

**T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection**

**ABSTRACT**

**INTERVIEWEE NAME:** Gilly A. Marshall

**COLLECTION:** 4700.0966

**IDENTIFICATION:** Vietnam veteran

**INTERVIEWER:** Paul Moore

**SERIES:** Americans in Vietnam

**INTERVIEW DATES:** 3/26/74

**FOCUS DATES:** Oct. 20, 1968-Jan. 5, 1973, March 1969-Feb. 1970

**ABSTRACT:**

**Tape 1412, Side A**

Born in New Orleans in 1948; went to Catholic grammar school, Jesuit high school; was involved with Marine ROTC in high school; everyone he knew went to private school, stigma around public school; came to LSU for two years, then joined military; parents are from Italy, mother came over on boat; mother is CPA, parents are divorced; mother went through night school to become CPA, are middle class family; used to live in lower middle class neighborhood; got draft notice because he wasn't far enough along in school; joined Marines because several family members had been Marines, had had Marine ROTC; thought he had the best chance of coming back alive as a Marine; mother wanted him to appeal draft board's decision; now he doesn't regret going, would do it again, but maybe would have joined Air Force; 8 week boot camp in Alameda, CA; lots of people didn't make it through boot camp; guys switched from reserve to regular, stayed in much longer than they had to; Marshall was in Delta Company 66; get more privileges every week if you're good; easier on you every week; the secret to boot camp is not letting them know your name; Marshall tried to stay hidden in group, never be leader; two-hour watch every night, watch continued 24 hours per day; classes on Marine Corp history, VD, safety, first aid; encouraged to write home; got 15 days off after boot camp, realized it might be his last 15 days at home; returned to Alameda for more training; knew he'd be sent to Southeast Asia; sent to electronics school, hated electronics; for Marines, infantry comes first, specialty comes second; spent several months in Pearl Harbor; then went to Vietnam, spent ten months there; came back after he was wounded; ranks, promotions; became E4 after Honolulu; teletype school in Memphis; worked radar, teletype, planes at same time; probably would have returned for second tour in Vietnam if hadn't been wounded; worked with third Naval helicopter division, lots of Medevac; went to Guam; transferred to assault division with Cobras, still flew Medevacs; had lots of helicopter experience; definition of a hero; saw people throw themselves on hand grenades to save other people; saw people lose hands; acclimated after a month; learning about VC tactics, NVA; respect for the NVA, a fine army; hates VC, would kill one now if he had the chance; cruelty of the VC; acclimation to war is no excuse for behavior of VC; atrocities VC would commit against village elders, their families, little children; ideologically we fought on the

right side, militarily we fought on the wrong side; knew Vietnam was lost when US troops pulled out; North Vietnam has more of a cause than South Vietnam; Marshall never lived in village, set up camps near villages; sometimes warned Vietnamese to clear out of villages; shot them dead if they didn't provide ID cards; didn't have that much contact with village people; opinion of South Vietnamese army; South Vietnamese versus VC; lots of Filipinos were employed by the US; residents of Saigon's feelings toward Americans; had only superficial dealings with Vietnamese; black market, rate of exchange; people of Saigon were cosmopolitan, normal people; village people were friendlier; when he got wounded, villagers saved his life; prostitutes, blacklisted bars were most popular; prostitution was preferable to marrying a nice Vietnamese girl and having to bring a gook back home; lots of guys ditched Vietnamese wives before coming home; prostitutes were much better option; low morale was big problem; realizing they might never get back home; guys that got killed, made careless by girls who sent them Dear John letters; Marshall had a letter from his girl every day; if she'd found someone else he would have wanted her not to tell him; how much it meant to get letters; doesn't know what happened to Vietnamese girls left behind; military was against US soldiers marrying Vietnamese; had to put in request to get married, talk to chaplain; military discouraged marriage to Vietnamese, but you could if you really wanted; if Vietnamese girl was beautiful enough was worth it; friend in New Orleans who married beautiful Vietnamese girl; rich father of his friend's Vietnamese wife, upper class; class differences between Marshall and his friend and rich Vietnamese; their wedding, children, her father's beautiful house; figures ten of these marriages failed for every one that worked; more about the rich and well bred Vietnamese father of his friend's wife.

