Glen R. Kendall ’64, Tu ’71
Dartmouth College Oral History Program
The Dartmouth Vietnam Project
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Transcribed by Mim Eisenberg/WordCraft

DANYOW: Okay. today is Monday, May 11th. This is Paul [F.] Danyow recording Glen [R.] Kendall. We’re here in the Ticknor room in Rauner [Special Collections] Library on the campus of Dartmouth College.

Mr. Kendall, thank you for being here today and for being willing to share your experiences with us.

KENDALL: It’s my pleasure.

DANYOW: So I’d just like to start off with some basic background on you. Would you mind stating when and where you were born?

KENDALL: Born in Grand Junction, Colorado, 13 January 1942.

DANYOW: Okay. And what were your parents’ names?

KENDALL: Richard Kendall and May Dell (strange name) Kendall [Mary Elizabeth May Dell Hallar Kendall Workman].

DANYOW: Okay. And what were their occupations?

KENDALL: My father was basically a salesman, and my mom was a day worker.

DANYOW: Like a laborer?

KENDALL: Yeah, like a laborer, yeah.

DANYOW: Okay. Great. And is that where you grew up, or did you grow up somewhere else?

KENDALL: I grew up in Grand Junction the whole time before I came to Dartmouth.

DANYOW: Okay. Great. What was your childhood like? I mean, what sort of things did you do as a kid, maybe some of your fonder memories from that? You know, young years.

KENDALL: Well, I come from a very modest background. We had almost no extra money ever, but my parents were good parents. They supported me in school. And I did—well, I decided at maybe age 14 or so that I didn't want to live the rest of my life that way, and I decided that the only way to do that was to do extremely well in high school and get a scholarship to a university. So that's what I did.

DANYOW: Fair enough.

KENDALL: I developed a real joy of learning early on, and it served me well.

DANYOW: Absolutely. So could you talk a little bit more about high school? What was your high school like? Obviously, you were a good student. You just mentioned that. Were there any sports you were particularly into, or activities?

KENDALL: I wanted to be a basketball player, but [chuckles] I was never good enough to make the team. I was president of my graduating class from high school. I took every academic course I possibly could. And in the summertime I worked. I worked picking peaches, and the summer between my junior and senior year, I worked at a uranium processing mill. Where I went to school in the early '50s, the uranium boom happened. They were making uranium to make atomic bombs during the Cold War, and finding and milling the uranium was an important thing. There was a boom in this town. There were so many kids going to school, they had to go to school half days, so I went to school from one o'clock in the afternoon until seven o'clock in the evening. And then I delivered the newspaper.

DANYOW: Wow. All right.

One thing I'd like to touch on a little bit at this point, based on your essay, is you mentioned that from pretty early on, you had kind of a sense of patriotic duty and kind of an interest, you know, in a military career.

KENDALL: Yeah.

DANYOW: Is this something that developed during high school? Was it something that was maybe even earlier than that?

KENDALL: That's a really good question. I can remember—I'm not sure how old I was, but it was before 1950. My cousin was a pilot—maybe it was a bit later because it was—maybe it was the Korean War. He flew Corsairs [Chance Vought F4U Corsairs], and one time he flew his Corsair into Grand Junction Airport, and I got to go out and look at that airplane, and that may be where my fascination started.

My parents were always very patriotic. I had uncles, great uncles in World War I. We had several members of our family in World War II. One of my cousins was in the Bataan Death March in the Philippines in World War II. So there's always been a family tradition of being in the military and protecting America.

DANYOW: Sure. That makes sense.

So, now, thinking a little bit more about, you know, the college application process, you mentioned that a scholarship was pretty important—

KENDALL: Yeah.

DANYOW: —in your mind. I remember you mentioning in the essay that you really narrowed it down to [U.S. Military Academy at] West Point and Dartmouth as your two top choices.

KENDALL: Yeah.

DANYOW: Were there any other schools that you considered initially and ruled out, or how did you ultimately find these two as your top choices, and what made Dartmouth—

KENDALL: Well, I applied to too many schools. I was accepted at Stanford [University], Princeton [University], Dartmouth and West Point.

DANYOW: Not too bad.

KENDALL: And also to Colorado College with a really generous, generous scholarship at Colorado College. I was really worried that I wouldn't be accepted anywhere. I was very surprised at the result, which was wonderful.

The interviewing process for Dartmouth applicants was they flew me in an airplane! They flew me to Denver to have an interview with the alumni interviewers in Denver, and the man who interviewed me was a municipal—was a judge, and so he had a police escort take me back to the airport. And he was such a charming, charming man. I was really impressed with Dartmouth. And that probably helped my decision a lot because I found him, and his colleagues who interviewed me, to be the kind of person I wanted to be.

And then Congressman Wayne [N.] Aspinall, who is quite famous, appointed me to West Point. Everybody in my family wanted me to go to West Point, and I was not a popular guy when I announced one day I was going to go to Dartmouth.

DANYOW: [Chuckles.] That's funny. That's a pretty good interview, though. They didn't send a police escort for my alumni interview.

So thinking about, you know, arriving at school and kind of the first couple of years here, what was it like being a student here in the early '60s, and what did you study?

KENDALL: I ended up being an economics major, but, you know, these liberal educations, you learn a little bit about a whole lot of things and nothing about anything.

DANYOW: [Chuckles.]

KENDALL: I think it's more just a love of learning and a love of knowledge and exploring how your head can work more than anything. I think that's what happened to me.

Well, I found it rather difficult the first couple of years because there are a lot of people here from some very wealthy families, and I was here with none of that. And at first, I was worried that they were going to be better prepared and so forth, but I soon discovered that my training at Grand Junction High School was just as good as theirs.

So I found it difficult. I remember eight o'clock in the morning calculus. First semester. And then in the winter semester, that [chuckles]—that was a challenge. I worked at Thayer Hall, and the dining hall, which is now called the Commons or something [the Class of 1953 Commons].

DANYOW: Yeah.

KENDALL: I worked at a gas station downtown as well, to make a little bit of money. And in between my first and second years, I took a job working as a roughneck in the oil fields in Wyoming and Colorado, which was interesting, being an Ivy Leaguer in an oil patch.

DANYOW: What was it? You said rough neck?

KENDALL: No, roughneck. Those are the guys that stand on the drilling rig and put the bit on the bottom and pull it up again. It's big, hard, fast, dangerous work.

DANYOW: Okay. That's quite a summer job.

KENDALL: And I joined ROTC [Reserve Officers' Training Corps]. The day I came to Dartmouth, I started ROTC.

DANYOW: What was ROTC like? I mean, was it—you know, did you find it challenging or did you enjoy the military aspects of it?

KENDALL: No, I didn't. Basically what we did was every Wednesday afternoon we put our uniforms on and marched around the [Dartmouth] Green. We did have a few mandatory classes. The one on military history was taught by a regular history professor, who was pretty good. I thought the rest were—somebody was checking a box by making us take these classes, and they weren't really very good for me.

There was—it was called mountain winter warfare or something like that [sic; Mountain and Winter Warfare detachment—a subset of Dartmouth's ROTC]. There was this sergeant in the ROTC, Sgt. Brown [Senior Sergeant Major Bill Brown Jr.], who was later one of the founders of the Vail ski area, by the way. And he would take us out, and he taught us how to rappel and climb and a few—that was a

lot of fun. It didn't have a whole lot to do with the military, but it was a lot of fun.

DANYOW: Sure.

KENDALL: I think the only—I learned a little bit of map reading, in the classroom, but the only real, good training I had militarily was the summer between the junior and senior years at Fort Devens [Massachusetts]. We went for six weeks.

DANYOW: Hmm. All right. And what sort of things did you do there at Fort Devens? Was it more comprehensive—you know, military—like, field exercises or—

KENDALL: Yeah. I can remember map reading, which for an infantryman is absolutely, absolutely essential.

DANYOW: Yep.

KENDALL: And we had this one—they told us that we were going to go on a short march with our rucksacks and things, and it was an endurance march. It was a good lesson in learning how far you could push your body to do things. That was very important to me.

DANYOW: Mm-hm.

KENDALL: And then they did all the normal military stuff. You had to shine your boots and make your bed and all of that disciplinary stuff—

DANYOW: Sure.

KENDALL: —that we all did.

DANYOW: Right.

One thing I guess I'm a little bit curious about: You mentioned a number of different jobs you had on campus to support yourself. At any time, did you feel there was a stigma associated with that in terms of holding those jobs?

KENDALL: No. That, I didn't feel. I felt—what's the right word? For example, one Winter Carnival I was working at the filling

station when all the guys came around with their girlfriends, and I missed not having my girlfriend at Winter Carnival, but the guys—we were all men [at the college] then. Everybody was always great. I had no problems, no stigma at all about being on scholarship.

DANYOW: Okay.

I guess another thing I'm curious about is, you know, you were here in the early '60s in what would you call it? Kind of the earliest period of American involvement in Vietnam as [President John F.] Kennedy was beginning to send in advisers and so forth. Was Vietnam on your mind at all during college? Did you become increasingly aware of it, you know, as time went along?

KENDALL: That's a really good question. I had a classmate named Edmund [B.] Frost [Class of 1964]. He was also a vet. And just towards the end of our senior year, he started telling me that he was worried about Vietnam. Before that, I knew something was going on, but I really didn't have any concerns or even any really knowledge about that. I knew at that point that I was going to be a Regular Army officer and I was going to go to Europe.

DANYOW: You were aware of that at that point.

KENDALL: Yeah.

DANYOW: How did that work in terms of you receiving that assignment? Was that something you got based on good scores in training, or was it just a random assignment?

KENDALL: Good scores in training and signing up as a Regular Army officer. That meant you intended to make the military your career, so you got to choose the first—and also that you selected one of the combat branches, either armor or artillery or infantry.

DANYOW: Okay. What drew you to infantry specifically?

KENDALL: Well, I thought that if I was going to do, I ought to get out where the doing was being done and not futz around with supporting somebody else doing the doing.

DANYOW: That makes sense.

So can you walk me through what happened after graduation? Did you go immediately to Europe, or was there some training in an intervening period?

KENDALL: My first assignment was at Fort Benning, Georgia, where in went to Infantry Officers [sic; Officer] Basic Course. It's called IOBC 1, Infantry Officers' [sic; Officer] Basic Course 1, and that was always reserved for the Regular Army officers out of the ROTC programs who were going to be career infantry officers. And so I was in IOBC 1. That training was excellent. It had one deficiency I'll mention in a moment, but it was really good. It was arduous, fatiguing, sometimes very, very frightening, but I learned a lot. The basic skills that I needed in Vietnam, I learned there, things like map reading and adjusting artillery fire and setting up your troops and so forth. I learned all of that there, and it was very good.

The one problem with the training was that they trained me to fight a war in Europe, with tanks and armored personnel carriers and entirely different kind of weapons system and entirely different kind of tactics. And so when I arrived in Vietnam, I wasn't prepared for those kinds of things.

After IOBC, I went to jump school, to parachute school [U.S. Army Airborne School]. That was physically demanding, but, boy, it was fun. It was just great fun, running around and then jumping out of airplanes. I enjoyed that a lot. After that, I was then assigned to go to Europe.

DANYOW: Okay.

If I can just back up for one second, I was curious about one thing you said. You said there were some aspects of training at IOBC 1 that were frightening. Can you elaborate on those a little bit?

