

Purvis, Robert US Army

[00:00:14.31] ROBERT PURVIS: My branch of service was US Army. And I signed up in February '68 and-- to October 7, 1970. I was born in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. I grew up in a working class neighborhood. It was sort of a major city with a little less than a million people.

[00:00:38.79] And it was a working class hardcore neighborhood where I grew up. My family was good. My father was an electrician and my mother was just a home keeper. And my father was away a lot because he worked construction in different places.

[00:00:56.06] ANDREW RINGLEE: And do you have any brothers or sisters?

[00:00:57.89] ROBERT PURVIS: I have two brothers and one sister.

[00:00:59.98] ANDREW RINGLEE: Did your father serve in the military?

[00:01:01.51] ROBERT PURVIS: Yes, my father did serve in the military in the Second World War. He was in the Army in Lord Strathcona's Horse.

[00:01:12.61] ROBERT PURVIS: When I was young I was in the militia or the cadets for a while. I served in the cadets and did that for a couple of years. But all the friends I joined with, all their fathers were in the military too, so it was-- we all came from military backgrounds in a certain way because everybody was in the Second World War.

[00:01:36.20] I guess what got us started, we always-- it was really prevalent on the 6 o'clock news every night so we'd always watch the news and the footage from-- combat footage from Vietnam. And I guess that's what really had a big impact on us joining the Army. A couple other fellows from my neighborhood signed up and went into the US Army, but that was just prior to Vietnam and they didn't really end up going there. In my sort of area of the city, there was quite a few young kids that signed up and joined the US Army back then.

[00:02:10.24] ANDREW RINGLEE: So now tell me about the experience with you and your three friends.

[00:02:16.52] ROBERT PURVIS: We signed up back in 1968. I grew up with-- it was Butch, Larry, and Billy. I grew up with them since we were probably six years old, went through all grade school and high school together.

[00:02:32.93] After graduating we were sort of-- went around different jobs and then said, well, let's-- maybe we should join the Army. And that's what we did. We went down to Grand Forks, North Dakota, which is 2 and 1/2, three-hour drive. And we talked to the recruiter there and he was just more than welcome.

[00:02:53.76] ANDREW RINGLEE: Did he know where you came from, or-- ?

[00:02:55.80] ROBERT PURVIS: Oh yeah, we said, we're Canadians. And he gave us all the paperwork, and we had to go back and fill it out. We had to go to the American consulate.

[00:03:04.62] We had to get a medical and police record check, passports because they gave us a green card to immigrate to the United States. And he was shocked when we showed up again with all our paperwork saying here we are for enlistment. When we originally went down it was November and by the time we get everything done, well, we didn't want to go into the Army and ruin Christmas for everybody so we waited till January and went back in January.

[00:03:33.45] ANDREW RINGLEE: And you said he was shocked?

[00:03:35.46] ROBERT PURVIS: Yeah, he was definitely shocked and-- here's four guys to recruit. He just walked in and he was just so happy to have us.

[00:03:49.03] ROBERT PURVIS: He put us on the bus and they gave us a buddy plan. So the buddy plan was we'd all go to basic training together. So we all went to basic training in Fort Lewis, Washington.

[00:04:05.09] ANDREW RINGLEE: What did your parents think of this?

[00:04:07.55] ROBERT PURVIS: They were I guess very upset about it. All of our parents were Second World War veterans so they knew what we were getting into but we didn't because we were just naive kids. But they were very upset about it. But they also realized too that with that age we're going to go do what we're going to do.

[00:04:31.38] We sort of had fun in basic training because, well, all four of us were together. And we had a little bit of experience like in the militia and stuff back in Canada. And we just laughed all the way through it because everybody thought it was so hard and said we had a lot of fun.

[00:04:51.33] They talked us into going unassigned. So they put you wherever you want them, wherever. So we went in unassigned and after basic training we all got split up. We all ended up in the four corners of the United States, so different branches of the service and different MOSs.

