

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Veterans Project

Experiences in Vietnam

O. H. 787

LARRY CALLAWAY

Interviewed

by

Dale Voitus

on

November 15, 1982

LARRY W. CALLAWAY

Larry Wayne Callaway, born February 19, 1940, is the son of Wayne and Dollie Callaway. He is a native of the state of Georgia. He attended and graduated from Lanier High School in Macon. He joined the Army Reserve at the age of fifteen realizing early on what his career choice would be. After a period of time as an enlisted man, he became an officer and settled into an Army career. His career inevitably took him to a year tour of Vietnam. There he was assigned as an advisor to a South Vietnamese unit. In this capacity he participated in numerous actions. After his tour of duty, he returned to the States and continued his Army career.

Currently the professor of military science at Youngstown State University, Lieutenant Colonel Callaway is married and has raised four children. He plans to coach football at Youngstown State University next year and will be in the Youngstown area until this tour of duty is up.

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INTERVIEWEE: LARRY CALLAWAY

INTERVIEWER: Dale Voitus

SUBJECT: Vietnam, army career, people, advisory groups

DATE: November 15, 1982

V: This is an interview with Colonel Larry W. Callaway for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program by Dale John Voitus at the Pollock House on the campus of Youngstown State University on November 15, 1982 at 10:00.

I would like you to tell me a little bit about your background and family history if you would.

C: I was born in 1940 in Macon, Georgia. I attended military school very early in my life starting in eighth through twelfth grades. My father was a contractor. My father had been in the military during World War II. He was in the Army Air Corps. He was a nose gunner on the B-17. During that time, before we had the problems in the 1960's, in the 1950's growing up we knew that we had to go into the military some day. We were proud of that fact. In fact, I joined the National Guard when I was fifteen years old. I attended National Guard meetings on Monday nights and Boy Scout meetings were on Wednesday nights. I was taking off one uniform and putting on the other. You could say that I have been in the military most of my life.

I left home and joined the Air Force when I was seventeen. I spent four years, from 1957 to 1961, and got out. I worked civil service until 1965. At that time, I looked into the Army Infantry OCS in Georgia. I was commissioned as second lieutenant and I have been in the Army ever since.

V: About your family, was it a large or a small family?

C: I had two sisters. Both of them are younger. One was born in 1945 and one was born in 1950. Both are married and live in Georgia. My father died when I was stationed in Germany

in 1978. My mother remarried and is now living in Toccoa, Georgia. They have a meat packing company.

V: Your father was a contractor? Was this his own business?

C: When he came out after the war, he and my two uncles got together and helped each other build a house. They went into plumbing and contracting together. He was in business for himself from 1945 until he died in 1978.

V: Could you frame for me an answer as to what motivated you to become an officer? You had already served some time and got out. What were the factors that brought you back to the Army?

C: Like I said before, the military background that I received in my high school education and the time that I spent in the Air Force and National Guard at the early age of fifteen, I knew then that I would have a military career. I didn't know that I would be an officer. I didn't know that until I got out in 1961.

I worked for the civil service and my boss happened to be a retired colonel. He told me several times that out of all the people that he had met, I should be in the Army and be an officer. In fact, he is the one who got me into OCS to get my commission. I think it is a combination of all of that that determined my background or what I was going to be in this world.

V: When and how were you sent to Vietnam?

C: After I was commissioned, my first duty station was at Fort Hood, Texas. During that time frame, I was at Fort Hood from 1966 to 1968, the latter part of 1968. At that time, I had received orders to go to Vietnam. I really didn't know where Vietnam was. Just the fact that I was a military man that had received orders, that is all that I had to know. When you are a professional, you get your orders and you follow through on them.

I arrived in Vietnam on January of 1969. I departed Vietnam in January of 1970. The idea of going there, it never crossed my mind to never go there. I was a professional soldier. I received orders to go. Like a good soldier, I saluted and moved out.

V: Was your unit being sent? Was a unit being rotated there? Was it just a chance for you to be exposed to that type of situation that would cause for you to be sent there? Do you know the reason for that?

