

Parish, Donald US Navy

[00:00:14.79] DONALD PARISH: I was born here on the reservation, back in the woods, really. Our house was way back in the woods. A lot of people lived back in the woods in my younger days and that. Mrs. Marshall, who the health center is named after, delivered me. Yeah. She was a medicine woman and if you got sick, that's who you called on. Yep.

[00:00:48.63] DEVON HARDY: So you were born in Brimley, Michigan?

[00:00:50.58] DONALD PARISH: Yes. Yeah.

[00:00:52.38] DEVON HARDY: OK, and who were your family members?

[00:00:55.02] DONALD PARISH: Well, there's my mother and dad, Donald and Ruth Parrish. Then there was David, Donald, Darla, Geraldine, Duane, Douglas, Dean, Danny, Denise and Doris. Denise and Doris [LAUGHTER], and Della.

[00:01:34.90] DEVON HARDY: How old were you when you went to Vietnam?

[00:01:37.73] DONALD PARISH: I was 26 or 27. When I was in the Navy earlier on a ship over there, I always volunteered to-- when they called for volunteers, I always volunteered but I always got-- by the time the letters left the ship and come back, they always said, thank you for volunteering but those billets have been filled and whatnot. And then I got out of the Navy and I was working as an x-ray tech because I was trained in the Navy as an x-ray tech.

[00:02:20.18] I was working at Wyandotte General Hospital and every morning when I'd go to work, I would pass this recruiting station. Then one morning I just took all my stuff, my discharge papers and everything, and I was going down there and I just pulled in there. And once I pulled in there and he said, yeah, you can come back in and he said, you can have any school you want. And I told him I wanted the field medical service school.

[00:02:54.27] And he was kind of dumbfounded, the recruiter, because he says, you know what's going to happen to you? I said, I have an idea, because that's the school that you're-- He said, you're going to go over? I said, yeah. So I shipped out. Well, they sent me to Camp Pendleton, California for training and whatnot. Field med school training. DONALD PARISH: It was only four weeks. Yeah.

[00:03:34.76] DEVON HARDY: And then what-- can you describe the training for us?

[00:03:37.35] DONALD PARISH: It was all training that you would-- how to bandage people when you're out in the field, what-- when they're shooting at you. And starting IVs, and doing many things that-- and when you're out in the field and when they're shooting at you, I always protected my guy.

[00:04:10.13] And they always told us to get on the safe side, but I always got on the side that was protecting him. And I was just-- that was just our way. We did that. We all did. All the

corpsmen did. Sometimes most-- well, I guess all the time. None of us got hit on any particular time like that, but it was rough. Lost lots of good friends there. Yeah.

[00:04:51.86] DEVON HARDY: Do you think your training prepared you for what you did in Vietnam?

[00:04:56.09] DONALD PARISH: Yes, I do. Yeah. I really do. It was really good training, and the Marines really, really liked you. Cover the doc. And when things were happening and my best friend got killed covering me and I kept hollering at him, get down, get down. He just kept on putting clip after clip in his-- he says, I'll cover you, Doc. I'll cover you. And then I said, Bull, I'm finished.

[00:05:35.36] Everybody called him Bull but his real name is Marshall Schaffner, and he was a short little guy from Idaho, I think. Yeah. Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. I said, Bull, get down, get down. I'm done. And I had no sooner said that and he just fell back on me, and he was gone. Yeah.

[00:06:10.50] DONALD PARISH: We flew out of San Francisco to Okinawa, and we stayed there in Okinawa. It was all on that big, what was that-- a 707 charter thing. It was all hospital corpsmen on there. And we flew into Okinawa. And they put us there for a few days and whatnot. And then they would come out and say, OK, so-and-so is going to Da Nang.

[00:06:51.33] That's where I flew into. Da Nang. And I stayed in Da Nang two days with other corpsmen. And if they were pulling out certain people who had what they call, NECs, Navy Enlisted Classification. I was an x-ray technician, 8452, and they said, you're probably not going in the field. You're going to a field hospital or something.

[00:07:22.98] And the next morning, they come back and talk to us again, and anybody who had a NEC except operating room technicians went out in the field. And they put us on a C-141 and we flew up to Dong Ha. And we got off there and went to the headquarters of the medical battalion that was there, and they was going over the list and telling us where we were going. I went to Hotel Company, 2nd Battalion, Fourth Marines.

[00:08:18.65] DEVON HARDY: And when was this, exactly? When did you land in Vietnam?

[00:08:22.19] DONALD PARISH: I think October 17th or something like that.

[00:08:29.95] DEVON HARDY: What year?

[00:08:30.58] DONALD PARISH: 1967.

[00:08:32.79] DEVON HARDY: 1967. OK. What were your first impressions upon arrival?

[00:08:37.54] DONALD PARISH: It was hot. It was, and we went out on the next day when I was-- after I was assigned them. And then the senior corpsman at that time for Hotel Company assigned me to the 3d Platoon, and then the whole company went out on patrol. But we didn't see any action that day.