[00:05:10.53] Mine was infantry. Larry, my friend Larry was killed. He was infantry. And I was infantry. And my friend Butch, he went into the artillery, its radio communications. And his brother Billy ended up electronics helicopter armament doing the miniguns technician thing.

[00:05:35.26] ANDREW RINGLEE: So where did you do your AIT?

[00:05:39.25] ROBERT PURVIS: I went to Fort Ord. And then after that I went to jump school in Fort Benning, Georgia. And then I got assigned to the Special Forces down in Panama. So I spent a year down there with Special Forces.

[00:05:53.92] I really liked it. It was fun. We were doing night parachute jumps and I was involved a little bit-- we were training-- back then it was the Apollo moon missions, and one of

the alternative landing zones was in the Caribbean. So part of our job was to pick up astronauts if they happened to go into that zone. So we did a little bit of that.

[00:06:20.90] And we did a lot of crazy fun training stuff in the jungle and-- jungle training. And I liked it. It was this really small camp and everybody was professional. Once you get in Special Forces it's for a different breed of people. And I really enjoyed it.

[00:06:40.14] I might have stayed in the Army if things worked out that way because I enjoyed it. But when my friend Larry got killed I got a telegram, and I didn't get the telegram for three weeks. Well, anyway when I got the telegram I took it to some of my peers and they gave me emergency leave and I went home for his funeral, but I missed it by a day. The funeral was Saturday and I didn't get there till Sunday morning.

[00:07:15.18] ANDREW RINGLEE: They had the funeral back in Winnipeg?

[00:07:17.19] ROBERT PURVIS: Yeah, they had a really big funeral for him with all the military honors, a 21-gun salute. They had National Guard come up from North Dakota and some of the legion members there. So they had a really nice funeral for him from what I heard.

[00:07:37.45] ROBERT PURVIS: When Larry got killed I volunteered for Vietnam and I went about three months later. Went into Cam Ranh Bay, one of the big ports of there. And then I got assigned to the 4th Infantry Division. I was supposed to go to the 5th Special Forces group in Vietnam but there's a lot of politics. There was a change of command and politics, so I got reassigned to the 4th Infantry Division.

[00:08:10.34] ROBERT PURVIS: I was originally-- I spent I think a week with the infantry and then I wanted to go back into-- there was a Ranger company and if I went to the Ranger company I'd get my airborne pay. So I got an extra \$55. So I volunteered for the Ranger company.

[00:08:27.96] Our missions-- basically we operated a four-man team. And they would drop us off by helicopter out in a specific area of the jungle somewhere and we'd stay there for four or five days and then they'd come back and get us. But in this area we never operated-- we were in the Central Highlands and we never operated around villages.

[00:08:56.19] So we didn't have any of those issues. Everything out there was free fire. It was all jungle.

[00:09:02.22] ANDREW RINGLEE: Was there a lot of contact?

[00:09:04.89] ROBERT PURVIS: There was. My job though, when I was in the Special Forces I ended up with a top secret crypto security clearance. And what I had ended up doing was I was the liaison with the division headquarters.

[00:09:24.61] So I'd go get all the intelligence briefings and come back and we'd set up where our teams were going to go. And I briefed the teams before they went in and then end up

debriefing when they came back. So most of my time was spent doing work more like that than going on missions because that's the way they utilized me because of my experience and training.

[00:09:54.73] ROBERT PURVIS: It was very sporadic. It was sometimes weeks of just total boredom. We had the monsoons and the different seasons. And it would go from one extreme to the other to an intense conflict to weeks of boredom again. But whenever you did conflict it was instant.

[00:10:17.63] And our company did take quite a few casualties during that year when I was over there. And that was pretty rough. You get to know these guys and they're gone and--

[00:10:34.02] ROBERT PURVIS: They were all great. I really got along good with them, and said everybody in our company was a volunteer. And they're sort of more of the cream of the crop or whatever.