C: Yes, I do. My unit was not sent there. In fact, I was company commander in Vietnam. Our mission at Fort Hood at that time was to take individuals into the Army--they would come through basic training and we would train them in basic training and then we would carry them into advanced training--and get them prepared to go to Vietnam. At the same time, I was being promoted. Doing more time is always faster. I had gone from second lieutenant to captain in twenty-four months. By the time I received orders for Vietnam, I was already a captain.

My unit did not go as a unit. I went as an individual. I was assigned to the Team 18 Advisory Group in I Corps which was operating out of Hue at that time. I was given the mission to go to Bihn Loc, which was an island. At that time, I was assistant district senior advisor. I had a major as a district advisor. I was the captain and his assistant. We had a lot of problems in I Corps in Vietnam.

V: Let us be a little more specific about your job assignment. What would it really entail for you? You said that you were an assistant district advisor. What was that? What did that entail?

C: There was an organization established as a team of one major, two captains, several lieutenants and maybe ten or fifteen enlisted men. We had been assigned to the Vietnamese. That was my first assignment as the assistant district's chief advisor. We were there to advise the people, the soldiers, and try to win the hearts and minds of the Vietnamese civilian populous. Anytime that the regular forces of the Vietnamese went to combat, these were the individuals that we were advising. We would go into combat with them as their advisors.

We provided the artillery, ammunition, and most of the training for these Vietnamese.

V: First of all when you would be involved in a combat situation, was it left to the South Vietnamese to be responsible for actually conducting the operation or did your advisor require or allow you to actually maneuver the troops or command the situations? How did that authority span out?

C: The first time that I went into combat with them, my district advisor had been promoted or moved up to take over the three shop operations in Hue. They gave me the district. At that time I was the district senior advisor. There were a lot of Vietcong operating on this island of Bihn Loc. They were using it for rest and relaxation, what we call R & R. The idea behind it was that my district chief was a lieutenant colonel. I was the captain advising him. He ran the show. He planned the operations. Naturally, we were in on the planning from the initial stages of it. Any coordination that had to be made

by the Americans for any operation, the advisor made that coordination. They would bring in their operations officer with our S3 Operations Officer, Vietnamese type. We would go over the operation that was upcoming.

My part in it was if that district chief got into trouble and his forces could not handle the Vietcong or North Vietnamese, we met them and I was to get him out of trouble. I was to provide artillery, air support, or any other support that he might need for the battle.

V: Through your exposure seeing the Vietnamese in actual combat, could you give us an opinion of them as soldiers? What were your thoughts as far as their fighting ability?

C: You had to break them down into two groups. In regular forces which is like our active Army, they were good fighters. They were trained. They could fight. They could hold their own. The poplar forces were like our National Guard or units that were not that well trained. However, there were a lot of them. We had to teach the poplar forces. In the war, we had to teach the regular forces. You have to keep in mind that my district chief was a lieutenant colonel. He had fought all of his life. Now here he was as a district chief fighting the Vietcong. He was fluent in five languages. He was a very sharp individual. He knew how to fight and made my job a lot easier. I just made sure that he had the support that he needed to win any battle that we might have to fight or go into during my stay at Bihn Loc.

V: Based on the background of the man you were working with, it would seem to me that the motivation level of the troops that were fighting the Vietcong would have been very high? Was it your impression that they had the motivation to win? It would maybe break out depending on who was regular forces and poplar forces.

C: They had the motivation enough that we pacified the island with the help of the 101st Airborne on an operation in the middle part of 1969. We went in and cleaned the island out of all the Vietcong. We captured over 250 and killed in the neighborhood of 25 or 30. In a major battle, that was great. We kept the casualty rate down on both sides. What we did with the help of the Navy also, we put the Navy on one side of the island and the 101st Airborne came in from each end of the island, north and south, and my district chief and his forces came in across the middle of it. There we were, after a five day operation, with all the captured Vietcong on the island and the island was now pacified.

It got to the point in about two months in the Bu Dop district, which was right across the bay from where we were, where it was under fire constantly. My province senior advisor and my district chief's boss who was the province chief, came down one afternoon

and told the district chief and I that we were being moved to Phu Loc. We had to go over and try to pacify that area where they had a lot more Vietcong and NVA moving around in the back.

