C: No! No! To see clans especially in minorities. When you see four or five Chicanos together, speaking Spanish and laughing, there is a feeling of, there's that feeling as if--well I don't know--insecurity!

L: Yea, I was going to say insecurity.

C: There's a feeling of insecurity and you feel that way about blacks. And it's kind of built into us as white Americans. It's part of our racist background, our heritage I guess, it's part of the training that we get, it's what we learn in school. We simply feel that way about blacks, or Chicanos or I guess we'd feel that way about Italian kids or Chinese kids in San Francisco. They gather together on the street corner or out in the school yard and they're speaking Chinese, you're excluded.

L: You feel alienated.

C: Yes, and it's a very unusual position for a white American to feel--in our white society to feel alienated. There is that feeling of threat. And I felt that in Vietnam. And of course the blacks are very much aware of this and they use it as a weapon. (Slight laughter)

L: Was it an effective weapon?

C: Very effective...

L: I thought it would be.

C: Well I don't know, I think it turned around on the blacks. But it is a weapon and of course in the situation they're prone to use any weapon they have, whether it's--I don't think I really have ever assessed the effect that has on whites, very threatening.
L: What steps has the Marine Corp taken to lessen this racial tension?

C: Oh, there is an awful lot of stuff published, official stuff published. Racial tension about commanding officers, we formed committees, sensitivity committees, racial—I can't remember the military terms now, there were certain terms that were used for these committees. I was a member of one on Monkey Mountain composed of half whites and half blacks and we had the duty Samoan on it at one time, and a Chinese kid.

L: How effective were these groups?

C: Very ineffective.

L: Why is that?

C: Well primarily because I really don't think the blacks wanted to communicate.

L: Did the whites try?

C: Yea, I know I was very sincere, I became quite sensitive to the problem. I was really eager to find a solution because the tensions of that sort are so distructive to discipline in an organization. You know when you polarize the troops, and you have blacks staring at whites in the mess hall, at clubs, at work, they get clanish in the barracks, they tend to group together. It's very—it's just bad. There is an under current of insipid violence. And it frightens people and it's very distructive of discipline. So, I know that all of the officers we had were interested in trying to either push it under the rug or get rid of it or do something about it. But most of the blacks, I really think that most
of the blacks kind of enjoyed the situation. It was ah...a lot of them found themselves in a position where they had some power. Where they were really affecting somebody. "Whitey" was looking and listening.

L: And sweating it out...

C: And it must have been a heavy feeling. You know I'm very sympathetic toward what they must have felt, I felt threatened by it, but I understood it I think as much as a white could understand it.

L: Drugs were also counted as one of the number one problems in Vietnam. Would you say the prevalence of drug use was extremely high?

C: Yes. Now, my direct experience—we had drug problems on Monkey Mountain, but because of the fact that we were isolated, it was thirteen miles by road down into Danang, line of sight we were looking right directly at it. It's probably maybe 2500 meters. But to get down to that town it was really torturous and we had very few Vietnamese civilians within our cantonment. So the stuff that was moved into our sight usually came in by the young Marines, they brought it in. There was a usual drug run, and there was an awful lot of really high quality marijuana, some of the moon drops, and that junk that you could buy in drug stores there. Uppers and downers and all that kind of business. I don't think there was too much of the hard stuff.

L: You mean like heroin?
C: Yea, cocaine and that kind of business. It was primarily marijuana. But now down in the city and outside the city out in the villages, it was shoot the moon—anything you wanted you could get. Any opium derivative, all that drug store junk.

L: Do you think that most of the men that were using drugs had used them before they came to Vietnam?

C: No, I really don't think so. I think the fact that they were so available and so cheap and it was the thing to do. You know using drugs is really a marvelous way to thumb your nose at authority, it is so far outside the regulations, and yet it is not easy to detect. And I think that kind of tickled the imagination of some of the youngsters. It's a way of turning on, it was a way of thumbing your nose at the old man.

L: Almost like when you were in, oh what was it, first and second grade, you used to try to chew gum in class without getting caught.

C: Oh yea, there was some of that. Plus it's the popular thing to do, it's the sophisticated thing to do.

L: Well did you find this drug use not only among enlisted men but officers?

