

TRANSCRIPT – TONY LACKEY

Interviewee: TONY LACKEY

Interviewer: CALEB DUBOSE

Interview Date: March 28, 2013

Length: 67 minutes

CALEB DUBOSE: Alright, I've got Colonel Lackey with me this morning. Would you like to give me your full name and place of birth, sir?

TONY LACKEY: John Garland Lackey III from Statesville, North Carolina.

CD: Alright, and could you tell me a little bit—I guess we'll start off with your childhood in Statesville, maybe some family memories, and maybe what created your interest in the military during the early years of your life?

TL: Sure. Well, I was born in 1939, which was right before World War II, and I would sorta characterize my family as—I wouldn't call my—middle-class exactly, but lower-middle I guess it'd be.

CD: Okay.

TL: My dad was a little bit of a rounder—spent a lot of time in the military in horse cavalry in the National Guard. Back then it was—And then my first recollections, as a civilian job he worked at a railroad station, and he was a volunteer fireman. In Statesville they had an alarm system that alarmed you to go to fires or to go to drills or what have you, and I can remember this alarm system going off and my dad getting in his uniform. And he was the Bugle Master and the Stable Boy or Stable Man, however you wanna—you know.

CD: (Laughs.)

TL: But he was into horses and that sorta thing. In World War II, he became a paratrooper—one of the earliest paratroopers—and I was fascinated. You know, the jump boots, as a little boy. He would bring his friends home, and he was at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. And my mother and I lived there for a while during World War II at a place called Camp McCall, and, of course, I was just around soldiers—enlisted soldiers—and my dad was a Sergeant. He went to Europe, and after the war, he was a fireman. Again the uniform thing was—and then he went back in the military for the Korean War. Well by this time, I was captured.

I grew up a dreamer, not a very good student, wanting to go to West Point, wasn't really qualified. By the time I finished high school, I was a— had erstwhile interest in sports, but I wasn't a very good athlete. I was just sorta one of those guys drifting through high school with big aspirations but nothing to back it up. So then my mother, who was a feminist before her time—

CD: (Laughs)

TL: She got me into The Citadel based on—Her boss was a West Point graduate but had come to The Citadel for a year, and he was, he was, influential. So he got me into The Citadel in 1957, and my teachers were amazed. And, uh—but I got in. And that was a big class. We had over 900 freshmen. People talk about what they bring in now, but that was a big class. Now, they got rid of a lot of 'em.

CD: (Laughing) I'm sure.

TL: Now, they say attrition's not the mission, but back then, attrition was the mission. There were 58 or 9 young people in my company. And we graduated—I think 14 of us walked the stage, and 21 got their degrees at a later date, or up to 21. But that—But that was sorta where

the interest in the military—and I really—I came to The Citadel with the idea of going into the Army, nothing else, and so The Citadel became the crucible that, for me—from the transition of a, a very poor student, a dreamer, not very action-oriented, a very poor athlete, but liked athletics, not great relationships with classmates, wasn't held in great high esteem, but okay. And I worked hard, I—my mother—that was the other thing my mother made sure of: that I had jobs all the way through school from the time I was a—and so, when I did play high school athletics I had to leave at 5:00 because I had a night job, and, and most coaches weren't appreciative of you packing it in.

CD: Right.

TL: They were still, but that was part of what I had to do. But The Citadel was really special. My first year here was difficult, but I was—I did pretty good academically, and that was a surprise to everyone, including myself.

CD: (Laughs.)

TL: But my—I, I was even selected as a Regimental Clerk at the end of my Plebe year.

CD: Alright, I hear ya.

TL: But it was different in those days. It wasn't the same—what you go through in today's Corps. Everybody thinks the Old Corps has been such high standard and tough. Well, knowing what I know about The Citadel, I'm not so sure it isn't a lot tougher today and a lot higher standards.

CD: (Laughing) You'll find varying opinions on that I think. We throw that around a good bit.

TL: But, the uh—there were supposed to be two Regimental Clerks, and the other guy didn't come back. So it was just me, and I couldn't type. And typing was big.

CD: (Laughs.)

TL: And I also was not a mathematical whiz, and I had to take Physics.

CD: Yeah, that's a big one.

TL: And you had to take it your sophomore year—two semesters of Physics, and they had all these mandatory courses. You had a six-week grading period. It's kinda like your mid-term.

CD: Mmm-hmm

TL: Well, by the end of September, I knew I was in deep trouble, so I went to the Regimental Commander and asked to leave and go back to my company. And I got all the, you know, "Quitters never win. Winners never quit," stuff, and that was very traumatic. I went back to my company and—which was R Company, and the sophomore year was a bad year. I did end up failing three subjects that semester, and then I sort of recouped partially second semester. Had a lot of discipline problems. I couldn't get things right. You, you sorta sink to the level—

And Junior year, I went to summer—between sophomore and junior year I went to summer school also and caught back up pretty much and—and junior year was better, but it pretty much was a tough year. Again, discipline problems plagued me.

