

U.S. Coast Guard Oral History Program



Interview With: Larry Villareal, USCG

Interview Conducted By: Commander Peter Rascoe, USCGR

Date of Interview: 22 January 2010

Place of Interview: By Telephone

INTERVIEWER: I wanted to just go ahead and start out again with your full name and date of birth and address, if we could.

MR. VILLAREAL: Okay.

INTERVIEWER: My name is Commander Peter Rascoe, I'm with the United States Coast Guard Historian's Office, and today is Friday, January 22nd, 2010. And we're talking today with Coast Guard veteran Larry Villareal.

And, Larry, I am going to get you to do the pronunciation of your name, if you don't mind, and your full name. . .and year of birth.

MR. VILLAREAL: Larry B. Villareal. You did a good job there.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

MR. VILLAREAL: . . .and [19]46.

INTERVIEWER: Great. And, Mrs. Villareal, are you on the line?

MR. VILLAREAL: She is not up yet.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, okay. Okay, no problem. Larry, I wanted to go back to California, and if you could just describe where you grew up, your hometown and your high school, and your high school education.

MR. VILLAREAL: Well, I was born in Los Angeles proper and moved to Lake Elsinore, California, when I was about seven, I guess, and lived there until I joined the Coast Guard in 1965.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

MR. VILLAREAL: Went through school there, got my GED in the Coast Guard.

INTERVIEWER: And I believe you had some thoughts about why you -- or how you came about to joining the service and then how you came about to picking the Coast Guard.

MR. VILLAREAL: I wasn't a bad boy, but when I hit the age to become a driver and get a car, that became pretty well primary, and, of course, the car I got needed a lot of work. And so I got some of my mechanical training, I guess, on-the-job training.

Anyway, back at that time, you know, drag strip, drag strip racing was big and we went to the drags a lot, and the car I had was pretty quick. And I did a big burnout in front of the judge's house, and he saw me, of course, and called me in his office the next day and suggested that I go into one of the services. And if I didn't, he probably would call me into court and make an example of me, I guess.

So I thought about it and selected the Coast Guard, mainly because it was a small service, and thought maybe they could straighten me out a little bit and train me for something. So that's how I am acquainted with the Coast Guard.

INTERVIEWER: I believe you enlisted in 1965; is that correct?

MR. VILLAREAL: Yes, 1965.

INTERVIEWER: And can you recall, Larry, where [you] actually got inducted?

MR. VILLAREAL: The closest Coast Guard station to where we were was West Long Beach. So that's where I went first off and then from there to Alameda, up by San Francisco, for basic training.

INTERVIEWER: And do you have any specific thoughts or memories about basic training, boot camp that you would like to share with us?

MR. VILLAREAL: Oh, the biggest thing I remember is probably the grandeur where they would march you up every day and do a big workout, and that got me in physical condition, anyway.

And, well, way back then, you know, they would stand, you know, on your face and poke you in the chest and kind of set you where you belonged, I guess. I don't know. That's about all I remember on that.

INTERVIEWER: I believe you said that you had a challenge to lose some weight during boot camp. Do you recall that?

MR. VILLAREAL: Well, it wasn't a challenge. It was a suggestion. It was a "we're going to make something out of you." They did. They got me right in shape. But it wasn't a request more than a "you're going to do this."

INTERVIEWER: And after boot camp, I believe you went to A School; is that correct?

MR. VILLAREAL: After boot camp, I went to Engineman School in Groton, Connecticut.

INTERVIEWER: And do recall how long that was?

MR. VILLAREAL: No, I think it was -- 13 weeks sticks in my mind -- no, let's see. I don't know if it was that long or not. I don't remember.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

MR. VILLAREAL: Actually, I went there. We came back, and we got stuck in a snow storm or it was snowing, so it must have been in the winter sometime. It could have been three months or something like that.

INTERVIEWER: After school in Groton, I believe you had your first assignment.

MR. VILLAREAL: I came back to a buoy tender, first stationed in Peoria, Illinois, on the Mississippi River. And then our port moved down to -- you know, I think they moved down to Cairo, and that's where we most of our time. I was there for, probably, let's see, until I left for Vietnam. So that was probably the next summer, about a year and a half.

INTERVIEWER: So you spent about a year and a half, and I believe it was on the Coast Guard Cutter *Sumac*?

MR. VILLAREAL: On Coast Guard Cutter *Sumac*.

INTERVIEWER: Can you describe what your duties were on the *Sumac*?

MR. VILLAREAL: Well, at that time, I was a fireman, an E-3, and my duty was to do whatever the E-1 said or the first class engineman -- a lot of cleaning out the bilges and, you know, just the grunt work of that job, and that's where I made E-4, on that boat.

INTERVIEWER: Did you actually berth on the *Sumac*, or did you have off-base --

MR. VILLAREAL: Oh, no. We worked on the *Sumac*. I don't remember the length of it but pretty good sized crew quarters. There must have been a dozen of us back there, mostly deckhands because our job was sounding the river through the channel and setting buoys and taking care of each navigational aid. So there were quite a few above grade -- above deck grades on there, just a few of them. I think there was a damage control man and two or three fireman, and a second class, first class, and a chief engineman.

INTERVIEWER: Larry, do you recall anything about the area of responsibility for the *Sumac*, the geographic area that you all tended to?

MR. VILLAREAL: I believe, what I remember is our tour was from Hickman, Kentucky, to Tiptonville, Tennessee. And I can't tell you the -- I can't tell you the length of that run.

INTERVIEWER: I believe it was during this time that you met your wife; is that right?

MR. VILLAREAL: Yes. Met her May the 13th of '66, while on while on off-duty over the weekend in Paducah, Kentucky. And she was from Metropolis, Illinois, which was just across the river.

INTERVIEWER: So I believe you all courted all that particular calendar year and part of the next before you --

MR. VILLAREAL: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Just for the record, can I go ahead and get your wife's name, please, Larry?

MR. VILLAREAL: It's Caroline S. Villareal.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. I was very interested, Larry, in your recollection of volunteering at this point, sometime during that year when a notice came out for volunteers for Vietnam. Do you recall that?

MR. VILLAREAL: Yes, I believe that came about while I was in school in Connecticut, and they came through and told us all about this insurgency and police action and all that business. And we thought, well, you know, there were several people from the school that had signed up for that. I had basically, really forgotten about it until I got the news, I guess about a month or so -- October, yeah -- two months before I shipped out.

INTERVIEWER: So this was October 1967?

MR. VILLAREAL: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: So that was a good year later that you actually got notified?

