ORAL MEMOIRS

OF

GUADALUPE CARRASCO

An interview conducted on

June 25, 2015

Interviewer: Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai

Angelo State University

West Texas Collection

"War Stories: West Texans and the Experience of War, World War I to the Present"

LEGAL STATUS: The oral memoirs of Guadalupe Carrasco are unrestricted. The interview agreement was signed on June 25, 2015.

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WONGSRICHANALAI: So, my name is Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai. I am one of the co-directors of the *War Stories* project. We are here in Pecos, Texas on June 25th, 2015 for a *War Stories* interview. So, just to start, what is your name?

CARRASCO: My name is Guadalupe Carrasco.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Okay, and where were you born? Where are you from?

CARRASCO: I'm from Pecos. I've lived here all my life. I was . . . I left Pecos for two years while I was in the service. That's the only time I've been out of Pecos.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Oh, really?

CARRASCO: Really.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Okay, well, before we talk about that, let's talk about this part of the country—West Texas. How is it different from the rest of Texas in your opinion?

CARRASCO: Well, the rest . . . there's . . . Texas is more . . . got all kinds of sceneries, you know, like this is more like a desert, you know, the trees don't grow that big. We have a lot of mesquites, which are good for barbecuing; that's one thing good about it. Like I went to . . . I took my training Fort Hood. Of course, Fort Hood the trees are bigger, got lakes are bigger, and the scenery is more . . . more beautiful.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Is there something special about West Texas?

CARRASCO: Well . . .

WONGSRICHANALAI: Actually before that, where do you think West Texas starts?

CARRASCO: I think West Texas starts from El Paso towards Fort Stockton all the way to, I would say, around Abilene. Then you start noticing the difference a little bit.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Is there something different about the people who live in West Texas that distinguishes them from other Texans?

CARRASCO: Yes, I believe we're a lot more friendlier. I've been to other . . . other towns and if they don't know you, sometimes they don't even say "hi." Now over here, ever since I was a small kid, we were always told to treat somebody the way you would like to be treated. So, even . . . even if I don't know somebody, I say, "Hi, how are you doing?" Or if we see somebody in trouble, a lot of people will help him, you know. And nowadays it's hard because of people that are bad people that take advantage and hurt other people, but it used to be that in years back, that anybody around Pecos would get help if they get in any kind of trouble. So, I believe, in my opinion, we are pretty friendly city . . . town.

WONGSRICHANALAI: It's changed a lot.

CARRASCO: Yeah, it has. And, of course, the oil boom changes it, and we get different kinds of people, but until they do something wrong we treat them . . . we are still friendly with them. Of course, you're not . . . you're not going to judge a person by how they dress, you know. Sometimes you meet them at a Walmart; they've barely got out of work and you say "hi," and a lot of people say "hi," and some people don't so you just ignore them, but we take the initiative to say "hi" first and try to make new friends. Doesn't matter if you're Chinese, Japanese, we treat everybody the same in my opinion, or I try to do it.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Fair enough. So, when and where did you enlist in the armed forces?

CARRASCO: I was drafted.

WONGSRICHANALAI: You were drafted.

CARRASCO: It used to be that, people were drafted in my age because the pay in the armed forces was a lot less than what you would earn doing in a civilian job. When they went to the volunteer Army, they had to raise the pay. So now they can have soldiers that earn comparably what civilians do, but at that time I was making about 200 a week in . . . a week okay, and I went to the Army I was making 90 dollars a month. So that's how come they had to draft a lot of people. The only people that joined the Army were people were, of course, people who were going to make a career out of it. They plan on staying and gain rank. That's how come their salary went up, so eventually would earn what a civilian would. But somebody who didn't plan on making it a career, you know, of course, you weren't going to join.

But during the Vietnam War, we were drafted. There were draft dodgers I guess, you know. They would burn the flag. They would burn their draft cards. Some went to Mexico. Some went to Canada, and me as . . . as a person that's what they had to do. That's how they felt, and they have the right to feel that way. But if you're patriotic and you got drafted, you served. But after so many years that they were out of . . . out of the country if they came back, they would be court-martialed and taken to court. But then they got us some kind of amnesty . . . amnesty that they could come back which it was all right, you know? Because they paid not by, you know . . . by not getting drafted they couldn't be in this country for a period of time. So . . . but it's their right, you know. We . . . the United States gives a lot of rights, you know. It's up to them if they wanted to serve or not. So, that's the way I feel.

WONGSRICHANALAI: What were you doing when you got drafted?

CARRASCO: Seismograph, you know, looking for oil. That's . . . that was what I was doing, but of course, you know, I only worked there for about four months because I graduated high school in May . . . the last part of May. June, July, August, September, October. They drafted me in October, so I was . . . I worked for six months as a civilian, then I got drafted.

WONGSRICHANALAI: What year was this?

CARRASCO: In '66. Yeah, in '66. Yeah, I graduated May '66 then I got drafted October '66. So, I didn't make . . . I didn't get used to the money in other words. So, with 90 dollars I could

live on . . . of course, you had a free house and free meals. All you had to do was buy cigarettes, go to movies, and you would make it, you know.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Was there a history of service in your family?

CARRASCO: I have a . . . I had a . . . my oldest brother was in the Army. He volunteered, and I had another brother—he's the one above me—he's a year older than me. Now, he . . . he got rejected because he was short and chubby. He got rejected. He volunteered, and he didn't pass his physical. He came back and got into an exercise program, got on a diet, went again, and he passed. So, they were both volunteers. I was the only one that was drafted. Then my . . . my youngest brother, he volunteered, and he made a career out of it, you know, and he . . . I never thought he would last the 20 years.

WONGSRICHANALAI: So, how old were your brothers? How much older than you were they?

CARRASCO: Okay, my oldest was about . . . he's about three years older, and my second brother is one year older, and of course the youngest is . . . he was the baby of the family. He went to Iraq. My older brother . . . my older brother, he went to Germany. From Germany, they sent him to 'Nam and the . . . my brother that's a year older, he went to Korea. I went to 'Nam, and the youngest went to Desert Storm.

WONGSRICHANALAI: What did your parents do?

CARRASCO: My father, he was a laborer. He is from Mexico, so he was a laborer, and my mom was a housewife.

WONGSRICHANALAI: And so, did all of . . . so the four of you joined the Army?

CARRASCO: Well, they joined; I was drafted.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Right, right, but you were all . . . ?

CARRASCO: Army.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Army.

CARRASCO: The branch of service was the Army.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Was there a reason for that?

CARRASCO: No. I don't know. I don't know. I mean that's what everybody was doing when they were joining, you know? Usually . . .

