25.03] I didn't realize this at the time, but at 55 degrees and below, and you get wet, you're going to die of hypothermia, regardless of what you got on. Unless you get stripped naked and dried off and put on dry clothes, you're going to die. And they brought a truck in and trucked him out, sent him back to the barracks to warm him up. Don't step in those damn streams.

[00:09:49.89] [LAUGHS]

[00:09:51.74] Damn that was cold.

[00:09:55.34] MARC HENDERSON: Any other stories about AIT?

[00:09:57.59] ROBERT GROSSMAN: Oh, yeah, that's where I learned to do the dying bug. Get on your back and wave your arms and legs up. If you displease them-- the cadre-- they get you on your back. You have to raise your legs and arms up and go, ah, I'm a dying bug, please step on me. Or if you did something else stupid, they'd have get your rifle and put it above your head, and run around saying, I am a shit bird, someone shoot me.

[00:10:23.54] [LAUGHS]

[00:10:26.00] I never had to do that. I was a good trooper.

[00:10:28.40] [CHUCKLES]

[00:10:29.54] And one time, a guy lit up a cigarette without permission. And I don't know if you know what a Big Red One bunker is, but it's a firing port with 45 degree angle firing, covered with grenades up in it and firing steps. So he had to dig one. That was the punishment. And it takes four or five hours to do that.

[00:10:55.89] So when he got it done, got it covered and everything, the drill sergeant inspected it. And he said, yeah, that's a good one. And the drill sergeant was smoking a cigarette.

[00:11:04.85] And he put it in the grenade some. And he said, fill it in. He did. It took about an hour to fill it in.

[00:11:13.52] And the drill sergeant said, I forgot something. I didn't put that cigarette out. Dig it up.

[00:11:19.29] [LAUGHS]

[00:11:20.65] Let's see if it's out. Oh yeah, that's what they did. That was funny. Was it valuable? Yeah, we all learned how to dig a Big Red One bunker by watching this guy.

[00:11:30.13] [CHUCKLES]

[00:11:30.98] It was hazing is what it was. He never lit up another cigarette. In fact, I think he quit.

[00:11:41.37] MARC HENDERSON: How many tours did you do in Vietnam.

[00:11:43.36] ROBERT GROSSMAN: Just one. One was enough.

[00:11:44.83] MARC HENDERSON: And how old were you when you first arrived? And what year was it?

[00:11:48.56] ROBERT GROSSMAN: 18, and it was 1970. I just turned 19, excuse me.

[00:11:55.43] MARC HENDERSON: How did you end up in the cavalry?

[00:11:59.51] ROBERT GROSSMAN: Dennis Manning, a high school friend of mine. I flew up out of Bien Hoa to Phu Bai. I took a truck up to Evans I think is the way it was.

[00:12:10.38] And I was out on the bunker line doing make-work that the Army always has you do. And I heard this Jeep drive by, and the wheels slide. And he started backing up, Manning started hollering at me. "Grossman, Grossman, is that's you?"

[00:12:24.73] And then we got to talking. And he said, what MOS are you. And I said, 11 Bravo. And he said, oh shit. He said, that's not a good one.

[00:12:31.67] He said, let me see what I can do. I'll get you into a good outfit. He comes back a day or so later-- well, he was buddies with the company clerk is what it was. And he came back a day or two later. He said, I couldn't get you into a good outfit. But I got you into the cavalry. He said, they spend a lot of time on the base.

[00:12:50.23] I haven't seen him since to thank him for all those combat assaults I'd done with the cavalry. I had two wounds, one Purple Heart. Yeah, I haven't thanked him for that yet. If I find him, I will.

[00:13:06.56] MARC HENDERSON: What were your first impressions when you first arrived in Vietnam?

[00:13:11.73] ROBERT GROSSMAN: Well, when I got on the bus at Bien Hoa, I remembered seeing the wire over the windows to keep the grenades out. And I thought, this is not a real good sign. And then I went to Screamin' Eagle replacement training, and I learned how to rappel.

[00:13:33.21] And they brought this Kit Carson guy, the guy who defected. He had to show us-- a sapper, how they got through the wire. I was impressed with that. That guy was fit. He could crawl through places I would have thought you could never have got through.

[00:13:51.85] And then I went to the 17th Cav after Manning got me an assignment with them. And I thought, what the hell is this? And we lived in hooches.

[00:14:07.80] And I got there February so the rainy season was just ending. And now Operation TEMPO started picking up. It was interesting.

[00:14:23.15] The garbage truck ran through our hooch, so I had to live in a tent out back for a while. The brakes failed on it. That was another interesting experience.

[00:14:33.62] I was looking out the door, and this truck backed up. He was on a hill, and he backed up to the mess hall picking up the garbage. And it kept creeping forward, it kept creeping forward. And finally, the Vietnamese driver said, run, run, run.

[00:14:52.70] [CHUCKLES]

[00:14:53.57] And he ran into-- so I started running out the door and telling everybody to come with me, the truck's coming. And the driver jumped out, and he crashed it. He crashed into our hooch and knocked her down.

[00:15:07.34] It was an interesting experience. And so I ended up living in a tent out the back. And everybody else, I don't know where they went. They went elsewhere.

[00:15:16.70] MARC HENDERSON: And what base was this?

[00:15:18.03] ROBERT GROSSMAN: That was at Eagle.

[00:15:20.71] MARC HENDERSON: How long had you lived in the hooch before that happened?

[00:15:25.80] ROBERT GROSSMAN: Two weeks, two-and-a-half an weeks maybe. ROBERT GROSSMAN: Well, when I was living in-- two weeks was in a hooch. Then I was out back in a tent-- in a makeshift tent I would add, a lean-to.

[00:15:47.11] And then eventually, the Charlie Troop moved to Evans. And we got the flyboys' hooches across the ravine. And that was hog heaven. They actually had drawers and cabinets you could hang stuff up in.

[00:16:08.24] [CHUCKLES]

[00:16:09.56] That Army cot was the same. But yeah, they actually had benches and stuff that you could store stuff, because what we were living in, the hooch we had was just throw your stuff on the floor under the bed, and that was it. That's what you did. So yeah, it was much nicer - a much nicer place. Even the mess hall was nicer. See, there's a class distinction between flyboys and grunts. And I was a grunt.

[00:16:40.75] MARC HENDERSON: And what were the differences in the mess hall?