[00:10:44.95] We didn't have any racial problems or anything like that. It was just a really small company with 90 men. So it's sort of a close knit group. We had our own compound, our own area.

[00:11:00.67] ANDREW RINGLEE: Did you encounter any other Canadians in your unit?

[00:11:05.02] ROBERT PURVIS: I met one briefly for two or three minutes. I also remember his name was Black. He was with the Ranger company with the 173rd Airborne. I think it was N company.

[00:11:21.38] They just happened to pass through our company's area for a day or two and hey, I'm from Canada. I'm from Canada. And basically that was it. I never saw him again.

[00:11:33.08] ANDREW RINGLEE: What did the people you served with think about you being a Canadian?

[00:11:35.79] ROBERT PURVIS: Well, even in basic training, they all thought we were crazy, like, what are you guys doing here? Because a lot of them were drafted and fight to get out of the draft. But we all joked about it. And we all got along good.

[00:11:50.69] ANDREW RINGLEE: Did you meet people who you never would have met in-- and develop relationships with people in the service that you wouldn't have ever contacted in real life?

[00:12:01.34] ROBERT PURVIS: Well, sure. You always do. I mean, we always met so many. Even in basic training I think we had one other Canadian who was with us. His name was Beetle Bailey from what I remember.

[00:12:11.09] And he was living in the States, and he was going to get drafted so he signed up. Never did hear from him again. But we had fun in basic and I had really a good time when I was down in Panama and-- I spent a year there.

[00:12:34.49] ANDREW RINGLEE: So you were mostly doing the intelligence work for the Special Forces outfit in Vietnam. Did you have any other assignments?

[00:12:42.74] ROBERT PURVIS: No, that was probably mostly it. That kept me busy because we were always putting teams in or taking them out or briefing the teams in-- prior to them going in and have to debrief them when they come out. And we moved around a lot.

[00:12:59.18] ANDREW RINGLEE: During this time period did you have any downtime-- during your service in Vietnam?

[00:13:04.89] ROBERT PURVIS: I did go on R&R to Bangkok for a week. And I thought that was great. But it was probably one of the most depressing times in my life when I had to come back in country, because just going back out to civilization and coming back into this, it was very depressing I found.

[00:13:28.75] ROBERT PURVIS: Yeah, we got a few letters, but I'd just write, oh, the weather is nice or, it's hot. I didn't really get into too much. They did send me care packages every once in a while. So one of the things we got-- what we liked was pizza. So we used the hot plate or C-4 to cook a pizza, the canned pizza or whatever.

[00:13:58.41] ANDREW RINGLEE: Do you have any memory of the kind of popular culture that you could talk about? What did you read in Vietnam or did you--

[00:14:05.91] ROBERT PURVIS: I didn't get a chance to read anything in Vietnam. We were always stationed pretty far back so we didn't get much reading material at all.

[00:14:17.81] ANDREW RINGLEE: Did you receive any news from home or news about what was going on in the United States or Canada?

[00:14:25.76] ROBERT PURVIS: Not really. I got to read the Stars and Stripes once in a while but that was it. There wasn't a lot of stuff to read or I mean, here I was in Vietnam so I couldn't be concerned about-- too much with the antiwar movement. We were just focused on doing our job, staying alive, and coming home again.

[00:14:53.93] ROBERT PURVIS: We had one of our teams-- I took them down to the helipad and we talked. And I got them a Coke before they put them on the chopper. And a couple of days later they were in contact and three out of four of them got killed. And so I was there when they come back-- it was pretty traumatic.

[00:15:24.02] ROBERT PURVIS: Christmas Day was pretty good. We had a stand down, so we brought everybody back. And I got some pictures. We played baseball and basketball, and the whole company was there doing this. And that was a fun day.

[00:15:41.95] ROBERT PURVIS: Well, when I came home it was-- I got off the plane and my parents were there to greet me from what I remember. And they were--

[00:15:52.88] ANDREW RINGLEE: Well, how did you fly back? You flew from Cam Ranh?

