

ALABAMA VETERAN THOMAS LLOYD:

"The day I arrived in Vietnam is one I will never forget. It was a cool, overcast day in April of '66, I was 24 years old with butterflies in my stomach like never before. I was nervous about what I would find once ashore and, even though I had been confined to a ship for almost a month, I was still apprehensive about leaving the ship. I had heard countless stories about snipers and booby traps, among other things. And, of course, the obvious danger of enemy troops. But ashore I did go, spending my tour of duty working as an Air Support Control Officer. As a Control Officer, my job was to deliver close air support to friendly troops. Each night I would stare into my monitor, acquiring a radar lock on A4s as they came across my screen and directing them to targets of opportunity. It all happened very fast and my missions usually came and went in a few very concentrated hours every night. While there I saw plenty of destruction, but I also felt gratified that I could contribute by volunteering to teach English to some of the Vietnamese.

"When it was all over and my time was up, I can remember boarding my flight back to the US thinking about how incredibly lucky I was to be doing something a lot of Americans who went to Vietnam didn't get to do, go home."