

UNITED STATES ARMY

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF TRANSPORTATION

INTERVIEW

of

COL CHARLES SUNDER

159th Transportation Terminal Battalion

CONDUCTED BY

RICHARD KILLBLANE

Transportation Corps Historian

June 5, 2001

MR. KILLBLANE: Okay, sir, could you tell me when you first arrived in Vietnam?

COL SUNDER: Yes. It was July, I can't remember the exact day, but July of '67.

MR. KILLBLANE: July of '67.

COL SUNDER: Yes

MR. KILLBLANE: And you assumed command of what organization?

COL SUNDER: I assumed command of the 159th Transportation Terminal Battalion which was, at that time, under the 5th Terminal Command at Qui Nhon, Vietnam.

MR. KILLBLANE: Okay. What were some of the challenges you had when you commanded the 159th?

COL SUNDER: Well, we were in the II Corps Area supporting operations in the central highlands area. So the 5th Terminal Command was vital in off-loading all types of ships for almost immediate support of these operations in the central highlands, in Pleiku, An Khe up in that area. The mission of the 159th was to off-load vessels in the stream. In other words, not at a permanent pier.

MR. KILLBLANE: De Long Pier?

COL SUNDER: The other battalion, 394th, used the DeLong Pier. We operated by off-loading in the stream and bringing the cargo to a beach. We called it the 'LST Beach' because an LST could be beached there. This meant we had the job of off-loading all ammunition. We off-loaded other things too, but primarily ammunition. So that was a major challenge in that you were faced with a lot of people who really weren't experienced stevedores handling a dangerous cargo under the most difficult of conditions. I had two Terminal Service (stevedore) companies and two Mike boat [LCM-8] companies plus the BARC company. The BARC off-loaded almost all the Class I. They took it immediately to the Class I [cold storage] depot which was located in the depot area in QN. The ammunition on the other hand was reloaded on trains/trucks for trans-shipment to the troops or air bases up country.

MR. KILLBLANE: Why did they require both beach operations and a DeLong Pier operations?

COL SUNDER: Well, first of all, it increased the capability of the port. But also, I think the main reason was that they didn't want the ammunition to go over the DeLong Pier. It was a facility too important to risk losing with an explosive accident.

So we off-loaded it into landing craft, LCM-8's (Mike boats) out in the ocean, so to speak. We then brought it into the LST Beach and put it on a train or trucks right there in the middle of town but some distance from the pier. It was still risky. But that was the reason for it.

MR. KILLBLANE: Did the DeLong Pier use indigenous help?

COL SUNDER: No, not indigenous. We had a Korean civilian company. The 394th and the Koreans operated the DeLong Pier and my battalion worked the ships at anchor in the ocean outside the harbor, the LST beach and the Mike boats which brought it to the beach. Also, I had responsibility for all the floating equipment, cranes, tugs, barges, etc. I think we had a 100-ton floating crane and I think two 60-toners. They were used for heavy lifts when needed anywhere in the port. In addition all the tugs were under my command. The main task of the 159th however was to off-load ammunition using the ship's gear into Mike boats, bring to it the LST beach, reload it onto trucks and railcars for shipment up country.

MR. KILLBLANE: Yes, sir.

COL SUNDER: And, of course, any LSTs that came into Qui Nhon were also off-loaded at the beach and they had a variety of cargo, not only ammunition but everything.

MR. KILLBLANE: What was the 159th called when you arrived? Did they have a nickname at that time?

COL SUNDER: Well, we've been called the Red Patchers for a long time. I don't know when or where that started. It could have started in World War II. I'm not real sure.

MR. KILLBLANE: The red patch signifies what?

COL SUNDER: Well, it's a special symbol that was sewed on the leg of our fatigue trousers .

MR. KILLBLANE: What was it made of?

COL SUNDER: A little piece of cloth .

MR. KILLBLANE: Okay.

COL SUNDER: Just a little patch not more than about an inch and a half by an inch, rectangular in shape, sewed just below your knee, and we all wore them. It was sort of a morale picker-upper type thing. You know, we were something special and a lot of times people came into town and said, where are the Red Patchers? We were identified by that.

MR. KILLBLANE: Now, was that the 159th only or did the 394th also wear them?

COL SUNDER: No the 159th only. Now, there may be other battalions that used them I notice that the Marines use them. I've seen them at Camp Lejeune but the 394th did not.

MR. KILLBLANE: Okay. So it was people running the beach operations that tend to wear the red patches.

COL SUNDER: Yes. Right. Exactly.

MR. KILLBLANE: Okay. Now were there any changes in the operations of the 159th from when you took over, not including the watch operation we had talked about, but as far as the way your mission was conducted?

COL SUNDER: There in Qui Nhon you're talking about. I can't say that there was. It was well established when I got there and took over from the previous commander. We had some rather nasty situations that occurred in the fall of '67. One was when an ammunition ship almost blew up that could have caused others to go and perhaps the whole anchorage area. A short time later we had a bad fire in the encampment (living) area of one of the terminal service companies. It was the 854th the same company that was involved with the explosion. Morale especially in that company couldn't have been any lower. It was obvious that something dramatic was needed.

MR. KILLBLANE: Could you specify?

COL SUNDER: That's when this Sunder's Wonders all started.

MR. KILLBLANE: Oh.

COL SUNDER: I remember sitting down with my staff. I said, we got to do something to buck up the morale of the troops. The same company suffered two serious situations which was the explosion which incidentally killed two of our people and injured several more and

almost blew up the whole harbor and then, this fire.

MR. KILLBLANE: Were both of these accidents?

COL SUNDER: They were accidents. There was an investigation in both cases. It was just one of those things, inexperience more than anything else. What happened as far as the explosion is concerned, they were off-loading 500 pound bombs into a Mike boat, two of them to a pallet. The pallet slipped out of the sling it was in and fell. The ship was almost empty so it was riding quite high in the stream there. It fell a considerable distance and then hit the steel deck of the Mike boat and fortunately it was what they call a low level explosion, which killed the coxswain almost immediately but didn't blow up the mike-boat or the ship.

Of the other people in the Mike boat, two jumpers went over the bowramp. one saved himself by climbing up the anchor chain, The second was badly burned and died later. The assistant to the coxswain was behind the cabin area, I forget what they call it, copula or whatever, and he didn't receive any of the blast. He survived and was able to get on board the ship.

But what happened then was frightening. The Mike boat with several pallets of bombs aboard had no one steering it. It was just drifting. So it just moved down the side of the ship. The crew of the ship was frantically trying to get the hoses on a fire that had started in the wooden pallets. When it went around, I think the bow of the ship, instead of coming around then down the other side of the ship, it went on out into an area right in the center of about five ammunition ships, which were in one stage or another of being unloaded and it then made a couple of circles. Then all of a sudden it blew. Of course, that was the end of the Mike boat and the end of the coxswain who was still on board.