[00:16:44.20] ROBERT GROSSMAN: It was better. I want to say it's better. Better arranged is what it was. We shared a mess hall with the 75th Infantry Rangers. And there was always tension, and it was packed all the time.

[00:16:57.27] And when they moved us into Charlie Troop, it wasn't so much-- you could actually spread out. There was room for everybody. When you got two companies trying to feed off one mess hall and one small-- probably the size of this room and that next room mess hall, about 200, 300 people trying to go through that, it's always crowded. Eat up, get out, and move on. That was just a mess.

[00:17:26.97] MARC HENDERSON: And then there was more room.

[00:17:28.35] ROBERT GROSSMAN: Yeah, there was more room-- more room across the ravine in Charlie Troop's area. Now, Charlie Troop didn't want to go, because they knew what they was going to get at Evans, which was a pile of crap. And that's what they got, was a pile of crap. Yeah.

[00:17:44.15] MARC HENDERSON: What were the responsibilities that consumed most of your time?

[00:17:48.49] ROBERT GROSSMAN: Well, we used to work down in the hangar on our Jeeps or help the mechanics headquarters platoon. Mostly, we'd sit around and waited on a call to go someplace.

[00:18:08.31] MARC HENDERSON: What were your initial duties.

[00:18:10.45] ROBERT GROSSMAN: I started out carrying the Pig, the machine gun. And I finally realized that that's a bullet magnet. See, I was officer material. I woke up to that fact. Machine gun equals bullet magnet. Bad news.

[00:18:27.63] [LAUGHS]

[00:18:28.60] You get away from it. That's like having a radio. It's the same thing. So I got away from being a bullet magnet, and I walked point for a while. That wasn't especially bright, either.

[00:18:41.46] [CHUCKLES]

[00:18:42.91] So I'm supposed to be smart, West Point material? Not really.

[00:18:48.06] [LAUGHS]

[00:18:49.19] God. So yeah, and then I would become the point squad leader after a while.

[00:18:55.08] MARC HENDERSON: What were the responsibilities for a squad leader?

[00:18:57.35] ROBERT GROSSMAN: A squad leader, I looked after 12 guys. Made sure they were outfitted. Made sure that they had the right materiel, the right ammo load out, the mission-critical stuff that we needed to have. Basically, I made sure that they were kept in line, actually, and didn't get sunburned, took their malaria pills-- hydroxychloroquine.

[00:19:23.19] Here's what gets me. Those idiots say hydroxychloroquine can kill you? Well, if that's the case, there ought to be 3 million dead Vietnam veterans because they took it.

[00:19:31.82] If you didn't take that hydroxychloroquine pill every week and you got malaria, count on being light in the paycheck and an Article 15 waiting on you. That's what happened. Everybody on Trump saying he doesn't know what he's talking about, hydroxychloroquine, it would kill you? I watched those CNN talking heads. So they know absolutely nothing. It's been around since 1954.

[00:20:05.89] ROBERT GROSSMAN: Well, one of my buddies won't talk to me because he voted for Joe Biden today. And I told him what was going to happen. And he said, you probably ought not be talking to me for a while, Bob. So other than that, I think the world of him.

[00:20:18.97] [CHUCKLES]

[00:20:20.11] But yeah, I-- his name's D. Morris. He's still my buddy, even though he's voted for Biden. And I told him what was going to happen.

[00:20:31.21] We're going to have inflation. We're going to have mass-- they're going to try for amnesty. They're going to let mass illegal alien immigration into here. They're going to come across the border.

[00:20:42.10] And I said, your taxes are going to increase. And the food prices and gasoline are going to go up because these guys are going to shovel all that off. What's happened? I read this morning food is up 5%. Gasoline's up \$1 an hour.

[00:20:58.22] In the first four months of this year, we got 400,000 or 500,000 illegal aliens come across the border. And it's heartbreaking when that happens. They found five girls the other day out in the middle of the desert.

[00:21:10.38] One of them they thought was dead. And they finally managed to get her rehydrated and alive. They just left them, all of this because of Joe Biden's policy which--

[00:21:20.76] MARC HENDERSON: Let's get back to your friendships.

[00:21:22.23] ROBERT GROSSMAN: OK, my friendships. I formed up with D. Morris We ran around in-- D. Morris, Gamertsfelder-- D. Gamertsfelder is going to be here too, Glenn Davis, Doc Funk.

[00:21:36.58] Glenn was a medic also. Diego Garcia. Cruse got killed. We all ran around in a circle. So the platoon I was in, 3d Platoon, always was isolated from the other two.

[00:21:50.86] The 1st and 2nd Platoon always intermingled. And for some reason, 3rd Platoon always got set off to the side. And I never understood why that was. Even when we were across the ravine in the old place, it was 3rd Platoon on one side of the compound, and 1st and 2nd was across the compound.

[00:22:08.80] And the mess hall was in the center, and the Rangers were on the other side. And when we moved across the ravine to Charlie Troop, 3rd Platoon was up here on the side of the hill. 1st and 2nd Platoon was right close to the hangar. And we never really intermingled with the other platoons, so it was always inside that platoon where our friendships laid. Rarely did we have friends-- or rarely did I have friends outside that platoon.

[00:22:35.09] MARC HENDERSON: Did you form friendships with men from different racial or social backgrounds.

[00:22:41.56] ROBERT GROSSMAN: Yeah, we did. Johnson was one. He was a good guy. He ended up staying in the Army, and he ended up a command sergeant major.

[00:22:51.32] Then there's Boo Boo Hudson. That sounds racial. I'll tell you a story about Boo Boo. His name is Clarence Hudson. He's a black guy, a nice guy, an RTO.

[00:23:03.35] He was the company barber. So I had to get a haircut one day. And so I went Clarence. And I didn't call him Boo Boo because I thought that was a racial stereotype, and I'm not into that crap.

[00:23:21.73] So I go get my hair cut and I walked back into the hooch. And Charlie Brown, he looks up and he says, you've been to see Boo Boo, haven't you? I said, yeah. How'd you know?

[00:23:31.90] He said, you got a haircut, right? Yeah, yeah. How'd you know? He said, did Boo Boo say that this is a small boo boo, nobody will ever notice?

[00:23:41.59] I said, yeah. How'd you know that? He said, that's his classic signature.

[00:23:46.57] [LAUGHS]

[00:23:50.17] He put a big nick in the back of my head.

[00:23:52.12] [LAUGHS]

[00:23:55.75] He didn't attend this time. He's a nice guy. He's a preacher. He's a good guy.