KENDALL: Well, there is—I can't remember what it was called now. There was a course where you crawled on the ground with machine gun bullets going over your head, and you had to crawl through the barbed wire and the—I wasn't so concerned about the machine bullets, but the noise of it—I

can remember the noise of all of that stuff going in when you're trying to do something with your brain—I found a bit difficult to do. That was one.

Then there was another one called Escape and Evasion, in which they drop you off, and you're supposed to go back to a designated point, and they had all of the dogs out and all of the guys out there trying to catch you, and if they caught you—and they caught everybody—they put you in sort of a torture area, and they didn't do anything that was permanently damaging, but some of the things they did hurt. And the whole idea was that if you're captured, you need to give your name, rank and serial number and nothing else. And I developed a real appreciation for the fact that that's probably somewhere between extremely difficult and impossible to do. You can't—I don't think there's any human being that can do that. Maybe some of these guys that are Cuba right now, at Guantanamo [Bay Detention Camp]. Maybe they're capable of that, but I don't know. It's—I know that at some point I would have broken. That then motivates you to say, *If I'm gonna be captured, I'd just as soon be killed.*

DANYOW: Hmm. I find it interesting that they had infantry officers going through that sort of training. That's something I would have thought would have been more for, like, pilots or something like that, but I suppose in a place like Vietnam, there's a potential for infantry to get lost behind enemy lines, too.

KENDALL: There were some incidents of American soldiers being captured in Vietnam, and for a long time, you probably know, there was a whole thing about MIAs [those missing in action] and POWs [prisoners of war] in Vietnam.

DANYOW: Right.

KENDALL: And most of those I think were pilots, but some of them were infantrymen.

DANYOW: Yeah, I'm sure that was the case.

KENDALL: But we were being trained for a European war, and in a European style war, there are lots of prisoners of war.

DANYOW: That's a good point. Mass encirclements or whatever. Okay.

So you talked about jump school a little bit. What motivated you to do that? Was it you just wanted to be a paratrooper? Paratroopers are the best infantrymen, something like that?

KENDALL: There was that. It was expected of the Regular Army officers to be parachutists.

DANYOW: Okay.

KENDALL: But mostly it was just fun.

DANYOW: Yeah. Beats being chased around by dogs in the woods, I would imagine.

KENDALL: Indeed, indeed.

DANYOW: [Chuckles.] And so it was after jump school that you got assigned and you deployed to Europe at that point?

KENDALL: Yup, that's right.

DANYOW: And can you just kind of walk me through how that happened: how you physically traveled there, what unit you were assigned to, what it was like being over there?

KENDALL: I went over on I think it was the last troop ship that the military used, the USNS [U.S. Naval Ship] *Geiger*, across the North Atlantic in the middle of December.

DANYOW: Wow.

KENDALL: That was quite an experience. I learned a very interesting lesson. Every day, somebody was the officer of the day, and they would clear out the holds of the ship, way down in the guts of the ship. The guys would have to either be on deck or in the mess hall. And one day I was officer of the day with the sergeant of the day, a crusty old NCO [non-commissioned officer]. And there was a guy in his bunk, and I said, "Sergeant, he's supposed to be up in." He said, "Okay, Lieutenant. He's fine. He's just not feeling too well. He's okay." Well, come to find out the guy was dead. He had

been in some kind of a sporting event, and he suffered a concussion, and he died on the boat.

DANYOW: Wow.

KENDALL: I then learned that you got to be careful with compassion in the military, that the rules are the rules and if the guy's ill, he either needs to be in sick bay or he needs to be up on deck. So that was a good lesson to learn, and rather gentle at the time.

Arrived in Bremen [Germany]. They put us in some U.S. military railroad cars, one of which caught on fire going to Munich [chuckles], in the middle of the winter. We were standing outside in the snow in our pajamas.

And my first assignment, which I didn't really like, was at an academy that trained NCOs in leadership. I wanted to be in a combat unit. That's what I wanted to do, and I worked there. They were good people. I did really learn a lot. I did pretty well, but I finally convinced my commander to transfer me to an airborne brigade in Mainz. And I spent about two years with this airborne brigade in Mainz. It was an Airborne Mechanized Infantry Brigade.

DANYOW: Okay. And you would have been a platoon commander?

KENDALL: I started off as a favorite lieutenant platoon commander, and shortly after I was there, I was promoted to captain.

DANYOW: Okay. And what sort of things did you do with this unit? Were you training, you know, near the East German-West German border, or—I don't know exactly where Mainz is, but, you know, were you guarding installations or—

KENDALL: We did basically two things. We guarded nuclear weapons dumps at various places, and we flew around Europe, jumping out of airplanes. And the second, the jumping out of airplanes, as I understood it, was to show that NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] has a powerful force and we're ready to go and instill confidence in the Europeans that we were there to support them. But mostly it was just a lot of fun.

DANYOW: Where exactly did you jump, just in Germany or kind of all over the place?

KENDALL: We jumped in Germany, we jumped in Belgium, and we jumped in Spain. That was the first—for a long—you remember when the—you probably don't remember. there was an accident in which a [Boeing] B-52 [Stratofortress] from the Air Force accidentally dropped a bomb just off the coast of Spain, an atomic bomb.

DANYOW: I have heard of that, actually.

KENDALL: Not surprisingly, the Spanish weren't very happy about that, and they didn't have anything to do with the American military for a long time. And this was the first sort of joint military exercise with the Spanish forces, and it was interesting. We did well.

DANYOW: Did you ever have any sort of—parachuting obviously, I'm sure, was fun, but there's some inherent danger in jumping of, you know, an aircraft. Did you ever have any issues with—you know, any close calls yourself, any issues with your men in terms of safety incidents or anything like that?

KENDALL: Yeah, there's always something that's going to happen. One of the things—it happened I think in '62. Some troops from the 101st Airborne [Division] jumped into a landing zone in the States, and the wind was really, really strong, and several of them were killed because of the wind dragging them across the landing zone after they landed. And so they then made a rule that an officer had to jump—for practice; this is not for war, for practice—an officer had to jump out of the plane first, the first pass at the landing zone, to see if the wind was really okay for the troops to jump out. And that guy was called a wind dummy. [Both chuckle.]

And I loved to be the wind dummy they open the door of [Lockheed] C-130 [Hercules], and you're looking out and standing there all by yourself, and there's a red light, and when the green light turns, you just jump out. Now, I found this to be a great thrill. But one time, I landed in an asparagus patch and the wind was blowing perpendicular to these big mounds of asparagus, and it was quite strong, and I kept banging into these asparagus mounds with my head,

and I'm trying to deactivate my parachute so it would stop blowing. That was no fun.

DANYOW: [Chuckles.]

KENDALL: That was no fun. And then there was one time when a guy, one of the parachute packers in the Quartermaster Corps went crazy, and he started sabotaging the static lines in the parachutes so that you would jump out of the airplane and the parachute would not deploy. And that was scary. It was scary for the troops, too. And we had to inspect every parachute after we put them on. We finally found him, the poor guy. He was just—he was gone.

What else happened?

DANYOW: Did you have to do anything in particular to kind of restore your men's confidence in the parachutes, or how did you go about resolving that?

KENDALL: If I recall correctly, the only thing we did—a lot of leadership, situations like that, is just talking to people. And also you lead by example. You say, "I'm gonna jump out." And yet the opposite would have happened. "No, you go jump out and I'll see that you're okay." These guys, these infantrymen are smart guys. They know what's going on. Immediately.

DANYOW: Sure, sure.

KENDALL: So you have to lead by example.

DANYOW: Another thing I'm curious about is how concerned were you about potential Soviet aggression and ending up kind of in the front lines of World War III? Was that something people thought was a realistic possibility? Did it seem remote at the time?

KENDALL: Can we swear?

DANYOW: Sure. I think.

DANYOW: There were a couple of places on the border between East Germany and West Germany where everybody assumed that there was going to become [sic] an invasion from the

east that would come through these gaps, and one was called Fulda Gap. And I was on the Fulda Gap a couple of times. And barbed wire and atomic mines and tanks and the whole thing you would imagine, and it was very clear to me that if they would have tried to invade, they would have been annihilated, we would have been annihilated. It was a real standoff. So I never felt that we were—it was necessary for us to be there at the time, but I didn't think we were ever going to have a serious, hot war there.

The saying was—when I went up, I relieved another officer who was there, and he said, "If you see the tanks coming towards you, towards the border, you stick your head between your legs and kiss your ass goodbye."

DANYOW: [Chuckles.]

KENDALL: Because you were dead. You were gone.

DANYOW: They actually had nuclear warhead mines?

KENDALL: Oh, yeah, they had nuclear mines.

DANYOW: Jeez.

KENDALL: They had nuclear warheads.

DANYOW: Wow.

KENDALL: Yeah, it was serious, serious stuff. And we were there during the time of the Baader-Meinhoff Gang in Germany sort of Red-leaning, violent people. And there was worry that they would try to go into some of the nuclear weapons sites and do something. Even if they were to just explode the warheads so that they spread the radioactivity—radioactive material, that would have been really bad.

DANYOW: Yeah.

KENDALL: So when you were guarding these sites in the middle of the dark, snowy, muddy, yucky wintertime, it was serious business. It wasn't just sort of going around in a pro forma way.

DANYOW: Right.

KENDALL: We were really worried that somebody was going to do something.

DANYOW: Okay.

One other thing I'm a little bit curious about—you mentioned from the essay—is you felt that this time-you know, you said, "I felt I was doing my part." You felt you were very much a part of the military mission,—

KENDALL: Yeah, yeah.

DANYOW: --you know, being over in Europe. Can you talk to me a little bit more about that?

KENDALL: Well, it was what I expected to be doing. I was behaving as an infantry officer. I was leading a bunch of men. I was doing the things that infantry is supposed to do in peacetime. And I was learning quite a bit, and I was—yeah, I felt professional. I was promoted to captain. Yeah, I thought I was doing fine. It what we were supposed to do.

DANYOW: Fair enough. And, I mean, do you think the experiences you had there—you know, certainly you weren't in a combat capacity in Europe. You weren't fighting. But do you think just, you know, gaining familiarity with being in command of men that served you well later in Vietnam? I mean, did that experience help?

KENDALL: Yeah, sure. Any experience like that is useful if you're open to it, yeah, and especially if you're doing something dangerous like jumping out of airplanes or guarding nuclear weapons sites or something like that. I came, as I said, from a pretty modest background. A lot of my friends were Hispanic, for example, so I was kind of used to dealing with those kinds of people, which are the kinds of people that end up being infantrymen.

DANYOW: Sure.

KENDALL: Sometimes. Most of the time. So I was comfortable around them, anyhow, but if you're in a guard shack with 150

infantrymen guarding—and you're the only officer and you're guarding this nuclear weapons site, you can't just go sit in the corner and not interact with them. You got to talk with them and deal with them—

DANYOW: Right.

KENDALL: —and take care of them and make sure they do what they're supposed to do. And that's important.

DANYOW: Absolutely.

So I'd like to now shift, you know, a little bit towards thinking about Vietnam. Was there a point in your time in Germany where Vietnam—you kind of became more aware of the seriousness of the American military involvement there? And also, when did you become aware that you were going to end up there?

KENDALL: I arrived in Germany in 1964, and about the time I ended up going to this airborne infantry battalion, they started pulling the officers out of the—the senior NCOs out of our units and sending them to Vietnam, so it was clear that something was going on. So we had—for example, an infantry company is supposed to have a captain and five lieutenants. Well, our infantry companies had a captain and one lieutenant, and the lieutenants' jobs were being done by sergeants. And it became clear that that was the next place I was going. Maybe by the beginning of '66, I knew I was headed to Vietnam.

