

Interview with Dr. Magnaghi-Vietnam

October 31, 1995

Interviewer:???

Transcribed: June 9, 2002

RM: Magnaghi interview tape 2.

INT: A question I was asking you, you were just finishing...was it a patriotic war?

Should you get out and fight for your country, die for your country, lie for your country?

You were just saying...

RM: No.

INT: Basically that concludes all the questions I had put together on this interview. Is

there anything else you would like to add where you feel I've left out?

RM: Not as an I told you so comment, but in general of what I've been talking about, unfortunately...this is going to become very difficult for people to deal with. People lost a lot of sons. Much of what I was thinking back at that time, what people were talking about, unfortunately today, proves to be true. Many of the things they were talking about...people like the Secretary of Defense and other people were saying, it was a mistake. We shouldn't have been there. For instance, with MacNamara, seeing him on tv with tears and doing that. And then why didn't you end things. Well I didn't want to

rock the boat. Then don't get on tv crying and so on. He had a chance. He said he knew that this was a mistake. Why didn't he do something? This thing becomes a very horrible experience. The horror of Vietnam is that it tore at the fiber of the United States. It also made the people distrustful of the government. I'm not going to believe Bill Clinton. I'm not going to believe Bob Dole. I want to find out what is going on. What does all this mean in terms of anything that the government does. The newspaper has gone to extremes with checking too much. Vietnam changed American society greatly. I think there was a lot of lying that went on. Even LBJ said at the end of his life that people mislead me. You had a bunch of brilliant people going in the right direction. At the end of Vietnam, not looking at it realistic of what is going on. That's the great horror. The thing I was concerned about in terms of what is the United States getting into, what are we being lead into, the one that makes me very nervous is all of this talk about sending troops to Bosnia. That could easily become another Vietnam. What happened with Vietnam, you couldn't ??? we were in there. We'd lost so many men. Unless you stop and cut your losses, okay we made a mistake, let's get the hell out, which we eventually did, it goes on and on and on. And then you go with Ross Perot's idea, as soon as that American man or woman leaves the US shore they're going to get a 25% surcharge on the war effort. There's no way out of it. The war effort is paid. The economy stays solid. And we all participate in the war. Not with our lives. Then we'd be talking. Then I'd volunteer. If that had happened in Vietnam, we might not have ever gotten in there. A lot of things were very complicated. For me it's a very complicated issue. It really had a devastating...America lost it's innocence after Vietnam. And you

If you compare a confusion or diplomatic it's not going to get anywhere

watch things on tv. We've gone to other extremes of the media going after??? For what purpose who knows. That's my conclusion I guess.

INT: You said some things about Perot, one thing he's definitely been quoted on in talking about POWs and MIAs, he's been quoted as saying, they're there, let's forget about it and send them over. How do you feel about POWs and MIAs who still to this day could be there? And not only the fact, I would also like to get your opinion do you think the veterans who fought in Vietnam got the respect they deserved? It took so long to get a memorial... 1982 to get the memorial in Washington DC finally got put up 12 years later after the fact.

RM: I might point out ??? by Ross Perot. But back to the first question the MIAs and whatnot. I would say the only way to deal with the MIAs would be to establish some diplomatic relationship with Vietnam and then just have people, maybe not as an investigation, but people going there...on that level you might find that in this village and that village a plane went down. A person was killed or caught. You'd probably get more information on a personal level about where somebody is or where they're buried. You'll find a guy say yes we dug a pit here and threw all the boots in this pit. People are going back today. So things like that probably happened. You'll be in the jungle and a different culture and so on. That's probably where a lot of people are. Some of that stuff won't be in Hanoi's Archives and so on. It would probably be out in the country. It would be a long process. Probably that would be the way you would find these people. If you continue a confrontation diplomatic it's not going to get anywhere.

INT: The other one was do you feel the veterans of Vietnam were overdue of the respect that they did earn and deserve even though they were not victorious.

RM: Oh yes. I would say from the time we decided to pull out, it was finally realized after thousands of dollars, we should have done this sooner. We made a mistake. We should have been out of there. What I think the government just pushed the thing under the rug. We don't want parades. We don't want festivities and whatnot. What are the anti-war people going to say. What are we going to say? Now we have to face the fact that we pulled out. It's all over. Let's go home. A great disservice was done. I would say a lot of the psychological effects of Vietnam...I don't know, I'm not a psychiatrist, but I would say a lot of it was because these guys were abandoned. Nothing happened in Vietnam. These people are suffering. On one hand people wanted to do it, wanted to be involved, defend your country and so on. Yet when the ships were down and you asked who is going to volunteer nobody knows anything about it. So when these guys came home, yes. At that point who's in charge? Did the government do anything? No. It just ignored them and walked away from it. They're back. You think about it, what is the effect going to be on these guys. They've been led to believe they're defending their country. They're saving it and so on. Then when they come back it's like who are you? I think yes. There were a lot of people....maybe not so much the officers, because they continued. But the privates and non-commissioned officers and things like that were just dangling. The whole war was. When it was all over and the last helicopter was out they just dumped them. Now I think it's changed to a degree, but that's very difficult. The

problem is now you have to ask the question. It was rectified somewhat, but not when it happened. That is just another part of it.

INT: Okay. I don't have any other questions and if you don't have anything else to add, that concludes the interview with Dr. Magnaghi and his views on staying home during the war in Vietnam.

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INT: I had previously asked you on your personal background and things like that and I'm going to Vietnam. You came from a background of military. Support your country no matter what. Die for your country no matter what. What kind of background as far as that did you come from?

RM: I'd say during WWII right after Pearl Harbor my Dad rushed down to join the army and then they found he was too old and they sent him home. He was quite disappointed. When he was home he ran a home....safety thing. He had a truck and if there was any bombing or anything they were going to convert it into an ambulance. He was all involved in a home defense thing in San Francisco. But the thing was that in our family there wasn't that lean toward the military and the army. We had...I'm trying to think...a cousin-in-law that was in the army. He had a big job. He was the chauffeur for one of the Generals. My uncle in WWII had a heart condition and they wouldn't accept him. I'm trying to think of other close relatives. I had some older uncles that served in WWI.

I'm trying to think of my grandfather. Some of these people came over and escaped the draft in the old country. My grandfather was in the Italian army during peacetime. But he had to serve. He didn't come for that reason. But there was never that real...we had friends in the military and army, but that never caught on. Though I would say that my Mom was very patriotic. That's one characteristic of her right down to the present day. But it never went over militarism and people going into the army. We didn't have a big tradition of cousins and what not. I'm trying to think of cousins on my Dad's side. There was one cousin who never went into the military. I guess he had gotten married young and stayed home. Another cousin... all you had to do is bring his name up and my Dad would get very upset. He had been in Switzerland and served in the Swiss Army, which everybody has to do until they're 45. When he came to the United States the government wanted him to join the US Army and he refused. My Dad used to get very upset over that. That he would not join the US Army. All you had to do is bring the guy's name up and my Dad would go crazy over this. That was the only militarism there was. There was no...I guess we really didn't think about it when we finished high school we went on to college and so on. There was no go into the military and take a few years off. So no. There was not that type of direction there into the military.