[00:09:01.90] And then we didn't see any action the second day when we went out on another patrol. And then I think two or three days later, they put our company on a truck and start-- do you ever hear of Con Thien? Yeah. They took us up there. There was some road there, and then they took us up there and offloaded us, and then we walked up past Con Thien. And that's where I saw my first action.

[00:09:42.14] DEVON HARDY: So two days after-- two or three days after you arrived.

[00:09:44.79] DONALD PARISH: Yeah, and it was not fun. No. You look at the guys that you were with a few minutes ago and here they are laying there, and you're trying to do something for them, and you do the best you can. I always carried four containers of what was called serum albumin, a blood volume expander.

[00:10:24.24] If they're hit in a belly or something like that, I stuck that in them right away and we usually had a place where we took the wounded people. And I would say to some Marine, I said, when this bottle is empty, I said, just pull that needle out of his arm. I just had a piece of tape on there.

[00:10:51.42] If you give them 250 cc's, that was like giving them a pint. And then I started carrying more after that initial thing. They'd give us a little first aid pack. They call it a Unit-1, but that thing wasn't enough to-- so I got a backpack, and then a big what's called a grenade pouch. I had that full and I had my backpack full.

[00:11:32.24] And then I-- one time we went past the Army guys. And the Army guy said, hey Doc, you want something better than that? I said, yeah, you got something? And he gave me a backpack that was so good and light, and it wouldn't fall down because it had these bars that come up here and would come across your chest, instead of those two little things you had on your arms with-- that the Marine had and--

[00:12:14.12] DEVON HARDY: What was in your bags? What did you carry?

[00:12:17.99] DONALD PARISH: Lots of dressings. Lots of dressings and a lot of serum albumin. And I had-- they gave us six syringes of a narcotic, morphine. And, let's see, and I always carried-- I didn't smoke at that time, but I always carried cigarettes with me. Depending on-- when I was patching somebody up, depending on where the guy was hit, he would always ask for a cigarette.

[00:12:57.13] So if he had a broken arm or something, or leg or something. I wouldn't do it if he had something in chest. I'd always tell him, through and through or something like that. I'd say, OK, now you got to lay on-- I got to lay on my sore side? [CHUCKLES] And I would say, yes, because if you lay on your good side the blood is going to come down and go into your good lung. I said, no, you got to do this. Yeah, and they were good at it.

[00:13:33.27] DEVON HARDY: Did you carry a weapon?

[00:13:34.80] DONALD PARISH: I carried a .45. Yep. But I had it wrapped in plastic because it was-- I never-- the only time I took it out was the day I got hit because we were in this bomb crater. I mean, me and the guy that I was carrying, and the other Marines were over there but we were-- they were shooting at us and we just had the .45 out in case they come.

[00:14:15.66] DONALD PARISH: After, I think-- when I was in field, after two months I was called back up to Dong Ha where the medical battalion was, who-- I asked our CO, the captain there, I said, well, how am I going to get up to Dong Ha? He said, go down the road. There was a-- we were at Quang Tri at the time, and he said, go down the road, there's always trucks coming by.

[00:14:48.69] So I just went out there on the road and stood. Pretty soon the first truck that come by, slowed down and he asked where I was headed and I says, Dong Ha, And he says, me too. So I jumped on and away we went. That's how I got back to-- and I stood at the gate at Dong Ha. When we were going back and a truck come, and the guy was the only one in there, the driver. And he said to me, he says, get in the back.

[00:15:25.02] So I jumped on the back and he had-- it was an M60 machine gun up there. And he said, have you ever fired one of these? And I said, yep, I have. He said, OK, we're going. He said, you're going to be my gunner. [LAUGHTER] So we got down to Quang Tri, and I just hit the top of the truck and I said, let me off here.

[00:15:54.52] He had some stuff in there that we liked. It was, I don't know, we called them heat tabs and we didn't have a whole bunch of them. And I drank a lot of coffee and made it out of a little can and whatnot. And other guys did the same too. And so I said, can I take some of these heat tabs? And he says, yeah, take as many as you want. So I threw down about 10 boxes down there. And he says, is that all you need? I said, Yep. That's it.

[00:16:35.97] And then I just went back to my unit, and I went and spoke to our CO. And he called the-- I had, I believe, a little letter from them. And I replaced that-- even though he outranked me, I replaced him and then they put him in a platoon because he never went out and he never-- there was always something wrong with him. Well, scared is one thing, but-- yeah.

[00:17:22.53] DEVON HARDY: Can you walk us through-- in the field after an injury would occur, can you kind of walk us through what would happen and what you would do, even though no situation is typical?

[00:17:35.55] DONALD PARISH: If somebody was wounded, I did what I could to them. I bandaged them, started IVs. If they had broken bones, I splinted them and put on the dressings and whatnot. And then I would move on. Yeah, after I did that to that particular person, I would move on. As long as he was doing OK, there was other guys who were assigned to stay with the wounded people. They were Marines and whatnot. But the corpsmen, we moved on up and-- yeah.

[00:18:24.90] DEVON HARDY: Can you describe what your living conditions are like?

