

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Bruce Thiemann

Part of the Illinois Public Media ([WILL radio.tv.online](http://WILL.radio.tv.online))
Central Illinois Vietnam War Stories project

Interview # VRV-V-D-2015-081

Bruce Thiemann, who served as a helicopter mechanic and crew chief in Vietnam from 1968 to 1970, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Illinois Public Media – WILL AM-FM-TV Central Illinois Vietnam War Stories project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: 05/27/2015 Location: WTVP, Peoria, IL

Interview Format: Digital video

Interviewer: H. Wayne Wilson

Technical Support (videographer): WILL Staff

Transcription by: Illinois Public Media staff

Total Pages: 26 pgs. Total Time: 0:46 / 0.77 hrs.

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The interview is archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

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Abstract

Bruce Thiemann, *Veterans Remember*, VRV-V-D-2015-081

Biographical Information Overview of Interview: Bruce Thiemann was born April 22, 1949 and grew up in East Peoria, Illinois where he graduated from Woodruff High School in 1967. Eager to experience combat first-hand, Thiemann went against his parents' wishes and dropped out of college after a year and joined the Army in 1968. He was sent to a military police school at Fort Gordon, Georgia, then transferred from there to Fort Eustis, Virginia, with orders to be trained as a helicopter mechanic. He was then shipped to Vietnam and was assigned to B Troop, 7th Squadron, 1st Air Cavalry Regiment in Vinh Long, South Vietnam as a helicopter mechanic. Once there, Thiemann volunteered to serve as a door gunner and then as a crew chief on UH-1 Huey helicopters, manning the left gun. As crew chief, he made sure the ship was armed, gassed up, the logbook was kept up and that the ship was mechanically sound. He assisted his aircraft commanders with insertion missions, dropping off and picking up infantry troops in the southern areas of South Vietnam, including the Mekong Delta region and near the Cambodian border. During his time in the Air Cavalry Thiemann developed a strong camaraderie with his fellow crewmembers. Despite his excitement to join and serve in Vietnam, it took Thiemann about a decade after his return in the spring of 1970 to let go of his resulting doubts and shame as a soldier and to be able to talk more publicly about his service with pride. He felt guilty for having shot up the countryside where the Vietnamese lived, but when he met Vietnamese who had escaped and heard their gratefulness for the American effort, he began to change his opinion on his actions over in Vietnam. After the war, Thiemann went on to earn a degree in history and eventually earned a law degree, practicing law in Peoria.

Subject Headings/Key Words: helicopter crew chief during Vietnam War; B Troop 7th Squadron of the 1st Air Cavalry Regiment; Air Cavalry operations in Vietnam; Vinh Long, South Vietnam; Cobra gunships; UH-1H Huey helicopter; actions at landing zones during Vietnam War; U Minh Forest, South Vietnam; ARVN (South Vietnamese) troops; Vietnam Veterans of Illinois; VFW; 92 B MOS;

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