MR. KILLBLANE: Oh, there were other bombs still on the boat.

COL SUNDER: Yes, and the coxswain. He was unconscious or dead.

MR. KILLBLANE: Right.

COL SUNDER: We don't know which. But that was a very frightening experience and I know when I went out on board the ship maybe 20 min or so later, all you saw were crewmen and my stevedores in a daze, they were just standing around bewildered.

MR. KILLBLANE: In shock.

COL SUNDER: Yes. I think it was shortly after that, the fire. That's what brought on this little thing about Sunder's Wonders.

MR. KILLBLANE: Tell me how you came to this decision, came up with the idea.

COL SUNDER: Well there were about ten of us around the table talking, my staff and some of the enlisted men, the sergeant major and so forth and I'm not sure who came up with the

idea. Somebody did and at first I wasn't too keen on it but I wanted something that would make us a little bit different, distinctive, that the men could feel that they were a part of something special. And so I went ahead with it.

And they painted it on the jeeps. Then, my driver, when he drove up the next day or so, he had this 'Sunder Himself' painted on it. I almost shot him, but I let it go. Anyhow, that's how it all started.

MR. KILLBLANE: It worked.

COL SUNDER: Yes it worked. It absolutely worked.

MR. KILLBLANE: Why did it work?

COL SUNDER: From then on, we were just such a close organization we were something special, it was unbelievable.

MR. KILLBLANE: What is it about the idea of a name that would improve morale so much?

COL SUNDER: I don't know. I knew that we had to come up with some idea that made us distinctive and that we weren't just the guys that went out there six days a week, seven days a week, and humped ammunition on ships, and, you know, just faded into the sun. Nobody knew what we did, nobody cared what we did, or whatever.

This way, the one thing that it did, everybody knew who we were. Our vehicles couldn't go above the speed limit or park in the wrong place or not salute the general when he came past, or those kinds of things. Otherwise, I was on the telephone, you know, real quick. But he went along with it. I thought sure he was going to say, get that off all of your vehicles, but he didn't.

MR. KILLBLANE: What else did they do besides paint it on the vehicles?

COL SUNDER: Well.

MR. KILLBLANE: I know at Wunder Beach you people painted the sign. Did you have something like that down there?

COL SUNDER: At our operation in Qui Nhon, I don't recall that. I don't recall that but it could be. We had a number of things going with the Navy people, who were across the inlet. They had an operation called 'Market Time' and we always had something going with them, like who had the best vehicles, boats, etc, We had a lot of back and forth going between us. We'd put signs on our boats every once in awhile. We also manned an observation post on the top of the hill overlooking the harbor and this outfits base there. It was an extra mission given to me. I think I had about five men up there at any given time.

MR. KILLBLANE: And that LP [listening post] for what, sir?

COL SUNDER: Security for the harbor. It was an outpost located on top of the most prominent hill, that provided security for the port as well as 'Market Time'. They had small, fast 'swift' boats that patrolled up and down the coast. They had a number of these outfits located in various locations in Vietnam. However VC did infiltrate it one time. They came up over that hill and our people didn't pick them up and got down into the base and caused a lot of damage. It was Christmas week of '67. There was quite a firefight. We could hear it and see it going on across from our barracks. I remember it very well. There were quite a few casualties on both sides. The Navy guys finally got all the VC before they were able to escape out of there. The next day I went over to see. It wasn't a very pleasant sight.

MR. KILLBLANE: What other kinds of enemy activity did you have at Qui Nhon? Rocket attacks, infiltration, sabotage?

COL SUNDER: In Qui Nhon, I don't recall any rocket attacks. I mean, we had some on the beach but there wasn't any that I remember in QN. But during Tet now, yes, there was a lot of activity and our people got involved very actively in that.

I was called home on emergency leave sometime in late December or early January. I was home for about four weeks and it was during this time that Tet took place, so I wasn't there for it. But our guys did get into some firefights, especially the ones that lived down in the town.

We had five companies, two were in one place and three in another. The two up in Kien Tan were in a compound with a number of two story tropical barracks that were plush compared to the other companies who were in tents. There was a barbed wire fence surrounding it, sort of a parade field in the center. It was a pretty good-sized piece of land. My HQ was also located there. The men had to actually take firing positions to defend that compound from an attack by armed infiltrators. They were lucky they didn't suffer any casualties.

MR. KILLBLANE: So when did you come back from leave?

COL SUNDER: I think I got back about the 15th of February. So I must have left Vietnam about the 15th of January, something like that. I was home about a month.

MR. KILLBLANE: Okay sir. Well, tell me about Wonder Beach then. How you got notified and what happened?

COL SUNDER: Well, I'm looking at another paper, which I don't think I sent to you, it's helping me refresh my memory on how it all got started. I think I told you most of this, but the Qui Nhon Support Command, which was part of the 1st Log [Logistics] Command was commanded by Brigadier General McBride. He was given the mission of taking elements from his command and moving up to Da Nang to form a new support command, the Da Nang Support Command.

This was necessary because of the addition of two Army divisions, the 1st Air Cav and the 101st Airborne into that area to help the Marines which were hard pressed at Khe Sanh. Maintaining supply routes to support these units in Operation Pegasus, the offensive to relieve

the marines at Khe Sanh, was critical. The NVA had interdicted Highway 1 over the Hai Van Pass. and were interdicting with great success the two sea LOC's into Dong Ha, the Qua Viet and into Tan My, which is east of Hue.

So there had to be some additional logistical support and that's the reason for the Da Nang Support Command. Why my battalion was picked and how the various units that I ended up with up there were assigned to me I can't answer. Maybe some of my staff can because those decisions were made while I was still on emergency leave.

MR. KILLBLANE: What was your personal working relationship with General McBride while he was still at Qui Nhon?

COL SUNDER: Mine were good.

MR. KILLBLANE: And he personally knew you.

COL SUNDER: Yes. Oh, yes. Oh, definitely. We had some problems with his deputy. You might pick that up by reading some of that song. But not the General.

MR. KILLBLANE: Right.

COL SUNDER: They were both Ordnance Corps and in the beginning, they weren't too keen on Transportation people. But Colonel McCleod, who was the 5th Terminal commander, did a fantastic job of changing their feelings about Transportation people, along with the 8th Highway Group CO. He's well known around here. I can't think of his name.

MR. KILLBLANE: Not [Colonel Joe] Bellino?

