ORAL MEMOIRS

OF

Mark Webb

An interview conducted on

January 11, 2022

Interviewer: Dr. Bruce Hunt

Angelo State University

West Texas Collection

“William and Don Griffis Vietnam War Oral History Archive”
LEGAL STATUS: The oral memoirs of Mark Webb are unrestricted. The interview agreement was signed by Mark Webb on November 11, 2022.

Interviewer: Dr. Bruce Hunt
Transcriber: Daisy Herr
Editor: Joel Durham

The electronic file and complete transcript of this interview were processed in the Department of History at Angelo State University and are available at the Dr. Ralph R. Chase West Texas Collection, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.
BRUCE HUNT: Okay so, uh, this is Dr. Bruce Hunt here with Mark Webb, uh, for, um, uh, the Don Griffis Vietnam Veteran Oral History Project. Uh, the date is January 11th, 2022. It’s about 9 A.M., um, and we will, uh, get started with, uh, just the basic questions for Mr.- Mr. Webb. Just in your own voice, uh- what is your name?

MARK WEBB: Mark Webb.

HUNT: When and where were you born?

WEBB: I was born in Ferndale, Michigan, 1949.

HUNT: And where did you grow up?

WEBB: I grew up in suburban Detroit, um, except for a brief period where we lived in Tucson, Arizona.

HUNT: Mhm-hm.

WEBB: Um, I finished junior high and high school in the Detroit area.

HUNT: When and where did you enter the armed forces?

WEBB: It was July 1968, Fort Knox, Kentucky.

HUNT: And which branch did you serve in?

WEBB: I was in the Army.

HUNT: And uh, what were your total years of service?

WEBB: Three.

HUNT: Okay, and that was from?

WEBB: ‘68 to ‘71.

HUNT: ‘68 to ‘71. And which military conflicts did you serve during?

WEBB: Uh, Vietnam.

HUNT: And what unit did you serve in?

WEBB: I was in the 101st Airborne.

HUNT: Okay, so that’s our- our, ba- uh, introductory questions. On to more digging into the military experience. Why did you enlist and what was your training like?
WEBB: I enlisted because I thought I was going to be able to learn a skill since I wasn’t going to be going to college. I was real interested in diesel mechanics, and the recruiter said, sure, we can put you into diesel mechanics. And so I signed on the line. The problem was, that wasn’t in writing, and they- they had a change of heart.

HUNT: Mhm.

WEBB: I never saw- I never saw diesels unless I was looking at ‘em going down the road.

HUNT: Wow. [takes a breath] Um, so what did you train to be and what was that training like?

WEBB: I trained to be an intr- infantryman, 11B in the army. Um, training took place at Fort Polk. It was in late summer so it kinda mimicked the humidity and climate generally of Vietnam. Um, I thought the training overall was good. I think it prepared us for what we were going to have to do. [pause]

HUNT: ‘Kay, and, uhh, so Fort Polk’s Louisiana, is that right?

WEBB: Right.

HUNT: Okay, what, um, did you have any, um- um, special training? For example, you said you were in the 101st. Did you do airborne?

WEBB: Mhm-hm.

HUNT: Mhm-hm. What was airborne training like?

WEBB: Oh, well, I wasn’t airborne.

HUNT: Oh, oh.

WEBB: By the time I got to the 101st Airborne, they were taking anybody. I was just basic leg infantry.

HUNT: Mhm-hm.

WEBB: Um, they kept some units up in the 101st with, uh, jumpers like the third of the 187th was all parachutist guys and- but, uh, no, by the time I got there in- in January of ’69, they were taking anybody.

HUNT: Mhm.

WEBB: Because I guess, their turnover was such that they couldn’t be selective. So I didn’t have any special training other than basic training at Fort Knox and infantry training at Fort Polk.
HUNT: I see. [pen scratching]. Great. Uh, what conception did you have of the United States when you enlisted? What did America symbolize to you? What did you think the flag stood for?

WEBB: Well, I was not patriotic- uh, in any kind of gung-ho way, and I think I was intellectually immature because I didn’t really have a- a strong feeling one way or other- the other about America.

HUNT: Mhm-hm. And since- since that time, has your view of the United States changed or developed?

WEBB: Oh absolutely.

