

George Cochran Oral History

[00:00:00] **George Cochran:** I didn't realize, that's Air Force if you were to form an Army, is that right? Oh, and your little handbook there? Navy, yeah, this, this was issued by the Navy. Navy, and Air Force. Oh, maybe someone in there, oh, the Army's in the front. Yeah, yeah. Yeah. I didn't, I hadn't looked at it ever for, forever. (Conversation was about a handbook he found within his military paperwork)

Dean Wetzel: Um, well, George, let me, let me start by saying thank you for letting me take your oral history today. Um, I'm going to start out with some, just some real basic information, just, where were you born?

George Cochran: I was born in Hanover, Michigan, November 2nd, 1938.

Dean Wetzel: Uh, who were your parents and what were their occupations?

George Cochran: Well, my parents were Tom and Mert, Mertie Bell, Cochran. And my dad didn't have a job that winter. My mother was a housewife and, uh, that, that was it. They, they, I, my grandmother owned a telephone company in Hanover at that time. And, uh, She, the kind of mother helped her over the switchboard and some stuff and she kind of helped them get by and my dad shot rabbits out back for food and, and then picked up whatever he could pick up for work, but 38 was not a, was, there weren't a lot of jobs, and it was a small town.

Dean Wetzel: Were you an only child?

George Cochran: No, I have a sister that was born, um, June 21st of 41. Okay, so and she's passed.

Dean Wetzel: She's just, just a little younger than you.

George Cochran: Twenty-one months.

Dean Wetzel: Yep. Awesome. Um, now, did your dad serve in the military at all?

George Cochran: No.

Dean Wetzel: No?

George Cochran: No, he, he, he worked in, when the war broke out, in the, in the late 30s. In 38, I was born in it, in November, and in spring of 39, we moved to Coldwater. Cool. And my dad took over a Shell gas station, managing. And, um, he worked at that for a few years. And we bought a, they bought, a cottage at Rose Lake, which was about 16 miles south of town. And he worked there and then he left there and bought his own at the west end of town. Because it, uh. Shell Station was the first thing he saw when he came in from the East End on U. S. 12. Then it was 12 between Detroit and Chicago. And, uh, then he got a job with Quality Springs, which were building springs and things for weapons. It was a defense pipe. I mean, defense operation, military operation. So, he didn't get ready. They didn't come after him and draft him. In 44, uh, he ran sideways with a plant manager and told him what he could do with his job. And we moved from Coldwater then to Hanover. We moved in with my grandmother. And that was the fall of 44. And then he got a job on the railroad. Which exempted him again from the draft. But he did go report, he got his draft notice and he went, reported in Cold Water to the armory to, for the draft and

the railroad had got him off and so he worked then for from 44 to 80, 80 on the railroad.

Dean Wetzel: Awesome. Um, A little bit about you now, um, were you drafted or were you enlisted?

George Cochran: I was drafted.

Dean Wetzel: Drafted?

George Cochran: In August of, I got my notice in August of 61.

Dean Wetzel: Okay, um, how did it feel getting drafted? I know that's a weird question, but.

George Cochran: Oh, I didn't, I didn't mind. I was happy to be drafted. I, I had, I got married, we got married a year after school. And, and in 1957, so by that time we'd been married four years. We had kind of figured, we started working on, on, uh, having children. And we, and so, and we were working with doctors and so forth, a little bit about the children. And then, uh, the Wall was built, the Berlin Wall and Kennedy come on and said and said he was going to up the draft, and I told my wife we'd be going, and sure enough, I got my notice, and then we left. I worked out there, I was working for Tommy Kanns out there, shoe store, and we left there in September, cause I had a report October 1st. Uh, to Jackson, to Jackson County, because that's where I was drafted out of. I could have, I could have, uh, converted it and gone in, in California, but then my wife would have been out there all alone. So, we said, we'll, I'll just go back and we'll

go back to Michigan, at least she'll be with my folks and her folks and so forth, she'll have family while I'm gone. And, and that's what we did, so.

Dean Wetzel: Yeah. How about your parents and your sisters' feeling then with you being drafted? Were they supportive of that decision?

George Cochran: I think mostly I don't, I, they knew that I didn't mind, and I was once, Hey, that's, yeah, I'm gonna go. I want to do it. My uncle had served in the Navy in World War II. He was a CB in the Pacific. They, they worked, he, he saw the, the, the, uh. practiced atomic bomb out there on the island when they, the what the test shots, when they blew, blew an island away or whatever. But anyway, he, he, uh, ran heavy equipment. For the CBS caterpillars and backhoe. There were cranes and stuff.

Dean Wetzel: Awesome. Um, now I, you say you were drafted. Um, I've talked with other veterans that obviously had received their draft notice as well. And then they were like, I'm just going to enlist. So, did you think about enlisting or did you say the draft was fine?

George Cochran: Draft is fine. I didn't, you know, my wife's cousin was a, uh, career Naval off Naval pilot officer. And. Because of his service, and stuff, I thought, well, we'll see what happens. I wasn't, I wasn't absolutely against making a career of it. I wasn't going to jump in and do it immediately, but I said, we'll see what happens. And, and, uh, once I was in for a while, I said, I'm not going to make a career of this.

Dean Wetzel: Thank you for that. Um, now you did say you, you were drafted a little bit older, you weren't fresh out of high school.

George Cochran: Yeah, I was, I was 23 when I was drafted.

Dean Wetzel: Awesome. What, now what were you doing for work at that time? What was available?

George Cochran: I was working for Tom McCann's Shoe Stores in, in California. I had worked for him in Jackson right out of high school or after I turned 18 in November after I graduated. And, um, worked up to assistant manager and so forth and then we decided to go out there. I had left them because in Michigan, at the time, uh, they, well, they wanted me to, to get a promotion, I would have had to go to Detroit to run a, to get my own store, my own shoe store. And we didn't want to do that. Well, just. Detroit didn't, wasn't, didn't look very inviting to us, whatever's down there. So, I had left there and I went to work on the railroad. Um, in, in the yard office, or yards in Jackson. And that's where I was at when, when we decided to pull up and go to California. And so we did.

Dean Wetzel: Um, did you ever think about college at all? Was that on your mind at all at this time?

[00:10:00] **George Cochran:** It had been, but we got married a year out of school and I said, uh, I'm gonna do that. And, um, my, none of, none of my ancestors, we'll put it that way, my parents or my grandparents, my grandmother, um, graduated from Concord, but anyway, she went to, Eastern,

nor, Eastern Normal at the time is now Eastern Michigan University for, um, what was it? She said she was there for twelve weeks or eight weeks or something. Anyway, she had graduated from Concord from high school and with good grades and so they went and she took a training, teacher's training course and then she taught school. She taught country school. And she always wanted me to go to college. And I always said I was going to go to college.

