

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Ramon (Jay) Castro

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
Veterans Remember Oral History project

Interview # VRV-A-L-2016-054

Ramon (Jay) Castro, a frogman for one tour in Vietnam, and a crewman on a river patrol boat for a second tour, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Veterans Remember - Vietnam* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: Nov 9, 2016 Location: Rockford Public Library, Rockford, IL

Date: Nov 10, 2016 Location: Jay Castro's home in Freeport, IL

Date: Dec 1, 2016 Location: Jay Castro's home in Freeport, IL

Interview Format: Digital audio/Digital video

Interviewer: Mark R. DePue, Director of Oral History, ALPL

Transcription by: _____

Edited by: _____

Transcript
being processed

Total Pages: _____ Total Time: 2:06 + 2:04 + 2:36 / 2.1 + 2.07 + 2.6 = 6.77 hrs.

Session 1: Early years in Savannah and military training as a Navy frogman

Session 2: First tour in Vietnam as frogman and leave in the U.S.

Session 3: Second tour in delta region of South Vietnam on a river patrol boat

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on June 21, 2017.

The interviews are archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

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Abstract

Ramon (Jay) Castro, *Veterans Remember*, VRV-A-L-2016-054

Biographical Information Overview of Interview: Ramon (Jay) Castro was born in January, 1947 in Chicago, Illinois, but grew up in the Mississippi river town of Savannah, the son of Mexican immigrant parents. Jay's father died when he was in 8th grade, and the family struggled financially after that, but they were sustained by his mother's work with a local physician. Jay was an athlete in high school, and had ambitions to be an artist, but after a short stint in college, he decided to enlist in the Navy in 1966. Following basic training, he was stationed in Coronado, California, where he worked in an amphibious food galley. It was there he saw sailors training to be frogmen (Underwater Demolition Team), and immediately transferred to that school.

In October, 1967 he was sent to Subic Bay in the Philippines, and was assigned to UDT 11-12. The team soon was on its way to Vietnam on board the diesel submarine USS Tunny (SS 282). The crew conducted operations off of the South Vietnamese coast near the demilitarized zone for the next several months. In March, 1968 Castro returned to the states for his next assignment. It was during this time that he failed to be accepted into the elite SEAL (Sea, Air and Land) program, a decision he fought unsuccessfully. Castro then volunteered to serve on a patrol boat, and following a few weeks in a language school, he returned to South Vietnam in mid-1969, this tour serving as a Gunner's Mate Third Class with the Patrol Boat Riverine (PBR) force in the country's delta region. Following his one year tour he went to the states for leave and spent time at home before curiosity took him to San Francisco, where he observed the hippie culture at Haight-Ashbury up close. Castro volunteered to extend for six months, which allowed him to be released from the Navy early. He served with patrol boats for approximately fifteen months, and during this time was credited with participating in 403 missions in all, with twenty where they encountered the enemy. Castro discusses many of these missions in detail, including those where he received his two bronze stars, and a mission where he was slightly injured.

Following the war, Castro earned a degree from Southern Illinois University and worked as an art teacher and other jobs. In 1977 he joined the Air Force Reserves, then moved to the Navy Reserves in 1979, eventually joining SEAL Team One and later SEAL Team Eight. He finally retired from the Reserves in 1998.

Subject Headings/Key Words: Underwater Demolition Team (UDT) during Vietnam War; Patrol Boat Riverine (PBR); patrol boat operations in the Delta region of South Vietnam; Yard Repair Berthing and Messing (YRBM) 20; SEAL training; Haight-Ashbury; growing up in river town of Savannah, Illinois; Southern Illinois University; Viet Cong; Agent Orange;

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