C: Well we suspected it. You must realize as an enlisted man I was really not in a position to know a hell of a lot about what was going on in the B.O.Q. (Bachelors Officers Quarters) We had a couple of young officers busted for marijuana use. And I mean busted, they busted them hard. They were moved out of the organization, and as far as I know I think they were both returned to
the States and they were probably cashiered. Cause that just absolutely was not condoned. 

L: So officers were busted, what about enlisted men?

C: Well it was so prevalent and it was so hard to control, it got to the point that in my organization people tended to just look the other way. A lot of people were running scared about it too. We had several fraggings. It was directly related to drugs, or drug searches. We'd have a drug search, a shake down and immediately following automatically we knew we were going to have a fragging. So people were running scared.

L: Were there any other reactions to like soldiers being caught stoned like on guard duty or in specific jobs they were found to be on drugs?

C: Let's use the term Marines. (teasing laughter)

L: Marines.

C: Yes, we knew that there was an awful lot of smoking going on out in the bunkers. Hidden in the sand bags, some of it I'm sure was deliberately put there. Like salt in the mine. The youngsters way of saying, "Look I'm smoking, you know I'm smoking, and there isn't a damn thing you can do about it."

L: Kind of hard to catch them?

C: Right. You know, twisting the bears tail.

L: Alcohol has always been a problem in the military. Was it cheaper in Vietnam?

C: Oh of course! They practically give it away.

L: Did that have a tendency to lead people to drink more?
C: Well there's an awful lot of boozing. As there is always in the military. Alcohol is really a problem. Alcohol is a problem that has been around for years, it's not much discussed. Just recently has this been brought out in the open and looked at by the military. And one of the first things they do at a place like Monkey Mountain up in a cantonement, first concern is to build a club, get the booze up there. Keep the troops happy with their beer. Then there's that interminable discussion whether you should give hard stuff to the sargeants or whether you should confine it to the staff N.C.O.'s and so on and so forth. We had a lot of booze up there.

L: What type of regulations were put on alcohol?

C: Well the troopers couldn't get hard stuff unless they were eighteen or over—legally. And of course the hours the stuff was on sale was controlled. Couldn't have it in the barracks. You know these were the kind of regulations that they had in the military and the United States Marine Corps ever since it's conception. They are universally violated regulations and the universally almost impossible to enforce regulations. But on the service it's all very legal and looks good. For the service.

L: I interviewed a sargeant that was an E-5 and he said that his main complaint was that he wasn't able to buy packaged liquor. But that in any other service enlisted men were allowed to buy packaged booze. And he found this to be a real problem among him and his friends. Did you find this prevalent?
C: Well were was this youngster?
L: I think he was ... I'm not sure. Da Nang? He was pretty close by to Monkey Mountain at times.
C: Oh really?! Well I can't imagine that he couldn't get a hold of booze.
L: Oh, well he often got it.
C: Oh sure sure. He just wanted to be able to do it legally.
L: He wanted to be able to buy it himself.
C: Well, well the thing is booze in the service, the use of alcohol, the way it's handled, the way it's dispensed, and who it's sold to is the prerogative of the commanding officer. You can go from base to base, and find different regulations, just like uniforms, it's kind of a local prerogative that's reserved for the commanding officer. As long as the C.O. (commanding officer) stays with in the law, it's against the law, the federal law, to dispense alcohol to somebody whose under say eighteen years old. But whether he wants packaged sales available to all ranks or if he wants to restrict package sales to E-5 or E-6 and above or only to chief petty officers or only to commissioned officers that's his prerogative. And it has to do with his own personal prejudices, or his idea of military discipline or his own self image or whatever turns him on or off.
L: So then it could vary just about everywhere you went?
C: Oh yes! Sure this young guy might not have been able to get it, what was he in? The Navy?
L: The Marine Corp.

C: In the Marine Corp. Well I'm sure if he had gone down to one of the Seabee bases he could have gone into the enlisted clubs there and rubbed elbows with a seamen with C.P.O.'s (police) at the same bar--no problems. He could have gone in as a guest and gotten all the booze he wanted. And I'm sure he did, you know if he was a boozer. There was no problem getting alcohol.

L: When you were talking about drugs, you mentioned fragging. Could you explain that term more fully?