CD: (Laughs.)

TL: And I wanted to be one of the boys, which was—but then the senior year rolled around after ROTC summer camp, and that was a great experience. And again my love of the Army and where my aspirations were—and I actually in my sophomore year I threatened to leave in the second semester and join the Marine Corps. That seemed to be the vogue thing for people to do if you didn't make it, and you could macho-wise say (Both laugh.) I'll be a Marine and go to Paris Island. And my mother said that was all fine. My mother stepped back into the scene and said, "But don't come home"—

CD: Hmm.

TL: — "until you've straightened yourself out and you kinda know who you are and where you're going." Well that, that kinda took me back, and, and so, I stayed. And, and the junior year was difficult. Senior year things really changed. I came back—In those days, everybody had to have rank in their senior year, so Buck Sergeants were the same as senior privates.

CD: Okay, so what would a senior private really have been?

TL: Well you had senior privates, but they were academic failures—

CD: Okay.

TL: —and discipline issues, and it all started from day one your senior year, well after they'd evaluated where you were academically, where you were a 1A is what they called it then, uh I don't know—

CD: They still do; Yes, sir.

TL: If you were 1A, you were good to go. If you had, if you had tours, you lost your rank; if you had confinements, you could serve the confinements. But, uh, so through a series of discipline and academic difficulties, I moved from Buck Sergeant to First Sergeant in, and in a relatively short period of time, and, and quite frankly that's when the learning really began from the leadership perspective because the First Sergeant of the company, in those days, sorta ran the company.

CD: Yes sir, still does.

TL: And, and he didn't play with freshmen very much ever, just wasn't his venue. What the problem was, the other seniors and the juniors were—the ones that were not aspiring for rank—

CD: Mmm-hmm.

TL: —and that's—well what that caused was the real leadership conundrum among classmates. You had to get classmates to do things that they didn't wanna do, and you had to do it in a manner which garnered respect or you compromised, which there's where the leadership issue's at.

CD: Right.

TL: And it didn't take me long to figure out if you compromised, it lead to another compromise, would lead to another compromise, which then you just had no respect—

CD: Yep.

TL: And the whole leadership equation would break down. Well, probably, it, it, a lotta issues—Honor System was very pervasive in those days. People were petrified of it. There were

a lot more things on the Honor System, or at least perceived to be, than there are today. In other words, the discipline system and the Honor system irrec—irrecoverably intertwined and so, for instance, if during evening study period the guard came by and said, “All right?” and, and you responded, “All right.” and he walked in and you were in the rack, that would have been an honor violation. Not just an improper ESP function; that would have been lying. And so the issues of a false official statement and that sort of thing were very pervasive, and so it really put a lot on the Corps of Cadets, and I feel like, is there where, not only was I ready for the Army when I got to it, but The Citadel experience really changed me. And, I learned—I believe I probably wasn’t that cognizant of it—but the term courage meant more than push-ups, and it was more to this intellectual and courage aspect of life than the physical aspect of facing gunfire or facing what would later become combat. The, the intellectual courage to make the right decisions or what was, you believed to be the hard decision, which generally is the right decision that was—that’s where that was born, and so that was a big deal. The Citadel experience moved me in quite a few ways growing up.

CD: It sounds that way. That’s amazing. I love hearing stories about something I can relate to, and you’re one of those people that make me proud to wear the ring now, so you’re a Citadel icon, obviously.

TL: A-ha.

CD: But, um, after your graduation from The Citadel, you moved into the field of Military Intelligence, and so, sort of, where does your story go from there?

TL: Well, uh, that was another—I really didn’t wanna be in Intelligence. I wanted to be in Infantry, and, and—

CD: (Laughing) But you excelled in it, though.

TL: And when you—I think they still do something close to it where you make selections or requests in your dream sheet of what you want to do when you got in the Army, and so I put down Infantry, Artillery, you had to select two combat arms, and then you had to select a non-combat arms. Well Intelligence wasn't really listed as anything. It was just a field, and you could select it, but it, but it wasn't a branch in those days, so I put down Intelligence. Sounded good.

CD: (Laughs.)

TL: Wasn't too long until I got called into over to Bond Hall to a classroom and a guy was a Special Agent, showed me his badge and credentials, and he said, "I want you to take this test; we'll be here about an hour." Little select-bubble, little I.Q. test, I guess. And then uh, and then he asked me to write a 500-word essay, and he gave me a subject. I don't even remember what it was, but so I wrote that. And then I never heard from him again. Then I got a set of orders that said I was selected to be an artillery officer with a duty in Army Intelligence, and they wrote it A-R-T-Y, Artillery abbreviation with a slash, and then A-I, Army intelligence. That was me. That was what I was in. But I was going to Fort Benning, Georgia, in the Infantry school for, for the infantry training, and I was to report at a certain time in July, right after I graduated.

