

Interview with Richard Bartolotti

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Interview # 1:

Interviewer: WILL Staff

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Bartolotti: Richard Joseph Bartolotti. Richard. R-i-c-h-a-r-d. Joseph. J-o-s-e-p-h.

Bartolotti. B-a-r-t-o-l-o-t-t-i.

Interviewer: That's a good Italian name, right?

Bartolotti: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay, that's what I thought. Good. I'm half-Sicilian and that half really is very proud of the fact that they're Sicilian. Would you please state and spell your place of birth?

Bartolotti: Okay. I was born in Valier, Illinois in a house. And the city of Valier, V-a-l-i-e-r, Illinois, I-l-l-i-n-o-i-s.

Interviewer: And if you could just state your birth date.

Bartolotti: March 13, 1947.

Interviewer: Okay, very good, now we can start, now we got all that stuff out of the way. Well, you know, I'd really like to start out by just asking you about yourself. So you were born in, could you say the name again for me?

Bartolotti: Valier. V-a-l-i-e-r.

Interviewer: Is that where you grew up?

Bartolotti: That's where I grew up, that's where I live now.

Interviewer: Oh, very good. Now, that's a smaller community, is it not?

Bartolotti: Oh yes, it's, well the part of it that I live in, there's probably only about thirty people.

Interviewer: Okay, wow. That could be a family in some places. If you wouldn't mind, talk a little bit about that. What was life growing up in a small town like?

Bartolotti: Oh, it was, everybody was close. Friends was like family. You had to make up things to have fun with because we didn't have a whole lot. And I enjoyed it.

Interviewer: Absolutely. Yeah, I'm from St. Louis myself, so not quite the small-town life. Talk about your family. Brothers, sisters?

Bartolotti: I got three brothers, one older than me, and two younger than me. Three of us been in the service, two of us was in Vietnam. And the oldest one, very intelligent, he's got several doctor's degrees, teaches at the University of North Carolina.

Interviewer: Very good, very good.

Bartolotti: I wasn't so smart.

Interviewer: Oh, listen, that's what I tell people, too. There's good genes in the family, I just didn't get them. So what was it like growing up in a house with all those boys?

Bartolotti: Interesting. Well, like I said, I was from a small community. I mean, just, the more kids you had, the more people you had to play with.

Interviewer: Talk about, if you would, if you can recall, when is the first time you remember hearing about a conflict in Vietnam?

Bartolotti: That was when I was in high school, and that was about when it started. And it was after the Kennedy era, after the Johnson era, and everybody was being drafted and going to war. And that was something I didn't want to do.

Interviewer: I can imagine that.

Bartolotti: And I was afraid I was going to have to. I was hoping I wouldn't have to, but I knew I was going to.

Interviewer: So, now you were just saying that, you know, you're in high school. You're still a young man, you're still a young man now, don't get me wrong. But this is the first time you're hearing about the conflict, and the one thought going through your mind is, "Gosh, I just don't want to get drafted."

Bartolotti: That's true.

Interviewer: Now is that what happened?

Bartolotti: That's true, and I got drafted. And then I started going to recruiters. I was not wanting to go to Vietnam, so I was trying to see what I could get into to keep from going there. And all of them basically told me the same thing, that if we would give you the test, that you'd already be inducted and in, and we can't pull you out of there once you're in it, so we can't do you no good. And then I see a Marine Corps recruiter, and, well, he told me a little bit different. But then I signed up to go into the Marine Corps. And I signed for the Marine Corps to keep from going to Vietnam, but I went directly to Vietnam.

Interviewer: Now talk about that a little bit. Why would the Marine Corps perhaps have kept you out?

Bartolotti: Well, they had promised, see, I was an instructor and graduated with an associate's degree from VTI [Vocational Technical Institute]. And I was there, and then I thought, "Well, I could get into welding and do something in the service," and that's what he promised me, but I didn't get it. I mean, in so

many words. I mean, never promised me nothing in writing or anything, it was just all verbal.

Interviewer: Where did you go for your basic training?

Bartolotti: I went to San Diego.

