

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

The Vietnam Project

Army Experiences as an Officer

O.H. 28

MICHAEL LUCAS

Interviewed

by

Louis DiDonato

on

February 6, 1974

MICHAEL LUCAS

Captain Michael Lucas of the United States Army was born on September 11, 1946, the son of John and Mary Lucas. He spent his first two years of high school in Germany, where his father, an Army officer, was stationed. He completed school in 1964 at Wakefield High School in Arlington, Virginia. He then attended Youngstown State University from 1964 through 1968, when he received his Bachelor of Arts with a history major. In 1973, he earned a Master of Arts from that institution.

While attending college, Captain Lucas was a participant in the ROTC program. While in the Army, he was stationed for two years in Germany, then was sent to Vietnam. In Vietnam, he served in the Twenty-third Infantry Division as a field artillery officer. His tour of duty there was influential in helping him choose to become a career army officer.

Captain Lucas distinguished himself in the service, being the recipient of the Bronze Star with oak leaf cluster and the Air Medal ninth award. He and his wife, Beverly, whom he married in 1968, have one son, Mark.

DONNA DEBLASIO
August 3, 1977

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INTERVIEWEE: MICHAEL LUCAS
INTERVIEWER: Louis DiDonato
SUBJECT: Army Experiences as an Officer
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D: This is an interview with Captain Michael Lucas by Louis DiDonato. It is February 6, 1974. The interview is being conducted in the Army ROTC building on the campus of Youngstown State University. Mike, can you give us a little bit of background about yourself?

L: Do you want my service background?

D: Yes, tell us about your service background and a little bit about where you went to high school

L: I can start off by saying that I had an unusual background mainly because of my parents. My father was an Army officer, so I moved quite frequently from place to place, from continent to continent.

I attended two years of high school in Germany. Upon completion of my father's assignment there, he rotated his assignment to the Pentagon. I went to school, then, in Arlington, Virginia, a suburb of Washington, D. C., where I attended Wakefield Senior High School in my senior year. I graduated from Wakefield in June of 1964. From there I came to Youngstown to attend Youngstown University, which wasn't a state university yet. I attended the university from 1964 through 1968 and participated in the ROTC program. My interests in the service, in enjoying ROTC, stemmed naturally from my home environment, my father being in the service.

After completion here of the course, in obtaining my undergraduate degree with a major in history, I was then assigned to a basic field artillery course at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. I attended that course for approximately nine months. At the end of that period, I was reassigned to another school at Fort Bliss, Texas. After spending approximately five months at that school, the Army sent me to Ranger Training school at Fort Benning, Georgia. Upon completion of that assignment, I finally went to Germany, where I was assigned to the Fourth Armored Division Artillery, whose headquarters was at Nuremberg, in southern Germany. I was assigned to a specific unit there and I spent approximately twenty-four months in Germany. At that time, I received my orders for Vietnam.

- D: I wanted to ask you one question about the training, Mike. Do you have any say-so in the type of training you get? Do you volunteer for the branch you get?
- L: When you are in ROTC, you are under contract with the government during your junior and senior years. In the senior year you select the branch you are interested in. You have three choices. I selected field artillery and two others, but field artillery was my first choice. The request goes to Washington, D. C. and depending on where they need manpower and also on your personal preference, they try to fit you into the branch you've selected. A lot of us in my class selected what we call the combat branch, and field artillery is a part of that. Since it was a heavy year for Vietnam in 1968, we were granted that request. Others that selected what we call combat support branches, such as Quartermaster or Medical Service, did not receive their choice but were given a branch such as Infantry or Field Artillery.
- Now effective today, the branches that we get here at ROTC for the students, are reflective of what they request. Most of the ones we just got back recently did receive their first request, be it a combat branch or a combat support branch. You can see how that's changing. It depends on the manpower needs of the service, and I think it has to be understood that way. There is some choice as to what branch you go into.
- D: Mike, how long were you in the Army, approximately, before you were sent to Vietnam?
- L: Before I received my orders for Vietnam, I was in the service for approximately twenty-four months.
- D: Did you get any kind of specialized training before you left for Vietnam?