MR. VILLAREAL: Oh, yeah. Yeah, a good year. Like I said, I really forgot I volunteered for that, but, oh, well, you know.

INTERVIEWER: And it was about this time that you actually got married to Caroline; is that right?

MR. VILLAREAL: Yeah, we were married in December in that year. I don't know, I guess we -- we knew about where I was going, but we just decided to go ahead and get married. I think we married on December 17th of that year, and I left January 23rd, I think, of the next year for Vietnam.

INTERVIEWER: And that was after your training in California?

MR. VILLAREAL: Well, I went to training in California.

INTERVIEWER: Let me back up one second. We had chatted before about when you actually volunteered. I had asked you a question about can you

recall anything about how you felt about the Service and the insurgency and actually why you volunteered, if you can recall that?

MR. VILLAREAL: Well, at that time, I guess, what they called it, it was the fight against Communism and their trying to take over the Southeast portion of that world, and it seemed like the right thing to do, having no idea what it would lead to, but --

INTERVIEWER: I believe after you got married, you actually went to training in early 1968 at Coronado or Warm Springs; is that right?

MR. VILLAREAL: Yes, uh-huh, went to training there. We went through a mock prison camp and training in if we happen to be stranded, how to survive in a jungle situation, how to try to avoid capture, which thankfully we didn't have to worry about that. We didn't do that. And then survival on the coast, what things were edible and how to subsist there if we were --

INTERVIEWER: Larry, did you get any language training at that time, do you recall?

MR. VILLAREAL: No. No language training that I'm aware of. Having to learn when we got there. Of course, we had a liaison on the 82 [foot cutter] that spoke English. So we really didn't have to learn the language.

INTERVIEWER: How about weapons training?

MR. VILLAREAL: No weapons training formally that I recall until after I got into Vietnam and onto a boat.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

MR. VILLAREAL: And that was on-the-job training.

INTERVIEWER: Do you recall how long that training lasted in California prior to going to Vietnam?

MR. VILLAREAL: No, but it was just a few weeks.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

MR. VILLAREAL: Yeah, it was just few weeks. It wasn't really too intense.

INTERVIEWER: I believe in our previous discussions -- you and Caroline and myself -- you had said that you departed on February 21st, 1968, from Northern California.

MR. VILLAREAL: For Vietnam?

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

MR. VILLAREAL: Yeah, I believe that's right. We left from Travis Air Force Base, I think, and flew on a chartered jet through the -- stopped in, I think, the Philippines for some reason and then on Saigon. And that was just a few days after that major Tet Offensive of 1968.

INTERVIEWER: So when you landed in Saigon, Tet had just happened?

MR. VILLAREAL: Yeah. They had just mortared it the day before, I believe, a day or two before, and they were still on guard and trying to clean up after that.

INTERVIEWER: Larry, do you remember if you realized that it was a major offensive when you landed?

MR. VILLAREAL: No. Other than a big presence of military on the air field, didn't really realize a lot of what was going on. You know, that area wasn't too much involved in the war since it was way down south. It wasn't until after I really got onto a boat permanently that we knew what we were doing.

INTERVIEWER: Again, when you landed at Saigon, can you recall that day, that specific day, or what the weather was like when you departed the plane?

MR. VILLAREAL: I recall the day very much. It was a monsoon season, but it was hot. I remember that. And if I remember rightly, after I had gone to the coast, I rode down to -- I think they shipped me to Vung Tau, and I rode down to An Thoi where I first was stationed, way down south, in an 82. And we were engulfed by a monsoon and it was a horrible ride. I mean, the boat was just rocking side to side. Practically, you could dip your elbow in the sea from the bridge. It was a horrible ride, and I got really sick. I do remember that.

INTERVIEWER: That brings up another question. Prior to that, had you ever had any experience on an 82-foot?

MR. VILLAREAL: No. I had never even seen one before.

INTERVIEWER: Is it safe to say that was the first ride?

MR. VILLAREAL: First ride, the first ride.

INTERVIEWER: So you --

MR. VILLAREAL: It was a --

INTERVIEWER: Go ahead.

MR. VILLAREAL: It was the one I remember.

INTERVIEWER: You actually went to An Thoi in the southern tip of the country before you went to Vung Tau; is that right?

MR. VILLAREAL: As a duty station, yes. Saigon was on that river. If memory serves me, going into Vung Tau and up the river, it was ultimately to get to Saigon, I think. I don't remember. But that's where I left for An Thoi was from that Coast Guard station there.

INTERVIEWER: And what was your first job there?

MR. VILLAREAL: First job was on board a repair ship anchored just off An Thoi. We lived on base and worked there repairing, repairing mechanical systems for the 82s, engines and generators, pumps, hydraulics, and I don't really remember how long I worked on that repair ship.

They didn't have a place for me on a boat when I first arrived on an 82, so that's why I spent a little time there, maybe a month. And then I was put aboard the *Point Mast* for a short time to fill in for somebody that was leaving; and after the *Mast*, on the *Point Banks* for permanent duty station.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Can we go back to the repair ship a minute? Was that designated an APL?

MR. VILLAREAL: APL, mm-hmm.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. I think you said you spent about 30 days on the *Point Mast*.

MR. VILLAREAL: Yeah, possibly.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

MR. VILLAREAL: It wasn't a big -- wasn't much to remember there, although that's where I first learned what the Coast Guard was really doing there, of course, because we went on patrols regularly and same duty as the *Banks* turned out to be.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Do you recall the names of your COs [commanding officer] on the 82s that you were on?

MR. VILLAREAL: I recall the names, but I don't recall the order in which -- the order of them. One was a Lieutenant White --

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.

MR. VILLAREAL: -- as a CO and then a Lieutenant Underwood, and as a XO on the *Banks* was a G.J. Fewkes [ph].

INTERVIEWER: Okay. I believe you said -- you had told me in our previous discussion that the first CO was a Lieutenant White, and then your new CO was Lieutenant -- I mean, excuse me -- was Jerry Underwood.

MR. VILLAREAL: Yeah, yeah. I believe that's right. I don't remember the CO on the *Mast*. I'm trying to think, but I just don't recall.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. And was it about this time that you moved to Vung Tau? That was Vung Tau. I'm sorry. You moved to Cat Lo after that, I believe; is that right?

MR. VILLAREAL: Yeah, yeah. The *Banks* was moved to Vung Tau, if I remember rightly, and Cat Lo rings a bell. You know, I thought about that after we talked, and I don't know. Really, my memory is just really bad, but I believe we did move to Cat Lo.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

MR. VILLAREAL: But after I started thinking about it, I'm not sure. Anyway, most of our time was spent in Vung Tau.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. And I believe you had described life on the 82, living on the 82, Larry. You all actually lived on board the vessel; is that right?