We graduated June in those days, and in July I was to report to Fort Benning. So I, I really didn't understand that, really. Nobody at The Citadel, the Army department couldn't explain it to me; they, they didn't understand it either, artillery officer going to the infantry school on route to the intelligence school which was in Baltimore, Maryland, at that time. So, somebody in the Army department said, "When you get home in the break," which at this time was Knoxville, Tennessee, "go to the post office. There may be a counter-intelligence office

there, an Army counter-intelligence office, and ask ‘em if they know, if they can explain it to you.” So I did, and they did. They, they, long—Special Agents. One finally identified himself as the First Lieutenant. So that—I reported in, went through the infantry training. I really loved it. Again though, I was not an outstanding student. Middle of the road academically. Physically, I didn’t have any problems. I wasn’t great. I worked out real hard to get there. I was middle of the road. Couple of experiences there that were really neat. Probably the most significant was the first officer I met was a First Lieutenant, old grizzled guy, looked like a fireplug—

CD: (Laughing) A fireplug?

TL: Hydrant, and he had a Medal of Honor ribbon, only ribbon he was wearing, and some parachute wings. And we were lined up side-by side in the squad. I thought he was a TAC officer ‘cause he was a First Lieutenant, but he wasn’t. He had been a Marine, the youngest Marine to win the Medal of Honor in World War II. He’d spent years of rehab in Walter Reed and different places in the hospital. His name was Jacklyn Lucas, and he said, “That name is what made me so mean. And he was mean, tough, and we became good friends because we stood next to each other in the squad. And this Medal of Honor—you don’t meet many Medal of Honor winners. Well there was another one at Fort Benning, and they reunited themselves because they were in the Medal of Honor Society, and he was an instructor in World War II also; he was a Lieutenant Colonel. I didn’t get to know him, but seeing him was unique all by itself. I was, I was to see Jack Lucas a number of times after that in our respective careers. They crossed a couple times, so that was significant.

The Berlin Crisis then hit right in the middle of August ’61, and I had orders for Ranger School and Airborne School like all the young people from The Citadel generally do, and they

cancelled them all. And kinda like sequester, everybody was to report immediately to their next duty station. I was given 48 hours to get from Ft. Benning to Fort Holabird in Maryland. So I got there, and they put me in this class; I really had enjoyed the Infantry School and all that. And I didn't wanna be in it, 'cause I was supposed to grow long hair, wear civilian clothes, grow a moustache—I couldn't even grow a moustache.

CD: (Laughs.)

TL: And I get a Post Office box downtown Baltimore. They were gonna train me to be a case officer, clandestine case officer. Boy, I hit the ceiling. I wanted to be in—if I was gonna be in Intelligence, I wanted to be in Combat Intelligence, so I resisted. And again I guess I go back to that First Sergeant year, if you believe in something. And I discovered that you had to volunteer for this course, and I hadn't volunteered.

CD: Someone set you up.

TL: I, I raised cane, wrote appropriate paperwork, and a Captain showed up, a World War II vet. He was a Citadel graduate. His wife was the daughter of the chairman of The Citadel's Board of Visitors, General Pollock, a Marine. Well, they sorta took me in, and he got me out of the course and into an Aerial Surveillance course. First 25-week Aerial Surveillance Course in infrared and radar. Well, I was no math thing, I could see things—this was not good, but I—I'd raised, I had been very vocal, so they uh, I, I shut up (both laughing) and saluted. But that became another great experience, and it—there were 16 people in this course. All 15 of 'em had 12 to 20 years service, and I was, had been in the Army for 3 months or 4 months and got in the course, and uh, and they sorta took me in. I became the coffee boy, the errand boy—

CD: (Laughs.)

TL: —the room-cleaning boy, and that sorta thing, and they became friends for life. So that's how it—and they helped me get to Fort Bragg. I left Fort Bragg in—I guess it was March of '62, and I got married in January of '62 to a girl I met here at The Citadel. And we got married at Fort Holabird Chapel, and we went to Fort Bragg to the 18th Airborne Course MI detachment, which was a very special unit, small unit, about 100 people. And I went to parachute school, and all the Sergeants with my dad's World War II unit were there, his Sergeants Majors, the Platoon Leader was there, Colonel, so again I was surrounded with love and concern and it got me to parachute school, and then the Cuban Crisis hit. And that was another seminal moment in my career 'cause I was just another Lieutenant until that time. And when the Cuban Crisis happened in October '62, the unit was spread out on all these exercises all over the United States. The counter-intelligence part of the unit was with the Marines in the Caribbean onboard ship.