[00:18:29.82] DONALD PARISH: Oh [LAUGHTER]. Well, whatever. Just sleeping on the ground, and once in a while we would be in a hut. Being in a hut was fairly decent, especially if it was raining and whatnot. But you really learned to sleep and whatnot.

[00:18:59.58] You didn't sleep very much. You slept light. When I was the platoon corpsman, we would-- if we went out on an operation and then we would come-- be coming back to our area, and then it would just say, such and such squad-- we would all be laying down, or sitting down, or taking a rest and then when they said, we're going to go, that particular squad just stayed there.

[00:19:43.31] We were all set up before they left where we were going to be on the ambush patrol. Well, not patrol, but we were ambush. We were just-- be there, quiet as a mouse. I always took the radio because-- let those guys-- they had all the weapons and whatnot. I took the radio and every half hour or hour, they would call us, like Hotel 3, Bravo, or something like that.

[00:20:31.36] Key your handset if all secure. And you just went, click. You couldn't hear it, but I had the radio right by my ear. So I was the only one who could hear that and I would just click, and somebody would say, Roger.

[00:20:51.73] DEVON HARDY: Did a lot of the other corpsmen also carry radios too, or was that something that you just did?

[00:20:57.89] DONALD PARISH: No. When we were out in the field I didn't carry the radio. I only operated the radio during ambushes. Somebody else would carry the radio and I said, I'll take the radio and you guys-- we had, when we were on an ambush, we had so many guys facing this way and usually two guys facing backwards, just in case somebody tried to sneak up on us from the rear.

[00:21:32.56] DEVON HARDY: What did you do for recreation and off duty activities if you had any time?

[00:21:37.93] DONALD PARISH: There was no off duty, really. If you were not out on a patrol, I would go up and down our lines, just talking with the guys. Not necessarily the corpsmen, but saying, how is your wound? How is your twisted ankle? And I would sit there and talk with them, and maybe have a coffee with them. But it was always, always good. Yeah.

[00:22:09.37] DEVON HARDY: When did you go into the villages? Was that part of the MEDCAPS programs when you--

[00:22:17.29] DONALD PARISH: I guess it was kind of called-- and we would more or less know before we went out where we were going as far as-- and sometimes the skipper would say, bring some extra candy, or this, or antibiotics, or some salves and that. And then we would go back in the next couple of days and look at the kids and whatnot, and see how they were doing and change your dressing and whatnot. Yeah.

[00:22:55.49] DEVON HARDY: Do you have any specific memories of the popular culture of the time, such as movies, and music, and things like that? Probably not.

[00:23:03.26] DONALD PARISH: We never had any movies over there. They had Armed Forces Radio that we listened to. I forget what-- I always liked-- there was two people in particular. One was a lady and one was a man, and they would play country and western, and this and that. And we liked it. It was something different.

[00:23:46.32] DONALD PARISH: There were a great bunch of guys. They would always say, I fell once jumping over a creek, and the edge of the creek just collapsed and that. I fell down and pretty soon all these guys were saying, the doc's hit. The doc's hit, and they were all over there by me trying to drag me to a safer place. And I said, no I'm OK. I'm OK. I said the bank caved in there. So they would do anything for you.

[00:24:35.45] DEVON HARDY: Did you form friendships with men or women from different racial or social backgrounds that you might not have formed back home?

[00:24:41.69] DONALD PARISH: There was no women over there that I saw. There was some at the hospital and that, but there was none out in the field that-- even up in Dong Ha at that field hospital there. I didn't see any. There might have been, but there was none out in the field. There was-- I was-- we all got along.

[00:25:15.52] DEVON HARDY: That was my next question. Any tensions or social tensions?

[00:25:20.83] DONALD PARISH: No. There wasn't. We had Vietnamese folks with us and we all got along. DONALD PARISH: They called us, the corpsmen, they called us bac si. I don't know if that was a real term, but-- they were good. They would go out on ambushes with us, and when we'd go into a village and that, they would interpret and whatnot. They could speak real good English.

[00:26:02.44] DEVON HARDY: OK.

[00:26:03.40] DONALD PARISH: Yeah. And when things got hot and they were right there with us. We would go out on patrol and we would go to these villages and help them. Fix a well, do this. And the kids always knew us. We would treat them with whatever we had-- antibiotics, and injectable antibiotics too and that.

[00:26:41.26] You'd have to mix it, but we would if somebody was really sick. And then a few days later we would go back. And the kids always knew the corpsmen. They would all come running there, bac si, bac si. And I always carried candy for them. Probably wasn't good for them but they liked those little candy bars and whatnot.

[00:27:09.95] DEVON HARDY: So you served as an x-ray technician for the rest of your tour?
DONALD PARISH: For the-- yes. While I was in Vietnam, yeah.

[00:27:15.53] DEVON HARDY: Can you talk about that a little bit? Actually, I don't think we've interviewed an x-ray technician.

[00:27:18.92] DONALD PARISH: Oh. Well, there was-- we were the 1st Hospital Company. When choppers would come in, the first place they would go was, they would be evaluated and always they got x-rays, because you could see a wound but, what else is hit there and whatnot? So we always, always did x-rays on them.

