INTERVIEW WITH GENERAL TOM LYNCH
AND CHARLES BRACELEN FLOOD
APRIL 29, 1997

INTERVIEWER1: It is April 29th and we are in Richmond, Kentucky with General Tom Lynch and Charles Bracelen Flood. I'd like to begin with General Lynch and I wonder if you would explain to us how you came to be associated with Mr. Flood and how you agreed to let him accompany your unit, as I understand that he did.

GENERAL LYNCH: I was told by my great leader, the Brigade Commander, that a correspondent was coming down to the battalion and that I should treat him with all due respect and anything he wanted to know or do or anything else within certain limitations, why I was permitted to cooperate fully. I really wasn't in favor of it, but it's one of those Army things that you're not asked to make any choices on it; you're just told. And with that, I think that -- I'm not sure how he got down there, if I sent a helicopter back, if he came to the brigade and then...

MR. FLOOD: Right.

GENERAL LYNCH: ... and then I sent a helicopter back.

MR. FLOOD: That's right.

GENERAL LYNCH: And then he arrived in a helicopter. He looked like a bedraggled old civilian with a mosaic bag, right?

MR. FLOOD: I have it upstairs, yes.

GENERAL LYNCH: And he introduced himself and that started the relationship.

MR. FLOOD: I had, I had seen him once before that. I don't know if this is appropriate or how much you want to follow him. We, ah, my own situation was that -- and I'll try to, if you want to draw me out more about how I happened to be there, let's just say I was in Vietnam. It was not long before Christmas when I arrived. They had a Christmas party as this

air base, which was my primary residence. This Christmas party was in something called the Taj Mahal, which was for, in civilian terms, I guess you could say, in fact it really was like a couple of mobile homes slapped together on this beach on the South China Sea, which was then under construction as an air base, but already flying operationally, but much more needed to be done. And so some Army people arrived at this party and they -- everybody else had probably showered reasonably soon before this party, air force types around and a few other types from the area including some Vietnamese, the province chief and so forth. And so in came these Army types and they were, had this red dust which was very characteristic of Vietnam. They put their rifles, stacked them near the door, and in varying degrees got into the party, but it was very clear that they were men with responsibilities who might at any moment have to leave. And so perhaps among them, all I noticed, Tom who was, I would say, the least involved in the party. He stood over by the doorway and he spoke to people, but was really a tall, chilly drink of water. And if anybody had told me that I was looking at the best friend I would make in Vietnam, who would subsequently become my daughter's godfather and whom I would be friends with thirty (30) years later, I would have said a very cloudy crystal ball. And that was really all I saw of him that night. And then I didn't link up the name or anything. When I got out of the helicopter and saw who was walking toward me with, I must say, a very friendly smile on his face, I thought, "Well, well, well, of all the people they've sent me to, it's, it's the tall, cold drink of water", but that passed very, very quickly.

INTERVIEWER1: When was it?

GENERAL LYNCH: About January...

MR. FLOOD: Yeah.

GENERAL LYNCH: ... January, '67.

INTERVIEWER1: And where were you?

GENERAL LYNCH: We were, we were at a place called the Hub in Thanh Hoa, in the high ground outside of Thanh Hoa, and had started up in the plateau. Thanh Hoa was the largest city. There were other ones up and down the coast, but we were in the midst of just a mountainous area, single canopy jungle, a lot of open ground because the Vietnamese had farmed it before.

INTERVIEWER1: What was your unit?

GENERAL LYNCH: Third Battalion, Eighth Infantry.

INTERVIEWER2: What kind of place was that for you to take a correspondent along? I mean did that happen very often?

GENERAL LYNCH: Well, I took pretty good care of him though. The only thing he use to was, he, we were on C rations and my battalion was on a, a three (3) day cycle and they have one (1) day every three (3) days and got their meal, egg and hot fruit, A was hot fruit and the rest of it was C's, but there was no place for him to sleep except in my tent. And when he got access to my tent, then he stole the best C rations and he had all the...

MR. FLOOD: Beer and scotch.

GENERAL LYNCH: ... beer and scotch that came in and then he had, I had to teach him how to bathe and he did that. We gave him socks, gave him coats, and took pretty good care.

MR. FLOOD: Yes, they did. For what under, under limited circumstances, I couldn't have been treated better, not possibly.

GENERAL LYNCH: But he sat in on all, all the briefings and that was really a challenge to do that because, you know, you could say, "Well, they'll probably say today that's classified." Well, I don't know if it was classified or not. It was our way of living. And he'd sit in there...

MR. FLOOD: Yeah.