[00:24:03.22] MARC HENDERSON: Were there ever any social tensions or turmoil?

[00:24:07.03] ROBERT GROSSMAN: We had a couple of guys who wanted to wear afros and those hair picks. Jason Robards was one of them. He was an out-and-out loser. He's one of those black guys that thought the world owed him a goddamn living.

[00:24:22.03] And I keep referring back to Frederick Douglass. You guys know Frederick Douglass? When they asked him about what to do about the negro problem, the white abolitionists in the Civil War, and he told them do nothing. You've caused enough mischief.

[00:24:41.33] Do nothing. Leave us alone. Let the apple fall from the tree. If it's too early or too ripe or whatever, do nothing. Just give us an equal opportunity.

[00:24:51.41] And I've taken that as a guidance. I really hate the burn, loot, and murder group, the BLM and Antifa. All I want is these guys to go to work and be successful. If you want to be successful, stay in school, get an education.

[00:25:11.45] When you get out of high school, get a skill set or get a degree. Find someone you love and want to marry. Stay married, because getting divorced is expensive, guys. I don't care what anybody says. It's damned expensive, so choose wisely, and you got the recipe for having a successful life.

[00:25:31.01] MARC HENDERSON: So these guys that wanted to grow their hair out, did they get disciplined or was it--

[00:25:36.17] ROBERT GROSSMAN: Oh hell, yeah. There was always, always-- how do I say this? There was always tension with this guy. There was a couple of-- Shivers wasn't that way.

[00:25:49.82] It was Robards and one other that was that way. They always wanted to-- we're the oppressed people. We're the down and out people. You guys have always enslaved us. I had an ancestor die in a Civil War to free your ass.

[00:26:06.59] MARC HENDERSON: How much time did you have to yourself and what did you do for recreation or off-duty hours.

[00:26:13.22] ROBERT GROSSMAN: Well, we took up boxing. That didn't work out too well.

[00:26:17.74] MARC HENDERSON: Why not?

[00:26:19.31] ROBERT GROSSMAN: I wasn't big enough. When you weigh 145 pounds, you can't box. Those big heavy-set guys, they knocked the shit out of you.

[00:26:26.84] MARC HENDERSON: So there were no weight classes, then?

[00:26:28.25] ROBERT GROSSMAN: No. You wanted to box? Put your gloves on. It don't matter. Boom. That's it, you're done.

[00:26:34.96] MARC HENDERSON: Now, was that done for recreation? Or was that a way of settling--

[00:26:38.00] ROBERT GROSSMAN: No, no, that was the first sergeant's way of-- well, the first sergeant's way of settling grievances and recreation. Or wrestling. There wasn't a lot of entertainment. They used to put on movies.

[00:26:51.50] That's when I first seen Patton was over-- and I fell asleep during it, by the way, because I was tired. But they used to give us movies. The Donut Dollies would come once or twice. It wasn't really entertainment.

[00:27:06.86] Here's an entertainment Ridgeway-Coy style. I'll tell you this story. I was going to tell you earlier, but we had a guy named Ridgeway from Alabama, and I think Coy was from Mississippi.

[00:27:16.85] So one day, Ridgeway gets the idea that, if I unscrew this grenade and pop the coil off-- pop the blasting cap off, I can have some fun with it. So he did. So he blows the plastic cap off. Puts it back together, puts the spoon back on it.

[00:27:37.37] And he waits for his buddy Coy to come out of the hooch. So Ridgeway says, Bob, watch this. And he goes, here, Coy, catch.

[00:27:46.81] [CHUCKLES]

[00:27:48.50] Ping.

[00:27:49.96] [SHOUTS]

[00:27:51.82] And starts running.

[00:27:52.81] [LAUGHS]

[00:27:55.67] They thought that was funny. And if I remember correctly-- because I went by the way, too.

[00:28:00.46] [CHUCKLES]

[00:28:02.77] I was running also, because when he said, watch this-- yeah. That was his sense of humor. I think what they did later-- and I can't confirm this. But they went up to the mess hall and rolled it into the mess hall. I think that caused a bit of a ruckus, and I think they got in a lot of trouble over that.

[00:28:19.48] Then somebody one time took a blasting grenade and put it on-- and wired it up to the trashcans. They were going to-- a concussion grenade is what it was, going to scare the hell out of the trash haulers. The first sergeant found it first.

[00:28:38.11] So he called a company meeting. And he was out there with this concussion grenade in his hand with the pin out of it-- with the pin straightened on it, and he was waving it around. The pin fell out.

[00:28:54.09] MARC HENDERSON: The first sergeant was waving it?

[00:28:55.72] ROBERT GROSSMAN: Yeah, he was cursing us in no uncertain terms. And he wanted somebody to step forward to take credit for setting this booby trap for the Vietnamese trash haulers. And when the pin fell out, we decided probably a good thing we ought to leave.

[00:29:11.16] [LAUGHS]

[00:29:12.73] MARC HENDERSON: And it blew up in his hand?

[00:29:13.78] ROBERT GROSSMAN: No, no. Hell no. No, he had a tight grip on it. But he was out there searching for that pin for a while.

[00:29:20.23] [LAUGHS]

[00:29:25.18] That was another hilarious-- First Sergeant Larry D. Buchanan. He was ex-Special Forces. He had a hole in his head from a hand grenade. He was one tough son of a bitch, to be honest with you.

[00:29:39.63] We captured a 76 millimeter recoilless rifle once. And we were carrying it out, and all us weaklings couldn't get it-- we'd carry it a little bit and have to stop.

[00:29:55.47] He walked up to the front, picked it up, threw it on his shoulder, and said, let's go. And he carried the son of a bitch the rest of the way. He was a hard guy.

[00:30:04.08] MARC HENDERSON: Were drugs an issue in Vietnam?

[00:30:06.55] ROBERT GROSSMAN: Yeah. we had-- in that unit, we had Kalipolis. There were about three or four heads who thought they had to smoke it. And there was Bowie, Kalipolis, a couple others. It wasn't serious. There was nothing--

[00:30:29.66] MARC HENDERSON: Was it confined to the base, or was it ever an issue while they were-- while you guys were--

[00:30:35.57] ROBERT GROSSMAN: No. They knew better than to do that. You could smell cigarette smoke and marijuana smoke for half a mile. That's just inviting somebody to shoot your ass or come get on you.