COL SUNDER: Yes, Bellino.

MR. KILLBLANE: Bellino.

COL SUNDER: Exactly. Between Bellino and McCleod and those of us who worked for them, various battalions that worked for those two people, changed McBride's feelings about us. I don't think we could ever have changed that deputies feelings about TC types.

We had a good relationship and I couldn't have had any better support from any commander than I did from McBride while I was at the beach. He made sure we came directly under his Command and I'm sure he was under great pressure to change that. But he did not and it worked out well. With the 26th General Support Group up there in Quang Tri, we probably should have been placed under them but we were not, and he made sure of that and it worked out great.

MR. KILLBLANE: That's good. So you get notified, you came back off leave and then, they notified you to go?

COL SUNDER: Well, I first heard it from my S-3, in a telephone conversation I had with him while I was still stateside, at that time he was the acting commander.

MR. KILLBLANE: What was his name?

COL SUNDER: Bill Dimon.

MR. KILLBLANE: Okay.

COL SUNDER: We had this conversation by telephone and he urged me to get back as soon as possible, which I did. Very shortly after I put my mother in a nursing home, I came back. I went back and I know I flew into Da Nang and I'm sure I went from the airfield on up to the Support Command and that was my first personal involvement.

Then, I quickly went back down to Qui Nhon and they had, because of a number of factors that I'm not fully aware of, placed the operation on standby. So we did have about 10 days after I got back, in that bracket. I made another trip to Da Nang and did some reconnaissance on that trip and also was able to do a lot of coordination with the 5th Terminal Command and the Qui Nhon Support Command, which was in the process of splitting up and forming in Da Nang.

MR. KILLBLANE: What kind of coordination did you do?

COL SUNDER: I sat down with their staff people and talked over a number of things, which I thought were pertinent. One of the first things I did, of course, was meet with my people and they gave me their input of what went on while I was gone, so I was brought up to date on the whole operation and I'm sure made some suggestions etc. Then I did my coordination with 5th Term, Qui Nhon Support Command etc. I also took a flight down to Cam Ranh Bay because the Engineer Battalion, the 14th Engineer Battalion, was slated to go up with us, to be up there at the same time. And they were supposed to do all of the engineering work, especially the road out to the beach and it just so happened that I knew the battalion commander, Ben Lewis, who later became a three star general, But, anyhow, I went down there and we sat down and talked and coordinated a lot of things about the beach and what we expected to do once we got on the beach.

MR. KILLBLANE: What were you coordinating? What did you need him for?

COL SUNDER: Well, I suppose it wasn't absolutely essential but I just thought it would be good to bring him into the picture.

MR. KILLBLANE: What did you know at that time about Wonder Beach?

COL SUNDER: Well, I had a pretty good idea. The one thing I did know was that he had to get that road out to the beach repaired and put in good condition. At that time, I didn't think about the sand being a killer like it was, but this came later. It seems to me that the main coordination was how we were going to bring the units into it and where they were going to go,

and these kinds of things.

MR. KILLBLANE: So you had already done a recon of the area?

COL SUNDER: Yes. I went back up to Da Nang, after I spent time in Qui Nhon being brought up to speed by my staff, coordinating with 5th Term, the Support Command and being satisfied all preparations were complete and the outfit was ready to go. I then went back up to Da Nang and did a recon, both aerial and on the ground. So I had a pretty good understanding of what we were facing as far as terrain was concerned.

MR. KILLBLANE: Why did they pick that site?

COL SUNDER: They had some Navy underwater people go out there and do some recon work. But I think it was mainly because of the road, an old road that was there and had been there, was put there by the French way back. That area was called "The Street Without Joy." A name from a book on the French army's experience during their war there.

MR. KILLBLANE: Street Without Joy.

COL SUNDER: Yes. The French had been there and they had this road but it was in very poor repair. There were a couple of bridges that needed to be repaired and that kind of thing.

MR. KILLBLANE: What was the road made out of?

COL SUNDER: As I recall, it was a dirt road that had some kind of red gravel on it or something. It was awful red. That's about all I can remember about it. There were a lot of big holes in it and lots of things, and they wanted to widen it because we were going to have a lot of truck traffic on it. But the funny part about it, they changed the whole thing and didn't send the 14th Battalion up there until about three weeks at least, two or three weeks later. In the meantime, they sent this SEABEE outfit out there and they actually started the repairs on the road before we arrived. They had been out there working on that road for, at least, two weeks and they did a great job. And, of course, they helped us out in many ways once we got there.

MR. KILLBLANE: So you did all the recon and then you had to get your units ready. You also visited the unit along the way that you were going to pick up and be with you at the beach?

COL SUNDER: Well, this other paper that I reviewed the other day reminded me where these other units came from. The Terminal Service Company, I think it was 561st, came from the Cam Ranh Bay area and the one that I talked to you about that had a very unusual beginning up there in I Corps [Tactical Zone] was the 403rd Terminal Transfer Company and it was commanded by Capt L. A. Olds. I'll never forget them. When I went up to Da Nang, I met Olds. He and his men were living in a hangar. It was one of these rehab type hangars someplace and the people were on canvas cots, those that could scrounge one. Some of the soldiers were laying around on the floor and they had put them to work with the graves registration people. They

were the saddest group of soldiers I had ever seen. They had had enough of what they had been doing up there for about three weeks and so when I was able to tell them what I planned to have them do and that we were coming up and, hopefully, would be up there within the next couple of days, they were just delighted that they were going to get out of Da Nang and up to the beach with us. So it made their day. The LARC Company came a little bit later but they came from Thailand.

MR. KILLBLANE: These are LARC 5's.

COL SUNDER: Yes. They were LARC 5's.

MR. KILLBLANE: Okay.

COL SUNDER: I have all of the numbers of these various units. I forget the actual numbers but I have them on a piece of paper here if you want them. But they came from Thailand. They brought their own maintenance people and had all kinds of spare parts. They were fantastic from that standpoint. We had very little maintenance problems with the LARC Company.

MR. KILLBLANE: Now, when did they arrive?

COL SUNDER: Well, it's hard for me to remember but it was about two to three weeks after I got there. There was something in the notes that I kept to that effect. I only kept the notes through the first 13 days, so it seems to me that they were either on their way or pretty close to being there. The only two companies, and that's very clear in this other piece of paper, is that the only two companies that came with me from Qui Nhon were the BARCs and it was not the whole BARC CO and the 71st Terminal Service Company. There I had two terminal service companies working under me all this time, doing this same type of work ie, off-loading cargo in the stream. Why they changed and sent me the 71st, I do not know.

MR. KILLBLANE: Oh, the 71st didn't belong to you?

