

1-27-1990

Interview with James Hatton

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholars.fhsu.edu/currey_docs

Recommended Citation

"Interview with James Hatton" (1990). *Currey Document Archive*. 11.
https://scholars.fhsu.edu/currey_docs/11

This Document is brought to you for free and open access by the Cecil B. & Laura G. Currey Archive of Military History at FHSU Scholars Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Currey Document Archive by an authorized administrator of FHSU Scholars Repository. For more information, please contact ScholarsRepository@fhsu.edu.

James Hatton
2809 Fremont Avenue, Apartment #301
Minnneapolis, Minnesota 55408

HP = 612-870-1488

or

Patient James Hatton
Veterans Administration Medical Center
North 8th Street
St. Cloud, Minnesota

telephone conversation: 27 January 1990, 4:30 p.m., EST

I was a convict at LBJ. I was in Vietnam from (June 1967--THIS ISN'T RIGHT, WHAT IS THE CORRECT DATE?) to 2 February 1968 and was in LBJ from (WHAT ARE THE RIGHT DATES? MY NOTES ARE CONFUSED). I was assigned as a point man in the 101st Airborne for nearly a year. (WHAT UNIT IN THE 101st?) I became a buddhist while in-country and also had several 'wives.' The guys in the outfit called me 'Buddha.'

I was a good guy in the field, knew what I was doing and did it well. My troubles always came when we were back in base camp where alcohol and whatever got me in trouble. I hated pulling details. When there was time away from field duty, I wanted to go to town, get drunk, get 'married.' So I was AWOL a lot.

My colonel and the First Sergeant wanted to keep me, so they would give me Article 15s rather than court martials. During that year I received two to three special court martials and maybe ten to fifteen Article 15 punishments. In February 1967 I was given the first court martial. We had come in for three days stand-down. They wanted to put me on details. I went into town instead. Then the unit got orders to go back to the field while I was gone. They came into town to get me. I was drunk, wouldn't go back to the field; wanted some downtime. So they court-martialed me.

The 'trial' was cut and dried, in and out. I got six months with loss of 2/3ds of my pay. I got out after 90 days because of good behavior with the rest of my sentence suspended.

GIs in Vietnam were supposed to get an R & R after six months. When my six months was up, I asked for one. Didn't get it until only two weeks left on my tour. So I didn't go to Bangkok but took an in-country R & R

at Phan Rang (south of Cam Ranh Bay about 80 klicks). Decided not to go back to unit. When they picked me up, they caught me with some marijuana on me, so I got another court martial in October 1967 and sent back to LBJ. Didn't get out until February 1968.

They wanted to throw me out of the Army in 1968, but I fought to stay in and served until 19 January 1970 and got an honorable discharge.

I was escorted by a guy from my unit to LBJ, on a C-130 from Chu Lai to Long Binh and in a cyclo from airport to LBJ. No handcuffs.

No physical or anything much in the way of in-processing when I got there. I walked in, they said be a nice boy, and then I was put in the compound.

When I got inside everybody was looking at the new guy from Philly. The cons were real organized and they matched me up with another guy from the South Side in Philly; sort of a buddy system so we could look after each other. We used to sing together.

Blacks pretty well ran it when I was there. One was a black belt from Chicago. But in my time inside there was no real black-white hatred. I saw rebel flags and so forth, but nobody seemed to care. In the 101st, it was 90% black and my 1SGT in the 101st was black. At LBJ maybe the five baddest guys I knew were black. I hung around occasionally with a couple of whites.

I was never in a conex. I don't think there were any conexas when I was there, nor any canvas between the fences. There was only a chain link fence and guard towers. We lived in tents set up on wooden bases.

Inside I smoked as many reefers--or more--as I had on the outside. Marijuana was always available.

Every day we were picked to go to work on one of two usual details. We burned the shit from the 90th and 94th Evac Hospitals and fixed sandbags to repair the hooches for two or three MP battalions. I would talk to the Vietnamese working around and ask for "Khan Sa" (spelling for marijuana). They'd give me all I could smuggle back. I'd put it in my shoe or hold it in my mouth.

A Major _____ Jackson ran the stockade. Because I had been sentenced for marijuana use and was a good guy, he didn't believe I would ever try to do any smuggling. Every day, coming back from detail, 8 or so men would be picked out to be given a strip search--but never me.

I had only one fight. We were supposed to lay our tablets out on our beds while we were outside our tents. One day someone stole mine. It was a guy without money w