

Savage, Clyde US Army

[00:00:14.12] CLYDE SAVAGE: I was born in McCalla, Alabama, October 19, 1943. Yeah, I was from a family of 13. So I had seven brothers and five sisters. Five of my brothers, and-- including myself, served in the military. My mother was a housewife. With 13 kids, she couldn't be anything else. My father did a little farming, coal mining, and timber.

[00:00:41.36] MARK FRANKLIN: So what was it like growing up there in the '40s?

[00:00:44.00] CLYDE SAVAGE: A lot of different than it is today. They didn't have cell phones. You had bicycles and you-- you did a lot of walking and stuff like that because we were in the country. We actually didn't have a TV for a very long time, and no telephone.

[00:01:03.51] MARK FRANKLIN: Were you drafted or did you volunteer to join the Army?

[00:01:05.99] CLYDE SAVAGE: I volunteered to go in.

[00:01:07.16] MARK FRANKLIN: And why did you do that?

[00:01:09.00] CLYDE SAVAGE: Well primarily, to probably to get out of the situation I was in. And I'd heard a lot about it. My older brother was in the Marine Corps, and one was in the Air Force. And I joined the Army. I enlisted in the Army in November of 1960. I had heard about Dien Bien Phu with the French, and that's all I knew about Vietnam at the time.

[00:01:30.53] When the subject was brought up for the second time was-- I was serving in Korea. There was a French guy, his father had been killed over there, and he was volunteered to go back over there as an adviser. And he tried to get me to go back. That's the first time I heard from an active-- read about Dien Bien Phu in school.

[00:01:49.22] So going into Vietnam, the people are a lot different. Their customs and things are a lot different. But there's a lot of similarities also, rice paddies and things like that. I had a good idea of what I was going into before I got there. But like I say, the customs of the people are completely different in each of those countries.

[00:02:15.31] CLYDE SAVAGE: I had basic training at Fort Riley, Kansas. And we trained as a-- of course, the basic training at that time was about 10 weeks or so. It was longer than it is now. I was in what they called an over rep unit. It was a unit that was designed to go overseas and be replaced unit by unit. In other words, one battalion would replace another battalion with a group of trained Soldiers. So we trained together as a battle group at the time, it was called a battle group-- as a battle group, from basic training all the way up to advanced unit training. And then we deployed to Korea

[00:02:53.37] MARK FRANKLIN: And what was your MOS?

[00:02:55.26] CLYDE SAVAGE: 11 Bravo. At that time, it was 1-1-1. I was there for three years. And then when I was over there, I was a machine gunner with an infantry company.

[00:03:01.89] MARK FRANKLIN: Do you think that training you received prepared you for what you were going to see in Vietnam?

[00:03:06.63] CLYDE SAVAGE: No, it's a little different. We were training for a little bit different because we were under the Pentomic thing at that time. And it was designed to fight basically in a nuclear environment. That's why we had it. It was a combat battle group other than the battalions and things like that.

[00:03:26.39] MARK FRANKLIN: Any other training you received after basic and then unit training, the base unit training?

[00:03:32.32] CLYDE SAVAGE: Well, NCO Academy and things like that. I went to an NCO Academy and tactical training courses and things like that, put out by units for the NCO. I was assigned to the 11th Air Assault in '64 at Fort Benning, Georgia. And there, we trained with the helicopters and developed the concept of air assault at Fort Benning.

[00:03:57.82] So the training we received, during the 11th Air Assault was designed to deploy as an air assault unit, not necessarily applied-- to deploy as a unit to Vietnam. Even though that concept was probably thought about when they were putting it together. But immediately after we were selected to go, we did do some different jungle-type training and stuff like that.

[00:04:22.79] MARK FRANKLIN: Talk a little bit more about the air assault training that you did. What did that involve? What did that entail?

[00:04:28.33] CLYDE SAVAGE: Well, that involved loading on and off helicopters, identifying each helicopters coming, what the formation of the chopper was, which chopper you belonged to, what you were supposed to do when you got off the chopper, and how to prepare to load on choppers and get out as a unit. We had a specific place you had to be because if the helicopters come in on a heavy lift, that would mean that you would have, at a five platoon size concept, you would have three on the right and two on left.