GENERAL LYNCH: ... and he, he'd stand behind there, you know, and being a Harvard graduate, he had that Harvard business approach to the briefings and he kept challenging us, you know, and afterwards we'd have big long sessions about, "Why are they doing this?" and "What are they doing?" You know, this evolved...

MR. FLOOD: I must say they listened too. They listened. He listened.

GENERAL LYNCH: But he wasn't always with me. He'd come and go. From that time on, he would come and go. A lot of times he'd just call and the radio message would be, "Charlie is on his way." And so...

MR. FLOOD: One time, this is quite interesting, I think, he had a radio message for me in suitably guarded language that it might be to my best interest to join him at a place called Dragon Mountain. It was very, very interesting because it meant that I almost alone, perhaps alone of correspondents in Vietnam, had a military commander calling me and telling me that I'd better get up there because something interesting was either under way or about to happen. So it showed, I think, the mutual trust and nature of the relationship that worked out pretty quickly and I think it's just as well that it did. It certainly invalued -- you've read my book, right?

INTERVIEWER2: No.

MR. FLOOD: It obviously, you know, produced a high percentage of the most interesting and exciting moments of the book. So from that point of view, it was very advantageous to me. And I think also that an Infantry Battalion Commander in Vietnam really was something like a Captain on a ship. He had to have a certain distance. I mean they were all friends and colleagues and all that, but I mean I don't think he could have talked to some, to any of his officers quite the way he did with me. I think that was not bad for him and it certainly was

good for me to find this, this friend. I knew other people in other places and certainly had an active social life at the base where the officers' club bar was just almost like the wild west and so forth, but I think it took on a singular kind of relationship. And although I was not an official part of the military, there was no question there is that -- in fact, I'm sure you've run into it with many of your interviews and run into it, there is a kind of male bonding that takes place under these circumstances, which I won't try to analyze. I will just tell you that it is definitely there and it certainly occurred between the two (2) of us.

INTERVIEWER1: Did you have an agenda in mind?

MR. FLOOD: My only agenda was I carried the papers of a correspondent, but it was understood that I was there as a freelancer on my own to, unpaid by anybody else, to gather material for a book, presumably autobiographical, which indeed it was, about my year in Vietnam. And that was, everybody knew that going in. I had to pay money where, ah, ask for officers' quarters in certain places, but it was all very, very cheap then. Where an officer would pay twenty-five ($.25) cents for a drink, whatever it was, I would do that, but fundamentally so much the farther forward you got, there was no question of money and the whole military/press relationship over there was, was understood. You couldn't buy a ticket to go on a Vietnam airplane to these places. The only way you were going to get in was a helicopter and military controlled that. Once you got inside their network, you just produced the right pieces of paper and on a space available basis, you were forwarded to wherever you wanted to go. GENERAL LYNCH: The thing here was that the brigade was on an independent mission at that time, so we didn't have division headquarters. We didn't have a whole bunch of headquarters to go through with a public affairs officer screwing it up.

MR. FLOOD: Right, right.

GENERAL LYNCH: So all he did...

MR. FLOOD: Never, never talk to the public affairs officer. They'd never know who he was.

GENERAL LYNCH: Well, they, they found out though. They found out in July.

MR. FLOOD: Uh hmm (affirmative).

GENERAL LYNCH: After the July fight, they found out that he had been with me.

MR. FLOOD: We worked it beautifully. I mean sometimes he'd send a helicopter for me. Once he sent me back to the coast by helicopter, which saved me a day of going to different airports and sometimes you'd have to jump around. I mean it was very understandable. They had, I mean the least important person they had to send around. I mean they were, they were sending ammunition. They were sending -- you know, who knows what they were sending that they needed to fight the war. So you were on a space available basis and you might well have to go two hundred (200) miles out of your way to a bigger place to wait for a plane to take you back to your own smaller place. So that was somewhat of the structure of the situation.

GENERAL LYNCH: But the other structure was that when he did come, I always put him with the soldiers and got him back at night to spend with me, but I said...

MR. FLOOD: Except for one (1) night.

GENERAL LYNCH: One (1) night.

MR. FLOOD: Which almost was my last.

GENERAL LYNCH: But I did that purposely because it wasn't, I'd had some press people come up and, and they just -- they wouldn't -- they'd go out with the soldiers and as soon as it started getting dark, they wanted to get out of there. Well, nothing happened in

Vietnam until the dark, particularly in the VC area and the coastal area. When we moved up in _____?, it was a different story. But in the coastal area, it was all VC activity and some NVA. So at night is when you really -- you, you had to sleep during, tried to sleep during the daytime, but he stayed with me and he stayed with me sometimes and we didn't have too many people, but until -- and I put him out with the unit, but then I'd pull him out of the unit. He'd go out with the unit and we'd feed him on the third day and spend some time with him and walk with him a little bit and talk to him. The troops liked him and that's my telling of what kind of a correspondent you are, what kind of a person he was. The troops, when they heard he was going to write a book, they kept telling him, "Put this in the book" and stuff like that.