WONGSRICHANALAI: Not the Navy or the Marines?

CARRASCO: No, I don't know because it was their decision to go into the Army. I don't know why but . . . so we were all in the Army.

WONGSRICHANALAI: So, what was your rank progress through the Army?

CARRASCO: I made Spec-4 and then after . . . after I came back from 'Nam, I joined the National Guard part time because in the National Guard you would train a weekend, a month, and two weeks a year in Fort Bliss. So, I . . . I joined the National Guard and stayed there for two years . . . two more years. I reached the rank of buck sergeant in the National Guard.

WONGSRICHANALAI: So, how long was your training at Fort Hood?

CARRASCO: It was a whole year because when we . . . when we went to Fort Hood they activated the 198th Light Infantry . . . Infantry Brigade, so we weren't going to replace soldiers that were wounded or killed. We were going to go as a whole unit, you know, so we had to train more because we had no experience . . . the people, soldiers. Like if you're just going to replace someone who got wounded or hurt, there would be someone there who is experienced. And we were going as a whole unit, and we departed Fort Hood and went by train to San Francisco, boarded a ship, and took off.

WONGSRICHANALAI: How long did it take?

CARRASCO: Thirty days.

[Recording paused and resumed]

WONGSRICHANALAI: You were at . . . Which unit were you with?

CARRASCO: I was with 198th Light Infantry Brigade.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Right, and you were talking about how you were deployed as a unit?

CARRASCO: Yeah, we were deployed as a unit, and that's why we . . . I believe that's why we received the whole year of training. So, we took a boat, took all our equipment, jeeps, and everything in the boat. That was a big boat. Now, I'd never been on a boat that big.

WONGSRICHANALAI: You said it was about three weeks?

CARRASCO: No.

WONGSRICHANALAI: No, no.

CARRASCO: Took thirty days.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Thirty days. Almost.

CARRASCO: To get over there. At first, I got seasick. I was seasick for about a week. I would say, "Why didn't they fly me over there?" I would have reached the battle zone sooner, but I said, "I don't care. I'm sick." And after . . . after about a week, I got well with the pills and the doctor helped me get well, and I said, "Nah, I'd rather not get there that soon. I'd rather go on the boat."

WONGSRICHANALAI: Well, this unit, how large was it? How large was the unit?

CARRASCO: The unit?

WONGSRICHANALAI: Yeah.

CARRASCO: It was a brigade, which a brigade usually has, I believe, four battalions. Each battalion has about four companies. Each company has about four platoons, and there is about thirty soldiers in a platoon. So, I would have a . . . I would need a . . .

WONGSRICHANALAI: Calculator.

CARRASCO: Yeah, to figure out how . . . but it was pretty big, you know. It was pretty big.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Well, now, the unit trained in Fort Hood, Texas, but the people must have been from all over the United States.

CARRASCO: Oh, yeah, yeah. We had people that came in from California, New York. I mean, they were drafting right and left, you know, because they were . . . they were running out of people to draft. When the draft first started, people would not get drafted if they were married, but as the government increased the troops in Vietnam, they started drafting people that were married, you know? So, anybody had a baby was not drafted; only the guys that were married. By the time I came back from 'Nam, they started drafting people with one child. They kept increasing the number of troops, so they had to increase the eligibility of the . . . of the person, you know? So, it was . . . it went on. So of course, you know, we were drafted, we served, and we got out, you know. The whole volunteer army, they can be deployed, they come back, they stay so long, and then they deploy them again. When we went, we served, and we got out. So, that's the difference now. They can go so many times. I've heard of soldiers being deployed about four times now. So, their chance of getting hurt are a lot more than us because we only went one year. We came back, and we were out of service.

WONGSRICHANALAI: These soldiers from other parts of the country, were they curious about Texan soldiers?

CARRASCO: Not really. I mean, we had trouble with the people from the North because Texas is . . . During the summer it got real hot, and they're not used to the heat. Now, us local guys from Texas, we . . . we had to . . . sometimes we had to empty our . . . you know. When we had like a . . . heat exhaustion, you have to bring down the temperature right away before they go into a heat stroke because it's dangerous, and we had to empty the canteens and just get them all wet to get the temperature down. So, we learned right away that we had to take care of each

other. I mean, I could go in 110 degrees heat and they would . . . they would say, "Hey, Lupe," because everybody is under the trees looking for shade, and I'm used to the heat. So, there was one advantage that we had. Even in Vietnam, you know, I had the advantage of me being used to the heat even though over there the difference was that it was very humid in Vietnam, so it kind of set me back a little bit. It's not the same kind of heat, but I could still take it, you know, and some people just couldn't adjust, you know? But we . . . we took care of each other. I mean, if I needed to pour my canteen over you and you were in my unit, we would do it. We would have to take care of each other. There is no, "I'm not going to do it." Everybody would do it.

WONGSRICHANALAI: It was a sense of community spirit.

CARRASCO: Well, brotherhood, I would say. By the time we got out of our training, I think you had spent more time with your buddies than with your brothers because we would almost sleep together, about two or three feet apart; we would eat together; we would drink together, so you would treat each other like a family, you know? And that's good because you can't do it by yourself, you know? You have to look after somebody's back. Somebody else has to look after your back. So . . .

WONGSRICHANALAI: So, this unit, was there a special mission that you trained for?

[Recording paused and resumed]

CARRASCO: If we had a special mission or what?

WONGSRICHANALAI: That's right.

CARRASCO: Well, we were trained for search and destroy mainly. There were . . . It depended on the mission. Sometimes, Vietnam was divided into areas that nobody was supposed to be living there. And of course, a lot of people saw the soldiers burning the hooches. I call them "hooches" because they're made out of the stems from the rice, you know? But they . . . we didn't do it because we wanted to be mean. We did it because these people were what you would call "Vietnam sympathizers." They would provide them with food, arms, ammunition, whatever they need to help. So, there were . . . nobody was supposed to be doing it. So, our mission was to destroy whatever the Viet Cong could use and move the people to where they were assigned. They were assigned . . . They were moved by the South Vietnamese Army to different towns, but, you know, people—I always say—like me, we get old and we don't want to follow rules, I guess. So, they would go back and we . . . We weren't burning those villages because they weren't completely villages. They were just like a couple of huts, you know? But we had to move the people back, and burn them down, and destroy whatever the Viet Cong could use.

