

Interview with: **Wayne PATRICK**
Interview by: Richard KILLBLANE
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KILLBLANE: Could you start out and tell me about how you ended up in the Transportation Corps and got to Vietnam.

PATRICK: I enlisted in February 1966 and went through basic training at Fort Jackson S.C. I went through advanced training which was Combat Engineer School at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. I passed a battery of tests so I applied for OCS. I went to OCS at Fort Lee, Virginia. My OCS class started in September, 1966 and graduated in March 1967. I received my commission as a Quartermaster Officer. My branch was not Transportation. OCS was a challenging program; I think we graduated about half the class. I was 20 years old when I graduated and received my commission. After OCS I went to Germany for a year and a half, came back to the United States, went to Jump School and broke my leg. While my leg was healing I attended the Petroleum Officer's course at Fort Lee, Virginia. Then I went to Vietnam and was originally assigned to the 262nd Quartermaster Battalion, Cam Ranh Bay. The 262nd was responsible for receiving, storing and shipping of petroleum products. After one month I requested reassignment and was lucky to get assigned to the 500th Transportation Group on the S-3 staff.

KILLBLANE: When did you arrive in Vietnam?

PATRICK: January, '69, January 19th was my in-country date. So, I was with the 500th Group for the majority of the first six months I was there. About mid-tour I became Company Commander of the 442nd Truck Company, 36th Transportation Battalion, Cam Rahn Bay. I was Company Commander until mid-January, 1970, when Rob Johnson assumed command of the company.

KILLBLANE: Who was the Group Commander while you were there?

PATRICK: Shortly after I became Company Commander...

KILLBLANE: No, while you were in the S3 shop then, Group Commander of the 500th Group?

PATRICK: Colonel Gus Woolman was the 500th Group Commander. The S3 was Major Lynn Stevens.

KILLBLANE: What were your duties while you were in the S3 Shop?

PATRICK: Classified documents, radio checks with the convoys, operations plans, procedures, coordinating response plans for areas that we had to cover during alert or an attack like the power ships and different facilities at Cam Rahn Bay. I did that for four or five months, then I went to the 442nd.

KILLBLANE: I want to try to get a feel for how trucking operations or that line haul mission was controlled at the group level. How many battalions did you have underneath you?

PATRICK: Under the 500th group, I think there were three battalions.

KILLBLANE: Do you remember what they were?

PATRICK: 36th, I don't know, was there a 39th? I don't remember, I know they were on the web page, but I don't remember the unit designations.

KILLBLANE: 36th, there was the 24th. So, you had all the trucking companies?

PATRICK: All three battalions under the 500th Group were motor transport units. I don't remember a lot about the structure. The 500th Group was not involved in the operations at the docks and other facilities.

KILLBLANE: How was the line haul mission essentially controlled, from looking at who you got your taskings for, for what cargo had to go where, and how did it go from route down to the battalions?

PATRICK: To tell you the truth, I guess it came from the 124th, to the 500th Group. I think the S4 had the responsibility for coordinating cargo to be convoyed. The S3 would arrange for the MP's, medics and air cover to accompany the convoy. As a company commander, I would get instruction that we had a convoy going to a location and you'd assemble the appropriate people from the 442nd, and NCOs from the different units. The vehicles would get loaded and they would assemble at the line up site at 0400 to 0430. Loading the vehicles and getting everything prepared started during the day and went to late evening.

KILLBLANE: When you're a Company Commander, how do you receive the taskings and how do you break it down for your drivers? Did they know the night before or did they get their taskings that morning?

PATRICK: That was pretty well coordinated. The drivers knew the day before. We would assemble at the staging area before daylight and everything checked and ready to depart at approximately 0600. I don't recall missing vehicles or people at the line up site or a load not picked up or lost. I don't remember a lot of confusion about what was supposed to be loaded or what convoy it would be assigned to. That all got done, I know it was a tremendous effort by the drivers and the motor pool getting the vehicles ready, keeping the vehicles maintained constantly while they come in for short periods and back out. Getting the 'tear sheets' and assigning a vehicle and driver. The "tear sheet" was the shipping order the driver would take to the depot and pick up the cargo.

KILLBLANE: The system you had is what you inherited from your predecessor?