[00:27:47.95] Yeah, there was, I think, five or six of us. We didn't have the good stuff now, like the automatic processes. We had tanks and rapid development and whatnot. That was the only place around there, the dark room, that had air conditioning because we had to keep that stuff kind of cool.

[00:28:16.81] DEVON HARDY: So the rest of the hospital didn't have air?

[00:28:18.73] DONALD PARISH: No. Nope. They would roll up their sides of their tents at night. But still it was, it was OK. Yeah, because I stayed there for, you know, yep.

[00:28:39.63] DONALD PARISH: Most of my-- when I was with the infantry company, most of our operations were north of Dong Ha. In December, or was it-- we were out in the field on Christmas. So I think it was early January of 1968 it would have been, they put us all on helicopters and took us to the amphibious assault ship, Boxer. And then from there we went over to the Philippines for. they said, jungle training. And we all looked at one another, jungle training? But it was because when we come back, we were going to be assaulting companies.

[00:29:49.12] Once we went in, we were supposed to do our thing then go back and-- we made an assault once and we were there for several days, and then they brought us back to the, I think it was the Boxer. Yeah. Everybody really liked that because first thing we all do is just strip down and get in those showers and whatnot.

[00:30:19.44] You wouldn't think a shower would feel that good, but it really did. And then they said, well, we're going to be here for a few days and that. However, at four o'clock in the morning, the lights come on and everybody up, do do, do do. Twenty minutes and we were all up on the flight deck. And we went in, and we never went back to the ship. Yep. We were moved around and whatnot.

[00:30:57.35] DEVON HARDY: Can you describe the quality of leadership?

[00:31:02.08] DONALD PARISH: I trusted all those folks. They were all-- they all seemed like they knew what they were doing. The sergeants, the gunnery sergeants, and the platoon commander, and the company commander. They were great guys.

[00:31:30.58] DEVON HARDY: Can you describe significant actions you witnessed or operations you participated in?

[00:31:36.22] DONALD PARISH: Boy. I don't know that they were called specific actions. I suppose they were, but we were just saying, we're going. I heard some things about operations this or that, but you worry about getting enough meds and dressings and whatnot.

[00:32:08.78] When I was aboard the ship, we weren't there very long but I would go down to what they called sick bay, the medical section down there and talk with those guys and say, hey, you got any more of this or that? Even some salves, because little things like that make them feel good instead of just putting-- something is infected and whatnot. You wanted to make them feel good.

[00:32:56.84] DONALD PARISH: The worst day in Vietnam was probably the day my best friend got killed, and that was four days before I got wounded. That was on the 20th or maybe three days. So 18th of February-- March. That was a long day, long day. We took-- by the time we ended that day, we had I think 87 people left. Three corpsman-- we started out with seven corpsman-- had three corpsman and 87 Marines. Most of them were wounded and evacuated, but seven were killed, including my best friend there.

[00:34:00.87] DEVON HARDY: And where did that take place?

[00:34:02.53] DONALD PARISH: It was kind of northeast of Dong Ha, towards the sea area. DONALD PARISH: I think when we were-- me and Bull, were actually just sitting back talking and that, because we were going to go-- because they give us R&R, we were supposed to go the first week in April.

[00:34:35.04] We were going to go down to-- our R&R was going to be down in Sydney, Australia, and we were really looking forward-- we would sit there and boy, we're going to have a beer and walnuts, this and that, and just relax and be on the beach. But unfortunately, those days never arrived for us.

[00:35:12.57] DONALD PARISH: We had taken that one village, and then when we went through that village that we had taken, and then we were coming across this rice paddy, and there ain't no cover in the rice paddy. I was thinking, I said, I'm going to go over here on the left of that building, and-- because there were six Marines over there and the rest of the company.

[00:35:51.21] There was-- it was not a big building. It was just no bigger in this area here, I guess. That's where I went. And the guys that were still coming across, and we were in there and heard all this firing and whatnot. So I started trying to go back, going along there. I was behind one of those little hedges that separated the rice paddies and this dirt flew up in front of me.

[00:36:35.68] I thought it was just coming from there and then I kept crawling. Then the dirt flew up in front of me again, not far from my head, and I saw the dirt going that way. Our guys were over there and we had some guys over here, and I hollered at the Marines. I said, they're behind us. So some of them went over there and I heard grenades going off, and they hollered at-- we got them.

[00:37:17.03] I kept going out there, and I had to get out to the rice paddy to see what I could do for this wounded Marine out there. When I got to him, he had a broken leg and fortunately there was some pieces of wood out there. So I bandaged him, then I splinted him, and I said, OK, we can go.

[00:37:51.68] There was three Marines, the wounded guy and me. We always had four carrying. We picked him up and started going. And then we started really getting fire from-- so we all went down again, and that one Marine said, if they just sprayed this rice paddy, he said we would be it. But they never did. They always waited till we got up. And each time we got up and started carrying and-- guess who got hit each time? The guy we were carrying.

