

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Randal E. Thomas

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

Interview # VRV-A-L-2015-058

Randal E. (Randy) Thomas, a Special Forces lieutenant who served in Vietnam in 1968-69, and who eventually became the Adjutant General for the Illinois National Guard, was interviewed on the dates listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Veterans Remember – Vietnam War* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Dates: Dec 14, 2015, Jan 12 & Jan 26, 2016

Location: Thomas family home in Springfield, Illinois

Interview Format: Digital audio

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

Transcription by: _____

Edited by: _____

Transcript
being processed

Total Pages: _____ Total Time: 2:12 + 2:11 + 2:16 / 2.2 + 2.18 + 2.27 = 6.65 hrs.

Session 1: Early life, basic training, Officer Candidate School and SF training

Session 2: Experiences in South Vietnam with the 5th Special Forces Group

Session 3: Life in Vietnam and post-war career in education and IL National Guard

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on March 15, 2016.

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

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Abstract

Randal E. Thomas, *Veterans Remember*, VRV-A-L-2015-058

Biographical Information Overview of Interview: Randal (Randy) Thomas was born on January 20, 1947 in Glen Carbon, Illinois, and grew up in the Maryville and Collinsville area, graduating from Collinsville High School in 1965. He was drafted in 1966, and scored well enough to attend the Infantry's Officer Candidate School (OCS) in Ft. Benning, GA. Upon receiving his commission as an infantry second lieutenant, Thomas received orders to Ft. Bragg, NC and began training in the Special Forces.

In May, 1968 he arrived at Cam Ranh Bay, South Vietnam, and was assigned to the 5th Special Forces Group, specifically to C-1, and further assigned to Detachment A-102, at Tien Phuoc, Vietnam, which operated in the I Corps area in northern South Vietnam. Each A team had twelve Special Forces troops assigned. For the next seven months Lieutenant Thomas worked with indigenous South Vietnamese units (not ARVN, Army of Vietnam forces), assisting them as they conducted patrols in the northern region of South Vietnam. He and another SF member typically accompanied company sized South Vietnamese forces on their missions. Thomas describes a typical mission in detail, while also recounting several of his more memorable missions. In November, 1968 he accompanied the remains of a deceased American soldier to the United States, and returned to Vietnam after that mission. Thomas was then reassigned to the I Corps Special Forces B-Team, specifically working as the unit's S-5 (Psychological Operations officer).

Upon completing his tour of duty, Thomas returned to the states, left the active army and enrolled at Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville, earning a degree in English with a secondary teaching certificate. He worked at Hillsboro High School for the next thirty years, both as a teacher and librarian. In 1983 he joined the Illinois Army National Guard, and was assigned to C Company, 2-130th Infantry, an infantry company in Litchfield, Illinois. After multiple command and staff assignments, he was selected in 2003 by Governor Rod Blagojevich to serve as the Adjutant General of Illinois.

Subject Headings/Key Words: Special Forces during the Vietnam War; Special Forces task organization; combat operations in South Vietnam; CIDG (Civilian Irregular Defense Group); Infantry Officer Basic Course at Ft. Benning, GA; Ft. Bragg, North Carolina; C Company, 2-130th Infantry; Illinois Army National Guard; selection as Adjutant General for Illinois; Gov. Rod Blagojevich administration; Barack Obama; S-5 Psychological operations

Note to the Reader: Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that this is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, interviewee and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for the views expressed therein. We leave these for the reader to judge.

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