Back to the fighting, as you have heard before, the American forces there never lost a battle anytime that they faced the North Vietnamese or Vietcong. A major battle was never lost. It was the same way with the Vietnamese forces that I was with. Never did we ever lose a battle. Yet people say we lost the war. Keep in mind that it was a two problem mission. We also, at the same time, had to win the hearts and minds of the people as we were eliminating the Vietcong and the NVA up there in this particular district.

V: The chain of command structure in which you were working under, your district advisor was a South Vietnamese Lieutenant Colonel?

C: The district chief.

V: You worked as an assistant as an American advisor to him?

C: I wasn't his assistant. I was equal in rank to him as far as the Vietnamese were concerned. I was his advisor. I was the one who provided the bullets being used and whatever it took for him to win the battle that he was in at the time.

V: What size of a unit would it be as far as numbers?

C: It was probably a little less than a brigade. At certain times, it was more than a brigade. Most of the time we had three RF companies. The most we ever had was like 12 RF platoons.

V: What is RF?

C: RF was regular forces and PF was popular forces. The PF were like local militia. Regular forces were the regular Vietnamese Army. You could say this district chief as a lieutenant colonel had a battalion plus size force of man at all times to go into combat or commit anyone at the time.

V: Let's talk about the angle where you mentioned about winning the hearts and minds of the people. Did you meet any civilians? How do you think they felt towards the United States' presence there?

C: We lived with the civilians. As an advisor, you live with the Vietnamese. We lived on the compound surrounded by villages and by the people. We dealt with them everyday. The people in our two villages, Phu Dop and Bihn Loc, they were relieved once we pacified Bihn Loc. By pacification, I mean it was no longer a threat of the Vietcong or NVA there. Also keep in mind that this is a very rural area. There is no electricity or running

water. They lived in straw huts. To the average Vietnamese, all he wanted was to be left alone and go out into his rice paddy with his water buffalo and grow rice to provide food on his table for his family. You could ask the average Vietnamese who was the president of Vietnam, the leader of the NVA, and he really didn't care. He wanted to be left alone and have peace.

It wasn't that way all over. Some places were according to who had control of that area. If the Vietcong had control of a particular village, naturally, they were going to lean towards the Vietcong because they were afraid that they were going to be killed. I have never yet seen a Vietnamese village chief and his people not be relieved to see the American forces come in there or my district chief and his forces coming in to rid that village of the NVA or the Vietcong and not be a happy man or happy people.

They knew what freedom was. They could see what the NVA and the Vietcong were doing to their women, taking their young off into the hills to fight at night, or robbing their villages of rice and food supply. They were afraid of them. We provided that necessary force that they felt secure and safe when we were in the area. When we would leave, especially when we were in Phu Loc, the Vietcong would move back in. It was a matter of ambushing which the RF, Regular Forces, did a lot of at night. Sometimes we would have from 100 to 200 ambushes set up at night in Phu Loc to catch the Vietcong coming out of the mountains and into the villages at night to get food.

- V: It seems to me that your operations were a little bit out of your area since you were an officer. How did that detract or add to your ability to function over there?
- C: You have to keep in mind in a jungle there aren't too many areas that tanks can move around in. However, we did have tanks in Vietnam. A lot of the armed officers, infantry, and all of the branches had been assigned as Mac Vee advisors in this particular part of the wartime frame. It was thought to be a way to win the hearts and minds of the people. I thought that we did a good job in I Corps. That is up close to the DMZ and Vietnam.

We did a lot to help the people. We did a lot of things. For example, we brought in tractors for the Vietnamese to use in their rice paddies. It was a mistake. They had been using water buffalo since time. When you go back and teach and train them how to use the tractors which could harvest a crop a lot faster and better. Yet, they would park that tractor and go back to the water buffalo. We learned a lesson there. With modern technology, you have to go very slow. We would bring in



thousands and thousands of chickens and different types of animals to feed the people. We would show them how to grow a crop faster. We brought in experts to teach them how to do this. It goes along with winning the hearts and minds of the people. We repaired bridges and built roads. We brought in Bihn Loc large generators. We had a Vietnamese form an electric company. They never had electricity before. He was running the wire and providing electricity for the first time in the history of this particular village. We would bring in thousands and thousands of dollars worth of tin. It was to rebuild homes. We brought in doctors to give them the proper inoculations they needed. We did a lot of things to help the people.

