

**John A. Adams '71 Center for Military History and Strategic Analysis.
Cold War Oral History Project
Interview with Lt. Col. William Moriarty by Cadet Shelby Sears, June 24, 2004**

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About the interviewer:

Cadet Shelby Sears Cadet Shelby Sears ('05), from Louisville, Kentucky, is a Corporal in the USMCR and majors in History at VMI. He desires a commission in the Marine Corps upon graduation.

Moriarty: My name is Bill Moriarty; I'm a retired Lieutenant Colonel U.S. Marine Corps

Sears: Can you tell me a little bit about your tour in Vietnam?

Moriarty: The first time I went to Vietnam was in May of 1964 when I participated in an On the Job Training (OJT) program and was assigned to the 32nd Vietnamese Ranger Battalion.

In 1967 I was assigned to the Vietnamese Marine Corps. I was there from June until November of 1967.

Sears: What year did you commission, sir?

Moriarty: 1959.

Sears: You went over as a...?

Moriarty: In May of 1964 I was a lieutenant and was promoted to captain while in country. In 1967 I was a captain and was selected for major in November 1967.

Sears: So you were with the 32nd Ranger Battalion in 1964

Moriarty: Yes. US Marines were serving in Vietnam in 1964 as Advisors and with a Helicopter Squadron located at Danang.

Sears: That was in the early days, correct?

Moriarty: This was in 1964 and just over a year prior to commitment of US combat units.

Sears: But that's what the advisors did first – those shorter than 30 day tours?

Moriarty: Yes. However, there were Marine advisors in Vietnam from the late 50's on. In 1964 I was not an advisor but an OJT participant.

Sears: Did you have any previous actions before 1964?

Moriarty: No.

Sears: In your 15 days in 1964, were you involved in any actions?

Moriarty: In May of 1964 the 32nd Vietnamese Ranger Battalion was airlifted from Phu Bai just south of Hue on the coast to an outpost on the Laotian border by the name of Aloui in the Ashau Valley. There were three fortified triangular outposts in the Ashau Valley: Aloui, Ashau and Tabat. A Vietnamese Infantry Battalion occupied Ashau to our south while Tabat was manned by a Special Forces group. The mission assigned to these outposts was to deny infiltration of men and supplies from the north into South Vietnam and to execute reconnaissance missions in the surrounding areas. The entire area was made up of steep hills and thick vegetation. The valley was usually covered with fog, especially in the morning. Mortar and small arms fire were daily occurrences. However, a ground assault was never attempted during my time there. Re-supply was by air and getting supplies, replacements in and casualties out was a problem because of the volume of incoming fire from the surrounding hills, as the fixed wing cargo

aircraft approached the marston matting air strip. The fog was also a factor, since it dictated when the aircraft could land. Marine helicopters in I Corps were the H-34's and supported by US Army Huey gun ships which operated primarily along the costal plains approximately 30 miles east of the Ashau Valley. Fixed wing Air support was provided by U.S. Air Force propeller driven A-1's from World War II and Korea. Helicopter support was not available during this period of time in the Ashau Valley.

Sears: And your OJT was to prepare you for what in 1964?

Moriarty: The OJT program was designed to familiarize a limited number of Marines primarily from the 3rd Division on Okinawa as to what could be expected when combat units were deployed in country. In addition, OJT participants were able to provide relief for one of the two advisors usually assigned to an infantry organization.

Sears: In your second time in Vietnam – 1967 – that was a more typical advisor role?

Moriarty: Yes. I flew from Travis Air Force Base in California to Saigon on a charter Pan American 707.

Sears: Can you tell me when you got your orders to go in '67?

Moriarty: I was a student at The US Army Advisor Sector Unit Training Course at FT Bragg, NC. I was scheduled to report to the Marine Advisory Unit in November 1967. However, I was informed that I would be reporting sooner if a casualty that required evacuation occurred. Approximately ten days prior to graduation I was informed that Capt. Jim Brandon had been seriously wounded and I would report as soon as possible.

Sears: Did that cut your school short?

Moriarty: No. The course was only six weeks in length and I was able to complete the course.

Sears: What was your training like – your first little bit of training – at the school named...?