And, of course, we would also be like a . . . if we were going search a village, we would go search in it because we had information that there were Viet Congs at the time in that village so then we would conduct an . . . an assault on the village and, you know, that was our . . . our main mission. Being a light infantry unit, we could also help . . . we . . . we operated with Marines. We operated with . . . with the Vietnamese Army. At times, we operated with the Koreans because we had Koreans over there in the war too. For . . . the reason is, being a light weapons infantryman and a light weapons infantry unit, we could be ready in five minutes. It

took the helicopters longer to get . . . and pick us up than it took for us to get ready. Because all we had was one pair of . . . extra pair of shirts, of pants, and that's it. And, of course, we had the ammo and food for one meal. So, if they say soon as we got our mission we were ready. Just move to the LZ where they were going to pick us up, and we were ready, and if the Marines needed help we could go help them. [Phone rings] I'm just going to . . .

WONGSRICHANALAI: That's okay.

CARRASCO: . . . get them. That's probably my grandson.

WONGSRICHANALAI: That's okay

CARRASCO: Anyway, that's why . . . that's the difference between a light infantry and heavy infantry, which is mechanized.

[Phone ringing in background]

CARRASCO: It takes them more. . .

[Recording paused and resumed]

CARRASCO: . . . to go to where the fighting is. Of course, you know on a helicopter you can go cross country, right? And mechanized you have to go with APC roads. They could go through rice paddies, but it would take them longer. Now us, we would be there as soon as . . . as soon as them. Then we had a . . . different kinds of combat assaults. It could be a hot LZ. It could be a cold, you know? If we went into an LZ hot, that means the fighting was there, so we just had to jump out of those choppers about five to six feet before they land. They didn't land; they just slowed down, and we would jump. If it was cold, they would land, you know, just enough to let us down. But we—I would say—saw enough action to last me my lifetime, but that was mainly our mission because we could do it.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Well, before you were sent over there and before you were drafted, what did you understand of the United States' role in the world? Not specifically in Vietnam, but what was the United States supposed to do in the world?

CARRASCO: Well, you . . . you hardly gave it a thought. I hardly would think. I knew that we had been in Korea to help the South Koreans. And I always knew that the United States would help the oppressed or people that were trying to be . . . taken over by communist nations. That was the way I saw it, you know. Of course, now I see it a little different. I feel right now that it's hard. It's very hard for the United States or for the present commander-in-chief to make the decision to go to war. From my experience in Vietnam, we took over the war. We did more of the fighting than the South Vietnamese, which I . . . which I see now, you know? The South Vietnamese go out, they would get into a fight, they would come back, and then they went to the Americans. Now, we were supposed to be there to help them, not them help us, so that's the way I see.

Now with ISIS, you hardly know what to do, you know, because the president wants them to take the initiative and do most of the fighting, and they're not going to do it, you know? We shouldn't even get involved. They have to commit themselves that they are going to win their independence, win their battles because it's just like a kid that you buy him a toy, and because he didn't work for it, he didn't pay for it, he doesn't take care of it. That's the way I feel about the South Vietnamese. They didn't fight for it, and when we got out they simply ran. We went, and we gave Iraq their . . . their freedom, not that of the United States' soldiers. I think that they did most of the fighting, the United States. And what happened when ISIS came in? They had no leadership, no . . . they didn't put up a fight. So right now, I don't know. I don't even know how anybody would say or make a decision to go into war. I know ISIS is a terrible army; they're murderers. They're . . . I think they're crazy, but wouldn't that be a hard decision for somebody to say, "Okay, we don't help them, then we might have terrorists in the United States. If we help them and do most of the fighting and as soon as we leave, they are going to lose it." So, that's the way I see it.

WONGSRICHANALAI: So, this has changed, your view has changed over the years or did it change after Vietnam?

CARRASCO: It changed over the years. I would say over the years. When . . . when . . . but because I completed my tour in 'Nam, you know, that war wasn't over until several more years after I came back. And then when you . . . you see on TV that the armies weren't even fighting or even putting up a fight, you know, then I started feeling I lost a lot of buddies for nothing because they're not even trying to keep their independence. As a matter of fact, I saw a plane that was supposed to be picking up women and children, and the Vietnamese Army came in running and got on the plane and left the women and children there. I couldn't believe my eyes.

WONGSRICHANALAI: When was this?

CARRASCO: When the North was starting to take over the South. Of course, we were out of the war by then. We didn't have ground troops, but we still had the embassy, but . . . you know. All I know is that I did . . . I did my duty. I did my job to the best of my ability. I also know that in war, you know, you're going to have collateral damage. There is no way, unless you've been there, that you're going to fire at somebody without somebody getting in the crossfire. And now, I think the United States is thinking too much of the collateral damage. I mean, if the civilians want to be there with ISIS, it's their choice, but . . . So I think they should . . . you know, if they want to go in, go in all the way; don't say, "Hey, we can't do this because there's some civilians there." It's their job to get out of the way. But that's the way . . . That's only my opinion, which is very little. But in Vietnam, we of course we didn't try to kill nobody that . . . that was not the enemy. There were females that we'd kill. They were carrying rifles. Because sometimes the Viet Cong were like the wives or females enlisted with the Viet Cong, so we had no choice. But a lot of times, you know, it happened; you got collateral damage, so . . .

WONGSRICHANALAI: What did you understand about the mission or even the people within your unit? Did . . . Did they understand what you were doing in Vietnam?

CARRASCO: Yes, I believe so. I believe we all understood. Like in Vietnam you . . . you had to be like compassionate . . . compassionate one minute, and then you have to be ugly the next minute because you would go, let's say, to the village with the medics to help the people, the sick, and then they would start firing at you. I mean, you had to fire back. So, it's hard. To me, I think it was hard work. I mean, it's not like where you only engage the enemy against the enemy. There was always civilians and . . . and, of course, you know, you . . . you had to do whatever you had to do to survive.

WONGSRICHANALAI: So, would you say it was difficult to interact with the Vietnamese people because you could never tell?

CARRASCO: Exactly, because the only . . . the only army . . . the North Vietnamese Army—they were a regular army, and you knew that they were the enemy. Now the Viet Cong, on the other hand, are farmers during the day and enemies at night, you know, because they try to go in and throw grenades at you; they would, you know, if . . . if they had enough ammunition, they would ambush you when you left your base. So, you never knew who was the enemy if . . . if it was the Viet Cong. Sometimes . . . being only one year that we went over there, by the time you left, you learned a lot and then you brought it home with you. Like for instance, you know, so one of my buddies, you know—we just noticed it—from carrying the backpack and ammunition and everything, you would get your shoulders . . . they were hard and kind of, you know, marked. And then we . . . We took in . . . Took in some prisoners, and we noticed they were the same. Saying, "They got to be Viet Cong, you know, because they've got the same marks we got." So, after that if we came into a village, that's the first thing we'd check, you know. "Hey, you're a farmer during the day, but you're Viet Cong at night." You know, or when you go . . . you're ready to go fight you . . . you carry your stuff, you know. So, another thing we would do you know check their bodies, you know, because sometimes when they try to penetrate your perimeter—we've got barbed wire, you know—and they would cut themselves. They're like razor type, and . . . and we learned this. Like I said, we were a brand-new unit, you know? No one was there before us to tell us, "Hey, check this; check that," but you learn a lot, you know? And of course, the . . . The people that were replacing our injured, we would pass that information to them. Like I was a tunnel rat. They picked the shortest and skinny guys, and you had to look for . . . they would hang snakes on strings to get you, you know, in the entrances. They would have false walls, you know. It's a lot of stuff that you just learn yourself.