COL SUNDER: No. It did not belong to me. It belonged to the 394th Battalion and was working at the DeLong Pier.

So when I think back on it now, if I had been there whenever this all came up, I would have probably raised the issue and I probably did raise the issue. But I don't remember too much about it and it was sort of in concrete by then because they had to, you know, there was a lot of personnel work that had to go along with any kind of a deployment like that. They had to make sure that they had so many days left in country and those kinds of things. So why the 71st was picked, and not the 854th, 285th, or the 264th all companies under me in Qui Nhon, I don't recall. I can't believe that I didn't raise the issue but I don't recall at what point and I wasn't there when it first came up, so I don't know. What else would you like to know about the beach?

MR. KILLBLANE: So you arrive up there. Describe what took place on the landing.

COL SUNDER: Well, the day we landed was a pretty miserable day. It rained most of the time. There wasn't a lot of wind to start with so we were able to bring the BARCs in. We came in on the BARC'S Everything was loaded on them in Qui Nhon and they were loaded in the well deck of an LSD (Landing Ship, Dock). This was a special Navy landing craft that had a deck that could be flooded so that smaller floating craft could be brought inside the ship, it was called a well deck. So the BARC's were loaded in there. There were six of them. They were all loaded initially with our unit equipment and other supplies.

On the morning of 2Mar we loaded on those BARCs with the cargo and came ashore. It was a miserable day, rained almost all day and later became quite windy. What we mainly tried to do when we got ashore was to organize ourselves and start digging some kind of revetments. We spent most of that first day doing those kind of tasks.. Later the ship had a problem with its rear door. It was damaged by the rough seas that developed as the day progressed. Anyhow, the LSD had to go to Da Nang for repairs with much of our equipment and supplies still on board.

MR. KILLBLANE: What caused the damage? Do you know?

COL SUNDER: I don't know whether one of the BARCs hit it or something. No one ever said that to me but something happened. It was rough seas and they had to open and close those doors a number of times. It was some damage to the door so they couldn't completely open it. It had to go to Da Nang to make the repairs. One of the BARCs was inside but the rest were ashore or at shipside empty waiting to go inside to be loaded. So we brought them ashore.

MR. KILLBLANE: Now, who was already there when you arrived?

COL SUNDER: A company of the 1st Cav. What battalion? The 1st of the 5th Cav I believe. I remember the battalion commander's name. Lieutenant Colonel Runkle and he was killed only a few weeks after that. But he had one of his companies there, that provided security, as well as I think there were some other units of the 101st still there. They were in the process of changing over their responsibilities. I know the first night we had to provide, I think, about 50 men from the 71st to augment their security outpost around the parameter. And we did that every night from then on, maybe not in the same number but we augmented them. They were responsible for security and provided it with our help.

MR. KILLBLANE: Whom did they answer to? As far as the beach operation, who was in charge of the beach and how did the security force, who did they answer to?

COL SUNDER: Well, if you're thinking of the beach operation itself, I was responsible for the beach operation. No question about that. The security of the beach perimeter was, the 1st Cav, they had that responsibility. and they did a nice job. They stayed there for a couple of weeks doing it and, then there was a Marine unit that had been evacuated from Khe Sanh. They provided it for a week or so and then, the 14th Engineers after they arrived took over some of that responsibility.

I never had the responsibility of securing the perimeter. A tactical unit which was co-located on the beach with us always had that responsibility Later on, there was a tank battalion

there also and they provided security. We always had outposts on it. We just didn't turn it all over to them.

MR. KILLBLANE: Now, so when your people had positions assigned during the parameter, did you fall under the control of the security force?

COL SUNDER: They did. They did for that period of time. Yes.

MR. KILLBLANE: There were SEABEES there also.

COL SUNDER: The SEABEES were there. I don't remember when they finally left. They did finally leave but they were there for, at least, the first couple of weeks of the operation and helped out in the POL [petroleum-oil-lubricants] area, helping to make the revetments for the bladders that the Marines put down there and, then, the ASP [ammunition supply point] area, we wanted revetments there so we could store our ammunition and have some kind of protection between the various elements of the ASP and so they helped with those kinds of things.

In the beginning, they also helped preparing revetments for the BARC's. So they were a big help. But finally the 14th Engineers came in and the SEABEE's left. The 14th Engineers, the biggest thing that I remember about them is making those sand cement roads. They were fantastic.

MR. KILLBLANE: Could you explain that again?

COL SUNDER: Yes. Right. It was really great. We brought in a lot of cement in fifty pound bags, and the engineers put them on the back of a truck and we showed them where we wanted roads and they went around and threw a fifty pound bag from the truck maybe four bags every ten feet or so and then somebody came along opened the bags then a Roto Rooter would mix the sand and cement. Next, they had a water truck with a sprayer on the back and it went down and sprayed that mixture and we stayed off of it for about 48 hours or something like that and behold almost smooth concrete road.

MR. KILLBLANE: Who built it? The SEABEES or the 14th?

COL SUNDER: The 14th.

MR. KILLBLANE: The 14th. Okay.

COL SUNDER: Yes. They did it. They did a great job. The one thing about it was that the sides would crumble if you go on and off a lot. So every so often they would make a cement off ramp to it, just maybe three or four feet long and it worked.

Did I show you that letter from General Barkley? He was a L/Col then and the CO of the tank battalion located on the beach. On a recent trip back to VN he visited the beach and sent me this picture he took then and a note. I haven't had a chance to talk to him personally. I wonder whether there's any sign of those roads being there.

MR. KILLBLANE: Concrete lasts a long time.

COL SUNDER: Each day we had an operations meeting where the activities for the day were planned and coordinated. As the ships came in we'd start off-loading them. I think the Washburn started on the 5th, It was the first AKA that we off-loaded, and I think we started it on the 5th of March. We off-loaded all kinds of ships over the period of time we were there. They were Navy ships mostly, AKA's, LST's, LCU's. There was one asset that was major to the whole operation and that was the pontoon causeway that the Navy brought down from Japan and installed. It was the signature facility at the beach and vital for us to offload the many LST's we worked. The Navy also maintained it. And that was a chore. If you run forklifts up and down it constantly, day and night, it's going to take a beating and the weather added to the wear and tear So they were always bringing in new replacement parts for it but somehow those Navy guys kept it in service and it worked. We off-loaded LST's pretty efficiently with the rough terrain (RT) forklifts running up and down the length of the causeway with pallet after pallet of cargo.