[00:15:55.70] ROBERT PURVIS: When I got back I flew from Cam Ranh Bay back to Seattle, where I went to basic training, Fort Lewis, Washington. It took 24 hours to fly back. It took roughly 24 hours. I out-processed out of the Army--

[00:16:13.94] ANDREW RINGLEE: Right away?

[00:16:14.93] ROBERT PURVIS: --right away. And within 48 hours I was back in Winnipeg. End of service. Over. Done.

[00:16:25.55] ANDREW RINGLEE: And what was it like coming-- what did your parents think of you?

[00:16:28.64] ROBERT PURVIS: Well, they were ecstatic that I came back home in one piece and everything. But when I came home there was nobody to talk to. My two other friends, they were still in the service.

[00:16:44.11] I got a little over a two month early out because when I got back from Vietnam I still had a couple of months left in my service, but if we got back with less than three months service they just discharged you because there were so many veterans coming back at once. They were having so many problems with just warehousing people for months on end so they were just discharging them.

[00:17:08.71] There was nobody to talk to and nowhere to go and I was sort of just more or less invisible as far as being a veteran.

[00:17:21.10] And after that I took a-- I was one of the few veterans that I know of-- I think I met one other one-- that took advantage of the GI Bill and I went to university. So that was sort of my unwinding, decompression. I spent four years reading books.

[00:17:34.48] ANDREW RINGLEE: Where did you go?

[00:17:35.66] ROBERT PURVIS: I went to the University of Manitoba.

[00:17:36.91] ANDREW RINGLEE: Mm-hm. Oh, so you could use GI Bill to go to--

[00:17:39.98] ROBERT PURVIS: Yeah. But like I said, I was the only one that I ever met. I did meet one other one that went through the GI Bill, went to school.

[00:17:47.18] ANDREW RINGLEE: Mm-hm. Did you have any difficulty readjusting?

[00:17:52.07] ROBERT PURVIS: A little bit but it wasn't too bad. It was 16 years-- I never met or talked to another vet for 16 years. And it was November 11 and somebody laid a wreath for a Vietnam veteran and he put his picture in the local paper. So I contacted him and a couple of other Vietnam veterans from Winnipeg also contacted him and we all got together. And that's what started the Canadian Vietnam Veterans Association.

[00:18:29.60] ANDREW RINGLEE: You have to tell me about this. Tell me, from the very-- so that was--

[00:18:32.98] ROBERT PURVIS: That was the beginning.

[00:18:33.71] ANDREW RINGLEE: What year was that?

[00:18:34.86] ROBERT PURVIS: That was in '68. No pardon me, it was '85, November '85. So I was sort of ecstatic. Wow, there's other Canadian Vietnam veterans here. So we all got together and started talking. And it sort of really intrigued me and I couldn't stop talking.

[00:18:56.64] And I said, well, there's got to be more of us out here. So I said, let's put together a national reunion. So that's what I did. And I planned it for September the following year. Didn't know anybody but two other guys, I think just three of us got together.

[00:19:18.07] So what I did-- I had a manual typewriter and I wrote letters to the editor of all the major newspapers across Canada and-- just looking for veterans for a reunion. And the response was overwhelming. And by September we ended up with 100 veterans and two Gold Star mothers, and we went to Washington DC to visit the Wall.

[00:19:51.10] ROBERT PURVIS: Oh, very emotional. And it was very emotional just meeting all these other Canadians that served, and some fascinating stories, and the two Gold Star mothers. And it just we couldn't stop talking.

[00:20:06.03] ANDREW RINGLEE: And then from this a group emerged, right?

[00:20:08.79] ROBERT PURVIS: Yeah. We got the Canadian Vietnam Veterans Association going. And there was another group in Vancouver, Vietnam Veterans in Canada. Their leadership was mostly Vietnam veterans that-- American Vietnam veterans that had come to Canada but they had a big group with a mixture of Canadian and American veterans. And we had-- all the way from the Maritimes right across the country.