The image—most of the imagery people that I was assigned to, the aerial surveillance platoon, were in Texas on a big operation, and at the same time, very unique moments in American history were happening in Mississippi. The integration of the University of Mississippi was going on, and all the 18th Airborne Corps unit, the 82nd Airborne Division, the 101st Airborne Division were playing on these civil disturbance exercises, at least that's what everybody thought. But what was really happening was the contingency plans for Cuba were moving forces around.

But I, I was supposed to be in Dillon, South Carolina on a Saturday night the third—October the 21st of 1962—to be part of a wedding of a company classmate, and Friday I got told what was going on. And I was to be the Liaison Officer to, they didn't tell me to whom really; [it] was a very unique set of instructions. But my job was—they gave me all this essential elements information that was required on enemy positions, Cuban positions on the island of

Cuba, and they were sending me my instructions where I would be south of Florida. Essentially, I knew it was Homestead Air Force Base. And when I woke up Sunday morning, early, 4 or 5 o'clock, I would hear the, the Naval bombardment and the air strikes, and I would have a light table and an airplane—T-something jet, two-seater jet at my disposal, and I would—I was to do a wet-reading of all these essential elements of information and O-I-R as they call it, Other Intelligence Requirements, they gave me, it was probably 100 of 'em, and then get the photos and annotate 'em all in about a three- or four-hour time frame, and then fly back to Fort Bragg, brief the command group, and then prepare for the parachute assault, which was to come later with my unit, which would be in the follow up, possibly even an air/land, but the 82nd and the 101st would use that intelligence on their drop zones as well as the 2nd Infantry Division that was going across the beach and Marines who were also going across the beach. And an armored division that was going in Mariel Harbor, and all these things had huge (laughing) requirements, and I couldn't believe what I was hearing.

I was a 2nd Lieutenant with a secret clearance, which was not a very high clearance by the way, and so that was what I was told. And I was not a happy camper, and I was petrified quite frankly. And I don't know if it was true, but I was told it was true. And I sorta suspected it wasn't, but my airplane was, uh, to go to Florida. It was supposedly the only airplane flying Saturday night that October on the East coast of the United States. And so you had all these dreams of atomic nuclear war, and you flew down the coast (both laughing). And two majors flew me, and I flew in General Yarborough's airplane, who was head of the special ops and Special Forces at Fort Bragg, and it was just me. And about halfway down, they came back and said we'd been rerouted into MacDill Air Force Base, and I also had the Op plan for the invasion that I was to deliver to an Air Force Colonel by the name of Radkovich when I got to this South-

of-Florida location. I had it all wrapped up. Again, I had no other instructions, so we land, and it looked like, you know, maybe I was the President or something. All these lights were flashing it was about 8 or 9 o'clock at night at MacDill in Tampa. And (Laughing) MP's came and took my war plan, the Op plan. I made 'em sign for it. I had a little receipt thing, got the main Captain's name. And then the, the two majors told me I could get off the airplane. They were going back to Fort Bragg, and I said, "Well do you know a Colonel Radkovich here?" "No." So I really didn't know what to do. I had a Carbine, a duffle bag, and my TA-50. So I got off the airplane and I said "Where is the officer's club?" That was the only thing I knew to do. I had the phone number back at Fort Bragg. (Laughing) They said, "Well, it's about a mile that way" (pointing off as though pointing at a distant location). And I said, "Well, how is there—is there anywhere I can get a ride?" And I was at the control tower, and a little airman said, "I'll give you a ride down there." I looked out on the tarmac at all these fighter aircrafts. Everywhere you could see there was a pilot in the cockpit, and the weapons were on, all the bombs and rockets were all attached. They were just sitting there; it was 9:00 at night. Well this didn't give me great confidence. (Laughing.)

CD: (Laughing) I wouldn't imagine so.

TL: I was where I didn't know I was supposed to be. So, I got to the officer's club and it was very raucous. Pilots that weren't in the airplanes were in the bar in flight suits and drinking heavily. So I went to the phone booth and called my headquarters, my next immediate superior, and told him what had happened. He said, "Don't leave that phone booth. It'll be about 30 minutes, but I'll call you back." So, he did, and he called me back. He kinda told me best he could, you know, over the phone what was going on and that I was to remain there and go find—I was to go get me a BOQ where I could find a BOQ, and I was to meet the first MI battalion as

it was traveling cross-country to MacDill, and we were to be part of the contingency effort there and standby. And, and call back every—he gave me a time to call back, and well, then the President came on the TV the next day. I sat in the officer's club bar and watched it. I called my boss and [he] continued to give me instructions. And it went on from there; it was very exciting. A lot of contingency planning, a lot of imagery, interpretation. I was there when the U2 was shot down. I met, I'd met the Major Anderson [the U2 pilot who was shot down] the day before because he was a friend of a Citadel graduate from T Company (smiling) who was flying one of the U2s. And we were buddies, well not really buddies, but we knew each other, and he was a year or maybe two ahead of me, but he was in the company next to me, so we knew who each other were. So that's where it began; I got a great efficiency report, told to explore options, a lot of people helped me out.