- L: The only specialized training I received, that could be considered oriented towards Vietnam, would be the Ranger School I attended, which is an eight-week course. It originated in Fort Benning, Georgia and we were trained there in the first phase. Then we went to southern Tennessee and northern Georgia, which is what they call the mountain phase, where we received mountain training. Then for the last phase, we went to Pensacola, Florida, where we received training in amphibious operations and swamps. They were small patrol-type situations such as we would encounter in Vietnam. That would be the only training I had prior to going there. It's similar in nature to Vietnam.
- D: Did you feel this was adequate training for where you were?
- L: I don't think you can adequately prepare yourself to go into combat, I don't care how long you prepare. It's something that's hard to instruct for or prepare for. That's my own opinion. Right offhand, I would say no, I was not adequately prepared for what I met.
- D: Were you a captain when you went to Vietnam?
- L: I was just recently promoted to captain when I was sent to Vietnam.
- D: What part of the country did you serve in Vietnam?
- L: I served in what they call, I Corps, the area closest to the DMZ [Demilitarized Zone]. I served with the 23rd Infantry Division.
- D: Were you still a field artillery officer?
- L: Yes, I was a field artillery officer. I originally started out in Vietnam as what is called a fire support coordination officer with an infantry batallion. This encompasses working hand in hand with the infantry batallion and coordinating all of the fires that they need for the operations such as air strikes, the use of all of the artillery in their area of operations or the use of naval gunfire, which might be off the coast. All of this was handled through my job. If they wanted fire support, I had to give it to them. This is basically what it was. That lasted for approximately four months. After that time, I was assigned as a battery commander of a M-102 howitzer. It is a 105 caliber unit of six howitzers and I spent my last eight months as the commander of that unit.
- D: What kind of reaction did you have when you got your orders assigning you to Vietnam?

- L: Well, at the time, I wasn't really surprised because all of my contemporaries were receiving them at the same time or had already left for Vietnam. I wasn't amazed or shocked that I was going to go. I was psychologically prepared to go, because I knew I was on the list. This was not shocking for me, but it was for my family.
- D: Were you married?
- L: Yes, I was married at that time.
- D: In terms of being a benefit to your career, did it help you to go to Vietnam?
- L: At the time, having just been promoted to captain, I had approximately another year left of my service agreement, but as far as making the service my career, I was fifty-fifty. I was not sure that I wanted to make it my career, even though my father had been in, so I really don't know if I can answer that question because of my feelings at that time. I can say now that more than likely it helped my career. After all, that's what the Army training is built around, actual combat situations. That's what it's all about, ultimately. As far as helping my career back then, I don't think I can honestly say that it helped my career. I was the last one that wanted to see orders for Vietnam. I knew that they were coming, but I didn't ask for them. I didn't volunteer.
- D: Did your service in Vietnam affect your decision to stay in the Army then?
- L: I spent my year in Vietnam, and once I came back, I had pretty well determined by then that I was going to stay in the service for my twenty years. I discussed it with my wife. We talked it over and I felt that I enjoyed the service and I thought I'd make a go of it.
- D: Most of us, who have never been over there, are interested in the type of things you did in your free time there. What was life like in the camp or on the base?
- L: When I first arrived in Vietnam in 1970, the units that I was associated with were, initially, on what they call a fire support base concept. This means that on an isolated hilltop or some similar place there would be three units. It would supposedly be well fortified and connected by communications with another fire support base located somewhere else and the units on that hill have operations off of that fire support base. After approximately four months in that situation we started moving once a week. In other words, there was no fixed base. We were always under a temporary type set-up.

As far as free time, I can honestly say that the only free time I had was on what is called, R and R, rest and recuperation, that's what I call it. That's one week, actually six days, in which you leave Vietnam. In my case, I selected Hawaii as my R and R site so I could meet my wife. She flew in from the States and I met her there and spent the six days with her. That was basically the only free time I ever had. The rest of the time I was pretty much tied up with my job.

D: Did most soldiers, even the enlisted men, get R and R just one time?

L: Normally, I would say for the enlisted man in Vietnam, every effort was made to give them one R and R. Most of the time, I would say, in 1970, they were receiving up to two R and Rs or two periods, if it was possible. In the unit I was with most of the men received only one R and R.

D: Then you must have been pretty busy?

L: We were busy, because we had the designation of the combat unit as opposed to combat support. The units supporting us back in Saigon, or Cam Ranh Bay or other huge logistical centers, had more free time and they would do other things.

D: Was there any kind of resentment among your troops or the troops that were in the rear that weren't involved in the conflict?

L: Naturally there's going to be some kind of conflict because some felt that they were out fighting while some others were back having a good time. In the unit I was with, I really didn't see that much of a problem. It wasn't a morale problem; it didn't affect their jobs. The men I was with who were between eighteen and twenty-one did an outstanding job and never complained. There was no above normal amount of gripes or anything like that as far as that particular point is concerned.