[00:05:05.46] On the left, the heavy right would be opposite. So you had to put your troops to get on the planes based on where that helicopter was. And the other thing, you had to think a lot quicker on what was going on. Because you could be sitting around, drinking a cup of coffee one time and five minutes later, you would be in combat. And that happened for-- maybe a little longer than five minutes, five or 10 minutes. That happened in Vietnam quite a bit.

[00:05:37.23] CLYDE SAVAGE: We left in August of '65. And Johnson deployed us in July. I think he told us in July. So we didn't have-- well, it was September of '65. So we only had a couple of months to actually train before we left. And we went by ship. The boat I was on was called the USS *Rose*. And we left out of Savannah, Georgia, went through the Panama Canal, and over. That was the longest trip, probably, anybody ever took to Vietnam because we had to chase a typhoon around in the Pacific. You know, dodging it. So it took about a week longer there, it seemed like.

[00:06:14.67] I went to Korea on a troop ship. But I went over as a private, so I was in the hole. And as a private in the hole, you got a bunk here and a bunk there, and that's all you got. But on the USS *Rose*, I was a NCO so we had little rooms with four NCOs in it. And we tried to do training on the decks of the ship, as far as physical training and some marksmanship training as well. Because we had just been given the M16 rifle at that time, so we hadn't had that much experience with dealing with that rifle. So we did a lot of shooting off of the back of the boat at a towed target.

[00:06:53.49] MARK FRANKLIN: So they did have a target for you to shoot at. You weren't just shooting--

[00:06:56.52] CLYDE SAVAGE: Yeah, they did, put something out there and towed it.
[CHUCKLES]

[00:07:00.06] MARK FRANKLIN: What did you think of the M16?

[00:07:02.40] CLYDE SAVAGE: We didn't like it to start with because we were used to the M14. In bayonet training and stuff, like, with M14, you used the butt of it as a weapon too. And it was heavy wood. It shot a very large round, and it could penetrate a lot. Most people that shot a .22 rifle, that was the same size bullet that the M16 fired. Matter of fact there, the .223 is the same thing as a 5.56, except for a difference in the powder load and the chamber pressure on them.

[00:07:32.29] So we weren't very impressed with them to start with. But then, once we started in, they would do a lot more damage than you think they would, as far as killing someone is concerned. Got a lot of people, a lot of guys argued about how I shot a whole magazine into him. But I said, no you didn't, you shot a whole magazine at him. Because if you hit him a couple of times, it's going to kill him.

[00:07:56.12] MARK FRANKLIN: When did you actually arrive in Vietnam?

[00:07:58.31] CLYDE SAVAGE: We arrived in September, last part of September.

[00:08:03.53] MARK FRANKLIN: 1965?

[00:08:04.70] CLYDE SAVAGE: '65, yes. Well, we got off the ships and got on trucks in Cam Ranh Bay, and rode to An Khe. Now I think the 101st had secured-- or 173rd had secured that area for us. But we had an advance party over there ahead of us who was preparing the place for us. Of course, when we got there all we had was pup tents. So the troops slept in pup tents for, it seemed to me like six or seven months, where you got two guys to it. And me and another sergeant had a little larger tent, like a CP tent, that we were in. About, it seemed like it was six or seven months, they got the large GP-type tents with the wooden floors in them, which was very good for termites.

[00:08:55.52] MARK FRANKLIN: It improved conditions a little bit.

[00:08:57.32] CLYDE SAVAGE: Yeah, for termites especially because we had legs on the wooden bunks. When you come back and you lay down on it, it just fell apart because the termites had ate it up. So you learn- you live and learn.

[00:09:13.92] CLYDE SAVAGE: I was a squad leader 1st of the 7th, 1st Cav Division.

[00:09:18.63] MARK FRANKLIN: What were your initial duties as squad leader?

[00:09:21.83] CLYDE SAVAGE: It's to train and lead the Soldiers in the squad. A squad usually consisted of 10 folks. That would include me and nine other Soldiers. It would be taking care of the troops, making sure they had what they needed the best you could, and making sure the maintenance on the weapons and equipment was up to date, and they knew exactly what to do as far as training was concerned. Since we had trained together for-- some of them up to 18 months at that time, you pretty well knew everybody in the squad, and you knew who their brothers and sisters was and everything.