[00:30:49.51] So no, they'd never done that. It was always at the base and always late at night. If Buchanan found them-- Hoffman was another head.

[00:31:01.24] But Buchanan would have beat the crap out of them. In fact, he did, Hoffman, several times. Well, Buchanan couldn't stand Hoffman.

[00:31:10.45] And Hoffman had a smart mouth on his ass. And he's the one that Buchanan knocked out of the orderly room. Yeah, and Kalipolis and Bowie also knew that-- they were smart. They waited until Top was drunk or was off doing something else before they'd light one up.

[00:31:35.71] MARC HENDERSON: How about pop culture? Do you remember anything from pop culture, music, books, movies?

[00:31:43.28] ROBERT GROSSMAN: No, the only thing I remember is a few songs. We didn't have-- "Leaving on a Jet Plane" was one of them, but that's about it. We really didn't have a-- I don't remember very many radios being in the company either, to be honest with you.

[00:32:02.50] MARC HENDERSON: No TVs, of course?

[00:32:03.88] ROBERT GROSSMAN: No TVs, and I don't remember any radio, to be honest with you, where we could listen to anything. But our entertainment was screwing with one another.

[00:32:15.81] MARC HENDERSON: Sounds like it.

[00:32:17.09] [LAUGHS]

[00:32:17.60] ROBERT GROSSMAN: That was-- like the time the Rangers blew up our shit house.

[00:32:24.72] MARC HENDERSON: Let's hear that one.

[00:32:26.05] [LAUGHS]

[00:32:28.04] Was anybody in it?

[00:32:29.12] ROBERT GROSSMAN: No, they made sure nobody was in it. So we always had this love-hate relationship with the Rangers because we used to have to go rescue them. And we always had this little ditty. How did that go?

[00:32:43.37] "I want to be an airborne Ranger. I want to stay at home and I want to live the life of danger. I want to stay at home and play with myself." They took offense to that because we used to sing it to them.

[00:32:56.67] [CHUCKLES]

[00:32:58.98] So they blew our shit house up. And it caused a little bit of event. But we had 106 recoilless rifles.

[00:33:08.78] Now, the first one-- this is why Larry D. Buchanan was a hard ass. He pulled one of those 106 recoilless rifles out, put it on the hillside, and called their TOC, and said, you guys want to step outside and watch this? And he put a tracer round into their shit house. And he said, the next time our shit house gets blown up, it's going to be followed by a 106 round to your shit house.

[00:33:38.58] [LAUGHS]

[00:33:44.43] The shit house stopped being blown up, and we still have yet to figure out who the dumbass was it threw the hand grenade into the hangars that caused 40 flats. We don't know whether it was one of our guys or one of their guys. But anyway, we had to fix a lot of flats one time.

[00:34:02.24] And on bunker guard duty, the Rangers used to make sure everybody was in the bunker. We weren't really nuts, but we'd make sure nobody was going to get hurt. They would launch a 79 round against the side of the bunker or shoot the side of the bunker. They'd call out and say, is anybody awake, or we got contact.

[00:34:24.95] [CHUCKLES]

[00:34:28.55] That was our entertainment. Now, the officers will never tell you that. But that's what used to happen.

[00:34:34.49] They used to say, oh, this is all straight and narrow and all the rest of that. Boom. Oh, we got incoming! Are you guys awake down there?

[00:34:42.74] [CHUCKLES]

[00:34:47.37] MARC HENDERSON: Where was your area of operations?

[00:34:50.01] ROBERT GROSSMAN: I Corps was on from the bottom of the-- Rung Rung Valley was one of them. That was the valley over from the A Shau Valley. We had Rung Rung Valley, A Shau Valley, and we had Quang Tri, the Khe Sanh Plain.

[00:35:07.41] And at one time we got into-- the first sergeant said, you might as well say you were in Laos. We were on the Laotian border. So with the cavalry outfit, we didn't have a defined territory. We went where we were told to, and we covered the I Corps.

[00:35:25.71] We weren't a typical outfit. We'd go and rescue downed aircraft and pilots. We'd support the line companies. We'd do reconnaissance missions.

[00:35:37.20] We'd do bomb damage assessment missions, whatever they asked you. We'd do body recovery missions. We'd do whatever they asked us to do. It was-- how do I say?

[00:35:49.54] MARC HENDERSON: And that was the whole Delta Troop?

[00:35:51.28] ROBERT GROSSMAN: Yeah, that was all the Delta Troop.

[00:35:53.53] MARC HENDERSON: Like a reaction force?

[00:35:54.60] ROBERT GROSSMAN: We were a reaction force. We always had one platoon on reaction force all the time. Regardless of what was happening, there was always one in the barracks, geared up, ready to go. In 20 minutes, they'd be on the line and out flying.

[00:36:15.78] The rest of the time was doing whatever. We used to pull ambush duty in Bravo sector, but that was a waste of time. That was make-work, and they knew it. We used to go out--

[00:36:28.32] MARC HENDERSON: Where was Bravo sector?

[00:36:29.31] ROBERT GROSSMAN: That was our assigned sector at Camp Eagle. We had a sector-- there was a sector that we were responsible for. So they never did it during good weather.

[00:36:40.80] When it was dry weather, we never pulled any duty. When it got wet, guess what? We always got to go out and sit in some damn grave and be miserable, and report in once an hour or whatever, and say nothing's happening.

[00:36:56.53] So we smarted-- we didn't get smart. We wised up to it. And we all used to go out there to this one grave, make a big tent, and stay dry, and tell the guy, hey, nothing's happening.

[00:37:11.04] And when the sun came up, we'd all pack up and go in. Nothing ever happened there. It was a waste of time.

[00:37:20.43] MARC HENDERSON: Tell me about the rest of your leadership, as high up as you could see them-- just the quality of leadership.

[00:37:27.60] ROBERT GROSSMAN: Molinelli was aggressive as hell. He was the colonel. He was an aggressive guy. He was one of those guys that liked to keep people busy in action. And he was fairly good at it.

[00:37:47.35] Bear, he's going to be here today. He was probably average. He was an MP by trade, I think-- an MOS who wanted to be in the infantry. And there were a couple of times I thought we ought to press the attack and he pulled back. But I didn't know the same thing he knew.

[00:38:12.82] But yeah, Buchanan was first sergeant. He was a tough son of a bitch, make no mistake about it. And he was a hard charger. And if you screwed up, count on getting the hell beat out of you.