D: Were you a company commander in Vietnam?

L: I was a battery commander. It's the same thing.

D: What kind of rapport was there between you and most of the enlisted men?

L: When you live with these people on a daily basis, you get a very good rapport. It's just like they're part of the family. You're there for twenty-four hours a day for a whole year and you get to know these people. I still correspond with some of my people.

D: What was your reaction to My Lai before you went to Vietnam, and then after you came back?

L: Prior to going to Vietnam, my first reaction was to wait and see. The press automatically puts a large scandal sheet out and I wasn't sure what was going on. I don't think anybody was. Instead of jumping to any conclusions, I just thought I would wait and see what the facts were. An atrocity is an atrocity, but, in this case, I don't think the facts were clear enough to give a judgement at that time. I had heard from other sources and other people who had been to Vietnam that something like this might possibly have happened. There was always a chance that it might have happened.

After the trial or whatever we had here, Lieutenant Calley was found guilty. The only thing I can say is that the evidence presented shows the man guilty of the crimes of which he had been accused. He should be punished accordingly. No one, I don't think, can condone something like that. I couldn't excuse myself nor anybody that worked for me if I were in that situation.

Being in Vietnam is not anything that you would consider a nice time, but that doesn't give you the right to become God or anything. This is what happened, and I can't condone it. My own personal feeling toward it is that it should have been brought out. I think it would have been a discredit to everybody if it had not been brought out.

D: What was your reaction to all the peace demonstrations that were going on in the United States at the time?

L: Well, my reaction was, as it always has been, that that's their choice, their way of showing dissent with what our country's doing. It did not affect me in the least, as far as the university scale. However, I felt that they weren't really giving the ROTC a fair shake. The ROTC department would naturally be a key target for the students who were displeased with what was going on in Vietnam. This was a way to get publicity, this was a way to show how they felt about it.

The problem that I saw was that some of the university's faculty started to support such activities. After all, I think as far as the Army is concerned, ROTC products such as myself, are the officers in the Army, and it is the university that has control over the students participating in the ROTC program. The Army itself doesn't have a large influence over the average student at a university even if he is enrolled in ROTC.

What I'm saying, in effect, is the fact that the liberal atmosphere you have at the university, if anything, would help produce an officer for the Army. The only exception is possibly the military academy. That's why I'm always a little bit upset or concerned about an attack on ROTC itself. If they do away with ROTC in all of our universities, I think our Army and our country are going to be badly hurt.

D: Did you hear about the demonstrations when you were in Vietnam and did this have any effect?

L: Yes, we had access to a radio there. It is run by the Army but the broadcasts are such that they are pretty fair about it. They broadcast just about everything you get here on the local station. For example, they say that the campus buildings at Rutgers have been seized by dissident militants. You wonder for a while what's going on back home and you get your home newspaper. I received two, one from Florida and I received the Vindicator. The Vindicator is not that great of a paper, but we read about it on the front pages and discussed it amongst ourselves.

The fact is that it really didn't affect me that much, nor did it affect the men that much unless their home was right by the campus or something like that. This goes back to the philosophy that I have about the liberal attitude on campus. This attitude is produced again in the officer, it is a product of the university, not of the Army. ROTC doesn't take up that much time as far as campus time is concerned

D: When you were in Vietnam, did anything that we were doing there really bother you even though you felt that we were being of some benefit to the Vietnamese at the time?

L: Well, perhaps the biggest complaint that I had while I was serving in Vietnam was that I was actually hampered from doing my job as a soldier. I feel that Vietnam was a limited conflict; it was a political conflict more than anything else. In getting down to the level of the soldier in the field in Vietnam, we had to live with these political guidelines. For example, in 1970, in my area of operations, we were not allowed to fire at certain areas that were designated by the Vietnamese and the military authorities as what they call "no fire areas". If the enemy used these as logistical centers, where they kept their supplies--which they did--you were still not allowed to fire into these areas.

A lot of political intrigue went on that I was not aware of. The only thing that I was aware of was that they were using these sources of supply and that I was not allowed to fire on these areas. Little things like that sort of handicapped and influenced one's morale as far as trying to do your job and trying to keep your people alive. It is very aggravating not to be able to accomplish what you consider your mission.

I think in a normal conflict you would think that your mission would be to destroy the enemy. Well, in Vietnam, that was not the concept. It was a limited type of operation which was very strict and regulated by rules of engagement and it was not a normal type of conventional war. This was part of the problem.