My immediate boss was a guy named Fred Patton, who was a Major who became the first commander of the Delta Force in Vietnam. And he went to Okinawa shortly after to the first Special Forces group. He was a Korea and World War II vet. Now, uh, and he, he left early so I said, "This looks pretty good to me." I went to Washington to the Pentagon and took a language aptitude test, and shortly after that, I was on my way to Monterey to be immersed in Vietnamese for a year, and this was 1963. So '63, '64, May to May, I studied Vietnamese, and during that time, President Kennedy was assassinated. And the Vietnamese War began to ramp up, and we began to put more troops in.

And then I went to the First Special Forces Group, and my first tour in Vietnam was in October of '64 as a liaison officer. And I was there from October to February as a Liaison officer from the 1st Special Forces Group to the 5th Special Forces group, which was the group that was in Vietnam and was actually just getting settled in Vietnam. And what was happening was they

were planning all these Special Forces Camps throughout Vietnam, and I was part of the planning cell for that. I didn't fully comprehend that at the time. I knew I had certain tasks to, to accomplish. And I lived in an apartment in downtown Saigon, and one of the people I met was Colonel Radkovich (smiling). He worked in the 2nd air division in their imagery shop; he was part of their aerial surveillance program. I didn't like him very much, I have to admit.

CD: (Laughs.)

TL: But he was a very pious Colonel, I thought, and most Colonels can get pious out there, particularly with Lieutenants. This time I was a First Lieutenant, and, uh, I was really something at that point. But that first four months, I met a lot of TAC officers from The Citadel, saw a couple classmates that were out in the field. Really, memories are about of that era. I like to refer to it as the Terry and the Pirates Era. This was before the introduction of large numbers of U.S. forces.

There was a classmate of mine named Dave Reagan. He was a heavyweight boxing champ. He was from T Company, and, uh, in the, in the Corps, and the Commandant, remember I told you I went to summer school between my sophomore and junior year when the Commandants were changing. Colonel McCaffrey, a very famous infantry Colonel, became the Commandant of The Citadel, a West Pointer, picked by General Clark, and he had a good-looking daughter, I thought (both laugh), so I knocked on the door and introduced myself, took her out a couple times, and then come fall, I introduced her to Dave Reagan (laughing). He ended up marrying her. And, the, he was killed in the summer of '64 right before I got over there in a terrific battle, and he won the distinguished service medal. If you're ever watching TV there's a retired General McCaffrey, a 4-star, who's on TV a lot, and he's given a number of Greater

Issues speeches here. And that's his, that was our Commandant's son, Patty's brother, of course and he was just entering the Military Academy at that point in 1959—He's class of '63 at West Point, and—Anyhow, General McCaffrey, Colonel McCaffrey, was our Commandant. Became a 3-star and was the deputy commander for Westmoreland throughout the Vietnam War. A very distinguished General, but uh, a lot of memories of Citadel friends and associates, TAC officers, classmates, that sort of thing.

Then I went back to, after that tour I went back to Okinawa. I had gotten some sort of blood disease and was in the hospital for a week or two, and while I was in the hospital in Okinawa, I got told I was going back to Vietnam, but this time as part of a group that was gonna be spread out all over Vietnam. And I was going to—well, they didn't tell me exactly where I was going to—at least a sea-detachment level. So they did. I, I went back in, uh, first of March. And just about the time we arrived, the Marines landed, I Corps in Vietnam. Then the 173rd Airborne Brigade, which was also in Okinawa, landed in April of '65, and the big introduction of U.S. forces were coming. Well, it was that tour I was promoted to Captain. For the first couple months, I was the Assistant S2 in charge of imagery and surveillance for the sea detachment in three Corps Special Forces, and there were 14 Special Forces camps, and we were in charge of it. My responsibility was to provide imagery and reconnaissance assets, aerial surveillance assets. Well, on June 10th, 1965, the first truly major—arguably the biggest—battle in Vietnam occurred. It's a place called Dong Xoai. It's the first time the main force VC attempted to create a division-size force. They had three regiments, and they put it together. Two of 'em actually saw combat; the third one never saw combat, and they were attempting to take the district town of—called Dong Xoai.