PATRICK: Yes, that process was in place when I arrived.

KILLBLANE: Do you remember who the previous company commander was?

PATRICK: No, I don't remember his name.

KILLBLANE: Okay.

PATRICK: I rode on one convoy with him, but I don't remember his name. I'll give you some of the guy's names and numbers that I know, and they...

KILLBLANE: I'll get those after the interview. Going back to the 500th Group when you're in the S3 Shop, what aspect of operations were you coordinating or working with?

PATRICK: Security information, road clearances, if there had been enemy activity in an area we would pass that information on to the battalions. Mostly a lot of radio checks and the signal instructions - the code books, authentications, authentication tables. It's been 30-something years...

KILLBLANE: I appreciate anything you can remember on that. Actually you're probably one of the first people I talked to who was working at the Group level. Most of the others were at the battalion level or below, so I'm really curious as to what was the role of Group in the line haul mission?

PATRICK: The Group staff members were usually Majors or Lieutenant Colonels. I was a Lieutenant and was promoted to Captain, March 1969, when I was in the S3 Shop.

KILLBLANE: Did you guys monitor the radio traffic of convoys as their getting out to...

PATRICK: Yes, we monitored convoy radio traffic 24 hours a day.

KILLBLANE: A lot of the convoys don't have good radio communication; especially the long haul missions exceed that range. How do you guys keep control of that, do you remember?

PATRICK: By radio. The long haul convoys carried a communications jeep with a single side-band radio, I guess that's the correct terminology, they could get in touch with most places when we couldn't communicate due to distance or terrain. The long haul convoys, big convoys, were broken up in sections/serials, and that section would usually have an NCO or Lieutenant in charge in a gun jeep and a gun truck. The gun jeeps and gun trucks also had radios. The MP's would lead the convoy in a gun jeep or V100 armored vehicle. Communications within the convoy was usually good. As a convoy commander, I had three radios on my jeep, one for air cover, one for ground support, usually artillery or whoever's area of operation you were in, and one for running the convoy. Often, not necessarily on a regular basis, I would fly over the convoy with a helicopter or fixed wing.

KILLBLANE: Oh, really? How did you work that out?

PATRICK: We tried to have air cover as much as we could. If I wanted to fly I would get on the radio, tell them you want them to pick you up at a certain point and you fly over the convoy for awhile. You had a better view and control of your convoy, how it's stretched out, and who needs to speed up or slow down, and conditions ahead or where the difficult areas are.

KILLBLANE: When you're in the helicopter, do you land at anytime, is it a matter of jumping out, getting from your jeep into the helicopter? When you start at Cam Rahn Bay and just follow your convoy, how did you do that?

PATRICK: I always started with the convoy. I would contact the air cover and arrange for pick up enroute at a rest stop. Going south we would stop at Phan Rang, one of the normal rest stops. Going north we would go past Na Trang and start up the mountain and there was a break point there near a mountain village. So, usually if you wanted to fly, tell the chopper pilot if he had room that you wanted to fly over your convoy. I got pictures, of course, they would get bored and they would try to make you sick. From my perspective in control of the convoy you had the beginning stages from, I guess, Command, down to Group, down to Battalion, you had road clearance, all that stuff, all the goods to be shipped were somehow identified, and all that came together. The maintenance all got done and the vehicles were on line and ready to go. Also, as part of that convoy concept, we had a trail party, the last group of the convoy was mechanics, and service trucks, and gun trucks, so they would always bring up the rear and pick up people that had broken down or had problems. Very important job.

KILLBLANE: When did you assume command?

PATRICK: I think it was late July, 1969.

KILLBLANE: What was your rank at that time?

PATRICK: I was a Captain.

KILLBLANE: How long did it take you to make Captain?

PATRICK: A year, a little over a year.

KILLBLANE: From First Lieutenant.

PATRICK: Yes, the total time was about three years because they kept accelerating the promotion schedule. I got commissioned at age 20; I was a 22-year-old Captain for a about four or five weeks before I turned 23. My birthday is in August.

KILLBLANE: How did you feel about assuming command in combat?