[00:10:00.10] Because you had been around them, and you're sitting in the field a long time, you sit around and talk to people, and you get to learn who the folks are.

[00:10:12.88] We had C-rations probably for, I'd say about six months. The first thing that I got from the mess hall was a cheese and jelly sandwich. That's the first thing I seen past C-rations before the mess hall got completely set up and operational. And of course, that only meant-- most of the time you ate C-rations in the field anyway. Now, if you were close to local, where they could deliver meals, and the situation would allow it, they would bring warm meals out a lot of times, in what we called the mermite cans, which is a can that keeps the food warm, and the coffee, and whatever they brought out.

[00:11:01.06] CLYDE SAVAGE: It was very close. Like I say, you knew everybody, and you spent a lot of time with that particular group. Because if you've got a squad or a platoon, you're with them all the time. When you're in the field, and you're talking to the other squad leaders, and you're talking to the other squads as well, so you get to know everybody pretty well within a platoon, so you're very close. Because it's pretty tough training with that 11th Air Assault now because they kept you moving. And you're in the field, you were extremely tired when you finished to come out.

[00:11:35.05] MARK FRANKLIN: Now, did you make friendships with folks from different racial or social backgrounds that you might not have otherwise had you not joined the Army?

[00:11:42.49] CLYDE SAVAGE: Of course, I think everybody does. It depend on what a part of the country you was from. I had black Soldiers, African-American, and Hispanic Soldiers also in my squad.

[00:11:53.55] MARK FRANKLIN: So the country's starting with the civil rights movement, and there's some turmoil. Did you experience any social tensions or turmoil in your unit in Vietnam?

[00:12:02.30] CLYDE SAVAGE: Now, '65 and '66 was different from about '67 on. When I was there, we never experienced-- I've never seen it anyway in the line units. And I would say, probably, in the line units itself, even after that, you didn't see much of a major issue because they had to depend on each other so closely. But in the rear support units you probably had more of that because you didn't have to necessarily depend on that guy in the next foxhole to keep you alive. So your perception of other persons is a lot different, depending on your situation.

[00:12:38.77] If we had any time off, which it was very seldom, you'd get together with a couple of your buddies, maybe go have a couple of beers. You couldn't get drunk, you know, because you never knew when you were going to be called on to jump on helicopters and go. You could have a couple of beers, but you had to have your head together. Because if they needed you, they loaded you up, and you went.

[00:13:01.98] MARK FRANKLIN: Do you have any specific memories of the culture? And by that I mean books, movies, or songs that, if you heard a song today, it takes you back to your time in Vietnam?

[00:13:10.20] CLYDE SAVAGE: Oh, there is a couple. I think Nancy Sinatra, "These Boots Are Made For Walking," was one thing that came out. And then, the first movie I've seen, they spread the sheets out between two poles in the company area and showed *Combat*, with Sergeant-- what is his name, whatever his name.

[00:13:28.19] MARK FRANKLIN: Vic Morrow, the TV series.

[00:13:29.67] CLYDE SAVAGE: Yeah, *Combat*, we seen that. And the next one we seen was, *Paint Your Wagon*, I believe it was. And it was showed on a sheet.

[00:13:46.45] CLYDE SAVAGE: Oh, we had great leadership. First of all, like I said, 11th Air Assault was very special. So they staffed it with special, qualified, good leaders. And in my platoon, my platoon sergeant was a Korean War vet, couple of squad leaders were Korean War vets, and the battalion commander, of course, was out of Korea. And they were all very good leaders, from the battalion commander on down. They were there on the ground with you, and you knew you could depend on them. So the leadership was good.

[00:14:21.68] Well, LZ X-ray, the battle in November of '65, pretty well changed that because we lost a lot of our leaders in there. And also, we had guys that were draftees. A week or so after, or a couple of weeks after that, they were gone. Their tour was up, their two years was up. If they didn't get killed in X-ray, they either moved out in the hospital and then were discharged, they went home or were discharged. So we had a lot of people we had to replace. Then we had to retrain.

[00:14:57.65] We had a lot of new, brand new NCOs because we had a lot of NCOs got killed. And a lot of them that weren't killed were moved up in a position to take the place of some senior NCO that had been killed above him, so you had to fill in the leadership slots.