[00:20:35.64] This all transpired in like six or seven months, eight months. So we didn't-- we were pretty naive, didn't know anything. So we just got this group together and we went to Washington. And one of the groups that helped us out was the Marine Corps in Washington and one-- another group was the American Legion. They had an American Legion Post in Toronto, and they helped put together a lot of the things that we're going to do in Washington.

[00:21:03.94] And one of the things we did was lobbied the American government to get medical benefits for Canadians. Historically there was a reciprocal agreement between the Americans and

Canadian Veterans Affairs with First World War, Second World War, and Korea that if you had a service connected disability you could go to each other's Veterans Affairs Hospital and get treatment. Well, it didn't apply to us because Vietnam veterans wasn't on their list. So we lobbied the American government, and they did it really quickly. In a year they passed the bill. It was S.894, and they included-- Vietnam veterans was included in this bill to get service connected disabilities on both sides of the--

[00:21:57.96] ANDREW RINGLEE: Have you made use of that in Canada?

[00:22:00.75] ROBERT PURVIS: No, I haven't. But a lot of our veterans did. And then it didn't work that well because a lot of the problem was that you had to be a service connected, and getting a service-connected disability means going to the VA. And that didn't work out too well for a lot of veterans because of the distances involved.

[00:22:25.83] Like in my instance, going to the VA, it's a four-hour drive one way. And that's just the beginning. So it's constantly going back and forth. In other areas, in British Alberta for example, it's up to an eight-hour drive one way because it's straight south of Montana and there's not a lot-- it's a long. So there's a lot of veterans that fell through the cracks.

[00:22:52.78] Another thing I heard from a lot of veterans, it was-- when you cross the border, this is what they're told after discharge, forget about all your benefits. You get nothing up in Canada. So don't worry about it. So a lot of them never applied, never even thought of applying.

[00:23:14.97] ANDREW RINGLEE: Did you ever think about immigrating? Or after you were discharged you just figured you'd go back to Canada? You just knew that?

[00:23:24.32] ROBERT PURVIS: Yeah, I just decided to go back home.

[00:23:33.50] ANDREW RINGLEE: Can you talk about the Canadian Legion or the way that Canadians looked at a, sorry, a Vietnam veteran, somebody who served in a foreign war?

[00:23:46.97] ROBERT PURVIS: Well, it started out when we first started organizing. We went to a local branch of the Canadian Legion, and after we met there for a couple of meetings it was the branch commander came and told us we had to leave. We were no longer welcome there.

[00:24:09.58] And she was very apologetic, but she says this came from Manitoba-Ontario command. And so we couldn't meet there. They didn't like us, the people in the bureaucracy.

[00:24:29.93] So we went to-- almost the same day-- there was another veterans organization in Canada. It's called the Army Navy Air Force Veterans Association, and they welcomed us the very same day, said you guys are welcome here. So we've been with-- have our meetings and been there at their branch ever since.

[00:24:47.33] ANDREW RINGLEE: Great. Tell me about the Wall, the Traveling Canadian Wall that you built.

[00:24:56.13] ROBERT PURVIS: This was set up-- I can't remember the year. Quite a few-- it was a gentleman from the Fargo Air Museum helped put it together for us. And it was in the '90s and so he wanted to do something for us. So we put this Traveling Wall together, and we've been traveling with it across the border in different areas for the last 10 years.

[00:25:23.51] ANDREW RINGLEE: How often do you go on a trip?

[00:25:26.33] ROBERT PURVIS: Mostly during the summertime in the warm months. And we take it-- and it's been mostly in local areas, well, Michigan, Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota we've traveled to because it gets expensive and nobody knows about it. And that's one of the things when we go down to the States, so we didn't know Canadians served with the Americans. So it's not well known that Canadians served with American forces.