PATRICK: I guess I didn't know any better, that's what I was supposed to do, you know? It seemed to be a natural progression. I was very fortunate to be selected to command a company. I didn't walk around worrying about it a lot, had a job to do and a mission to do. I think I was smart enough to depend on the First Sergeant, the NCOs, and folks that were there. It was a lot

of responsibility but a very rewarding and memorable experience. A lot going on. The top priority was getting the mission done and the care and welfare of troops and equipment maintenance, that consumed you. Wasn't much else to do or worry about. There were mostly a lot of long days and hard work by everyone. Being a Company Commander in Vietnam was a profound experience. I'm proud of the 442nd TC, our troops and what we accomplished.

KILLBLANE: Who were some of the more influential NCOs that you had and what they taught you?

PATRICK: Frank Selig was the First Sergeant; Sergeant Green; Sergeant Bearden; my driver was Spec 4 Wayne Howerton, Sergeant Bell, he was the armorer, took care of all the weapons and guns. Frank Selig was a great First Sergeant. We had great NCO's, most were career soldiers and were pretty matter-of-fact people, they cared about getting the job done. We didn't have a lot of hassles with the troops. I guess everybody had different experiences stateside and all that, it wasn't spit and polish and all that stuff and we didn't bother the troops a lot as long as they weren't causing too much trouble or getting out of hand. We didn't care if they didn't shave on the road; we didn't have inspections a lot, that kind of stuff. We just expected them to maintain an acceptable appearance, keep the vehicle in shape, and be ready to go when we hit the road was the main thing. We didn't care as much about what they did while they were in the barracks and in the base camp. I did care about their condition when we got ready to go on the road.

KILLBLANE: Your focus was on getting the job done, that's what you're saying?

PATRICK: Well, you had all kinds of stuff going on, you had some drugs starting up. I think everybody felt it was important that people show up fit for duty. The troops understood the importance of getting the job done.

KILLBLANE: What kind of trucks did the 442nd have?

PATRICK: It was a medium truck company so we had 5 ton tractor trailers. We had flat bed trailers, no refrigeration trucks or trailers. All of our gun trucks were 5 ton cargo trucks.

KILLBLANE: How many?

PATRICK: To tell you the truth, I don't know. I can recall the names of a couple of them. There were probably three or four. Flying Dutchman was one. I think Widow Maker was one and the Black Widow. I remember one, just stands out in my mind. I guess it was the name of it, but, on the side of it, it had 'Happiness is Warm Gun'. I just always remember that. They usually were 5 ton cargo trucks with built up body with steel box, or wood box in some cases with a 50 caliber on the front, M60s on the front corners.

KILLBLANE: So, by the time you assume your command they already have got the armor plating on the side. They've gone through sand bags and all that, and now it's basically...

PATRICK: I think we had one that was a wood box.

KILLBLANE: A wood box? Describe that.

PATRICK: Filled with sand, a double wood box filled with sand.

KILLBLANE: Did that change while you were there, did they improve that one or did it stay a wooden box?

PATRICK: I don't recall a change. I know the truck with the wood box was heavy. It may have changed but I don't remember that being a big event.

KILLBLANE: Where did you get the crews for your gun trucks?

PATRICK: They were Company crews, a driver, NCO and gunner on the 50 cal.

KILLBLANE: Company people?

PATRICK: Of course when you made a convoy, being CO of a Company and you go line up for a convoy, it's not all 442nd vehicles. You got vehicles from other Companies mixed in, you got tanker trucks from different units, you might have refers from a different unit. They got a mix and match of Company units.

KILLBLANE: How did you get your tasking as a convoy commander, how did you know which convoy you're taking out, and when you went out, where they usually your trucks, primarily your trucks?

PATRICK: A majority of them were company trucks, but there were trucks from other units mixed in. The best I remember, I'd be out a lot, so the First Sergeant would have the paperwork and then he would tell me you got to go out again in the morning, here's where you're going, and be at the starting line, and here's who's going with you, and here's your NCOs, and we'd get together. The best I remember, every time we were going out on a convoy you'd get the critical people together, including the NCO's, MP's and medics, make sure they knew they were attached to your convoy, have a short briefing, a small meeting the evening before we headed out the next morning.

KILLBLANE: How often did you go out as convoy commander?

PATRICK: Pretty consistent for five or six months. Two or three times a week. Stand down time, you might be back at Cam Rahn Bay for two or three days at a stretch. Sometimes maybe longer, that was a bit unusual.