[00:38:31.47] We had a guy by the name of Hoffman who smarted off to him and got knocked out of the building. And Hoffman said he was going to file charges. And McCarthy spoke up.

[00:38:46.02] Buchanan turned to McCarthy and said, what did you see? McCarthy was the company clerk. He said, you know, he tripped going down the stairs.

[00:38:52.29] [LAUGHS]

[00:38:55.23] Hoffman got out of the Army being an E-1 private. He was another Robards-- a waste of space. We didn't have a lieutenant for a long, long time. We were at-- ran with Jerry Trew as a platoon sergeant, and he was a worry wart.

[00:39:14.58] He was competent, but he was a worry wart. And he'd tend to get on everybody's nerves, but he was a good guy. But boy, would he worry about crap.

[00:39:24.51] We were going up this ravine one time, or this stream, and it was walls around it. And he was worried about them throwing hand grenades on us and wiping us out. And I kept thinking, Jerry, if they were going to do it, it would already be done, because we've been in this son of a bitch for 30 minutes. There ain't nothing here.

[00:39:51.49] But anyway, that was a classic example. He'd be worried about what could happen. He was also a good organizer guy, too. Then we got James J. Speicher as a lieutenant, and he lasted about a month. Someone shoved him out of the helicopter.

[00:40:13.66] MARC HENDERSON: Intentionally?

[00:40:15.47] ROBERT GROSSMAN: Yeah, it was his RTO Dan Terry. We were coming in to pull a-- for a downed aircraft that had been shot down. And I typically flew the first ship in, and the lieutenant typically flew the third ship in.

[00:40:38.10] The shooting started. And when the shooting started, the third ship was coming in. They shifted the fire from us to him. And he was standing on the skid. And of course, the rounds are impacting the helicopter, and Speicher is trying to determine where he's going to land.

[00:40:58.98] And Terry was behind him, decided screw this, you're going out. So he shoved him out. Well, he come out of there like a ruptured duck and broke his leg. And that was the last we'd seen of him until '03 at a reunion. He still remembered Terry shoving him out, by the way.

[00:41:18.94] [LAUGHS]

[00:41:21.43] Well, the helicopter pilot decided that, hey, he didn't want to be the second helicopter shot down. So he started pulling G-- tilted her down, and started pulling away. And Speicher come out of there, about 30 foot up. He's damn lucky to be alive, to be honest with you. It was touch and go whether he could have killed him or not.

[00:41:44.87] And this guy was going for altitude. He was 10 foot when he started. And I remember looking at it and thinking, Jesus Christ, there's one dead. And he just had a broken leg, but it is what it is.

[00:42:05.69] ROBERT GROSSMAN: Those guys brought out a ground radar for us. They said, OK, this is the bee's knees-- ground radar. We're going to be able to see them with radar coming at you. OK, yeah, let's go out there where they are and see what happens.

[00:42:21.47] Why crap. I ended up telling that technician this is a pile of junk. Get the hell out of here. It was waste of time. We spent two days out there trying to get this piece of crap to work.

[00:42:38.34] No. I don't even know why they even thought it'd work in that. We were in elephant grass, and he's trying to pick up stuff with radar with a wall of grass. It might have been a solid wall in front of him. You got to ask yourself, what kind of nutcase does this?

[00:43:00.88] [LAUGHS]

[00:43:03.16] The only other thing we had was Starlight scope. Now, that worked. That was good. That was a good thing.

[00:43:11.27] MARC HENDERSON: You want to describe it?

[00:43:12.72] ROBERT GROSSMAN: Well, it was just a scope they put on a rifle. And you could actually see stuff, if there was starlight or moon, that you had enough light for it to gather to see things. And you could actually see out to 100 yards or more, and see things.

[00:43:27.06] It was all outlined in green. But hey, you could see it. So yeah, it was a good thing.

[00:43:32.58] MARC HENDERSON: How many of those were distributed in your unit?

[00:43:35.80] ROBERT GROSSMAN: I think there were two. I think Robbie Robinson had one for his sniper rifle, and there was another one. I think headquarters-- I think Craig had it with him. I'm not sure, though. I don't know if he's going to be interviewed or not.

[00:43:59.20] ROBERT GROSSMAN: Well, that would probably be when Cruse got killed. They were-- it was a typical goddamn mess, too. Nobody knew what was happening, including Craig.

[00:44:17.75] They come and told us, hey, the Pink Teams had killed some 15 guys sitting on a log, and some guy out in front of them. So you guys are going to go check them out. That's part of our mission, to go check out dead bodies.

[00:44:34.59] So what they neglected to tell us was that there was a regiment around them. So we-- there was Delta Troop, and two of the other troops come in with us-- Bravo Platoon and Charlie Platoon, Blue Platoons.

[00:44:55.75] We get on the ground. And then I think the XO was running the operation. Molinelli wasn't running it. And the XO picked us up-- picked up 3rd Platoon, and put us-- booted us 1,000 yards down the trail.

[00:45:10.38] And I knew we was in the shit when I got off the helicopter and we started taking prisoners. We moved out to take out the dead bodies, and Cruse got killed. And we come back, and a hand grenade went off. Pretty much it.

[00:45:44.81] MARC HENDERSON: What typically happened with prisoners?

[00:45:47.19] ROBERT GROSSMAN: Grab them. Strip them down. Take everything off of them. Shove them on a helicopter as fast as you can. And if you can't, then you bind them up and wait.

[00:46:09.16] MARC HENDERSON: They weren't interrogated there on the scene?

[00:46:11.20] ROBERT GROSSMAN: Oh, hell no. No, we used to talk to the NVA, but generally at the point of a gun. When Cruse got killed when he was talking to that guy that killed him.

[00:46:23.81] And he was talking to us. It was from here to the end of that table. It wasn't in a normal voice, but--

[00:46:40.78] ROBERT GROSSMAN: I can't think of any that was a real good time. I'll tell you about the time I crapped in my pants. So I brought that up.

[00:46:50.97] I was on radio relay out on a Vietnamese firebase. And I think Trew had part of his team out, part of the team was out on reconnaissance, and they couldn't make good radio contact. So I was a go-between. And we was out there for three days.

[00:47:14.23] And I got bored with C-rats, so I decided I'd share food with the Vietnamese. So we shared food, and then we got called back to the base. The third day, we got called back to the base.

[00:47:27.27] And that was the day I started eating the Vietnamese food. So I thought I had to pass gas. No. No.