[00:25:57.42] ANDREW RINGLEE: Are you in relations with the group that put the monument up in Windsor?

[00:26:04.46] ROBERT PURVIS: Yes, we did have contact with them when they put that up. And I think that started when we went to Washington, and that's how they found out about us. And then that's when they said, well, we've got to get a monument to the Canadians. And they fought for quite a few years with the Canadian government to try and get the monument in our nation's capital, Ottawa, but that wasn't going to happen. And that's why they ended up in Detroit.

[00:26:40.52] ANDREW RINGLEE: Interesting.

[00:26:41.91] ROBERT PURVIS: It was just too much politics and they didn't want any reminder of the Vietnam War and a monument in our nation's capital.

[00:26:50.96] ANDREW RINGLEE: How do you think the Vietnam War is remembered in Canada?

[00:26:56.03] ROBERT PURVIS: I think that it's remembered as a tragic incident that happened, a tragic war. But very few Canadians know about the Canadians across the border. So most of them they just, well, Canada wasn't really involved. it's an American war.

[00:27:18.37] ANDREW RINGLEE: What do you think about draft dodgers that went to Canada?

[00:27:23.31] ROBERT PURVIS: Personally, I don't have any animosity against them. It was such a divisive war and I know it split families and it really tore them apart. It tore America apart. And personally I don't have anything against them but they have to live with their decisions the same way I live with my decisions of crossing the border and doing what I did. And sometimes that's not easy because my friend Larry got killed and I sort of feel responsible sometimes that maybe we shouldn't have done this.

[00:28:09.11] ANDREW RINGLEE: Are you in contact with your two other friends that you signed up with?

[00:28:12.86] ROBERT PURVIS: Yes. Well, my friend-- we all live in the same city, but Butch he passed away last year. And his brother Billy has a lot of medical issues so I don't see him very often.

[00:28:33.36] ROBERT PURVIS: Well, it's just my personal opinion. I think like just what happened in Korea when our President Trump went and met with Korea that they resolve the difficulties over the peace table rather than fighting. And I'd like to see more of that take place because I don't think we have to go on killing everybody for political issues.

[00:29:02.26] It's too difficult because it's all the kids who get killed. It's all the kids that go there and it's so hard on the families. And really it can be solved.

[00:29:17.36] ANDREW RINGLEE: How has your service in Vietnam affected the way that you think about service people coming off the battlefields today?

[00:29:24.57] ROBERT PURVIS: We never had any welcome homes in Canada for the troops or anything. It's the same, they just come home and they blend in. But I've worked with those veterans, and I've tried to get them organized and get them together and it hasn't been very successful.

[00:29:43.45] They don't get treated very well with Veterans Affairs and the government either. Their veteran benefits are about a third of what the Americans get. And they just get stonewalled to get-- and a lot of their problem is that they're not organized. They've got no veterans organization to speak for them.

[00:30:04.21] The big veteran organization is the Canadian Legion there, but they're sort of like a paper tiger. Most of the membership now is associate members. Our veterans are gone. They're all in the cemeteries. The Second World War veterans are gone, the Korean veterans, they're just about all gone. So there's just a handful remaining.

[00:30:23.86] So they're all divided, and that's what the government loves. They divide and conquer. And the government loves the military, but they hate veterans because they can send the military on their adventures, but they don't like the veterans because it costs them money. That's probably the same here in the US.

[00:30:48.80] ROBERT PURVIS: I think they're really good. I've been to a lot of them in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and all in southern areas around Winnipeg there, and I really love it. I love coming down and talking to all the veterans. And it's so interesting listening to their stories and sharing stories with them.

[00:31:09.77] And I wish I'd written a book or kept track of all the Canadians I met and their stories because it just been really fascinating stories I've heard. But all these guys are gone now. And like I said, I wish I had taken notes on it.