At the same time, there was the Vietcong robbing them and killing them of their food and youth. We were making a lot of money in this case. However, it wasn't always so. It wasn't always "proper" to do some of the things that we did. An example would be using the tractors. We were rushing it. We were too far ahead in pushing the modern technology on the elder Vietnamese. We did a lot of good things for them.

- V: How did you and your fellow officers and soldiers feel about the Vietnamese? Did you feel that you were actually helping them as far as being a protector for them and letting them go about living their lives? Do you feel that we were providing them any type of service or beneficial services?
- C: Just like the things that I just covered. We provided them with a lot of services especially when we take a medical team into a village that has never laid eyes on a doctor. They had the doctor and medical team to treat the village. I mean the entire village, especially the children. We did a lot of things with building hospitals and things like that. We rebuilt villages that were bombed out by the Vietcong or the Americans. It didn't take long, but once you were there, you realize that you were doing some good. Building a road that they could push their carts on helped. They had to go across the country in the sand. Bihn Loc was all sand on an island. These people never had a road before and we built a road. We repaired bridges that had been damaged years ago. We helped them to learn to produce bigger and better crops with a higher yield. We did a lot of good things there. We also did some bad things.
- V: As far as what you were doing to help them . . . I want to try to stew this around the politics. You mentioned once before that the average person wouldn't know who the president was. Was there an effort made to educate the people in any type of political indoctrination life similar to how we have ours in the United States?
- C: We had teams that would go in. Many of them would talk in military. We had our military teams to go in and drop leaflets.

They would go into the villages and talk to them about ways to stand up against the Vietcong. It wasn't so much political.

You have to keep in mind that this is a rural farmer with no means of communication. There was no electricity at that time with the majority of the people. His days consisted of getting up, going out, working in the fields with the entire family--the small children were taking care of even smaller children--and to provide food for his family on that particular day. They weren't interested in politics or even the war. Some of them had been arrested and some of their children had been snatched off and taken by the Vietcong or by the regular or poplar forces of Vietnam.

You have to figure that these people have been fighting all of their life, one battle after another. They grew up in battle. They could see their brother or sister killed. Naturally, there would be some heartache there, but not as much as you would have in American families. There wouldn't be that much sorrow because they lived in sorrow. They were living in hell. It was a tough life.

- V: How did you feel about what was taking place back here in the United States when you were over there? I realize that the soldiers had some exposure as to what was happening back home. How did the war protests affect you personally?
- C: I am sure a lot of the soldiers, especially the ones stationed at base camps or large cities, were aware of it. Like I said, I was out in the district in the woods or jungle. I didn't get that information. I didn't know what was going on back here. As a professional, I don't really care. As a professional soldier, you stay out of politics. It never has bothered me to that great extent. I was sent there to do a job and I did it to the best of my ability. My people, down to the man, felt the same way. Being in the district, you didn't get a lot of information about what was going on in the outside. You didn't have time to sit around and read a newspaper. We didn't have newspapers. The only radio we had was Vietnamese radio. If you didn't understand Vietnamese, which most of us didn't, you didn't receive that. The year of 1969 for us, the United States, what was going on at home was a total loss to most of your advisors in Vietnam. Yet I am sure that a lot of them in Saigon and places like that had communication and could hear what was going on back in the United States.
- V: As far as how you felt, how did you feel the United States and the sincerity of trying to win . . . Do you think they were actively seeking to win the war or do you feel that they were more or less just providing the means for the Vietnamese to win the war? That is a political type of question, but maybe you could give me thoughts on it?

C: The key here is that we were trying. The Mac Vee, the advisory part of the war, were trying to get the Vietnamese strong enough that they could take over the war and we could get the Americans out of there. But as you know, it escalated. The reason it did was we made the same mistake that the French made when the French were there and they were defeated. We made the mistake of going into defensive positions. We made the mistake of having a lot of politics involved in it. When you go into a defensive position, you have to know the situation. To win, you have to be the aggressor. You have to attack and eliminate your enemy. We weren't doing that. We were in static position trying to win the hearts and minds in most of Vietnam. We should have learned through the French. You can't win a war like that. It is a no-win situation. It is a matter of time. Ho Chi Minh said it properly years ago, "If the elephant and the tiger go into combat, duel, and the tiger can take a bite of the elephant and continually attack the elephant and move away, come back and attack him again. On another day, he will in time consume the elephant." That is what the Vietcong, Vietnamese, Vietnam did to the French and what they did to the Americans. It was a matter of time before the tiger would consume the elephant.