Interviewer: Oh, that's interesting. I wonder, that's where my father went. He was drafted in the Marines, but I can't remember the year. But, uh, Greg St. George was his name, is his name. Well, he has lots of stories about the difficulty of Marine boot camp. Could you share maybe just one story that comes to mind about how tough that really is?

Bartolotti: Well, I'd say the main thing that sticks with you is your first day there. I mean, they scare you to no end. I mean, you really start thinking, "Why in the heck did I ever get into this? What am I in?" Because you think they can do anything to you and get away with it, which they can't, but you think that anyway. It was just scary to me. I wasn't a physically fit person back then. I was overweight, I was little, I was only five-foot-four when I joined the Marine Corps. And, matter of fact, by the time I got out of infantry training, ITR, I was five-foot-eight, and I was a hundred and, what was it, a hundred and seventy-eight pounds. And when I went in, I was over two hundred and five-foot-four. So they, I mean, they put you through some stuff, and most of the people that I was in there with were all well physically fit people, and I had to try to keep up with them. It made it rough, but I was able to do it.

Interviewer: That's good to know. My dad talks about his favorite candy growing up when he was little was chocolate covered cherries, used to love them. And when he was in San Diego, in his training, my grandmother sent him a box, and his drill sergeant found out, made him eat every piece, and then put on the pack and go do his miles. And he said he's never been sicker, and sadly he hasn't enjoyed a piece of chocolate covered strawberry since, cause it just.

Bartolotti: Yeah, all through boot camp, you was not allowed to have any (unintelligible) or anything, you wasn't allowed to have anything other than what come from the mess hall, and only have that within the mess hall. That was it.

Interviewer: It's very, very strict. Okay, so you got through basic training, you came out the other side, a little more physically fit. When did you find out that they were going to send you to Vietnam?

Bartolotti: Oh, you knew it all the way through.

Interviewer: Oh did you?

Bartolotti: Oh yeah, from the first day in boot camp, they, that's what they drilled into your head. You was going to Vietnam, and your odds of coming back wasn't that great. They just told you that all the way through boot camp, and then after you get out of boot camp and ITR, then you go into a staging battalion. That staging battalion, that's what that's for, to send you to Vietnam. And when I was in it, basically I volunteered for everything that come up in there because I was trying to prolong my time to go to Vietnam. I went through

special map reading courses, POW training, all kind of different trainings like that. I had a lot of training before I went over there.

Interviewer: So, Wade was talking last week that he was very thankful for some of the extra training he got because he said, you know, every bit of knowledge helped you. I mean, every, everything you could know was beneficial when you actually got out there, as far as survival techniques and so forth. So how did you, how were you deployed to Vietnam?

Bartolotti: We flew over there in a civilian airlines. We had our rifles, we had everything. I mean, we was prepared for war the minute we got onto that airlines until we got off in Da Nang.

Interviewer: And that's a long flight, I would imagine.

Bartolotti: Oh yeah, it was several hours. I don't remember just how many hours it was, but you flew from there to Hawaii, from Hawaii to Guam, Guam to Okinawa, from Okinawa to Vietnam. You never got off the plane, you stayed on the plane the whole time.

Interviewer: Do you remember stepping off the plane in this foreign country? What was going through your mind?

Bartolotti: Scared. Not knowing what I was getting into. You know, they put you through all kinda training and tell you what you're going through, but you don't really know what to look for. And the military don't give you a whole lot of descriptions on what to do or what you're supposed to do at that moment.

When I got off the plane there, you go to dispersing, and the dispersing that was underneath the, oh, like a pavilion with benches in it. You sit in these benches and they called your names out and they say, "Well, you're going to so-and-so." And they told me that I'd be in the First Marine Division, Seventh Regiment. And they said, "You get on this truck here and take it so-and-so." I got the regiment, and then they told me I was going to Third Battalion. And they told me, walk down this roadway until I come to that hill over there and go to the office there, and that was the battalion. You don't know nothing until you get there, and that's basically how it all ends up.

Interviewer: That's scary in and of itself. I would imagine, you know, it's a stressful situation in and of itself, and then you add the element of the unknown to it. And I can't imagine it.