DANYOW: And when did you actually—was that in early '66 that you actually got your official orders to deploy to Vietnam?

KENDALL: I think I got my orders in either December of '66 or January of '67.

DANYOW: Okay. And can you walk me through how the actual, you know, transition went? Did you go back to the U.S. first from Germany, or did you deploy directly to Vietnam?

KENDALL: Yeah, I think everybody went first back to the States, go back to the States, take a little bit of leave, vacation and show up at open Army base at midnight one night and get in

a Braniff Airlines [sic; Braniff International Airways] [Boeing] 707. It was passionate pink, this airplane. And off you go.

DANYOW: I just want to back up for a second. So that small amount of leave you had—did you visit your family or friends from college or—

KENDALL: I was married at the time. I visited my wife's family. I visited my family. My grandfather died while I was in the States, so I went to his funeral. I went to a baseball game in Candlestick Park just before I left. That was interesting.

DANYOW: Yeah.

KENDALL: I was—I was—well, this Infantry Officers Basic class at Fort Benning, the first one of the—

DANYOW: Yeah.

KENDALL: Less than half of us are still alive. It was pretty clear that company-grade officers didn't have a good survival rate in Vietnam. We really took the brunt of the casualties of the officer corps.

DANYOW: Mm-hm.

KENDALL: So I was pretty convinced I was going to die. Took out a life insurance policy to pay for my funeral and did all my wills and everything. I knew I was going to something kind of dangerous.

DANYOW: So there was definitely a sense when you were visiting with, you know, family and your wife's family that this could potentially be saying goodbye to them.

KENDALL: Yeah. Mm-hm.

DANYOW: Wow.

Okay. So I guess moving to—can you walk me through exactly what happened when you, you know, landed in Vietnam and how you ended up getting assigned to your unit?

KENDALL: We landed in the Philippines because we lost an engine on the airplane, and then we flew to Tan Son Nhut Air Base in Vietnam, and I went to the—and I had orders to go to the 101st Airborne Battalion [sic; Division]. And I arrived there at the replacement depot, and they said, "Oh, no, you're going to the 196th Infantry Battalion [sic; 196th Light Infantry Brigade]. And I fussed and I fumed because I wanted to be in the 101st. But there I go, and I was sent to the 196th Light Infantry Brigade in Chu Lai. I flew there in a C-130. Landed at Chu Lai Air Base. And a Jeep picked me up and took me to my battalion, which was about 10 kilometers north of Chu Lai, on Hill 59, it was called.

DANYOW: I just curious about one thing you just said there. You said you wanted to be in the 101st Airborne?

KENDALL: Yeah.

DANYOW: Why exactly? Was it just the division's kind of history and prestige from World War II?

KENDALL: Yeah, it's a famous, famous airborne division.

DANYOW: Yeah.

KENDALL: Well, *Band of Brothers* was about a company—

DANYOW: Right.

KENDALL: —in the 101st. It is a prestigious unit, and I wanted to be in *the* prestigious unit.

DANYOW: And did the 196th have a reputation at that point, really? I mean, what did you know about it before you were—

KENDALL: I knew nothing about it before. I was in the 2nd Battalion, 1st Infantry [sic; Regiment], which is one of the first infantry battalions ever in the U.S. military way back in history, so it's been around for a while, but it had no particular reputation like the Big Red One [101st Airborne Division] or any of those.

DANYOW: Sure.

KENDALL: It was a bit unique because it was a light infantry brigade. We were basically only infantry and light artillery. We didn't have tanks, and we didn't have big artillery pieces or anything, and we attached to us was also a battalion of helicopters.

DANYOW: And you mentioned a little bit about—you know, in the essay— about arriving to your unit and seeing—if I can quote you directly, you said, "The unit had been decimated, with only about six soldiers with combat experience remaining."

KENDALL: Yeah.

DANYOW: Did that surprise you, or how did that kind of affect you mentally, showing up and seeing that the unit was relatively green?

KENDALL: Well, the first thing that happened is I showed up and met my battalion commander, and he said, "Oh, you're going to be commander of Delta Company." And I said, "I would prefer to be on the staff first and in my second six months to be—because I don't know much about what we're supposed to do here." So, for example, our weapon was the M16 [rifle]. I had never seen an M16, much less fired one before I arrived there.

And the preferred mode of transportation was choppers, and there's just a whole thing of the tactics about how you use helicopters: how you call for them, how you help them land, how you help them take off, how you protect them. A lot of information about helicopters. I had none of that. I jumped out of a helicopter with a parachute once in Germany, but that's as close as I got to the helicopter.

So I didn't really know some important things about what we were supposed to do, but my complaints went unheard, and I became commander of Delta Company. And it was—yeah, we were all—there were only six combat vets in Delta Company when I took it over. We were all new, which—and we'd never—

And it was another problem was that we didn't know each other. As I mentioned before, you got to get down with the

guys—I mean, you're still the boss, but you got to get to know them and their names and how they behave and how you can predict they're going to behave in certain circumstances. And we didn't know each other. We hardly knew each other at all.

DANYOW: I mean, was there anything you tried to do? It sounds like you were in combat fairly shortly after arriving to the unit. Was there anything you tried to do in those few intervening days to get to know them better or—

KENDALL: Oh, yeah. You go around and you sit down and you talk with them. "Where are you from, Jones?" And "What did you do before you came here?" And "Are you a [Boston] Red Sox fan?" And just whatever you can to just get to know them a little bit, and them to get to know *you* a little bit.

DANYOW: Mm-hm.

KENDALL: We did a bit of firing of our weapons together and bit of tactical practice. Not much, though. Not much.

DANYOW: Did you have—this is just kind of a side question, but I'm curious. I've heard the M16 had kind of a bad reputation at least early on in Vietnam. Was that—did you have any experience with that, with, you know, issues with it?

KENDALL: It was a piece of junk.

DANYOW: [Laughs.]

KENDALL: The original—I'm not going to remember the nomenclature, I think. I think—we had the M16, and there was the M16A1, which was modified. And the big problem with the M16 that we had was that it would jam, especially if it was on automatic. And so you had, you know, 20 cartridges, and it would jam maybe on the eighth one or so, and that's bad enough, but then it was jamming in such a way that you had to take the cleaning rod from wherever your cleaning rod was at the time and jam it down through the barrel to push the jammed round out. And if some guy's shooting at you, that's not something that you want to do.

And at one point, I complained to my battalion commander. He mentioned it to the division commander, and a man from ordnance, a officer from ordnance came out and talked with me about it. And basically what he said was "you're not cleaning your weapons and your ammunition often enough." Well, every time we stopped, that's all we did, was clean the bullets, clean the rifles, clean the bullets, clean the rifles, all the time. The trouble is that when you're fighting a war in a rice paddy, you can't stop and clean your rifle all the time.

DANYOW: Sure.

KENDALL: The M16 was a disaster. We finally started getting the A1s or whatever they were, and that was much better. But it was—have you read [Secretary of Defense] Robert [M.] Gates' book about the Defense Department when he was there?

DANYOW: I haven't.

KENDALL: You should read that. The problem is that—he had problems with protecting the guys in Iraq and Afghanistan from the IEDs [improved explosive devices]—

DANYOW: Right.

KENDALL: —because the vehicles didn't have the kind of protection—and we knew how to do it. We had the technology.

DANYOW: Right.

KENDALL: It's just that the procurement system wouldn't produce it.

DANYOW: Yeah.

KENDALL: That's the same thing I think that happened with the M16s, that the system of supporting the soldiers didn't respond to the needs of the soldiers.

We had the same problem with rucksacks. We carried about 50 pounds each, and when I first arrived there, we had this stuff that we used in Europe, which was a bunch of straps and bags and—it's very, very ineffective, and if you were on your belly trying to move, it got all wound around you. It was terrible. It was terrible. And finally after about six months we

got rucksacks, which made a big difference. But there was no need for that, for those kinds of logistical screw-ups at that point in the war. They should have had those worked out, I think.

DANYOW: That makes sense.

And the other thing you mentioned is, you know, your lack of familiarity with helicopters and helicopter operations.

KENDALL: Yeah.

DANYOW: Is there anything you were able to do in those couple of days between arriving and going into battle to familiarize yourself with helicopter operations or was it just kind of—

KENDALL: The only thing I did is I took a ride with—what's it called? He's an Air Force officer in a little push-me, pull-me, fixed-wing aircraft, who basically adjusts the fire of the tactical jets when they're coming in to support the infantry. And I went up with him, and he showed me how he pointed at where the jets were supposed to go and how he talked with the jets when they came in to do the—so—and that was—I'm glad I did that because that was—we did that, only we did it for real after that, but at least I knew what was going on. And I knew the guy. It was amazing. I knew the guy who was calling the jets in to support us. And I kept saying, "C'mon, you gotta get it closer than that." Anyhow, it was—but I had no—no training at all with choppers. None. I didn't even know how many troops went into a chopper.

DANYOW: Jeez. It's kind of amazing that you would be sent into combat with such a lack of—

KENDALL: The answer is five. But yeah, it's—that was a deficiency in the training that we were provided.

DANYOW: It sounds like it.

So if it's okay with you, I'd like to move on to this first combat action that you described.

KENDALL: Yeah.

DANYOW: Which was kind of your baptism by fire, I guess.

KENDALL: Yeah.

DANYOW: Not to use too much of a cliché there, but—do you mind taking me through how you found out this mission was going to occur and kind of what happened?

KENDALL: Well, one evening the battalion commander called us all in and said we'd been assigned this mission, by brigade, for "day after tomorrow." And there's a whole procedure when you give an operations order that's very, very ritualistic. And it works. It's good. "Here's the situation. Here's what we know about it. Here's what we are going to do. Here's who's going to be supporting you. And here's the timeframe." It's kind of like that. "And here are the maps" and so forth.

And so we went through all of that. I went back and assembled—we were in a safe fire support base, and we assembled the company and said, "Here's what we're gonna do." I then sat down with the battalion S3, the operations officer, a major, and we kind of worked out a plan for how my company was going to go and what was going to happen.

And then the next day, we prepared to go into combat. And you get your C-Rations, and you make sure you've got enough water, and that there's machine gun bullets for the machine guns and smoke grenades and—the logistics of it. Moving an infantry company into combat is really quite amazing, when you think about it.

DANYOW: Mm-hm.

KENDALL: And checks and double checks, and especially because we'd never done it before. We had to really, really check. I think we did a good job of preparing, though. I don't remember any particular deficiencies, at least.

And then we sort of slept that night, and the next morning at—it was quite early. You could hear the artillery battery firing, and the choppers came in. There were ten of them, and they were one opposite the other, like this. [Demonstrates.]

DANYOW: Mm-hm.

KENDALL: And I met the major who was the commander of these ten helicopters, and I got into the first helicopter with him and my two radio telephone operators, my artillery FO [forward observer] and his radio operator. That was kind of the core command group. I had a radio that communicated with my battalion headquarters, and I had a radio that communicated with my company.

DANYOW: Okay.

KENDALL: And then he had a radio that communicated with the artillery.

DANYOW: Right.

