

# Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Robert Ritter

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-2015-080

Robert Ritter, was a fire control technician on the Naval ship the USS Canberra during the Vietnam War, 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: 04/28/2015 Location: WILL-TV, 300 N. Goodwin Ave., Urbana, IL 61801

Interview Format: Digital video

Interviewer: Cassidy Williams and Kimberlie Kranich, Illinois Public Media staff

Technical Support (cameraman, etc.): WILL Staff

Transcription by: Illinois Public Media staff

Total Pages: 44 pgs. Total Time: 1:22 / 1.37 hrs.

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on March 3, 2016.

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

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# Abstract

## Robert Ritter, *Veterans Remember*, VRV-V-D-2015-080

**Biographical Information Overview of Interview:** Robert Ritter was born October 11, 1945 and grew up in the small town of Farmer City, Illinois. He moved to Monticello, Illinois in 1971 where he still lived at the time of the interview. He went to Navy boot camp for two weeks in San Diego, California, after which he underwent additional training at the Great Lakes Naval Training Center in Illinois. Altogether, he went through sixty weeks of school, learning how to maintain and operate electronic equipment. Following that training, Ritter was assigned to the guided missile cruiser, the USS *Canberra* (CAG 2), which was based at San Diego, California. It made frequent cruises to Vietnam to support combat operations while Ritter was assigned to the ship from late 1967 to 1969. He operated and maintained fire control equipment, especially for the ship's 3-inch and 5-inch guns, which had a maximum range of twenty-five miles. The guns were often used to support the forces on shore. Among the USS *Canberra*'s many missions, it supported Operation Sea Dragon as well as the liberation of Hue after the communists seized the city in early 1968 during the Tet Offensive. The USS *Canberra* also engaged enemy ships, destroyed enemy bunkers and "took out" islands, with the aid of spotters from shore.

The USS *Canberra* used Subic Bay in the Philippines for repairs and it was also the port where the crew spent their R&Rs. Ritter says the war helped him and his wife develop a closer relationship because they wrote letters to each other every day. Ritter describes the poor living conditions and slum towns in the Philippines, Japan and Hong Kong compared to the quality of living in America. His experiences taught him to appreciate life and everything America has to offer. He believes every man should consider serving because it gave him great training as an individual.

**Subject Headings/Key Words:** US. Navy during the Vietnam War; Monticello, Illinois; Operation Sea Dragon; North Vietnamese equipment; Subic Bay, Philippines; USS *Canberra* (CAG 2); Great Lakes Naval Training Center; naval fire control technician; censorship of letters during Vietnam War; Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall; Vietnamese Demilitarized Zone; National Defense Ribbon; Republic of Vietnam Ribbon;

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