Bartolotti: But it's, I mean, you're prepared for it, you're well trained for it. But nobody's ever well prepared to get shot at or shoot back, it's just something that you really have to learn once you're there.

Interviewer: Obviously this is something that in your heart, you probably were hoping you weren't going to get involved with, but you were drafted, you went through your training, you went over there. Did you have hopes and goals about what you'd be doing in your time over there?

Bartolotti: Your hopes was that you'd make it back. As far as goals, I don't think there's any, you're just in a survival mode. You're just wanting to survive. I'd say that's basically it.

Interviewer: Sure, sure. Obviously, you probably went out on numerous missions. Were you often told what the objectives of these missions were, or was it something where you kind of had to figure it out as you went?

Bartolotti: When I, when I first got over there, now you're just thrown into a fire team, which a fire team's in a squad. When you're going on patrol, you just knew you was going on patrol. You didn't know where you was going. If you went on an operation, you didn't know if you was going on that operation until probably the day of it, or maybe you may know the day before, but that was basically it. I was in a, like a reactionary force over there. And they, somebody got in trouble, they called us in, and stuff. But after you're there a while, and then you fit more into the crowd, and if you fit in with a lot of the higher ups, I'd say basically do what you're supposed to be doing, and they think you're all right, then you're in on a lot more information than what you would be otherwise. But most of the time, just an ordinary person in a squad, he don't know, he just following, that's it.

Interviewer: Following orders, absolutely. I understand, believe me, that there's a fallacy in this question about what's a typical day, there's no typical day in war. But can you walk us through what it would be like to have to go, is it called a skirmish?

Bartolotti: Yeah, skirmish.

Interviewer: Okay. Perhaps, what's that?

Bartolotti: Or firefight or whatever.

Interviewer: Yeah. Okay.

Bartolotti: The first one I was in, I don't think it really set in, you know, somebody was shooting at us and we was hiding to keep from getting hit, you know. But then after you're there a while and you know more about what you're supposed to be doing, and instead of taking orders from somebody, you're giving orders to other ones, then you're more involved in it. You know more about what's taking place and all that, but right at first, you don't really, all you know is somebody's shooting at you and you don't want to get hit.

Interviewer: That's an indescribable feeling, and so this is an impossible question to answer, but mentally what is it like to be in a warzone and know that you have an enemy who's firing at you?

Bartolotti: You're scared, I mean. I never met nobody over there that wasn't scared. Maybe there is some that don't, but I mean, I was scared the whole time I was there. But that, when that actually happens, that's all, you don't even think about that. You're thinking about the situation, what you gotta do to get out of that situation. And so, it's all afterwards is when all the other thoughts start coming to you, and you start realizing that you was in a mess. But before that, it's basically you know you gotta get out of that situation, and you was trained to do this and this and this. And so you're trying to do this for your safety and for the safety of the ones that's under you.

Interviewer: One question that I accidentally gleaned over, I wanted to put this kind of early on, but I think everyone who lived through it, you know, 9/11, you know where you were when you heard the news. I haven't met anyone who was of age who doesn't have a recollection. I think of the baby boomer generation, you know, my parents both talk about that, they knew where they were when President Kennedy was assassinated.

Bartolotti: Oh, I do too.

Interviewer: Could you share that?

Bartolotti: Yes, I was a part of the team that put the school paper together in high school. And we was in this little room putting this stuff together, and we was listening to the radio. And it come over the radio, and when it come over the radio, I run down to the study hall and announced it in the study hall. And they thought that I didn't know what I was saying because they didn't believe it either. And then a little while after that, they let school out and we went home and watched it on TV.

Interviewer: What was that like? I mean, the president was shot.

Bartolotti: Oh, it was, I mean, that was something that you didn't, like before him, Lincoln was shot and all that. This seemed different because you didn't think that anything like that would ever happen, and it's, it was weird. It was odd.

Interviewer: Do you think, and this is just a hypothetical, almost thought experiment, but had President Kennedy not been assassinated in 1963, and had he won a second term, do you believe we would've taken the same route in Vietnam?