D: Who did you hold responsible for giving you the guidelines?

L: The guidelines for the war itself? I'll put it this way. The Army works for civilians. That's the way it has been set up in the Constitution. The Army does not make policy; our government makes the policy. The Army is the means of carrying out that policy. In 1954, we first started becoming more involved in Vietnam after the French fiasco at Dieu Ben Phu there. The Vietmin had thoroughly dissipated the French. They ran them out and then the United States came in. We were not totally aware, militarily speaking, of what we were getting involved in. Perhaps we should have learned a lesson from the French: You're not going to isolate the enemy and stomp them out. It just won't happen that way. It still won't happen today.

I think what happened was that as civilian policy was being made, we started to become more involved in Vietnam. When the big escalation started after 1964, more troops and more material boosts also came in. The only thing that the people in charge of the military at that time could draw back on from experience was the Korean War. They tried to fight the Vietnam war the same way we fought the Korean War. It just didn't work out. Then, after that initial influx of men and material, someone began to realize that we had a political problem as well as a military problem.

Initially, they said, "We'll start a pacification policy. The American soldier will fight the battles and we'll take the Vietnamese soldier back and use him to pacify the immediate countryside around the larger population areas." This is fine except that all the Vietnamese know that the Americans feel they can fight the battle themselves. We felt that the Vietnamese might screw us up if they tried to help us fight their own battle. That went wrong;

that was the wrong approach. Finally, someone realized, "Hey, we have this counterinsurgency situation." All sorts of money went into that program. Then they realized that the Viet Cong infrastructure was not going to be isolated and removed until the Vietnamese could stand on their own feet, fight their battles, and control the population. I hate to say this historically, but it's hard to try to fight any kind of war or any kind of conflict if you don't have the support of the people, and this was one of the problems that we had in Vietnam. At first, the people were controlled by the Japanese, then the French. Recently they were controlled by the Americans. I think you can understand how they felt. They just wanted to be left alone.

We didn't control the people, nor did the South Vietnamese government. There was this pacification program, in which more and more of the Vietnamese were slated to take care of their own population and not worry about the fighting. The Americans would do the fighting. Then we ran into problems. The Vietnamese felt that we Americans didn't want their help, and thought that the Vietnamese were in the way. Then in 1968 and later on when we started the Vietnamization program, in which the Vietnamese started assuming more and more responsibility in the fighting and I think this was a good idea. They should have done it long before that.

D: Mike, as a career officer, what effect did this war have on the Army and its image to you that it brings out to the public?

L: I think the only possible answer is that in the Vietnam conflict I think you have a different ball game, I use the word "conflict" because I didn't consider it to be a war. The nice words they use are "limited engagement conflict," but it was not a conventional war, so I don't think you can really call it the Vietnam War. The only effect that Vietnam had, as far as image, was a definite negative effect on the Army. We have a tendency after any kind of troop engagement, especially over this long a period of time, to want to forget or to go into what is called isolation. The Army itself received a negative image because the decisions made on the Army level are the ones that made the newspapers, such as casualty figures and incidents like My Lai. The first thing that the headlines would say would be the army this or the army that or something about the navy.

On a policy basis the higher level decisions were made by civilians, be it in the Pentagon under the regime of Mr. MacNamara or whoever. These decisions were enforced by military personnel, but the ultimate policy making is in the hands of the civilians, not the Army. In today's

world, I think this is important as far as making the decisions. There is no such thing, in my opinion, as a unilateral type of decision in today's society. What is done in the United States has an effect throughout the world, not just on the American people. This is possibly one of the main reasons why we became involved in Vietnam.

Stating that we originally became involved in Vietnam because we were asked to by the South Vietnamese, is true. However, we also became involved, I think, because the policy makers of that time felt that it was very important in order to match the other powers of the time, in order to keep up with the other powers. The term they use today is detente and if you want to apply it to them, fine. In order to keep up with the other super powers, mainly Russia, we had to stay involved in the affairs of other countries. We were not only involved in Vietnam. During the Kennedy regime there was also Cuba, and the Congo. These were small countries that we became involved with. I think there are possibly two reasons why we became involved initially in Vietnam: We were requested by the Vietnamese to become involved and it was in our national interests to become involved.