MR. VILLAREAL: We lived on board. The crew from the first class on down lived in the forward section. I believe there were six of us up there. And the cook and the liaison lived in the room off the mess deck where two were, and then the chiefs above that alongside the CO and the XO, just under the bridge.

INTERVIEWER: Was there a cook?

MR. VILLAREAL: There was a cook, a big Polish fellow that I think really liked to cook because he was at it all the time, and we had pretty good chow, except for the milk. [Laughter.]

INTERVIEWER: Was it powdered milk?

MR. VILLAREAL: It was reconstituted.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

MR. VILLAREAL: We drank a lot of Kool-Aid, too, because the water was barely good enough to bathe in.

INTERVIEWER: What were the chiefs like on your vessel?

MR. VILLAREAL: Oh, the chiefs were excellent. They were good guys, chief boatswain's mate and the chief engineman. I don't know if they did a lot. Most of that was up to me and a couple of firemen, but they were good guys.

INTERVIEWER: Do you recall specifically where you bunked on the *Point Banks*?

MR. VILLAREAL: Specifically, I think I had a lower bunk up front in the starboard side.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

MR. VILLAREAL: About as close as I can get.

INTERVIEWER: I wanted to talk about the mission of the 82s at this point. What was you all's typical mission, you know, the duty of an 82-footer at that time, if you could --

MR. VILLAREAL: At that time, the duty was to patrol the coast, and I believe we had a limit of a mile out, but I don't think we ever got that far. And our purpose was to stop infiltration of soldiers and enemy supplies by way of sea. My job was to stop every vessel that we came across for inspection and to see if they were carrying contraband or people without proper ID.

INTERVIEWER: And I believe you had described restricted zones or restricted areas as well.

MR. VILLAREAL: Yeah. There were certain restricted areas that I presume the Vietnamese knew about, because we didn't find people in there very often, but periodically we did, which we would chase down. And if we couldn't get close enough, we'd get in a small boat and chase them down in the 14-footer and board them at that point, and if they took flight, why, we would take them under fire.

INTERVIEWER: And can you recall about how often that would occur? Would that be once a mission or every day or daily occurrence?

MR. VILLAREAL: Well, probably like -- probably a couple of times a week.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.

MR. VILLAREAL: Mostly at night because we'd spot them on radar.

INTERVIEWER: Now, going back to the small boat, you said the 14-footer. That was the Boston Whaler, fiberglass hull, outboard engine, right?

MR. VILLAREAL: Boston Whaler with a 35-horsepower Mercury. Well, it was a ski boat.

INTERVIEWER: Did it fall within your area of responsibility to make sure that the engine was maintained on the small boat?

MR. VILLAREAL: Yes. Oh, yeah. That was an engineer's responsibility, right.

INTERVIEWER: How long would you stay underway, typically, Larry, on a mission?

MR. VILLAREAL: It seemed like we were out a week, and the only reason we didn't stay longer, I think, is because we just couldn't carry that much water. And fuel would be pretty low when we got back, but water was the big reason, because our tanks weren't that large on the 82 to supply all those people for that long.

INTERVIEWER: When you came back in, would you refuel and take on water and go right back out?

MR. VILLAREAL: We would probably come in one day and refuel and get whatever supplies we'd need and go right back out the next day or the second day, but we didn't stay in port for a great length of time.

INTERVIEWER: You mentioned a while back about the [South Vietnamese] Liaison [Officer] on board. Can you talk a little bit about him again, what his job was and --

MR. VILLAREAL: Well, he was a member of the Vietnamese army, and his duty was to, basically, oversee the inspection of the junks that we came across and give them direction on what to do and what we were going to do. Of course, he would look at all the paper because, obviously, he could read the language also. So that was his big job.

INTERVIEWER: Do you ever recall noticing him in action when he was talking to Vietnamese on the junks, in the small vessels?

MR. VILLAREAL: Oh, he was very forceful. He wasn't a very big guy, but he was forceful. He'd give them the devil if they didn't snap to right away or they didn't show him what he wanted to see. He would get right with the program.

INTERVIEWER: I was curious about something that we had talked about before. You had mentioned telling the difference between typical Vietnamese civilians and actual sympathizers. Do you recall how you could tell the difference or what that was all about?

MR. VILLAREAL: No. No, I don't recall that.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

MR. VILLAREAL: It's very hard to tell one from the other in my memory.

INTERVIEWER: Right.

MR. VILLAREAL: Very difficult.

INTERVIEWER: Wanted to touch base a little bit about life at the base itself. Tell me about getting liberty and what you all would do during liberty and that sort of thing.

MR. VILLAREAL: Liberty was when we hit the base, and the only place to go was into a local village of Vung Tau. There were some restaurants and bars and some shops. We didn't do a lot of shopping. [Laughter.]

INTERVIEWER: How about communication with the local population? Could you all communicate with them or they communicate with you?

MR. VILLAREAL: In town, oh, yeah. Yeah. They spoke broken English, but they could get their point across and understand what we wanted.

INTERVIEWER: This was, again, during 1968. Do you recall how aware of things on a national level you all were and how you were actually notified of things that were going around the country?

MR. VILLAREAL: Well, the way we actually found out what was going on was basically the Armed Forces Radio that broadcast news and, of course, music, and word of mouth, over the radio, between boats, because we would -- periodically, we would meet up with another boat from the other division and get

some scuttlebutt at what was going on there and that sort of thing, so, basically, word of mouth and over the radio.

INTERVIEWER: Can you recall anything about what your thoughts were when you heard of something happening, say, in South Vietnam as a whole?

MR. VILLAREAL: Well, as far as what the ground troops were doing, we kind of understood what was going on there in the major scrimmages and just -- I was just glad I wasn't a member of -- a member of those forces because we actually had pretty good duty.

INTERVIEWER: Did any of your crew members ever engage in any fishing?

MR. VILLAREAL: Crew members fished. I didn't do any fishing. I was a city boy, basically, to them. But, yeah, they did some fishing. The liaison did a lot of fishing. Of course, one of his staples was fish and the fish sauce that they used on everything, which was really nasty.

In fact, one day we had some pretty rough seas, and the liaison left his bottle [of] nuoc mam sauce on the mess deck table, and it rolled off of there and broke on the floor, and that stuff went all over the floor, and it was weeks, weeks before we got the smell out of there. You couldn't even go down there. We couldn't eat down there. That stuff is really nasty.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, gosh. Wanted to ask you about your typical watches on the 82, what you did during watch time.