MR. FLOOD: They were great kids and they were kids too, believe me. I, I had been in the Army briefly and had been in the Korean War, and what was fascinating to me, because, particularly when you got out to a battalion like this, it was as if it was fast forward again so it was whatever it was, fourteen (14) years later, but virtually the same kids, the same mix of black faces, Chicano faces, red-headed kids with sun burned arms. You know, it was the same group and, and what was happening was exactly the same thing, that the Army was drafting the available kids who weren't in college, etc., etc., etc., exactly the same crowd and that's just fascinating. I guess because I had been with them myself when I was younger, I probably did understand a little bit more how to relate to them than maybe some other people.

INTERVIEWER1: How old were you at that time?

MR. FLOOD: Okay. I was thirty-seven (37) when I was in Vietnam.

INTERVIEWER1: How old were you?

GENERAL LYNCH: Forty (40).

INTERVIEWER1: Did -- so the soldiers didn't look at you and say, "Well, he's hanging out with the old man. He must be one of them"?

MR. FLOOD: I don't know. I mean that's a question I would either leave to him or unanswered. I will say I remember once this very nice sergeant, your Sgt. Heiko...

GENERAL LYNCH: Yeah.

MR. FLOOD: ... who is a _____ and a great, great guy and a fine fighter. When I first appeared, he was very polite, but he told me later, he said, he said, "Why is this old man hanging out with us?" You know, but it wasn't because of that; he just couldn't figure it out. And then when he found out I'd had a little bit of infantry training and so forth, no combat, I mean in the Korean period, that, you know, you can figure it out, okay, because they were not a glamorous unit. I mean a straight leg infantry unit was not like the airborne outfits or special forces or other things.

GENERAL LYNCH: Uh hmm (affirmative).

MR. FLOOD: So, you know, it would not -- I guess his reaction was, "Why us?", if the idea is...

INTERVIEW2: Why are you up there?

MR. FLOOD: Yeah, yeah.

GENERAL LYNCH: I think though that when you put together a history and, and putting this thing together, you should remember that '66 and '67, you know, that, those people that we had were people who were drafted from a better cross section of the country at that time. I had people in a rifle company carrying a rifle with college degrees because the draft then in '65 and '66 was as fair probably as it ever did and plus there was that aura of people not figuring out ways to get out of it. Now this group was put in the Third Battalion, Eighth Infantry; they trained the Third Battalion, Eighth Infantry; and then they all went to Vietnam in the Third Battalion, Eighth Infantry. So there was a camaraderie in there and they knew the officers. As a Battalion Commander, for example, none of our officers wore any identifying

insignia at all, and we had no saluting, which got me into trouble. We all -- I carried a M16 rifle so that I didn't have the signature. And I lost two (2) officers in that February or that May article because they didn't listen to me. So there was no identification. Everybody knew, you knew the face and you knew the people. You know, when I'd go out, it wasn't, "Yes, sir", "No, sir", nothing, you know. It was liable to get pretty raunchy. And so when Charlie came in, he had to mold in, he molded into that camaraderie in there. And he just, you just do that by suffering with them. If they see your feet wet and you're wet and you're eating that great food, you know, then they accept you, only then. But if you come in there with shiny boots and camera, they're not interested. They just, they push you off or they con you. There's a great deal of conning done in Vietnam by people telling, you know. I think I want to make that point. Now you've got to remember that if you took all the people in Vietnam, only fifteen (15%) percent experienced any combat, the combat we're talking about, that experience at that level. So you've got eighty (80%) to eighty-five (85%) percent of them are back and the most dangerous thing they've got is getting killed in a traffic accident or VD. So it's a different, it's a different mindset than talking to someone back in Saigon. You know, I spent twelve (12) months and I never saw Saigon and a lot of my people never saw Saigon. They went down on a train, an hour and an hour, and came back. They never saw Saigon. We're, later on, we're, you know, we're in triple, double and triple canopy and the only way, ask Charlie, is that you can, you can -- you had to go in through a hole in the jungle to join us. So it's a different mindset. There's different wars. I was thinking about this. There was a war in the delta and a war on the metro area, Saigon area, and then there's a war in the central highlands. So when we tell our experience, we're talking, for the most part, central highlands. We had no rest, my battalion. We went out and we stayed out. I commanded them for seven and a half (7 1/2) months that stayed in the field. There were no showers. We got showers one day. So it's, you know, that's -- when you go to talk to people, you have to

make sure what was their experience. And I had this trouble with Vietnam vets, because they're, yes, they're a veteran, but they were in a different atmosphere than the riflemen. The riflemen who has been shot at and had to get up every day and kill people at twenty-five (25) meters, he's got a different mindset, altogether mentality, and that's what Charlie joined.