KENDALL: And off we go. And it was—it was exciting! The rear chopper was hit and had to go back. And I'm on the earphones with the major, and I'm listening to the radio traffic of the choppers, and the door gun machine gunners are firing, each side an M60 machine gun, which makes quite a bit of noise to start with, and then beyond the flight pattern there were artillery rounds going off as we were going, and the jets were coming into the landing zone and dropping napalm and HE [sic; HEI, High Explosives Incendiary] explosives. So it was a pretty chaotic mess. And we were taking some incoming fire as we were going into the landing zone. And you could hear a pop. And it was the first time any of us had ever been shot at.

And so the major says, "Okay, Captain, are we goin' in?" And how the hell do I know? I had no way of making—I had not training at all in how do I make that decision. I didn't even I was supposed to make it!

DANYOW: Wow.

KENDALL: And so I said to him, "Well, what do you think?" He said, "Yeah, let's go." So in we go. And I guess we were maybe, what, four feet off the ground, and so you jump out, and the landing zones stink of napalm and smoke and everything, and you go against the first rice paddy you can find to hide behind, and the choppers take off.

And all of a sudden, it's eerily quiet. Until they start shooting at us again. And there was one guy in front of me who was wounded, and I crawled up and pulled him back. That was probably a pretty fortunate thing to have happened to me because he happened to be Afro-American, and after that I had no race problems with my company, ever.

DANYOW: Mmm.

KENDALL: And so companies had serious race problems because all of the enlisted men were black and all the officers were white.

DANYOW: Interesting.

KENDALL: But my guys really took care of me. And, well, we did what we were supposed to do. We got the guys who were shooting at us. I don't know if we killed any of them, but we certainly scared them away finally. We got there and went on about our mission.

And then we were—the difference in the professionalism of the troops was amazing once they got through that. The first—there were 50 of us in the first batch in. That was real combat. And they turned into professional soldiers overnight, and we all turned into old men.

DANYOW: So one thing I realize I actually forgot to ask at the start of this is what was your given objective from your higher officers, was just to go in and secure this landing area or was it a search and destroy type thing?

KENDALL: It was search and destroy. This was part of the free-fire zone effort to get all of the noncombatants out of this huge area to the west and the south of Da Nang, clear to the Laotian border, maybe even a little bit farther north than Da Nang so that anything that was alive in there and moving was free game to go shoot, and that was the main problem.

And they had—I don't know exactly what it was, but there was some sort of vague intelligence kinds of reports that there's this North Vietnamese unit that's moving here or there or the Viet Cong or something, and I don't know how much of that was somebody's imagination and how much of it came from, say, the [U.S. Army] Special Forces guys or

something like that. I never knew that. But it was mostly just to search and destroy, get the civilians out of the area.

DANYOW: And the date of this first mission would have been spring of '67, somewhere in there?

KENDALL: Around June 20th, 1967, somewhere around there.

DANYOW: Sure, somewhere in that window.

One thing I'm just kind of curious about, I want to back up to is just kind of trying to get a sense of, you know, what was running through your mind specifically at various points in this. You're thinking first about, like, kind of night before and morning of. Were you really apprehensive about going into combat? Were you confident, based on your training, maybe some of both?

KENDALL: You always have some of both. Well, I was content that we had done everything we *could* do to prepare. The guys did a good job of preparing. I knew we had the right stuff. I—what's the right word? I was somewhere between curious and apprehensive about the way *I* was going to behave, and the same with my men and how they were going to behave, perform, because we had never done it before. We didn't know.

DANYOW: Sure.

KENDALL: Nobody knew. Nobody knows how they're going to behave in that circumstance until they're in it. And men behave in many, many different ways when they encounter that kind of danger. So I didn't sleep very well. I don't think anybody did.

DANYOW: No, I would imagine not.

KENDALL: I can't—it was business. You just—I learned then—I just shut off anything else except business. I just was able to focus on what it was that I needed to do.

DANYOW: And what about—you know, thinking about when you said you were in the helicopter and North Vietnamese troops started shooting at you.

KENDALL: Yeah.

DANYOW: What went through your mind then? Was it just kind of, you know, *Wow, this is surreal*? Did it make you angry?

KENDALL: I wasn't angry, and I wasn't surprised. That's what war is about: People are supposed to shoot at you.

DANYOW: Sure.

KENDALL: And you're supposed to shoot back. I was not frightened. I was almost never frightened. I guess I just thought that's what was supposed to happen. I don't remember—I was concerned about the chopper that was hit. I hoped that the guys were okay.

DANYOW: Right.

KENDALL: But except for that, I didn't have much of a problem. The thing I remembered most about that, in addition to the decision to go in, was just the incredible noise. And chaos. And you think, *Well, you're in command of these 50 guys, and they're gonna do exactly what you tell them to do*, and they do if they know what you want to do, and you're shouting at them. There's this noise, and they're doing their thing as well, and it's basically chaos.

DANYOW: Yeah. When you talk about—when your first group of 50, from the first wave of helicopters was on the ground, could you see Vietnamese soldiers shooting at you?

KENDALL: No.

DANYOW: Or was it just, you know, indistinct—like, muzzle flashes or from trees?

KENDALL: The rice paddy was in a valley-like—and there was high ground to the south of us, and the firing was coming from there, and you could see—it was a machine gun. You could see the flashes, but I never did see the soldiers.

DANYOW: And you mentioned this one African-American soldier who was hit.

KENDALL: Yeah.

DANYOW: Did your company suffer any other casualties in this engagement?

KENDALL: He was medevac'd. I think two other guys were medevac'd. I think that was it. This was not a serious combat engagement. This was one machine gun, probably a couple of guys shooting at us.

DANYOW: Right, right.

KENDALL: It was not a major contact by any means.

DANYOW: No.

KENDALL: But it was the first one.

DANYOW: Right. I think it's interesting because of that. And you said you ultimately—was it with air strikes you called in that you dealt with the machine gun or was it fire from your own men?

KENDALL: I think—I sent a squad towards it, and I called artillery fire on it, and I think it was the artillery fire that probably—I suspect we just scared them away. We probably didn't do anything to them, but they stopped, and when the squad got there, there was nobody there.

DANYOW: Fair enough. And then eventually—did the remainder of your company get airlifted in as well?

KENDALL: Yup.

DANYOW: Okay.

KENDALL: Yeah. So there was about, I guess, 150 or 155 of us at that point.

DANYOW: And was there anything else you did on this particular mission, or was the only contact and you were eventually extracted?

KENDALL: I think for a lot of us, the war was days and days and days of slogging through the rice paddies and climbing up the hills

and looking for things, and—with nothing. It was basically tough physical work with no—nothing to it at all. Once in a while, we encountered a few booby traps, nothing like the guys in Iraq and Afghanistan. They didn't explode. For the most part. But almost no contact at all.

And then at some point, the higher-ups would decide that we'd done everything we could in that area, and they'd bring you back and give you some clean clothes and send you somewhere else. I don't think there was anything else in this particular one that happened.

DANYOW: Okay. Fair enough.

And then in your essay you kind of—the other major combat you talk about is this kind of night battle that occurred?

KENDALL: Yeah.

DANYOW: I'd like to talk about that in a minute, but first I kind of want to just get a sense of—and you sort of just alluded to it a little bit, but what the day-to-day routine, if there was a routine, was like. You know, how much of the time was spent, you know, out of those patrols, slogging around? How much of it was, you know, back in base, refitting?

KENDALL: We probably spent half of our time outside of the safe perimeters and half of our time either guarding one of those perimeters or getting ready to go out. One of the interesting aspects of the Vietnam War is that many times we were long distances away from any other friendly troops, 10, 25 miles away from the next supporting company, and we were basically out there on our own, self-contained, self-protective. What we had was all we had. We had some support that we could call on from time to time. There's artilleries; there was always the choppers. But basically we were there by ourselves, and there was no—unlike the war I was trained to fight, there was no line: the bad guys are here, and the good guys are here. The bad guys were everywhere except where *we* were.

DANYOW: Right.

KENDALL: That was—it was difficult piece of it because, for example, they say, "Okay, Delta Company, go from here and go over there and do this." Then you had to get over there! And I was the guy reading a map. I was the guy that says, "Here's where we have to go here, and here—where we have to go." And every night you had to decide where you wanted your protective artillery fires to go and call them in and shoot them. It was—for a 26-year-old guy, it was a lot of respon- — I wasn't the only 26-year-old guy. We were all 26, I think. But it was a major job. And you're kind of alone out there with these guys because you need to be. The boss needs to be alone a bit.

DANYOW: Hmm.

KENDALL: But it was mostly just slogging around, hoping somebody's going to—they're hoping, at least, that somebody's going to shoot at you so you have something to do besides slog along.

DANYOW: Hmm. Did you find it, you know, particularly stressful? I would imagine if you were the company commander out there, say, 10 miles away from the nearest American base, you're kind of "it" in terms of, you know, the leadership, it's—.

KENDALL: That's right.

DANYOW: It's you.

KENDALL: Yep.

DANYOW: I mean, was that hard for you to deal with, or did you just kind of accept it as "this is how it is"?

KENDALL: I didn't ever find it hard in sort of an emotional way, no. It was—it kept you busy, and you were always, always concerned—I didn't sleep well when I was in the field. Didn't eat well, either. But, no, it was—it was okay. We learned how to do it together.

DANYOW: Mm-hm.

KENDALL: And once we learned how to do it, we were pretty good at it. And these guys from Watts and Harlem and Puerto Rico were damn good soldiers.

DANYOW: Mm-hm. Did you find, you know, being out on patrol for, you know, extended periods—was the terrain particularly tough? Did the climate make it difficult for you or anything like that?

KENDALL: Oh, it's ugly. There were rice paddies and volcanoes, and you're either slogging through a rice paddy or climbing up the side of a steep mountain, and in the rice paddies there were leeches that got all over your body, really ugly, ugly things. And you'd take the salt from your C-Rations and put on the leeches to get them off. There were mosquitoes everywhere all the time. You were wet more than you were dry. One of the medical problems we had is that people's feet were wet so much that sometimes they suffered serious—not injuries but open wounds in their feet because they were wet all the time. Water was always a serious issue. In the summer it was hot, and then as November approached and December, it became so cold that we had to have these poncho liner blankets to sleep at night, and it was still cold.

DANYOW: Hmm. Did you ever have morale problems with your men, your being out for extended periods in what sounds like pretty miserable conditions a lot of the time?

KENDALL: I don't know. The infantrymen are notorious for bitching.

DANYOW: [Chuckles.]

KENDALL: They just bitch all the time about everything. Just that's what they're supposed to do. And they were always complaining. They were always complaining. Except when we had to do our business, they stopped complaining and did their business. But I think it was more on an individual basis. Some of them just couldn't cope with it. They just weren't capable emotionally or physically to deal with it, and they were evacuated one way or another. I either sent them back because I didn't think they were going to—they were going to become a burden rather than an asset, or they were medevac'd or something, these guys. So in general we had

no morale problems, but specific individuals really had difficulties.

DANYOW: Sure. And how commonplace was that for you to have to send someone away for whatever reason?

KENDALL: Maybe one or two a week, something like that

DANYOW: That seems pretty significant.

KENDALL: It is. And you'd get the new guys coming out, these kids—sorry.

DANYOW: Right.

KENDALL: These kids would come out, and you'd brief them when they got off the chopper, and they're scared to death, and all these old combat-hardened guys are there, and you know that some of those green guys are just not going to make it. And it's really difficult. So, yeah, that was—but you have to take care of them. You have to pay attention to them. You don't want—you could not tolerate having someone who was unreliable out there with you if there's anything you could do to prevent it.

DANYOW: Right. That makes sense.