KILLBLANE: Oh, yeah. Why?

PATRICK: I just remember being on the road a lot.

KILLBLANE: Could you describe your normal run, the destinations that you usually ran to out of Cam Rahn Bay?

PATRICK: The destinations were primarily Delat, Ban Me Thout , Bao Loc, Qui Nhon, Nhu Trang and Phan Rang. Nhu Trang was north of Cam Rahn Bay on the way to Ban Me Thout and Qui Nhon. Phan Rang was south on the way to Delat. Going south we would run to Phan Rang which was at the bottom of the mountain.

KILLBLANE: And, that's on Highway One?

PATRICK: Yeah. South to Phan Rang past the Air Force Base then you turn, go up the mountain to Delat and from Delat to Bao Loc. The short convoys were to Phan Rang or Nhu Trang and back.

KILLBLANE: The others were long convoys?

PATRICK: Yes, Ban Me Thout, Delat, Bao Loc and Qui Nhon were large convoys over long distances.

KILLBLANE: Which is one day out, one day back?

PATRICK: Yes, usually one day out and one day back. I remember the last convoy I took out was to Qui Nhon which was unusual, from Cam Rahn to Qui Nhon.

KILLBLANE: What were you hauling down there?

PATRICK: I don't remember, but that was the last convoy I think I took. I got pictures of that, because we were on the road with the South China Sea on one side of the road and cliffs on the other side. That was unusual. Primary or most frequent locations were Ban Me Thout, Delat and Bao Loc. All of those were difficult territory and terrain and bad locations.

KILLBLANE: What was difficult and bad about them?

PATRICK: Going both ways you had to go up mountains and jungle trails and it wasn't unusual to see rear duels on trucks hanging off the side of the mountain, the rear axle dragging the ground, trucks breaking down. A couple of times we had trucks go down the side of mountains. We had a couple of contacts, ambush situations. I remember going up to Ban Me Thout and came up on a creek that was washed out, the creek was maybe 10 to 15 feet wide and a culvert was washed out. The engineers came from the other side of the creek and laid down two steel beams and we took the whole convoy across two steel beams. As crazy as that sounds, I can verify that. I recall one time on the way to Delat we came upon a Deuce ½ that was turned over. There was a signal battalion on the way to Delat and there was a shell of an old, bombed out, French fort in the mountains. As we were going up the mountain on the side of the road to the left was a Deuce ½ turned over with its wheels sticking straight up, the troops scattered out and the driver was pinned under the truck with his arm pinned under the steering wheel and the truck was teetering. The convoy went on and we brought the trail party up, tied the vehicle off with the wrecker so it wouldn't roll over on the guy. While on the radio, I was able to get a helicopter to come in, a Chinook, we hooked up a logging chain to the helicopter and lifted the truck. We pulled the kid out, then medivac was going to come in and when we popped smoke we started

taking small arms fire. I remember a gun ship came in, his call sign was Tiger Shark, his door gunner got shot during that incident.

KILLBLANE: That's because you guys ended up staying in one spot for...

PATRICK: A little bit too long, probably.

KILLBLANE: How long were you there?

PATRICK: And, it was the length of a knoll from across 30, 40 yards away from another knoll, kind of hilly, mountainous country. I guess we probably stayed out in the open too long.

KILLBLANE: About how long did you hang around there before they got hit?

PATRICK: Once we got the guy out and in the helicopter we left.

KILLBLANE: How long was the rescue?

PATRICK: We were in that spot maybe twenty or thirty minutes, before we started taking fire.

KILLBLANE: Did you have any gun trucks on that?

PATRICK: Yeah. Any time we stopped or something like that kind of situation we had gun jeeps and a gun truck or V100 armored vehicle standing by. One time, coming back from Ban Me Thout, we left in low cloud cover, the air cover couldn't get up, we started back anyway. About halfway back we were ambushed, we got hit. Took a rocket across the top of the armored box on the back of the gun truck and the blast came right across the top, cut one kid about in half. There were several other people that were wounded.

KILLBLANE: So, the primary objective was to take out the gun truck?