MR. FLOOD: One...

GENERAL LYNCH: I don't mean -- now '68, '69, '70, '71, '72, we ran out of people. We ran out of leaders just as much as people, and we just did not have the people. We just -- it was like a big meat grinder.

MR. FLOOD: I'd like to just -- I know how much he nurtured me, the large issues that are in the personal accounting, although I think he touches upon a very important point, which is that we actually, where it mattered, the trigger porters in the jungle, we were outnumbered, which I don't think was the image of the great American military machine in Vietnam. There were just so many support people back along the way and what concerns me to this day is I think people in Washington, that they really thought we had half a million fighting men over there. They were making a very grave mis-estimate and also some of the paperwork -- not, I was never privy to this paperwork, there was no reason to be, but I saw a lot of the advisory paperwork and there were places you could say you built a bridge and no place to say, "And the VC blew it up the next day". And if you put that in on a margin, you were endangering your career. So people did not. So all the news going to Saigon, to a General, i.e., General Westmoreland, who wanted very much to give good news to Washington to Lyndon Johnson, who wanted to hear good news, was very misleading in that regard.

INTERVIEWER1: Did you yourself generally feel that pressure to, to make the news as good as possible and, and...

GENERAL LYNCH: No.

INTERVIEWER1: ... how did you...

GENERAL LYNCH: No. I, that wasn't my nature, the way I came up. The -- I had one problem with it and I couldn't get boots and, you know, they had me out by the Cambodian border and my troops couldn't get boots and I had one (1) pair and that's about all the boots we got. And the boots were being stocked in a brigade in division headquarters, so I stopped my whole battalion. And they asked me why I stopped. And I said, "I'm not going to move another step until we get boots." And the division commander and the brigade commander came out and asked what the problem was in that picture; that's the day that it incurred. And I told them. I said, you know, "We're going at this the wrong way. I've got to have support." There was units in Vietnam that got hit. And we, my, my company, my battalion got hit. You know, casualties is a serious thing if you're at a ten (10) man squad and five (5) people get hit; that's catastrophic in the squad. It's a major in the batt-, in the platoon and that's probably another major in the company. It's a minor thing insofar as the battalion is concerned. So they were catastrophic engagements, insofar as it depends upon your mindset. But the most important thing that we tried to do and my people and myself is that the sacred trust of the people we had is to bring them back alive and not leave them. And the troops feel that when you don't push the troops beyond. You don't push them beyond that they don't have boots or they're not being fed or they're not getting ammunition. You don't push them on that. And they were probably units that they pushed them constantly to get up. We had cases where they told me and they'd ask, "I want to know where your patrols are at the night", and they're asking me at two (2:00) o'clock in the morning and two (2:00) o'clock in the afternoon and we're still moving. I don't know where the hell they're going to end up. So I look out there on a map and I put a bunch of plots. Then I'd call them up and I'd say, "They're here, here, here, and here", and then they were all happy and they never got there. So you, you just cannot put pressure below. You have to take the flack

and I tried to do that and I wasn't always successful. You get a change of General officers or Colonels and you can't, you have to bid your time.

MR. FLOOD: I would like to chime in on something that I feel very strongly was Tom Lynch really took care of his soldiers very, very well and they were devoted to him and respected him. And his officers certainly respected him profoundly. And I think that it is interesting thing because at that time in Vietnam a number of Lieutenant Colonels who had battalions to, so to speak, play with, took risks. They really were headline grabbers and they didn't mind taking some chances of losing a lot of men to become known by one of these headline nicknames and so forth. And General Lynch was very, very much in the opposite camp. And just as there were more glamorous outfits, I probably could have been with the First Air, you know, I could have done this with other people, I think, although they were the nearest and I liked it and I stayed with them. I think it's important, very important to bear in mind that he really was, in my view, the right kind of commanding officer, that he was not -- the only way he was trying to make a name for himself at all was by doing the best job he could with that particular unit and he had signs from Avis. I don't know where they got these Avis buttons, "We try harder". And it was right down the line. And the guys back -- the first helicopter I ever got on to go out to this place had these people, "We try harder", and I think in the long run it saves lives, I mean the very fact you're supposed to even move the water cans the right way, there would come a moment when that would make a difference, put extra water cans on the helicopter, it would be better balanced. I mean just -- I'm sure that lives were saved by really, that philosophy, "We do everything well", and I heard it a lot and his people heard it just that much more than I did. And I also know he did suffer. It didn't impair his judgement or his ability, but he suffered. Where he says it was a minor for the battalion of five (5) people, I can promise you if four (4) people were lost, he spent a bad night because I was in the other little