[00:47:36.05] [CHUCKLES]

[00:47:36.87] That was wrong.

[00:47:37.46] [LAUGHS]

[00:47:40.83] MARC HENDERSON: Memorable, though.

[00:47:42.09] ROBERT GROSSMAN: Yeah, it was memorable. Oh yeah, it was memorable. And everybody started laughing, too.

[00:47:47.97] [LAUGHS]

[00:47:50.19] I was glad the shower room was still operational. It was an interesting point of view. But anyway.

[00:47:56.70] MARC HENDERSON: Was the shower ever not operational?

[00:47:59.92] ROBERT GROSSMAN: Yeah, the water would be too damn cold to take a shower, because in the wintertime, they put a stove in it and heat the water, so you'd have a warm shower. But they'd only do that for certain hours. And if you wanted to have a cold shower, feel free to do so. It was interesting anyway.

[00:48:29.36] The showers-- they'd light it up around, I guess, five o'clock or so. You could have a warm shower, and then they'd let it cool down. During the summer months, it was hot enough that it wouldn't have mattered.

[00:48:46.29] It was cool to the body, but it was still warm enough you could take a shower in. It was an interesting time. I can't tell you any good times that I can think of.

[00:49:02.63] MARC HENDERSON: Would you like to talk about either or both of the times that you were wounded?

[00:49:09.37] ROBERT GROSSMAN: Well, the first time was on July 8. It's when I told you about the grenade. Several grenades went off, but one of them one of them got me.

[00:49:19.94] And then the second time was August. I threw a hand grenade at an NVA. And it hit a tree and went off, and wounded me and four or five others. That was not a real smart move, to be honest with you.

[00:49:46.20] MARC HENDERSON: Were you medevacked?

[00:49:47.13] ROBERT GROSSMAN: Yeah, I should have shot the son of a bitch. I should have let him get close enough to put a bullet between his eyes. The medevac come in the next morning, picked us up.

[00:49:59.75] I was walking wounded. Well, we were all walking wounded. They took us down to-- was it Long Binh? I forget the name of the place it was.

[00:50:11.07] Anyway, the first sergeant was there. They took all our gear. They laid me down on the table, started cutting the crap off my legs.

[00:50:22.10] And the first sergeant was in there debriefing me while they were cutting on me. That's an interesting experience, by the way, that hard son of a bitch. But anyway.

[00:50:35.01] [CHUCKLES]

[00:50:36.45] So I felt tugging on my legs. And I raised up and the doc says, what the hell are you doing?

[00:50:40.59] [LAUGHS]

[00:50:41.38] He goes, stay down, boy.

[00:50:43.26] [LAUGHS]

[00:50:47.10] So I was telling the first sergeant what was going on. And the doctor was interjecting and saying, what the hell is he talking about?

[00:50:54.06] [LAUGHS]

[00:50:56.86] So the first sergeant was translating my speech into doctor-speak. It was an interesting time alright. So then they medevacked me out to the USS Sanctuary and I got to spend some time on the boat for about a month.

[00:51:12.27] One day, I was on that ship. And they come and took some samples-- blood samples and all the rest of it. And the doc shows up at me.

[00:51:21.63] And he says, what have you been eating? I say the food. What the fuck do you think I've been eating?

[00:51:26.55] [CHUCKLES]

[00:51:27.90] And he says, I know that. He says, but exactly what have you been eating? And I said, well, C-rats. He said, no, you haven't been eating C-rats.

[00:51:37.92] I said, well, I was out on a firebase eating with the Vietnamese. Hah. He said, exactly what did you eat? I said, well, they had rat, snake, and rice, and some mystery meat, and all the rest of it.

[00:51:50.98] He said, boy, he said, you're so goddamn wormy that-- and I had to stay three extra days for them to deworm me. I picked up a parasite, I guess. And that didn't bother me. I guess it did bother me in one way.

[00:52:11.25] I got pushed-- shoved off in Da Nang instead of up north in Phu Bai. So I took the LST off the ship to the pier. I started walking down the pier, and some asshole MP yells at me and says, you need a hat. So I pulled my ratty boonie hat out and put it on.

[00:52:38.20] And I go over to Da Nang Air Base-- I catch a ride to Da Nang Air Base. And I go in there and say, hey, I've got to get a flight to Phu Bai tomorrow. And I accidentally got the wrong building. I was in the Air Force section.

[00:52:55.00] And the guy looks at me and said, OK, you can stay here. This is when I realized that I was in the wrong service. He takes me and puts me in a bunk.

[00:53:06.04] And he said, 9:00, there's a flight out here. Just don't tell anybody what I'm doing here, but you can get on this next flight out at 9:00 in the morning. He put me in a bunk. I had a mattress this thick. Even the Navy didn't have the mattresses just this thick.

[00:53:19.24] [CHUCKLES]

[00:53:20.75] And the bunk I was in on the ship only had a mattress this thick, and I'm used to sleeping on the ground or a thin canvas. And I knew exactly I'd made a wrong choice.

[00:53:30.65] [CHUCKLES]

[00:53:31.88] Air Force is the way to go. And the food, I thought I'd died and gone to heaven. But anyway, it was an interesting experience.

[00:53:42.75] And then I get up and go back. I flew to Phu Bai, and I caught a ride back to the company area. It was a good time.

[00:53:56.50] ROBERT GROSSMAN: I thought they were pretty nice people, actually. But a lot of them chewed betel nut. You see this beautiful young woman, and then she smiled at you, and you see all this black red teeth. And the older they got, the blacker those teeth got.

[00:54:16.51] And I learned later that that betel nut that they chew is a mild narcotic. And it takes away the pain of hunger and aches and pains of your body. And they chew it on a daily basis.

[00:54:30.76] And when I got to India, it was a different story. But I found that they put lime with it-- lime with betel nut, and put it in a coconut leaf, or a leaf of some sort, and they chewed it. The same thing-- it turned your teeth black.

[00:54:48.75] But it was mild. It was a mild narcotic. I didn't mind the Vietnamese people, except the ones trying to kill me. I minded those. But the rest of them were all right.

[00:55:03.69] MARC HENDERSON: I never had any contact with them. Later on, they did. But I wasn't there for that-- unless you tell the Hac Bao. We operated with the Hoc Bao.

[00:55:16.59] MARC HENDERSON: Who were they?