Well, I flew above it, and that was the damndest flight you'd ever see. It lasted a long time, about 48 hours. The SF team that was there was extraordinary. Nobody was wounded. Nobody was killed in the SF team. The commander was killed on the first mortar round, or wounded on the first mortar round. There was a Second Lieutenant from South Carolina who was older than anybody else; he was the XO. His name was Charles Q. Williams, and he was known as "Pappy." And he was 30-something years old; he was older than me, fought Korea as an enlisted man, and he took charge. Huge battle, huge, and I could talk about it for the next hour, but I won't. The VC, the NVA, well they weren't NVA; they were main force VC, the 9th VC division. They attempted to, well they attempted to kill everybody there. And of course, we were hittin' 'em, and at that point in the war, we did not use jet aircraft to attack the enemy in South Vietnam. We used it at Laos, North Vietnam, and Cambodia, but we didn't use it in South Vietnam. It was another month before that was authorized. So a lot of the old World War II-type fighter aircraft, helicopters were all comin' in, A1-Es were comin' in dropping napalm, and you could see the VC getting engulfed in napalm. The defense force there was one battalion, what we call CIDG [Civilian Irregular Defense Group], and they were on mountain yards. And their families were there, and they were fightin'. They were, they were fightin'. There was only about 300 defenders and about 2,000 to 3,000 attackers and a 14-man Special Forces team and a 21-man Seabee team, but they were split, and most of the Seabees were off in another location, hiding because the battle that the—the VC were so omnipresent, the VC didn't know that they were there and they weren't about to raise their head because they'd get, they'd have gotten all killed. Except for about three or four of the Seabees who were in the team house when the thing started. One Seabee, his name was Shields, Marvin Shields, and Charles Q. Williams took a 3.5 rocket launcher with and four or five rounds, slipped through the VC, through the attacking

force, in between the burms, around houses, and knocked out a, a .50 caliber machine gun, and there's another 14-7, 14-2 designation or whatever it is .50 caliber in the Russian or Chinese term. But it was a big gun, and it was knocking out helicopters and A1-E's pretty regularly, and they knocked it out completely. And they were both wounded, and Williams was so shot up that he couldn't carry Shields back. Shields bled to death. Williams got back in, and they both got the Medal of Honor. And that was the first Seabee, only Seabee in the history of our Armed Forces, to win the Medal of Honor, so there's a special for you. My only contribution to that—it was a small one and I'm proud of it—is that I got to provide photos of the area to support the recommendation for the Medal of Honor recipients to back it, you know. So that was it; that was a big seminal moment of that tour. Now there were other events that went on, and I could, I learned a lot—participated in my first attack of people in which people were killed, and you know made the decisions to make that happen, and so it was a going up period. And I got promoted to Captain.

The MIKE Force, if you've ever heard the term MIKE Force in Vietnam, was born while I was there, named after my Commander, the guy that promoted me, named Mike de la Peña, who I think is still alive. He's a Mexi-, Texican, Mex-Tex (both laughing), uh, great guy, made Lieutenant Colonel. Many people have credited other people for the name MIKE Force, but I was there. I know (both laughing) what happened and was part of it. So then I went back to Okinawa and had a lot more experiences. Spent six months in Taiwan working with the—in '66. And sometimes in Thailand, and sometimes, sometimes—had a little exercise in Japan and Korea, but short ones. There was a very full tour; then I returned and taught combat intelligence, in, uh, at the Intelligence school for a year.

Then the Tet Offensive occurred. And one thing I didn't mention is in that last, in that second tour in Vietnam in Special Forces, after the Dong Xoai battle, I was picked up and sent up to the Delta Force. And it was, uh, the Delta Force, the original Delta Force was the in-country national surveillance, reconnaissance and surveillance organization. Lemme see if I can explain that. All these U.S. forces had come in in 1965, all over, a huge build-up. Before they had arrived, before they'd come—the Delta Force was created to support the South Vietnamese forces, and, and where you had ambiguity in the, in the, location or the—there was some strategic intelligence that we needed to get on the border, in the border areas of the Ho Chi Minh trail, in the war zones throughout Vietnam. You had to have a force that you could rely upon, that Westmoreland could rely upon that put American eyes on the target. That's why Delta was created, to put American eyes.

Well, when the U.S. forces come in, you have another situation. First, the Special Forces' mission changed. It—it changed from a strategic hamlet defense to what they call border surveillance and war-zone surveillance, which meant a tremendous reconnaissance job. You had to survey all these areas where the enemy NVA and main force VC were located and when they were infiltrated into the country, and where. Well that was Delta's mission. And so I was sent up in the chain to join Delta Force with some other intelligence guys from the first group, and that's where I roomed with a famous Commander of Delta by the name of Charlie Beckwith. And I don't know if you've heard of Charlie Beckwith, but he, he later became the founder and the original Commander of the modern Delta Force, the counter-terrorism Delta Force that you read about today. But he was a Major, and he was in command of the Delta Force in Vietnam in '65. And, uh, he, we created quite a little relationship. I was the first officer, Intelligence officer, that ever worked in Delta. They always had used enlisted men to do the functions of intelligence

operations logistics. So, we developed this relationship. Well, I went back to Okinawa, did the Taiwan and all that sorta stuff, went back to— Tet of '68 occurs. Charlie Beckwith is now the G2 of the 101st Airborne Division that is deploying to reinforce U.S. forces in Vietnam as the Tet of '68 unfolded, which was February.