MR. VILLAREAL: Well, my watch was, of course, the engine room. We didn't stay down there. It was pretty noisy, but we went down hourly and checked the gauges and just to make sure everything was ship-shape, so to speak.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.

MR. VILLAREAL: And then, you know, we could spend time on the bridge usually. At night, there would be maybe a boatswain mate and one of the chiefs and an engineer. And most of the time, we spent most of the time on the bridge or wherever we really wanted to be. I spent a lot of the time on fantail, just listening to the engines and looking at the wake of the boat.

INTERVIEWER: Right. I believe the 82 also had contact with larger Coast Guard vessels off shore; is that right?

MR. VILLAREAL: Yes. Yeah. The larger ships, of course, they had the duty from where our patrol area stopped on out as far as -- as far as forever, I guess.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.

MR. VILLAREAL: And we would rendezvous with them and sometimes take on some water, supplies, and we could get aboard and shop at their small stores. I don't know. We would come across them probably once a month, if I remember right.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have a name for them?

MR. VILLAREAL: Well, we just called them the "big white ones."

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

MR. VILLAREAL: Because that's what they were, bigger than us. They weren't battleships by any means, but they were --

INTERVIEWER: All right. I believe the *Point Banks* was a part of Division 13 of Squadron One.

MR. VILLAREAL: Squadron One, Division 13, right.

INTERVIEWER: And when you all were in port, did other 82s come in the same time, or was it rotating out, in and out, or what?

MR. VILLAREAL: Oh, yeah. There would be probably three or four tied up to a dock, and then we would tie up to each other when we came in, kind of communicate with all the other guys on the other boats and see what was going on and if they got into any scimmages or trouble. Some were in for repair. Some were just in taking on supplies.

INTERVIEWER: And going back to being underway for the mission, I believe you had a colorful XO; is that right?

MR. VILLAREAL: I'm sorry?

INTERVIEWER: I believe you had a very colorful or hard-charging XO.

MR. VILLAREAL: Colorful? Hmm.

INTERVIEWER: Well, hard-charging?

MR. VILLAREAL: Well, yeah. I don't know if "colorful" is the word. [Laughter.] He's a nut case as far as I was concerned.

Everybody thought he was a nut case. He just wanted to go out and get in trouble and wanted to go out in the small boat and go ashore and shoot things. And he would dress up like Rambo with his boots and his shorts and bandoliers and M60 belts around him like an "X," you know, like Poncho Villa and just try and get into any trouble he could find. And, of course, he'd take the rest of us. There was really three of us that went in a small boat.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.

MR. VILLAREAL: So, of course, we'd go along, you know. It would kind of overtake the boredom of just going up and down the coast, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Well, that 14-footer with three adults in it, would that sit pretty low, or was it maneuverable?

MR. VILLAREAL: Well, I think that was -- three or four is at capacity.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.

MR. VILLAREAL: I really don't know what the official capacity was, but that was about all you'd want to handle, and the little outboard just -- you know, it would just putter along. You couldn't even -- you couldn't get it to rise up and plane. It wouldn't even do that practically with one person in it too well. [Laughter.] It was at its limit with three or four people on there.

INTERVIEWER: Larry, can you describe, to the best of your recollection, the armament on the 82s?

MR. VILLAREAL: The armament consisted of an 81 [mm] mortar on the bow with a piggyback .50-caliber machine gun, and then there were four .50 calibers on the fantail, two on each side and, of course, a host of M16s and shotguns. I think we had a Thompson aboard and .45s. Most of the time, we carried a .45 with us -- all the time, just in case.

INTERVIEWER: And I believe you had some M-60s and a M-79 grenade launcher.

MR. VILLAREAL: Yeah, M-60. I think we only had one M-60 and a couple of M-79s. That's what I usually carried because if I were out in a small board, small boat, that's about all I could handle with maneuvering a small boat.

INTERVIEWER: I'm curious. At this time, did each crew member have a .45?

MR. VILLAREAL: Yes. As far as I recollect, we did.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Going back to life over there, do you recall how you communicated with your wife and the frequency?

MR. VILLAREAL: Well, by mail only, and that was when we came back in to port. We'd get a whole lump of mail at once, but I think the mail flowed pretty freely. They did a good job of getting the mail there pretty quickly because a lot of people got care packages and, you know, different kinds of food stuffs, and it was all pretty fresh. They moved mail very well.

INTERVIEWER: Is Mrs. Villareal still with you there?

MR. VILLAREAL: She's not on the phone, but she's here.

INTERVIEWER: I was going to see if she could answer it from her end what type of mail service she experienced from you.

MR. VILLAREAL: Where'd she go?

INTERVIEWER: Oh, that's okay. We'll come back to her.

MR. VILLAREAL: I think her cell phone rang, and she went to --

INTERVIEWER: Okay, that's fine. We'll come back to her. She had a good story. So this was during the year 1968, pretty much the same type of missions day to day, week to week, during that year; is that right?

MR. VILLAREAL: Day to day, week to week, month to month. It got a little old after several months of it. That's for sure.

INTERVIEWER: Do you recall did the weather change during the year?

MR. VILLAREAL: Oh, yeah. It went from beautiful seas to monsoons. We had some terrific rains. I remember that, a lot of terrific rains.

To break the boredom, we would sometimes have a dentist or a doctor, which I forgot to tell you. We would take them in to some of the coastal villages and islands and do a little Psy-Ops [MEDCAPs] with them, treating them for whatever they could, you know, with the field dressings or whatever they could carry with them, and we'd just take the villagers.

Some of those little islands were really beautiful little islands, clean, well kept, and I don't think the people there really were bothered by the war. They just went about their business, and we didn't see any obvious signs of skirmishes

or anything on the little islands because they weren't places that were real -- I can't say the word.

INTERVIEWER: Well, let me ask you about that. Do you recall the people? Were they thankful for civilian --

MR. VILLAREAL: Oh, yeah. Yeah. They were very thankful and glad to see us, and sometimes they'd just come out to the boat in junks, even, to greet us. It was like a little paradise actually on some of those small islands. The water was beautiful, beautiful white beaches, and would have been a good place for a resort.

INTERVIEWER: Larry, when you first went to Vietnam, were you aware what your tour's length would be at that time?

MR. VILLAREAL: Yes. Yeah. We had a year's tour.

INTERVIEWER: So, during the year, was it a big thing to be thinking about your anniversary date?

