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## Interview with Ivan Nelson

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Interview  
COL Ivan "The Terrible" Nelson  
Wednesday, 1500 hours, 2 April 1990, by telephone  
741 Daytona Drive  
Palm Bay, Florida 32905  
telephone number = 1-407-724-0201

I'd really prefer not visiting about the Stockade. I was one of the commanding officers, but that's all the farther I want to go on it.

Gene Murdoch was the confinement officer before me until they got me down out of I Corps. Vern D. Johnson was before him. Gene Murdoch would know exactly who all was in there. He's in Columbus, GA. He's retired there. Gene held it together until they got me down from Eye Corps. If a confinement officer was injured during the riot I'm totally unaware of it.

I probably had a couple of incidents after I took over but I got them straightened out very quickly, but I don't like to go into the details of that stuff. That's part of the history I'd like to leave alone but as far as--no, I'm the guy that straightened it out, I know that. Anyway, Big Gene Murdoch would be aware of these other things.

A lot of people thought it was pretty great. I had a function and role to do and I did it just the way they . . . I brought it all to a screaming halt. That was about it. But the background on this thing--two people would really know; and I never got into who did what. When I got there it was a real mess and I didn't go on well they should have did this or somebody should have did that; I just cleaned the sucker up and turned it over and that was it. But, Big Gene Murdoch; and I had a very fine outstanding executive officer. He was black and his name was Josh Williams and Josh Williams knew the whole history of it. He was my deputy and in fact he taught confinement at Fort Gordon afterwards. I don't know where Josh is now but he was a dandy; he was really good.

Well Josh Williams was the one, he taught at Fort Gordon how I did it. He was my; he was an outstanding officer, this black man, a major, later promoted to light colonel but he was a major when he worked for me.

You have me down as leaving in November 1968? You have me replacing who? Mmmmm. Who? Keyes? No. The guy who took over from me had a Polish name. I can't think of his name either, but it was a Polish name. And he had taught, prior to his coming over to Nam, he had taught . . . No. I had come home in May 1969. I wasn't at the Stockade the whole time, though. I was up in Eye Corps. I was the one they sent up to Eye Corps to develop the national police. I was the guy that was running all the raids on the, in the Phoenix Program up there. God, I think I got down there [to LBJ] sometime in November [1968] and I think I left sometime in May [1969].

Currey: I know Keyes tells me he got there sometime in November 1968

and he stayed there until November 1969 as confinement officer.

Well, I'll be danged. Huh. I left there, I got home in May [1969]. I came from Eye Corps to Long Binh. The commanding officer of 18th MP BDE, he was a fine officer, his name started with a "B". He knew me when I was provost marshal at Ft. Gordon. I stopped a big riot down there the second day I got in to take over. And I stopped that one flat in its tracks and, anyway, he never forgot that so, when he was there and had the 18th MP BDe and had this riot going on and they had nothing they could seem to do with it, that's when he went to General Abrams and I was working for Ambassador Komer running this Eye Corps operation and anyway General Abrams sent his aircraft up to get me and bring me down there and get this thing squared away. That was in September. And I left Long Binh the following May. [Aside: what in heck was his name for god's sake, Mother? It starts with a B. Commanded the 18th MP BDE. Oh, for god's sake. (wife's muffled response.)]

Big Gene Murdoch would know all that stuff. So would Josh Williams. There's a guy who took over from me; had a Polish name. He had taught; he was a light colonel and he had taught confinement at Ft. Gordon; he was a confinement instructor there for years. And when I left and Josh Williams left, he--then I went up to Northwest Pacific Corps of Engineers to put in all the Safeguard Sites. They were having problems up there, and Josh Williams took this light colonel's job over as a confinement man at Ft. Gordon to teach the advanced officer corps and the lesson plans he made there at that particular time were based on the Long Binh experience.

You got one guy missing in your chart there and you have me in there at the wrong time. The fellow you have missing is the Polish fellow. It was a fellow with a Polish name.

Who was there during the riot? God, I don't--I know Big Gene Murdoch would know that. I didn't pay any attention to that; I say I just went and got done what had to be done. Yes. Big Gene was there during the riot. Big Gene was in good shape. He hadn't been injured. I just relieved him, you know. He was just holding it together until I got there. He couldn't straighten the thing out either and so that was why I got sent for. Big Gene was a very close friend of mine; he was a fine officer but this just wasn't one of his things. Big Gene Murdoch is in Columbus, GA. He lives there. His address is

Eugene Murdoch  
6257 Starlight Drive  
Columbus, GA 31904

1-404-563-0667.

I'm still trying to think of the name of this BG. He was fine. He was probably one of the best generals the Corps's ever had. An old straight arrow. I think I vaguely remember this fellow Keyes, but you know, there's so many of these people. Good god, you know, I've been retired

going on now 16 years. I had 35 years, that's enough.

I might in the future--because I don't know what the heck to do with them--I might take and send you some of the slides of what happened there. After you get this thing kicked around a bit, I've got some slides that I don't think--Josh Williams showed them once at the school and I think that was about the end of it--but to give you an idea of what was around there. I was going to put them in the ash can about a month ago and I thought, Well, I'll just--I don't know what I'm going to do with them.

You live near Tampa? Good god, that's about as close to the gates of hell as you're goin to get, Chaplain!

--End--