[00:15:16.34] And therefore, the cohesion of the unit suffers a little bit there. But the hardcore NCOs that were left in there just pulled them back together pretty well. But even at that, the training wasn't as good as it was when we went over. And the casualties showed that. Because when we were in battles, we lost the new guys a lot quicker than the older guys. So experience counted.

[00:15:43.16] MARK FRANKLIN: So talk a little bit more about your unit and the role it played in Vietnam, what its mission and role was.

[00:15:50.43] CLYDE SAVAGE: The role of the 1st Cav was to pursue and kill the enemy. Basically, that was it. You didn't have a particular terrain that you occupied. And the only way you could tell success, if you killed the enemy and made them move out. And basically, that was our mission.

[00:16:09.14] We worked as companies and battalion levels, and sometimes down to the platoon level, in search and destroy missions, where you'd put a platoon out there to find the enemy. And then you would bring in a company or battalion, whatever it took, to deal with whatever was found by that search unit. And then you brought in a destroy unit.

[00:16:34.00] CLYDE SAVAGE: LZ X-ray was one of the first-- was the first major battle between American Soldiers and the North Vietnamese Army, commonly known as the NVA. That's when Colonel Moore dropped the battalion into a landing zone called LZ X-ray. You named them-- X-ray, Charlie, Tango, or whatever. We happened to land at X-ray. That's how everybody knows it as LZ X-ray. And it so happened, that we just jumped in amongst a whole bunch of NVA that was on Chu Pong Mountain, which was about 200 or 300 yards from the LZ. So we got in there, and we only had a couple of companies on the ground when they were beginning to engage the enemy. They come down the hill, and we engaged them.

[00:17:17.92] And my platoon actually went out to the flank to help one of the platoons that had been pinned down. And when we went out to the flank, the lieutenant went too far. And we chased some NVA out, and we got trapped out there as a platoon. So we were out there 27, 28 hours alone, away from the LZ X-ray. So the battle of LZ X-ray started for us at X-ray, and it ended at X-ray. But most of our battle was outside X-ray.

[00:17:46.40] MARK FRANKLIN: Talk a little bit about that.

[00:17:49.37] CLYDE SAVAGE: Well, it was a pretty tough battle. Because, first of all, if the folks have seen the movie, it didn't happen any way or form that the movie showed. Nobody was totally disorganized. We just moved too far out and away from the rest of the battalion. But we were not disorganized. But the movie shows us as being disorganized. We were not.

[00:18:12.11] When we made contact with the main unit, two squads went down in position on the ground because we was on a little knoll, was firing on the lead company of the NVA. And we didn't know it as a company at the time.

[00:18:26.41] And then one squad, which was from my squad, flanked around, and the machine guns followed me and set up on a little knoll also. So my squad flanked out and hit the enemy from the side. That's when we realized, when we seen them choppers going around, that we had hit a big force. And I pulled my squad back. The two machine guns were set up for firing in support of me. I got back into the-- formed the perimeter. The two machine gun crews never made it back.

[00:19:00.72] But anyway, when I got back in there, then they hit us from a couple sides at the same time, it seemed like. And they killed the platoon sergeant and the platoon leader. And we had a mortar FO with us and an artillery FO with us. And the medic with us was the company medic. So we were lucky to have the medic with us.

[00:19:26.03] The mortar FO got killed. The artillery FO got knocked out, disabled. He couldn't do anything, so we had all the leaders going and all the fire adjustment people dead or incapable of performing their mission.

[00:19:40.12] And the mortar FO guy fell in front of me. I pulled his radio headset under a log, and I started calling artillery in. And artillery's what really saved us. I called artillery in real close, plus Captain Nadal was assigned with A Company-- they started to attack them about the same time that they were hitting us hard. And that took a lot of pressure off us as well.

[00:20:07.26] So I contributed a lot to A Company and their efforts to get to me, distracting the enemy from us directly. We would have probably been killed. That gave us time to get the artillery adjusted anyway.

[00:20:22.73] MARK FRANKLIN: So talk about what was going through your mind when you realized you were now taking over the platoon.