Moriarty: The course was taught by Army and some Marine officers and senior NCOs who had previously served as advisors in Vietnam. The course was very general since the students were lieutenants, captains, majors, lieutenant colonels and colonels who would serve as advisors at various levels of the Vietnamese armed forces. Some were slated for division and regimental staffs. Some were assigned to supply, communications, motor transport and administrative organizations. A smaller number were assigned to infantry and artillery battalions. The course did not prepare me for the job I was expected to do.

Sears: How's that?

Moriarty: The course was not specifically oriented to the job I would be doing. An advisor at the infantry battalion level was a walking fire direction center. An infantry battalion advisor would have been better served if he had received far more hands on training pertaining to artillery, fixed wing and helicopter support in addition to communicating procedures with supporting units. An advisor could get off a plane from the United States and be involved in a combat situation within days. The terminology and operational procedures differed not only from Marine Corps and Army but also differed between divisions and corps areas. The US Army provided helicopter gunship and artillery support for II, III, and IV Corps while the Marine Corps provided this support in I Corps. A Marine advisor had to be prepared to operate in all four Corps areas. Naval Gunfire Support was available in to all Corps areas as well. It should be noted that US Air Force provided fixed wing close air support in II, III and IV Corps areas while Marine Corps air support was provided in I Corps. In 1964 the Marine Corps was of the opinion that fixed wing support was superior to helicopter gunship support during helicopter operations. However, the Marine helicopter squadron based at Danang preferred U.S. Army gunship escort support.

Sears: So you had to learn that on the job.

Moriarty: You learned it on the job and you learned it quickly.

Sears: I believe you spent four hours a day in class to learn the language. What else was emphasized?

Moriarty: Other than history, geography, culture, customs and traditions, very little information was provided that I believe had any relation as to what an infantry battalion advisor would actually be expected to do. The course from my perspective was oriented to the advisory effort at the regimental and higher level staffs in addition to the effort with combat service and service support organizations. The course was very general and not oriented to a specific function.

Sears: Can you tell me about when you got off the plane in Vietnam? I imagine you flew into Saigon.

Moriarty: I flew from Travis AFB near San Francisco directly to Tan Son Knut AFB near Saigon. I remember the terminal was very active and, after claiming my baggage, I was taken by bus to The Koelper Compound for processing. The compound was named in honor of Marine Advisor Capt. Don Koelper.

Sears: Was he taken prisoner?

Moriarty: No – that was Capt. Don Cook who was an OJT with the Vietnamese Marine Corps. Cook was wounded and taken prisoner during the battle of Binh Gia in December 1964. Capt. Koelper was killed in Saigon by a Viet Cong terrorist in February 1964. It should be noted that Capt. Cook was posthumously awarded The Medal of Honor and Capt. Koelper was posthumously awarded the Navy Cross for specific actions which cost them their lives.

Sears: In Col. Miller's book about the advisors, he describes the airport at Tan Son Knut and he says it's a very uneasy feeling for the rookie to get in and see everybody who's going home. Was there a similar experience for you?

Moriarty: I have very little recall of Tan Son Knut other than it was very active, hot and humid. I believe I was quickly able to find my bag and board the bus for the trip to Koelper Compound.

Sears: How long was it from the day you got off the airplane to the day you met your unit in the field?

Moriarty: I do not recall the number of days. However, I met the Senior Marine Advisor in the early morning, received two tiger suits, left my bag at the Marine Advisory Unit Bo Tu Linh Compound and was on my way by jeep to Tan Son Knut for a flight to Qui Nhon. I was to relieve Maj. Joe Hoar as the Senior Advisor Task Force A located at Tam Quan in northeast II Corps. I remember the sun had set when I arrived at Qui Nhon and I was very fortunate to meet by chance the Sgt. Maj. of the 2nd Brigade 1st Air Cavalry Division. The Sergeant Major got me a place to stay plus something to eat. Early the next morning I was on a helicopter with the Sgt. Maj. en route to Landing Zone English. We were able to land even though there was some activity near the landing area. I spent several hours under ground in a Battalion operations center due to the activity. The Army later arranged for helicopter and jeep transportation to take me to Tam Quan where I met Maj. Hoar, who was engaged with an operation being conducted by the 5th Battalion. When the engagement was over, Maj. Hoar introduced himself. Later that evening Capt. George Douse who I had known previously and who was the Senior Advisor to the 5th Battalion arrived. That evening we discussed the possibility of me going to the 5th Battalion rather than to assume the responsibilities of Senior Task Force Advisor. Task Force A was composed of the Task Force Headquarters, the 4th Battalion with Capt. Bob Hamilton and Lt. Tony Zinni as advisors, the 5th BN with Capt. George Douse and Capt. Jim Laney as advisors, and A Battery of 105 Howitzers with Capt. Dick Cavagnol as advisor. Twenty-four hours after departing Saigon I was enjoying my first meal with my new Vietnamese buddies.