[both laugh]

WEBB: How could it not? Uh, I- I still don’t know if I’m proud or not. It’s um, it’s pretty screwed up. This experiment in democracy- it’s like [pauses] but bay- mostly I’m proud of the people.

HUNT: Mhm-hm.

WEBB: I’m proud of the people that have served for a cause greater than themselves. [pause]

HUNT: Okay. Um, were you deployed overseas?

WEBB: Yes.

HUNT: Did you reflect much while overseas about your unit’s mission, or how much you did or didn’t believe in it?

WEBB: Actually, we did it as a group- it’s kinda group therapy.

HUNT: Mhm-hm.

WEBB: Um, your smallest unit in an infantry outfit is a squad, and that’s usually about ten people. And then, you get up to about 30 to 35 people, you have a platoon. Well, we were deployed with a platoon who speculated that if we were serious about it, we could be in Hanoi in three days.

HUNT: Mhm.

WEBB: We had that kind of power.

HUNT: Mhm.

WEBB: Or we felt that kind of power. But [pause]
HUNT: So there was confidence in your capability?

WEBB: Mhm-hm.

HUNT: But, also, the reality of how things played out didn’t, didn’t match that or-

WEBB: No, absolutely didn’t.

HUNT: Yeah.

WEBB: And it got worse when Richard Nixon took office. He took away all the free fire zones. He made you start calling permission to engage anybody. It was- it was not good. And I blamed- At the time I thought it was a military problem, but, y’know, I’ve since came to understand that it was a political problem. It wasn’t the military.

HUNT: So, from- from your perspective, the- the- the chain of command particularly as it channeled down the political decisions from the top was affecting, um, the- the- the strategy- the- the strategy’s ability to succeed or the-

WEBB: Oh, it was putting restrictions on it mainly.

HUNT: Mhm-hm.

WEBB: But when you have to call for permission to fire on somebody, they’re usually gone by the time you get permission, and that was, uh, pretty crazy.

HUNT: But it sounds- so it sounds like, um, the- that you believed in the mission to the extent that you wanted it to be successful, and you were optimistic that it would have a- uh, a good outcome if you were successful.

WEBB: We could- we could do this.

HUNT: Yes.

WEBB: That- that was my attitude.

HUNT: Uh, what did you think of, um, local inhabitants that you encountered?

WEBB: I loved ‘em because when you’re out in the ci- in the country, in the small hamlets and villages, you’re not dealing with the- the city, um, the cowboys and the cyclo-girls and- you’re not dealing with them out- you’re dealing with the real population, and they are curious, friendly, for the most part, um, and grandma runs the place. The senior mama-san was the- like the final authority.

HUNT: Mhm.
WEBB: And I found them to be generous, kind- the ones that didn’t hate us. ‘Cause not everybody liked us. [laughs] It- it was a different experience from city to country.

HUNT: Uh, when you interacted with local inhabitants, what do you think their conception of the United States was and did you ever talk about America with them?

WEBB: I probably did but I don’t remember much of it.

HUNT: Mhm-hm.

WEBB: We would go in, if you were invited, into the homes-

HUNT: Mhm-hm.

WEBB: -for a meal. So, say pho, we’d talk more about the meal, like is there dog in this food?

HUNT: [laughs]

WEBB: Just kidding, kind of. And I- I don’t remember all the conversations we had, but they were- they were, um, they seemed to be curious about the United States.

HUNT: Mhm-hm.

WEBB: About- because we appeared to be so wealthy to them.

HUNT: Mhm-hm.

WEBB: Y’know, even this poor kid from lower-middle class was pulling- that army money was good to them.

HUNT: Mhm-hm.

WEBB: Um, that’s- but I did enj- enjoy going into their homes, meeting whole families, and watching how each mama-san kinda [makes knocking sound] dropped the hammer. She was the authority, and- and you wouldn’t think that but- [pause]

HUNT: So was that- was that typical to- to have that, uh, type of, uh, close interaction with, uh, people in the country-

WEBB: No.

HUNT: for someone that was an infantryman?

WEBB: No, this- this was- from time to time, this would happen and it would depend on our mission.
HUNT: Mhm-hm.

WEBB: Um, if our mission was patrolling out of a certain location, um, we’d usually be in one area during the day, and patrol from that area, and it would be a villager near a village, or near uh, could be on a firebase from time to time, but, um, my unit- the 327th was more into the villages, with, y’know, periodic stand-downs on the firebases.