I mean, how often were you, you know, in combat during this period? You mentioned it was kind of a lot more slogging around than it was actual fighting.

KENDALL: Oh, yeah, much more.

DANYOW: But, I mean, was it, you know, every few days you'd be in some sort of engagement or every couple of weeks?

KENDALL: Every few days you'd be in some sort of engagement. Mostly it was just small, small stuff.

DANYOW: Mm-hm.

KENDALL: I was only in two significant engagements while I was there.

DANYOW: With the second one being the night battle? What would the first one be?

KENDALL: No, I'm wrong. It was the other way around. The second one was just before [the] Tet [Offensive].

DANYOW: Oh, okay.

KENDALL: That was after this incident occurred. I was still company commander after this incident that we're going to talk about in a moment—

DANYOW: Yeah.

KENDALL: —for about two months, I think.

DANYOW: Oh, okay. I didn't realize that. Okay.

KENDALL: I didn't say that, so—

DANYOW: We can talk about that in a moment, then.

KENDALL: Yeah.

DANYOW: I guess before we move on to the night battle thing, one other thing I'm curious about is did you ever get a chance to have any leave from the theater in this period or were you there pretty much the whole time?

KENDALL: After I commanded my company for seven months, I took R&R [rest and recuperation] in Hawaii for five days.

DANYOW: Okay. But all of the combat had occurred at that point?

KENDALL: Yeah.

DANYOW: Okay. And one other thing, sorry, that I meant to ask is—you mentioned in your essay that your desire for a military career waned during your time in Vietnam. You eventually decided that was not what you wanted to do. Did that happen—you know, did that start to happen in this kind of relatively monotonous period, or was it more after the intense fighting that changed your mind?

KENDALL: No, it was—it happened after the intense fighting.

DANYOW: Okay.

KENDALL: It happened suddenly.

DANYOW: Okay.

KENDALL: No, I thought that's what infantrymen do: They slog around. They did it in World War II. They did it in Korea. The Revolutionaries against the British did it.

DANYOW: Sure.

KENDALL: I mean, that's what they do. Yeah, it's—no, I was not happy. I told you about the problems with the logistics.

DANYOW: Yeah.

KENDALL: And I always felt that this search and destroy in the free-fire zone didn't seem to me to be the right way to go about it, but I was a captain, and there were generals up there, telling me what to do, so that's *their* job to worry about that. But, no, I was—I was pretty content with my role and what I was doing until that incident.

DANYOW: Thinking a little bit about that, so you were—you questioned the wisdom—at least privately, you questioned the wisdom of the search and destroy approach to fighting the war?

KENDALL: Yeah, yeah.

DANYOW: Did you find—other than that, you know, were you pleased with the function of the chain of command? You've mentioned the logistical problems. Was there anything that worked well with it?

KENDALL: Well, there was one incident in which we were being fired upon. My battalion commander was up above in a helicopter, and I was doing what I was supposed to do to get these guys that were shooting at us. I told one platoon to go this way [demonstrates] and another one to go that way [demonstrates], and I started to call in some artillery fire. And my battalion commander came in on my company radio

frequency, which is a real no-no, because he overrode *my* decision, where *my* lieutenants could hear him telling me I was wrong. And you can't do that. That's really, really tough.

And so I said—the first time he did it, I didn't do anything, but the second time I said, "Colonel, I'm in command of this company. If you want to command it, get your ass down here and command it. Otherwise, get off my radio frequency." Now, that's probably court-martial offense, I would suspect.

DANYOW: Certainly borderline.

KENDALL: But I was really angry, and his actions were inappropriate, and this guy wasn't particularly good anyhow. The brigade commander happened to be coming out and was listening to this exchange, and the next day, my battalion commander was gone.

DANYOW: Wow.

KENDALL: So you're going to have—it was pure luck. You're going to have bad people in positions of responsibility from time to time. It's inevitable. And he was one of them. After that, my battalion commander was fantastic. He was wonderful, and so was the operations officer. They were excellent. So generally speaking, they were good.

One of the problems with the field-grade officers (majors and colonels) is that they'd never been in combat. They didn't know about it, and they didn't have some of the experiences which we had at the company level. They'd never have them. This battalion S3 I'm telling you about would come out with us and spend the night with us out in the countryside from time to time, so he got some sense of it.

DANYOW: S3 being the operations officer?

KENDALL: Operations officer, yeah, the sort of—the guy that runs the show.

DANYOW: Sure.

2\KENDALL: But they didn't ever have any—and it's not their fault; there just didn't happen to be a war for them.

DANYOW: Right.

KENDALL: But there was some disconnect there between the things that go on in the field and what at the battalion level they expected you to be capable of doing.

DANYOW: Did the brigade commander ever, you know, address you specifically about that incident, or did he just kind of deal with the battalion commander and it was just kind of left unsaid?

KENDALL: No, he didn't. I got to know the brigade commander fairly well, but, no, he didn't ever say anything about it. He didn't need to. Everybody knew what happened.

DANYOW: Right. That's an interesting story, though.

So I guess now I'd like to talk about this battle that you kind of devoted I'd say the bulk of your essay to. So this was getting towards the end of your time?

KENDALL: Yeah, getting towards the end of my time as a company commander.

DANYOW: And when would this—would this have been, like, November of '67?

KENDALL: I think November of '67 probably, yeah.

DANYOW: Okay. Because you mention this is a month or two before the Tet Offensive.

KENDALL: Yup.

DANYOW: In that build-up period.

KENDALL: Yup. Mm-hm.

DANYOW: So can you take me through, you know, what happened in this incident?

KENDALL: Well, we were northwest of Tam Kỳ, which is about halfway between Chu Lai and Da Nang. And we were in a hilly area.

And we had been moving all day. We must have gone 15 miles or something like that, moving.

DANYOW: Jeez.

KENDALL: You can imagine, 150 guys spread out. That's something to manage just by itself—

DANYOW: Sure.

KENDALL: —because the guys in the back can't even see the guys in the front.

DANYOW: Right.

KENDALL: And you don't want to get together because then if you get ambushed, you're really in trouble.

DANYOW: Right.

KENDALL: But anyhow, we walk along, we walk along, and every once in a while somebody would shoot at us but nothing serious. And we ended up on this hilltop. And I did what I'm supposed to do with the defensive artillery fire. I set out listening posts, where I thought they should be, and everybody dug a hole in the ground, and it got dark. And at first the guys at one listening post heard something coming. It was something substantial. And two of those guys didn't make it back. And then the other listening post was attacked, and then we were attacked.

The chaos was incredible. And it's dark. The only thing you see is flashes of rifles and artillery rounds going off, and you have to shout in the radio for anybody to hear you, and you would start calling in artillery fire, and they finally started shooting the big guns off the ships off the shore. Those were frightening. That was frightening to me because it sounded like a boxcar was flying over your head. And then all of a sudden, the explosion was deafening, just deafening. [Whispers.] Deafening, deafening.

[Resumes normal volume.] And that continued until just before dawn, when they left. They just disappeared. So we were—I guess we had prevailed. They didn't get us. We

didn't get them. There were a lot of people who were badly injured or killed. And—I don't know what you call it—the fatigue is awesome. You're just bone, bone tired and shocked.

So finally the commanding general came out, our brigade commander came out and said how good a job we'd done and so forth. Then he sent some choppers out, and we went back to a fire support base to lick our wounds and get ready for the next one.

This was a hilltop in the middle of a bunch of rice paddies, in the middle of South Vietnam, with a bunch of my guys trying to kill a bunch of other guys, whom we didn't know and we had no argument with, and for what seemed to me to be an absolutely, totally worthless piece of real estate. It seemed to have no value for anything except maybe down below they could grow some rice.

And I was sitting there, watching my guys, and I said, *This is not the way to make the world free for democracy. This is just not the way to do it.* And—well, as the story says, I submitted my resignation within three days of that. I said, *This is not the way I'm going to make the world free for democracy.*

DANYOW: So that was a real mental turning point for you.

KENDALL: It was. It was very important. And it was sudden, and it was clear to me, just clear, clear, clear that this kind of violence and this kind of death and—for nothing—just did not make sense. So I had to serve another two years because I was a Regular Army officer, which I did.

DANYOW: Right.

KENDALL: But then I got out.

DANYOW: So when you say submitting your resignation, you were essentially stating that you were not going to be continuing on as a career after your initial contract expired.

KENDALL: That's right. No, the contract was indefinite.

DANYOW: Oh, okay.

KENDALL: And I had to resign my commission, so it was a little bit different than that, but it's close to being correct, yeah.

DANYOW: Okay. Fair enough.

So if I can back up a little bit to the battle again, do you have a sense for how long the attack lasted? It sounds like it was at least a few hours, if not maybe longer than that. I don't know.

KENDALL: It was all night. In November the nights are a little bit longer than July, so maybe it was eight hours,—

DANYOW: Jeez.

KENDALL: —something like that. It wasn't intense all the time.

DANYOW: Right. It just kind of ebbed and flowed, in ways?

KENDALL: Yeah.

DANYOW: And did you ever see the Vietnamese troops who were attacking here?

KENDALL: Never.

DANYOW: Hmm. Did they come close to overrunning your position? Was there—I mean, you comment in here that I think you were worried about being overrun at one point in this engagement.

KENDALL: Well, you always worried about that, and especially when you have no idea how many there are or even exactly where they are.

DANYOW: Right.

KENDALL: No, I don't think so. I don't think we ever were in—I don't remember anybody—there was no hand-to-hand combat. There was no penetration of our perimeter. The listening posts were penetrated, but nothing else.

DANYOW: Right. Right. You mentioned—you said, “For the first and only time, I was scared in Vietnam.” Was the fear—was that because it was at night? Was it because of just kind of the shock of the naval artillery? Was there something else that played into that?

KENDALL: The naval artillery contributed to it because it was so big, so huge and beyond my experience. And the unknown of who these guys were and where they were coming from and how many there were bothered me. And the nighttime is always a bit worrying anyhow. And I was—yeah, I was frightened. I was worried, maybe “worried” is closer to the right word. I was frightened. I wasn’t frightened to the point that I was ineffective,—

DANYOW: Sure.

KENDALL: —but I was frightened.

DANYOW: Was there any particular—I don’t even know if this is a good question, but was there anything you did particularly to kind of keep the fear under control and think to yourself, *I need to stay functional and stay in control here?* You just kind of relied on your training perhaps or—

KENDALL: Well, what happens is the necessity just overrides everything else, and if it’s time to talk on the radio to the artillery, you talk on the radio—you just do what you see needs to be done, and it subsides. It’s when there’s nothing to do that you kind of say, *Oh, Christ, what’s goin’ on?*

DANYOW: That makes sense.

And, you know, I guess the other thing I want to ask about here is, you know, it sounds like your company actually took some casualties,—

KENDALL: Yeah.

DANYOW: —including some fatalities here.

KENDALL: Yup.

DANYOW: I mean, how did you process that? Did you feel, you know, guilty that these were, you know, your soldiers who had been killed, or did you feel like it was, you know, "war is hell" and this is what happens no matter what you do, or—

KENDALL: My most memorable experience with that was that there was one Afro-American sergeant, an E6 [staff sergeant], who was a wonderful, wonderful soldier and very supportive of me, and he hit a barbecued hand grenade, and I loaded his body onto a chopper to be medevac'd. He didn't survive. And that was the worst regret I felt the whole time, and maybe because he was so close to me and he was there from the very beginning. These guys—the shock of it all afterwards was such that I was numb. I knew what had happened. I had no more emotion left to feel, I think. I was just numb.