Sears: When you did meet your unit, do you remember your initial reactions?

Moriarty: Maj. Hoar introduced me to the Vietnamese Task Force Commander, his executive office and the Vietnamese Task Force staff. My Vietnamese language skill was very poor I had no idea what they were talking about when we had the opportunity to eat that evening. However, they were pleasant and they went out of their way to make sure I sampled everything on the table. Rather than return to Saigon as scheduled Maj. Hoar remained as Senior Task Force Advisor in order to familiarize me with the operational procedures and terminology of operating with and under the control of the 1st Air Cavalry Division. To this day I remember Maj. Hoar could have returned to Saigon, yet he chose to remain so that I could make the adjustment quickly. I am grateful and appreciative for the guidance and assistance he provided.

Sears: When you first were introduced to your Vietnamese counterpart....

Moriarty: Even though I had a limited skill with the Vietnamese language when I first arrived, they made an effort to meet me more than half way. In fact, the S-1 spent time with me the first few days to help me with the vocabulary and pronunciation pertaining to the necessities for day to day operations. My first counterpart was the Task Force executive office, Maj. Thong who I worked with for about five days. I then became the Senior Advisor to the 5th Battalion and Capt. George Douse became Senior Task Force Advisor when Maj. Joe Hoar departed for Saigon.

Sears: Were there any difficulties to overcome that you can remember? Any small things that took you by surprise?

Moriarty: I had to make two quick adjustments. One was the heat and humidity and the other was getting used to the diet. I found the Vietnamese food was pretty good. I simply could not get enough of it during the first couple of weeks. I had to remember the Vietnamese were much smaller than I was and probably conserved their energy far better than I initially did. Also, I was not included in their operational

plans. For one thing, there was the language and it was very obvious I was the new guy. However, they made sure I was prepared to obtain U.S. artillery, air and gunship support.

Sears: Did you notice that your language skills improved?

Moriarty: Yes, and it came quickly. Even after 37 years I can still recall some words and phrases.

Sears: My stepfather said he left with about 2000 words and came back with 2000 words, but they were different.

Moriarty: Capt. Ron Ray served in Vietnam with The Vietnamese Marine Corps much longer than I did. My vocabulary was probably 200 to 300 words plus some key phrases. I did know how to pronounce their numbers because that enabled me to request fire support from U.S. assets and get the coordinates right the first time. The pronunciation we learned at FT Bragg was not quite the same as what we heard and used in country.

Sears: In your time there did you notice yourself to begin to empathize with your Vietnamese counterparts more so than your American counterparts? Did you prefer the company after a while?

Moriarty: Initially, I was not included during their operational planning phase. I was new and I did not have a handle on their language. However, after a village search operation when I was able to coordinate some fixed wing helicopter support I noticed that I was able to enjoy a cup of their coffee without having to ask. Maj. Nha who was the 5th Battalion Commander was a seasoned fighter who never spoke to me in English. In fact, he rarely spoke to me but I could see signs that he had confidence in my ability to function in the capacity he desired. My acceptance was also enhanced by the efforts of Capt. Douse who had enjoyed an exception relationship with Maj. Nha.

Sears: Did you take liberty with them?

Moriarty: We had very little time for liberty. However, I do recall several occasions when Maj. Thoung and later Maj. Loung, both were Task Force Executive Officers at different times, took me to eat in several small towns and once or twice in Saigon. Also, Capt. Ba who was the Task Force Operations Officer picked me up on his motor scooter and gave me a tour of Saigon, plus I met his wife and daughter. I also met Maj. Loung's wife who also wore a Vietnamese Marine tiger suit and looked terrific in it.

Sears: Did you run into any problems with regular U.S. soldiers and their problems with Vietnamese?