canvas cot in the same tent. I, I think that has to be remembered. Yes, a commander at certain moments has to harden his heart and if the order is to take the hill, you take the hill and you take the casualties involved, but I think that he absolutely minimized both the physical discomfort and the, the bloodshed for his men while carrying out -- they, they had nonetheless the reputation of being the most aggressive battalion in the division and I think that was well deserved and sometimes being aggressive the right way will save lives, I mean you know, instead of screwing around and getting up the hill, get up the hill, and I felt that those things -- I mean I saw them then. They didn't all sink in at once. I've had a lot of time to think about them since. We had -- is this picking up alright. I was speaking fairly softly. INTERVIEWER2: Yes.

GENERAL LYNCH: We had, we had an example that we had a rifle company that to me got hit pretty hard and lost all the officers, casualties, two (2) of them killed. That's another story, but the two (2) officers that got killed, the second officer -- the first officer, the company commander, he got killed and he got killed because he -- and the other, his other officer with him got wounded because they did something they were told not to do and they, they had a map and had binoculars and they had a little stubnose R15 instead of the regular M16, so a sniper hit them and then they hit the company. I think we lost about ten (10) or twelve (12) that nights, KIA's. So we evacuated the dead and it's something you learn, when a fight like that starts, you want to get your dead off. And the helicopter came in and it was on a spot to about a hundred fifty (150) feet of jungle and we had a pad and we were loading there. And the helicopter pilot says, "Don't put your dead aboard." And one of them said, one of my people just pointed his gun at him and said, "The dead are going up." And we took the dead out and then we got the serious wounded out next up with -- when they went back to the rear, they got all sorted out. And I only had, I start off with a hundred and twenty (120) in that company, I think, and I had, I think it was eighty-one (81) people left in that company and they were all wounded. They were all -- the

prideman said, when they fired that RP, the D40 and the rocket into the jungle and the fragments would hit and it just tore them up. Some of them were, the faces were bleeding. So I had to make a decision whether we were going to take them out. And the First Sergeant, the one that's in the picture, he took over the company and saved the company. But he came up and said, "No, we're going to stay." And we spent the night in the top. So, you know, and I had wounded people from B Company. But rather than be evacuated, they would stay. And that's just something -- it's a bonding, it's a comradery of goals with that type, and only those people can understand it. And John Wheeler, he got out. I got him out of there because I had forgot that he was in it and I didn't want to be accused of losing a correspondent.

MR. FLOOD: Yes. I, I think that's it's a very -- I mean I'm sure you'll run into this again. But I mean believe me when you get into these situations, it is the only loyalty, meaningful loyalty is to your immediate comrades. I mean they weren't fighting for the United States or mother or anybody or the fourth division or the brigade and, you know, they're probably not really for Colonel Lynch either. I mean the guy on their right and their left, and a lot of it is you're not going to be the first to run away, I mean it really is, plus if you've been well enough trained, you realize that's your most...

GENERAL LYNCH: It's an automatic reflex action.

MR. FLOOD: Yeah. And you stay and they were well trained. And they, I noticed with great interest and I noticed with some of my air force activities too, that the tougher things got, the less Hollywood it got; the more the chips were down, the more the transmission over the radio going out or coming in was very measured, very clear.

GENERAL LYNCH: Clear.

MR. FLOOD: Speaking slower, you know, and I, I found that that was -- whatever else you want to say about the Vietnam War, the people there at that time, and I saw a

lot of them in a lot of situations, were extremely well trained. They were very well trained and they certainly were dedicated. And they were, believe me, brave, almost without exception.