WONGSRICHANALAI: They didn't train you for this?

CARRASCO: Well, not really because nobody told me. I didn't know I was going to be a tunnel rat until I got over there. You know, they told us about it, but not, you know, experience. Because when we got over there, they never told me . . . The captain says, "Hey, can you fit in there? Can you? You're our company tunnel rat." But you know, it's just one of those things.

WONGSRICHANALAI: So, where did you serve in Vietnam? Like where . . . Where in the country?

CARRASCO: All over the place. Remember I said they sent us . . . I served in Da Nang, Chu Lai. Our base was in Chu Lai. That's where we came in, but our duffel bags came . . . I saw my

duffel bag when I went to R and R because I went to get my uniform and go on R and R, came back, picked it up, went back to the field, and saw it again when I left country because we were all over the place. We were in Da Nang and Chu Lai or close to the Cambodian border. Like I said at one time to our colonel, "Colonel, I want to put my unit together." Because this company was helping this Marine. This company was helping somebody else. We were all, at one time, we were all spread apart because it was during the Tet Offensive. Do you know what the Tet Offensive is? When the Viet Cong kind of got together and took over most of Vietnam. So, we finally got the . . . the battalion back together so . . . and . . . and like I said, you know, the United States was pretty good at feeding us, you know? I think the most I went without eating was . . . was about two . . . two days. Other than that, you know, we had rations, but you got tired of it. But like I was telling you . . . your friend. You could never go hungry in Vietnam because you had bananas; you had coconuts; you had tomatoes.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Tomatoes?

CARRASCO: Toma . . . tomatoes, chickens, watermelon, tomato. And then of course, you want a fish? Get a grenade throw it into the river, and the fish would float, I guess, from the concussion. And then you pick up the fish, you cook it, you know. It was . . . Vietnam would be a good tourist country, you know, if they would develop it because you breathe the air up there—it's fresh, you know? In the backcountry, you don't . . . you don't smell the . . . the fumes from the cars . . . the cars. They use water buffaloes to transport the stuff, you know.

Of course—like I was telling your friend—you watch what you eat because—I was telling her—one time we . . . we had an operation in a village, and one of the G.I.s got bit by a dog. So, our captain said, "Go get us the dog because we . . . they need the head to examine it for rabies, or if you don't get it, then you're going to get those painful shots in the stomach." So, we went and got the dog, but the helicopter . . . it wasn't at a priority to get it back, so it took a while for the helicopter to get in. The kids stole the dog, so we went after the dog again, and they were roasting him like a pig, you know? So, you watch what you eat over there because you don't know what you're going to be eating. We knew they ate cats and ducks of course, but not dogs, you know? But . . . it's just you don't know how . . . how good you have it here in the United States compared to a third world country. There's a, you know . . . they say that there's hunger here, but I don't believe there is hunger here in the United States because people get food stamps. They got churches that give out food. So, I don't see how we can say that there is hunger here compared to what these other people go through in the third world countries. And then another thing, before I left . . . Some of the poor people . . . We would go into a village, let's say, and we would, you know, try to get information from them about the Viet Cong. So, we would kind of rough them up if they were young, you know?

WONGSRICHANALAI: Did you have any language training?

CARRASCO: No. I already forgot, but I knew how to say "stop" and "you may go." That's it. But the most important thing was "stop" because if I needed to search something, I would tell them to stop and then search, but no training, no.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Did you have an interpreter?

CARRASCO: Yeah, they had interpreters, but it would be on a company level, you know. And a lot of times we were in a platoon or squad level. So, we . . . I hardly saw an interpreter.

WONGSRICHANALAI: So, you go into a village, and you'd rough up some people to get information?

CARRASCO: Well, yeah. And . . . and then one time we decided to . . . to . . . to stay, you know, rest a little bit there, and here come the Viet Cong. They saw them talking to us. So, they rough them up again because they thought they gave us information. So, they had it lost, you know. The people, they wanted to be neutral and got caught in the middle. They had it lost because they . . . they got it from both ends. So, you know, war is hell. That's . . . that's what they say. So, it's just a lot of stuff that goes on in a war.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Can you walk me through what you would usually do if your squad came to a village or if you found a tunnel? Like . . . ?

CARRASCO: Well, first of all, if we found a tunnel . . . Of course, that would be . . . I wasn't there for the tunnel raid. But the tunnel rat would carry a .45 or a .38 mil. Now, the Army would give you a .45. If you thought that the .45 was going to damage your ears, you would call home . . . not call, but write home and have them send you a .38, which I had, you know. And then what you did, you went with your bayonet checking the walls, you know, of the tunnel. Of course, you had a backup because you don't want to be in there while somebody comes in behind you. So, you . . . you had to have a guy outside.

We would have a commo wire. You know, it's just as thick as baling wire, and it's flexible, and we would give each other signals. If I was in trouble and I was hauling ass back, I would just yank it as much as I can and haul ass, you know? But if I am coming slowly, I would give three . . . three pulls real slow. We had to have signals in case, you know, something happened. Because, of course, you're not going to . . . If you find something or you find somebody in there, you're not going to stay in there and fight him, you know, on his terms. That would be his terms. So, you would haul ass and then throw in some grenades, you know? After the grenades, you know, you can go in because they were probably dead, or their ears would be busted because of the explosion. And of course, you would find . . . like I said, the entrances were small, but a small entrance can turn into like a room like they would have . . . We would find like ammunition, gear. They . . . they . . . I heard that they even found a hospital, but you know, not real big, but a room that had equipment to treat, you know. That's what I heard from another tunnel rat, you know. I never found anything that big.

In the news, I heard that they had a . . . they were living under one of the base camps, and when the United States pulled out, and they abandoned their underground deal, the base had fallen down. And, you know, they were right under us, you know? For the simple reason is that if you are going to bomb their camp, you know, you would never look to bomb a base camp, you know. In other words, you wouldn't even look underneath a camp for the Viet Cong underground camp. But they were . . . They were very resourceful. We couldn't leave an empty can of beans, or they would find a way to make a bomb or something out of it. Yeah, of course you've heard about the punji stick . . . the punji pits they would have? They would poison the points, you know, and once your foot went down, you would have a big infection. It may not kill you, but it would put you out of commission. You would be out of combat for a while.