Well, marriage and all this and got to put it off. Uh, eventually I did go. I was 47 when I went, no, excuse me, 37 when I started college, graduated at 40 from Western.

Dean Wetzel: We'll get to that. Oh, we'll get to that here in a little bit. Um, Now, back to your service, um, can you tell us a little bit about the first days that you joined, going on into boot camp and what that was like?

George Cochran: Yeah. The day before I was supposed to go, I went down to the barber and I had him give me a, well I thought a military haircut. Went down to Fort, uh, Fort Detroit? I remember it was Fort Wayne in Detroit. And was processed in, sworn in, and it was the day after Thanksgiving in 1961, the 29th was sworn in. And then, um, they put us on a train, and we took the train to, I'm trying to remember, I don't think we took the train all the way to Leonard Wood, I think we took the train to St. Louis. Thank you very much. And then they bused us out to Fort Leonard Wood. If I remember right. I didn't pay too much attention. Anyway, um, of course the next morning they got us out and we were in civilian clothes and everything. And ran us through and everyone got a

Interviewee: George Cochran
Interviewer: Dean Wetzel
Date of Oral History: May 22nd, 2024
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haircut. Regardless of what my hair looked like, it was short then, but I got another haircut that cost me a buck. So anyway, uh, then we got our uniforms, and we got all our first shots. Um, I don't remember how many, but they had air guns and shooting us and needles and they would shoot this and then they had this needle about this long and about that big around, that they poke to your butt and, uh, that one hurt. We had a couple of guys that took it, that were in the group with me. And, the one guy was so, his, his, his body fat was like minus 4%. I mean he didn't have any body fat on him. And he was on his bunk for two days. He couldn't move. He was just, that was it. That was it. But I finally got him going and so forth. But anyway, um, then we moved around and moved into our training. Engineering, anyway, basic training. And, um, just went through it. That was early November, or early December, I'm sorry. Um, weather wasn't bad yet. The 1st Battalion, 2nd Battalion. second regiment, February of ninety, of uh, ninety-two, or sixty-two. And, um, that was our graduation. And, um, uh, we went through basic care and the, the, Rivera, our sergeant, look, uh, company sergeant. And, uh, He, picked out all the guys that wore glasses and we were firemen. We didn't have to do, we didn't have to do KP (Kitchen Patrol). So, you know, if we were firemen, I said, that's good. I don't mind that at all. And, um, so like, you know, two nights a week, we were up half the night tend to, cause there were coal furnaces in those old barracks there. Not gas, not, no air conditioning, none of that. Just the old coal furnaces and left over from World War II. And, um, we came home for Christmas, and

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we had a bus headed for Michigan, and some of them in, uh, all the way through, we got off at Jackson. You guys got off here in Kalamazoo. And so forth. We came up to Illinois on, on 66. The snow was snowing so hard that the bus driver could barely see. And he said, you guys want to go? I'll take you if you want to go. But everybody's got to agree that we'll go ahead. Keep on going in this. And not, not pull off somewhere. And we said we were going. We're driving out of, in the bus. The only thing that goes by us is folks iron needles. And, and we were, he wasn't passing many because almost everybody was out. It was a long ride from St. Louis to, to Chicago. and once we got to Chicago, got up around Chicago, it led up a little bit and we came on across on, on uh, 12, then actually came up to, well, is now 94 this route?

Dean Wetzel: Yeah. Um

George Cochran: Yeah., they, they changed the, the, they changed the road numbers and then, you know, whatever. Of they didn't build these highways till 64 and 65 Of course.

Dean Wetzel: Yeah, because that was Eisenhower, right? Yeah, Eisenhower.

George Cochran: Oh yeah, Eisenhower. Yeah. Yeah, he'd seen him in Germany. Yeah. He said we're going to do that. Yeah. And it was great for the auto industry. Well, sure. Terrible for the railroad. Well, absolutely. And buses. They were terrible for the railroad.

Dean Wetzel: Mm hm. Because they were Everybody could drive now. You could go everywhere with your car.

George Cochran: And the auto industry was great. And they could hire all the soldiers when they came home from the war. It worked.

Dean Wetzel: Uh, you mentioned KP, an abbreviation. Could you just explain what KP is? I'm not sure what that is.

George Cochran: Kitchen Patrol. It's working in the kitchen. Oh. Washing dishes. Peeling potatoes. You know.

Dean Wetzel: The not fun jobs.

George Cochran: The not fun jobs. They didn't, they didn't hire, they didn't have any, anybody, they didn't hire any people to do that work. The soldiers did the work.

Dean Wetzel: Yeah. Um, alright. Well, thank you for that. Um, now, how long was your boot camp? Or your basic training?

George Cochran: Eight weeks.

Dean Wetzel: Eight Weeks?

George Cochran: Um. Well, it says seven weeks because, you know, zero week and then seven weeks of actual.

Dean Wetzel: Sure. Um, eight, eight total. That's fine. Um, what skills would you say that basic taught you that you didn't have before going in?

[00:20:00] **George Cochran**: A little bit of self-discipline. Um, yes, I've been hunting and winter, you know, all my life. Out in the cold, ice skating and sliding and dealing with the cold. Um, at least I was there in the wintertime when it didn't snow. I could deal with the cold. I didn't have to deal with 110

degrees in the middle of Missouri, uh, in the summertime. So, but, no, that's, that was, that was it. Um, a little bit more about, obviously, how to handle a M1-Grand rifle. And, um, I guess it helped me, helped me learn respect for other people and, and have a better understanding because we had, we had in our, in our, uh, company, some guys from Philadelphia and from Detroit and from Illinois somewhere. I don't remember now just where, but, uh, so these were all people that I had. Other than the fact that we'd gone to California, you know. And, and, but out there, I wasn't out there long enough. And my jobs out there when I was working for Tom and Kaz, which is what I did when I got to California, Um, real quick I became an assistant manager. Because I had good background and stuff. So, my life was not that different other than the environment we lived in. Lived at Pacific Beach down on the ocean and worked in a store uh, 16 miles inland. And it would, and it was every mile you went inland, the temperature went up one degree. But that was, that was just part of the climate. That was what was there. And so, the diversity of what we had. But in a, in a company was a much greater than anything I'd ever ran into. And so, I think I learned to get along a little bit better with people. I never had too much trouble with that, but growing up or school or whatever, I was reasonably popular. Yeah.

Dean Wetzel: Thank you for that. Um, what was your most vivid memory of your time in basic training as you look back at it? Does anything stand out?

George Cochran: Yeah, eating frozen cake out in the field with the rifle range.