MR. VILLAREAL: Well, the closer you got to the anniversary date, the more you thought about it. You know, when six -- eight months into it, nine months really didn't -- really weren't thinking about the end of the tour until, you know, you could count the weeks on one hand, and then it was daily basis, practically.

INTERVIEWER: Did that thought process make that average service member not specifically want to volunteer for different things during the year?

MR. VILLAREAL: We were more cautious. Yeah, more cautious of what we were getting into. Of course, that goes without saying for anybody that was over there, I guess.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.

MR. VILLAREAL: You wanted to make it to that day. Of course, it wasn't as bad for us as the guys in the Army and the Marines on land, but we -- you know, we took a junk under fire pretty regularly and they would return fire if they were -- if they were Viet Cong. So we wanted to be careful. We didn't press ourselves too much.

INTERVIEWER: I got a question about press coverage. I'm looking at a photograph of you, Larry, where you had a lot of black hair back in those days.

MR. VILLAREAL: Boy, those were the days. I wish I would have saved some of it from haircuts and glued it back on.

INTERVIEWER: Do you recall any print members of the press ever coming on base or on the 82 or ever interviewing or photographing you all's activities?

MR. VILLAREAL: Yeah. There were a couple of journalists that we picked up off the beach several times and took back in to the base. For what reason, I don't know. They were with the ground troops and wanted to get back to the base for one reason or the other, and we would go into the beach and pick them up.

They would tell us what was going on and what they observed, and some of them may have been in the field for quite some time, like a few weeks. So they were glad to get back to where there was some form of safety.

INTERVIEWER: Right. Now's a good time, I guess, for us to shift into the new year, January 1969. You'd been there almost a year in Vietnam, and I guess you could call yourself a short-timer in January of '69?

MR. VILLAREAL: Yep, very short. Sure could.

INTERVIEWER: Were you looking forward to going home?

MR. VILLAREAL: Looking forward to February coming along and leaving, very much so, yeah. It was -- you know, after all that time, it was time to go.

INTERVIEWER: So there was one mission in January of 1969 at night, and I believe your CO got a call.

MR. VILLAREAL: Yeah. He -- we got a call that some Army personnel were stranded on a beach, actually surrounded. They had no means of escape except by sea, and we were the closest 82 to their position. So we went up to see if we could help, and it was just too shallow to get the 82 in.

Before we arrived, there were a couple of Navy Swift Boats on the scene, and it was too shallow at that particular spot for them to get ashore. And by this time it was like -- oh, I don't know -- one or two in the morning. So our CO asked for a couple deadheads to volunteer to get in the small boat and see if they could extract them that way.

So Jerry Goff, who was a gunner's mate, and myself said, "Oh, we'll go." We stuck our hands up, you know, and thinking, oh, gosh, this is -- yeah, we can go get them.

So we just hopped down in the small boat. Jerry took an M-60 machine gun with a couple of bandoliers of ammunition, just in case. I was coxswain. I ran the small boat, and we went into the beach to see if we could get them out.

INTERVIEWER: Could I ask you a question? Going back to the 82, did the CO -- I take it, at first, did you think they were United States Army personnel?

MR. VILLAREAL: Yeah. At first, we thought they were U.S. Army, and it wasn't until -- actually, we got almost away from the 82 when they told us, oh, by the way, they're Vietnamese, South Vietnamese troops.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.

MR. VILLAREAL: And Jerry and I looked at each other, and we thought, well, okay, I guess, we'll go get them too. At that time, it was too late to do anything anyway. They had no other way to get out of there, so we went ahead and went on in. Not knowing their position, they were supposed to shine a light. We had radio contact with them, and they were supposed to shine a light to show us their position.

And after we got in a ways, I really don't remember how far off the beach we were, maybe -- I don't know -- a couple hundred yards, if that, and they shined a light. And the Viet Cong, they had them cornered, had lights also, and they shined two more lights. So we had three lights to pick from, and we didn't know what to do at that time.

And the closer we got to the beach -- the moon was out, if I remember rightly. I remember we could see a little rock jetty sticking out from the beach, and we thought, well, if we were cornered, we'd be there, as far away from the jungle as we could get from the brush. So we headed there, to that light, and, fortunately, we picked the right one.

INTERVIEWER: And what were the seas like during that time, Larry?

MR. VILLAREAL: The seas were fairly rough. It threw the little 14-foot Boston Whaler around pretty regularly. I don't know. It probably had maybe a foot-and-a-half, two-foot breakers hitting the beach, maybe a foot and a half, but rough enough to slam us up against the rocks pretty violently.

INTERVIEWER: You mentioned the Swift Boats, and, of course, the 82 was there, and was there air cover as well?

MR. VILLAREAL: Not at first. The air cover came -- oh, if I remember it rightly, it came on the second trip. We had to make two trips because we just couldn't get them all in the small boat. But there were two Navy Swift Boats, and they had armament of .50 calibers, twin .50 on a mount above their little bridge,

and .50 on the fantail. And, of course, we were -- the 82 was sitting there parallel to the beach. So there were three .50s pointing at the shore from our boat and the other two Swift Boats, and they were providing what they called "cover fire." [Laughter.]

I don't know what they were shooting at, but there was a lot of .50-caliber traces going over our head, just feet above our head. Sometimes it felt like inches. So there was a lot of gun fire from our side, and I was practically more afraid to get hit by one of them than the small arms fire that we received from the beach. I'd rather get hit by a .30 caliber than a .50 caliber. [Laughter.] That scared the pants off of us.

So we got down as low as we could and hit the beach, and all of them came running out from what cover they had, trying to get in the small boat. Of course, there were no means of communication with them because, obviously, they were Vietnamese, and Jerry kindly -- kindly helped as many in the boat as we thought we could handle.

INTERVIEWER: Now, you say kindly. Tell me --

MR. VILLAREAL: Kindly like over his shoulder. He would grab them and just basically throw them over his shoulder to get them in the boat, so we could get out of there as quick as we could. We didn't want to make a big fancy boarding process.

INTERVIEWER: Now, let me ask you about that, though. You couldn't communicate with them, but, obviously, half of them were standing there. Was there any panic, or were they trying to get on the boat regardless?

MR. VILLAREAL: They were all trying to get on the boat, yeah, of course. We just had our bow into the jetty, into the rocks, so we wouldn't get swamped sideways. So they all couldn't -- you know, they couldn't get on all at once. They had to sort of line up, but they were pushing and shoving, and we got in as many as we thought we could carry, which is I think we got five of them the first trip.