Bartolotti: I don't think so. I don't think he would have put us in that situation. I think it was more done on what they thought that they should do on his behalf than what he would have actually did. But that's a guess thing, you know.

Interviewer: No one truly knows, but that's, it's just kind of interesting to think about. Now, while we're on the subject of presidents, let's just move through a few. LBJ, with McNamara, obviously expanded the war. Some people write, reluctantly, some people say more reluctantly in the start, less in the end. Do you have any views or opinions about the LBJ foreign policy?

Bartolotti: I think he done what he thought was right and what should've been done. You know, a lot of this blame goes strictly on the presidents, but it ain't just the president, it's your Congress, too. And their hands are tied to a certain extent to what just what they could do. And like over there, the war we were fighting, it was, you set back and think about it, it was ridiculous. I mean, we was waiting until they started something with us before we done anything. And all while we was over there, that's the way it always was, you waited until they did something and then you countered. I don't, I can't ever picture us ever being able to do any good in a war like that. I mean, sure, we weren't beaten, I don't think we were beaten. I mean, a lot of people say we lost that war, but we pulled out of it. Any time we wanted to take a skirmish against

them, we'd come out on top, but that was it. You had to wait till they wanted to do it before you could do it. That's the way the guidelines was set up.

Interviewer: Just to follow up, and obviously you make a very good point that people like to blame the president, or give the president maybe too much credit or not enough, just because it's sort of a centralized office that people can point their finger at. But it takes the entire government, it takes the military leaders. When Richard Nixon came into office, he ran on a platform of having a secret plan to win the war with the help of his security advisor, Kissinger. It was, it was two-fold. You can see that during his time, he did pull out troops. However, he also increased the amount of bombings and things like this. Do you think, and again this is a hypothetical, so there's no wrong answer, but he resigned in 1973 or 1974, '73 I think. Do you think that if he hadn't gotten into his trouble with Watergate and been pushed out, do you think we would've had a different outcome?

Bartolotti: No, I don't think so. By changing presidents or anything like that, I mean. Once you're involved in something, the only way out is either to go all out and win it, or pull out. It's just plain and simple, and the only way you're going to go out, all out and win it, the way our country is set up, I don't think you could ever do that because you're going to have to be pretty violent. War is violent, and you're going to have to be violent towards other people, and we're not going to fight a war like that, I don't think. I don't think that our country would stand for it.

Interviewer: That's very true, that's very true. Well, getting back to your time during the war, there's definitely a culture shock coming over there, between a western culture and the Vietnamese people. Can you talk a little bit about maybe what surprised you about their culture, maybe something that was just so different from ours?

Bartolotti: So primitive. I mean, everything was primitive. It was, it was something that you couldn't imagine, something that you read about in history books that, how people lived thousands of years ago, and that's just how they lived there. It was hard to really see why people would want to live like that, but they did and they had to. And I guess that's what stuck with me more than anything, was just the primitive of it.

Interviewer: Yeah that's something that I've heard quite a bit, it just seemed not even a few decades, perhaps a few centuries behind the time with certain things. Back home during the war, obviously there were, and this is very controversial but, your opinions as a veteran are some of the most valid to hear about this subject, so that's why I bring it up, and that's the protestors back home. You had a full range, you had a peaceful hippie movement, and then you had the other extremes, you had the Black Panthers, you had the Weathermen, who were targeting government buildings, you had the gentleman who burned himself alive outside McNamara's office. What were your feelings about these protests?

Bartolotti: I think I felt different about them at that time than what I do now.

Interviewer: Please go ahead. At that time, how did you feel about it?

Bartolotti: At that time, I come home from the war, and the war was still going on. And you just having these protests and stuff. And I thought the people had a legitimate beef, but in my own mind I didn't think you could, I didn't think it was right for you to protest against your own government. I just didn't feel that was right, which now, I think it's, it is right. It's a good thing to do, that's what makes your government better is to have that. At that time, I didn't. You know, I just thought you shouldn't, well, I guess because they drove that in you in boot camp and all of that, and so you wasn't supposed to counter your own government. That's just the way I felt of it.