[00:38:30.58] One wound wasn't bad. It was on his belly, but it was just-- and I looked at it and I said, OK, you'll be OK. I put a bandage on it. It didn't go into his abdomen or anything like that. And then they were hollering at us, OK, we're going to give you covering fire. So we picked up again and said, OK, let's go. And then we started. And man, we really started taking it again and down we went. How those bullets got between us and to him?

[00:39:08.69] The next time he got hit was-- he had this arm here broken. So I had a wire splint and I put that on him and then we, instead of getting up, we dragged him over there. We were just more or less waiting for our help, the rest of the company, because we were on a platoon patrol and they called in the rest of the company to come and help us.

[00:39:53.91] Then we got to that one edge of the rice paddy there. There was a few little shacks and that, and we started carrying the wounded back across to where the rest of the company was. They were giving us good covering fire and then when I had made it across there, I think twice, and I went back. And the second time I went back and the CO said, how many more is over there? I said there's three Marines and the wounded guy.

[00:40:44.55] I knew their names, but now I don't. I said, I'm going back and we'll bring them across. He says, OK, this is your corridor, come down this way. They always tell you, don't run in a straight line. Zig zag and whatnot. We got about half way across and then I got hit. I just went down. I don't know what-- and then it kind of knocked me out for a bit.

[00:41:27.28] It was just a matter of seconds and when I come to and I couldn't move my legs. Oh, man, I got it in the back, you know, but I felt myself moving. And this guy with a broken leg, and a broken arm, and the belly wound, he was dragging me.

[00:41:59.74] Then I could start moving my legs and I got up beside him and then we just moved along, and then there was a bomb crater there. So that's where we went to get-- we were protected there. And that's the only time I took my .45 out. Now it's out there in the--

[00:42:23.61] [LAUGHTER]

[00:42:25.15] DEVON HARDY: But it was wrapped in plastic, right?

[00:42:26.95] DONALD PARISH: Well, I took it out of the plastic. Before I started wrapping it in plastic, I'd-- you're laying out there in the rain and whatnot, and you get back and you got-- it was all rust and whatnot. You can take it apart. So I just wrapped it in plastic and I didn't have to do all that. I kept it nice and greased, and I carried-- one clip was in there with six shells, and none was in the chamber though. And then I carried two other six thing magazines. That was that.

[00:43:09.78] When we were in that rice paddy, you could tell the CO was-- he said, just stay down, stay down. Air's coming, and you saw these planes. What were they called? They were the smaller plane, but they were jets and they carried rockets. You could just see them circle around and then they would come in and shoot the rockets, and then once they used up the rockets, they just started with their machine guns,

[00:43:50.54] the .50 caliber machine guns they had on them. While that was happening, they come out to get us. And then the CO-- I don't know how they were carrying me. They were carrying me with my face down instead of-- I mean, they were just trying to get us out of there. And the CO was hollering, that's no way to carry him. So he come running out there and they carried me the correct way.

[00:44:27.84] DEVON HARDY: Where were you hit?

[00:44:29.34] DONALD PARISH: I was hit-- the bullet went in over here and let's see. We must have been doing a zag that way and the bullet went in over here and it's right in my-- still in my hip. It went across and hit my lower pelvis. When the choppers come in, they took us to the field hospital at Dong Ha, and from there, they shipped us out to the hospital ship Sanctuary.

[00:45:08.18] I was on there for five days and then the Sanctuary come into-- pulled into Da Nang and offloaded us all, and then we were loaded on those Air Force C-141s, I think, Yeah. Big, big cargo planes.

[00:45:35.43] DEVON HARDY: And where did they evacuate you to?

[00:45:36.81] DONALD PARISH: They took us to Guam.

[00:45:40.34] DEVON HARDY: OK.

[00:45:40.55] DONALD PARISH: Yeah. Naval hospital at Guam. First they had a fuel stop in the Philippines and then on to Guam. And I stayed, well, the whole time I was out of the field was two months. Once I was well enough to be discharged, they called me down to the personnel office and said, where do you want to go? He said, you can go any place you want. I said, I want to go back and finish my tour.

[00:46:25.41] The guy just looked at me like I was stupid or something. But then he said, OK. So from there I went-- well, even on Guam I had to wait for orders. So I went to a clinic there on the island of Guam and helped there at the clinic for, I think, a bit longer than a week, and then they called and said the orders are in. I had to report to the air base and they flew us to Da Nang again.

[00:47:12.57] We got there kind of late at night. At the airport, they loaded us-- told us all to go into this big old building there. There was people there to meet everybody, you know. And you know what? Where was I going? I just kept on waiting up. Pretty soon, come dark and there was not a soul around. So I just went over there in the corner and slept until I heard the door open in the morning.

[00:47:51.56] Somebody said, what are you doing in here? I said, just waiting. I'm supposed to go to the 1st Division-- what was it? division surgeon's office. He said, OK, come on. So he said, OK, bus is going to come by. And he took me to the division surgeon's office and the people who assigned--

[00:48:30.58] He was a captain. Actually, a medical corps-- and he said, I'm not sending you back out in the field. He said, you're an x-ray tech? I said, yes, sir. And he said, OK, you're going to the 1st Hospital Company, which was about a mile away from where the division surgeon-- So I stayed there for some time in July or early July or June, until-- I was supposed to leave in October but I didn't get orders.