And that made seven of us in the 14-footer, and that was -- that was four too many, as far as I was concerned. It just about swamped us, and Jerry had to push the rest of them away, so we could back out. And that was -- backing out from the jetty with that many people in the small boat and the seas that were there, it just practically swamped us.

On the way back out to the 82, it was a long process because it was -- we could have almost rowed that far, that fast. It was a very slow trip because we just were way overloaded.

Actually, it did swamp us, but, fortunately, that's unsinkable.

INTERVIEWER: One last question about Jerry, did he have to show force to keep them back?

MR. VILLAREAL: Yeah. Yeah. He had to physically show some force, and I don't know -- I think he might have picked up his M-60 and kind of let them know that that was enough.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. So now we're almost back at the 82 with a fully loaded 14-foot Boston Whaler. Seas are about a foot and a half, two feet, and there's still fire going on overhead.

MR. VILLAREAL: Still fire going on overhead, more so because they knew where we were -- I mean our boat knew where we were and where we picked them up. So they could kind of steer their fire not right on that spot, in other words.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.

MR. VILLAREAL: But they were still -- they still firing over our heads to see if they could, you know, push back some of the small arms fire coming from the beach.

INTERVIEWER: So what happened when you got back to the 82?

MR. VILLAREAL: We got back in and got them out of the boat, which was pretty well swamped, and Underwood hollered down at us to get out of the boat and come back on board. He said he didn't want us to go back in and -- I don't know. We -- Jerry and I looked at each other and thought, you know, boy, those guys are pretty well stuck, and we kind of, sort of communicated to them we'd come back.

So we just decided to go back in, and Underwood really didn't want us to go. He said this is enough. He says that's too big a chance to take because they know where you are and they know you're going to come back, and we want -- we want you here. But we went back anyway.

INTERVIEWER: At this point, did you notice any air cover?

MR. VILLAREAL: At that point, they finally did arrive. It was a -- I believe they called them like a "Puff the Magic Dragon." It was a DC-3 with a mini-gun and the side door. I had never seen one of those before or heard of them.

They circled overhead as tight a pattern as they could fly, firing this mini-gun down practically on top of us after we got into the beach, because, you

know, from several hundred feet -- I don't know how high they were, but they were sort of guessing, I guess.

On the way in, I just remember the tracers out of that mini-gun. It would fire thousands of rounds a minute, and, of course, every third or fifth round was a tracer. And it just looked like -- it just looked like a laser beam coming down, and I just couldn't believe my eyes when I saw that.

INTERVIEWER: Now, you pulled up to the jetty again?

MR. VILLAREAL: We pulled up to the jetty, and the seas must have picked up a little bit because, in trying to get in through the rocks, it washed us sideways and washed us up on a big flat rock. And we were -- I don't know. We bottomed out on it, of course. The top hit this rock, killed the engine, and we just kind of sat there on top of this rock.

So Jerry was busy shooting into the beach with the M-60, so I jumped out and fortunately was able to wait for a next wave to help float it off and pushed it off the rock. Hopped back in and restarted the engine, thank heaven, and made it over to the jetty where the other four were.

INTERVIEWER: Did you ever think that the engine might not start?

MR. VILLAREAL: [Laughter.] Yeah. After about the fourth or fifth pull, I'm thinking -- I'm thinking maybe Underwood was right, we shouldn't have done this.

I had the fear that when he hit the rock the shear pin had broken in the propeller to the shaft, and the engine might start but might not go anywhere, because when it hit, it really made a loud [noise] --

So, fortunately, it started, and I shoved it up in gear, and it took off. And we headed back around to the side of the jetty, out to the front, because we had been kind of washed towards the beach from the jetty. We weren't very far from the beach, maybe 50 feet, and we took back off up and went around the side and up to the point of the jetty to get the other four.

They came running out to where we were after we got there and threw down their weapons and whatever they were carrying and scrambled onto the boat and practically swamped us again. Obviously, there were six of us in there. We backed out and got out of there as quickly as that little 35 would carry us, which wasn't very quick.

INTERVIEWER: And still tracers going overhead, right?

MR. VILLAREAL: Still tracers, yeah. I don't know how many rounds they went through with the .50 calibers. I just wouldn't even hesitate to guess. Practically constant fire. By that time, of course, the .50 calibers, you fire them too long at one time and it will heat the barrels.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.

MR. VILLAREAL: And once they got a little hot, they would practically warp. They would expand and actually warp a little bit. And when the projectile come out of the muzzle, they might want to go sideways or -- we could see them picking up circles, like zoom this way and zoom that way, going every which way. And I'm thinking, oh, as long as they zoom up, we'll be all right, because they were just barely over our heads. Boy, I was really afraid that we were going to get hit by our own friendly fire.

INTERVIEWER: One last question about the fire, were you still aware of fire from the beach at this point?

MR. VILLAREAL: Oh, after we got back, maybe halfway, we never looked back.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

MR. VILLAREAL: If they were firing, I don't know.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

MR. VILLAREAL: I just wanted out of there in a big way. But I don't know. I doubt that they were. They couldn't have carried that much ammunition with them, I wouldn't think, to be able to fire that long.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Do you recall coming up to the 82 after that second trip?

MR. VILLAREAL: Yeah. Well, I must have. I don't -- I really don't recall anything after getting away from the beach. In a big sense, it was just get me out of here, I want out of here. Obviously, we made it back. One of them had a leg wound.

INTERVIEWER: How about the 14-footer, did it take any hits?

MR. VILLAREAL: There was some bullet holes in the boat and one nick in the engine, went through the cowling and nicked the spark plug, which gave us a little misfire. So that took the 35 horsepower down to about 10, I think. It was bad. [Laughter.]

INTERVIEWER: Wow!

MR. VILLAREAL: Yeah, it was --

INTERVIEWER: Wow!

MR. VILLAREAL: It was one of those things I just didn't think we were going to -- we just weren't going to survive, we just weren't going to survive, it was just too much.

INTERVIEWER: How about Captain Underwood? Did he say anything to you when you all got back?

MR. VILLAREAL: Might have, but I don't know what it was.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

MR. VILLAREAL: My knees were shaking so bad, I could barely climb up and get on board. I just -- I don't remember even climbing out of the boat. I really don't.

INTERVIEWER: Do you recall going back to base after that?

MR. VILLAREAL: No, I don't. I mean, obviously, we did, but I really don't remember --

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

MR. VILLAREAL: -- what happened after that a great deal. It's just gone.

INTERVIEWER: I believe in our previous conversation, you said it was a matter of days before your replacement came after that.