Moriarty: I never experienced a problem with the Vietnamese Marines I worked with. I treated them with courtesy and respect and they treated me the same way. I had confidence in their ability to perform and, after a short period of time, I believe they had similar confidence in me. I felt very safe and secure with them. US troops who did not know or associate with Vietnamese Marines probably did not respect them, their effort or their country.

Sears: Did you have a combat tour after your 1967 tour?

Moriarty: No. However, in 1973 I was with the 9th Marine Amphibious Brigade headquartered in USS Blue Ridge and had the opportunity to observe the Haiphong mine clearing effort after our Prisoners were returned.

Sears: Was there an adjustment period for a regularly trained Marine to go over the irregular SVM way of things? Was that a difficult adjustment for you?

Moriarty: No. I had a general idea as to what I would be doing and what was expected of me. Also, the OJT with the 32nd Ranger Battalion in 1964 had been a very worthwhile experience. In addition, I was the

beneficiary of the hard work and sacrifice of the Marine Advisors who had preceded me. The only change I noticed was the war had expanded significantly since 1964.

Sears: What was your role as an advisor from day to day?

Moriarty: I served as the 5th Battalion Advisor at Tam Quan for about a month. I spent all of my time with Maj. Nha, the Battalion Commander. The 5th Battalion conducted a large pre-dawn village cordon and search operation, plus platoon and company operations designed to locate enemy units during this time. The Battalion captured some prisoners, uncovered weapons caches, established ambushes and destroyed mines and booby traps. The Battalion suffered casualties on a daily basis from contact with the enemy.

In late July I was assigned as Assistant Task Force A Advisor and Capt. Douse again became the Senior Advisor to the 5th Battalion with Capt. Dennis Fryrear as assistant advisor. My counterpart when I was Assistant Task Force Advisor was at first Maj. Thoung and later Maj. Loung. They were very different in their personalities and the way they operated. Maj. Thoung was quiet and reserved, while Maj. Loung was flamboyant. Maj. Thoung was a detail orientated planner while Maj. Loung, who had recently returned from Quantico, was quick to jump on a situation. However, both were smart and very savvy. I did not have any problem making the adjustments. Maj. Loung did initially challenge me on an operation. I must presume that I met his expectations because our relationship developed to the point of us eating in small towns when the opportunity arose, plus the introduction to his wife and other relatives.

In late July the Task Force returned to Saigon from Tam Quan via US Air Force C-130's. The 3rd Battalion with Capt. Jerry Simpson and Capt. Ron Ray as advisors replace the 5th Battalion in Task Force A. We were helo lifted along with the 4th Battalion with Capt. Bob Hamilton and Capt. Pete McCarthy as advisors and A Battery with Capt. Dick Cavanol as advisor to Dong Tam in IV Corps where we were under the operational control of the US 9th Infantry Division. While in IV Corps we participated in Operation Coronado II. The 3rd Battalion, which did most of the fighting, was replaced by the 5th Battalion

for further operations in IV Corps. In August, Task Force A was helo lifted to Tan Uyen in III Corps and operated under the operational control of the 1st US Infantry Division. The 5th Battalion was relieved by the newly trained 6th Battalion with Capt. Gene Gardner, Capt. Larry McFarland and Lt. Wesley Fox as Advisors. During September, the Task Force operated in the vicinity of Bien Hoa, Xuan Loc and Phu Cuong. Col. Richard Michael, the Senior Marine advisor, told me I would be assigned as Senior Advisor 3rd Battalion in October. From the above, one can get a feel for what it was like to be an advisor with the Vietnamese Marine Corps. In four months I had the opportunity to work with several counterparts with different personalities. In addition, I had the opportunity to work with three US Army Divisions in three corps zones. For US Marine advisors this was the norm.

On a day to day basis, in addition to the duties and responsibilities during combat operations, I did my best to improve the health, welfare and morale of the Task Force. Cigars for Maj. Nha, soap for Maj. Loung, menthol cigarettes for just about the entire task force plus at least 50 Sundry boxes containing all the goodies that are cherished by those who actually engage the enemy, courtesy of the 1st Brigade 1st US Infantry Division. I was also instrumental in obtaining observation helo support every other day for Vietnamese battalion and company commanders to recon our assigned area. I coordinated air strikes, artillery support and both day and night helo medical evacuations.