DANYOW: Hmm.

KENDALL: And of course I still think about them. There was one lieutenant, who was a wonderful guy, was a smoke jumper from Idaho, and he was killed. Yeah, but I—just numb.

DANYOW: Do you think processing losing these guys factored into your kind of mental shift towards realizing this is not, as you put it, how you wanted to defend democracy?

KENDALL: Oh, sure, it had something to do with it. The whole thing of it had—and which factors I processed into that sudden emotional realization, I can't say. I don't know.

DANYOW: Fair enough. I mean, I guess I'm just a little bit more curious about, you know, this decision to leave the Army. So you said this was something you realized within a day or two afterward?

KENDALL: Yeah, that was very clear.

DANYOW: And was it sort of—you know, did it come about from, you know, sitting and consciously working through this in your mind, or was it just sort of an intuitive sense of *this has to stop*?

KENDALL: Well, the first realization that day when we came back was very clear, and I had no conscious evaluation of it. I thought

about it afterwards and evaluated and evaluated and evaluated.

DANYOW: Sure.

KENDALL: And it didn't change.

DANYOW: Okay. And what exactly happened in the period after this battle? I know you mentioned there was one other major engagement. Was that shortly afterward or was there an intervening period?

KENDALL: A few weeks, I think. I can't remember exactly.

DANYOW: Okay.

KENDALL: And this was in the built-up to Tet.

DANYOW: Right.

KENDALL: And we were in the—what we found out was the migration route of the NVA [North Vietnamese Army] to go towards the village of Tam Kỳ,—

DANYOW: Okay.

KENDALL: —and we were there one night, and we had some engagements. And that night, the artillery got their signals wrong, and they started dropping artillery rounds on us, the U.S. artillery did. That was exciting. We had no casualties that evening, but we had quite a bit of contact. It was a serious battle. But the NVA were not interested in us; they just wanted to get by us and get to where they were headed. I think that's what was going on. I don't know.

DANYOW: And this is what you're describing as the other major action?

KENDALL: Yeah.

DANYOW: So how—can you just walk through a little bit more, like, how it came about? Were you out patrolling and just kind of ran into a group of enemy soldiers?

KENDALL: We were in a large area of rice paddy dikes, and there was one sort of high ground in the middle of them, and we'd settled in there for the night, for our night—the position. And the battalion S3 came out and gave us a briefing that he thought we were in a pretty dangerous spot so we better be careful, and he left. And we started digging our holes and putting our artillery fire out and so forth. And they started dropping mortar rounds on us.

I can't remember exactly how it happened now, but they were mostly 60mm mortars. That's not real—they could kill you, but it's not the real serious stuff.

DANYOW: Sure.

KENDALL: And then we called for artillery fire, and I think helicopter gun ships. I can't remember. And all of a sudden, the artillery rounds started landing on our heads. [Chuckles.]

DANYOW: Jeez.

KENDALL: And that was—it was serious. But we got it shut off pretty quickly.

DANYOW: You were able to radio in and tell them to shift coordinates or whatever?

KENDALL: Yeah, yeah. Mm-hm. I also had—you carried with you a set of codes for radio frequencies, and I got on the frequency to the highest artillery place I could find and said, "You guys are droppin' them on our heads, and you gotta stop." [Chuckles.]

DANYOW: But you mentioned you were able to avoid taking any casualties from that.

KENDALL: Yeah, we had no—I don't know what happened with that. I don't know why that happened, but we had no casualties.

DANYOW: So were there any other, you know, particularly notable engagements or anything else that, you know, you think is worth describing before you shifted from company commander to staff officer?

KENDALL: No. We had one stint of about two weeks when we were in charge of protecting the waterways just to the north of Chu Lai Airport [sic; Air Base]. And we had—I think we had four Boston Whalers with M16 machine guns mounted on it, and the beaches in Vietnam are beautiful, just beautiful. And these guys would go riding around in their Boston Whalers, with their M16 machine guns, and go running around the beach, trying to find the bad guys. That was pretty good duty. That was not so bad. And we never saw any bad guys. So that was interesting, but—

DANYOW: Had you ever received any training in fighting from boats, or was it—

KENDALL: No.

DANYOW: —just kind of figure it out as you go,—

KENDALL: Yeah.

DANYOW: —and that's not terribly complicated?

KENDALL: One of the things that you learn about Americans is that—you know, we're pretty inventive. If there's a job to do, we'll find a way to do it,—

DANYOW: Sure.

KENDALL: —which is a good trait. And then if the guys could have a bit of fun with the boat, that was wonderful. [Chuckles.]

DANYOW: Yeah, that certainly sounds better than slogging through the rice paddies.

KENDALL: It was much better than rice paddies.

DANYOW: And so you switch from, you know, field officer or, you know, company commander to battalion staff.

KENDALL: Mm-hm.

DANYOW: Was that a normal occurrence,—

KENDALL: Yes.

DANYOW: —to shift after six months?

KENDALL: Yes. Everybody did it.

DANYOW: Okay. And can you describe—you know, what was it like, I mean, to leave your unit? I'm assuming someone replaced you as company commander.

KENDALL: Yup. A company commander came in. Yeah, that was pretty emotional. And then about two months later, the company encountered some really serious problems. It started with they were on an armored personnel carrier which blew up with a mine and killed about 12 of them at one time, including a lot of guys that had been with me. And then they were in a major contact, and they didn't do so well, and so a lot of them are gone. But that was not under my command.

And I was the battalion logistics officer. I was in charge of moving the supplies from the depots at brigade headquarters to the people in the field.

DANYOW: And so what would a typical day be like for you? Was it more kind of administrative and paperwork, or were you out there overseeing the delivery of supplies?

KENDALL: The guys—the people at brigade level would say, "We're sending these supplies out to you," and we would get them—water, ammunition, food, clothing, mail, replacements, medical supplies. And then the companies would call in and say, "We need this, and we need this, and we need this." And every fifth day, we would prepare a meal, a hot meal and put it into these insulated containers called Mermites, and we'd ship out a hot meal, clean clothes, mail and beer to the troops. That's basically what we—and we would get people coming back and were going to go home or going on R&R or whatever, and wounded people. And sometimes I would fly out with the supplies, especially if there were wounded people, so there'd be at least somebody to take care of them on the chopper, coming back in.

I was in—[Chuckles.] I was in an isolated area by Tam Kỳ, and I had only these people that were sent back by their

company commanders. Those were the guys I had to protect my logistic support base. [Chuckles.]

DANYOW: Oh, wow.

KENDALL: So it was kind of hairy. But that's basically what I did, was I provided resupply.

DANYOW: Was there ever an attack on the logistics base that you were guarding?

KENDALL: No.

DANYOW: Okay.

KENDALL: Amazingly, but there was not. No.

DANYOW: And I'm kind of curious about what you just said about you would fly out in a helicopter to try to take care of—were you functioning, like, as a rudimentary sort of medic, essentially, in that role?

KENDALL: There's a medic with each infantry platoon.

DANYOW: Okay.

KENDALL: But the medic stays with the platoon.

DANYOW: Right.

KENDALL: And there are medevac choppers, and those guys are incredible. Boy, they've got paramedics and all the medical equipment and everything else. But a regular old [Bell UH-1 Iroquois] "Huey" was just a helicopter with two machine gunners and a pilot and copilot. They had to do their job, so there was nobody really to do anything with the wounded guy unless somebody went out to help.

DANYOW: I see, so you were kind of filling in as an impromptu medic if—

KENDALL: Yeah, yeah, just kind of a—

DANYOW: —a normal "Huey" to medevac someone.

KENDALL: Yeah.

DANYOW: I mean, were you able to give any medical treatment to anyone who was wounded, or did you find you were often just there to kind of be with them?

KENDALL: Well, the one thing that we did do was we would call on the radio and warn the medevac hospitals what it was that was coming,—

DANYOW: Sure.

KENDALL: —as near as we could tell from our unprofessional opinion. You could do things like stop bleeding. Hold hands, basically, was about the most important thing, yeah. And so there was no professional medical care provided.

DANYOW: Sure. But presumably they in most cases had been treated by the platoon medic on the ground—

KENDALL: Yeah.

DANYOW: —before they were loaded up. Treated, to some extent.

KENDALL: The most important thing, though, was to get the chopper there as soon as possible—

DANYOW: Right.

KENDALL: —and get them back to good medical care.

DANYOW: Right. And do you have any idea how many times you went out on these flights? Was it, you know, just a handful of times? Was it frequent?

KENDALL: It was maybe a bit more than a handful but not frequently. No, it was not every day I did that. We didn't have contact every day.

DANYOW: Right, right.

KENDALL: So no, it was not that often.

DANYOW: Okay.

Was there anything else that was particularly, you know, memorable during your time, you know, as the logistics officer? Any other incidents you were involved in?

KENDALL: There was this road that went from where I was, outside of Tam Kỳ, about 15 miles to one of the fire support bases where we were, and the Viet Cong would mine that road every night, and there were several truck drivers killed, driving over those mines, even though we put guys with mine detectors in front of the trucks to kind of find them. We never did find them. We never did stop them doing that. I remember that.

DANYOW: And you were involved in some aspect of the coordination to—

KENDALL: No, no, I had nothing to do with that except to know about it.

DANYOW: Okay. Fair enough.

And were you still in Vietnam when Tet occurred?

KENDALL: Yes. Yes.

DANYOW: I'm assuming you would have been the logistics officer when Tet occurred.

KENDALL: Yes.

DANYOW: Do you have any, you know, recollections particular to that?

KENDALL: Well, I told you that we were in this little place that was guarded by all the people that had been rejected by the company commanders.

DANYOW: Right.

KENDALL: And we were just outside of Tam Kỳ, and the NVA attacked Tam Kỳ, and there were something like 50 killed in action, all Vietnamese, and the NVA troops went right by me. I didn't ever see them, but they couldn't have been more than 500

meters from me, going in to attack Tam Kỳ. That got my attention.

DANYOW: You were outside of the town?

KENDALL: Yeah, yeah.

DANYOW: Wow. Yeah.

KENDALL: So that certainly got my attention. And then it was memorable to see 50 bodies stacked up. That was—yeah.

DANYOW: Did you find that over time you became, like, a little bit more numb to that sort of thing and maybe—I don't know if "accustomed" is even an appropriate word for that, but did it became easier to deal with or was it always, always tough?

KENDALL: Oh, it's always tough, but you—that's—it is. You can do nothing about it.

DANYOW: Right.

KENDALL: And it is, and that's—it is, so you observe it, and you say, *That's terrible*, and you go on and do whatever it is you're supposed to do. I don't know that I became—I certainly didn't become inured to seeing dead people. I thought that was terrible.

DANYOW: Right.

KENDALL: Always did.

DANYOW: And so can you walk me through kind of the end of your time in Vietnam and what exactly determined when you were going to leave, and the manner in which you left?

KENDALL: They decided they were going to build a new fire support base, and we went into this hilltop, and we brought in the choppers. I was helping the choppers come in that day, with the high explosive rounds for their artillery brigade. And then the next load coming in was the barbed wire, and then a bulldozer came in at one point. And at some point in that—and this was a grassy hilltop. At some point, the Viet Cong or the NVA—somebody started firing mortar rounds at us, and

the grass caught on fire, and the grass was going to go burn up and blow up the high explosive rounds of the 105s [105mm Howitzers]. So I was out there trying to put the fire out, along with a bunch of other guys, and the mortar rounds were coming in.