The reason the causeway was so important was because the gradient of the beach was so slight it would not allow LST's to beach with a dry ramp ie, vehicles could not use the ramp without going through water. A plan to solve this problem was put forth by some so called experts from Saigon who proposed building two breakwaters so the beach could fill up in between them. After much effort of bringing up a great many unused steel anti-submarine nets packaged in huge rectangular bundles and using a heavy lift helicopter to put them in place , it didn't work and the whole thing was scraped, I often wonder if those bundles of nets are still there.

MR. KILBLANE: Explain this a little more

COL SUNDER: These nets were great big huge bundles, rectangular cubes weighing over 2 tons a bundle. Then they sent up a helicopter, one of those heavy lift 'sky hook' types that lifted one bundle at a time and put them in place and built like two brick walls, so to speak. The idea was that the sand would build up between these two breakwaters. It didn't I remember, I think it was the 1st Log [Logistics] Command general, who came up with this civilian specialist who was supposed to know what he was doing but it didn't work.

MR. KILLBLANE: What happened?

COL SUNDER: Well, after they had put in this tremendous effort to do it, it never changed the gradient of the beach one bit and it never built up to any great extent.

MR. KILLBLANE: Oh, yes. You said there was a problem with the beach gradient and that's why you couldn't land?

COL SUNDER: Well, that's right. The ideal is to have a beach gradient which allows LST's, LCM's and LCU's to beach, drop their ramp, and allow vehicles especially forklifts to exit and enter the vessel without going through water. But with the gradient we had an LST couldn't do it. LCU's came close. LCM's could do it most of the time.

MR. KILLBLANE: The beach was too steep?

COL SUNDER: No. It wasn't steep enough.

MR. KILLBLANE: Okay.

COL SUNDER: It was too slight a gradient.

MR. KILLBLANE: Got it.

COL SUNDER: So they ground out before the ramp could give them a dry ramp. Now when the AKA's came in there, they had their own mike boats. They were Mike (LCM) 6's, different than the Army's Mike (LCM) 8's. I didn't have any Mike 8's up there. I had them in Qui Nhon but not on the beach. And Mike 6's, weren't very good in rough weather. They were okay if the seas were nice and calm. Yes, we hauled a lot of cargo from the Washburn and the Tulare and the other AKAs that came up there. But the 6's were limited. So the BARCs and the LARC 5's handled the major amount of the cargo that was brought in from the ships to the shore. The LST's couldn't ground out, they couldn't come the whole way in therefore the causeway and it worked. Later on, we shortened that causeway and we put in another one, a shorter one that LCU's could marry up to and it worked. We learned every day, and when we found other ways of doing things better, more efficiently, with the equipment we had we implemented it. We had some problems. We sunk a BARC. Again, you have to work with operators that don't have very much experience. This young man was out there as the coxswain of the BARC and it started to take on water. I don't know what caused it, a hole in the side or something. And he didn't let the ship know soon enough.

The ship used their radar to guide him to shore in a dark night. This was night with a lot of clouds and fog, a bad night. He didn't let the ship know early enough and somehow or other there was some mix-up in communications and the young coxswain got lost in the fog and he was going in circles and not making it to shore. All of a sudden he realized he was taking on too much water and couldn't make it. He had a load on board but he wasn't overloaded. It ended up sinking. The 2 man crew made it to shore, but we had a heck of a time getting the sunken BARC out of the water and on shore. After much effort over several days we finally did get it on shore but we never could bring it into our perimeter. And as far as I know, it's still sitting out there as a monument to the beach. It was still there when I left and when they evacuated the beach several weeks later it was still there.

MR. KILLBLANE: So you ran twenty-hour operations.

COL SUNDER: Yes.

MR. KILLBLANE: Okay. Because you mentioned about revetments for the BARCs when you parked them at night. So they're not parking that much. You're not shutting these things down except maybe for maintenance.

COL SUNDER: Well, it was a matter of how many you were going to use at any one

given time. They weren't all running back and forth all the time.

MR. KILLBLANE: I see.

COL SUNDER: So there were some situations where they were sitting in these revetments and we were rocketed a couple of times on the beach and the BARCs never took any damage but the LARC' did. There were several LARC's that took some, let's say superficial damage. There was no major damage like the whole LARC blowing up or anything like that but they took some shrapnel into the front ends of them. You know, they're made out of aluminum. So we did have some of that kind of damage.

MR. KILLBLANE: Outside of being rocketed, was there any other attempts by the enemy to shut down operations?

COL SUNDER: I don't recall of anything. There might have been a couple of efforts to infiltrate the perimeter in the Engineers area which they handled. It did not effect our operation. As I recall, they or the tank battalion might have had some problems. The tank battalion really was operational up there. It got involved in a couple of really major fights while we were up on the beach. Not on the beach itself, but within like ten to twenty kilometers from where we were. There was a big ground combat operation just north of us and they were involved in that.

And I remember meeting with the tank battalion commander a couple of times and he telling me about how they had been shot at a few times. But the big operation was that one up north of us, with some NVA units, major-sized units, and they helped the 2nd Brigade of the 1st Cav in a major operation. So they did do those kinds of things from the beach. And, of course, a Brigade of the 5th Mechanized Division deploying in country from the States came through the beach. This was after I left.

MR. KILLBLANE: But you know of that deployment then?

COL SUNDER: Oh, yes. They were moved through the beach and got themselves oriented. It seems to me it was August. It was just a matter of a couple of weeks after I left. I think I left about the 20th of July or something like that and the 5th Mech was brought through the beach and organized there.

MR. KILLBLANE: Now, you say when you left. You personally left, you rotating back to the States.

COL SUNDER: Yes.

MR. KILLBLANE: Okay. And the 159th remained there.

COL SUNDER: Oh, the 159th stayed there for another month or two.

MR. KILLBLANE: Okay.

COL SUNDER: I don't know the exact date when they left but it was in September.

MR. KILLBLANE: That's interesting. Now, you mentioned about the tool used to improve the morale back in Qui Nhon was to come up with the name of Sunder's Wonders and now you get here and the only unit you're bringing with you that was with your original 159th was the BARC Company.

COL SUNDER: That's right.

MR. KILLBLANE: And actually, it's only a couple of platoons. And so now all these guys are calling themselves Sunder's Wonders also?

COL SUNDER: The battalion, itself, took on that name and kept that name. The units, some of them and some of them didn't. Now, I don't know what happened to them, the ones that we left behind in Qui Nhon, how they reacted to it. The ones that were up on the beach, they didn't paint their jeeps or anything like that. No. We didn't do that but we were Sunder's Wonders of Wunder Beach. That stuck.

MR. KILLBLANE: So how did Wunder Beach name come about?