You'd be out, we'd be out, it was cold, you know, I mean it was below zero, or not below, excuse me, it was below freezing. It was in the 20s, 10s, 15s, and 20s. And We'd be out there and, and of course, your hands get cold and all that stuff. But they'd bring out, in the mess hall, they'd bring these big pots that were heated, and all that stuff and they'd bring dessert, cake. So, we'd go through with our pans and stuff and eat quick because the food would cool off. And when you wanted dessert, the cake was frozen. By the time you got to it, it was frozen hard. That, that's one of the biggest, biggest things that, that I, that, other than that, and, I enjoyed rifle range.

Dean Wetzel: Yeah?

George Cochran: Because I'd been a gun, I'd had my own gun, I bought my own shotgun when I was twelve. Okay. And I'd handled guns from before that. And we hunted squirrels and rabbits and, um, and deer. My dad hunted deer from 1940, I think it was 40 or 39 or 40 until 1980 every year. He never missed a year in the woods in northern Michigan. So, uh, that was, that was, uh, quite a trip.

Dean Wetzel: Was that the only thing you got to shoot was the M1 Grand?

George Cochran: Yep. Well, you got to throw grenades. But that was all we had. That's all they had. That's all the Army had when I went in. They were developing the 15, 14, the AR 14s and, and, and the other weapons. But the, that and the small M1 carbine, well, that's a beautiful little one. Yeah.

Dean Wetzel: Yeah. Um. Looking back at your time in boot camp or basic training, uh, there's a particular instructor.

Do you remember any of your instructors? Do you remember anything they did?

George Cochran: Yeah, I remember because the, the drill instructor for Company C was a hard nose. We were awfully, we, we were awfully, we, we had a guy that drove us and, and, and didn't take a crack. Okay, Rivera was tough. But he was honest, and he was fair. And he didn't mess with him. He didn't back talk him. But the one in company C was just mean. Yeah, he was just mean. And we felt, we kind of felt sorry for those guys on that, over there, that ex Billete.

Dean Wetzel: What was uh, what was the most, you know, horrific, I guess, memory than you have of it. Like, was there ever a particular bad time you were getting IT'd, intensive training, or whatever, put in the same thing?

George Cochran: Not, not, uh, there was a stupid thing I did.

Dean Wetzel: Oh, what's this?

George Cochran: Yeah, I had a kid from, actually from New York. And he's, no, he's not in that picture because he never finished basic. And, He had the dumbest mouth. Not, not ugly mouth, but dumb. Just stupid. And he thought he was really smart. And maybe he was intelligent, but he wasn't smart. And he just rattled on everybody. And I got sick of it. And, I don't remember anyway, I challenged him. For some reason, stupid. And so, we started wrestling. And all

of a sudden, my watch popped off. And I looked at him, and I looked at my watch. You're not worth my watch. And I turned around and walked away from him. That was it. But it was just a stupid thing that I did. And I don't know if it was, what, I, I don't know what caused it. me to be that way, to do that, other than the fact that, that probably some nerves or some, some something built up because of where we were and, uh, and, and, uh, frustration and so forth probably.

Dean Wetzel: Well, did he ever cause group punishment? As in, like, he said he was a, you know, had a mouth on him or whatnot. Did he ever?

George Cochran: No, he never did. Because Revere didn't, didn't do that.

Dean Wetzel: Okay.

George Cochran: That company C did. Yeah. But he didn't do that stuff. No, he, he, you screwed up, you screwed up. You didn't screw up everybody else.

Dean Wetzel: That's, that's actually kind of relieving in a way. Like, I always hated mass group punishment. One guy messed up, we all paid for the price. Especially in boot camp.

George Cochran: Well, and I know, I know the principle. Yeah. Behind that. I know why, why it's done, but, uh, uh, he didn't, he didn't have to do that. He, he just built, he built respect without even, you know, getting a hard case.

Dean Wetzel: Just that, just that eye look and

George Cochran: Boom. Yep. And you, and you knew he'd been a, you know, army light heavyweight champion, boxer. So, you didn't want him hitting you either. No, cause he wouldn't have. He couldn't have,

Dean Wetzel: Alright, George, I want to open the can of worms. So, what happened after, what happened after basic training?

George Cochran: I came down on orders. Mm hmm. Even, um Let's see, wait a minute. Yeah. I came down on orders to go to Cook school.

Dean Wetzel: Okay.

George Cochran: Came home for leave after. It took two weeks or ten days, whatever it was. Went right back to Fort Leonard Wood. Cause that's where Cook school was. Got in there, started, had zero week and went into the kitchen in a mess hall. And learned how to cook for 350 people. Along with the crew that I was instructed. We had, we had, uh, our, the three instructors that we had were all less than a year left for retirement. Two of them had jobs as a cheap chef, top chef, in New York and one of them was gonna be in another hotel in Chicago. They, at, that time, big money. But anyway, um, that went, that went well. But we learned, you walk in and they give you a half a beef. A half a beef, you throw it on the, throw it on the butcher block, cut it up and make it food. We learned how to do that. I'd already known how to do it with deer. Okay. I knew how to do it or squirrel or whatever. So that helped. But they taught me that a lot more about the IES of, of, um. getting that meat cut just right and peeling it off the bone and getting that getting that getting it that rib down the

back and all of those out and stuff and then the shanks and stuff so that was interesting and uh then the recipes just working with the recipes and the big pots and pans and so forth and of course we at the same time while we didn't We, we also had to clean up a lot of our own pads. We didn't have somebody on KP. Part of the, we had some people that were doing the, kind of, some of the washing and cleaning up, but most, a lot of it we did ourselves and so forth. And then learned how to sharpen a knife and all that.

Dean Wetzel: How long did that schooling go for?

George Cochran: Six weeks.

[00:30:00] **Dean Wetzel:** Okay. Now, when you were drafted into the army, um, I'm not, again, I wasn't drafted, obviously, I was enlisted. Did they ever tell you what your MOS was, you're gonna be? Was, was, was cook?

George Cochran: No, no, no.

Dean Wetzel: Did you feel Cook was the best use for you?

George Cochran: No.

Dean Wetzel: Okay.

George Cochran: But I was in the army.

Dean Wetzel: Yeah.

George Cochran: Okay, and we're in the 60s.

Dean Wetzel: Mm hmm.

