

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Sandra Vasko

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

Interview # VRV-A-L-2019-064

Sandy Vasko, the wife of a Vietnam veteran who subsequently experienced PTSD, 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: Oct 4, 2019 Location: Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL

Date: Oct 30, 2019 Location: Sandy Vasko's home in rural Peotone, IL

Interview Format: Digital audio

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

Transcription by: _____

Edited by: _____

Transcript
being processed

Total Pages: _____ Total Time: 1:31 + 2:13 / 1.52 + 2.22 = 3.74 hrs

Session 1: Family history, early life, education and marriage to George Rolowicz

Session 2: Experiences while George was in Vietnam and post-war struggles with PTSD

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on January 15, 2020.

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

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Abstract

Sandy Vasko, *Veterans Remember*, VRV-A-L-2019-064

Biographical Information/Overview of Interview: Sandra (Nielsen) Vasko was born in July 1948 in Elmhurst, Illinois and grew up in Lockport, Illinois. Her parents met during the Battle of the Bulge. Her father was an American GI, and her mother, the daughter of a wealthy Russian, was a refugee from Russia living with her family in Belgium. Sandy graduated from Lockport High School in 1966, then enrolled in Western Illinois University. She had met George Rolowicz while in high school, and in 1967 Sandy left college and the two eloped, traveling first in Kansas City, then on a whim, ended up in Charleston, South Carolina. They stayed in Charleston until George was drafted into the Army in late 1968. Sandy returned to the Chicago area.

George attended basic training at Ft. Leonard Wood, Missouri, then Sandy joined him when he was posted to Ft. Sill, Oklahoma for further training. While there, Sandy gave birth, but the child died after five hours, in part due to the poor quality of medical care. George then deployed to South Vietnam in December 1969 and Sandy returned to Chicago. George initially worked as a cook, but later changed his assignment and saw more serious combat. Sandy worked at Argon National Laboratory as well as a department store in downtown Chicago, where she met Robert Vasko. When George returned from Vietnam, Sandy described him as a changed man, often jealous and angry. They returned to Charleston where they had once found happiness, but the relationship continued to deteriorate. After being beaten a second time, Sandy left George and returned to the Chicago area. They eventually divorced and Sandy later married Robert. During the latter part of the Vietnam War, Sandy became involved with a group of anti-war protesters at the University of Chicago. Many years later Sandy had a chance encounter with George's estranged daughter who would soon be married. Sandy encouraged her to include her father in the wedding. Shortly after that, George visited her to thank her. He was seriously ill at the time and died shortly after that.

Subject Headings/Key Words: Vietnam War; PTSD; Charleston, South Carolina; Argon National Laboratories; anti-war protests during Vietnam War; childhood in Lockport, Illinois during 1950s and '60s; George Rolowicz; Robert Vasko; National Barn Dance; Battle of the Bulge

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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