PATRICK: It seemed to me. That was either the commander, NCO, or a gun truck. The Company Commander generally stood out because he had three antennas on the jeep. On that trip coming back from Ban Me Thout, the gun truck got hit, a B40 rocket blast came right across the top of the box. We were in the 101st Airborne support area. Got air cover when I needed it, called and we had three Cobra Gun Ships come in, their call sign was 'Undertaker', I'll always remember that. It's funny how you remember strange little bits and pieces of information when you're under stress but, I remember those names. They blew up a bunch of terrain and then we moved the convoy on through.

KILLBLANE: Did the convoy stop when they fired on the gun truck?

PATRICK: Yeah. The rest of the convoy was not in the kill zone, no need to pull them into danger, so they stopped and they had the security of another gun truck or the trail party back there. All the troops had their own weapons, M16s and stuff. Those were some instances I remember. I remember another trip coming back from Ban Me Thout where we had a driver his

name was Philip Tomaszewski, he was carrying artillery gun tubes, hauling back to be reworked, not a big load, but a heavy load. I think he went through a turn, and for whatever reason the truck flipped over and he was killed in the wreck, we came up shortly and found the truck had turned over and the truck was smoking and screaming, he's in the wreck, we pulled him out. There was a passenger with him, Tim Wilkinson, he injured his leg ended up losing part of his leg. I heard from him a few months ago. I can recall frequently leaving out of convoys, particularly going south going through the rubber plantation, it wasn't unusual for somebody to take a shot at the convoy somewhere along the way, a shot or two going through there. Going up to Delat one time, past the French fort on the way into town, it's supposed to be a secure zone but we had a brief contact there, small weapons. Somebody was broke down; we pulled up and started taking some small arms fire. I can remember four or five instances involving contact actually firing back and forth and helicopter support.

KILLBLANE: What you would constitute an ambush, at least engagement. Most of the time it's just individuals firing, what, squad-size units firing on the trucks?

PATRICK: Yeah, never any major or sustained contact with forces of any size. Just squad size units, five, six individuals.

KILLBLANE: You said the only time you had any casualties as a result of it was then that gun truck was fired on by (?)?

PATRICK: No, I can remember an MP getting shot in the shoulder, a lead MP vehicle, somebody taking a shot, hitting him in the shoulder. Just kept going, a single shot, stuff like that. Most of the time it was small squad units contact, might have seemed like an eternity, but it was probably 10 minutes or maybe 15 minutes at the most.

KILLBLANE: And, you had air cover the whole time. You mentioned one that you were coming back from (?).

PATRICK: Most of the time we had air cover. On the trip back from Ban Me Thout we did not have air cover due to low clouds and that is when we had the gun truck hit with a rocket.

KILLBLANE: At the time you were hit, did you have air cover?

PATRICK: No. That one time we did not. I had the option to delay or move out, but we still had our mission and job to do. We had a convoy pick up and run so it was my decision. We were going through an area that was secured by ground troops. Having air cover might not have prevented it anyway.

KILLBLANE: How did you normally organize your convoys, where was your place in the convoy, where did you put the gun trucks, how many gun trucks, how many trucks did you usually have in a mark serial?

PATRICK: Convoys were pretty large, I would say probably anywhere between 80 maybe 120 vehicles. Had a lead MP group, usually a scout jeep and a V100 in the front, then you'd have

your convoy broken up in serials, usually three or four depending on the size of the convoy. You'd have a lead NCO with each of serial.

KILLBLANE: Driving a jeep?

PATRICK: Yeah, a gun jeep with a driver, NCO and a gunner on the M60. To the best of my memory you might have two or three gun trucks, since you've got your MPs and armored vehicles up front you'd try to put your first gun truck somewhere near the rear of the first column. There was always a gun truck with the trail party. If you had another, you'd disperse it somewhere in the middle. I don't recall trying to take my place any particular place in the convoy. Sometimes I'd run closer to the front, sometimes in the middle. Just depending on what was going on or where I needed to be.

KILLBLANE: What did you find worked the best as far as on the convoys where you should be?

PATRICK: Probably toward the end of the first section / serial, somewhere there to the middle.

KILLBLANE: Why?

PATRICK: I think you can respond up and down the convoy better depending on events ahead of you or behind you.