The negative image of the army is still present today. I think the Volunteer Army is part of that negative image. The draft has been done away with but you still have to register. The Volunteer Army, I think, is a part of that negative image that resulted from Vietnam. The people just became fed up, not with the policy makers, but with the Army because the Army was all they heard about. The younger generation was the most fed up because they were the ones that were involved. I think it's an image that we have to live with and since I'm in the service, I have to live with it. I can't tell you what's going to happen in the future. I don't have a crystal ball. I wish they would have kept the draft system alive instead of the Volunteer Army.

D: Did you ever think that our country was going to get out of Vietnam? Did you see any light at the end of the tunnel?

L: Well, remember General Westmoreland's famous comment for this, about the light at the end of the tunnel. By the way, General Westmoreland was also the one that was instrumental in getting a Volunteer Army set up. He's now retired, so he doesn't have to live with his decisions. As far as seeing any conclusion to the war, fighting a limited conflict, with limited objectives, I don't know what will happen.

Yes, I think we will get out, but how we get out and with what we get out is the question. President Nixon has said we have "peace with honor". That's true, we do have "peace with honor," but what else do we have? It's hard to list what else we have. Only history can tell what we have obtained in Vietnam.

D: I'm interested to know if you had much contact with the Vietnamese people. I'm talking about the civilian people, the people that we hear about in the villages.

L: The only Vietnamese that I worked with were Vietnamese soldiers that I had a few operations with. Naturally, I did not speak the language, nor did many of them speak English. The officers that I associated with did speak English, some of them rather well. Of course, their officer system is somewhat different from ours; sometimes they combine their positions and things like this. The officers that I worked with were fairly good at their jobs, but you have to remember an officer of theirs has been in combat probably since he was born. So, naturally, he's going to know what his job is, as far as soldiering is concerned. You also have to realize that he knows that an American soldier will be going home in twelve months and that he will be staying right there. You have to keep those two factors in mind. The Vietnamese I associated with were very good people. They had no gripes about Americans, nor did I have any gripes about them. We worked very well together.

D: What kind of soldier was the average Vietnamese soldier?

L: I can't honestly give you an answer on the average Vietnamese soldier. I can only give you my experience. The soldiers that I worked with, I'd probably have to rate them somewhat below the American soldier. Again, this goes into the training program. I think perhaps the American soldier, first of all, is much better equipped. Secondly, as far as motivation, the Vietnamese, after fighting for that long a period of time, have become quite disgusted with the whole situation. They do have quite a problem there; I think the people are tired of fighting. They're fighting, year after year, and today, to a certain degree, they're still fighting. You begin to ask yourself, how do they do it. That was my first question. How would you like to be born and raised with the idea that you're going to be in combat practically every day of your life? It would be very discouraging. The soldiers that I worked with were adequate ones.

D: How much actual combat were you involved in? Was it an everyday type situation?

L: It's hard to say how much combat. We could have been under enemy fire on a daily basis. In other words, the area of operations that I worked in was especially close to the DMZ and we were under enemy surveillance on a daily basis. We did receive quite a bit of enemy fire from day to day.

D: In light of all your experiences there, do you think our efforts there were worth the cost we paid?

L: First of all I don't think the cost we paid can be evaluated. Are you talking about men and material?

D: Not only men and material, but also things like the image of the Army.

L: We can carry it as far as to the state of our society today. A lot of people blame the condition of our society on Vietnam. That's true to some extent, but I think a lot of it has been fabricated. I think Vietnam has been a catch-all for the last ten years. Vietnam has been blamed for everything from racism and drug abuse, to the state of the economy. I don't believe a lot of that is true. It may be. I don't have the history to tell it. I don't have the facts myself.

I do know about drug abuse in my own area. People first think when you talk about men coming back from Vietnam, that all those dope addicts are coming back. They went over there clean and pure. Well, I think that that's a bunch of nonsense. In my unit, I had several people from the States that were later identified as addicts, not from Vietnam, but from the United States. I had approximately one hundred and twenty men in my unit and I would say, percentagewise, maybe at the most, ten percent were hard drug users. When you consider how available it was in Vietnam, I think those are pretty good statistics and a lot of that was also because of our personality weaknesses.

Vietnam does not bring out the best of most individuals. You're in a very harsh situation that you normally would not be put into in normal civilian life back in Youngstown, Ohio. I think that entered into the picture, but blaming the drug abuse and the racism and the state of the economy on Vietnam has been a problem. I don't think it was Vietnam, I think it was other factors. A negative image, yes, I blame that on Vietnam. The Army's going to suffer from that for a long time to come. It's evident in the enrollment of ROTC cadets in the universities across the the country. Here, in Youngstown, we have eighty-five cadets. When I was going to school here, in 1965 we had four hundred and fifty. Of course, part of that's due

to the fact that the draft was then in existence and the way to avoid the draft was to join ROTC. The fact that the draft was dropped so drastically is some kind of an indication that the negative image is having its effect.