C: Fragging is a term that relates to a type of grenade, a fragmentation grenade. That's where the nickname comes from. So to fragg somebody is to throw a fragmentation grenade at them. And the term fragging as it was used in Vietnam means simply it's a clan-destined operation. It has nothing to do with throwing a grenade at a Vietnamese; it has to do with throwing a grenade at one of your own staff non-commissioned officers. An officer--usually an officer or a personal friend. The standard fragging technique is always done at night, it's always done anonymously, there is nothing more anonymous than a hand grenade, absolutely nothing because it's a self destructive weapon. When it goes, the evidence goes. There is no such thing as getting fingerprints, there is no way to identify unless you are caught red-handed throwing the thing. There is just no way of knowing. And it's small--it weighs about a pound and a quarter. If you can throw a baseball you can throw a fragg grenade. There's no problem throwing it forty, or fifty yards.
L: Then it was easy to conceal?
C: Oh yea sure.
L: Did you ever have any personal fear of fragging?
C: Certainly, certainly did. I think any N.C.O. or officer had, was concerned about the—-I had several threats, directed to me.

L: Do you know what brought about these threats?
C: The normal military discipline. Now this is nothing new. Junior troopers have always been angry at having to do menial tasks, there is the child parent relationship between the junior enlisted man and senior enlisted man. The old military bug-a-boo, the sargeant, you know the mean guy or the bad officer, the guy with all the privileges and there you are in the mud and he's up there sleeping in sheets. There is all that normal resentment. It's always been around. But fragging grew directly out of all this violence in our society that's been coming on the last ten or fifteen years.

L: Was fragging always evident? Like you said you were in the Korean War and in the World War, was it evident then also?
C: There were some incidences of fragging. It wasn't called fragging. I can't remember what the term was, but I remember there was the infamous incident the Second Marine Division Camp at Camp Kamuela on a big island. Somebody booby-trapped a head. There were some incidences of fragging. It wasn't called fragging. I can't remember what the term was, but I remember there was the infamous incident the Second Marine Division Camp at Camp Kamuela on a big island. Somebody booby-trapped a head. Ten or twelve holer, I can't remember what. It blew some poor guy away. He went out there and lifted up the sanitary seat and there was a grenade that was attached to the lid. And the grenade
was sitting in a five gallon can of gasoline. It just blew him and the head, but that's told as a kind of funny story. When you really think of it here is this guy going in there to do his bodily functions and he gets his ass blown away. I've heard some people tell this story and it can really be funny if it's told right. It wasn't very funny to that guy that went to the head. But that was isolated stuff. Fragging in Viet Nam was a part of that war.

L: Would you say that one service had it worse than any other?

C: Oh, I think the Army had real problems. Real problems, much more so than the Marine Corp. And I doubt if the Navy had serious problems.

L: Why do you think the Army had it the worst?

C: Well it's the nature of the organization. Army discipline tends to be comparatively poor compared to the Marine Corp. The army just does not have the professional attitude. The junior enlisted troops simply don't get the kind of training that the Marine Corp does. They don't have that feeling of spree that the Marine Corp has. I just think it's the nature of the army, that they're going to have more disciplinary problems of that nature.

L: Do you think that fragging was related to the drug problem in any way?

C: Oh yes, I think they are directly related.
L: How is that?

C: Well the drug problem, drug use, is a symptom of this militant attitude that has come on here in the last few years. In the last ten years I'd say. No, the drug culture and militancy kind of marched hand in hand, and with the militancy you have violence. And fragging is just the epitomy of that violence manifesting itself. So I just think they're inescapable in length. I think drugs and militancy and violence all coalesced in Viet Nam in the military situation and with this fragging business.

L: You mentioned fragging and drugs in relationship to the deterioration of discipline and you considered that a severe problem once before. Could you talk about that a little bit?

