

Sam Sopocy

Lowe Veterans Appreciation Video – November 11, 2020

I'm Sam Sopocy. I was in the U. S. Army from 19-, May of 1966 to May of 1969. I took my basic training at Fort Leonard Wood and from Fort Leonard Wood I was supposed to go to Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana for finance training, but they had different plans for me. They sent me the personnel school, right there at Fort Leonard Wood for another two months, and then sent me home and told me that I'm going back to Fort Benning, Georgia.

They were forming 11 air units to take over the airfields in Vietnam. There'd be 17 to 20 people in each one of these. So that's where I ended up. But I ended up with a great group of guys.

I had a major that was Major Jones and a First Lieutenant Stouffer and a First lieutenant Bowers, and we were all a good group. We get along good, and then we formed our unit, got all our gear and stuff. And we took C-130s from Fort Benning, Georgia, all the way to Vietnam. If you ever been in one, see there's straps on the sides of them, but just seats that are made out of like canvas and cold. Talk about cold. We about froze. I could tell you some other incidents on that, but I'm not going to get into that because it's kind of different, you know.

But once we get the Vietnam, I lucked out. Our unit went way down south in the Delta in the Soc Trang. It's second to the furthest outpost that they had. And it was kind of interesting because we all got our jobs, and I had to work for the air field commander which was Major Jones. Well, that didn't turn out so good because a lieutenant colonel wanted that position. So he bumped out Major Jones, and this lieutenant colonel and I didn't get along. So he sent me up to Can Tho to the battalion for a month.

But that was all right. I had good duty there. I sat behind a desk, you know, I couldn't complain. But the weird thing happened is the two lieutenants, all the paperwork was - they put a guy in there who didn't quite understand the paper work and it was all goofed up. And Battalion was calling them and asking what was going on. And finally the, one lieutenant came up to Can Tho and said you got to come back. I said, do I, you know I got good duty now, you know, but I did go back and Deerfield, the Lieutenant Colonel and I still bumped heads pretty bad.

And I asked what I could do and the lieutenant told me, he said, why don't you do your work in the night and we'll let you have most of the day off unless something serious comes up. I said well, that's great. Sounds great. So this one on for a little bit and I got bored.

So being young, I volunteered to fill them as a gunner on the Humvees. So I did that and I never told my parents back home or my wife what I was doing till I got home, because I didn't want them to worry. And there was some incidents. I'll mention one. There's Palm Sunday, 1967. And we were flying back, we was us up to [?] and we was flying back. See we transferred troops too on these Humvees all over and we were coming back and one of our choppers got hit. And I'm not going into it.

That was some of my experiences in Vietnam. And then when I came home from Vietnam, they stationed me, I was supposed to go to Italy as an ambassador. I applied for ambassadorship and I had a [?] find out what I was doing. So he pulled rank like everybody does, you know if they get away with it. He took that job so I still don't want to go just any place. So there was an opening in San Antonio, Texas, to do recruiting, and I did do the recruiting, but I was in the recruiting station and we gave the test to all the guys coming in. It

was kinda interesting job because you meet, you know, college graduates to guys that having a hard time. You know, they wanted to go in some of these guys wanted to go in and they couldn't pass the test and you didn't know what to do. So I would just send them on to a - we had a sergeant major and I would tell them to go talk to him. Whatever he did, that was up to him. That was out of my jurisdiction, you know, but it was interesting and my wife was there with me in San Antonio. So we had fourteen months there.

If anything at all, the military I guess brought a lot that I could see. So my wife and I enjoy traveling quite a bit. So I guess I can be thankful for the military for that part and I - I still got a lot of good training. So I'm not complaining, but it's been rough.