KILLBLANE: You mentioned besides every now and then getting on a helicopter and flying over and watching our convoys, what else did you do, did you stop along the road and watch it go by, drop to the rear and then come forward? How would you do your job as a convoy commander?

PATRICK: Each NCO had a map. Everybody had maps with check points and would call in when they reached a certain check point. I would keep track of each serial in the convoy, so you would know who was progressing, naturally they would communicate if there was a problem or a breakdown or a crisis or something. What was your question?

KILLBLANE: What you did, how did you control your convoy, would you drop off to the rear, forward, or would you tend to stay in one spot?

PATRICK: Oh, no, you wouldn't stay in one spot. I was starting to say you have a couple of safe areas to stop in. I know there was one location at a small air strip near a mountain village on the way to Ban Me Thout, and we would stop there and regroup, the convoy would catch up and get updated on any situations, then we'd head off again. Depending on road conditions, if you were on a road wide enough to pass, a paved road, then you might move up and down the convoy or pull to the side. For the most part I think I tended to be positioned in the middle of the convoy but I did change positions.

KILLBLANE: Where the roads paved at the time?

PATRICK: Not all of them. The one section of the road that was paved I guess was the north/south highway that we ran out of Cam Rahn down to Phan Rang and out of Cam Rahn up

to Nha Trang. Beyond that you start going up to the mountains, some places are paved, most were not.

KILLBLANE: What about bridges? Were they out or rebuilt?

PATRICK: I can recall a convoy returning from Delat and a bridge was out or damaged. We had to stay out over night at the bottom of the mountain until the engineers got the bridge fixed.

KILLBLANE: What were some of the common problems that you encountered on a convoy?

PATRICK: Brakes burning up, trucks going over the side of mountains, flat tires and trucks breaking down. Break downs, injuries, troops trying to tighten the load and a chain binding slipping and hitting them, I remember one guy got hit in the face. I think one guy sliced his hand on a load, stuff like that, in addition to running your convoy and getting shot at every now and then, the break downs and wrecks, people rolling off the side of mountains that kind of stuff. Getting to our locations and unloading, once you got there everybody had to unload at that location, if it was fuel it was one direction, if it was supplies it was another direction. We'd always set up our gun trucks and our vehicles, try to disperse them, set the gun trucks up in the perimeter in the event of activity at night. Gas them up, we'd carry our own tanker, we'd line up the tanker and the trucks had to come by and gas up so we'd be ready to crank up and pull out in the morning. The next morning getting all the trucks cranked up and usually somebody's not going to start or have a problem. By the time we got everybody together and heads counted, made sure we had everybody, we'd line up and head back.

KILLBLANE: How did you keep accountability of the trucks that were in your convoy -- when you'd line up going out and coming back, how did you work that?

PATRICK: We knew how many we were supposed to have and how many people were supposed to be with the convoy, and I can recall counting heads. Most of the places you went there wasn't anywhere for the troops to go. I don't recall missing any trucks or trucks not being where they were supposed to be in the convoy, trucks not showing up or showing up late, I don't recall a lot of confusion about return trips.

KILLBLANE: Tell me about maintenance, the problems with (?), you had M52s, right?

PATRICK: Yeah, 5 ton tractor?

KILLBLANE: What was your average OR rate and problems with maintenance?

PATRICK: Just the conditions they were driven in, the roads, the weather. The best I remember the longevity on a vehicle might be six to eight months before it went to depot, going to depot means it got cannibalized and parts reused elsewhere. The trucks were run constantly, two, three, four days at a time, then you'd stand down for maintenance. It's not like you made a trip out and made a trip back and everything stops and everything gets fixed, and three or four days later we go on another convoy. The trucks were constantly in and out. In my unit, 442nd, we had our own maintenance shop, had a Chief Warrant Officer in charge of the maintenance

shop, I think his name was Smiley, then we had a pretty good size group of mechanics dedicated to maintaining those vehicles and keeping them moving.

KILLBLANE: That's company motor pool, right?

PATRICK: Yes.

KILLBLANE: To verify again, you mentioned about where you going out for two days, coming in and shutting down, or you were just running continuous, that wasn't clear to me?

