

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Richard Hertel

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-2015-071

Richard Hertel, a personnel clerk and chapel organist in Vietnam, 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: March 17, 2015 Location: WILL-TV Studio X, Campbell Hall, Urbana, IL

Interview Format: Digital video

Interviewer: Stretch Ledford and Kimberlie Kranich, Illinois Public Media staff

Technical Support (videographers): WILL Staff

Transcription by: Illinois Public Media staff

Edited by: Illinois Public Media staff

Total Pages: 32 pgs. Total Time: 1:21 / 1.35 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

Richard Hertel, *Veterans Remember*, VRV-V-D-2015-071

Biographical Information Overview of Interview: Richard Hertel was born on August 26, 1945 in Milladore, Wisconsin. When he was drafted, Hertel decided to go to Officer Candidates School since he had a bachelor's degree. He attended basic training, and advanced infantry training but after hearing stories about fragging at induction, he decided not to attend OCS and become a second lieutenant. He was then sent to Fort Lewis, Washington where he was assigned to an armored unit. While there, he was trained to be a personnel clerk.

Hertel was shipped to Vietnam in July, 1969 where he served as a personnel clerk in the 520th Transportation Battalion stationed at Phu Loi, South Vietnam, and also was a chapel organist in Cu Chi. While Hertel did not experience combat in Vietnam, he witnessed the effects of drug abuse and prostitution on the base of Phu Loi and during rest and relaxation leave (R&R) in Thailand. He returned to the states in June, 1970, and during the plane ride home from the war he had a revelation. He realized his life had been saved, and he had to make the most of it. At first, this meant going to graduate school at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and doing his best for his wife and daughter. Later in life, this meant being true to himself as a gay man. At the time of the interview, Hertel had been with his now-husband for more than 30 years. Hertel says that at the time he served in the Army he would not have said being drafted was a good thing, but looking back, his service during the Vietnam War changed his life for the better.

Subject Headings/Key Words: Richard Hertel; personnel clerk during Vietnam War; army; Phu Loi, South Vietnam; Thailand; gay soldiers during Vietnam War; fragging of officers during Vietnam War; University of Illinois; organist during Vietnam War; prostitution and drug abuse during Vietnam War; Milladore, Wisconsin; Cu Chi, South Vietnam; chaplain work during Vietnam War; Da Nang, South Vietnam; R and R; 520th Transportation Battalion

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