Interviewer: That's very interesting that your perspective has changed. My father talks about that too, how in his forty years removed, you don't necessarily feel different, but your way of looking at things becomes different. And I, I really do, this is a painful thing to ask, but I, you know, because my father talks about when he came back, meeting protestors almost directly off the plane, and being spit on, you know, getting accusations thrown at him that were groundless, unwarranted, and quite vicious actually. Did you, unfortunately, have any experiences with that?

Bartolotti: Oh yeah, when we landed in San Francisco, they met us at the airport. Yeah, they spit at us. They threw dyed water at us, like blood and stuff. I don't know. I guess I thought of it being more funny than anything.

Interviewer: Than hurtful?

Bartolotti: Yeah. Then after you're here awhile, you seen it at home, where people was against the war, thought you was terrible for going there, and they blamed us and stuff. And it kinda made you hide. You didn't, I know I didn't even want to be involved in VFW, American Legion or anything for years. I guess I felt ashamed.

Interviewer: Well, hopefully, that feeling has.

Bartolotti: Oh yeah, it's gone, it's, I mean I don't feel that way no more.

Interviewer: I was talking to someone else, I was talking to Wade last week, and he was saying he had his Vietnam hat on and someone approached him and just thanked him for his service. And you know, it's a few decades late, but it's nice to hear nonetheless, so hopefully our brave veterans of Vietnam are getting treated with the respect that you, without question, have earned. Going back a little bit to the draft, now obviously you didn't want to be drafted. What are you feeling about the draft just in general? Was it a necessary evil, a good thing, a bad thing?

Bartolotti: I guess back then it was necessary. I feel, I don't wish the draft was back in, I guess for the simple reason I don't wish nobody to go to war. That way you're saying you want this person to go to war or not, and I don't wish that. If it was during peacetime, and there was no wars, I think it's a good thing for all young kids to come right out of high school and go into the service. It's a very good discipline thing, but I mean, you can't have all peace, and so. You don't want, I know I don't want my kids to go to war.

Interviewer: Yeah, that's what my father says too. Let's see here, just want to go through some other questions. Good, we got through theirs, now we can just talk a little bit, just you and me. So, again, now, these are, there's no such thing as, I mean, you're scared a hundred percent of the time, almost, maybe when you're not sleeping, and maybe even when you are. My dad talks about, though, he had to find weird sources of humor just to keep himself going. And one thing he still remembers were the socks. He just says, "Oh my gosh, you had to have, when we went out, you had three pairs of clean, dry socks, and that was very important that you kept your feet powdered and your socks dry." Anything like that just stand out as just something that was just like, wow, we had to go through that, or?

Bartolotti: Well, I never had a clean pair of socks, so I can't say that. I wore my shoes until they literally fell off my feet. I mean, for us to get supplies, now the army was different from the Marine Corps. And if we got into an army base, if we could, we'd steal off of them, because we didn't have the supplies the army did. And like I said, I got pictures of me at home, and my fatigues just all ripped, torn, the rags. I never took a bath over there until I went on my first R&R, and which that was, I was in country eight months before I even. But you didn't want to, I was out in a bush all the time, and we was on ambush, if you wasn't on ambushes at night, we done recons. And you'd stay out there with just one or two people, maybe by yourself, you didn't want to be smelled, and you could smell different than what they did if you cleaned up. And so you just didn't wash up. And I could remember when I come home

from Vietnam, we got on a plane, and they handed us these washrags that had alcohol on them. And we had just took a shower that night, and I thought I was clean. And I wiped my face with that in a white wash rag turned black, and I hid it under the seat because I didn't want the stewardess to find it. But try to keep my mind off of things, I don't think I did anything to keep my mind off of it. I was always concentrating more on about what I was thinking I was going to have to do the next day or stuff like that. Now, marijuana was introduced to us.

Interviewer: Okay. Talk a little bit about that.

