William “Bill” Richmond, US Army, 567th Transportation Company (Terminal Service)

I reported to 567th Transportation Company in July 1967. After a month of preparing equipment for shipment, the enlisted men below E-5 in an act of solidarity had their heads shaved, prior to departure by air to Oakland Ca. The 567th boarded the *General Patrick* for the long trip to Viet Nam, as last to board we were not available for KP and had an easy trip. The *General Patrick* sailed past Iwo Jima, and all aboard were initiated in traditional crossing the equator ceremonies. The *General Patrick* stopped at Subic Bay before leaving for Cam Ran Bay. We stopped at Nha Trang and Qui Nhon to off load the other troops. The 567th off loaded at Vung Tau and flew by C-123 to Bien Hoa.

We trucked to an area in Long Binh adjacent to the 48th Transportation Group (Rolling Thunder). The first day we set up tents in the mud, other than poisonous snakes crawling through the tents our initial experience was uneventful. The next week a few of us stayed at Newport and began operations. Initially, we offloaded barges sent up river from Saigon Port.

Personnel slept at Newport, and had one hot meal from Long Binh. I was part of a three-person documentation section. We had two crane operators and several stevedores. We were only able to work in day light, as the lights had not been installed before we began operations. The major event of those first two weeks was a floater washing up on the shore adjacent to the barge site.

In the beginning of October, we began operations in earnest. Our first ship arrived for off loading, either a Liberty or Victory ship. It seemed that shipping companies did not want to risk their newer ships traversing the Saigon River. This first ship began what would become our steady routine -- twelve hours on twelve hours off and an eighteen-hour swing shift monthly. The day began with a forty-five minute ride in the company bus or a deuce and a half from Long Binh to Newport, we were unarmed and often the first vehicles on the road.

The ships were off loaded to barges and taken to shore and either the cargo was stored on site placed on blue Philco-Ford trucks driven by Vietnamese and taken supply areas in country. Sometimes the barges went to RMK Island to be off loaded. This was a special treat because they let us eat in their facilities and the food was much better than Army food. Sometimes the ship’s crew would let us use their heads and give us food and sometimes others would treat us like lepers. The day shift was actually the more difficult shift to work, between the heat and the visiting brass, the stevedores had it the toughest since the holds were unbearable. Nights were warm but tolerable, in the distance Puff (AC47) could always be counted on for fireworks and the vibration of artillery shells could be felt. The Long Binh ammo dump blew up one night actually rocking the ship I was on.

The arrival of the 561st and the 368th Transportation Companies completed the

71st, but the Army's policy of breaking up units to stagger personnel returning stateside caused a disruption to assimilate new people. The 567th continued to be the only unit operating at Newport while the others stayed back at Long Binh. In addition to RMK Island we also operated a barge site a Tu Duc. I spent Christmas Eve working and listening to Bob Hope -- Silent Night still chokes me up.

In January, a detachment of the 2nd Shore Platoon and 1st Ship Platoon went by LST down the Saigon River where it stayed overnight at Vung Tau and went up the Can Tau to Dong Tam. We moved the heavy equipment of the Ninth Infantry Division and continued to support them. I returned in February and March 1st and we began operation of the first deepwater pier at Newport. I was promoted to documentation section leader of the 2nd Shore Platoon. The operation became considerably more efficient and our ship turn around went from over a week to three days. There was an orphanage next to Newport that the 71st adopted. The deepwater facilities included three large warehouses and storage areas behind. Although we weren't in the jungle I did chase a King Cobra into a cement truck (with an M151) where a Vietnamese truck driver killed and skinned it.

In May (‘68) I was promoted to Specialist 5th class and made an acting Sgt in order to assume the position of Documentation NCOIC.