Charlie calls me on the phone, says, "I want you to be my G2 Air Surveillance and Reconnaissance guy." I said, "Okay." I'm teaching intelligence, I wanted out of Baltimore, Fort Holabird. So, I put in my paperwork. I get to Vietnam. He's no longer in the 101st Airborne Division. I said, "Well I'm not goin' there." (Both laughing.) "You might get killed there." So I go back to 5th Special Forces group and, and that—I spent a year as first the Operations, the Intelligence operations officer at the headquarters, then I became the assistant S2 at the headquarters, and then I became the senior intelligence officer for the group. And, uh, it was an exciting year. I was all over country, and probably you try to think of, you know, what did you do to make a difference, what, you know, alright, you were there. It was, you, I wasn't out fighting VC with my knife in my teeth and anything like that.

But what I did do that I think played a role in the final curtain in Vietnam was—it was during that time that Westmoreland went back and became the Army Chief of Staff, and a fellow named Abrams, General Abrams became the Commander of Vietnam. And one of the things that he went after much more vigorously than Westmoreland was the VC infrastructure. In other words, the shadow government that was in the villages and the hamlets. And he created this thing called Phoenix or the Phụng Hoàng program, Phoenix being the English translation of Phụng Hoàng. And, and every major unit in Vietnam had to create a plan. Now the 5th Special Forces group had 105 locations in Vietnam from the North, the DMZ all the way to Camau in the South, and so we were pervasive. And so I was given the task of writing the plan and the

implementation of the Phụng Hoàng plan for the Special Forces group, which I did. And not alone, I mean I had a staff, we put it together, and I was proud of that, and that played a role, which came later in the decisions in Vietnam, the final decisions.

Well, uh, probably the other major thing that happened in this tour [was] another Medal of Honor situation. Again I didn't know that until 1990, 1991 that—but, it was the first SEAL to get a Medal of Honor, and his name was Bob Kerrey, Do you know who Bob Kerrey is?

CD: Um, I think so. Yes, sir; we've studied plenty of them. We have a whole Medal of Honor—

TL: Well Bob Kerrey was Governor of Nebraska and a senator from Nebraska and ran for the Democratic nomination for the President a couple times, and this past year he ran for Senate in Nebraska, but got beat for [the] Democratic [nomination]. But he was a young SEAL Lieutenant, and I didn't know him from Adam's housecat. But uh, but uh, in '68, 69' the VC had their own version of SEALs. Now, they were underwater sappers is what they called 'em, and in the big ports they would have these sappers, underwater sappers place explosives on ships, tankers, and different kinds in the big ports, Camrahn Bay, Nha Trang, and, uh, and they operated out of a place called a—all of a sudden I'm having a brain cramp—on an island outside of Nha Trang, huge island. And when I first got there, as an Operations Officer in Intelligence, I had all these case officers working for me, different kinds of people, and one of our tasks was to get an informant to penetrate this underwater sapper team and see if we couldn't put an end to this.

Well, about two months before the end of my tour, my guys came to me and said, "Hey, we got a guy inside, and he is inside this team and he's giving us reports and we're paying him;

we're paying him good." So, he was polygraphed, the whole business, and he was the real deal. Well, about a month or two weeks before I was to leave the country, my tour was over, got a report that the entire VC sapper, underwater sapper team was meeting Hon Tam Island, was the name of the island, which was about 20 miles off the coast of Nha Trang. They were gonna plan all their operations for the next six months, so I reported to the group Commander, got the necessary [people] involved. They decided they'd use a SEAL team to get these guys, and we'd use a Special Forces team to transport them to the island. 'Cause we knew the island pretty well, big mountainous island, and had to scale up the cliffs. So, we brought the SEAL team up, and they went out there and about two days before I left, they had surrounded and sure enough, they were all there. They were sleeping, and the SEAL team, SEAL Platoon, somebody tripped over a rock. Big firefight happened. They killed all the VC, maybe a couple of them survived, but they killed my agent, that's what I remember. And several of the SEALS got killed and wounded, and it was a big firefight. I knew that; that's all I knew that it was successful from the standpoint that they would have to replace the entire sapper platoon, which, for us, was a huge success. I left. Well my last tour right before I retired from the Army, I was out with SEAL Team Six in the Black Ocean (laughing) on a SEAL attack craft, and I was talking to this SEAL Team Six Platoon Leader who was writing a history of the SEALS, and he was telling me about all these exploits. And all I said was, "Well, my only knowledge of SEALS is what I've learned here with JSOC [Joint Special Operations Command] and knowing you guys in this little event in Vietnam," and I told him the story I just told you. And he said, "Well that's Bob Kerrey. That's the first Medal of Honor we ever had." And I knew who Bob Kerrey was because he was very political, and he dated movie stars (both laughing). So the girl that played John Travolta's main squeeze in *Urban Cowboy* was his main squeeze.

CD: (Laughing) Okay.