GENERAL LYNCH: And then this, you know, one of the misconceptions that gets, filters down in the Vietnam War is that the politicians and the higher tacticians, they couldn't stem the flow of people coming out of North Vietnam with their equipment. But down in the field level, down at the field level, if you were mobile, you could take on an NVA with your fire power complement. You could take on, we took out as much as a regiment or a battalion. You could take three (3) or four (4) to one (1) odds in a big fight, but the problem that comes out is we didn't lose it at that level. We lost it at the, at the higher level. And you know, its people are, it's impossible to understand how these Vietnamese can come with three (3) days ration out of Vietnam and come down a trail, come all the way into South Vietnam, get resupplied, and then leave. They come down there sometimes and they only got a weapon for every two (2) people or every three (3) people and they did the same thing to the Chinese and the North Koreans. And you'd kill off the first bunch and they, we had some NVA with a machine gun tied and strapped to their leg so they couldn't get out and they'd put them up in trees and tied them up in a tree and the snipers. So they did that, but in each individual case, the American soldier was a, he was a fighter, and it's always misconstrued that there was a drugger or raping women or pillaging villages and so forth. Where we were, there wasn't any villages to pillage. We were in the _____? and the hill people and, you know, it's a different way, but the image presented is one of these guys that are bizark on drugs or something and shooting the people and that's, that just is, that just did not happen in this time frame in those islands, no. Afterwards, there was a general deterioration that I told you for the reasoning that, that -- we just didn't have those incidents.

MR. FLOOD: One thing I'd like to speak about and I'm not sure I've ever

discussed it in this way with General Lynch, but an impression I carried away was that some soldiers and some air, air men as well, they liked this stuff. They liked it. They understood they might be killed. I don't believe this stuff about every eighteen (18) year old thinks he's immortal. It only takes seeing a very little bit to rid you of that notion. But some of them liked it well enough, and the proof is they would extend in Vietnam and preferably extend at the front, wherever they were.

GENERAL LYNCH: Where they were.

MR. FLOOD: You can -- one case in point, and I'll certainly defer to Colonel Lynch, but he had a very interesting Lieutenant, who was in charge of a scout platoon, called Jack Crumbly, who I can see very clearly before my eyes right now. And Jack Crumbly extended on the understanding he would be in this continual for another six (6) months when he could have gone back to headquarters and been out of the country at the end of the year if he were allowed to stay forward and he was not alone. I knew other people in other units who had this. Now that's not the majority, but I think every time they're going to draft a thousand (1,000) kids who have no intention of entering the service, you're going to find maybe fifty (50) who like it well enough, knowing what it is, that they're going to stay in, and that's where you get a lot of your lifers from out of the Korean War who are getting to be, you know, your Master Sergeants in the Vietnam War and you're going to get some young kids in the Vietnam War who are going for another fifteen (15) years, probably in the Gulf War you're going to get some, and that's just a fact. And of course, that gets you back to the good wars and the bad wars, but whether you're fighting a good -- what, as history judges, as a good war or a bad war, you're going to need those guys. I mean, unless you decide to disband all armed forces everywhere, you're going to need some people, and that probably is one of the reasons that attracts them. There are other reasons, but, but I mean -- and usually they are good soldiers. You may not like the fact that they like it,

but it was okay on _____? Beach; it wasn't okay in Vietnam. I, I've got some problems with that interpretation. But it's just if anybody else hasn't told you that, the dirty little secret is that a lot of people -- a significant number of people like this stuff or certainly not a negligible number like this stuff.

GENERAL LYNCH: Well, you know, the same thing applies if you take the King's shilling and you do the King's bidding, then some of the people that were in there, particularly the officers and non-commissioned officers in those years, they were professional people. And you, you're told to go do something and the company, you know, how it filters down from the Chief Executive or the Commander in Chief, you know, we don't know, but when you get down to the battalion level and the trigger puller level, there aren't any politics. You know, you don't know. You're there. And my job was to bring myself back and the people.

MR. FLOOD: Yeah.

GENERAL LYNCH: You know, so it's difficult to say there and some of these press would come up, you know, and the correspondents after a fight, and they'd all descend on you, see, and they wanted, "What about this and what..." -- I don't know about that. That's not my job. You know, go ask someone else. The problem is that there's so much untruth that came out of Vietnam and that caused the people -- you know, it was a problem. MR. FLOOD: At our level, level we were at, it did make any _____. I remember once I happened to be present and, although I certainly wasn't there all the time, I was fortunate in that I saw a lot of different moments that I might have missed, including he was welcoming, if you can use that word, a whole bunch of new replacements just coming up and trigger pullers, who were then going to be put out in different companies and they were just there. And I don't know just how many. And I remember one of his assignees, a young man who was understandably worried and everything else, but he said, "Up here", and we were way up on the Cambodian border, up in

the hills, "Up here you can forget about this political bullshit. It's just you on one end of the M16 and the NVA on the other." And that was, I think, a wise remark to make to them because whatever they thought about it, they were going to have to do it, and I think it was just as well. I mean Shakespeare had some wonderful line about soldiers shouldn't, his brow should not be clouded with too much thought, and I think that's true. He shouldn't be worrying too much about Massey at home or, you know, the car payments or some, some of them were married, the kids, or anything else, just you've got a job that your life really depends upon doing well and you can in some cases, I mean some people are going to be killed no matter how well they're doing it at the moment, but a lot of people can change the odds significantly by the way in which they perform and their attitude and their concentration. I think that, but I think there is an excitement just to go back briefly to the dirty little secret and although as you grow older, a lot of your years begin to look a little the same, but, I mean you know, for me as I look back on my life, there was that year and then there were an awful lot of other years and I think a lot of people feel the same way, whether they were in or out of the military or whatever. There is an excitement about it. It's just, just there; it's a simple, simple fact.