As a matter of fact, we . . . We had a whole company that got poisoned by a little kid. It was about three or four little kids. They sold us poisoned popsicles. Before we knew it, everybody had all kinds of cramps, but they . . . they did their job. They put us . . . They put us out of commission, you know? But this is just . . .

WONGSRICHANALAI: Was this in a village?

CARRASCO: It was in a village. Yeah, we weren't even in the village; we were on the road clearing the . . . We were like support for the engineers that were going to clear the road. And they . . . they came on their bicycles and they sold . . . We even paid for them. One of my buddies said, "Hey, have a nice . . . have a popsicle." I said, "Oh no, I don't want one." Hey, once he was eating one, I knew something was wrong. So, you know an hour later everybody was having stomach cramps, so . . .

WONGSRICHANALAI: So, what happened?

CARRASCO: Well, nobody died but it still, you know . . . We had to go in and get checked up. It wasn't enough poison, you know, to do it, but everybody did their part, you know, to get us. Our enemy did their part to try to get to us.

WONGSRICHANALAI: How did your service affect your family at home?

CARRASCO: Oh, man. My . . . my . . . my mom, you know, she . . . She was pretty sick. I would say it affected her most. Of course, you know, at that time we were three in the Army. So, my . . . the oldest three were in the Army, so it affected her pretty bad. My daddy, of course, he had a more of an escape by having to go to work, you know? The worst thing—and I found out in the Army—is idleness. If you are not doing anything, you start thinking about it. So, that's why in the Army, most of the time you are busy. I mean, if you're brought in to rest, you're asleep. Once you get enough rest, you're back in the field. That's to keep our mind from, you know, thinking stupid things.

And of course, Hanoi Anna didn't help. Hanoi Anna. Have you heard of her? She was a disc jockey, you know, that would . . . and she would play good music. Real good . . . our kind of music, but between the record, she said, "Oh, G.I. Joey's over there with your wife." Just trying to get . . . "Oh, maybe she's pregnant by the time you get there." And you know, trying to just mess around with . . . mess with your mind. But we still heard her because it was good music. But it . . . it . . . some of the guys got affected especially if they got a "Dear John" letter, you know. It affected them because usually you could tell when somebody got a "Dear John" just by the way he acted, you know. Even though he tried to keep it to himself, but you could tell. So . . . but other than that, you know, my mom took it real hard.

WONGSRICHANALAI: They didn't tell you not to listen to the broadcasts?

CARRASCO: No, we wouldn't listen to them anyway. I mean there was good music, you know. It hurt in a way because . . . but what are you going to do at night besides being on guard duty just . . . ? So, we still listened to her, but between . . . you know, the music was good. And then what hurt the most also . . . that we went on a . . . on a mission, and the Viet Cong had . . . what

are they called? Pinups, you know? Where you put a nice lady, you know, in a bathing suit, you know, of . . . what's her name? I had it on the tip of my tongue. Jane Fonda. Did you know she went to Vietnam . . . to North Vietnam? She went to North Vietnam, and kind of put us down over there. So, when we had Raquel Welch as our pinup, they had Jane Fonda. Can you believe that?

WONGSRICHANALAI: So, you find these in a . . . ?

CARRASCO: In a bunker. In an enemy bunker. Yeah. Yeah.

WONGSRICHANALAI: I hadn't heard that before.

CARRASCO: It hurt, you know. But, you know, like I said, everybody's a . . . Everybody's got a different opinion. Everybody has a . . . The only good thing about now compared to then is that during the Vietnam War, they would not support the war, but they would not support the soldiers either. Now we support the soldiers even though we don't support the war. We still don't blame the soldiers for what they're doing because they're doing what their government asks of them. And then they would spit on the soldiers, they would call them names, and that was wrong. Which it's . . . Right now is a lot better for a G.I. than what it was before.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Did you face that personally?

CARRASCO: Yeah, when we came in. When we came in, we came in to Seattle, Washington. And as we got down, we got in line, and they herded us inside right away because there were protesters outside, you know, protesting the war. And I mean we were just doing what . . . what was asked of us, you know? But, you know, that . . . That's bad, you know. Let me take a deep breath.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Sure.

CARRASCO: What else?

WONGSRICHANALIA: Do you remember the monsoon?

CARRASCO: Monsoon season, yeah.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Was it bad?

CARRASCO: It started raining, and it didn't stop for I don't know how many months.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Well, coming from West Texas that must have been . . .

CARRASCO: Yeah, I mean . . .

WONGSRICHANALAI: . . . very different.

CARRASCO: Yeah, a lot different. I mean, it didn't stop. It's like we have a bad storm, you know, usually doesn't last, but over there it kept on, kept on. And you know, sometimes it was harder than others, but still you . . . you . . . you went out on patrol. It was . . . you were all wet even the boots, you know? The boots, they had little like holes where you stamped where you pushed the water out, and they were made out of leather and canvas. You . . . There was no way to keep dry. It was bad.

WONGSRICHANALAI: What sorts of technology did you have that you remember using over there?

CARRASCO: Well, not anything compared to what we have today. Because we had a . . . They call it a "starlight scope" that you put on an M16, and it went from the stars, and you could see . . . like it would be like light goggles, you know. Night vision. But if you got it wet, it wouldn't work. If it was cloudy, it wouldn't work. So, it was about that big and pretty heavy. So, we just left it. I mean, if it's not going to work then why carry it?

BACKGROUND: Done?

CARRASCO: Not yet.

BACKGROUND: Oh, not yet? I'm not going to bother you guys. Go ahead.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Remember any animals? Did you encounter any wildlife over there?

CARRASCO: Well, I didn't encounter it, but one night I was so tired that I laid down. We barely got there. It was up on this mountain, and my friend was going to take the first watch, so I laid down, and I felt this heavy thing coming across my feet. And in the morning, you could see . . . you know, you see . . . you can follow the tracks of a snake, and there was grass and you could see it was probably a python. And the captain said, "It's a good thing you were tired, because if you would have panicked you . . . it would have wrapped around you."

But I was so tired I was like, "I'll just let it go through."