[00:49:11.15] Then in November, they called me up to the division surgeon's office again. And he said, we got to get you out of here, because our normal tour was 12 months. He says, OK, go down, pack your stuff and report down here. Come back here tomorrow and we'll have your orders.

[00:49:36.82] You're going to go to Okinawa until permanent orders come for-- so I went to Okinawa for, I think, about two weeks. And then finally-- I worked in the clinic over there again. And then the orders come and I got what I wanted. I wanted, well, I wanted either Japan or Italy. So I got Italy. Naples, Italy. DONALD PARISH: I wrote all the time.

[00:50:14.54] DEVON HARDY: Did you?

[00:50:15.23] DONALD PARISH: Yeah. Yeah, I talked to them once when I was in the hospital on Guam. I didn't-- when I first got hit, when they come around, I was on the Sanctuary then and they asked me if they wanted-- said, you want us to send a telegram to your parents? I told them, no, because my dad was working and I didn't want this telegram to get to the house when my mother was there by herself.

[00:50:59.61] So I wrote to my sister and I said, you explain to Ma. Then after a few days, I sent a letter to her because I figured this letter was already there and my sister had explained to her that I was OK, I was being taken real good care of. And then letters just started coming in. Wow.

[00:51:35.78] DEVON HARDY: While you were on the Sanctuary?

[00:51:37.07] DONALD PARISH: Yeah.

[00:51:37.52] DEVON HARDY: OK.

[00:51:38.03] DONALD PARISH: Yeah, and then when I left the Sanctuary to go to Guam, and then from Guam I went back to 1st Hospital Company. And then after I left there, when I went to Naples. Over Naples, I swear, there was-- they had wads of mail that had come in over there for me.

[00:52:11.34] And because they were-- first it went to here and there, and there, trying to catch up to me. And finally, it did over in Naples, Italy. I would look at them and I'd-- here's from

them and I'd put them there and then I would look at the dates, and then I would start reading that way.

[00:52:38.55] DEVON HARDY: How much news were you receiving about the war, or about back home during the war?

[00:52:46.59] DEVON HARDY: You only heard it on-- so what was it called? Voice of--

[00:52:52.52] DEVON HARDY: Voice of America?

[00:52:53.75] DONALD PARISH: No. Something about Vietnam there. You'd hear about all these demonstrations and riots, and whatnot. Some guys would say, if I was back there, I'd kick their-- [LAUGHTER]. But when I got back in the States, I landed in San Francisco.

[00:53:32.36] Then I stayed at San Francisco at Naval Station Treasure Island for a few days awaiting the orders for Naples. I knew I was going there, but-- and after a few days they said, OK, you can go home. We're going to send this to-- all your travel stuff, we'll send it. We'll send you a letter there at home and then the letter did come to my home here.

[00:54:18.45] When I got the letter, I looked at it and they told me what to do. Go to the nearest military establishment, which was at that time Kincheloe Air Force Base. So I went there and they fixed me up with travel right to Rome. Well, how did they do it? Sault Ste. Marie to Detroit, Detroit to New York. Had to stay in New York one night, and then New York to Rome. Got on another plane in Rome to Naples. And I was there.

[00:54:51.42] DEVON HARDY: How long were you in Naples?

[00:54:55.67] DONALD PARISH: About 25 months.

[00:54:57.59] DEVON HARDY: Wow. And then, were you an x-ray technician the whole time there?

[00:55:02.49] DONALD PARISH: Yes.

[00:55:02.79] DEVON HARDY: OK.

[00:55:08.76] DONALD PARISH: I come from Naples to home here, and then from-- I had orders to the aircraft carrier USS Intrepid, which is in New York now as an exhibit ship or something like that. It was an aircraft carrier, which I liked. It was good duty.

[00:55:40.57] DEVON HARDY: And what year was this? When was this?

[00:55:43.60] DONALD PARISH: I reported there in December of '68, just before Christmas.

[00:55:54.58] DEVON HARDY: OK.

[00:55:55.26] DONALD PARISH: Yeah.

[00:55:55.84] DEVON HARDY: And how long were you on the Intrepid?

[00:55:59.45] DONALD PARISH: I think 32 months. I got off of there because, when we pulled back in, they were going to decommission the Intrepid, which they did. And then I got orders from there to-- where did I go? Oh, the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology in Washington D.C.

[00:56:30.63] DEVON HARDY: When did you finally come home to Michigan? To Brimley?

[00:56:34.53] DONALD PARISH: To retire? I retired in June of '89. So I spent 28 years in the service.

[00:56:46.05] DEVON HARDY: So you were traveling in other locations, thus the whole time before you retired you were away from Michigan?

[00:56:51.39] DONALD PARISH: Yeah.

[00:56:52.38] DEVON HARDY: Wow.

[00:56:52.83] DONALD PARISH: Yeah. I'd come home sometimes.

[00:56:57.06] DEVON HARDY: And how long were you in the Pathology-- or the Armed Forces Pathology?