HUNT: By stand-downs, you mean, enemy, uh-

WEBB: A stand-down is where you come out of the field, and resupply, recharge.

HUNT: Mhm-hm.

WEBB: Um, you sit in a bunker at night and do perimeter security.

HUNT: Wow.

WEBB: Yeah, it’s considered safer than being out on patrol.

HUNT: I see. Um, were your missions primarily more in the country or the city, or?

WEBB: They were mostly out in the boonies.

HUNT: [quietly] Out in the boonies, okay.

WEBB: That’s um- we were usually seeking, um, or there were- there were times when we were- we were deployed as blockers.

HUNT: Mhm-hm.

WEBB: Um, and sometimes we’d fly out in the middle of nowhere and say, march back.

HUNT: Hmm.

WEBB: See what you find.

HUNT: Hmm.

WEBB: That was- wasn’t much fun.

HUNT: So it sou- it sound- it sounds like, um, you were asked to do a lot of different kinds of things.

WEBB: Yeah, cause the mission constan- constantly evolved. It was-

HUNT: Wow.
WEBB: Y’know, one month you’re doing this operation, and the next month you’re doing another operation. And your piece of the pie is going to be a little different each time. So there were good gigs and there were bad gigs.

HUNT: That’s what it sounds like, yeah.

WEBB: Yeah-hm.

HUNT: Um, did you receive any, um, special medals or recognitions? Purple Heart, for example. Um, if so, could you explain the circumstances?

WEBB: I got the standard show-up medals.

HUNT: Mhm-hm.

WEBB: Um, also Army Commendation Medal.

HUNT: Mhm-hm.

WEBB: I call it a show-up medal.

HUNT: [laughs]

WEBB: Um, I was not wounded in combat which is a good thing.

HUNT: Mhm-hm.

WEBB: So I don’t, uh, possess a purple heart.

HUNT: Um, the Army- Army Commendation Medal is a go- is a- is a, uh, significant-

WEBB: Meh.

HUNT: Uh. [laughs]

WEBB: Bronze Star is significant. Army Commendation Medal is so-so. But the thing I’m probably proud of, and the only thing I display, is my combat infantryman’s badge.

HUNT: Mhm.

WEBB: That’s, um- that’s the award that tells the rest of the army that you were- you were in active combat. You fired at somebody.

HUNT: Yes sir.
WEBB: So, that's the one I'm proudest of. 'Cause it just- in fact, I have on my motorcycle- I have one, um, the infantryman’s badge on my license plate.

HUNT: Mhm.

WEBB: 'Cause you’re hanging around with all these military people and they know what that means.

HUNT: Yes sir.

WEBB: It’s like you don’t have to say anything.

HUNT: Yes sir. Um, [sighs] this is a little bit of a different kind of question, but um, what sorts of technology did you use in the service? [laughs]

WEBB: Primitive. [laughs]

HUNT: [laughs]

WEBB: There was a starlight scope, a night vision device, called starlight scope.

HUNT: Mhm.

WEBB: And you would look through that and it would use, uh, um, light from stars and moon and what have you.

HUNT: Mhm-hm.

WEBB: And you could see, like, a green silhouette out there. It was pretty primitive.

HUNT: Mhm.

WEBB: Then we had the Prick-25, PRC-25 radios, that carried around. They were- they were not cordless.

HUNT: [laughs] Probably very heavy.

WEBB: The- uh, I think they were like 25 pounds.

HUNT: Wow. [laughs]

WEBB: But, I- I- I never carried one so I don’t know.

HUNT: Mhm.

WEBB: I mean I picked one up and it was- it felt heavy so.
HUNT: Oh. Uh, and the so- so the starlight scope- was that sort- sort of like a night vision goggle device?

WEBB: Yeah, but it was, um, like a binocular.

HUNT: Ah.

WEBB: It was not- and it was heavy. Oh god, the thing weighed about ten pounds, and you- and- and you really couldn’t see much through it. It was like, ‘What the heck am I looking at?’

HUNT: Did you feel like you trusted your technology or did you feel more like it was better to be, y’know, travel light, be less encumbered?

WEBB: Um, the only technology that went with us was our weapons.

HUNT: Mhm-hm.