George Cochran: And I knew I didn't want, I knew I didn't want to be an infantryman as such, okay? And I knew how to type. Uh, my grades were

mediocre because I didn't work very hard in high school. But I still, when I took the tests, all the tests, I tested out high. And I didn't know it then. I didn't, you know, when I first went on basic and all that, I didn't know, in fact, I didn't know it until the thing come up in a little bit we're going to talk about. So, I went back there and then Leonard went for the cook school. I could have my wife with me. Now I could go home one night a week and every other weekend because we shifted and did the shifts. And where we were at, at, at Waynesville, we were in a, grouping of, there was four little rooms, uh, apartments, uh, bedroom, living room, all in one, and a kitchen and, and a bathroom all in a square, a lot smaller than this room. And, and. Um, but there were four of those in the front and there were like three trailers, and these were all for permanent party. We got there, I got, my dad and her dad brought her out, put her in a motel out to drive into Leonard Wood and they got, she took them back, put them on the bus and sent them back to Michigan. I eventually, she eventually came in and was able to pick me up. That was the first week of Cook school. And, then we went into Waynesville, and we started looking for an apartment, some place for her to live. And we looked at three chicken, two or three chicken coops. Um, basically they were chicken coops. And then another one that was a kind of a multi building. Uh, I think three places, three little units that were separated. And then there was a common wash place with a washing machine and a shower. Because there weren't any showers in the rooms. It was a bathroom. a stool and a sink, but no shower. So, you had to go out, go in behind

the washer and dryer, you know, you know, a space to take a shower. And finally, somebody, and I don't remember now who, somebody told us that one of the apartments out where, where if we ended up was open, but that they didn't, they only, they only rented to full, to a permanent party. And the lady worked in the, in the, uh, general store downtown, like, took my wood. Somebody was taking us around, a realtor or somebody was taking, from, oh, from, um, uh, their, uh, I keep, brain keeps going dead. Um, anyway, they took us over down to their, I said, take us down there, I want to talk to her. And we're in the middle of the store, and there's people in there, and I talked to her, and she said, well, we don't, we, we really only, I literally, in uniform, in my khakis, got on my Knee. In the middle of the store. and said, please.

Dean Wetzel: ha. Wow. So, you're saying the housing

[34:50] **George Cochran:** she let us go there. She let us, she, she rented it to us. And it was great because when I wasn't there, the other, the other ladies, we all got together, they're all young, you know, everybody's, everybody's young and E 5s was the highest rank in the place. Um, and anyway, so they had somebody that they talked to and buddy back and forth with and that kind of stuff. And one of the guys that lived in one of the trailers, um, worked in personnel. Um, Well, we're going through Cook school and getting down towards the end. We're in the seventh week, I guess, of, uh, we had a week left before school was over. And he came, he started looking for, my orders. Because there were other orders, other guys had looking for, or a week already,

about where they were going, and stuff. And he, uh, said, well, here's what happened. You know, you, you, your orders are to go to, I don't know, Korea or somewhere, I don't remember now, but you're not supposed to be here. You're supposed to be in Fort Gordon, Georgia, going to crypto school. And so he said, I'm, I got an appointment for you tomorrow. You come, you gotta come down the headquarters and sit down with my boss and other people. And so, I did. And he said, and they said, well, uh, here's the, they explained to me what happened. And I'm looking at that and listening to 'em, and I'm thinking, and they explained what cryptography, what, you know, what the crypto school was and what that amounted to. And I said. I looked at, for some reason I used my watch as a reference, and I looked at my watch and I'm thinking, okay, I've been here, I had basic training, and, eight weeks, and I went home for vacation. I've been back down here now for six weeks, and so forth. So, if I go there, I'm gonna have another eight or nine weeks, into my two years. So, let's go. So, I said, I'll go, please. And they said, you're on. They made it, made it happen. And three days later we, we were on the road and headed for Memphis, Tennessee. And you had to cross the bottom of Tennessee and to get into, uh, Georgia to get to, uh, Fort Gordon at Augusta, Georgia. And, anyway, we left there, it was the end of March, I'm in my greens, and we landed in Augusta, Georgia at Fort Gordon on April 1st, and I'm in my greens, and it's 98 degrees. Yeah, that was before they had summer, even summer, uh, fatigues. We were the old, we had the old cotton fatigues. But, anyway, so I'm in the greens. And, reported the next

Interviewee: George Cochran
Interviewer: Dean Wetzel
Date of Oral History: May 22nd, 2024
Library of Congress Veteran History Project

day I was in my khakis. So, but, anyway, and, and that worked out well. We found, we were able to find a, nice apartment there. And, uh, up in South, South Carolina, for, North Augusta, South Carolina. And, uh, I had four guys that, that we ran into that I got around during zero week, move around a lot. I went and looked up Paul, the kid that had gone, gone to Fort Gordon for me, that was supposed to be in Cook school. And when we found him, he did end up going to Korea as a cryptographer, but not as a cook. Yeah. So anyway, um, Uh, we, I mean, and he said, when I found him, he said, you know, the funniest thing happened to me, he says, I was second or third day of school, and, or, we, we, anyway, he said, they came and asked me if I wanted to be an instructor, and they showed me this paper, and he said, that's not mine, I want to basic with this guy. It's George Cochran. I'm Paul Cochran. At that time, they didn't know what, they didn't know that Paul was supposed to go on to Cook School or anything else. And, so anyway, I get in class. This was zero week when I found this out. So, we're getting in class, and by the second week I'm pulling out a couple of sleeves and saying, hey, this is what happened. And they, and, and they pulled him out to want to be a teacher. I'd like to do that. So, and as it worked out, they went back, we went, and I ended up being an instructor. And went through three weeks of instructor training, or two weeks, whatever, of instructor training school. Um, painted cyclone fence for a few weeks, waiting for my security clearance. And then we started teaching them in class.

Dean Wetzel: Wow. Um, now just, just so for the record, what is, uh, crypto or cryptography? Is that

George Cochran: What is it?

Dean Wetzel: Correct.

George Cochran: It's, it's communications. It's, it's secret communications. It's encoding, encoding communications. At the time, what they use now is all different. At the time, we were It was a, the army was still a, disk operation. You put a, the equipment and you put this disk in, and it all jumbles up everything. So, if I'm sitting at the machine, my TT-76, um, and I'm typing a message that came from when I was in Vietnam, came from up, somewhere up in the, in the country. And, and I'm typing that. What comes out on the tape is a series of five-digit letters. There'll be five letters to space, five letters to space, on this whole tape that runs out, you know, 25 feet long or whatever. And then that is trans, is transmitted from, you know, we were in the third basement. in the three-core comms in the three core ARVN headquarters down there and we had a armed guard outside the door and we were sharing it with air force air force had the modern equipment they were they were using uh like computer stuff already the army was they were still using world war ii stuff yeah i

George's Wife: (Walked into the room to inform George of an invent, Dean Wetzel pauses the interview so they can discuss)

George Cochran: Anyway, um, we would, we, we would work 12-hour days, 12-hour shifts. And, um, then we, we worked, I don't know, there, it swung

around enough, so we worked like three days or four days, three days, one week and four days another week or whatever. With the shifts coming around, and you work nights, and then you workdays, and then nights, and days. And then, uh, um, I say work, we were down there typing these messages. They would go to, as far as I knew, they went to Clark, and then probably went to, uh, Pacific Headquarters in Hawaii, and then to D. A. As far as I know, that's probably where they went. I don't know that for a fact. That would have been, at the time, that would have been what would have been normal, I think.

