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Position: Airport Rescue Firefighter (ARFF)

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- 1) What branch and unit were you in? *U.S. Army. Joined in 1966. Served in Vietnam as an Artillery Forward Observer with 1<sup>st</sup> Air Cav (1<sup>st</sup> of the 7<sup>th</sup>).*
- 2) What was your highest rank? *Major. I was a 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant in Vietnam; later becoming a Captain, then Major in the California National Guard. Towards the end of my career, I was able to keep flying as a Warrant Officer, Aero Scout Helicopter Pilot.*
- 3) Are you still enlisted as a reservist or National Guard? *No. Retired with 35 years service a few years ago.*
- 4) Why did you join the service? *I was sure if I didn't join, I would soon be drafted. Remember, this was the mid 60's, the height of the Vietnam War. I considered joining the Air Force, but when they said "come back later", I decided to join the Army. It offered a chance to attend OCS (Officer Candidate School). When asked which OCS program I wanted (Infantry, Armor or Artillery) I thought Infantry meant walking so I chose Artillery. Where did I end up (in combat)...walking with the Infantry (First Cav) as an Artillery F.O. During OCS they offered us a chance to apply for Flight School. The thought of an additional two years obligation caused me to turn down Flight School at this time, a decision I came to regret, but later I was given another opportunity. After returning from Vietnam and getting out of the Army, I started working with TWA at LAX where a friend told me that the National Guard was sending people to Flight School. I joined the California Army National Guard. I was the first combat vet this artillery battalion had since the Korean War. I finally got Flight School and enjoyed it tremendously. By that time I had earned my civilian commercial pilot's license and found Flight School very rewarding. I later got a job as the Aide-de-Camp to the State Adjutant General in Sacramento (while Reagan was Governor). I was able to travel to other parts of the U.S. and meet some interesting people (including Jimmy Carter when he was still governor of Georgia). Later I attended the Artillery Officer Advanced Course, back, again at Ft. Sill, Oklahoma. After I became a firefighter, I continued in the Guard in various assignments, including flying Counter Drug support missions for sheriff's departments and other law enforcement agencies throughout California, from the Mexican to the Oregon Border. This included flying for the LAPD and the LA County Sheriffs.*
- 5) What did you like the most about being in? *Responsibility (I was XO for my artillery battery, then took over as the battery commander when the BC was wounded). Later I was the G-3 Air for the 40<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. Now that I am retired, I miss the people and the flying most.*
- 6) What did you like the least? *Inept leaders. I have been fortunate enough to work with some excellent leaders in the military (and in the fire service), but I've had my share of poor ones, too. Some are weak; some show their insecurity through aggressiveness. Others show little compassion for their "troops". I have a lot more admiration for General Omar Bradley (known as the "Soldier's Soldier") than I do for Patton. Patton was the right man at ONE POINT IN HISTORY, but probably would have been less successful as a Lieutenant in Vietnam (might have gotten "fragged"). Having been a leader, I am a student of leadership and appreciate good leadership. I often evaluate leaders using the axiom: "It's a poor craftsman whose first tool out of his toolbox is a hammer. It's an incompetent craftsman whose only tool is a hammer". Poor leadership probably ruined a lot of young soldiers who could have turned out better with a good officer or NCO.*
- 7) What moment most defined your military experience? *Several: In 1968 I got to see a full combat division make a major move, from one end of Vietnam to the other, (while in action). I couldn't believe how big this operation was. Another time was when a Chinook took off and turned in front of our 105mm howitzer battery. The artillery shell put a hole through the helicopter and continued to who knows where? The CH-47 landed okay (the shell didn't explode). Another, more emotional time was seeing the guy walking in front of me step on a land mine. I was holding his head in my hands as I*

*squatted. My knees were shaking uncontrollably, but, thank God, my hands remained steady. Very strange. My awards included a bronze star (with V-device) for directing artillery fire in close to our position during an attack. It felt good when the troops expressed their confidence in my ability. When you are firing mortars or artillery, you don't want the troops moving on the gun-target line (the line between the guns and the target area) due to the likelihood of rounds landing short or long. I worked hard, when training my replacements, telling them to be certain that our troops moved in a different direction.*

- 8) *What made you choose firefighting as a career? Looked like a good career to pursue. I was offered jobs in three cities simultaneously and decided to go with LA City. That was 31 years ago. It was a very good choice!*
- 9) *What do you like the most about firefighting? Camaraderie. You work with the cream of the crop of society when you're working with people in the fire service. Also, the sense of pride in telling people what I do. Doing something that society needs to have done. Being given the time to do other productive things such as working with the Air Explorer Scouts: giving flight instruction at Edwards Air Force Base during an exciting time in history (when the Space Shuttle was being test landed after being launched from a Boeing 747). Helping mentor young people.*
- 10) *What do you like least about firefighting? Dealing with people at their saddest time (from losing a loved one to seeing a teenager who just crashed dad's new car).*