Time was on their side. Like I said, they were fighting since time began in Vietnam. They grew up by it. The people back home in the United States were not used to that. As far as they were concerned, Americans were getting killed, hundreds a day. They were watching it on television for the first time in the history of the United States. They could sit down, eat dinner at night, and watch Americans getting killed and all of the action in Vietnam. The Americans got tired of that. That is when the politics came into getting the Americans home and why we pulled out.

V: Did you feel that your time spent there helped you in being a better officer as far as improving your career or was it something beneficial to you just being exposed to that type of situation? You are trained to be a soldier in combat and sometimes you are never exposed to it. How did you feel that it helped or hindered you?

C: I was trained to be a combat soldier leading combat American troops. Here I am in combat with Vietnamese. We were in combat especially after we went to Phu Loc. We saw a lot of combat there. It is a different feeling when you are advising than when you are leading, when your life is on the line. You are depending on a force--I don't want to say a foreign force, but they were foreign--instead of your own guys that you trained with and you know what they can do. You know that you can depend on them. Never once did I come close to death in any combat that I felt we could never win. We had some well-trained fighting men of Vietnam. Also we had the assurance that we had the Americans not too far away. All I had to do was mash a button

on a microphone and I could get the helicopters and gun ships. I could mash another button and I would have the artillery there. In any operation that we ever had, we had the back-up support of the American forces. I will say again, we never did lose a battle, not one battle in Vietnam, yet to some people, we lost the war.

V: Basically, you feel that it was beneficial to you as far as being exposed to that?

C: Yes, it was. I definitely do. It gave me the big picture. After awhile, you begin to understand what the Vietnamese were all about, why they were fighting, and why we were there protecting these people. It gave me an opportunity firsthand to see what the Vietcong was doing to some of the village chiefs. They would come into a village and take a village chief that wasn't cooperating with them and tie him to a stake, cut his penis off and put it in his mouth and let him bleed to death. They would bring everyone in the village around to watch that happen. I saw a lot of that.

It helped me to become a better officer and understand their side and why they were fighting. A lot of the American soldiers in Vietnam, especially the ones who never worked or operated with the Vietnamese, thought they were ignorant people.

V: This next question might be something that you can't answer, but maybe you could give us a general idea of what each part of the day was like as far as what you did. What was a typical day like from when you got up and went to bed and what you did in between?

C: A typical day for an advisor that was in an area with a lot of conflict . . . You never slept when it was dark. That was when you did your operating. The entire year that I was in Vietnam, I was never in combat in the daylight except for two times.

A typical day would start for us at dark. Operations had been planned during the day. As I mentioned before, we were doing a lot of ambushing. We had part of the Marine Corps there; we had part of the 101st Airborne, one battalion. Later, it was brigade operation plus the RF Companies, the regular forces Vietnamese Companies, the popular forces Vietnamese Companies. There were many people in the district. We had a lot of the NVA in the district. It was right in the mouth of the Achau Valley. The Vietcong and NVA were coming in over entire villages and getting rice. We knew that we had to stop them. The way to do that was to plan our operations during the latter part of the afternoons.

Various units with up to 150 ambushes would be set up in an area. From district headquarters, the district chief and

I would control this most of the time. We had the American artillery supporting. There were two fire bases in our districts that supported these ambushes. We had the gun ships from the 101st Airborne and helicopters to provide air support. We had various other air support. If we needed it, we could call. We had Naval gun fire that we could call.

The big problem was to insure. If you had 150 ambushes set up at night with platoon size force to company size force, you had to make sure that they didn't fire on each other. The way this worked was you would send them out right at dark. They would move into an alternate position and wait a couple of hours. Then they would move to their primary positions. Someone had to coordinate this with the artillery, air strikes. We had an umbrella like over all of these ambushes. Each one of these had to be plotted on the master board. This was done back at district headquarters with the American staff, my staff, and the Vietnamese staff. We would wait.

