

“I Couldn’t Breathe:” A PBR Crewman Recounts His Wounding

In September of 1957, Jerry Gandy joined the United States Navy. Jerry felt that his time in Vietnam was the height of his career because it tested him both physically and emotionally. Jerry served as a boat captain on a Patrol Boat, River (PBR). On one occasion, he recalled his boat being struck by a rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) and having to save an officer from the water. Jerry received both the Bronze Star and the Purple Heart for his actions that day. After 10 months in Vietnam, Jerry remembered being severely wounded by an RPG.



Watch Jerry Gandy’s oral history as he describes the attack on his PBR and what he felt afterwards. The video is available on YouTube at: <https://tinyurl.com/JerryGandy> or you can click directly on this QR code from your smartphone or tablet (using either a QR reader app or your phone’s camera).



Questions to consider:

1. What is the importance of oral histories? Would you consider these accounts to be artifacts? Why or Why not?
2. What did Jerry experience when his boat was attacked by the enemy?
3. What do you think Jerry’s thoughts were when he noticed the Vietnamese gunner asking for help?
4. How do you think Jerry’s experiences might have affected him for the rest of his life?