GENERAL LYNCH: You can control, you can control soldiers. When I say control them, you have to lead them. I mean you can't be one type individual and expect your soldiers to be something else. And you can command soldiers. And soldiers will follow. Whenever you find a bad unit, you're going to find bad leadership. There's not bad soldiers. There's no such thing as a bad soldier. Somebody is not doing their job. I think, you know, as we're talking now about a time frame, '66-'67, and it's fair for your work for us to stay in that time frame. Don't ask me today what I think about in hindsight and I have all this wisdom now and all this gray hair.

INTERVIEWER1: I do want to do a little of that. And I want to ask a

question that I hope you won't find offensive. But in a lot of the books that have been written and in, of course, a lot of the films that have been made...

GENERAL LYNCH: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER1: ... the officer in Vietnam generally looks pretty bad.

GENERAL LYNCH: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER1: And that's for a variety of reasons. You know, the young ones are ignorant and...

GENERAL LYNCH: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER1: ... the old ones are out for glory.

GENERAL LYNCH: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER1: But I wonder if you could comment on that and, and your experience. I have a stance of you as -- and my husband said this before, before this he said, "I don't know General Lynch, but I know of General Lynch."

GENERAL LYNCH: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER1: And he said he has a fine reputation. My husband is very hard to impress. But I wonder in your background as an enlisted man, a person having come up through the ranks, did that change your perception in any way and the way you might have related to your soldiers?

GENERAL LYNCH: I think that it does because you've, as the saying goes, you've walked in his shoes. So you know what incompetent leadership is. So you struggle harder learning so you're not incompetent and I use to -- I was really fortunate, I was really blessed with a lot of talent, but I just didn't have the problem other people had. I made the non-commissioned officers work. In my beginning, in my early companies and troops as a first company commander as a Lieutenant, later on as a Captain, right after the Korean War, I am

responsible for some Lieutenants leaving the Army because I just flat said that they're, they're not qualified. I did that to one Lieutenant and unfortunately he, he decided he wasn't a combat officer and so he went to medical and became a doctor. I got an invitation to his change of command ceremonies as a Brigadier General.

MR. FLOOD: But not in command of troops?

GENERAL LYNCH: Yeah. And so, you know, our problem is that I had some in Vietnam. The interesting thing in our division, we had seven (7) Lieutenant Colonels relieved because of their level of proficiency wasn't very good, you know, but in the Army all you heard about was the battalion commander is getting relieved in another division, but our division commander just cleaned them out. I mean they just, he didn't -- he was a World War II individual. You know, he just did not want to take the risk of soldiers. So I was fortunate to be in that environment in Vietnam and he understood me and I understood him. I had some Lieutenants that are unfortunate and they just weren't trained.

MR. FLOOD: I know he got rid of one right before he'd head out.

GENERAL LYNCH: Yeah. I had a Captain come after I lost all those officers in May and had a Captain come down and he said the only reason he came down there was the brigade commander sent it down that I needed a company commander. He didn't need that company commander, he didn't need that company command on his record. He had already served in some command in some other place. And I called the helicopter back and threw his butt on the helicopter and I said, "Get out of here." And I went back and I got on the brigade commander and I told him, "Don't send me any more of those." And then I had another guy, the next guy they did send me was -- what was the guy's name from Louisiana?

MR. FLOOD: What was that?

GENERAL LYNCH: Cajun.

MR. FLOOD: Oh, a wonderful guy.

GENERAL LYNCH: B Company Commander.

MR. FLOOD: Yeah. The pineapple, the raw pineapple.