PATRICK: We would, like to run to Ban Me Thout was a day and a day back, the run to Delat was a day out and a day back. It was maybe because of the distance, you may make it in one day out and back but you may wind up in a hang over, or a stay over, be delayed. The best I remember, initially, we would run three or four convoys, five or six days then stand down for two or three days for maintenance. I think somewhere along the way that changed and we established more of a pattern of being out for two, three, four days, then stand down for maintenance, the trucks would get regular maintenance more frequently. I can recall a lot of the problems, you asked about problems, the wheel cylinders on the trailers leaking, brakes catching on fire, burning, smoking.

KILLBLANE: So, if you guys were shutting down, do you remember what your OR rate would have been, about 60%, 70%, 80%, Operational Readiness?

PATRICK: I would be guessing, but I think it would have been pretty high. I think 60 to 70%, most equipment was ready to go most of the time.

KILLBLANE: Which battalion were you a part of?

PATRICK: 442nd was with the 36th Transportation.

KILLBLANE: Was LTC Honor your Battalion Commander when you assumed command?

PATRICK: I don't think he was, I think it was shortly after I became company commander he assumed command of the battalion.

KILLBLANE: What was he like?

PATRICK: He was a good guy to work for. I haven't seen him in all these years, but I have good memories about him. I was a young officer, and I can remember that he wasn't harsh, or unreasonable, from my standpoint, he wasn't as rough as some of the people I had worked for. He was very business like, he was the colonel and he was my boss but I saw him as being pretty understanding. Given some of the situations and things that may have happened on the road, he could have probably responded differently, but I did not recall him losing his temper. I think he was smarter than that. I think he dealt with people effectively. I enjoyed working with him. I had a lot of respect for him. I think the troops found out that he treated everybody fairly and

equally. He enjoyed being around the troops. He would show up for convoy lineup and even went out with us occasionally.

KILLBLANE: What did you learn from him?

PATRICK: A lot about how to assume responsibility and how to portray yourself. He was pretty poised. I do not recall him screaming or shouting. That wasn't his style, he was pretty controlled. I think he thought things through pretty smart. I guess what I learned was to not over react when dealing with people and to try to exercise some patience and think things through before you take your next step, evaluate, cause and effect in situations.

KILLBLANE: Did he sit you down to talk with you to mentor, counsel, or how ...

PATRICK: Probably occasionally. I felt like he placed a lot of expectations and trust in his staff and officers, expected people to do their job, keep him informed. He was easy to talk to. We were out doing our thing and he was I'm sure interacting with command and whoever else. We lived up in the same battalion area on the hill overlooking Cam Rahn Bay, the main post and South China Sea. We would all get together at one of the hooch's and have a drink and talk.

KILLBLANE: What kind of policy changes did he institute? Do you remember any of those?

PATRICK: I can't recall.

KILLBLANE: What are some of the things you may have done to improve your company while you were there?

PATRICK: We always tried to have a good mess hall, I think that was an accomplishment. We passed our Command Maintenance Inspection. Having enough equipment to do the job, you're scrounging stuff. I think we had good men. I relied on my NCOs, and let them know I relied on them. There was not a lot of animosity between the troops, NCOs and officers. It seemed that everybody worked together to get the job done.

KILLBLANE: With the accelerated promotion system that you had at that time, how did that affect the experience level of your lieutenants, and what did you use them for, what were their rolls in the convoys?

PATRICK: I recall having three different lieutenants. They were a bit inexperienced at first. You had to get them out there and you had to get them used to running convoys, the three things you had to be able to do as a commander is communicate, move and shoot. If you can't do all three of those things almost at the same time, you're in trouble. So, you had to put them out on the convoys with NCOs and break them in and they became more adept. I was fortunate to assume the company my second six months and not my first six months. Some of the lieutenants were thrown into that roll early on in the first six months.

KILLBLANE: Normal company command is six months, right?

PATRICK: That was my understanding.

KILLBLANE: For a lieutenant, how long is he going to stand in that company?

PATRICK: Probably six months, maybe eight months, I would think, he would get a promotion or move. There may be various reasons for moving him depending upon his performance.

KILLBLANE: Do you remember any of the other company commanders you worked with?

PATRICK: Fred Freeman was my hooch-mate. I think he was commander of the 566th or 563rd, or whatever. I'd like to hear from Fred, too. He's somewhere in Texas. I've never found him.

KILLBLANE: If I've got his address I'll give it to you.