WEBB: And almost to a man, we would have rather had AK-47s than M16s because their propensity to jam.

HUNT: Right.

WEBB: Um, AK-47 you could use as a walking stick through mud, and it’s still gonna fire. Uh, so no, I don’t think that we had total faith in our technology. Some of us could. The, uh, grenade launchers were fun. I mean just, they were a blast.

HUNT: [laughs] Um, great, great. Um- what were race and/or gender relations like in your unit?

WEBB: That’s a tough one. [paper rustle] Because the- the people that were serious about what we were doing- didn’t really matter skin tone or color, but if you were a screw-up- 

HUNT: Mhm-hm.

WEBB: It didn’t- well it didn’t matter if you- If you were a screw-up, you were a screw-up.

HUNT: Mhm-hm.

WEBB: There were white screw-ups and there were black screw-ups and you tried to stay away from ’em.

HUNT: Okay

WEBB: But overall, it’s like there’s no atheists in a foxhole.

HUNT: Mhm-hm.
WEBB: You don’t have time for prejudice when you’re depending on that guy next to you to lay down fire. So, I don’t know how it worked in the rear- I’ve heard an awful lot of things, but in the field, it was pretty- we’re here for each other.

HUNT: That’s- that’s, uh, helpful and interesting that distinction between in the rear versus in the field. That things were-

WEBB: Oh yeah, there’s a big difference.

HUNT: Was there a difference even in Vietnam, in country, between- between units that were more out doing the patrols versus, um-

WEBB: [laughs]

HUNT: [laughs]

WEBB: Ohh, the biggest treat of my entire Vietnam tour was going to Da Nang- and going to the Air Force mess.

HUNT: Mhm-hm.

WEBB: ‘Cause they actually had steak and ice cream.

HUNT: [laughs]

WEBB: We had- We had C rations, then the helicopters would bring out one hot meal a day. It wasn’t a very good meal, but it was- it was- it was hot.

HUNT: Mhm.

WEBB: The cooks would bring it out in these containers, go through a chow line. So, they tried, but it wasn’t good food.

HUNT: Mhm. ‘Kay, um, yeah, we’ve heard a lot about the C rats. [laughs]

WEBB: There’s- [laughs]

HUNT: Famous or infamous. [laughs]

WEBB: It’s kinda funny because they were bartering tools with the- with the locals.

HUNT: Uh-huh.

WEBB: And then, you did- when, when we did resupply, y’know, you- you’d get a full case, and we’d barter amongst ourselves. I’ll swap you this for that, y’know.
HUNT: Mhm-hm.

WEBB: Beans and franks.

HUNT: Mhm. Um, yeah, so that doesn’t sound very appetizing. [laughs] I’m trying to imagine the quality- even a good bean and frank is, is something, something else. Um, what, uh, are your most vivid memories of your time in the service? So, just over- overall, y’know, in a- in a combat situation, a non-combat situation?

WEBB: I guess the most vivid- vivid memory I have was the first time I was in contact with the enemy- with the, these in this case, it was NVA soldiers. But-

HUNT: Mhm-hm.

WEBB: And it was February 4th, 1969, and I had been in country almost a month, or in- in my unit for almost a month. I’d been in country for a month.

HUNT: ‘Kay.

WEBB: Um, because up until that first time, I wondered what I would do. [paper rustle] Would I freeze? Would I get up and run? Am I, y’know, what’s gonna happen? And that’s probably the most vivid memory I have because I was so surprised that once combat began, your training took over. You didn’t even think about it. It was- it was pretty awesome the way that worked. Then, of course, afterward, you’re going ‘holy cow’ and about have a breakdown.

HUNT: Mhm-hm. And did you find that that was, uh, an experience that your, uh, uh, um, your squad all shared? Did everyone react to it the same way?

WEBB: There were people that went a little nuts.

HUNT: Mhm-hm.

WEBB: Um, but I think the after-action was- was pretty universal. Everybody was coming off adrenaline or something. It was just: got the shakes and ‘holy shit, almost died’.

HUNT: Mhm-hm.

WEBB: That kind of thing.

HUNT: Um, what did you like and not like overall, uh, of your, uh, experience in the service?

WEBB: I didn’t like the stupid orders.