[00:20:27.83] CLYDE SAVAGE: I didn't-- nothing. I just looked around to see what had to be done to try to survive. I knew we couldn't go back because we had a lot of people wounded. Most everybody in that platoon was wounded. I am an exception. I got a couple of scratches, a little bit of fragments, and stuff like that, but I didn't get wounded seriously.

[00:20:46.61] But a lot of people in that platoon did. So there's no way you could withdraw. So the only thing you could do was to set up your perimeter and pull in tight, get the ammunition redistributed, and get your artillery restoration set in. And that's exactly what I did.

[00:21:02.37] MARK FRANKLIN: And if I were to ask you your worst day in Vietnam?

[00:21:05.18] CLYDE SAVAGE: We would probably put that one in there also.

[00:21:07.49] [LAUGHTER]

[00:21:08.63] Although, you know, Bong Son brought some pretty rough days too now.

[00:21:11.45] MARK FRANKLIN: Well, talk about that operation.

[00:21:12.83] CLYDE SAVAGE: Well, Bong Son was rough psychologically. Because what we did there, we were always running into them. Like I told you, with a helicopter, they could run all night, and you will catch them in 10 to 15 minutes. And that's basically what was happening. We had a lot of little fierce, furious battles, and they would just pull back. A couple of days later, we'd run into them again. So psychologically, you knew. If you were a company back, you would hear it when the fight started. So you had to maneuver up there.

[00:21:45.86] MARK FRANKLIN: Well, what was your mission when you hit Bong Son, when you went into Bong Son?

[00:21:49.86] CLYDE SAVAGE: It was the same thing.

[00:21:52.27] MARK FRANKLIN: Find the enemy.

[00:21:53.17] CLYDE SAVAGE: Find the enemy. They had intel, of course, that they were NVA-- not just VC, but NVA in that area. And the primary mission was to clear them out. And the only way you do it is kill them.

[00:22:12.80] CLYDE SAVAGE: Probably when I left. [LAUGHS] I don't know, Christmas or Thanksgiving, or something like that.

[00:22:18.35] MARK FRANKLIN: Do you have some memories of the holidays when you were in Vietnam?

[00:22:21.68] CLYDE SAVAGE: Very few, but I can remember eating turkey up on the firing line, [LAUGHS] and yeah, for Thanksgiving. And we were back for Christmas of '65. So we had a Christmas dinner in the cantonment area.

[00:22:40.81] MARK FRANKLIN: Was that in An Khe, back in An Khe? Or where were you at?

[00:22:42.76] CLYDE SAVAGE: An Khe. And then we were back into Bong Son January and February.

[00:22:52.75] CLYDE SAVAGE: The Koreans operated very close to us a couple of times. And a couple of times, they were there and we could talk to them. I had been to Korea before. I could speak a few words of Korean. And we talked on a bridge we had. They were on one side, and we were on the other. I waited for them. A bunch of us came over, and we talked to them.

[00:23:09.01] South Koreans are the best. They are good soldiers. You didn't mess with the South Koreans. They had no rules. They were just to kill you.

[00:23:24.19] CLYDE SAVAGE: The Vietnamese people, I think, were friendly to anybody who was there at the time in the combat areas they were in. They would probably like the Americans to win over and get the VC out. When you were there, they were friendly to you. But I have a feeling that when they were there, they didn't have an option. They had to be friendly to

them too. But I see no hostility directly from the civilian population. And they always treated us very well. They didn't seem to be afraid of us, as a matter of fact.

[00:23:59.76] CLYDE SAVAGE: Oh, everybody wrote-- just about everybody-- every opportunity you got. Of course, you were in the field, and a lot of times it's raining, you couldn't write. And if you did, everything got wet. And so, you normally only wrote when you were not doing something or you were back in base camp. And so, you would have wrote more. I guess, the guys in the rear did.

[00:24:20.41] Well, you always got letters from home. Just about every day you would get letters from home-- that you got mail. Sometimes, three or four days you wouldn't get mail. But when you come back, you would get everything at once.

[00:24:31.61] And they would mail stuff like cookies, and you know, canned goods that you couldn't get. And of course, once you got something like that, you shared it with everybody.

[00:24:40.74] MARK FRANKLIN: Does that come mostly from family, or church, or from folks you didn't know?