[00:57:02.43] DONALD PARISH: I was stationed down there, let's see, almost four years. And then from there I went to the Advanced Hospital Corps School, which was 48 weeks or something like that. And that taught you to go aboard ship and be independent of a doctor. You did everything.

[00:57:36.19] DEVON HARDY: Wow. 48 weeks?

[00:57:38.30] DONALD PARISH: Yeah.

[00:57:38.91] DEVON HARDY: Wow.

[00:57:39.78] DONALD PARISH: I mean, when you go to school in the military, you go to school. It's not like going to college. Oh, I have a class here today and then-- you went to school every day. Eight in the morning till five in the afternoon or something like that. Yep.

[00:57:57.69] DEVON HARDY: Let's just go back a little bit. When you finally returned back to the States, what was your homecoming like at that time?

[00:58:04.97] DONALD PARISH: From Vietnam, you mean?

[00:58:06.68] DEVON HARDY: From Vietnam. And from Naples.

[00:58:08.87] DONALD PARISH: I landed, like I said, I landed in San Francisco and I flew to Detroit. I had a brother and sister-in-law down there in Detroit, and they picked me up there at the airport. I had friends that I knew and they weren't at the airport but they were at my brother's house after that.

[00:58:39.54] I was going to fly from Detroit up to the Sault, but my brother asked if I could stay there with them for a few more days because he had put in to be off. So we drove up. And then, well, when we got home, so many people were there. Yep. Then they had a big thing at our old house. That old house that I was born in, that they towed out of the woods there. There was so many cars around there and people because they knew when we were approximately coming in. Yeah. It was a good homecoming.

[00:59:42.23] DEVON HARDY: You were welcomed home?

[00:59:43.07] DONALD PARISH: Yeah. Then they had a big-- few days later, they had a big meal and everything down in the church basement there, and-- Wow, Good. Yeah.

[01:00:01.22] DEVON HARDY: Was it difficult at all to readjust to life after the war?

[01:00:05.48] DONALD PARISH: No. I don't think so. No, I don't have any PTSD or anything like that. Sometimes I think what would happen if I would have done this. But no, I don't have any regrets of what I did because I think I did a good job.

[01:00:44.93] I feel good about myself doing that. But over the years things, I don't know, we get into things that probably we should not. Like the Middle East right now, you know. I was talking with somebody there and I said, the only thing we heard about the Middle East before was Saddam Hussein, and ever since we went over there and liberated that country, things have been downhill since over there.

[01:01:31.73] That's my opinion, anyway. You don't hear any good things about that over there. I guess the only good things is we don't have a whole bunch of troops and that over there now.

[01:01:51.05] DEVON HARDY: Have you had contact with fellow veterans over the years?

[01:01:55.62] DONALD PARISH: There was-- once a year, I go down to-- it's in lower Michigan at Selfridge Air National Guard Base. It's just kind of east of Detroit. Once a year I go down there and have-- it's called Retirees Day. We all talk, you know, who were you with and this and that.

[01:02:22.05] They're all guys my age and some a little bit younger. It's just one day, but we have a good time talking and eating lunch, and they tell us about things that's going to change with our retirement, cut back on this or addition to that. Yeah.

[01:02:55.54] DEVON HARDY: How did your Vietnam-- or your experience in Vietnam change you and affect your life afterward?

[01:03:01.45] DONALD PARISH: Oh, I don't think it has. I honestly don't think it has. I think of Vietnam once in a while. Well, we never went there. But I did what I was supposed to do and I think I got-- as a medic over there, or corpsman, you're only supposed to fire your weapon to save your patients, and that one time I pulled it out and I never fired it.

[01:03:42.54] And even the Marine who was-- there was another Marine, and he said, how does this thing work? [LAUGHTER] because he was always used to the M16. And I treated the NVA over there too. It's like that one night there, I think it was the 18th or the 20th or something around there of March. After we took this village, we were just kind of waiting for morning and whatnot.

[01:04:23.67] There was supposedly nobody else there and then we heard all this shouting and that. They were coming through and they were trying to escape under darkness. Unfortunately for them, most of them were cut down.

[01:04:45.04] There were wounded guys there, and I treated them just like I would treat one of the Marines. Start an IV and-- I didn't-- I just more or less stayed with him because it was quiet time there once-- and the CO said, how is he? And I said, well, he's got a belly wound. So I started an IV on him. He was evacuated the next morning with the rest of the Marines.

[01:05:29.51] DEVON HARDY: So did you have any follow up or just-- ?

[01:05:31.85] DONALD PARISH: No, because a few days later-- they were choppered to Dong Ha, which you could kind of almost see along the Cua Viet River there. What happened to him, I don't know.

[01:05:54.23] DEVON HARDY: Was that a single occurrence or was that-- did it happen-- ?

[01:05:56.66] DONALD PARISH: Oh, no. I patched it up several of them, but that was the last one I patched up there. I remember him kind of looking at me and I just said to him, I said, bac si. And he shook his head and I gave him a morphine, and patched him up and started an IV on him. I would check on him periodically.