And it was hotter than a pistol. And we had no water. And I was hit by something from one of the mortar rounds, and the next thing I know, I woke up in a medevac hospital with lines coming out of my arm and stuff. I was subsequently flown back to the U.S. I spent some time recovering at Fort Devens. I also developed a case of intestinal parasites, where I lost about a third of my body weight.

DANYOW: Wow.

KENDALL: They were unable to diagnose it for some time, until they finally found it, and then I was cured.

DANYOW: Was that something they think you acquired in Vietnam?

KENDALL: It was clear I got it in Vietnam, yeah. It's not unusual to get those kinds of things in places like that.

DANYOW: Right. And was that the first time you'd been hit by enemy fire?

KENDALL: Yup.

DANYOW: Okay.

KENDALL: The only time.

DANYOW: Right.

I guess one other thing I'm curious about: How were you trying to fight the fire if you didn't have water out there? What exactly were you doing?

KENDALL: You tried with shovels and—

DANYOW: Just throwing dirt on it?

KENDALL: Yeah, just throwing dirt on it, yeah.

DANYOW: Wow. Interesting.

DANYOW: And asking for—on the radio, asking for the choppers to pick up bladders of water and come out and dump on it, but they never did. And I don't know. They must have gotten the fire out because I didn't ever—my battalion commander came along—this is another point of contention—to give me a Purple Heart, which I never got.

DANYOW: Hmm.

KENDALL: And he said that everything turned out okay. So I was on morphine, and I was on an Army cot, and the first thing that happened was that I became conscious and looked up, and here was an Army nurse, and I hadn't seen a female except for these Vietnamese women for a long time. And my first thought was that I'd died and gone to heaven. This is true. And then I realized I was probably not going to go to heaven, so—

DANYOW: [Laughs.]

KENDALL: Anyhow, then that night was a huge rocket attack on this air base, and they hit the ammo dump, and the sirens went off. What we were supposed to do is you're supposed to take these bottles and go into this bunker. But I was on morphine. I was feeling really good. And they had these toilets that were sort of up above a barrel, and you could open the door, and you could see things as you were sitting there. And so I went up to the toilet because I thought that was where I was supposed to go, and I opened the door, in my morphine state. The fireworks were going off from the ammo dump, going off. I thought it was the most wonderful thing in the world.

DANYOW: [Chuckles.] Wow.

KENDALL: And finally one of the nurses came and got me and put me in the bunker.

DANYOW: That's pretty amazing. And so long exactly were you there at the field hospital before you were brought back to the U.S.?

KENDALL: Five days maybe.

DANYOW: Okay.

KENDALL: Maybe a bit less. Not long at all, no.

DANYOW: Not a long period of time.

KENDALL: No, they didn't want to keep—they didn't—no.

DANYOW: Right. They were trying to move people through the system, I would imagine. And how much time did you spend in the hospital in Massachusetts?

KENDALL: Not so long in the hospital. I got out after they [Mr. Danyow coughs] cured the wounds, and then they gave me a sort of make-do assignment until my resignation became effective, and I was working with a group of officers. I think there were four of us, and we were looking after the U.S. Army Reserve in New England.

DANYOW: And so that was another sort of staff role or something like that?

KENDALL: Yeah, yeah.

DANYOW: Okay, so more administration than anything else.

KENDALL: Yeah.

DANYOW: Did you follow what was going on in Vietnam, the course of the war after you returned, in that immediate period in the hospital and then administering the New England Reserve committee—or whatever you said? Was it something—or did you just not want to follow what was going on?

KENDALL: You couldn't avoid it. You'd watch the news every night, and there it was, and you'd read about it. But it was clear to me after the Tet Offensive that we'd had it. We'd lost the war, and there was no way we were going to prevail.

DANYOW: Okay.

Can you talk a little bit about—you know, kind of thinking about your decision to go to business school and kind of what led you in that direction? Because I know you had decided at this point that you didn't want to do the military career. Did you immediately decide, *I want to do business*? Or was it kind of a more gradual process?

KENDALL: I can't remember exactly what happened with that. I had applied to Tuck [School of Business at Dartmouth College] before I graduated from Dartmouth, and they said—and they knew I was going to be in the military, and they said, "We'll hold a place for you after you get out of the military." I mean, it's free so why not?

DANYOW: Yeah, that's great.

KENDALL: It was great, yeah. And there was a place for me when I came back.

DANYOW: So that was an existing plan, to go to Tuck when you got out.

KENDALL: Yeah.

DANYOW: Okay.

KENDALL: And I was here. There were three vets—is that right? I was the only combat vet. And two other vets in my class at Tuck.

DANYOW: And that was Class of '71, you said?

KENDALL: Class of '71. That was the year that [Dartmouth] President [John G.] Kemeny's office was occupied and all the antiwar things.

DANYOW: Right.

KENDALL: And finals were cancelled one quarter, one term, and it was quite an active antiwar thing going on at the time.

DANYOW: Yeah, that was actually my next question. What was it like being back here after all the experiences you'd had in Vietnam? I imagine it would be kind of surreal, in a way.

KENDALL: It's a very good word for it. It was just surreal. Even now, you don't really fit in with other folks in many ways. It's a life-changing experience, and you have experiences that other people will never identify with. They can't understand. And for a long time, until [Philip C.] Schaefer [Class of 1964] started this project, nobody wanted to talk about it. They didn't want to hear about the experiences. And then Phil started this—this is a great project. For us it's a great project, to be able to finally articulate some of this stuff.

DANYOW: Did you experience any of the—you know, there's kind of the classic "baby killers" chant and, you know, people spitting on veterans. Did you experience any sort of hostility from students while you were here?

KENDALL: Yeah.

DANYOW: You did.

KENDALL: Not here, no.

DANYOW: Oh, okay.

KENDALL: I experienced people who really didn't agree with me and shouted at me and told me I was wrong, but I don't recall anything personal, like "baby killer" or anything like that. The Dartmouth antiwar demonstrators were a pretty civilized lot, actually. [Chuckles.] But other people were much less respectful when they found out, and—yeah. You know, it didn't really bother me that much. It was too bad. It was sad that we had such major disagreements, but the whole damn war just tore our society apart. And it still is. That's the amazing thing about it. We're still trying to deal with what we did there.

DANYOW: Mm-hm.

So I guess one thing I'm curious about is—your essay mentions that you worked in the [President Richard M.] Nixon White House a little bit?

KENDALL: Mm-hm.

DANYOW: Was that directly after graduating from Tuck?

KENDALL: Yeah.

DANYOW: I guess one thing I'm wondering about that: Were you perhaps, you know, drawn to Nixon by the fact that winding down American involvement in Vietnam was something he was pretty significantly involved in or was it just it happened to be the job you wanted?

KENDALL: There's a program called the White House Fellows [sic; White House Fellowship Program], and I applied to be a White House Fellow and was selected. And lots of famous people have been White House Fellows. [Secretary of State] Colin [L.] Powell was a White House Fellow, for example. And it just happened to be the Nixon White House.

DANYOW: Okay.

KENDALL: And I think maybe I was selected because I was kind of a respectable, semi-educated vet, combat vet.

DANYOW: Sure.

KENDALL: So, no, I didn't—it had nothing to do with what Nixon was doing with Vietnam particularly, although I was certainly in favor of what he was trying to accomplish.

DANYOW: And what exactly did you do as a White House Fellow?

KENDALL: I served as a special assistant to the Secretary of Interior, and I did some things for the National Security Council.

DANYOW: Fair enough. And then it sounds like you moved to the EPA [Environmental Protection Agency] after that in some capacity?

KENDALL: Yeah. Mm-hm. Yeah.

DANYOW: How exactly did that transition go? Because I knew Nixon created the EPA I believe by executive order in maybe 1970? I don't know the exact year, but—

KENDALL: I think you're right. And it was a part of what's Green Day [sic; Earth Day]. We just had it. Rachel Carson and *Silent*

Spring and the environment movement started. So at the end of the—and I'd become quite concerned about the way we were treating the Earth, and there opened up a position as a policy planner at EPA, and I took that position.

DANYOW: And how much time did you spend there, and what sort of things did you do?

KENDALL: A couple of years. I worked on the amendments to the Clean Air Act, Safe Drinking Water Act. I helped write a couple of reports for the Council on Environmental Quality. I helped write a couple of speeches for—I don't think for Ni- —yeah, maybe one for Nixon and a couple of others.

DANYOW: Cool.

KENDALL: Just kind of what you do as a staff person in the government.

DANYOW: Yeah.

KENDALL: I got involved a little bit with the Colorado River—which for me—I was born right next to the Colorado River—a little bit about how you allocate the Colorado River water.

DANYOW: Okay.

And would it have been in this period that Saigon fell? I'm curious what your reaction would have been.

KENDALL: Oh, yeah, that photograph of the chopper taking off from the building next to the embassy is just etched in all of our minds.

DANYOW: Sure.

KENDALL: It was incredibly sad. It was a sad time for our country. It was a sad time for our culture. But at the same time, I was really happy the stupid war was over with. It was more than time.

DANYOW: Did you have any sense of the fact that the south fell—did it make you feel like, you know, the fighting you had done was wasted in some capacity, or were you just thinking it's more the inevitable fall of the, or the south was doomed regardless?

KENDALL: After Tet, I was convinced that this was going to happen; it's just a matter of when.

DANYOW: So you weren't really taken by surprise about it.

KENDALL: No.

DANYOW: Fair enough.

You know, one thing I'd like to talk about a little bit, if you're willing, is—you know, you mention in here that you had what sounds like PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder] or, you know, symptoms that could be categorized as that and that that was a pretty significant hardship for you? Can you elaborate a little bit on—I know you mentioned recurring dreams in the essay.

KENDALL: Yeah, I had recurring dreams when I was in combat and I was just about to killed when I woke up. I had real trouble with my relationship with women. I'm on my third wife. I had times that I was just malcontent with my lot in the world. I was able to function. I was not dysfunctional. I started a business that was—

DANYOW: No, I don't mean to imply that at all.

KENDALL: I don't think you do. So I was not "unfunctionable." I could function.

DANYOW: Right.

KENDALL: But I would only function at maybe 70 percent capacity. I would go through periods when I would be really angry, not about the war but about some stupid things that just made me angry. And slowly but surely, that subsided over time.

DANYOW: Yeah. I mean, you make it pretty clear in the essay that as time passed, you got better at kind of, you know, dealing with these symptoms.

KENDALL: Yeah.

DANYOW: Why do you think that is? Is it just that more time had, you know, passed between, you know, the events in Vietnam and where you were at the time,—

KENDALL: Yeah. Yeah.

DANYOW: —more than anything else?

KENDALL: Yeah.

DANYOW: Okay.

KENDALL: I never received any treatment for it. I did get—at one point, they came out with a notice that anybody who was exposed to Agent Orange should go have their sperm count made, so I did, and it turned out I had no sperm. And then lots of people started complaining about the effects of Agent Orange, and people were having malformed babies and early cancer of weird sorts and so forth.

And then finally, finally—the war's over in '75. I think it was in '93 the VA [U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, also known as the Veterans Administration] finally sent us a letter saying, "We recognize Agent Orange is bad stuff, and if you have any of the following 75 maladies, it's treatable at the VA's expense." That made me angry. The VA did not do a good job of taking care of the Vietnam vets.

DANYOW: No.

KENDALL: And PTSD was—people thought you were some kind of a crybaby or something if you complained about that.

DANYOW: Right.