[00:24:44.16] CLYDE SAVAGE: Both.

[00:24:44.90] MARK FRANKLIN: Oh.

[00:24:45.24] CLYDE SAVAGE: Both. And if anybody got a box, everybody gathered around to see what was in it. He didn't mind sharing.

[00:24:51.99] MARK FRANKLIN: He kind of had to.

[00:24:52.87] CLYDE SAVAGE: Yeah. And I didn't tell anything about the killing and stuff like that. Tell about the operations, but not exactly what we were doing. We were out in the field three or four days, you know. And it was hot, and things like that, but never the gore that you sometimes seen.

[00:25:08.46] MARK FRANKLIN: Did you get much news about what was going on back home? By that I mean the politics or any social movements.

[00:25:14.64] CLYDE SAVAGE: No. No, we didn't. Until the last part of the tour, we heard a little bit. Matter of fact, there wasn't that much going on in '65 and '66.

[00:25:29.00] CLYDE SAVAGE: Well, we took it with us, the M16. Yeah, and the M16 was an up-and-coming weapon. And it's still-- they still have it today, so it worked out real well. But the other technology that I remember is the Starlight scope, where you could see at night. The NVA and the VC, which is the Viet Cong, didn't know we possessed it or didn't know what it was. But you could look out across the rice paddies a couple, 300 yards out. If they were coming across it, and it was just about totally dark, you could see them, and you could identify what weapons they were carrying. So that was good technology. But you always had to make sure you use only one

eye because the light would get rid of your night vision. And it was cumbersome too. It was huge.

[00:26:15.84] MARK FRANKLIN: It was big?

[00:26:16.97] CLYDE SAVAGE: It was big, yeah. Most of time, it was mounted on the M60. But a lot of times, the squad leaders would carry it with them into an ambush.

[00:26:29.66] CLYDE SAVAGE: July '66, one tour, that was it. I came back from Vietnam, and I taught basic training and advanced individual training at Fort McClellan, Alabama. We reopened that post from World War II and we started training infantry Soldiers there. I spent about a year there, and then I went to Alaska from there. And I spent three years in Alaska. And being an Alabama boy, it was really cold. So I got out of the Army at that time for a couple of years. That was in '68 I got out, I came back in '69.

[00:27:06.99] MARK FRANKLIN: When you came home from Vietnam, talk about what that was like.

[00:27:10.56] CLYDE SAVAGE: Well, I'm from the South, so the Southern folks are pretty-- were pretty dang supportive of what was going on at that time. I never run into anything negative as far as being spit on or anything like that. Of course, like I say, it was early, before all that stuff started. And most of the time, it was just the bigger cities, and where we were coming into in California, where those things actually happened. But then it spread, like everything else did.

[00:27:38.31] MARK FRANKLIN: Did you witness anything when you landed in California?

[00:27:40.56] CLYDE SAVAGE: No.

[00:27:41.71] MARK FRANKLIN: Did you make a career out of the Army or did you get out of it?

[00:27:43.74] CLYDE SAVAGE: Yes, I did.

[00:27:44.34] MARK FRANKLIN: You did?

[00:27:44.87] CLYDE SAVAGE: Yes. I went back in, and I retired in 1982.

[00:27:48.39] MARK FRANKLIN: 1982. Was it difficult to readjust to life after the war, in between your getting out of the Army and coming back in?

[00:27:58.93] CLYDE SAVAGE: Well basically, yes. Because there's a couple of years I was out. I just felt like something was completely missing.

[00:28:05.17] MARK FRANKLIN: Talk about that a little bit.

[00:28:09.29] CLYDE SAVAGE: I was working and going to college at the same time. And you-- it seemed like something was always missing from the day. First of all, your gun's missing, because you always carried a gun. I didn't feel completely happy as a civilian. And my recruiter, who was a buddy of mine, he called me and said, hey, if you want to go back in, I can get your rank back. You can come back, and you go back in before Christmas.

[00:28:37.23] I had to think about it, said, I'm gone. So I went back. My brother said, don't go back in, you'll be pushing up daisies. They're going to send you back to Vietnam.