Bartolotti: I never knew nothing about marijuana, I never knew nothing about any drugs, period. I get to Vietnam, my first day there in a trench, my squad leader asks me if I wanted a cigarette. And I said, "I don't smoke." And he said, "Everybody at my squad smokes." And gets me a cigarette, and I smoked it. I puffed on it, I didn't smoke it, I puffed. Well, it kind of made me dumbfounded, feeling funny, and I didn't know what the hell it was, it stunk. And then I found out what it was, it was marijuana, and that's just something that everybody did over there. And I guess that's what we used more than anything to just get a peace of mind. You just got high. After I got home, I didn't smoke, didn't use that, I didn't do nothing. I mean, I did over there. But I just thought it was a natural thing to do.

Interviewer: My father did, too. He talks about that. It was just available and it was there, something you kind of did to build the camaraderie a bit. So some difficult

questions, and we'll wrap with these, and again, if there's any question that just rather not answer, there's no worries. We'll just skip right over it. One of the most.

Bartolotti: Oh, something I need to tell you. You asked me what the most shocking thing was to me when I went over there. When I come back from Vietnam, it was just as shocking for what I seen here in the United States, how the country had changed in a little bit over a year. I mean, it was unreal. When I went over there, girls' skirts was right at their knees. When I come back from there, their skirts was way up here. I mean, it was, the culture here was completely different. All the crowds I run around with, everybody smoked marijuana. There were some of them in the crowds that didn't, but we were all together. It's just, just a completely different culture. I was more of a backward kid before I went over there, and when I come back here it seemed like everything was completely turned around. So it was as shocking for me to come home as it was for when I went there to see that culture.

Interviewer: I never heard that, that's extremely interesting. I can't imagine that. Absolutely. The Zeitgeist was changing by month, almost, in this country during that time. My father, and I preface this just to kind of share stories, my father is still disabled from the Vietnam War. He was in a battle and a grenade went off next to him, and a piece of shrapnel cut through his spine. He's had to have, I think, nine surgeries. He's doing okay, but he lives with that, with his, for the rest of his life. Were you injured at all during the war?

Bartolotti: Yes, I had a grenade hit me in the back. It was fired from, it was a grenade fired from a rifle. And I got an article in there about what had happened. And they'd fired, what I did, I went up to talk to who I thought was the CIDGs [Civilian Irregular Defense Group], but was actually North Vietnamese that was dressed up in the CIDG's uniforms, they took them off of them. And we were supposed to be meeting these CIDGs, so there was about twenty of them standing at the end of a tree line there. And I had my squad hold up out there, and I told them I was going to go up and make contact with them because they had been shooting at us. And I said, "I'm going to go up and make contact with them. But if I holler, and tell you to start firing, don't worry about where I am, just start shooting." Because I figured they'd blow me away right off the bat. So I walked up to them and they told me to throw a rifle, Marine. And I stood there and looked at them a few minutes. And I think, "They aren't who I think they are." And so I just opened up. Well, when I did, they turned around and ran, so I did too. Well, I was running back to my squad, and one of them had fired one of these grenades from a rifle and it hit me in the back and knocked me down in this rice patty. And this grenade was up above me when it went off, and I got shrapnel in my rear end. That was basically all my injury was.

Interviewer: What is the procedure when you are wounded in combat? Do they try to get you quickly and get you out of there?

Bartolotti: Oh yeah, you try to get a corpsman to them right away, and get them medical treatment, and as soon as you can get a chopper in there and chopper them

out. I was in charge of my squad then, and we was on a flank security force, and so I didn't, I went to the corpsman and had him look at it. He put some bandages over it, but I stayed out there with them the rest of the day until we was all choppered out of there. I didn't want to leave my squad.

Interviewer: I can't imagine what type of pain you were in from that.

Bartolotti: It's pain you feel now and then, you don't feel it all the time. You're getting more of a rush, you know, your adrenaline's all pumped up and everything. You know, when you're in a skirmish. But what had happened, there was, we was walking security for, it was a left flank security, for this convoy, the CIDGs, which the Green Beret trained. And there was, like, two or three hundred of them. Well, they, they just wiped that convoy out. We was left stuck out there in this open rice patty by ourselves. We didn't realize how many North Vietnamese had actually been in there, involved in that until it was all over with.

Interviewer: Absolutely, my gosh. That's so powerful for you to say that, though, that your need to be with your brothers, to stand by them, outweighed even your, what would be to me, an automatic response to get medical attention. That's very powerful, very powerful.