[00:55:18.47] ROBERT GROSSMAN: They were the elite 1st ARVN Division's group. They were some hard guys. They were our backup. If we got in trouble, they would come in.

[00:55:29.39] And we were the backup to the Marines. The guys that are here today, we were their backup. We used to-- I'm not going to say rescue them, because they get upset about that. But everybody does.

[00:55:43.28] MARC HENDERSON: The reconnaissance Marines.

[00:55:44.27] ROBERT GROSSMAN: Yeah. They were our backup, the Hac Bao was. They were fiercely tough. They are hard, tough batches, no nonsense.

[00:55:58.79] We went out on a couple of issues with them, and they'd actively go looking and pile on. A couple of times, they'd try to come and get us, and they couldn't get in to us. But yeah, they were just tough guys.

[00:56:21.05] ROBERT GROSSMAN: Well, I wrote some letters to a couple of girls. And they told me to stop writing them. I don't know why.

[00:56:31.25] And then my mother had a stroke, and I didn't find out about it until months later. Well, I didn't find out about it until after I got out of Vietnam. My sister told the Red Cross person that I wasn't writing home. And the first sergeant had me write home, Buchanan did. That's not a pleasant experience.

[00:57:03.42] MARC HENDERSON: Having to write home or being told?

[00:57:06.19] ROBERT GROSSMAN: Having the first sergeant tell you to write home. Writing home is not a problem, buddy. It's when the first sergeant says you've got to write home it's a problem. He gets really upset with you. But anyway, yeah, that's how I found out she had a stroke.

[00:57:22.97] MARC HENDERSON: So what kind of news did you share with your family when you did write home?

[00:57:28.51] ROBERT GROSSMAN: Everything is OK. I'm sitting in base, doing nothing. I didn't write about our missions or anything. They don't need to know that shit. That's--

[00:57:46.76] MARC HENDERSON: So how much news did you receive about the war you were fighting in?

[00:57:52.90] Newspapers?

[00:57:54.45] ROBERT GROSSMAN: The only thing we got was the Kent State thing happened while I was there. And we thought the National Guard did a piss poor job of killing them. That's how much we-- and a whole bunch of people thought that.

[00:58:17.11] Part of the reason that war dragged on was the protesters. Giap and Ho Chi Minh had decided that this war was unwinnable by the North Vietnamese, until these-- the likes of Kerry and people started protesting and decided let's drag it out and force America to leave humiliated. If they'd kept their goddamn gobs shut, the Vietnamese would have capitulated.

[00:58:46.64] And they put that in their memoirs. Did you ever read their memoirs? Well, they actively discussed coming to a negotiated settlement.

[00:58:53.84] Surrendering actually is what it was until these assholes over here started acting up, the antiwar movement. And they decided, well hell, what the hell. We'll drag this out and see what happens.

[00:59:06.90] And guess what? That's what happened. South Vietnam now is unified under a communist dictatorship. Kerry ought to be really happy.

[00:59:17.81] MARC HENDERSON: So how did the news of the protests affect you in the moment, while you were there?

[00:59:25.12] ROBERT GROSSMAN: Well, to be honest with you, I wasn't really happy they got killed, to be honest. But what did they expect? They backed them on to a knoll, surrounded them, cornered them, and was threatening to kill them, and they expected them not to shoot them?

[00:59:41.35] If you want to peacefully protest, that's your God-given right. Stand on the sidewalk and say that Trump's an idiot or an asshole or whatever. I'll give you the megaphone.

[00:59:55.25] If you break a wind and start fires and burn down buildings, and damage people and kill people, you deserve a hell of a lot worse. You need to be taught a real big, heavy lesson. And our political will today won't handle that, won't do it. And why do we have riots in Portland going on now for over-- going on 18 months? Because they won't put them down.

[01:00:31.95] MARC HENDERSON: Did you witness any protests or antiwar demonstrations in the States? No?

[01:00:38.58] ROBERT GROSSMAN: No. I come from a conservative state, from a conservative county. If you're a war protester, you won't be for long, because someone's going to give you an ass whipping. Mom, God, apple pie, my country first? That's the way that was. It still is today.

[01:01:04.71] MARC HENDERSON: So tell me about going home from the war.

[01:01:09.08] ROBERT GROSSMAN: Oh, that's an interesting experience, too. One day, I'm going to combat. The next day, I'm going down to Cam Ranh Bay to check out.

[01:01:23.04] So I throw my jungle fatigues on, put some khakis on, and jump on a jet-- and I think it was a Flying Tiger jet, and start flying for a long time. And I get to Seattle-- well, that fort out there. It's not Dix. I can't think of it's name now.

[01:01:47.40] But anyway, I'm dragging my duffel bag. It's been in a container for a while. So the guy's going through it, and I had some saddle soap for my shoes.

[01:01:57.87] I don't know why I took it to Vietnam. But anyway, I did. So he says, you got to open that can. And I says, I can't open it, because it's rusted shut.

[01:02:05.66] [LAUGHS]

[01:02:08.01] So he goes and gets some pliers and forces the thing open, and it's moldy.

[01:02:13.56] [LAUGHS]

[01:02:14.77] It's moldy and rusty.

[01:02:15.99] [LAUGHS]

[01:02:18.93] I told him, I said, guess there's no marijuana in that, is there?

[01:02:22.08] [LAUGHS]

[01:02:24.85] And he said, what do you want to do with it. I said, throw it in the trash. It's no good to me now.

[01:02:28.56] [LAUGHS]

[01:02:30.33] Walk on. It was hilarious. But anyway, we changed our clothes there in Fort Dix.

[01:02:38.13] Not Dix. What the hell is that? I'll think of it in a minute. Water on the brain. Changed our clothes to class A's and flew home.

[01:02:45.84] And I flew to Denver. It was the last plane into Denver too, by the way. That was another interesting experience.

[01:02:53.56] So the guy applies the reverse thrusters. And the damn plane, he had six inches of snow under-- not six. He's got about four inches of snow on the runway, and it's slick.

[01:03:05.61] The damn plane turned sideways. I'm looking at the end of the goddamn runway. And I hear this jet engine spool up and come straight.

[01:03:16.89] [LAUGHS]

[01:03:18.27] He pulls her up, straightens up. And he goes on the announcement, and he says, that was rather interesting, folks.

[01:03:25.13] [LAUGHS]

[01:03:28.35] But we're here safe and sound. And we'll have you at the gate in a minute.