Then I got horned, not horned, but I got hit . . . a water buffalo. He came at me. I . . . I said, "I guess that's because I am the smallest one he picked on me." He . . . he got me on . . . on the leg, you know, but it was because we were going through a mission. And of course, when you go through, if you're going to search something, you never go bunched up when you're in combat. You got to have your distance. If you're my buddy, and you get too close to me, "Hey, get away. Don't come close to me." Because if you have someone who's going to shoot at you, they're going to shoot at people that are bunched up or close. Because if he miss . . . if he's shooting you and he misses you, he may hit me because I'm too close to you. So, you know, it's only natural. I don't know. So, we were kind of spread out and the buffalo just got scared and went at me. Other than that, animals . . .

WONGSRICHANALAI: You said they used snakes to guard the entrances too?

CARRASCO: Yeah, cobras.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Yeah.

CARRASCO: How they got them, I don't know, but they would tie them close to the entrance. So, that's one thing you got to watch. You got to watch out for booby traps.

WONGSRICHANALAI: What kind of booby traps?

CARRASCO: Well, like grenades. They would get a grenade and tie . . . tie, you know, a stake to it or branch and then use like a trip wire. Then you would hit it you, would get the pin out. Of course, we did the same thing. We were better than them because we . . . I . . . I would grab the safety pins from the house. A grenade . . . the . . . the pin is kind of rough, you know, and you can kind of bend it for security . . . safety purpose; you can bend it like a cotter pin. You can bend it; it has two ends. Now, when we . . . when I made booby traps, I would put a safety pin. It'd go a lot quicker and a lot smoother. So, I think we were better than they were. Well, they were good at booby traps, but we learned. And another thing we would do, you know, a grenade has a delay fuse. If you throw a grenade, it doesn't go off right away; you throw it and then it goes off. I think it's six seconds.

[Indistinct background conversation]

CARRASCO: You throw it and then it goes off. So, you could take that delay fuse, put the blasting cap back on, and it'll go right away. If you put that as a booby trap, then you have no chance because you . . . you fix it, you know. We were crazy. We would throw a grenade up, and what kills more . . . I thought it was the outside fragment, but inside it has like a stainless-steel coil. A grenade is shaped like that, and on the coil, it has like indentations. They . . . They hit it with something, so that when it explodes it's just a bunch of little fragments, and it's that stainless steel. I still have one of those in my body.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Oh, you were wounded?

CARRASCO: Well, yeah. Twice. But I still have a five-millimeter piece of shrapnel in my side. They found it about a year ago when I was going to take an MRI. An MRI was going to . . . magnetic field, and I was having a problem with my joints. So, the doctor said, "Let's send you to an MRI."

So, I went to get my MRI, and my side started hurting. So, they have to give you a button, you know, in case something happens. So, I press it and, "Feel that. There's something over here."

"Well, let's take you to X-ray."

I still got a piece of shrapnel. I've got a souvenir from Vietnam still. Yeah.

[Recording paused and resumed}

WONGSRICHANALAI: Sorry about that.

CARRASCO: Oh, we were talking about my souvenir.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Your souvenir?

CARRASCO: Well, it's just nothing big, you know, just five millimeters, but I've still got it there.

WONGSRICHANALAI: You were wounded twice?

CARRASCO: Yeah, I was hit on my side and on the back, right below my buttocks. So, if you were in the infantry, you were going to come back with some kind of wound. It might be small, but still. Your chances of coming out of there without a scratch are very, very minimal. So, that's one of the facts of life.

WONGSRICHANALAI: So, what are the most vivid memories of your time in the service?

CARRASCO: What do you mean by vivid?

WONGSRICHANALAI: Either funniest or scariest moments of your time in the service.

CARRASCO: Well, I don't remember anything funny about the service. It was always work and training. Scariest, uh, that would be when we got our butts kicked. We walked into a base camp, battalion-size NVA. They . . . They let us walk into their camp. As soon as we walked in, they closed, you know, the area where we walked in. We lost our captain there. We lost a lot of guys. That's the first time that we left our dead behind. Any other time, we would bring them with us right away. Anyway, when we lost our captain, our sergeant took over. So, we started bringing in artillery to opened up the area so we could get out. So, we finally got out and climbed a hill, and I thought for sure they were going to come after us. I thought that was it for us, you know? But for some reason, they didn't. So, in the morning, they had called in a B-52 strike, and those suckers are good. You don't hear them; you don't see them. You see the bombs hit and accurately. So, you know, that was the scariest. Because of course when you fight the NVA, you're fighting another army, not farmers that are Viet Cong at night, you know? They are a well-trained army from the North. So, that would be my scariest. You see I'm starting to tremble. So . . .

WONGSRICHANALAI: So, what was it . . . Did you face any challenges returning to civilian life?

CARRASCO: Well, not really. Putting the war behind me was a challenge, you know, because even . . . even 'Nam, I thought that we . . . They say, "Are you having nightmares?"

I say, "Sometimes."

They say, "How many times a month do you have them?"

You do not count your nightmares; something triggers them. You see something on TV. You see something. To me, I don't know about the rest of the G.I.s, but to me something always triggers them. For instance, let me give you an example. I was just watching a movie, and it was a murder movie, you know, somebody's been murdered, and they go and check them, and they want to exhume the body, right? Because for some reason they want to exhume it. So, that night I had one of my nightmares because the war in Vietnam was not measured by the territory that

you gained. Because if you gained any territory, eventually you'd give it back. It was measured by what you would call the . . . the count . . . the body count. They would say, "Have you heard the body count?" The body count . . . they tried to measure if we were winning the war or not by a body count.

So, me being a G.I., let's say this night we got in a firefight, and of course they would take their wounded. At night, we're not going to follow them because it's their land, it's their family, it's their village. But as soon as it gets morning, we go . . . We see blood, we go follow it, and pretty soon we start finding out that we are getting more kills than what we know because they would bury them right away at night. It just so happened that we noticed some fresh graves. So, we undug them . . . dug the bodies out, and sure enough they had bullet wounds, they had shrapnel wounds, and after that we started doing that for the body count. Because, you'll also think it is a game. B Company wanted to have more . . . a higher body count than A Company, you know? So, you . . . an example is just like the cowboys. You see the gunslingers when they killed somebody in a firefight how they notched their gun with a little knife; we started doing that too. If I'm point, and I could prove I killed two guys, I would get two notches. But now, that's silly, you know, but you did it because you had to survive. I believe that you had to survive. And of course, I wanted to have more notches on my M16 than my buddy, you know?

Of course, you . . . in Vietnam you can't get too many, because usually what you are firing at is the bushes. You might see the guy running from one bush to the other. So, the vegetation is so . . . Too much that they can hide, you know? So, once you start a firefight, you're usually shooting at where the bush moved or where you saw somebody running to. It's very rare that you aim at somebody and got him in your sights and shoot him and say, "Well, I got him." Usually it's after the firefight is over, you know, you just go over and gather the bodies. You don't . . . It's not like other wars. A guerrilla war is not like other wars.