HUNT: Mhm-hm.
WEBB: Telling us to do dumb things. There was a period of time that we were ordered out on patrol at night, on the outskirts of villages, in the dark- trying to look for trouble. I’m going, we can’t see- they can’t see- y’know, we’re going to walk into an ambush for sure. That was a stupid thing to do.

HUNT: Mhm.

WEBB: And- and it’s kinda- wasn’t just me that thought that. Our platoon sergeant goes- he’d pull out a map and he’d go, ‘Where- where’s the least likely spot to get into trouble tonight?’ He’d ask us for a consensus [both laugh] and we’d go there, and he just said, ‘Okay, here we are.’

HUNT: Wow.

WEBB: Um, the thing I liked best was- was the relationships with- with other soldiers. It was- it was like family but it wasn’t like family cause I was in a unit that didn’t- that was all- all- all the time rotating people out. In and out, in and out, in and out.

HUNT: Wow.

WEBB: So you had no continuity like you’d have with a unit that went to Vietnam together, served tour together, and came home together. We didn’t have that.

HUNT: Mhm.

WEBB: And- but during the time you were there, you tended to avoid people that were in their first three months, and people who were in their last ten days.

HUNT: Ah.

WEBB: That’s like- avoid the short-timers, and avoid- avoid the rookies.

HUNT: So, it- it- it sounds like a lot- a lot of um, a lot of the experience in terms of liking and not liking certain things involved, uh- uh, risk. The management of risk, and- and- and um, and just- just being smart, taking care of yourself, staying alive.

WEBB: It didn’t always work either. We’d pick out a spot, and sure enough, the Viet Cong or NVA walk right into us, and it would shock the heck out of us. But, well, we’ll have to do better next time. [laughs]

HUNT: [laughs] But it’s those experiences that, uh, le- lead to you- like you just said- avoiding certain people-

WEBB: Mhm-hm.
HUNT: -sticking to the people that are sort of in the sweet spot in terms of focused, and motivated, and making good decisions.

WEBB: Yeah, we let the rookies, once they- once they been in a firefight, they could come aboard.

HUNT: Ah.

WEBB: And then you didn’t want to jinx the short-timers so, you just kinda pushed them away- just get out of here safe, man.

HUNT: Mhm.

WEBB: [quietly] So- [pause]

HUNT: Okay, um, uh, shoot, can we move on to civilian experiences back- coming back home?

WEBB: Yeah.

HUNT: Um, and we’ll have a chance at- at the end to- to try and fig- fill in any- anything that we think we left out. Uh, did you- did you expect to face any challenges when you returned back to civilian life? So before you got out, were you worried about the transition?

WEBB: No.

HUNT: No.

WEBB: Now, when I came back from Vietnam the first time, I flew into Oakland Army Air Terminals so there were no protesters there. There was nothing- it was like, get your clothes and go home-

HUNT: Mhm.

WEBB: -for your leave. I extended for six months in Vietnam in a non-combat role.

HUNT: Mhm.

WEBB: I was doing security which is basically sitting in a bunker. Um, um, in a R&R, uh, Place called Eagle Beach.

HUNT: Mhm.

WEBB: It was, um, in I Corps. Uh, so the second time I came back- this would’ve been in June in 1970. I flew into Seattle-Tacoma, and there were young protesters there getting in everybody’s face.
HUNT: Mhm-hm.

WEBB: Um, yelling and spitting and stuff. And it’s, woah. And it was, y’know, some of the- the senior guys- like sergeants- they were being accosted and called baby killers. And finally they just ‘Damn right, I killed babies and I’m going to kill you next. Come after me.’ [laughs]

HUNT: [laughs]

WEBB: But it wasn’t- it was that kind of thing- it was-

HUNT: Wow.

WEBB: So- so when I came- when I got out of the army, I just didn’t advertise the fact that I was ever in it.

HUNT: Mhm.

WEBB: And that went for a long time.

HUNT: So- so you sensed, that um, I think first thing you said was that the- the protesters or the- a lot of the animosity in the civilian population, it would get more targeted towards upper enlisted.

WEBB: Yeah, the more stripes you had or if you were an officer, then that’s- they’d come after you.

HUNT: Mhm.

WEBB: I was a lowly E4.

HUNT: Mhm-hm.

WEBB: So what do I know? But I went in the bathroom and changed too. I didn’t- [laughs] I’m not going to wear my uniform in this.