Was it worth it? I, myself, say yes. I personally couldn't say that we're going to cure all the social ills of the country of South Vietnam, but at least I think we've given them a start or given them an opportunity to make decisions. I cannot say that the present political regime is honest or crooked, but at least there is a political regime there to make some kind of decisions. The Vietnamese people have to decide now what they want to do with their leadership, their direction.

I think it's important that the United States does not get into a policy of isolation. I think it can't afford to. It's very important that we realize that national security rests not on our reducing the number of our armed forces, but in keeping it in parity with the other nations that we deal with. I don't think we can deal with the super power nations on equal footing if we don't keep up our defense, or in this case, our army, up to strength. If you read the papers recently, I think, it's evident that the Army is not meeting their quota as far as manpower. I think it's a serious problem and something that should be looked into before it's too late. I'm not pushing the panic button, by any means, but over a long period of time this situation could develop into a crisis, if that's the proper word.

D: Do you think Vietnam was vital to our national security, our national defense?

L: Again, you have to start in 1954. That question should have been asked then. That's when we really became involved. I'm really not sure. Vietnam was vital to our defense then. It was important, though, in keeping this parity of armed forces. There is the Domino Theory, that states we have to stop communist aggression in Vietnam before it spreads. Look at the concept of diplomacy with other nations. The question is, how do you work diplomacy? Diplomatic relations are made between nations which can support and enforce their decisions. If we don't have the support to back up our decisions when we negotiate, then how can we honestly say that we're going to come out ahead in the game or come out even. I think it's something to look at.

As far as national security, Vietnam is located in Southeast Asia and we're located on the North American continent. Sometimes it's hard to understand why it's important for

national security. I think it is in the long run. I do foresee some problems if people don't take seriously this problem of reduction in our armed forces, reduction in the military budgets and reductions in ABMs that are always being talked about.

It is naive to think that the people in the world can exist without armies. That's my own philosophy. Naturally, I'm a little bit biased because I am in the military. I do have my own philosophies. I think to have a strong nation, you have to have a strong military. A good thing about this country is supposedly that the military is controlled by civilian policy makers. That's the way it should be.

D: What kind of tactics did the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese use to try to win the support of the people over there?

L: I did not become that involved in working with the civilian population, but from what I've read and from what I've seen I believe the Viet Cong are rather sophisticatedly and very effectively organized. They have structure; they know who their commanders are. They use force as a tool. If someone is in disagreement with them, they first try talking and then they will resort to force. Of course, the South Vietnamese do the same thing, I'm sure.

They fight on two different levels. They fight on a political level, indoctrination, and then they fight on a military level, such as you saw in TET in 1968. The whole idea was to show the South Vietnamese people their numbers and their strength, which they did. They also shocked a lot of Americans and a lot of the military in charge. The targets of their objective are not the cities nor the terrain, but the people. We finally realized that. You're not going to win a campaign over there unless you can control the people and unless the people believe in you.

D: We hear all kinds of stories about the unhappy draftee and how he doesn't want to be there. We also hear that the draftee doesn't make a good soldier. What was the percentage of draftees in your unit?

L: Well, I would say that in our unit, ninety-five percent of my people were draftees and I can honestly say that I had probably some of the best soldiers that I ever associated with. They did an outstanding job. I think that history will show that the entire Army did it's job in Vietnam, again within the parameters that we had to work with. I feel that at least my unit did the job that we were assigned and we did it in a very organized

fashion. There was no morale problem. The man who put in his twelve months would go home, but for those twelve months, he did his job and he did it very well.

D: What kind of problems did you have with the young officers, coming into this environment and with the older non-commissioned officers, who had to take orders from you and who looked to you for leadership?

L: Before going into Vietnam, I did have some experience with other troops in Germany in a command position. Experience always helps. I had confidence in myself, in my technical knowledge of my job. I knew what I was supposed to do. I felt that the non-commissioned officers who were much older were trained to do a job, follow orders and help officers. If they were not aware of what was right technically, they would quickly point it out. In most cases, the NCOs were very helpful in dealing with personal problems. After all, they have more experience. I had no problems as far as that aspect.

D: I think that just about wraps it up, Mike. Thanks a lot.

END OF INTERVIEW