#### **Tape 1412, Side B**

Majority of people he knew in Vietnam smoked marijuana; military did rehabilitative work with drug abusers; if Marshall had been US president, he would have leveled North Vietnam; thinks just as many people use drugs on college campuses as over there; Vietnamese drug dealers; how to find prostitutes, prices ranged from two to five dollars; you could buy \$35 or \$40 worth of stuff for five dollars there; how to maximize your currency; Saigon was a busy, compact city, reminded him of New Orleans; people who got rich off black market, war; was glad he was an enlisted man; hates officers for looking down on enlisted men; generals know how important enlisted men are; lower ranking officers don't appreciate enlisted men; Calley should never have been an officer, wasn't educated or mature enough to handle situation at My Lai; people that have been through college for four years are probably more mature; military needs more liberal arts people who are critical of the military.

#### **Tape 1413, Side A**

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#### **Tape 1413, Side B**

Went out in assault helicopter in 1969; didn't know VC had machine gun set up there; got machine gunned as they were coming off helicopter; felt pain in leg, knew he was hit; hit in the butt, passed out cold; recuperating in a camp hospital; surgery, skin grafts; sent to Guam, stayed there till mid November; Naval hospital in Guam was bad, lots of death around him, old buildings; sent to Army hospital in Honolulu, wanted to be home for Christmas; arrival at Travis Air Force Base near San Francisco; had 47 days leave left, terminal leave; got home to New Orleans on Christmas eve morning, surprised family; got to visit Tokyo, enjoyed it; also sent to

Philippines for R&R; when he was wounded, the guys from the helicopter carried him in a stretcher; someone snuffed out the machine gun; Marshall was unconscious, carried to a village, doesn't remember much; limited medical care in the village; personnel at MASH hospital; description of hospital; not many American women in Vietnam; hospital similar to TV show MASH; lengths of time he spent in different hospitals; had to wait two weeks for a flight out of Guam; very satisfied with the medical attention he received; Marshall knew he wasn't going back out to field, no matter what; would have got home about the same time even if he wasn't wounded; was back in school at LSU in January; had been overseas for more than one year; Marshall was in combat zone the whole time he was overseas; society doesn't like Vietnam veterans; Philippines was full of talented, industrious people; people are educated in Hong Kong, don't fool around; duration of his R&R trips; Okinawa was his worst R&R trip, lots of resentment against Americans; went to a geisha house, took a bath; liked the Philippines the best, wished he could have been stationed there; all the people were industrious in the countries he visited; black market; better rate of currency exchange on black market; can get into trouble dealing with black market; prostitution has an ugly stigma attached to it here, but not a dishonorable profession there; guys who got homesick for their girlfriends, got married there, didn't want to take her home; Marshall fooled with prostitutes but didn't love them; girls in Philippines especially beautiful; organization of prostitution; in Philippines you could rent a girl for a whole day, like renting a car; didn't go for going to a village and raping girls, much easier to pay one a dollar; safer in bars; enjoyed the prostitutes more than anything else, Oriental girls just turn him on; didn't have women out in field; prevalence of drugs; could have found heroin easily if he'd wanted; thinks 60-70 percent of people he knew there used drugs, just about everyone smoked pot; believes in legalizing pot because people seemed to be able to do their jobs on it; rehabilitation centers for soldiers in Vietnam; wasn't exposed to many hard drugs; thinks statistics on heroin use were exaggerated; Philippine hustlers near US bases in the Philippines; inefficiency of military; too many old generals in charge of a young army, this wasn't America's kind of war; importance of helicopters; wasn't that much corruption; not enough quality people in military; Marshall plans to join Air Force after he finishes college; looks at it as a job and way to serve his country, but not gung ho; many able people in military, some incompetent.

**TAPES:** 2 (T1412, T1413)

**TOTAL PLAYING TIME:** 1 hour, 30 minutes

**# PAGES INDEX:** 5 pages

**RESTRICTIONS:** None