Sears: I was curious as to what in your opinion makes a good advisor?

Moriarty: I believe one must really want to be an advisor. Language is a barrier if one permits it to be a barrier. Food could become a barrier as could culture, training, relationships, etc. Maintain an open mind because, at that time, they had far more experience fighting the Viet Minh, Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army than we did. They also knew the terrain and had probably fought there while we were in high school and college. The life cycle of the average Vietnamese Marine was to be born in the war, to fight in the war and to die in the war. On the other hand, after a year the advisor could probably return to the USA, pull in to Mc Donald's in a new 5 speed, down a Big Mac, fries and Coke and head down I-95. I believe being accepted based on one's ability to know and understand their capabilities and limitations is

very important. Remember, just to obtain a fighter and a leader who can learn basic English, go to Parris Island or Quantico and return to Vietnam is a very lengthy process. This is an asset which should not be squandered through incompetence and senseless operations. One must be aware that the average Vietnamese does not have the size, strength and body fat that we enjoy. When he is wounded it is always more severe and his option is usually not a medic with a limitless supply of pain killers or an evacuation system that is staffed with the latest life saving techniques. I always did my utmost to see if I could get our wounded into a US facility rather than a trip to Cong Hua Hospital. If one does not wish to live with these people, share their food and take the associated risks then one should probably not seek this opportunity.

Sears: How did you come to that? Was that just from being there? Or did you study before hand? Did you study other advisors?

Moriarty: Fortunately, I was the by chance beneficiary of experiences of several Marines who had been advisors in the 1950's and early 1960's. I had the opportunity to run into Capt. Willen Van Hemeret in 1963 in Hong Kong. We had served in the 1st Battalion 2nd Marines previously and he was on R and R from his advisory billet in Vietnam. We probably had a two hour conversation about what he was doing and some of his experiences.

Prior to my OJT assignment in 1964 I spent several days with Lt. Col. Dale Davis who was an advisor in 1957. Lt. Col. Davis told me of his experiences and about the expansion of the VNMC from 1957 when he was an advisor to the present. After I returned from my OJT assignment I received orders to The Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center located at Bridgeport, CA. Lt. Col. Davis again visited with me and told me that the Commanding Officer of The Mountain Warfare Training Center was Col. Frank Wilkerson who served as the 3rd Senior Marine Advisor in 1959. Col. Wilkerson initiated the action which resulted in the official Vietnamese Marine Corps emblem and distinctive uniform as well as obtaining approval for U.S. Marine Advisors to accompany their units on combat operations. Col.

Wilkerson provided me with copies of his after action reports as well as his assessment of the VNMC, in addition to many conversations about his views on South East Asia.

In November 1964, I had the pleasure of meeting Col. Victor Croizat who had been the original Senior Marine Advisor in 1955 and was now the Commanding Officer of the 5th Marine Regiment. I had the opportunity to have dinner one evening with two extraordinary Marines who had been Senior Marine Advisors #1 and #3. I only wish that I could have recorded the conversation I was fortunate to hear. In 1967, just prior to heading to Vietnam, I visited with Lt. Col. Davis at Camp Lejeune and he also provided me with some of his after action reports. Maj. Lane Rogers and Capt. Tom Hemmingway also provided me with considerable information from their personal experiences that was invaluable. Every Marine officer I have mentioned had been an Advisor with the VNMC and I sincerely appreciate the time and effort they took to make my transition and adjustment easier.

Sears: What was the very best thing you read in preparation?

Moriarty: The After Action Reports of Col. Wilkerson and Lt. Col. Davis provided me with considerable background. In addition, I was aware of the history of the VNMC from conversations with these two officers. Maj. Rogers and Capt. Hemmingway also informed me about specific operations and what their duties and responsibilities had been. I read Fall's book "Hell In A Very Small Place". The After Action Report and photographs pertaining to the battle at Binh Gia in December of 1964 and the account of the destruction of Groupment Mobile 100 between An Khe and Pleiku in June 1954 probably were the most influential that I can recall. Have you ever heard about these two battles?

Sears: Not directly, no sir.