[00:31:28.04] I was probably one of the first veterans ever to go back into Vietnam. I think it was 1992, just-- it was prior to the Americans lifting their embargo. I just-- having these issues, I woke up one day and I told my wife I'm going to go back to Vietnam. And she says, well, if you're going I'm going too.

[00:31:51.26] And I had a 10-year-old son so we pulled him out of school. And it took me about a week to get visas and passports. We had to get a couple shots. And I got on a plane. We went to Vietnam.

[00:32:08.36] We went to Bangkok first. I got my entry visa into Vietnam there. When I was getting my entry visa, that was the-- I think the same day the Americans lifted the embargo.

[00:32:23.28] We flew into Vietnam and we traveled from-- backpacked from Saigon to Hanoi. We were there for over a month. I went back-- I tried to get back to some of the areas where I was in Vietnam but a lot of them they still had unexploded ordnance and they wouldn't let any tourists or anybody back there. I met quite a few European tourists there, but no Americans or--

[00:32:50.26] ANDREW RINGLEE: No veterans?

[00:32:51.49] ROBERT PURVIS: No veterans. One interesting experience I had, when I went to-- my friend Larry was killed around Cu Chi so I wanted to go to the tunnels of Cu Chi. And the driver was in the South Vietnamese Army.

[00:33:08.16] The tour guide was in the North Vietnamese Army. And I was an American veteran, and we sat down at a picnic table and had a beer together. So that was an interesting experience.

[00:33:21.18] But when I went back there in '92, like the embargo was on and it was like going into a time warp or time tunnel because there was no reconstruction, everything was pretty much the same. The jungles had grown back and the foliage had grown back from all the defoliation and stuff, but everything was so-- quite a bit the same. When I was in Hanoi I went to Hanoi Hilton and they still had the guards out front. And I was going to take pictures and they were waving me off telling me get out of here.

[00:33:57.78] There's still a lot of places there. I went up to Khe Sanh and there was absolutely nothing there. It took us almost four, six hours driving to get up there, went through a lot of the base-- Camp Carroll and up-- the Rockpile and through that area. And there's nothing there. In Khe Sanh it was just a big empty field. You could see the mountains and there was one Montagnard village. That was it. That was all that was there.

[00:34:30.38] I guess it was a bit of a healing experience. I wanted to go see where my friend Larry got killed. And it was pretty emotional. When I first got there, I guess it was a customs fellow at the airport, soon as I got off the plane he just went nuts. He started screaming at me because I never filled in a declarations form that they were supposed to give me on the plane. They never gave me one.

[00:34:59.47] And so he just went totally berserk. I'm sure he had PTSD or something. But he was just ranting and raving and screaming. And I said, we'd better get back on the plane because I can't put up with this. But after we got over that we went to a little tourist cafe and had a couple of beers, and everything settled down and everybody was so nice.

[00:35:22.18] We spent a month there. We never had any problems with anything. We never got sick. The people were just wonderful. Scenery was beautiful.

[00:35:31.57] I've talked to a lot of veterans and some say, I'll never go back there. I just hate that place. And I can respect their opinion on that too, but just each to their own it. I just wanted to go back.

[00:35:43.13] ANDREW RINGLEE: That's great. Well, thank you so much, sir, for participating in this oral history process. We've been trying to get you for a really long time.

[00:35:52.09] ROBERT PURVIS: Oh yeah. It was-- this cross-border stuff, it's been going on since the 18th century. During the Second World War prior to the Americans going into the-- thousands of Americans came up to Canada and joined the Air Force. And what I find is ironic is that the Legion put up memorials to them, but when we did it we were traitors and mercenaries.

[00:36:17.71] I never got that part. Opinions are starting to change but it's still taking a long time. And there's still the hardcore few veterans out there that have those opinions.

[00:36:31.09] ANDREW RINGLEE: Well, thank you so much--

[00:36:32.29] ROBERT PURVIS: Oh, thank you.

[00:36:32.71] ANDREW RINGLEE: --for participating.

[00:36:33.73]