COL SUNDER: How did it come about? Well, I guess what happened was we painted that sign and put it up there and that was it and they picked it up. This thing here, Westmoreland used that term and Pierson used that term in his after action report and from then on it was Wunder Beach. And they spelled it and some of the reference was the Task Force Sunder of Wunder Beach and that's the reason it took on the spelling of W-u-n-d-e-r as opposed to what we had done in Qui Nhon, which was W-o-n-d-e-r.

MR. KILLBLANE: So the sign you guys painted up said Wonder Beach.

COL SUNDER: Yes.

MR. KILLBLANE: Okay.

COL SUNDER: Again, it was W-o-n-d-e-r. That's what it was. I don't know what else I can tell you. I can say this. That it was a complete logistics operation. We had all classes of supply there. In Class I we had reefer, we had an ice cream plant, we had a bakery. We supplied all the units in the area with ice cream three times a week. The 159th had little to do with making the ice cream. There was a unit under the 626th S&S [Supply and Service] Company. But it was there, part of the beach. And, of course, the POL was really the Marines, They put the bladders in there and maintained them. Navy tankers brought in the various products, hooked up to the underwater line which fed the bladders. Army tanker trucks took the product up country to the troops, There were landing pads for helicopter refueling at the POL site also.

Our people handled the actual handling of it, filling up the tankers, the aircraft that landed there, etc.. Our famous 403rd Transportation Terminal Company handled the ammunition depot.

I'd never heard of a Terminal Transfer unit so I didn't know what to do with them, so I gave them the responsibility of that and they loved it, plus the beach clearance.

MR. KILLBLANE: Now, when you were transporting up in that LSD, how did you find the beach? Now you're coming in by water. How did you identify the beach?

COL SUNDER: How did I identify the beach?

MR. KILLBLANE: How did you know you were in the right spot?

COL SUNDER: Well, I had nothing to do with that. That had to be done by the commodore of the Navy who was responsible for that and the captain of that ship. I had quite an experience along those lines, my personal experiences, not too much with the unit but I had a couple of interesting experiences. Somehow or other when the decision was made to move, I was in Da Nang.

MR. KILLBLANE: Okay, sir.

COL SUNDER: I went up to Camp Evans, the location of the 1st Air Cav Division headquarters. I had lunch with General Rosson, the Division CG [Commanding General] and some of his staff, his G-3 and his G-4 and I explained to them what we were going to do, and they were delighted. General Rosson asked, "When am I going to get ice cream?" I said, "I can't tell you exactly but within a couple or three weeks." That night I met with the battalion CO who had responsibility for the area where we were to be located and for the security of the landing. With him were the district adviser and the Vietnamese district chief. We met at the battalion CP [Command Post] one of the battalions of the 101st Division. I'll never forget that night because it was my first experience of being at the center of a real combat situation. There was artillery and small arms firing throughout the night. Besides being the Battalion CP it was also the Battalion Aid Station. The battalion surgeon was there and he was taking care of several wounded. It was just an interesting night for me.

The next morning after learning that the LSD would not be offshore until after 1PM we decided to postpone the landing until the following morning. I wanted a full day to allow us to get ashore and organize ourselves. This delay gave me some additional preparation time. I was able to fly out by helicopter to meet with the Navy Commodore on his flagship, an aircraft carrier. We met with him and his staff, made final arrangements, and then, when the LSD with my men and equipment finally arrived, they transported me by Marine helicopter, over to the LSD.

When we arrived over the LSD, all the CONEX containers with all of our equipment were stacked all over the deck so the helicopter had no place to land. They were going to put me in a harness and lower me by a cable. I said no way, there had to be a better way. That Marine pilot hovered that helicopter on top of a CONEX container but didn't touch it.

MR. KILLBLANE: At sea?

COL SUNDER: His wheels were just a few inches above the top of the container so I just stepped out on the top of the CONEX container. What a great exhibition of flying that helicopter. My people brought a forklift up and raised up the forks and got me off the container and down on the deck. That's how I got on board the LSD the night before the landing. I spent the night on the LSD. So those were a couple of interesting nights and days that I had up there. I'm trying to think of anything else. We had a couple of accidents up there where I lost a couple of men.

One was drowned on the LARC 5 and we still don't know how it happened. He was an excellent crewman of the LARC 5 and he went overboard in some way, it was really tragic. I had another guy who was going up to Dong Ha to the dentist, the only way to get up there, not the only way, but the way he was able to work it was by helicopter and the helicopter was shot down and we lost him that way. So we did have some casualties but none as part of the actual operation. We were very fortunate.

MR. KILLBLANE: Okay. What was your command relationship? Who did you answer to while you were at Wonder Beach?

COL SUNDER: The whole time I was at Wunder Beach I answered directly to General McBride.

MR. KILLBLANE: McBride?

COL SUNDER: Yes.

MR. KILLBLANE: Did he come down to visit? What kind of VIP visits did you get while you were there?

COL SUNDER: Oh, golly. Yes he visited us several times as well as other star ranked officers. I had quite a few listed in that little log that I kept for the first 13 days. We had everybody there from General Westmoreland on down. Even General Frank Besson, who at the time was CG of AMC [Army Material Command], stopped in on one of his visits from stateside. General Richard Stillwell, General Creighton Abrams, General Cushman, who was CG of 3rd MAF [Marine Amphibious Force], Major General Scott, The CG of First Log Command, Major General Rosson, CG of 1st Cav Division, Major General Pierson, Chief of Staff of 24th Corps and the list goes on and on. Especially in the early days there was some star rank there every day.

MR. KILLBLANE: And did they interfere with the operations or did, essentially, they'd just come up to see you guys working and provide help?

COL SUNDER: Well, it got a lot of publicity, I guess, but it also caused a lot of concern among a lot of the higher ranks. A LOTS [logistics-over-the-shore] operation was risky. It wasn't a sure thing of being successful. And some, especially the tactical people, weren't sold on it. But they accepted it because they didn't have any better solution and they had to have more logistics support in that area or they couldn't pull off Operation PEGASUS, the relief of the Marines at

Khe Sanh, and that was the whole purpose of us being there.

That was their main mission to relieve the Marines up at Khe Sanh, and we had to provide the logistics support, which allowed them to go on the offensive to make that relief. And so, obviously, there were a lot of people who were a little nervous about it and they wanted to come up and see, first hand, what was going on and they did. For the first ten, fifteen days I mean, there was a constant stream of brass. As I said, Westmoreland came up. I remember that very well because I was out. I wasn't goofing off but I was way out on the perimeter checking on something, and all of a sudden I get a radio or some kind of message, they had to come up with a special signal to let me know, so I come charging back. The reason I remember is that it happened to be a Sunday and I had told the NCO's they could go ahead and have a cookout. They had found some steaks on the reefer ship. One of the perks of being in the offloading business. Anyhow, they were going to grill some steaks. Of course the grilling was taking place in full view of the helo landing pad. Westmoreland didn't seem to mind and was happy with the whole operation. Years later when I ran into him at Army football games in North Carolina, he always remembered me from the beach operation.

