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Jim Wieczorek is a United States Marine Corps veteran who served in Vietnam from August 1968 until March 1969. Mr. Wieczorek was a principal at Reedsburg Schools for many years and is a well-respected member of the Reedsburg community.

Wieczorek was asked about, what made him want to join the Vietnam War. Wieczorek enlisted in the Vietnam War because he was a strong supporter of the Vietnam War and wanted to stop the Communists from spreading around the world. Also, he thought that the United States “had to stop those dirty rotten Pinko Commies somewhere.” It was his thinking during the time that Vietnam was the place to stop them. During this question, he is referencing the United States on containing the Communist countries through policy called the Domino Theory. The Domino Theory is the belief that if one country falls to Communism, other countries in the area would fall, and eventually, the whole world would become Communist. Wieczorek also shared how he and some friends from high school went to take a test to become the United States Air Force officers. While leaving the United States Air Force, an office he decided to go into the United States Marine Corp office to see what they could offer him to join the Marines. Wieczorek had a deferment from entering active duty until after he was done with college. He was in college to become a teacher, so he believed that he wouldn't be drafted if he didn't enlist. He explained that teachers were needed at the time. Wieczorek ended up enlisting in the United States Marine Corp.

Wieczorek's job during his time in the Vietnam war was an Artillery Forward Observer. This job was to report to cannons the coordinates where they need to fire. He would relay the coordinates via radio where they needed to fire the canon. This was not an easy job. If he were to

mess up and report coordinates incorrectly, the enemy would move quickly. There was only one chance to get it correct. Also, it is a very dangerous job because he was carrying important information, and the enemy would see him as a target to be stopped from passing along where they were. Wiczorek was injured twice during his time in Vietnam. During his time in Vietnam, Wiczorek was part of Operation Meade River that took place from November 20, 1968, to December 9th, 1968. Operation Meade River was the largest vertical operation in United States military history.

When asked what his family's thoughts were about him joining the war, he said that his mother was not really happy about his decision to join the war. His father did not really say much about the idea of him joining the war, but he felt that his father supported him. He also said that he married his wife right before leaving for training. He says she knew what she was signing up for when she married him. Wiczorek also mentioned that after he was wounded in battle, members of the United States Marine Corp went to notify his wife at her home. It is a tradition in the military to let family members know in person rather than a phone call when a soldier has been injured or killed in battle. He also said that his wife wouldn't let the Marines into the house until they told her what happened. After they told her that he was just injured, she let them in and then went with the Marines to tell his mother and father about what happened.

When asked, Wiczorek had a lot of opinions on draft dodgers. He said that he did not necessarily have a problem with people who dodged the draft for moral reasons. He did say, however, who he did have a problem with draft dodgers that would later talk tough even though they couldn't fight for a minor medical reason such as bone spurs. Not all Vietnam veterans

would agree with Wieczorek's opinions on draft dodgers. Many people ended up losing their lives due to being drafted in a war they did not wish to sign up for.

When asked about a major memorable event he experienced during the Vietnam War, Wieczorek shared that while he was injured and recovering at Cam Ranh Bay in Vietnam he had a chance to go see Bob Hope. Bob Hope was a very popular actor and comedian who would travel around Vietnam and entertain the troops with the goal of keeping morale up. There were several other famous people who performed during the Vietnam War. These included Phyllis Diller, Sammy Davis, Jr., and the Gold Diggers. This was something that he remembered very well even though it was not enjoyable. He had to wait a long time to see Bob Hope and was very sunburned afterward. He did state that looking back at it he is glad he went because it gave him a good story about the war, even though during the time it was not a good experience.

When asked what was his overall thought are on the Vietnam War he said that after years of thinking about the war he has come to the conclusion that the Vietnam War could have been won if it had not been managed by the politicians at home. If the United States would have gone in and fought the war, it could have been won. The United States would not have been the "good guys" in the eyes of the world and would have been very disliked, but they would have won the war. There would not have been as many American lives lost in a war that did not matter in the long run. He also stated that in his eyes, the War on Terror is another Vietnam War. There is no long-term goal. The government said that when the United States troops entered Iraq and Afghanistan the civilians would greet the United States troops with open arms. This was not the case in Vietnam or in Iraq and Afghanistan.

When asked how he was treated while returning from the war, he said that he was treated very well. While coming back to the United States and when returning home, he was able to ride on a military flight. He did not see any civilians that would have been disrespectful toward him or would have spit on him, contrary to many stories shared by Vietnam veterans after their service.

In conclusion, in the years after the Vietnam War, Wieczorek had time to reflect on his time spent overseas and the policies that the United States had during the Vietnam War. He is very willing to go into classrooms and talk about his experiences in Vietnam. Wieczorek stated in the interview that one of the main reasons why history is taught is so lessons can be learned from our past mistakes and not repeated.

Work Cited:

Wieczorek, Jim. Personal interview. 23 Sept. 2018.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rNPHje5UFNI&t=18s>