

## “Welcome to the Gun Line:” On a Destroyer in Vietnam

Jerry O'Donnell graduated from the Naval Academy in 1969 and was commissioned as an ensign in the United States Navy. Jerry made two deployments to Vietnam on two different ships, USS *Rowan* and USS *Davidson*. Jerry's ships spent a lot of time off the coast of Vietnam on what was referred to as “the gunline,” where Navy ships cruised up and down the coast, providing gunfire support to troops fighting in the jungles of Vietnam.

Watch Jerry's oral history to learn about what he describes as his introduction to Vietnam. The video is available on YouTube:

<https://tinyurl.com/JerryODonnell> 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? Why do we spend the time to speak with veterans about their experiences?
2. Is this oral history a primary source or secondary source? Why?
3. Why exactly was Jerry's ship needed on the gunline?
4. How long was Jerry's ship on station before something happened?
5. What happened to his ship?
6. What was Jerry's job during this mission?
7. During the video clip, he refers to the table shaking. Why was that happening? What had his fellow sailor experienced to make him react this way? What is a common term to describe what this sailor was experiencing?
8. How did Jerry react? Would you have reacted the same way?
9. How would you feel about being in a war zone?