MR. KILLBLANE: You guys were what? You were exceeding everybody's, all the estimates and expectations.

COL SUNDER: Yes. Some people didn't expect us to go up much over 300 short tons a day. I think our average was well over 1,000 and that was including a lot of downtime with weather and other situations. We off-loaded a lot of steel matting for airstrips, drums of oil like material for controlling dust, lumber, and of course ammo and other supplies. You name it we handled it.

MR. KILLBLANE: You mentioned, initially, a problem with the sand, and with the driving on the sand.

COL SUNDER: Oh, yes.

MR. KILLBLANE: That's why you needed the matting.

COL SUNDER: Well, we used the matting on our helicopter lift type things and also in the ASP. Again, the helicopters lifts because they'd come in and picked up ammunition. But most of the matting that came in was for some airfield that they planned to build in that area but they did not do it, I don't think. So what happened to the matting I don't know? But we used some of it. We used it in building our bunkers in some cases and that kind of stuff.

MR. KILLBLANE: Oh. So you didn't use it for the LARCs, for driving around on the beach.

COL SUNDER: No.

MR. KILLBLANE: Okay.

COL SUNDER: We didn't need it for that. We didn't use it for roads for our other vehicles either. We got the sand cement roads that help to overcome the sand problem, we didn't need it for that.

MR. KILLBLANE: Okay.

COL SUNDER: And we didn't use it before. We did in a couple of cases but nothing that really helped us out until we got the sand cement roads.

MR. KILLBLANE: The sand cement roads were for the beach so that the LARCs and the BARCs could drop off the supplies.

COL SUNDER: Well, the LARCs and the BARCs were able to maneuver on sand. That was no problem.

MR. KILLBLANE: Okay.

COL SUNDER: It was the other vehicles. Our jeeps and trucks and those kinds of things. Impossible. Impossible, until we got the sand cement roads.

MR. KILLBLANE: And that's within the camp.

COL SUNDER: That's within the camp. Right. Our camp was sort of like this (pointed to a sketch of the beach perimeter) I forget exactly where all the roads were located, but one in general circled the facility on the inside of course but we had a couple of other ones also. They were primarily for the land vehicles not the BARCs and LARCs they were amphibians that had big tires and had no trouble with the sand.

MR. KILLBLANE: Now, how did weather effect your operations? How often did it shut you down? What did you guys do?

COL SUNDER: Weather was a factor, always is in port operations and of course much more so for a LOTS. Rough seas greatly affected our operation. It was very difficult to keep the LARC5's along side a ship. They were practically useless in any size sea swells. The BARCs, of course, were bigger and pretty stable. But any kind of rough seas, a lot of wind, affected the mike boats and the LARCs.

MR. KILLBLANE: So what did you guys do during your down time?

COL SUNDER: Well, if it wasn't real bad, we continued to off-load the BARCs and if we had an LST in there it was worked. Each day was different and we had to decide what we could do and we tried to keep in business every day and for the most part we did.

MR. KILLBLANE: Sir, was there any down time for your men during this entire operation?

COL SUNDER: What do you mean by that?

MR. KILLBLANE: Down time, relaxing time. You guys are running lots of operations continuously.

COL SUNDER: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. I mean, usually we tried to give the guys at least one day off a week. I mean, when I say off, where were they going to go? We did have some movies that came in. They came in and we had a chaplain come in on Sunday and had religious services. I remember one of the Catholic chaplain's was a Marine major who flew his own helicopter and he started out on the ships, you know, went to two or three, like we had a hospital ship offshore plus a couple of other ships.

He would go out there and then he'd end up at our place and we'd have services.

We weren't actually doing something every minute. There was time to relax and write letters. I can't remember. We had a chaplain in our Battalion. He was a Protestant chaplain. I can't remember that we had a library or a PX or anything like that.

We were able to get refreshments from Da Nang. They wouldn't let us put anything on the LSTs. Abrams said the only items that comes into our area that way was ammunition, food, and other necessary operating supplies, nothing else. No PX, no beer and that type of thing.

MR. KILLBLANE: Class I [food], III [petroleum products], and V [ammunition].

COL SUNDER: Basically yes. So somebody came up with the idea of going down to Da Nang and coming back with a convoy that made it through and bringing back a couple of truckloads of beer. And so we did have some beer on the beach later on.

Incidentally, I had a nervous breakdown over that. That's a little exaggeration but about halfway up they got interdicted and there was an accident or something and they were on this side of Hue, between Hue and the beach. I got word that they broke down. We weren't the only ones in the convoy, but we did have about two or three trucks with my people in it that had broken down and had to stay there overnight.

I remember I borrowed the helicopter from the battalion commander of the Tank Battalion and flew down to them and I was really worried because they were out in the middle of enemy country. It wasn't a comfortable feeling. But they finally got in the next day without any incident.

MR. KILLBLANE: And morale went up. Right?

COL SUNDER: And morale went up. And oh yes we also had VINNEL Corporation people with us. Didn't I tell you that?

MR. KILLBLANE: Yes, sir. Tell me again.

COL SUNDER: They operated Kenworth trucks and performed the maintenance of them. I think they helped with the construction of that breakwater and they were a great crew. They had Korean drivers for those trucks and we had to bring in Korean food for them. I remember that. Somehow or other, the Mike boat with the Korean food didn't make the beach. It ended up beaching about two or three miles below our perimeter and there was some real concern that they were going to get attacked. I had to send some men down there and give them some firepower to try to protect them. Fortunately, it didn't happen and they finally got this Korean food up to the people. Kenworth trucks were a great asset.

MR. KILLBLANE: Why? What was unique about them?

COL SUNDER: They could maneuver in the sand. They had these trailers so that you had a truck with a big body on it and, then, you hook on a trailer and they had the big flotation tires and had no trouble maneuvering in the sand. So in the beginning, they were one of our primary means of moving the cargo off the beach.

MR. KILLBLANE: When did they arrive?

COL SUNDER: It must have been within the first two or three weeks.

MR. KILLBLANE: How many of those trucks did you have?

COL SUNDER: We had ten of them and they were good. We also had some Goers, but this was much later on.

MR. KILLBLANE: Well, there's only one Goer company in the whole wide world.

COL SUNDER: Somehow or other, I think they were still under product management at the time. But they were somewhere on the beach, I know that. I remember seeing them and I make reference to it in my remarks that I made to the CDC. I think I told you how that happened.