HUNT: Oh wow.

WEBB: There were several of us in there changing.

HUNT: And so- so that- that would be when you first got back.

WEBB: That would be coming home, yeah.

HUNT: Mhm-hm.
WEBB: On the- on the- so it was, um, Tan Son Nhut to Alaska to Seattle-Tacoma, and then on to Detroit but that was in civilian clothes.

HUNT: And from there on, you found- found it natural to just blend in and-

WEBB: Well, it was hard to blend in with my haircut.

HUNT: Ah. [laughs]

WEBB: You had a GI haircut, you couldn’t undo that, and everybody else is wearing long hair.

HUNT: Ah.

WEBB: Just walking around with a buzz cut.

HUNT: Ah.

WEBB: That pretty much says- a sign on your chest says ‘GI’.

HUNT: Ah. [laughs softly]

WEBB: But, yeah, just kinda’s- when you get back to the neighborhood, you go to your- to your people you went to high school with, your friends, since what have you-

HUNT: Mhm-hm.

WEBB: And- and that was okay.

HUNT: Mhm-hm. [pause] You just needed to get back into your circle and then-

WEBB: Yeah, because the people that knew you growing up, aren’t going to call you baby killer.

HUNT: Right.

WEBB: They may- most of them didn’t even ask, y’know, it’s like, did you- You know, others didn’t say, ‘did it suck?’ and you go, ‘yeah, it sucked.’ ‘Sorry man.’

HUNT: Mhm-hm. How did uh, this is connected, how did your service influence or affect your family?

WEBB: Obviously, they worried about me-

HUNT: Mhm-hm.

WEBB: -when I was overseas. I have two younger sisters, and I was raised by a single mom. And they were all proud of me, and they just kept saying that over and over.
HUNT: [sighs] So that was your- and your family was in Michigan still at that point?

WEBB: Yes.

HUNT: Um, this is a question that’s more about West Texas, so this would be more about your experiences here. How well do you think communities in West Texas have treated, so going all the way back till today, any reflections you have on how communities here have treated returning veterans?

WEBB: Well, obviously I wasn’t here during Vietnam and I’ve been here, uh, in West Texas since 1982. And the reception that veterans get on completion of duty, on returns home on leave, uh, is very positive.

HUNT: Mhm-hm.

WEBB: And- and they, in turn, feel very supported.

HUNT: Uh, what, uh, long-term impact do you believe veterans such as yourself have had on communities, uh, in West Texas since- since the war?

WEBB: Well, as a collective, we’ve done a lot to [pause] move the, uh, move the bar, I guess, so to speak, on injuries like A- Agent Orange that aren’t obvious injuries.

HUNT: Mhm-hm.

WEBB: Um, we’ve started the vet centers for- for uh, veterans to go and have places to sit down and talk. Um, and I think our legacy is that we made sure what happened to us, didn’t happen to the ones behind us.

HUNT: Mhm. Great. Okay, we were moving right along. Making great progress. Um, these have been great answers. I really appreciate your time. We have just a few sort of conclusion, final thoughts questions.

WEBB: Sure.

HUNT: Uh, just how- how do you feel about your military service looking back?

WEBB: It’s something I did. It’s not who I am.

HUNT: Uh, do you have any advice for the young men and women who are just entering the service now?

WEBB: God, why would you want to do that? [laughs]

HUNT: [laughs]
WEBB: No, I don’t. It’s- it’s- I have two sons in the Air Force. They’re career Air Force, and it shocked me when they went in. It’s like, where’d you get this? Um, I see a lot, of um, because of- I’m around some- some patriot organizations, I see a lot of young people that are leaning towards the military or like in, uh, R-R-R- ROTC.

HUNT: Mhm-hm.

WEBB: Or, uh, Junior Marines, or stuff like that.

HUNT: Mhm-hm.

WEBB: And I don’t- I don’t question it. I just think, go for it if it’s going to make you happy.

HUNT: Mhm-hm.

WEBB: But if you asked me thirty years ago, I’d say, ‘God. Don’t- don’t turn around and walk away. Turn around and run away.’

HUNT: [laughs] So do you think those reservations were be- were rooted in the- the political context of the era and now it’s kinda changed so-

WEBB: That’s exactly right.

HUNT: Okay.