[00:28:45.14] But then, I didn't go back to Vietnam. I came back to Benning. I taught weapons at the Fort Benning, Georgia. And then I was assigned to Korea, come back to Benning. Went from Benning to Germany, come back from Germany to Benning, same thing. And I retired at Fort Benning.

[00:29:05.71] MARK FRANKLIN: Oh, OK.

[00:29:06.82] CLYDE SAVAGE: I retired at Fort Benning. I got my masters in education administration. And then I went to work back at Fort Benning, Georgia. And I worked at Fort Benning for 21 years for the infantry school. I developed programs of instruction, wrote field manuals.

[00:29:22.75] MARK FRANKLIN: What years were you at the infantry school in Fort Benning?

[00:29:27.18] CLYDE SAVAGE: The last time I was there, I came back in '78.

[00:29:29.94] MARK FRANKLIN: Yeah.

[00:29:30.48] CLYDE SAVAGE: And I retired out of infantry school in 2003. 21 years, I worked for them. I worked for training developments, which was developing programs of instruction and their manuals, and evaluation of courses also. And they also assigned me to evaluate Reserve forces schools and Reserve NCO academies. And I had Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands, Georgia, Florida, and Alabama. And I did that for about a year and a half. And then I went to the intel side as an intel analyst, intel research analyst.

[00:30:08.19] And I worked for the intel side, as far as acquisition is concerned, new weapon systems. And I played the threat or identified the threat that would be against that system. So in a field test, I would actually take a unit out there and fight against them using the Red tactics.

[00:30:25.54] MARK FRANKLIN: Did your time in Vietnam help you with that? Or was it completely different?

[00:30:29.05] CLYDE SAVAGE: Oh, yeah. It helped it a lot. Yeah. I mean, any experience you got when you start planning a military operation, it plays in.

[00:30:38.43] MARK FRANKLIN: How much contact have you had with your fellow veterans that you served with in Vietnam?

[00:30:44.43] CLYDE SAVAGE: We had a reunion every year up until the COVID came in.

[00:30:48.23] MARK FRANKLIN: Hm.

[00:30:48.84] CLYDE SAVAGE: Yeah, every year. And we've had one planned every year ever since COVID, but it's been canceled because of COVID. We did get a group together a couple of weeks ago, several people called the people and said, hey look, if they can't get one together, let's have one of our own. So about seven or eight couples showed up in Memphis about a month ago. So we had a little mini-reunion there.

[00:31:17.52] MARK FRANKLIN: Now is this 1st Cav reunion or is this specifically--

[00:31:19.97] CLYDE SAVAGE: The battalion.

[00:31:21.09] MARK FRANKLIN: Oh, the battalion reunion. OK.

[00:31:22.86] CLYDE SAVAGE: Yeah. I think the next Cav reunion is going to be in Ohio, I believe. Someone told me the other day.

[00:31:34.81] CLYDE SAVAGE: I think it did affect me. You know, I always said that it didn't, but it probably did. When I came back, I drank a lot more than I normally would. And of course, going to Alaska, that's all you had up there. There was nothing else to do. But I don't blame that on Alaska, I'll probably blame that on the experience there. I've always denied having PTSD, and I still deny it today. But I probably do have some of it.

[00:32:01.99] Because a lot of times I get irritated real quickly, which I didn't ever do that before. That may be with PTSD, I don't know. But I don't have dreams at night, or nightmares, or anything like that. And I attribute that to the fact that I worked with the military for 41 years after I came back from there, directly with the Soldiers on the ground, talking to them, and sharing your experiences, all the way up to the guys who were fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq.

[00:32:33.46] MARK FRANKLIN: How did your experience in Vietnam affect the way you think about veterans returning from the battlefields in Iraq and Afghanistan today?

[00:32:43.39] CLYDE SAVAGE: You remember how you felt when you come back from there, and you know that there is something deep back in their head, where they say they're-- nothing bothers them or not, that it actually is. And I'm glad to see that they are supporting the vets that are returning now in the way that they do, and the many programs that they got.

[00:33:05.95] But I attribute it to what happened to our guys coming back from Vietnam, and it's trying to sort of a payback for the Vietnam guys. You cannot wear this hat anywhere now without somebody talking to you, or buying your dinner, or buying you a drink, whatever. Sometimes, it gets to be too much.