MR. KILLBLANE: No.

COL SUNDER: Well, I ended up being assigned to the Combat Development Command (CDC) when I returned stateside. It was located in Fort Belvoir, Virginia. There was a Brigadier General Hayes who was the chief of staff of CDC. He accompanied General Besson when he came over to visit us. So when I got back stateside and was assigned to CDC, we ran into each other and he said, "How about making a briefing on your operation to the staff here?" I said fine. So that's when I prepared and gave that briefing. It was very well received by a very sizeable audience of the personnel there. I don't know whether I changed anybody's ideas about anything but it made an impression because they asked a lot of questions.

MR. KILLBLANE: What did goers do while they were there on the beach?

COL SUNDER: Well, we had two kinds. We had some that were tankers and we also

had some that were regular cargo. I don't know whether they would be equivalent to a two-and-a-half ton truck or what. I'm not very familiar with them myself. They weren't real big things but the cab of it sort of articulated and they had big wheels on it and they were able to move through that sand pretty well. There weren't too many of them and it was a company that was assigned to the 57th Transportation Truck Battalion, part of which was co-located on the beach but they didn't belong to me. They belonged as far as I know to the 26th General Support Group.

MR. KILLBLANE: What were the numerical units that belonged to you back at Qui Nhon?

COL SUNDER: The units back in Qui Nhon, were the 854th and the 285th Terminal Service Company

MR. KILLBLANE: The 854th and what was the other one?

COL SUNDER: 285th.

MR. KILLBLANE: 285th. Okay.

COL SUNDER: Then, I had two medium boat companies. One was the 554th and the other was the 1098th.

MR. KILLBLANE: 1098. They're all out of the Delta. Oh, yes. They operated in the Delta.

COL SUNDER: I don't think so. I don't know for sure where they were before Qui Nhon. I think they came directly from the states to Qui Nhon. I also had the provisional BARC company, so I had five companies down there, plus several detachments.

MR. KILLBLANE: Right. The BARC was just called BARC.

COL SUNDER: Yes. The BARCs were organized, TOandE-wise [table of organization and equipment], in platoons of four BARCs per platoon as I recall and they ended up putting all four platoons in Qui Nhon. So we organized a provisional BARC company and that's the way it was.

When we went to the beach, we took three of those platoons with us and the other platoon stayed down in Qui Nhon. Now, what it did I don't know but I do know that we had them up in Sa Huyn. I have some pictures of those. Did I ever tell you about Sa Huyn?

MR. KILLBLANE: No, sir.

COL SUNDER: That was an interesting operation.

MR. KILLBLANE: When did that take place?

COL SUNDER: That took place from August of '67 and it was still going when I left Qui Nhon in February of '68.

MR. KILLBLANE: What was it?

COL SUNDER: It was an off-loading operation as part of what they called Task Force Oregon and it was made up of some elements of my units. I'm shifting over here getting on the Sa Huynh thing. What happened was up in Northern II Corp, they needed some support for this Task Force Oregon. They had an over-the-beach operation at a place called Duc Pho, that was wiped out by the hurricanes in September of '67. So they replaced it with this operation, which was a platoon size task force that I sent up there from my battalion assets. Primarily a couple of BARCs, a mike boat or two and some stevedore troops to handle the offloading of cargo sent up to support Operation Oregon. I have some pictures of it.

MR. KILLBLANE: Okay. So this was another LOTS operation that took place?

COL SUNDER: Yes, it was. It was a much-reduced size. It was about a platoon or something like that. I had a lieutenant in charge of it, It was a very interesting little operation.

MR. KILLBLANE: So the 159th did the two major LOTS operations of Vietnam?

COL SUNDER: Well, I don't know how many LOTS operations there were in Vietnam. I do know this, that the one that we did up there in I Corps was certainly the most unique one of its size and magnitude that I know about. Even our little situation in Qui Nhon was really, when you think about it, a LOTS operation.

MR. KILLBLANE: LOTS operation. Right.

COL SUNDER: Certainly Sa Huynh was.

MR. KILLBLANE: Yes. Sa Huynh is specifically a LOTS operation.

COL SUNDER: Yes.

MR. KILLBLANE: The others are in association with the pier augment or port augmentation.

COL SUNDER: Right. Sa Huynh was strictly, again my responsibility but we were separated by about a hundred kilometers or so and I wasn't up there every day or anything like that. But it worked. We started on the thing in August when we went up there, reconnoitered the place and sent a mike boat with a crane and bucket. There was a sandbar that was across the entrance to this little stream that went by a little island opposite a little village off one side called Sa Huynh.

MR. KILLBLANE: Okay.

COL SUNDER: It's mentioned in Westmoreland's report.

MR. KILLBLANE: Oh, I need to look that up.

COL SUNDER: It's mentioned here.

MR. KILLBLANE: What element went up there to set up that operation? Do you remember?

COL SUNDER: Yes. I think it was the 1098th boat. I'm not positive of that. But it was one of my units.

MR. KILLBLANE: So it was just a mike boat.

COL SUNDER: No. There were BARC's also I think we made a task force out of it. In other words, we sent some terminal service people as well. We had people up the Qua Viet, too, and that was a small operation helping the Marines at Dong Ha

MR. KILLBLANE: I'll look it up later.

COL SUNDER: Well, I have it here. (Quote from General Westmoreland's report) "In the Southern part of I Corps near Duc Pho and Sa Huynh in Southeastern Quang Nam Province, Army engineers and the transportation units developed during April an over the beach re-supply system to operate and to support operation MALHEUR, conducted by the 1st Brigade of the 101st Airborne Division. When the northeast monsoons began in September, the engineers had completed a small sheltered coastal port of Sa Huynh and an all-weather airfield at Duc Pho." They might have done the airfield. But the port at Sa Huynh we did with our own people. We used that crane and bucket to reduce that sandbar so LCU's and Mike boats could negotiate it and beach on the island to offload.

MR. KILLBLANE: Just a couple more questions, sir. Who commanded the battalion before you got there? Do you remember? And who took over after you left?

COL SUNDER: Well, I can tell you who took over after I left. Duane Smith. The guy before me was Dave Thatcher, he's still around here.

MR. KILLBLANE: Okay. That pretty much is all of the questions that I had. Is there anything else you think you could add?

COL SUNDER: I can't think of anything right now. I'm sure that we've covered most of the things. I hope they were worthwhile to be covered.

MR. KILLBLANE: Okay.

COL SUNDER: Thank you very much for the opportunity to say it.

MR. KILLBLANE: Thank you, sir.