Dean Wetzel: Um, maybe I'm just being a grunt here, uh, cryptography or crypto school sounds difficult. Was it a challenging schooling?

George Cochran: No.

Dean Wetzel: No?

George Cochran: No, because what we had to do is learn to type. I already knew how to type. And we had to learn to type. We didn't have to learn the coding. The machine did the coding for us. So, we didn't have to learn that. Now, had I gone on, stayed in, and gone on to other things in the, in the job, probably at some point I would have gotten more involved in more of the coding and so forth. Maybe. But, uh, no, the machine did that for us, but we were reading, um, well, secret. I didn't get any top-secret stuff. I think our sergeant carried a top secret. But there was three of us to a shift. We had each, there were three TT 76 machines, teletype machines, basically. Um, and there were three of us to a shift and we had a sergeant. And I think the sergeant had

probably the top clearance. Because the rest of us hadn't been there, you know, too long. Um, and, uh, anyway, uh, but we would, we'd just sit there and we're reading things that were happening on the ground with the ARVN basically with the ARVN troops because it wasn't our troops in the army, in the war. Our troops were advising the Arvan troops in the war. Um, they, they were, they were a few American that were sent home that got killed in action. But um, not like it got to be when we, when it all went to hell. But uh, no, that was us. And then, and then our other days, we actually, uh, we basically carried a class A pass in our pocket. That's Anytime you wanted to go into Saigon or whatever. I had a couple people that I'd gone through language school with and so forth that were there with me. And I'd go see them. One of them was an E-6 sergeant that I spent quite a lot of time with when we were in Monterey. And we just, because I was a little older, we just kind of hooked up a little bit. And, and so we. He, uh, had a girlfriend over there and we, we would go to her house and that kind of stuff and go to the beach or something, a little bit. So, it got me off post, off the Presidio, we were off post. And uh, uh, and then it was just strange. He lived in a, in a hotel downtown, right off the main square, not too far from the Capitol building. He was up on the, I guess the sixth floor, up high enough so he could see over all the buildings and face the streets and so forth. And because of all that had gone on with the French and then the, uh, North Vietnamese and all that stuff, there were a lot of people that had come from the north, come south, and a lot of them went into the cities. The front had all these buildings and bars

and whatever else, but in space between the streets, between the buildings, you look and they're all tin roofs. They're little, little 8x8 or 10x8 or whatever tin roofs. And people are living in those things. And it was, there was no open space. And there were air alleys, of course, that cut through.

The people could go through, but it was, it was a, it was a strange thing to see. Um. Saigon was a beautiful city. Parts of it were, it had been a beautiful city at some point, more so, but by the time I got there were so many people coming into it that they'd filled it up and it was, it was busy.

Dean Wetzel: Yeah. Now, what was maybe the hardest part of adjusting to military life for you? Or was it all just fairly easy because it was so closely to the life you were already living?

[00:50:00] **George Cochran:** Well, the, the, I guess just the, the, the regimentation, uh, there was no freedom much as far as, especially basic. And then while you're going to cook school, uh, As I said, I would go home one night a week and every other weekend, and my wife would come in and pick me up, and she had the car, so, and that was, that was pretty close, but, and the language school was, was good because that was, as I said, we carried a class A pass in our pocket. But we also did at Presidio Monterey. Uh, we had classes. Every, we had classes, um, we had, I'm trying to remember. I know we had classes at night a lot. In the evening. They put us through, we'd have morning and noon, or morning, afternoon, and evening classes. They put us through quickly, and they said that was six weeks. Uh, there. But, and, but still, uh, on

Interviewee: George Cochran
Interviewer: Dean Wetzel
Date of Oral History: May 22nd, 2024
Library of Congress Veteran History Project

the weekends and stuff, cause basically civilians were teaching us, at Presidio, their language school. And, uh, uh, I, heh. Finished the school. I had a little bit of knowledge of the language. I came home for three weeks. Back to Michigan. And then I went back to, to Oakland Terminal. For another week. So, a month later I landed in Vietnam. Do you think I had much of that left? Besides that was, the, the, I was all with Americans anyway. Wherever I was. Uh, we landed and, and they had these, uh, I think 15 by 30, anyway, they're large, big brown tents, the big ones, and they were, uh, probably, let's see, we had eight in each Hooch, which, uh, there was probably, 24 of us in one of those tents, or bunks, double I. And it was hot, and sweaty. It's June. It was ugly. It was ugly. And we were there for, we were there for, or I was there, cause we were dispersed from there. I was there for six days, I think, before they sent me out to the signal company. And we were, the signal company was, was, uh, basically in a, in a same area, or we shared an area with the MPs. Uh, and so it was, they had, the MPs had good food, they had great showers. And almost all of us would go down there and shower and, and, uh, eat down there. Every once and awhile. But

Dean Wetzel: You gotta get the good food where you can, right? Mm hmm.

Mm hmm. All right. So, when did you finally arrive in Vietnam?

George Cochran: I believe it was June 21st

Dean Wetzel: of?

George Cochran: 63. I was in country five months and 21 days.

Dean Wetzel: Okay. Alright, um, during that time, anything crazy happen?

George Cochran: No, getting there happened.

Dean Wetzel: Yeah?

George Cochran: We, we took Matt's, they had Matt's four engine turboprops, planes, that, that, that Matt's used, which is military air transport. Okay. And we flew out of Hickam, or out of Travis Air Force Base. Okay. And we went to, to Hawaii, and we went to Midway. And we went to Kadena, and then we went to Saigon. And every time we landed; we had three engines. One of we lost an engine each time we, between each hop. This stuff was old. It's World War II stuff. The, the, the, the, you know, they, they quit building all that stuff. And so, all they had was what was left after the war. And, and they shut down the, the, the, building all the extra planes, building all that stuff. So, it was older. But we flew, we flew, they had almost no air conditioning in the plane, and we were at 10, 000 feet. We could see Whitecaps all the way over there. And so, but coming back, I told you before, coming back we were on a Boeing 990, and leather seats, air conditioning, 16 hours back, 36 hours going over.

Dean Wetzel: Um, when you were, like you were also talking a little bit before, uh, about how, really not much happened the first, uh, five months or so that you were over there in Vietnam, really?