[01:03:32.19] [LAUGHS]

[01:03:34.34] Oh, that was funny. The stewardesses, they were panicking. They were scared shitless. It was hilarious.

[01:03:41.57] MARC HENDERSON: After your adventure in Denver, what was your reception at home like?

[01:03:46.15] ROBERT GROSSMAN: Well, you're home.

[01:03:47.22] [LAUGHS]

[01:03:49.90] Yeah, that was about it. I drank some beer. I was home for a month before I went to Germany.

[01:03:56.55] I drank some beer with the guys. I drank beers with my cousin. Calvert was in the 173rd, and a couple of other guys. Shared some stories with them.

[01:04:10.44] MARC HENDERSON: And how much time did you have left in your enlistment to spend in Germany?

[01:04:15.88] ROBERT GROSSMAN: 22 months. That was an interesting time, too. I like Germany. At the time it was a nice place to be. The exchange rate was about three marks for \$1.

[01:04:34.15] Yeah, and you could buy a beer for a mark. And we used to buy a jug. We used to go out to this guesthouse. And on payday, when we was rich, we'd go buy a fifth of the American whiskey. A fifth-- a half a gallon or a gallon of American whiskey, and give it to Emma at the guest house.

[01:04:51.73] And she'd feed us German meals for a couple of days for that gallon, because she ran a bar and she sold that American whiskey to them-- to the locals. That's where I learned what Jagermeister was and Korn was. Jagermeister is fairly nice, but I found out later it's a women's drink.

[01:05:13.91] Men drink Korn. Now, here's what you do with Korn. You throw it down as far as you can to not taste it. And then you can take a match and light the bottle and burn it, because it's damn near pure alcohol.

[01:05:28.69] [CHUCKLES]

[01:05:30.96] MARC HENDERSON: So did you have any difficulty readjusting to life after the war?

[01:05:38.82] ROBERT GROSSMAN: You know, I don't know. I used to-- when I first got married. I can't answer that, to be honest with you.

[01:05:52.22] I sweat the bed when I was married. My wife couldn't-- it took me years to get over that. I'd wake up in a puddle of sweat. And I don't know if that was from PTSD or whatever the hell they call it or whatever. But to answer your question, I think I'm normal.

[01:06:09.50] Now, you two may think, no, he's not normal. He's a rabid redneck. But I think I'm normal.

[01:06:15.82] [CHUCKLES]

[01:06:17.93] I don't think I had any trouble adjusting to it.

[01:06:21.35] MARC HENDERSON: How much contact have you had with fellow veterans over the years?

[01:06:27.63] ROBERT GROSSMAN: Well, these guys, we meet since 2003 every couple of years. The first one was really enjoyable, 2003 in Branson. And that was a large crowd that showed up.

[01:06:44.10] We were all still alive, by the way. Somewhere between three to six people die between reunions every time. And now we're down to about 50, 60 people. Well, it was about 80 people showing up-- was showing up. Now we're down to 47.

[01:07:07.56] ROBERT GROSSMAN: I'm pro-American. And I'm still that way, even more rabidly so. I believe in this country. And I believe in a fair go.

[01:07:21.56] And I want everybody to have an equal opportunity to succeed. And I don't care what race, religion, color you are. I want-- you should have a fair opportunity to succeed.

[01:07:34.85] But I also think that we should not have-- and I'm a fervent believer in this-- I don't believe in a nanny state. Yeah, there are some people that deserve help or need help.

[01:07:45.59] But there are some people who, regardless of what you do, are not going to go fix themselves or correct themselves. And they need to be like what Frederick Douglass said. Hey, let them rot on the ground, because you're never going to fix them.

[01:08:04.23] MARC HENDERSON: So how did your experience in Vietnam affect the way you think about veterans returning from combat today?

[01:08:13.86] ROBERT GROSSMAN: I don't envy them. In one way, they had much better medical attention and much better medical procedures. I told my wife several times, I said, that would have killed the guys in Vietnam that were wounded. They would have bled out or died.

[01:08:36.03] One of the reasons there was such a low fatality rate in these Middle East wars is the response time and the medical treatment was way much better than what it was in Vietnam and World War II, and again Korea. Getting your legs blown off in Vietnam was pretty much a death sentence, or getting blown up. You just didn't survive because they couldn't get you to the hospital in time, even though we had helicopters. These guys had the training and the expertise to do it.

[01:09:17.09] MARC HENDERSON: So what do you think the war meant to you and your generation?

[01:09:23.73] ROBERT GROSSMAN: My generation is divided. There are those who think like I think, and there are the others, the antiwar guys. And unfortunately, the antiwar guys are running our government. There's the guys who are patriots, who believe in Mom, God, and apple pie, and believe in their country.

[01:09:46.45] And then there's the Bill Ayers, the Bill Clintons, the George Bushes. They're the guys running our country today, and I fail to understand how that happened. I don't understand why that happened or how it happened.

[01:10:03.38] I think we just allowed complacency to take over. Be happy to be home. And these guys set out to change the world in their view. Right now, I don't think I agree with their view of how this country should be.

[01:10:18.75] I don't think we should have illegal aliens in here or we should grant amnesty, we should have perpetual welfare. I think we should have a program that helps people, and get rid of these illegal aliens.

[01:10:32.31] Let's put Americans first. Yeah, I sound like Trump-- Americans first. But anyway, that's the way it is.

[01:10:39.38] MARC HENDERSON: How do you think the Vietnam War is remembered today?

[01:10:42.79] ROBERT GROSSMAN: Oh, badly.

[01:10:48.24] MARC HENDERSON: What lessons did you take from your experiences in Vietnam that you would like to pass on?

[01:10:54.53] ROBERT GROSSMAN: Support your country. Right or wrong or indifferent, it's your country. And whether the country's wrong or right-- and at the moment I think our leadership is completely wrong, I'm still going to support them as best I can.

[01:11:10.84] But it's hard. We have to fix the problem. That's the issue right there.

[01:11:17.11] And support your country. We don't have another one. Where do we go? If this country fails, where do we go? Do we go to Canada or we go to Mexico, or we go to China or Russia or Europe?

[01:11:29.98] Bob Grossman's rules for success-- stay in school. Get the best grades, the best education you can. Get a skill set. Get married, stay married that you're well on your way to being middle class.

[01:11:52.29] ROBERT GROSSMAN: Well, I looked up all the dead people I knew. And I know several of them. So I know a lot of those names on the-- not a lot of them. I know several of them on the Wall.