We would wait. Not a night went by that we didn't kill Vietcong or NVA coming in or going out. Once we received that they had moved into a village of any size force, a large size force especially, we would go in and accord a search operation or accord and destroy. That is where you go in and circle the village. You would give a sign and go in and destroy the Vietcong in that particular area.

- V: Were you actually involved in the planning and waiting for the results or did you actually become involved in the true movements and go out and see what was happening?
- C: The district chief and I would go out at least twice a week. Each time that we would go out . . . Once we had information that a large size force was involved, the district chief would take his three RF companies. It was like a small battalion. We would set large ambushes. We would go in one of these accord and destroy missions. We would probably go twice a week. It was important what type of intelligence information we were receiving of where the largest force was or where we expected it to be.

Like I said, my district chief was very aggressive. You have to remember the district chiefs were God in their district. They had the power of life and death. They could shoot one of their soldiers saying he was a coward in combat or he was running in combat. The villages understood that he was God in that particular district. We never had any problems with the civilian populous and our soldiers because of the great power given to the district chief.

- V: As far as your experience of the enemy, could you give us an opinion of them as fighters, the North Vietnamese, the Regulars, and Vietcong?
- C: They were very good fighters. Any captured enemy soldiers that we took would tell you that they were well-trained. They believed in a lot of rehearsal before they took a particular objective. We believed in rehearsal also, but they really rehearsed. We found camps that were made up and looked exactly like a train of artillery placement. Before they would attack that artillery placement, they would rehearse it. They would actually have the barbed wire strung up. They would rehearse it many times before it came time to take their objective. They were well-disciplined fighters. They could lay for hours in a waiting ambush and not move. They had a cause. The Americans over there didn't have a cause. The Vietnamese, both side, the north and the south, had a cause. They felt that they had a cause. They were an excellent fighting force which they proved to be in the long run.
- V: As far as their equipment, were they well-equipped and supplied? It seems to me that when they were moving around all of the time that they had to supply themselves with their own food. Was that just their way of operating?
- C: Keep in mind, this was a guerilla war. Unless you met a large NVA Force, North Vietnamese Force, probably 90% of the fighting over there was in the guerilla type action. In guerilla type action you didn't have to carry that much equipment. They couldn't carry that much equipment because they didn't have the transportation going through the mountain passes and jungle. I am sure you are aware of the Ho Chi Minh Trail. They constantly had their supplies brought into them. They would get their munitions or small arms. Mainly, it was a small arms type of war. They never did get their large artillery pieces in. Most of the stuff was to carry on their back or pull with small type equipment. It was a guerilla type war and that is the way it was fought, ambush-to-ambush. There weren't so many but we did have large battles. They weren't in the area that I was in. It was just mainly guerilla type action.
- V: There weren't many situation that they would trade with you; they would just hit and move out?
- C: Remember the elephant and the tiger. That was the war. They figured that they could take a bite here and a bite there and consume the elephant. That was the type of war that it was. I say again, if you are in a defensive static position, it is just a matter of time; you aren't going to win. That is why you have to attack to win a war. You can't go into a defense and win. That is what we were doing. We were in a defense position having our ambushes et cetera. We were trying to

win the hearts and minds. At the time we were doing this, they were taking a bite here and a bite there. You saw what happened.

V: Basically, you felt that is what lead to the downfall of the South Vietnamese as far as not maintaing an aggressive mode?

C: I feel that what led to the downfall of the Vietnamese is when we pulled out of there. If we were still in defensive positions, we would be there today. We would still be winning the major battles and never losing a battle. We had them outgunned, outforced, outtrained, and everything else. The Vietnamese could hold their own. Most of the units could. It was just a matter of being a long and drawn out war. The reason it did that was because we were in those defensive positions.

There was, at one time, two million American forces over there. We should have gone in and taken the country. It would have just been a matter of days if we had started from the south and moved north or started from the north and moved south. Again, it was a political type of situation and we didn't choose to go that route.

The reason the Vietnamese lost the war was because the United States pulled out. That is the only reason. We might still be there today had they decided to continue the type of fighting that we had done. Keep in mind that they lost the war because we pulled out.

V: What were your feelings upon coming home? Was it just that your time was up and you rotated out? Is that what it boiled down to?

C: At that time, you know that we were serving a year there. We would come back to the States and retrain and then go back over again. Some of us would go back every two or three years. Some people had three or four tours in Vietnam. Most people had two.