George Cochran: Well, there wasn't, yeah, right, you're right, until the last 10 days I was there. Uh, we just went to work, uh, swimming pools, they had an Olympic swimming pool. I made one jump off the top of an Olympic swimming

pool. That's a long way up, that's a long way down, and once was enough. But I had to do it, once. We went to the pool, and then here's this, You know, tower stand in there and a challenge. I had to, I had to accept it and I, and I took it once. But anyway, uh, other than that, no, we could go into Saigon. Uh, a lot of the guys went in there, uh, evenings and so forth for other entertainment, I was already married. I didn't want to bring anything home. So,

Dean Wetzel: Um, how did you stay in touch with your friends and family on that note? You talk about having a wife.

George Cochran: Just mail.

Dean Wetzel: Just mail?

George Cochran: Yeah. I think, I don't, I think on our anniversary, July 13th, I think I called home. I was able to call home, if I remember right. Okay. But I think that was the only, because it was very expensive. Yeah. to call home. Mm-Hmm, . And we didn't have any money. Well, I went in, I went in as an E one at \$96 a month. I got the E two \$113 a month. I got the E three at 125 or six or something. And E four I got, I got, I was \$140 for two months, or three less than three months, and was home. So, there wasn't a lot of money.

Dean Wetzel: So, was mail reliable though?

George Cochran: Yeah.

Dean Wetzel: Every day?

George Cochran: Yeah. Six, seven days. Yep. Well, they were flying the, they were flying the mail back and forth, so. Yeah. Yeah. She'd put it in and address

it to an address and, and, uh, it would come through the mail. But yeah, once, probably, probably two letters a week.

Dean Wetzel: At least it was something, you know, it helped with the morale, I'm sure. You know, to be able to hear and stuff like that, what's going on and talk to them. Um, now looking at those again, we're not going to talk, we'll talk about those other, those other ten days here in just a moment. But that first five months, do you recall anything humorous or unusual at all? Happening?

George Cochran: No, no, um, it was, the routine was every afternoon at two o'clock, monsoons came in, and it rained for an hour, poured for an hour. We lived in hootches, okay, wood, raw wood floors, and raw wood frame, and there was a, uh, uh, lap board siding up. Uh, just, just about the same height or just maybe a little bit higher than about, than uh, uh, uh, the, the beds that we used, the folding beds. And then from there on the screen up to the eaves and then the top was a corrugated, uh, fiber roofing, rattled, hard. And then we had a wardrobe. Each of us had a wardrobe. There was eight of us to, to a hooch. So, once it quit raining, you stayed on the boards, because otherwise you're going to be ankle deep in the mud. Until, it would rain, eh, maybe 45 minutes. And by four o'clock it was, you could walk on it again. The sun baked it again. That was, that was, and, and that was, that was, uh, the, the thing that, that, uh, was probably the most, most, uh, annoying or difficult part of that whole thing of just to watch the rats. We were, we were, our hootch was, was right next to the fence on the outside. And then there were some buildings that looked like, what

you see is the road commission builds these shelters, that they put the gravel in and so forth, they're kind of open. And there was three sections, there was one right there with three sections, and the Vietnamese people lived in those, because they were over, they didn't have houses to live in, they lived in, there was usually two or three families in each of those three sections. But we would watch the rats and the rats were bigger than cats. I mean, they were, they looked like they had, uh, a beaver or something like that. They were huge. [01:00:00] Anyway, and, and of course sanitation was, 0, nothing, outside the fence. We had, we had restrooms, but they were, they, they were cleaned out every once in a while, the honey, honey wagons. Um, But, you know, you walked on the boards, uh, on paths made of wood around the whole thing. But it was always hot and always wet and it was just not, for me, not a comfortable situation because I don't do the heat real well.

Dean Wetzel: Alright, so for five months you battled the elements. But the last

George Cochran: Yeah, yeah. That was my most annoying thing. Yeah. Was the element?

Dean Wetzel: For summarizing purposes. Yeah. Um, so then what happened the last ten days?

George Cochran: Well, one day we're in camp, and all of a sudden there's an alarm sounded to fall in. So, we all go down to the central parade area, or whatever you want to call it. Common area. And fell in by, by the, uh. patrols or whatever, squads. And, um, they said, they announced that uh, we're going to go

up by Bien Hoa to a rifle range and you're going to learn to use the F-14.

Because they were just issuing them. Brand new. Yeah. And, uh, we said fine.

And they said, well, go to the more we were storing the weapons there, metal container, things, and get your weapon and it couldn't fall back in. So, we did.

And when I got there and when about a third of our company got there, um, we were issued the M1 carbine. Most of the rest of them were all issued the M14.

And it's just what they had when we landed. The supply for a weapon, because you had to have a weapon. When we landed, all they had in stock was the M1

carbine. Anyway, we all fell back in. And we had a second lieutenant. That

thought he was awfully special. Anyway, And, and he walks around, and he

looks at us and he says, what are you doing with that weapon, that rifle? I said,

this is what was issued to me when I got here. And he said, well, we're going to

learn to do the M14. Go put that away. And about a third of the company, over

30 people put their rifles back. And nobody, the Company Commander and the

Sergeants and such didn't catch it. They didn't see what was going on because

they were in a hurry because the CID had told them get the hell out of town

because we're about to have a coup. We didn't know that, but somebody would

do it in that company or they wouldn't have done what they were doing. So,

anyway, we're loading the trucks. Deuce and a half, and start out of town, north

out of Saigon, on 1, towards Bien Hoa, and we get 10, 15 miles out of town, and

all of a sudden, here's this convoy of army, Vietnamese army, coming at us, and

we're looking at that a little shaky. We knew we were wrong. The third of us that

didn't have weapons because they took us out beyond the third ring and you were not allowed to leave to go out of that circle without a weapon. In fact, you were supposed to have a weapon before you got to that. So, we knew, we knew, we knew there was a problem or something was wrong. Anyway, and all of a sudden here comes the ARVN uh, Army. And we weren't sure who they were, because nobody, at that time you didn't know who was who for sure and who was on whose side or, because commitments hadn't been made yet. All right? And anyway, and then there I'll wave it, and so we're waving back, we want to be friendly. And that convoy was, I don't know, three or four miles long. And we went up, and then the, the rifle range was in, would have been to the west, to the east of the road, or northeast. And so, we turned off and went back at, all back into where the rifle range was, and we Had a little discussion about the fact that we didn't have weapons. But nobody made a fuss about it, at the time. And, we all, those that didn't have a weapon lined up behind the guys that did have. So that we were learning how to use this thing. Cause they had, they'd been issued it, but they'd never had a chance to practice with it. Or do anything with it. So, the guy that had been issued one, was on the line first. And we were going to learn after they got through, after they had their turn. And before we ever got to it, all of a sudden a helicopter lands, and I don't, I think he was a colonel, got out of the helicopter and talked to our captain, or our commander, and They had a little talk and then finally they said, we've got to leave. So we all loaded back up in the trucks, sealed everything up, and left and headed back towards the