WEBB: It’s- it’s- once I grew up enough to know that the- the fiasco that was Vietnam was not a military issue; it was a political issue.

HUNT: Mhm-hm.

WEBB: And as long as politicians are gonna decide what you do in a- in a conflict, you’re not gonna get any results.

HUNT: Mhm-hm. Okay, last uh, last question. Would you like to share anything else about your service? The lead-up, the service itself, or afterwards?

WEBB: I think afterwards: the GI Bill was very good to us.

HUNT: Mhm-hm.

WEBB: And I took full advantage of it for two years, and I got an associate degree in a career field because I’d been in the Army.

HUNT: Mhm-hm.
WEBB: That’s, y’know, that was a fair trade.

HUNT: Mhm-hm.

WEBB: Because [chuckles] I’ve been out of the Army a lot longer than I was in it so I- I was pretty happy. I mean, I have two si- I have three sons, and they’re all successful in their own right. One’s a lieutenant colonel, one’s a master sergeant.

HUNT: Wow.

WEBB: Oh yeah, they’re in for the long haul.

HUNT: [laughs]

WEBB: Uhh, the one who’s not in the military is a MBA, he’s a project engigeer- engineer for EOG resources.

HUNT: Wow.

WEBB: They’re all doing good.

HUNT: Wow.

WEBB: It’s like, ‘How did you do that?’ ‘You just screwed up.’ Um, about 1985 is when I came out of the closet as a Vietnam Vet.

HUNT: Mhm-hm.

WEBB: I never mentioned it. Never brought it up.

HUNT: Wow

WEBB: Um, it was not something I felt like talking about. I have a certificate of my Combat Infantryman’s Award with a rifle on it.

HUNT: Mhm-hm.

WEBB: And I put it in a really nice brushed chrome frame, and I was, uh, I was branch manager for a company. And I went in, put it on my wall. And I had people coming in, ‘Oh, I didn’t know you were a Vietnam vet.’

HUNT: [laughs]

WEBB: ‘I didn’t know,’ you know, it’s like, and you- and you try to tell them it’s like, yes I am. It’s something I did. It’s not who I am. It’s- but, they had this expectation of what a Vietnam vet should be.
HUNT: Mhm-hm.

WEBB: That they got on TV or a movie.

HUNT: Mhm-hm.

WEBB: So, now, [pause] I kinda keep my foot in Veterans Affairs, involved with it.

HUNT: Mhm-hm.

WEBB: That’s my landscape out at the airport- that memorial there.

HUNT: Really?

WEBB: I’m the grounds chairman.

HUNT: Oh wow.

WEBB: Um, I’m on the board of directors of the honor flight. Uh, we’ll have a flight coming up May 19th.

HUNT: Mhm.

WEBB: With roughly a hundred and twenty veterans on it.

HUNT: Wow.

WEBB: Yeah, yeah. I’m involved with Patriot Guards, which is motorcycle riders. Um, and, of course, I’m involved with the Combat Vets Association, another group of motorcycle riders.

HUNT: Do I have your timeline right, Mr. Webb? That, uh, in 1985 you were in West Texas?

WEBB: Nah, I was still in Michigan.

HUNT: Oh, okay.

WEBB: Well, actually it’s kind of a fluke. I was in West Texas, but I was on duty in Michigan for the year of 1985 and then came back.

HUNT: Ah.

WEBB: Um, that just happened to be where I put the CIB up.

HUNT: Mhm.
WEBB: But when I came back, I put it- it- it stayed in my office, um, my whole career.

HUNT: Mhm.

WEBB: It’s- it’s like, okay, this- this will tell you what’ve I done.

HUNT: Hmm. I’m- I’m ju- I’m wondering did- did you have- did you have any- any idea what it was, why 1985 instead of 1980 or 1990?

WEBB: No.

HUNT: Ah.

WEBB: No idea. It’s- it’s, uh, it could’ve been just one of those things where you get up one day and say it’s time.

HUNT: Mhm.

WEBB: To acknowledge my past.

HUNT: Mhm.

WEBB: And not be- not try to hide it or not be ashamed of it. And it’s like, again, it’s one of those things.

HUNT: That’s great. Maybe- maybe- maybe that- that’s a nice note to- to leave- to leave off on. Um, so I’m going to stop recording.