MR. VILLAREAL: Yeah. I think I was stuck on base. They moved me on base for a week or so, and I don't know -- they must have had somebody from another boat that was in for repair take over for me for a little while. But I didn't have a permanent replacement until -- I don't know -- a couple of weeks after my tour ended.

INTERVIEWER: So you actually had -- they extended you?

MR. VILLAREAL: Yeah, two or three weeks, if I remember rightly.

INTERVIEWER: Do you recall leaving the base and going back to Saigon?

MR. VILLAREAL: No, I really don't. I don't recall whether I went by truck or by helicopter or --

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm. So this would have been --

MR. VILLAREAL: My memory's pretty foggy for all of that.

INTERVIEWER: That's okay. So this is late winter, sometime February-March time frame of 1969 at this point?

MR. VILLAREAL: Right.

INTERVIEWER: And do you remember flying in from Vietnam to California?

MR. VILLAREAL: Yes. We came back, as memory serves me, the northern route, but I think we stopped in Alaska, for some reason. I don't recall what it was. Maybe it was for fuel. I don't know. And then we came back into the base in the Bay area.

INTERVIEWER: Did the Coast Guard try to get you to reenlist?

MR. VILLAREAL: The Coast Guard tried to get me to reenlist before I left Vietnam, which was the wrong place to ask anybody to do it again. And they wanted me to go into recruiting, and that wasn't my bag, so I respectfully declined.

INTERVIEWER: Gotcha. Before -- I wanted to briefly touch on what you did as a civilian after you got out. You actually got out of the Coast Guard in June or July of '69; is that correct?

MR. VILLAREAL: I got out a little early, yes.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

MR. VILLAREAL: I told them I wasn't going to stay in, so they weren't going to ship me back to my last duty station, which was in Cairo, Illinois, because they didn't want to waste the money on somebody who wasn't going to stay in. So they mustered me out in Long Beach.

INTERVIEWER: Larry, I got one more question for you about that night. You were in the 14-footer and you all had washed up on the rock. Do you recall or can you recall any reservation about stepping out of the boat when all that fire was coming overhead?

MR. VILLAREAL: No. No, I didn't think about it at all, I don't believe. I just acted.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.

MR. VILLAREAL: No, I don't -- I don't recall sitting there thinking what are we going to do now. [Laughter.] I just knew that we didn't want to stay there, and there wasn't enough wave power, I guess you could say, to wash us off. And -- I don't know -- I guess just in the back of my head, I thought the only way we were going to get off of here is to get out and shove it off.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.

MR. VILLAREAL: I don't really remember.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

MR. VILLAREAL: But I knew we didn't sit there a long while thinking about it because there was just too much going on. We were too close to the beach, and the fire was coming up. How we got out of there, I don't know, but the .50s were going over our head and the fire from the beach and small arms fire. There were tracers everywhere, going every which direction and this mini-gun over our head, and I just -- all we wanted to do was get out of there --

INTERVIEWER: Right.

MR. VILLAREAL: -- and get them in this boat as quick as possible.

INTERVIEWER: After you got back and got out of the Coast Guard, I believe you had told me you worked for a Case Dealership and --

MR. VILLAREAL: Right. I worked for Case Dealership in Riverside, California. I worked for them for -- until 1973. And Caroline and I thought maybe we'd like to go over the road in a semi because I had driven a truck for the dealership in delivering equipment, and I liked to drive. So we thought, well, you know, we're just going to -- we're just going to go on the road ourselves. So we bought a Peterbilt Conventional and leased it through a company, one of the bigger companies in the U.S. that had rights to go into Canada, and we leased it through them until the latter part of '75, I think.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.

MR. VILLAREAL: And at that time, the company just -- they were just too hard on all the drivers with nitpicking. So we quit them, went back to work at the Case dealer. Caroline went back to work at the bank where she was employed, sold the truck, and both stayed at that particular job until -- well, in 1980 Caroline

was pregnant, and she had our daughter in 1980, in December. And I kept working for the Case dealer until 1983, when I decided that they should take some of the used equipment we got on trade and part them out. They didn't think that was too good of an idea. I did, so I quit, started out on my own doing some repairs and buying what equipment I could afford and either reconditioning it or take it apart for parts.

It was a struggle for a year or two because the economy dumped right around there, and we just stayed in that business. Caroline never went back to work. We stayed in that business until 2004, I think, 2003, the winter of 2003. We were able to sell it and sold our house the next year and moved to Illinois, back to her hometown.

INTERVIEWER: That's great. So you're retired now.

MR. VILLAREAL: Retired now. I recommend it highly.

INTERVIEWER: And you have one daughter.

MR. VILLAREAL: One daughter and she is getting married to a local boy, good kid.

INTERVIEWER: And I believe you ride a bike.

MR. VILLAREAL: Yeah. A few years ago, I bought a Harley, and just a couple of months ago, I decided that we were getting old enough to where when we rode I just didn't feel real secure on a regular bike, so I bought a trike.

INTERVIEWER: All right.

MR. VILLAREAL: So now I'm piddling with it, you know, doing little things to make it mine, getting ready for summer.

INTERVIEWER: All right.

MR. VILLAREAL: Spring.

INTERVIEWER: And, Larry, I believe you're a member of the Coast Guard Combat Veterans Association.

MR. VILLAREAL: Yes. We joined that after we moved back here. In fact, for some reason the government -- I don't know what branch -- decided to have a big to-do in Washington for the Medal of Honor winners, and they invited us to go back there and -- us, Jerry and I and our family to go back and represent the Coast Guard.

Of course, I told them, you know, they got the wrong guy because I didn't get one of those, and they said, well, you're the only one with the Coast Guard, I guess. We were their best choice. So they flew us back to Washington, and I saw Jerry there for the first time after 40 years.

INTERVIEWER: Now, when was that?

MR. VILLAREAL: Maybe it was '04, I think, something like that. Maybe it was -- maybe it was earlier than that. Maybe we were still -- I don't remember.

INTERVIEWER: But that's the first time you've seen Jerry since --

MR. VILLAREAL: First time I'd seen Jerry in like 40 years.

INTERVIEWER: Wow!

MR. VILLAREAL: Practically, thirty-five. We knew each other right away, though, even as bald as I got and as gray as he got. [Laughter.]

INTERVIEWER: Both of you were Silver Star recipients.

MR. VILLAREAL: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: I asked you this question before, Larry, but did you ever -- after you left Vietnam in the early 1970s, did you ever think about what was going on in Vietnam while you were working back over here in California?