So . . . and like I was saying, you know, nightmares are, to me, they got to be triggered by something. Like, I cannot tell you if I might have five nightmares. I could go a couple of months without having a nightmare, but if something triggers it—something triggers my mind because of something I heard, something that happened—that's when the nightmares come. And of course, flashbacks. Of course, I'm barely now getting out of the habit of when you hear a loud noise, you want to hit the ground because that's how you were trained. When we were for a whole year, they would make noise, and you would hit the ground. So, by the time we went to 'Nam, it was a reflex; you didn't think about it. If you heard a noise or a pop like a gun, you would hit the ground because you want to stay alive, and that's what you're . . . you're already brainwashed to do. Which is a good thing, you know, because if someone is going to shoot at you, you hit the ground.

The first guy takes care of the front; the last guy in the rear, and then we go right, left, right. Then we would shoot one magazine, automatic, to gain fire superiority. After that, you kind of have their . . . have their assigned job, you know. Somebody would go on automatic, and somebody would just see if they could see something move. Of course, if everybody goes on automatic, you'd be running out of ammunition, you know. So, everybody had a job to do, and if someone fails to do their job, that's when people get hurt because maybe someone fell asleep on guard duty. That's when people get hurt. Or they are daydreaming, you know?

Like me, I would like to take point because, at that time, I had good eyes. You know, I could . . . I started taking point after about six months because I figured I had more experience than some of the new guys, and like I told them, "Hey, if you're going to go into a big battle, they are going to let the point go by. They are going to concentrate on people that are more

together because nobody wants to take point. The only thing when you are on point is that you have be more alert for booby traps. You have to learn the signs; anything out of the ordinary, you stop." Sometimes, like the elephant grass, they would braid it like a braid of hair and, "Hey, something is wrong. I know that the grass didn't braid itself." So, it's . . . you're going to either . . . someone is waiting to ambush you. You've got a booby trap there in front of you. Something's out of the . . . Something's not right.

And at night during the ambushes, you had to stay awake unless you had . . . There was a soldier—the best soldier that I've known for ambushes. His name is Rusty . . . was Rusty. I don't think . . . I think he's old now. So, his name was Rusty. He came with a trainer. Rusty was a German Shepherd. Anyway, I remember the first day that he came. They were checking for ambushes, and he said, "Okay, Rusty can . . . you can all relax."

I said, "Hell no, I'm not going to relax." So, I sent out my guys, you know, three here, a bush here.

And he says, "Nah, Rusty . . . nah, everybody go on just like normal." It just so happened that I had guard duty, and then here comes this stupid German Shepherd. And he'd go *grrrr* and I was there, you know. Then he starts pawing at the trainer, and so the trainer gets up and said, "There's somebody coming."

So, I said, "Well, where are they coming from?" The stupid dog pointed, you know, with his nose. And so, he . . . He smelled them or heard them. I don't know how he knew. It took those guys about 50 minutes to get there. So, we had plenty of time to get in position to kill those seven Viet Cong. From that night on, everyone relaxed, "Rusty will do the guard duty." They're sharp, man. From then on, everybody wanted Rusty. Another instance, we were on a mountain top, and of course we set tripwires. In case the enemy got close, they would hit the tripwire, and you have like illumination. And the trainer said, "Rusty doesn't want to go." Said, "What's wrong with Rusty?" So, he's pushing him, and hitting him, pushing him to go down . . . down the trail. He wouldn't go. He wouldn't go.

So, I said, "Chief, something's wrong. It's not him."

"Oh, I forgot to take out the tripwires in the front." You know, he smelled the tripwire.

So, I said, "Jesus Christ, we need more dogs like that."

WONGSRICHANALAI: That's technology.

CARRASCO: Yeah, that's technology! But you know, obviously some are better than others. That Rusty, man. We couldn't do without him anymore.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Saved a lot of lives.

CARRASCO: Yeah, saved a lot of lives, but, you know, that's when . . . Another thing . . . technology when I was there was the Cobras. A Cobra is a helicopter-based gunship. It's only two people that go in it, and they carry a lot of rockets, you know. Usually, when they came in—let's say we're landing—choppers go in twos if you have space, and the Cobras are just circling [mimics rapid gunfire]. So, that helped a lot. Before . . . you know, before the Cobras, we would land, and you wouldn't know if you were going to get ambushed or something. And if we did, that way we would have the advantage. The Cobras were shooting. If nothing else, they were inside the tunnels or wherever hiding because the Cobras were shooting. I forgot about that technology.

WONGSRICHANALAI: So, what did you do when you came back to the United States after you got out of the Army?

CARRASCO: After I got out of the Army, I worked in construction. I did a little bit of . . . Back to the seismograph looking for oil. And the last 22 years, I was a correctional officer at a prison, at a correctional facility. I started as a correctional officer, then I advanced to . . . I retired as a safety officer, which was a lot easier—less hassle with inmates. All I did was check fire extinguishers, make sure the fire system was working, just safety in general. I retired about five years ago.

WONGSRICHANALAI: When did you become involved with the Catholic Veterans?

CARRASCO: Catholic War Veterans? Actually, I started about five years after I retired. At first, I would help them when I was off. Now that I'm retired, you know, I usually make the funerals and all the meetings, whatever we have. It's just a shame we can't get more members, you know? I can see the point because if you're still working, you don't have the time. I used to belong to the Veterans of Foreign Wars, but they closed the chapter too because we didn't have enough members. So, it's just . . . and I bet you there are pretty close to 300 veterans in Reeves County. And it's a shame that we have trouble getting seven for military funerals. But I'm hoping it will get better.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Mr. Acosta says that you've been helping with the flag ceremonies, presenting the flag.

CARRASCO: Oh, oh, yeah. He used to do it. And one day he started getting old . . . Started getting old. So, I said I better . . . you know, I was ready, so when he didn't make it, I was ready. So, at first, you know, nobody that . . . The veteran that gave the commands, he died, so I took over the commands. And then Tino Acosta was still there, so he would present the flag. Then he got sick, and I said, "Well." So, now I do the commands, I present the flag, and I have . . . I make . . . I make in my spare time a little box, and it has a soldier on top, and it has the soldier's cross, which is the rifle with a helmet, and it says . . . I put on top, "Catholic War Veterans, Pecos, Texas." Down at the bottom I put, "For God, Country, and Family." And on the inside, I divided it into seven little slots. So, there's 21 rounds that we fire, so we put three in each slot, and close it and present it to the family. So, you know, and like I put together . . . I didn't, you know, I didn't write it, but from reading I put the words together. Do you want to hear?