Moriarty: A large Viet Cong unit overran the town of Binh Gia in late December of 1964. Binh Gia was only about 40 miles east of Saigon. The 4th Battalion VNMC was ordered to retake the town, which they accomplished with little opposition. The 4th Battalion was then directed to assist with securing a nearby

downed helicopter and the recovery of the remains of the crew. Capt. Pete Eller who was the Senior Battalion Advisor repeatedly recommended to the South Vietnamese Joint General Staff that the 4th Battalion continue to occupy and defend Binh Gia. Capt. Eller was overruled and with one company of Vietnamese Marines he proceeded to the crash site, only to be ambushed by elements of the 9th Viet Cong Division. The remaining three companies of the 4th Battalion moved from Binh Gia toward the crash site and were also ambushed by elements of the 9th Viet Cong Division. All Marine Advisors were wounded and Capt. Don Cook was captured. The 4th Battalion Commander and most of the officers were killed. The Battalion suffered in excess of 60 percent killed.

The 33rd Vietnamese Ranger Battalion operating in the same vicinity also suffered a similar fate. Within a 24 hour period two elite South Vietnamese Battalions had been destroyed. Staff Sgt. Harold Bennett and Pvt. Charles Craft were serving with the 33rd Vietnamese ranger Battalion and both were also taken prisoner. Staff Sgt. Bennett was executed by the Viet Cong in June of 1965 and Capt. Cook died of malnutrition and malaria in December 1967. Pvt. Craft was released by the National Liberation Front in February 1967.

The destruction of French Groupment Mobile 100 in June 1954 by the 803rd Viet Minh Regiment on Route 19 between An Khe and Pleiku was a disaster that few have ever heard about. Groupment Mobile 100 was a self-sustaining motorized brigade composed of three infantry battalions, an artillery battalion, light armor, engineers, and medical units and totaled about 3500 soldiers. Four days after the ambush, less than fifty percent of these veteran soldiers were alive. In addition, they lost eight-five percent of their vehicles, all of the battalion artillery pieces and over half of their rifles, machine guns and communications equipment. From these two disasters I learned that death is the price one pays when one underestimates an enemy.

At Binh Gia, Capt. Eller repeatedly warned that a large enemy force was in the vicinity. However, he was overruled and ordered to carry out a mission that resulted in the destruction of two elite battalions. Higher authority did not believe the enemy had the capability to attack with a force larger than a company.

However, the 9th Viet Cong Division was composed of the 271st and 272nd Viet Cong Regiments with supporting recoilless rifles, mortars and machine guns and they were able to destroy two elite government battalions 40 miles from Saigon. Capt. Eller was my company commander when I was in the 2nd Reconnaissance Battalion and I can still recall the day he departed for language school.

As for Groupment Mobile 100, the commander simply underestimated his enemy and sacrificed security for speed. In both of these battles poor judgment by senior leadership resulted in total defeat. It should be noted that eleven years later in July 1965 Task Force A with Maj. Bill Leftwich and the 1st and 5th Vietnamese Marine Battalions would be traveling in the same area between Pleiku and Duc Co. Major Leftwich was well aware of what had happened to Groupment Mobile 100 and was able to lead the Vietnamese Marine Task Force to a decisive victory over the 32nd Viet Cong Regiment, breaking the siege at Duc Co. Maj. H. Norman Schwartzkopf was the Senior Advisor to the Vietnamese Airborne Task Force at Duc Co during the siege. I was fortunate to have worked with Maj. Leftwich when he was the commanding officer of Company E 2nd Battalion 2nd Marines in 1961.

Sears: What lessons would you pass on to me as a Corporal? At school I have quite a lot of friends, including myself who are going to commission next year. What lessons would you pass onto us?

Moriarty: Know your enemy. Never underestimate your enemy. Know how to employ your supporting arms. Practice and rehearse how to call in an artillery fire mission, fixed winged air strikes and helo gunship support. Make sure your subordinates are as proficient as you are. Test them on a regular basis. Know how to utilize and employ your crew served weapons. Be absolutely certain that you and your subordinates know how to use your communications equipment. Always know where you are and where your artillery is located. Do not assume anything. Conduct immediate action drills. Know your troops, look out for their welfare, set a good example, and keep in tip top physical and moral condition. It is always best to be fair and firm and then be friendly. Always be the leader.

Sears: Sounds like you had plenty of opportunities to begin to appreciate different ways of doing things.