MR. VILLAREAL: Yeah. Obviously, it was in the news every day, and I was just kind of hoping we'd get over for everybody.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.

MR. VILLAREAL: When the Coast Guard left, they left all the 82s there for the Vietnamese, and we understood that they just trashed them.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.

MR. VILLAREAL: And I was just hoping we'd get out of the war because I didn't think it was going anywhere, and, obviously, it didn't, so --

INTERVIEWER: I wanted to ask you, Larry, about what you think now looking back on the Coast Guard in those days. What do you think of it as a part of your life in those early years of yours?

MR. VILLAREAL: Well, it straightened me out. It gave me direction, trained me for my ability to earn a living.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.

MR. VILLAREAL: I was very proud to be a member of the Coast Guard and still am, and I recommend it to all of the youngsters in our family that are thinking about joining the Service, and I think it's the way to go.

INTERVIEWER: You mentioned not seeing Jerry after all those years. How about some of the other guys off the *Point Banks*? Do you stay in touch with some of them?

MR. VILLAREAL: Really didn't stay in touch after I left. After I joined the Coast Guard Combat Veterans Association -- I don't remember how I got acquainted with them, but then after I joined, we met up with several off of the boat. One of them that I thought was killed during a small boat operation, he was just wounded very badly, and I saw him there for the first time.

INTERVIEWER: Was that after you left when that happened?

MR. VILLAREAL: It was while I was on R&R.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

MR. VILLAREAL: It was while I was on R&R. I met Caroline in Hawaii for a week. I don't remember when that was but after about six or seven months there.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.

MR. VILLAREAL: Of course, Frenchie was off the boat then and shipped off somewhere and never heard from him again. I just thought maybe he had perished. Obviously, it wounded him very badly, and I think he's really got some bad problems now. He can barely walk, operated so many times, and --

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm. How often do you all get together?

MR. VILLAREAL: We get together probably twice a year with a couple of guys, Jerry being one and his wife and one of the other guys off the boat that lives in Ohio. They're a member of sort of an association that has the resorts all over the country, and we go on a yearly basis to Hilton Head for a week, get together and hash out things and have a good time.

And we still are in contact with the chief boatswain's mate that was on there -- he lives in Texas -- and a couple of other guys by mail.

INTERVIEWER: You mentioned meeting your wife for R&R in Hawaii. Was that the only time that you got that far away?

MR. VILLAREAL: Yes. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Larry, there's a building named after you at Training Center Yorktown, at Coast Guard Base Training Center Yorktown. What do you think about that?

MR. VILLAREAL: I don't know. It's the Engineman School there. The "Machinery Technician School," they call it now. I don't know. They wrote and told me they were going to do that, and I'm thinking, you know, I don't know why they want to do that. And I wasn't even sure I wanted to go to the ceremony. I just -- I don't know -- just never made a big deal out of all of that business.

So I guess it's an honor to have a building named after you. I think Jerry has one named after him in Cape May.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.

MR. VILLAREAL: Or somewhere over there. I don't know.

INTERVIEWER: Larry, it's --

MR. VILLAREAL: I just never was one to toot my own horn.

INTERVIEWER: It's been a pleasure conducting this interview, and the Coast Guard appreciates this.

MR. VILLAREAL: Well, I hope somebody listens to it to know what was going on, anyway.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Well, I'm just honored to be talking to you, a real American hero.

MR. VILLAREAL: Oh, more of a Vietnamese hero than an American, but they never even -- I don't even think we got a postcard from them.

INTERVIEWER: Yes. I thought about that the other day. I mean, if there was even any way of tracking who those guys were or are and if they made it out of the war.

MR. VILLAREAL: I wouldn't have the foggiest idea.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

MR. VILLAREAL: Like I said, the government didn't send us a postcard or -- I believe the guys were pretty happy with us, but that's about it.

INTERVIEWER: And I really appreciate it. Thank you for all your indulgence.

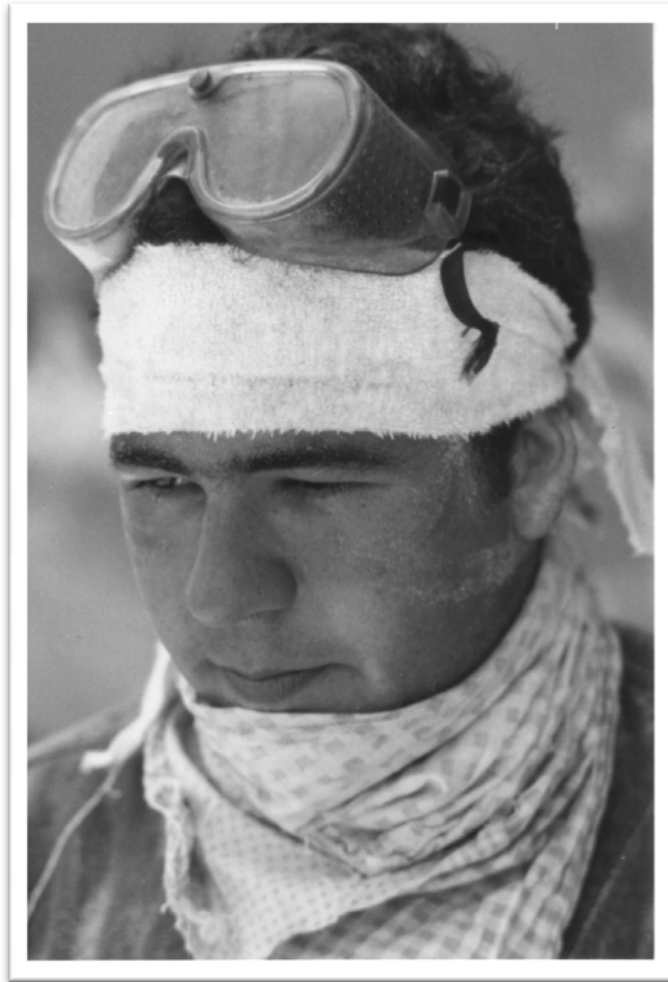
MR. VILLAREAL: Oh, no problem. Like I say, I've got nothing else to do. Being retired, why, you know, got to look for things to do now. So, it's been a pleasure meeting you and --

INTERVIEWER: Thanks, again, Larry.

MR. VILLAREAL: Okay. Thanks, Peter.

- - -

END OF INTERVIEW



Villareal sandblasting on board the *Point Banks*.



Villareal (right) and two other *Point Banks* crewmen on board their cutter.



Villareal (fourth from left) with the Coast Guard Honor Guard



Coast Guard Day honoree.