When I came back, it was time for me to get a Master's degree as far as the Army was concerned and move into a different area. I moved into the Foreign Area Officer. You had to have a Master's degree for that, the language and all that went with it. I came back from Vietnam and went to the Armed Forces Staff College. They sent me for a foreign area specialty. I chose the Middle East. By the time I had graduated from the Armed Forces Staff College after six months or so and spent eighteen months at the University at Akron, the war had started to wind down in Vietnam. The decision had been made to pullout. I didn't have to go back.

- V: This maybe won't pertain to your unit since you were an advisor and weren't closely related to American units, but maybe through hearsay you can relate the feeling of drug abuse in the American Armed Forces.
- C: Drug abuse in Vietnam was so exaggerated. In the time that I spent in Vietnam, I saw one marijuana cigarette. I saw that under a jeep seat when I was inspecting a jeep. I don't know how it got there, but it was under the seat of the jeep. There were four marijuana cigarettes. In my entire tour in Vietnam, that was all that I saw. I am not saying that the Americans didn't use drugs in base camps, back where they were after combat, but I can tell you this! We associated with the American Forces especially the 101st Airborne. I had some time there. I never saw one American use drugs or one Vietnamese who used drugs. In my opinion, it was highly exaggerated. I am sure that it happened, but I never saw it.
- V: Do you feel that a lot of conceptions of the war itself as far as that particular area and what was seen at home had a lot to do with the media coverage of the war?
- C: Yes, it did.
- V: Were they particular? Do you feel that they picked and chose the things that they would want the public to see at home?
- C: Today, our press is based on a story of some type of disaster that will sell more newspapers. You will get more people watching television than talking about good things that are going on. How many times did you see a new bridge that we replaced? How many times did you see thousands of chickens that we gave them? How many times did you see a new road being built? How many times did you see stories relating to the individual being set up with electricity to form his own power company? No, you saw the Americans killing Vietcong. That sells news, TV and press.
- Today it is the same way in our society. The good things that happen just aren't that newsworthy compared to the bad things that happen. It was the same thing in that war. It will always be that way when it comes to journalism. They want something that is going to sell the newspaper or the TV show. Good things don't go very far.
- V: I would like to give you a couple of moments for final comments with your involvement in Vietnam, beneficial or otherwise.
- C: This is my opinion. First of all, as a professional soldier, I would go anyplace anytime that my country calls for me to go. That is my job. I am paid to do that. I am trained to do that. I ask no questions. I think a lot of your professional soldiers felt that way. The ones that were drafted and came back to



the States had problems. You hear of the Vets having problems today, psychological problems. A lot of these kids weren't prepared for that. One reason that they weren't prepared for that is they were not trained military professionals. A lot of them got killed. The facts proved that the ones killed were in the first few days in combat in Vietnam or in the first few minutes in the battle. Some of these kids were not trained. They were not professionals. In turn, a lot of them died. The ones that survived came back and had psychological problems.

Some of them feel that the Army or United States Government owes them something. A true professional doesn't feel that way. I don't feel that the Army or the government owes me a thing for fighting that war. I have been in the military for twenty-five years. They don't own me a thing. I guess as a professional--I hope most professionals feel this way--the war in Vietnam was a tragedy. It was a tragedy because we didn't go in there to win it. Anytime that you go into combat not to win, you are going to have problems. I said before that the war could have been ended in a matter of days if we had taken and been the aggressor. We went into a defensive position and you can't win wars like that. It was a tragedy that we lost 57,939 lives. You are going to lose that in every war. We are a very aggressive nation. Look at over 100 years. We have been in some type of combat with almost every country in the world. In the eyes of the professional soldier, he just does his job. He is called on to do it and just does it. He comes home, if he is lucky enough to come home. We hear of the 57,939 that died. How about the 300,000+ that were wounded in the other wars. It is sad that we have wars. Since man has been alert, we have had wars. We will always have wars as long as we have two human beings on this earth. It is in their own nature. It will always be. It is sad, but it is a fact of life.

Vietnam is considered a tragedy in our history. I will tell you this and say it again: We never lost a battle, major battle, in Vietnam. That is just the way it goes.

END OF INTERVIEW