WONGSRICHANALAI: Sure.

CARRASCO: You know, like I start, "A flag can be a flimsy piece of printed cloth or a beautiful banner of the finest silk. Its monetary value can be trifling or great, but its real value is beyond price. For it is the emblem of this land and a precious symbol of all that we and our comrades have lived for, worked for, and fought for. Fighting under this flag was our privilege and duty. In combat some even gave their lives protecting and defending this flag, which stands for one nation under God with liberty, freedom, and justice for all the people. Your father has earned and is entitled to this ceremonial flag of the United States for his valor, service, sacrifices, and

loyalty to this nation. As the keeper of your father's flag, we ask that you take very good care of it, honor and cherish it as much as your father did. Therefore, on behalf of the President of the United States through the Catholic War Veterans Post # 1859, I am honored to present you with this flag of our country under which your father has so honorably and faithfully served." Then I say, "God bless you and may God bless the United States of America."

Then I hand them the flag. After I hand . . . hand them . . . I may be a little long, so that they would have a chance to pick up the casings from the 21-gun salute. But I might . . . I present the flag, and the little boxes here. And so, I just give them the little box and say . . . and tell them, "In this little container are the casings from the 21-gun salute that was fired in honor of your dad." But you know, I didn't write it; I just got something from here, something from here, and put it all together.

WONGSRICHANALAI: It's very nice.

CARRASCO: So, it . . . it . . . It helps, you know? And just like I was . . . a lot of people . . . a lot of . . . the person that presents the flag, they . . . they kneel and then they whisper, and . . . and me and Mr. Acosta, we say it out loud because the people can hear what the flag means to us and . . . and . . . and all veterans, you know?

So, they know how we cherish the flag, which brings me to mind, in my day, I learned to respect and honor and love the flag because of my dad. My dad—like I told you—he was from Mexico, and he used to have a Mexican flag. And then when we were growing up, we used to tell him, "Hey Dad, why don't you become a citizen? That way you don't have to go sign every year at the post office to get your green card to work here in the United States."

"I will never betray my flag. This is my flag. That would be betraying my flag."

So, we told him, and we told him. So, finally when he was . . . He turned 65, ready to retire, we didn't know where he was born, and we needed to know for the paperwork for Social Security. So, we got all the . . . our family are long-lived, you know; some of my aunts lived until 94. We had a lot of old people, and we made a dinner and said, "Okay, the reason we got together was because we want to know where my dad was born because we need his birth certificate."

And they said, "Well, it was a big family." They said, "Go here." And at that time, some of them were born in Mexico because at that time they used to go up there, live there, work here, and they were back and forth. So, they had some kids in Mexico and some kids here. So, we told them my dad was born in Mexico.

Finally, the old ladies said, "No, I don't remember." The other said, "Wait a minute. We only counted one . . . One that was born in Brazil. There were two born in Brazil. Yeah, your dad was born . . ."

So, one day I was drinking a couple of beers, and I folded my American flag up three by . . . three by five. I just . . . so I went to my dad and said, "Here. Get rid of that flag. This is your real flag."

So, he said, "Yeah, son, this is my real flag," he said.

And before that we used to say, "What if you forget to sign at the post office and they deport you to Mexico and there is a war between the United States and Mexico?"

"Well, I'll just throw rocks at you and you can throw rocks at me. Don't shoot bullets at me." So, I said . . . So he says, "Now if the United States and Mexico get in a war, we're going to be fighting on the same side."

So, you know, he always . . . He always cherished the flag, honored it. He thought the world of his flag, which is my flag which is his flag too now. So, you know? I tell my kids, "You don't dishonor my flag. No way." And God help you if somebody is dishonoring it in front of me because I'm going to stop them. I might be old. Like I told this guy that I had a confrontation in a Walmart I said, "Hey, I'm not going to let you push me around."

And he said, "Well, you're an old man."

I said, "I'm going to fight you. I'm not going to box you. Boxing you got a referee. You got to go by the rules. If you're in a fight, everything goes, you know? I might have a bat with me or something. I'm not stupid. You're kind of young for me, and I'm not stupid to come barehanded and box you. But you watch it." So, you know, like I said, you just got to do what you got to do. That's how I survived Vietnam, because I did what I had to do.

WONGSRICHANALAI: What advice would you have for someone who is enlisting now, in today's Army?

CARRASCO: I think right now the world is very bad right now like ISIS. But if you're going to do something, if you're going to enlist for one or two years, you might as well make a career for it, you know, because somewhere sometime there's got to be peace. You know like Vietnam . . . After Vietnam, I think we had peace for about 20 years, something like that. So, you have a chance to live. And of course, if it's your destiny that you're going to go to war, you're going to go. If it's your destiny—a lot of people don't think like that—but if it's your destiny that you're going to die in a war, you're going to die in a war. If it's your destiny to die, you're going to die.

I had a friend, you know—like I said, something triggers something—I had a friend when I was drafted. He was a real good football player, but . . . but then we got out of high school. He had broken bones, so he didn't pass the Army physical. He used to make fun of me, "Hey, they're going to shoot your ass over there." Stuff like that. Well, I was . . . I was overseas when he got killed in a car accident. So, you never know, you know? Somebody might be here, he might be in the Army serving in peacetime while there is a war, but if it's your turn to die out of an accident or something, it's going to happen. That's the way I see it, but I know it's stupid. But I went through a lot, and I made it back. It wasn't my turn. It wasn't my time yet.

WONGSRICHANALAI: That's all the questions I have. So, thank you very much for spending time with us and talking with us.

CARRASCO: You're welcome. Okay.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Do you have anything to add or any last thoughts?

CARRASCO: No, it's just that a lot of people put the United States down, but so far . . . it's not perfect, but it's still the best country to live in. It's . . . and maybe they . . . they put it down because they haven't been where I've been. It could be a lot worse. It could be a lot worse, you know. You have a lot of . . . a lot of . . . a lot of freedoms here that you wouldn't have in China. You have a lot of freedoms here . . . even in Saudi Arabia, even though they think they are democratic, they're not. It's still the United States is the best place to live in right now. I don't know about the future, and I hope that it's like that for my kids and my grandkids. And . . . and if

I had to go to war again, I would go to war again. That's what I tell my grandkids. They say, "They're going to go out there and kick the shit out of you."

And I say, "Well, I would go if they threw me on a bicycle or something because I can't walk 20 miles and give the enemy a good fight." But they used to march 20 miles and still had the energy to put up the good fight. So, that's what I tell them. I may not march 20 miles anymore and put up a good fight, but if they give me a bike, I'm good for it. Well, thank you.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Thank you very much.