[00:33:30.53] MARK FRANKLIN: What do you think the war meant to you in your generation?

[00:33:33.93] CLYDE SAVAGE: This generation?

[00:33:35.01] MARK FRANKLIN: Your generation.

[00:33:35.91] CLYDE SAVAGE: Oh. I think the Soldiers that fought it, as far as that generation is concerned, they think that what we was doing was the right thing. And they supported the idea of what we were doing. And they still do till today. You know, someone will say it was a waste of life. Yeah, it was a waste of life because they will say it was-- we did not lose the war militarily. We lost the war politically. And I guess that might help to say that, but it doesn't change the fact that we did lose the war.

[00:34:12.26] MARK FRANKLIN: How do you think the Vietnam War is remembered today?

[00:34:15.47] CLYDE SAVAGE: I think that people are saying, thank you for service to the Vietnam guy, but they really don't know what the war was all about. Because, you read conflicting stories about what was the purpose of being in Vietnam, and should we have been there or not. I think the younger generation is not even reading any of that, as far as I know. Most of them, if you mention Vietnam or anything about Vietnam, they don't know it unless they've seen it on TV. They got other wars to worry about. We've had one going on for 20 years.

[00:34:52.35] MARK FRANKLIN: So if there were any lessons that you might have taken from Vietnam to pass on to this or future generations, what would those lessons be?

[00:35:02.59] CLYDE SAVAGE: The American Soldier is one hell of a good Soldier. And he will fight and do exactly what he is trained to do. If you send him over there to fight, he's going to do it, and he's going to do a damn good job of it. And your Soldiers are true patriots, as they should be. So if you say anything around a Soldier against the US, they're going to get excited about it. Whereas in the civilian world, you may get away with it. But with the military, you probably would not.

[00:35:33.42] MARK FRANKLIN: Have you been back to Vietnam?

[00:35:35.16] CLYDE SAVAGE: Yes, I went back in '93 with General Moore and the ABC program they put together about returning to LZ X-ray.

[00:35:45.48] MARK FRANKLIN: What was that experience like for you?

[00:35:48.33] CLYDE SAVAGE: Well, we flew in the North Vietnam, Hanoi. And a stark difference between North and South when we flew in there. We flew into the North, they ignored us on the street. I guess because maybe they thought we were Russian. I don't know. Nobody paid any attention to us-- very much attention to us. But when we got in the South, the South Vietnamese were all over us.

[00:36:12.35] MARK FRANKLIN: In a good way or a bad way?

[00:36:13.28] CLYDE SAVAGE: Good way. They were all over us.

[00:36:14.69] MARK FRANKLIN: How so?

[00:36:16.40] CLYDE SAVAGE: They would all come gather around you and say, GI, good job.

[00:36:24.67] CLYDE SAVAGE: I was there for the dedication of it. Well you know, first when I seen the design for it, I didn't like it. And I think most Soldiers didn't like it. But when you go up there and you see it, as it actually is, then it is great. It's a great memorial. But when they drew it, being on the ground, and stuff like that, the guys were really upset about that, until they went and seen it.

[00:36:50.49] And the other thing about it, that started other memorials up there. If you notice, there's a Korean War memorial up there now, there's a World War II memorial being put together. And there's statues and things around there that celebrate the women in the war as well as the men. So there's a lot of-- those memorials-- that memorial started a lot of stuff, as far as memorial is concerned.

[00:37:21.12] CLYDE SAVAGE: Well, I hadn't seen it in action yet around because I haven't attended any of the things that are supposed to be planned. But I think it's a good idea. You're probably going to get a few vets. There's not that-- really that many vets left from my era, my time there. In the later on, say, up into the '70s, you probably got quite a few that would be interested in that. And then again, when you got a veteran, you got all their families too. Because all reunions now have more family than you do have vets.

[00:37:55.35] MARK FRANKLIN: Is that right? So the families are invited.

[00:37:56.97] CLYDE SAVAGE: The families come.

[00:37:58.17] MARK FRANKLIN: Wow.

[00:37:59.23] CLYDE SAVAGE: That's the sons, and daughters, and grandkids, and they all show up there. A lot of them do, not all of them, but a hell of a lot of them.