KENDALL: The way the vets were treated was not good. It ended up—I was living in San Francisco for a while, and you end up with a lot of vets homeless on the street. I'm not happy about that. Our country let our soldiers down.

DANYOW: I think Vietnam was fairly unique among recent wars in that capacity, it seems, to my understanding, in terms of the lack of support for veterans.

KENDALL: Well, yeah. Maybe it's my experience, but when they found this thing at the Walter Reed Hospital [sic; Walter Reed Army Medical Center] recently with the Iraq and Afghanistan vets, I was really angry. I wrote letters to everybody I possibly could, saying, "You cannot possibly allow this to happen to these guys." And I'm still offended by this—what is it? The suicide rate for these vets is 10 times the national average for people their age?

DANYOW: Something like that.

KENDALL: And they ought to be able to figure out a way to do something about that, although last night I met one of your classmates, one of the Iraq vets who's here. I was talking to him about the support he was getting from the VA, and he said it was really good, so that's nice to know.

DANYOW: Yeah, I'd at least like to think that things are better. They're certainly not perfect, but I think hopefully we've learned some lessons from Vietnam in that respect.

One other thing I'm, you know, curious about—and this may not be a great question, but did you ever find, you know, the leadership skills you developed in the military helped you in your business career, or did you find yourself drawing on those experiences at all, or was it more just trying to keep that separate?

DANYOW: Well, you certainly have a lot of self-confidence when you survive something like this, sort of based on your own wits.

DANYOW: Right.

KENDALL: And that helps a lot in anything that you do. There's not too much demand for a guy who knows how to call in protective artillery fire in the civilian world,—

DANYOW: Sure.

KENDALL: —so those kinds of skills didn't really help at all, but—and then you kind of—when people—when you're threatened with something, you realize that there's nothing anybody can possibly do to you that was as bad as the Vietnam War, so you kind of have a feeling about that, that that's good. Yeah.

DANYOW: Another thing I'm curious about that it [the essay] mentions is this Calcutta Rescue charity—

KENDALL: Yeah.

DANYOW: —that you've been involved with?

KENDALL: Yeah.

DANYOW: I mean, do you think there's any connection between, you know, Vietnam experience and the desire to, you know, go and help people, or was it just something—you know, just a separate interest?

KENDALL: I'm not really good at being that deeply introspective. I think there must have been something about it. With all your other experiences in life, there had to be something about that. I retired, and I don't play golf and I don't play bridge, and I was bored, and I was looking for something to do, and I felt that I had some skills I contribute, and I saw an advertisement for this charity in Calcutta [now called Kolkata, India]. "We need an administrator." And I said, *I can do that.* And off I went. And it's been a rewarding second career for me.

DANYOW: Certainly. And it mentions you actually lived in a slum for a year.

KENDALL: Yeah, I lived in a Muslim slum in the middle of Calcutta for a year.

DANYOW: What was that like?

KENDALL: It was great! The people were wonderful. I had a pretty nice place to live. I actually had running water and electricity about half the time, but all around me was this real serious poverty. They accepted me readily. They took care of me. They invited me to their Ramadan dinners—breakfasts. Yeah, it was—

DANYOW: Sure.

KENDALL: And I could see that I was able to do some things to help this charity do a better job of taking care of these poor people. I

always say that I went over there to help poor people, but they helped me more than I helped them. [Chuckles.]

DANYOW: Well, I think they might disagree, perhaps, if you asked them.

You know, one thing I'm curious about is have you returned to Vietnam at all since the war?

KENDALL: No.

DANYOW: Because I know some of the veterans from your class I think took a trip back there.

KENDALL: And Professor [Edward G.] Miller is organizing another one for November-December, and I decided not to go. I'm not sure I'm ready to do that, emotionally.

DANYOW: You just don't want to relive those experiences.

KENDALL: Yeah, I think so.

DANYOW: That makes sense. That's certainly understandable.

So I guess the last thing I wrote down there that I'd kind of like to talk about—we touched on this a little bit—is, you know, now that we're here, looking back on Vietnam a number of years ago, do you think—you know, what lessons do you think we have learned as a county, as a government, as a military, as people, and which ones have we not learned?

KENDALL: [Sighs.] When I was preparing for this seminar, I found a quote from Aldous Huxley. Do you remember when—maybe you don't remember. He said that the only thing that men learn from history is that men don't learn from history.

DANYOW: I've heard that one before. That's a good one.

KENDALL: It's a good one. And I think we probably haven't learned a whole heck of a lot. From a military point of view, we've engaged in at least two wars that were absolutely unnecessary, for reasons that were not justifiable, at huge cost, not only in terms of money but in terms of people's lives.

I think that the tear in the cultural fabric is not yet healed, and maybe when we're gone, maybe it'll start to heal a bit, but I don't see that happening. You still see bitter, bitter disagreements about these issues, about how we deploy our military forces in the world. And so I don't think that's going to—I was really stuck with this anniversary of the '75 escape from Vietnam, the celebrations that went on recently and some of the articles that have appeared recently, in which some people, at least, are trying to blame the fact that we lost the war on the media, on the military leaders, on the soldiers that weren't brave enough, on something. And in my opinion, we lost the war because we couldn't win it. It was an unwinnable war from the very second we started, and we should have realized that.

We seem to have this attitude that if folks disagree with us, we'll just go blow them to smithereens and they'll agree with us.

There was one story I told—I don't know where—but anyhow, one day we went towards this village, and we received a lot of fire, and we started shooting back at the village, and we went into the village, and we couldn't find any man. We couldn't find any weapons. And so there was one woman who was clearly the leader of this village. It may have been 30 people, kids and women. And she was pregnant. And so with my interpreter, I went up to interview her and said, "Where are the men?" "There are no men here." "Who were firing at us?" "I didn't hear any firing." "Where are the men?" "There are no men here. There haven't been men here for a long time." "Who made you pregnant?"

DANYOW: [Chuckles.]

KENDALL: I had my fatigue jacket on with my jump wings and my combat infantry badge and my captain's bars, and she looked at me and grinned and said, "American Airborne captain."

DANYOW: [Laughs.]

KENDALL: She was just defiant, just defiant. And I wish I could find her and talk with her again. But anyhow, so then we—based on the policy of clearing the free-fire zone, we loaded them all in choppers, burned their village and shipped their rice back to the refugee center. There was no way in hell we were going to win that woman's heart and mind. No way. It's just impossible. That was—we didn't learn that. We thought we could blow people to smithereens, and we couldn't. Yeah, I'm not sure that we made much progress in that respect.

DANYOW: Do you think with a better strategy, focused on actually winning people's hearts and minds, in which you would have built a relationship with these villagers rather than burning down their village and shipping them away—do you think the war would have been more winnable or do you think it was still ultimately a futile exercise?

KENDALL: I don't think the American public would have the endurance to—it would take a long, long time. One of the things—one of the strengths that we had that we didn't use from a tactical point of view was that these American soldiers are enterprising guys. They're not highly educated. Infantrymen are not rocket scientists.

DANYOW: Right.

KENDALL: But they're enterprising guys, they work hard, and they're not dumb.

DANYOW: Right.

KENDALL: And we could have taken an infantry squad, run by a sergeant, and put it in every village, and these guys help protect them from any military things that might happen against them and make sure they get some clean water and the kids get to go to school—

DANYOW: Right.

KENDALL: —and just live with these people for a period of time. And that may have made a difference. But we didn't do that. We just dropped bombs on them.

DANYOW: Right. Because, I mean, I think there's kind of a whole modern school of counterinsurgency that's largely developed to try to push that sort of effort of actually, you know, integrating with the population and gaining their trust.

KENDALL: Yeah.

DANYOW: I think a lot of that has developed as a result of mistakes made in Vietnam, but I'm still not sure it's 100 percent effective, as we've seen in the Middle East.

KENDALL: Well, if you look at the experience of the British in Malaysia, for example, against the guerilla war they had there, it took years and years and years and years, and I don't think the American government and politics will put up with that. We want results faster than that.

I'm pretty pleased with President [Barack H.] Obama's reluctance to engage troops in some of these opportunities that we currently have and to use other means of trying to get people to change their behavior a little bit. I hope that that can continue, because we don't need to send a bunch of guys to get shot every time somebody does something that we don't like. That's just not necessary.

DANYOW: Fair enough.

One other thing I'm curious about—and you may not have had this experience, but did you ever interact with South Vietnamese military forces and have any experiences with them?

KENDALL: No, not really. At one point, they assigned my company a platoon of Popular Forces [sic; South Vietnam Popular Force]. These were untrained farmers, and they had a gun [chuckles], with a few bullets. And they were supposed to be an additional platoon for me, but these guys—[Chuckles.] Finally, I just took each one of them and assigned them to one of my infantrymen and said, "Your job is to take care of him," because they were worthless as soldiers.

DANYOW: Right.

KENDALL: The only thing they'd do is every time we got near a village, the next thing you knew, they'd gone in and got two chickens and they were starting to boil a chicken in a pot to eat. But they were not—they were not impressive. I really didn't interact with the regular South Vietnamese forces at all.

DANYOW: I was just curious because that's, you know, another school of thought, is that, you know, their military was too corrupt and their government was too corrupt, and that's also part of what made their ultimate defeat inevitable. But fair enough.

KENDALL: Yeah, but I think we know from the history that that's a long, long, long time in the making, the corruption of the South Vietnam Army.

DANYOW: Oh, absolutely.

KENDALL: You make a mistake to depend on indigenous armies in those kind—the same in Iraq. We're paying the price right now, because those guys just don't do it the way it should be done,—

DANYOW: Right.

KENDALL: —at least from our perspective.

DANYOW: This is one other thing that just occurred to me. Do you, you know, buy into this idea—a lot of people argue that, you know, politicians who are going to be in the position of sending troops into combat should have, you know, combat or at least military experience, themselves. Do you think that's important? I mean, do you think that's a viable argument, or do you think it's more just about having a good decision maker in those positions, regardless of what their background is?

KENDALL: I think we lost something about waging war when we stopped having William the Conqueror go in front of his troops to go into battle instead of standing behind them and pointing the direction. I've run into, quite a bit these days, people that talk about the sacrifices that the soldiers in Vietnam and the soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan have made, and a lot of people say, "Well, it's their job, isn't it?" Well, yeah, it's their job. Yeah, maybe they volunteered. But

they don't have any idea of the cost, the terrible human cost that's incurred in the process. There's a disconnect between this decision, "Well, we're just going to go send a few troops in" and the actual execution of the terrible, terrible violence that it does to people on both sides. And I don't know that realization of that has existed since the American Revolution or perhaps before.

I would encourage any vet who possibly can: Run for Congress. We need two presidents who are vets. We need—yeah. And I think it's absolutely wonderful that we have a course like Professor Miller's course, where people like you are learning and talking to people like me to try at least to understand what it was about.

DANYOW: Absolutely.

KENDALL: I think it's really, really, really important.

DANYOW: I couldn't agree more. That's why I'm here.

KENDALL: Yeah, it's great. And you're doing a good job.

DANYOW: Thank you. Well, I think that pretty much covers what I wanted to go through today, so unless you have any other thoughts that you want to share, we can wrap up.

KENDALL: I have nothing particular. If you need anything else from me, you have my e-mail.

DANYOW: Absolutely.

KENDALL: Drop me an e-mail. I'll be glad to respond.

DANYOW: Well, thanks so much for your time today, Mr. Kendall.

KENDALL: Thank you.

[End of interview.]