Moriarty: I was very fortunate. I enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1954 and was paid \$66 a month. I went to boot camp at Paris Island and graduated from The Citadel in 1959. After Basis School at Quantico my first assignment was as a platoon commander with Company C 1st Battalion 2nd Marines at Camp Lejuene in May 1960. I deployed to the Mediterranean terrain twice and three times to Vieques. I had the opportunity to train with the Royal Greek Hellenic Raiding Force at Napleone, Greece; The Royal Marines in North Africa and Malta and a French Commando unit on Corsica. I also was assigned to the 2nd Reconnaissance Battalion for 18 months prior to deploying to the Pacific in 1963. I was fortunate to have been selected to the OJT program in 1964 prior to being assigned to the Mountain Warfare Training Center as the Senior Survival Instructor. I was also very fortunate to have been associated with some exceptional Marines prior to my tour with the Vietnamese Marine Corps.

Sears: Can you tell me about your major actions?

Moriarty: During June and July 1967 Task Force A was in operating under the control of the First Air Cavalry Division at Tam Quan in the Bong Song area of II Corps. There were small encounters just about every day. Our casualties were, for the most part, from mines and occasional mortar and small arms. I was not involved in a major encounter during this time. In late July, Task Force A returned to Saigon via C-130 transports. On the 28th of July we were helo lifted from Saigon to Dong Tam in IV Corps to assist in opening Highway 4. The enemy had closed this route in order to stop the rice from reaching Saigon where over a million refugees were located. Task Force A consisted of the 3rd Battalion with Capts. Jerry Simpson and Ron Ray as Advisors, the 4th Battalion with Capts. Bob Hamilton and Pete McCarthy as Advisors and the 105mm A Battery with Capt. Dick Cavagnol as Advisor.

On Sunday 30 July the first wave of the 3rd Battalion with Capt. Ray landed in a hot LZ where three Viet Cong battalions had their base camp. Ten minutes later Capt. Simpson landed with the second wave and I landed with the 3rd wave about ten minutes later. The enemy was well entrenched in a thick tree line that was somewhat "U" shaped and well over a mile in length. Our problem was we had no cover or

concealment; we could not maneuver due to the open terrain and we were outnumbered by about three to one. The Task Force made good use of all available supporting arms which prevented our enemy from overwhelming us during the early stages of the battle. The squads, platoons and companies of the 3rd Battalion were able to link up and become an organized fighting force by early afternoon. By 4 P.M. on Monday 31 July the 3rd Battalion had taken control of the Viet Cong base camp and was subsequently relieved by the 4th Battalion.

Two Advisors who played a major role with the success Task Force A achieved were Capt. Dick Cavagnol who coordinated the artillery support we received during the battle. Capt. Cavagnol picked up on our radio request for close in artillery support at 5:00 A.M on the 31st to break up the assault on our position and his quick and very accurate response made the difference between living and dying on that rainy Monday morning. The other Advisor who played a key role was Capt. Paul Carlson who was the operations Advisor at Dong Tam. Capt. Carlson was our link to the fixed wing and helo gunship support we received non-stop on the 30th. He was the one who coordinated our emergency ammunition re-supply on the afternoon of the 30th and he personally pitched some the crates of ammunition out of the helo as they flew by our position. He was instrumental in the helo medical evacuation of our Vietnamese Marine and Advisor casualties. The Vietnamese Marines fought well and demonstrated their courage and tenacity even though they were initially out manned and out gunned. The Advisors were able to coordinate the close combat support provided by the U.S. Air Force and U.S. Army as well as adapt to the rapidly changing battle plan.

Sears: That was CORONADO II?

Moriarty: Yes

Sears: At that time, I've had it explained to me that Col. Ray was Horseshoed with the enemy all about on three sides. Called air support on his own position. Where were you?

Moriarty: The tree line was somewhat horse shoe in shape and was probably 300 to 400 feet from my position. Capt. Ron Ray was in the center of the position; Capt. Simpson was initially on our right flank while I was on our left flank. Capt. Simpson and his counterpart, Maj. Bao, linked up with me and my counterpart, Maj. Thoung, about 2:00pm.

Sears: Is that where you were wounded?

Moriarty: I did not get a scratch. Capt. Ray and Capt. Simpson and our artillery forward observer, Army Capt. Bill Perry, and his radio operator were all wounded during the early morning of 31 July.

