

Open Vault, from WGBH
Vietnam: A Television History; Roots of a War
Transcript of an interview with Herbert Bluechel, 1981

“So if you turned the corner uh to take the road leading to our headquarters, parallel to our headquarters, we encountered a roadblock and uh consisting of some logs and some brush and, in order to get through the roadblock we had to make a sort of an inverted “S”. . . .”

“Well, with that, we were just on the spade edge of the “s” heading for the ditch and machine gun opened up, and the burst caught Peter in the back of the head, on the left side. The jeep continued and tipped on its side.”

“And um, I grabbed a hold of Peter but...he was dead, 'cause machine gun burst had hit him, exclusive, didn't hit me at all and there weren't even any, as I recall, no bullet holes through the windshield, so he caught the full burst.”

“Well the ditch was about four or five deep 'n, four or five feet deep and next to the ditch on the other side it's a hedge, hedge is about three feet thick, maybe six, eight feet high. Uh, firing continued, rifle fire, but the chassis of the jeep protected me.”

“I had a forty-five in my holster and I had three clips, total of twenty-one rounds of ammunition. Peter had a carbine, thirty caliber carbine in the jeep. I grabbed that. It jammed right away, it was, I don't think it'd been fired in months and months and months. So I, I had to get, get out of there.”

“I went back to the jeep again and checked on Peter and nothing I could do for him. So I made my way around the hedge to...the other side of the hedge is a golf course. So, the hedge

protected me too and I made way down the hedge. People came around the end of the hedge and started firing at me. There were about fifteen or twenty."

"And there's firing coming through the hedge, too, but I slowed 'em down with the forty-five and uh 'till I got down to the edge of the hedge, then there was no more protection and they were still coming and I had two rounds left, so I took off across the golf course, I had to run about roughly five hundred yards to our headquarters."

"Then they fired everything, shot my hat off, went through my trousers, but they didn't hit me. Just lucky. Hmm. So I went to the, arrived at headquarters, and um, Captain Frank White was there and he had two war correspondents, guests for lunch. Sergeant Wicks was there. And we broke out our arms and uh we had a pitched battle for about an hour or so. Turns out that Peter Dewey was the first American to be killed in Vietnam. Huh."