C: Well the fragging and the use of drugs are the worst examples of the discipline problem. But I think the youngsters—when I talk about discipline, the change in discipline picture in the Marine Corp, and the Viet Nam War. I think the youngsters that were coming into the Marine Corp, whether they're draftees or enlistees, they were a reflection of the attitudes of their generation. They brought these attitudes into the service with them. And although the Marine Corp prides itself on it's training techniques in boot camp, remolding the man, making a man out of the boy, make a man out of this junk that they get for raw material. I just think those attitudes carried
over, and they carried over beyond boot camp. Whether our training system broke down or whether these attitudes were just too damn strong for normal training techniques. Maybe it was that the Marine Corp simply did not adjust itself properly to what is really the threat to military discipline. These kinds of attitudes are a direct threat, contempt of authority, and the fear that fragging engendered in leaders. You know...my God! when you don't know if someone is going to throw a damn hand grenade under your hooch and blow your ass away—it changes your attitude! It's inescapable. I've always prided myself on being a damn good Marine and pretty tough. Pretty rough and tough, I can take care of myself, and I'm big and I've never been afraid to be physical. But it was almost impossible to take a normal attitude toward the troopers, those young marines that I had a direct responsibility for, you know, as a leader. My attitude changed toward them. I felt a fear. I tried to operate as if it weren't there, but it was there. I never went to bed, I never crawled into the rack at night in Viet Nam with out that running through my mind. And I incidently always kept an M-16 rifle, just as a matter of course; I had an M-16 rifle laying on a chair right next to my rack and I always had a couple of bandoliers of ammunition handy—just in case. Just in case. And I never needed it and it never happened and I think my troopers were aware of the fact that was there. As troopers are always aware of
everything that goes on with them... the junior troops are so
tuned in, they really focus on the boss, the guy they work
for. So I'm sure they were aware of this. I'm not saying
this was any kind of a deterrent, if somebody wanted to blow
my ass away they could have done it. It was my way of exhibiting
here I am, if your coming friend we'll meet each other eye-
ball to eye-ball.

L: In Viet Nam what type of officer enjoyed the highest
level of loyalty? I mean were there certain characteristics
that really made an officer?

C: Well, you can ask that question and just forget about the
"in Viet Nam". Characteristics of leadership are true no
matter where or when or what situation. First and foremost that
strikes any enlisted man about the caliber of an officer,
the one characteristic is the officer's attitude toward his
troops insofar as their welfare is concerned. When you find
an officer that really exhibits interest in his troops as far
as the conditions of their living, what kind of food they are
being fed, their health, safety, comfort, then you find that-
there is a reciprocity, that there's a feeling from the junior
man to the officer. He might be technically lousy, he might
be a terrible communicator, or his craft into the sides
of mountains, or he can't find his rear-end in the fog, but
if this guy as far as leadership ability is concerned is really
concerned about the welfare of his troops, you'll find alot
of loyalty given up. There is that loyalty up business and that comes from loyalty down. And any good leader... that's one of the basic properties of leadership that's taught to junior officers when they go through basic school or go through platoon leader's class, or what not, look out for the troops and they'll look our for you.

L: So then there weren't any specific characteristics or incidences in Vietnam that would make an officer different than say back in the States?

C: Oh no. Course in a combat situation or a situation where you get shot at, or somehow are in danger, the relationship is sharpened considerably. Because what an officer does can have a direct relationship on your well being. He can get your ass shot off, or whether or not you get fed or get mail on time---and those things are important. Then you're living is adequate or inadequate.

L: I wanted to ask you about living conditions too, you just sort of touched on it. What were the differences between the enlisted men and officers quarters?

C: Well, considerable. Although now in the organization I was in, we were living in barracks, we were living in South East Asia type barracks. A standard type of construction, they are made out of plywood, screen to keep the mosquitoes out. Of course on top of Monkey Mountain you were living practically up to our eyebrows in water all the time, rain
and fog and just a lot of clouds. We were living right in the clouds, so living there was not ah... living because things were so wet, although we were in garrison in effect, it was not very comfortable. Strangely enough one of the most sought out comforts on Monkey Mountain was an electric blanket. (laughter)
The reason being not for warmth, although it got damn chilly up there, if you had an electric blanket it kept your bunk dry! If you've ever crawled between wet sheets or under wet blankets, oh God Almighty, that was just terrible. You can't get warm, it's just impossible to get comfortable, trying to sleep wet. and as a result electric blankets were just marvelous for that, we had unlimited power up there, we had 650 kilowatt generators that ran twenty-four hours a day because of all our electronics' equipment and to keep the perimeter lights on and all that kind of business. So we had unlimited access to electric power. I can't think of anybody over there who didn't have an electric blanket. Everybody sent home for them, or bought them at the exchange, or when they went on "R and R," or had a buddy bring them back from Hong Kong, or Tokyo, wherever they went on "R and R." They'd bring back a double hand full of electric blankets.

L: Were any of the troops on Monkey Mountain stationed like in combat areas and then sent back?

C: Yes. Yes we had a infantry security unit there that was made up of people who had three purple hearts, been wounded