highway. But they, during the discussion, apparently, they had said we're going to just send you on up to Bien Hoa. Because we had a, we had a, uh, uh, campment, inside of the large Arvon, uh, camp up there. And, so, anyway, we're on our way out to the highway, and before we got there, in a ways, we ran, there's a, we're driving down the road, and I happened to be in a truck that was pretty close to the front, and I could see out the front, and, Here's this jeep, sitting in the middle of the road and there's a there's a a thirty caliber machine gun sitting in the jeep, mounted. And, and Arvon troops on the ground. Well, the leaders went up and the sergeants or whoever was in charge went up and talked to them and they said, no, you got to you can't go out and so, they sent us in. We were right by a little village or something. They sent us in and they put the trucks in a circle. We all got out and, uh, we're sitting around just talking and waiting for something to happen.

Meanwhile, they're on the radio, back and forth, Somebody, you gotta let us out or what are we gonna do? What's gonna happen? And we're all sitting there. All of a sudden, a slug. You could hear it just whistle right over top, way up and over top of us. And we all looked at each other and it was just one. Then it happened again, but we didn't know for sure what was, what was up. But pretty soon they came back, and they came down and said, Okay, we're going to Bien Hoa, load back up in the trucks. And they let us out, put us on the highway, we went the rest of the way up and into, into the, uh, camp. And, um, they had, uh, good buildings and everything else and stuff there. That they'd taken over from

the French, I'm sure. I don't know where, who had built the buildings, but it wasn't America because we hadn't been there that long. And we fell out, and here's a third of us without a weapon. And this colonel come walking down through there, and he's looking at us, and he challenged us, why don't you have it, and we explained to him, and he said, who did it? We pointed out their lieutenant. And he just walked over to the lieutenant and calmly said, come with me. And there was a brick building, headquarters building, not too far from where we were in formation. **[01:10:00]** And they went in, all of a sudden there was noise out of that basement. And he was shouting, that colonel. Just tearing that lieutenant up. And I, we said the building looked like it was shaken. It wasn't, but you could hear the noise. You didn't hear exactly what he had to say, but you could hear the noise out of the basement. He took him out there. He took him down there and we didn't witness it, but we knew what was going on. Well, they had bell, bell or barracks there, barracks there. And We, uh, all said we're spending the night here and we'll see what we're going to do with you tomorrow. So, we all got in, got to the barracks and found a bed and so forth. And we're talking and, you know, we don't have weapons. We don't know if somebody's going to attack us from within the Arvan or anybody. What the hell's going on? And they put out guards. And I said, I know if something starts, I'm going to find myself a guy that's got a weapon, and I'm going to stay right behind him, and if something happens, I'm going to have a weapon myself. If something happens to him. I said, that's a little cold, but, you know, we're going

to do survival here. And as it turned out, we weren't attacked, nothing happened, and so forth, and the next morning all of a sudden, they came through after breakfast and said, um, uh, load up, and they took us out to a little airfield right there and put us on helicopters that flew us back to Tungsten, back to Saigon, back to the airport. And we, by that time, they, uh, the coup had completed, they killed Diem and Nhu (South Vietnam President Ngo Dinh Diem and his brother Ngo Dinh Nhu), and the generals had taken over with CID help, CDI, oh yeah, CID help. We, we knew who, who did it, you know. That was the first of, I think, three, at least three coups that happened during that. Especially the early years of, of the war. But, uh, anyway, I got, lucky and I got the end seat, or outside seat in a helicopter so that I had a strap on and from right here, right here, out there was nothing. All air. And I could see down into the patties. And we were concerned a little bit, what if there's some Viet Cong out there with a rifle? Right? We weren't high enough for what they couldn't shoot at us with a rifle. We were a little worried about that, but turned out there wasn't anything. But there were people in the rice paddies when we flew over. We could see them.

Dean Wetzel: Um, now as you, as we approach the end of your service here in your time in Vietnam, um, coming back to the States, and adjusting back to civilian life, did you ever meet resistance? Was there protest at this time?

George Cochran: No, not, not, not even a little bit. Not nothing. I came back, blended in, um, we landed again, uh, at Travis on the 11th and got home on the

12th. And, um, within a couple of days, I had a job. Uh, for a Christmas job with Montgomery Wars and Hillsdale selling shoes again, uh, working there and, uh, uh, at least for a holiday, and then figure out what I was gonna do after that. So I went, just went back to work. And, and then on the 22nd of November, uh, I'm standing in the middle of that store, and they announced that Kennedy had been shot. It was, uh, emotional, because I, I, you know, but it was emotional for everybody.

Dean Wetzel: The unknown. The uncertainty. Right?

George Cochran: Just, just out. A little more so, maybe.

Dean Wetzel: Well, yeah, I mean, at that point, I'm sure in your mind, immediately when he was shot and killed, is this going to recall me? Is this going to make me have to go back? Am I going to have to go back to Vietnam?

George Cochran: I don't. At the time, I don't think we had, I don't think we had that, I don't think we had that, uh, that feeling. Later, um, my son was born in September, uh, that, of 63. And, uh, excuse me, 64. And, um, there were a couple of times, especially when, when, uh, Johnson was doing the buildup and stuff. Because I had a, I was a 214, field experience, and um, uh, instructor. So, my MOS was verifiable and decent, you know. And I wasn't sure that they weren't going to come back and get me again. When the real build up came. But I was not. Where I was living in Owasso, there was no place for a cryptographer anywhere within fifty miles of me. So I wasn't, I never got assigned to a, uh, uh, reserve unit or anything. I, uh, they, my, I think they said, anyway, that, that I

was placed in a, in an on call or some, some, I remembered exactly how they worded it. Um, but based in, in St. Louis, Missouri, that's the central. And, but I never, I never had to, never had to go, but I, I, there were a couple of times during buildups that, that we got a little nervous.

Dean Wetzel: Sure. Um, looking back at your service as a whole, do you think it changed you? And if so, how do you think it changed you?