PATRICK: Okay. Sorry I couldn't be more detailed, that's been 30 years ago.

KILLBLANE: You've provided a lot, believe it or not.

PATRICK: I can remember our 442nd, I think there was some history to the unit, back in WWII, I remember our company flag had a lot of streamers on it, of course I was young, never took the time to look at those or write them down or see what that meant. As far as (?), he was a lieutenant colonel at the time, of course I tried to forget about Vietnam for a long time, it was unpopular, some bad memories, or whatever. All of a sudden it started to be a little more popular, but in '74 my dad was sick and he was at the University of Virginia Hospital so I went to see him. I went through Danville, Virginia, my driver, George Howerton lived in Danville. We spent days up and down the road together, he was a good guy. I stopped by and saw him, we shared stories and stuff. Then, later on, I guess a few years ago, I found the ATAV web page, I put a post in there and heard from Terry Rhorback, he's from Texas, he's going to be here tomorrow. Of course I talked to Howerton, I heard from Wilkinson, I heard from John Smith, he was a sergeant, he's in St. Louis, but he's going to visit this summer. I've heard from some of the guys that were in the unit when I was there. I heard from Rob Johnson, he was the company commander that assumed command after me. I think you may want to talk to Rob, I think I've got his phone number. I can give you all that information.

KILLBLANE: How did you feel when you're finally getting short? Enlisted men go through a series of phases. There's that stress factor going out. How did you feel while you were running convoys?

PATRICK: I just wanted to mention to you, as far as (?), the adjutant, I think when I was there was Daniel, I can't remember the name, it started with a 'K', almost like Kilbasa or something like that, young guy. How did I feel as far as stress, getting short?

KILLBLANE: Well, the whole process, running convoys, what's going through your mind while you're out there? I know a lot of drivers are getting, they are going through phases, they get scared and they finally kind of resign themselves that what's going to happen is going to happen, then about a month out they begin to start thinking they might actually make it and be a little more cautious. As a company commander, what's it like?

PATRICK: When you first start going out on the convoys and you're going through these jungle passes and mountains and you look around any corner and you think that might be a good place for them to hit us from. I guess with more time you get accustomed to that and you get through one convoy and nothing happens and you get through another convoy and nothing happens. From other convoys and learning where the danger spots are and with the help of your NCOs you begin to learn to ropes, even though you have a safe convoy, I felt like, as a company commander, my biggest responsibility was the welfare of my troops. Maybe the NCOs thought I was nuts, but, when we would stop at night we would put the gun trucks out on the perimeter, spread the troops out. When we would stop for a break we would put the gun trucks out for security, not just take your shirt off and get your lawn chair out and take a sun dance. You can get lulled to sleep, so knowing where you are, reading your map, being able to communicate, knowing you've got your own firepower, knowing you've got support in the air cover or artillery, it's important to know where you are on that map, or pretty close to it, and that you've got communications with people that can help you. Because people get shot, people get hurt, people get sick and have to be airlifted out. Then it becomes normal, after awhile, you get over that initial nervousness and then it's almost like you're numb, you just get in the harness and go. Toward the end, the end just arrived. It seems like I was working one day running a convoy with the company, then there was a change of command ceremony and then I was on the plane back.

KILLBLANE: So how did it feel when you were going home?

PATRICK: The plane was rocking, everybody was cheering. I was glad to leave as I recall, and good to get home. I came home and my family situation was deteriorating, so when I arrived I got a divorce and became single again which was fine with me. After that I stayed in the Army another year and a half. I got out May 31st, 1971, Fort Gordon, I was with the 95th Civil Affairs Group which was attached to the 18th Airborne Corps. Last official act I did, I was the S4 with that group, we moved from Fort Gordon to Fort Bragg.

KILLBLANE: How does loss of lives of men in your convoy or your company affect you?

PATRICK: It still affects you. I still feel responsible for making the decision when we left Ban Me Thout and the gun truck got hit and troop or troops were killed and wounded. That stuff still affects me, still bothers me. You never forget but you try to deal with it and not let it ruin you, realize it was part of your job. Regardless of what efforts you made or what you've done, the decision was made, the outcomes may have been similar or may have been different, I can't second guess it.

KILLBLANE: That's all I have.