[01:06:31.46] DEVON HARDY: And you stayed with him too?

[01:06:32.73] DONALD PARISH: Yeah. Yep. He wasn't very, very far away and I was going around checking. You don't get up and start walking around. It's always crawling. Your elbows and whatnot. You get used to them, you know.

[01:06:52.05] DEVON HARDY: How did your experience in Vietnam affect the way you think about veterans returning home from today, which you sort of started to get into a little bit?

[01:07:02.55] DONALD PARISH: It's a lot different. The ones who's coming back today are really praised. I mean, if I was coming back from there, there would be all these people at the airport wishing me well instead of calling me such and such, or so and so. But even when I come

back, that never happened to me then. But I'm glad it's changed because the people in the military are there for a reason. That's for-- they help the non military folks.

[01:07:54.42] DEVON HARDY: What do you think the war has meant to you and your generation?

[01:07:57.97] DONALD PARISH: I feel good about what I did over there, but after thinking about it for so long, we didn't accomplish anything. Once we pulled out, they just rolled down. Yeah. I saw some films of them and I was looking, and I said, God, we were there.

[01:08:26.15] They had these tanks coming across there. And it's the same way over in the Middle East there. I think sometimes we get carried away. When I say we, the folks out East there get carried away with how they're going to do stuff and maybe they don't think enough about it.

[01:08:59.33] DEVON HARDY: How do you think the Vietnam War is remembered today?

[01:09:06.37] DONALD PARISH: I don't think it's-- you don't hear about it. It's not remembered very, very much. Folks ask me on occasion because when I wear my hat and they will say, were you in combat? I said, Vietnam. He said, oh, OK. Good. But that's about it.

[01:09:37.99] DONALD PARISH: Do you have anything that you'd like to pass on to future generations? Any lessons?

[01:09:48.44] DONALD PARISH: I don't know. I don't know if it's a lesson or not, but I just want to say, the younger generation, I would hope they would stay off the drugs. So many of them are on drugs now. I get the Navy Times all the time and I read all, and it's-- I can't believe how much drug use is out there. I wish it would-- they would cut back on that stuff.

[01:10:32.15] They said medical marijuana is good for you and whatnot, but I don't know. It seems like folks-- well, I really don't know but they may go on to other stuff if this medical marijuana doesn't hold them. I have not done it. I take, well, you see I had knee surgery and the doctor gave me some pain pills, and I took two pain pills out of that group.

[01:11:20.05] And then after a while, I brought the pills and the container over to the pharmacy and said, don't need them anymore. But if I have an ache or something now, here or there, my knee or whatever, I'll take a couple of Tylenol. It does what I need it to do. It's not just probably the military that's into the drugs, it's lots of people. I'm sure there's, well, there's lots even here on the rez.

[01:12:09.97] DONALD PARISH: They had a replica of it here in Sault Ste. Marie several years ago. And I went up to it, and found some friends names on there. The guy I relieved, the corpsman in that 3d Platoon, he was pulled out of the field. Actually, they said, you spend six months in the field and we will send you to-- whatnot.

[01:12:47.76] But like that one day, we lost four corpsmen and you have to replace it with someone. And he was sent to another company, and unfortunately he was killed. It was one of-- in our battalion. And he was killed. I got his name on that. You know how you do that, and I got Bull Schaffner's, and there's a couple other guys that I have there that I knew. One was a platoon commander. I have not made it out to that one out in Washington yet.

[01:13:38.71] DEVON HARDY: Do you think you'll ever get out there?

[01:13:42.64] DONALD PARISH: It would be nice, yeah, but right now I'm very limited what I can do because of health issues at home. DONALD PARISH: I saw it in the paper. Yep. I think that's how I called you that one time. Yeah.

[01:14:06.87] DEVON HARDY: What are your impressions of the commemorations, or what do you think of the efforts?

[01:14:12.11] DONALD PARISH: Oh, I think it's great. Yeah, I really do. Yeah. More people should be into this and whatnot. I don't know if you folks-- are you kind of it?

[01:14:33.01] DEVON HARDY: There's more of us.

[01:14:34.45] DONALD PARISH: OK.

[01:14:35.08] [LAUGHTER]

[01:14:35.92] DEVON HARDY: There's a lot more of us in D.C.

[01:14:38.95] DONALD PARISH: In D.C.? OK.

[01:14:40.42] DEVON HARDY: Yeah. But we're the best ones.

[01:14:41.83] DONALD PARISH: Yeah, I agree with you. Yeah. I think it's great.

[01:14:50.14] DEVON HARDY: Great.

[01:14:50.47] DONALD PARISH: Yeah, I really do.

[01:14:52.61] DEVON HARDY: Is there anything else you'd like to add? One last thing?

[01:14:57.28] DONALD PARISH: No. I can't think of anything right now. Maybe later on I'll think of something. I probably will when I-- oh, should have said this, I should have said that.

[01:15:07.54] DEVON HARDY: Well, sir, thank you so much for your interview today. I could talk to you for hours. So thank you so much.

[01:15:12.64] DONALD PARISH: My privilege.