TL: But then Kerrey, back around 2005 or 4 came and gave a Greater Issues speech here, and I contacted him. I was invited to the luncheon, and we'd corresponded through the years just on email because we found it ironic that he didn't know anything about me, and I didn't know anything about him (both laughing). What's important about him is that he never felt he deserved the Medal of Honor, and because he truly was a hero. He lost a leg, part of a leg from about the ankle down, foot, you know, and it's quite a story, so there's a unique story.

CD: Alright, well the last major note on you that I have is your induction into the Military Intel Hall of Fame. How'd that feel?

TL: (Laughing) Well, uh—How long we been going now?

CD: Um, I think we're at about an hour. We can go a few more minutes if you want, or we can call it a day. If there are any last few things, things you want to mention.

TL: Well, a lot occurred. I had another tour in Vietnam, and it was probably the most exciting tour. After all this, I went back to Vietnam '71, '72 as an Infantry officer where I wanted to be in the first place.

CD: Mmm-hmm.

TL: And I went through the Easter Offensive, and that was, that was the most exciting, but at the same time, the most distressing. I almost got out of the Army after that. Then I came back to The Citadel—

CD: Right.

TL: —and was a TAC here, got my Master's degree, went to the Army Staff, and a lot of good things continued to happen as a Battalion Commander and the Brigade Commander and the 82nd Airborne Division. Life really took off. And then, and then, uh, you know, you're at a different level. All those times I was at the working level. When I say the working level, the trigger-pulling level, the decision and tactics and operations, I moved into Brigade Command and into strategic level, and my command, and this is where you mention the MI Hall of Fame. I commanded the 66th MI brigade which was the echelons above Corps Brigade in Europe 1984 to 1986. Now, you know what happened '84 to '86—it is when Gorbachev became the head of the Soviet Union.

CD: Yes, sir.

TL: Well our job was to keep track of the Warsaw Pact and Russian for—Soviet Union forces, and it was very tense. There was a point in time where Reagan deployed the P2 missiles and four deployed nuclear warheads which could reach Moscow. That put a lot of pressure on the Soviet Union and a lot of tenseness along the border. Now, our job was to create the intelligence picture: What were they doing? And you had all these nuclear sites in the east on the other side of the Iron Curtain. And part of our job was to observe those nukes so that if they moved any nuclear weapons that would be an indication of war. So our struggle was through imagery, through clandestine means, through interrogation of border-crossers, huge operation. And this brigade was in five countries and supported two other countries. So it was a huge operation and that was seminal.

After that, another thing phenomenal was going in the world that's called terrorism, and it started in the seventies, and we had a, a new unit to come out of Iranian Hostage Crisis. Special

Ops Hybrid Unit of Special Forces and Intelligence people, and when I left the MI Brigade I took that brigade. And then after that, I went to the Joint Special Operations Command as the Director of Intelligence. Ensnared in those years was a conflict in the Persian Gulf and which was called a Reflagging Exercise in which the Iranians attempted to mine the Straits of Hormuz to stop International Aid Shipping, so we reflagged friendly foreign ships, put our flag on it and moved them through the straits, deeply involved in that. And then, El Salvador, the Panama Invasion, and then the First Gulf War, and after Desert Shield/Desert Storm is when I retired from the Army.

And it was for most of those activities that I was selected for the MI Hall of Fame. And, you know you're not singularly—a Colonel who was my peer, who is not a close friend, is the one who made the decision to recommend me and was supported by a lot of wonderful people, but there are a lot of people that deserve to be in the MI Hall of Fame besides me (laughing); believe me, a lot of good friends of mine that did a lot more than I did. And the last thing I did in the government, after I retired I went to work in the Department of Defense as a Special Assistant to the Secretary of Defense in Intelligence and Special Operations, and I worked there till Mr. Cheney left (laughing). And Mr. Clinton came in as President and brought a new Sec. Def. in. Actually we got two new Sec. Defs in. I can't even remember the—Aspen was the first one, who was a unique individual who was there during the Mogadishu issues, and Somalia when the Black Hawk Down events and all people in the Black Hawk Down were good friends of mine, and the two that got the Medal of Honor who—I knew them well. Two Delta Sergeants, and Gordon and Shughart— And so then I left, and I went to Burke High School, taught for a year and then came here to The Citadel, and had a wonderful experience here at The Citadel for a

number of years, from '94 until I retired from the Commandant's Department in 2005. Taught National Security in the Political Science Department until 2009, and now I just play golf.

CD: (Laughing) Well, that's not a bad thing, either.

TL: So that's the story.

CD: Alright, well thank you so much for sharing. Covered a lot of good stuff, I think. Enjoyed speaking with you, sir.

TL: Well, thank you; I hope it was worth your time.

CD: Oh, definitely.

TL: Hope it was a good interview for you.

CD: Definitely. I hope it was good for you as well.

TL: Thanks again.

—END OF INTERVIEW—