George Cochran: Yeah, it changed me a little. Uh, I was proud to have served. I am proud to have served. Um, and, but I knew I would be. I graduated from high school at, that I was only 17. So, I was young anyway. Um, and I was, so I was too young for Korea. So, If I had graduated from high school while Korea was still going, I would have enlisted at that time. Regardless of whether Korea was good or not, I think Korea was better than it turned out. Some of the other ones that we got messed up with. Um, but no, I just, I was proud to have served. And, and it, it, I think it gave me a, a feeling of, confidence in our country. And, and, and, and as, as sometimes screwed up as the military is, they're still a hell of an organization. And it's my, my opinion of, a lot of the stuff that's going on, over the last 20 years or so, uh, that if we still had to draft a lot of the crap that we've seen, uh, drugs and a lot of that other stuff wouldn't have happened. Because the military would have, would have made men out of some of these guys that, they think they're men, but they're not.

Dean Wetzel: Yeah, it's, uh, we might both agree that, you know, the military is not always the best with their military able judgments, but it does, it does instill Order, discipline. Yeah. You know what I mean?

George Cochran: Yeah.

Dean Wetzel: That, that you don't get anywhere else in that. No, right. You gotta go somewhere like that.

[01:20:00] **George Cochran**: That's, that's, and that's exactly, that's, that's the part that you get from serving that you get nowhere else. And, and, and you can talk about playing football. We never played football cause they didn't have it in high school. I played baseball and I was lousy at basketball. I boxed their golden gloves instead of playing basketball, um, for one year. And then my senior year, I went to, went to go back out. And my, the, the coach who was the principal of the school at the time. Said, George, you're a senior, if you insist, I'll have to put you on the bench, which you know you're not going to play, and you're going to be sitting in place of somebody that really, a sophomore, that really should be out there. Would you be the manager? And keep score for us when we're in away games? Yeah, I said yeah, I'll do that. Not a problem. So, and I think that I, so I had that in high school, but I think also that, that, that got reinforced some when I was in the service. The cooperation with people working with, and, taking on duty or not duty and that stuff. That I've always worked hard. I keep saying I run so fast that time can't keep up with me. It's catching up with me. I'm 85, so. And I know it's catching up with me. But

there's a hell of a lot of people that never got where I'm at. Uh, whether, especially to get to my age and then the health and the condition I'm in. And I ache every day. So.

Dean Wetzel: Well, thank you for that. Um, are you yourself a part of any veteran organizations or have you ever done any reunions with the guys that you served?

George Cochran: I've never done any reunions with anybody in my lifetime. Uh, when, when, when we were working and stuff, I, um, my wife, unbeknownst to me, paid for my lifetime membership in the, in the, American Legion, which were posted out here at the VFW. I was in a, for a long time when she started, I was out of the state. And this under the state Legion, and then I transferred to this post over here. And then a different story.

Dean Wetzel: Well, do you like the veteran organizations that we have today? Would you recommend them to the guys coming out of the service and girls coming out of the service today?

George Cochran: Coming out? Yes. Um, I've worked with Boy Scouts for 10 years. I was, worked with, uh, Little League coached and, and, and managed and, and ran Westwood Little League for a year as president. My wife's been involved with it. Uh, spent a lot of time with that. Um, I've done a lot of, uh, of, uh, civic stuff, uh, United Way, um, Substance Use, uh, Group. I ran the, uh, or I was the, uh, head or whatever you want to call it, of the, uh, Southwest Michigan Substance Abuse Their Substance Use Advisory Council for 10 years.

Um, and that was after 20 years before that. So, um, or so. Um, involved, well for 10 years involved for it. Because I started in 91 and stayed with it until, until 2016. But, um, I just, I'm not, I don't find myself, uh, needing to be involved in, in, in those, in the organizations like that. Okay. I just don't.

Dean Wetzel: Yep, that's fair. Um, well, George, as we get ready to conclude your oral history in here, um, is there anything that we haven't talked about that you might want to include in your oral history? I know we've covered quite a bit in the last little bit.

George Cochran: Well, there's a lot of stuff that don't necessarily pertain to military at all. But, uh, um, as I said, I'm proud of the fact that I was able to serve and, contribute. And I, and, and, and I'm proud of that. realistic enough to know that, that some of the stuff that I got involved with, that some of the stuff we do this for is not necessarily the way we would like to have had it presented to us was not okay. Or, or it was presented in a way that we find over time, um, was uh, Not accurate. Um, Vietnam was a good one. Uh, part of that. And of course, uh, the Iraq was even worse. As far as I'm concerned. Um, The messes that we have now are, are, are just a mess.

Dean Wetzel: Yeah.

George Cochran: I, I, I'm not, I'm not at all proud of what Benjamin Netanyahu is doing. In the Gaza. I understand what he's doing. I understand that he's, he's, that the, that the Jewish people have lived for thousands of years, oppressed, split out, sent someone, threatened to be annihilated, being

annihilated, and all that stuff. And I understand what Hamas did in October. And why he's mad and why he wants to eliminate him. But I don't like his tactics. I think there's better ways to do it because he's, he's done in my mind, almost a genocide of the Palestinian people, not Hamas, the Palestinian people.

Dean Wetzel: Once you, once you get trained up and you go to war and you go and join the army, you, you, you. I want to say you're a little bit more hesitant to want to go to war, right? Like, I want to say, like, even myself, I would want to keep away from war as much as possible nowadays. It's just not a good situation. No good can really come from modern total war that we have today.

George Cochran: I understand that. And the other day I heard somebody talking about their dad that had been in service. And he'd been in Vietnam, but he'd been there in the outgoing time, after I was there.

Dean Wetzel: During Tet, probably.

George Cochran: Um, I, well, it's got 12 years of it, and sometimes it's all hell. I didn't even get into that, and I haven't hunted since I come home. I haven't hunted since I come home, because that weapon that I picked up, and my shotgun was never made to shoot men, shoot a person, human being. And I own it, and I still own, no, I gave it to my grandson. I have my dad's, which he bought in 1927, in the basement right now, and along with some other weapons. I owned, at one time, I owned nine weapons, so now I've got five. They're, they're still mine. But I haven't hunted. I haven't had a desire to kill. Uh, okay. There's been a few instances that, that, I've thought about it, but they had to do

with my children. Well, it had to do with some bad people with my children.

That's what I say.

Dean Wetzel: And that's understandable. Um, well, last question and then we'll wrap it up here. Um, what would you like people to know or remember from your story the most? If you could summarize your whole thing in like 10 or 15 words or 20 words, your story, what would that be?

George Cochran: That this country is a good country. The United States, it's like they said a long time ago, you got a republic if you can keep it. And we need to keep it. Because it's the best way, with all the flaws that it has, it's the best way to live for a society. And be proud of it, and, assume your responsibility for it. We've got too many people that just won't assume their own, the responsibility for, for living the world properly. And, I'll quit. It was good. I had a lot of other things I could say, but they were all personal.

Dean Wetzel: Well, George, I want to thank you for your time today, and thank you for sitting down with me and having this oral history.

George Cochran: Thank you. Thank you for the opportunity.