Bartolotti: I mean, it's nothing no more than anybody else would've done there. I didn't do nothing out of the ordinary, it was, I mean, you're, I don't know how to explain it. Marines are bound together by a brotherhood of their own, and you look after each other.

Interviewer: Absolutely. Especially in that environment. A very difficult question. And, again, if it's something where you're just not comfortable with it, we'll just move right along. It's in war, and in war, as you mentioned earlier, it's just violence, it's a violent situation. And your prime goal is to, you know, what my dad said, "My goal was to get out of there. Get out of there and be alive and see my family again. And sometimes that meant I had to shoot at the enemy, and that meant that I probably took a life or two." If you're comfortable just talking at any level about just being in that experience, knowing that it's a you-versus-them situation. Obviously, when you're in the moment, you're thinking of that moment, you're thinking of what do I need to do, you know. But in hindsight, how does that affect you?

Bartolotti: I'd say it affects different people different ways. I mean, a lot of these people's got this post-war syndrome. I would say I had as many skirmishes or been in as many close calls as probably anybody else did over there. I know for a fact I was in over a hundred of them, skirmishes. But did it, I guess, deep back end someplace, yeah, it probably did. Yeah, because when I first come home, my mom complained about me hollering and screaming at night, and I'd wake up and I'd be in soaking wet sweats. But I never, how can I say, I never tried any violent things against anybody or do any, I still had my sane mind. I knew wrong was wrong and right was right. But over there, yes, when you get into a skirmish, and after it's all over with, you sit back. What bothers you more than anything is when somebody gets killed in it, or somebody real close to you gets wounded pretty bad in it. You think about that, and you try

to think about how that could've been prevented or stuff like that. I mean, it's nothing that weighs you down, or I'm going to say it didn't to me.

Interviewer: Sure. I think people, and it's a very difficult subject, but I think people need to hear about losses and about sacrifices and about the things that you and your fellow servicemen did over there. And you touched briefly upon how it affects you when one of your fellows gets injured or, God forbid, killed. Are you about to speak about that at any level, about perhaps someone you knew?

Bartolotti: Oh yeah, I can talk about it. But that's like, I don't watch war movies. And the reason I don't, I like them, but I don't watch them because if I watch them, then I have nightmares at night. I don't, and it's odd, because what I have nightmares about, it's about people I was with over there, and friends that I have here, and we're all there. You know, it's an odd situation, and so I don't have the nightmares and stuff. And talking, just like we're doing here, I'll probably have nightmares tonight over that.

Interviewer: I'm sorry, sir.

Bartolotti: But I mean, it's no major or big deal. But when somebody gets killed, it hurts. It hurts all over.

Interviewer: It really does, it really does. Forty years, we'll go ahead and wrap now, you've been so gracious with your time, but let's wrap on maybe a little bit of a lighter note, higher note, so we're not too sad. You know, the good news is, you made it home, you know, and that's the best news there is. We're forty

years, give or take, removed from the conflict. Have your opinions about the war changed because of time?

Bartolotti: I don't know if it has or hasn't. Before I went there, I didn't think we should be there. After I went there, I felt sorry for the people, but I didn't think we should be there. And now, I don't think that we should've been there. So I really don't think nothing's changed. I mean, my overall look of it is different because you see a bigger picture. But that'd be the only difference.

Interviewer: Say I'm an eighteen-year-old high school graduate, and I'm watching your interview for the first time. And I know about the Vietnam War, but this documentary has helped me see it at a more personal level, and I think see it far better than any textbook could lay out. Would you have any advice for this next generation, so someone like me who might look into a military career, just maybe a life lesson that you learned from your time?

Bartolotti: Well, in the military you make good money now. Life is tough out here now, as far as getting jobs, getting good paying jobs. If you could get yourself the education to be able to do something where you're not going to be a ground pounder or in the infantry, I think the military life would be a fantastic life. Even if you was in war time, because then you're not going to be in the middle of all this stuff. I like the military, I didn't like all the discipline in it, but I do know that it has to be there. I just didn't care for it.