Sears: That was in what month?

Moriarty: The 30th and 31st of July, 1967.

Sears: When did your health become a major concern?

Moriarty: From the 2nd to the 7th of August, Task Force A was composed of the 4th Battalion with Capt. Hamilton and Capt. McCarty as Advisors, the 5th Battalion with Capt. George Douse and Capt. Dennis Fryrear as Advisors, and A Battery with Capt. Cavagnol as Advisor. They conducted operations in IV Corps searching for remnants of the three Viet Cong Battalions we had fought with previously. The Task Force returned to Saigon on 8 August and was then deployed to Phu Cuong, where we linked with the 2nd Battalion 28th Infantry 1st U.S. Infantry Division for a five day search and destroy operation in III Corps. The Task Force then deployed to Tam Quan to assist with the interdiction of rocket attacks on Bien Hoa Air Base and Long Binh Logistic Base. The Task Force also provided security for a Vietnamese Prison Camp during a period of attacks designed to free Viet Cong captives POW's. In addition, Task Force A conducted an operation with a Vietnamese Ranger Group south of Ben Cat the 1st of September.

I noticed that I tired easily, had bloody diarrhea, my uniform just hung on me and my eyes had a yellow color. I had some blood drawn by a 1st Division medic in mid September, but I was told to return to Saigon and did not get the results. Colonel Richard Michael, The Senior Marine Advisor, informed me that I would become Senior Advisor to the 3rd Battalion on 1 October. Shortly thereafter I was admitted to the 17th Field Hospital due to an abscessed liver, amoebic dysentery and hepatitis. I was hospitalized in Saigon until 7 November and I was evacuated to Japan before being admitted to Bethesda north of Washington. I was released on out patient status on 15 January 1968 and was returned to a limited duty status in July 1968.

Sears: How much weight did you lose?

Moriarty: I weighed about 185 when I arrived in Saigon. When I was weighed at Bethesda, I was less than 130. My Marine uniforms that I had worn when I left the US in June 1967 did not come close to fitting me when I tried them on for the first time in January 1968. Even my shoes were loose. I began The Amphibious Warfare Course at Quantico in February and I had to make several uniform adjustments to compensate for the changes from bad to better. However, I was very fortunate to have received the care provided by the Army, Air Force and Navy and I owe my life to their skill and knowledge. I was subject to Medical Boards every six months between 1968 and 1972 before I was returned to full active status.

Sears: I just finished "Battle Ready", Gen. Zinni's book. It's got a pretty grim description of his illness after his tour. I'm sure you're aware he left for reasons of health as well. He was in pretty bad shape, but sounds pretty similar.

Moriarty: Gen. Zinni is one tough Marine and I can vividly recall his calm demeanor during a tense time and I admire his commitment and dedication. My wife bought me his book for my birthday.

Sears: It's a real testament to the group of individuals.

Moriarty: The Vietnamese Marine Corps was an elite fighting force for 21 years. Every Advisor made the Marine Advisory Unit just a little bit better. Most people, whether they are Marines, other branches or the general population, do not comprehend the bond between the Advisor and the Vietnamese Marine.

Sears: Let's see... you had Gen. Zinni, Gen. Hoar, and Col. Ripley.

Moriarty: When I joined Task Force A at Tam Quan, Gen. Joe Hoar was the Senior Task Force Advisor. I will always be grateful for the time he took to bring me up to speed with regard to operating under the control of the First Air Cavalry Division. Gen. Tony Zinni was the Assistant Battalion Advisor with the 4th Battalion. I remember my first impression of him when we met at the "Ant Hill" in the Bong Song area. Tony had simply worn out his "Tiger Suit" and I gave him my brand new bottoms. Latter on at Tam Quan, Tony was receiving some large caliber fire and I can still recall him obtaining back azimuth, flash and explosion data just like it was a Quantico field exercise, even though the incoming was very deadly. I did not serve with Col. John Ripley in Vietnam. However, we attended the Amphibious Warfare Course together in 1968. I have read and re-read the book "The Bridge at Dong Ha" which details his extraordinary courage, knowledge and commitment to destroy the bridge. The last time I talked with Col. Ripley was in 1978, when he was the aide to Gen. Snowden.