GENERAL LYNCH: No, no. That was the other one later. And this guy came in he said, Captain so and so. And I said, "What do you want?" He said, "I want to command a company." I said, "Why do you want to command a company?" He said, "Because I'm a Captain in the Army and I think I can command this company." I said, "Do you have any experience in a rifle company?" He said, "No." I said, "Do you have any experience in a tank company or a recon company?" "No. No, sir." I said, "Well", I said, "I'll tell you what we'll do, I'll send you down there and you listen to that First Sergeant. Okay?" He said, "Yes, sir." And they had lost two (2) officers too. He went on down there and he, he got down there and the next day we cranked up to get off that hilltop. And he cranked up and asked the First Sergeant, I told him, "Call the First Sergeant in". I called him Higgin then, I called Higgin, I said, "You take care of this guy." And I told the Captain, "You keep your mouth shut until you figure out what's coming on." I said, "I hope there's not a fight for at least a couple or three (3) days until you learn your people." And, and afterwards I checked with the First Sergeant, I said, "What happened to him?" He said, "His first step with that seventy-five (75) pound rock sack on, he took his first step and he slid all the way down the damn hill." So, you know, you've got bad ones and you've got good ones. The majority are pretty good. There is no, there is no source of commission, which has a preference over another. It's easier with an OCS guy because at the level that he's working, he has a better understanding or a draft commission like myself. We have a better understanding of the mechanics at that level. I've seen good West Pointers and LaCitadel and something else, you know. It doesn't make a man. A good man is a good man regardless of where he comes from and the color of his skin or his background or anything else.

In combat they, you know, I had some real wild ones, but so that's -- and what do you with it, well, you just sit on it, you know. I had another incident of a helicopter pilot rolling in and killing some of my people. And he was a hot shot, a real fire burner, and they didn't want me to court martial him. I hung in there until we court martialed him.

MR. FLOOD: It was quite influential -- I think he had influential connections too, if I'm not mistaken.

GENERAL LYNCH: Yeah. I had the I.G., I had his congressional everything else on it. Just a man screws up. If you screw up in combat and you cost me a soldier's life, you're dead. I mean I, I'll -- that's it. And so it wasn't like a zero defect. It was just the fact that, "Don't risk the soldiers and know what the hell you're doing", and eventually they did and they did super. So, yeah, there was incompetents. I seen them-- well, I was talking to Charlie about one that was a Lieutenant Colonel; he was incompetent. I would have fired him. I damn near shot him. But, you know, that's, that's somebody else to sort out. You just got to get out of it. You got to, you just got to go on with your life. You just can't stop and get focused on that incompetent.

MR. FLOOD: The Army caught them, that, I think, is a very important point because I think that of all the occupations I've ever seen where I mean it literally is life and death, inefficiency will kill people and I think that the Army does have, in some parts at least, a cover-up mentality. We saw it at Me-Lie(?); we saw it at other things. And this is just so institutional. One arm is being unfair to itself and you, you may well be killing people. I think it's very important to bear that in mind. You can say, "Gee, is that kind of a snap judgement, Colonel?" I saw this one Lieutenant come in, a G type, and he had him out of there in forty-eight (48) hours, I think. He just didn't work, you know. Look, you know, come on, but you can't -- if it has to be being unfair to the individual or saving somebody's life, I mean if there's any shadow

of a doubt, I think you simply have to go the other way. But to be very honest with you, I was a little surprised that Tom Lynch ended up as a General because I thought he was such a good Lieutenant Colonel, because there's a whole other stuff that goes on to become, before some people can become Generals, I mean personality and connections and Christmas cards to the right people at the right time, you know, all of that.

GENERAL LYNCH: Yeah.

MR. FLOOD: There's a whole game that's played there...

GENERAL LYNCH: Yeah.

MR. FLOOD: ... as it's played in the corporate world and I'm sure in the academic world as well.

GENERAL LYNCH: Yeah, but that's also a myth.

MR. FLOOD: What?

INTERVIEWER2: General, we've got to flip.

OFF THE RECORD WHILE TAPE BEING FLIPPED

MR. FLOOD: Well, let me just, now that we're on again, I just want to say that I was lucky without realizing it that I did end up with Tom Lynch. I felt that I had been sent there. I had no doubt this battalion commander, Colonel Austin, he could have sent me to any one of three (3) battalions that were in the field, but I mean the very fact that he sent me there told me something. I think, you know, this was where he thought that -- he understood what I wanted to do and he thought this was where I ought to go. But I think also the people I've talked to have known Tom completely exterior to my experience with him. You know, they all see him as the soldier's soldier and I think that's fair. Here's a guy who joined as a private, I guess maybe drafted as a private in 1945, just as the war was ending, goes at eighteen (18) years old and ends up as a Major General and has never had a college degree, never is assigned to the

Pentagon.

GENERAL LYNCH: Once.

MR. FLOOD: Once, okay. Well, but fundamentally the things that, and it was because he was so good at what he did, each subsequent assignment, that they couldn't -- you know, nothing was going to stop him from being at the top and I think he could have gone farther and chose not to. But I think it was indeed because he paid attention to what he was doing and, as he put it, didn't worry about anything else. I got the benefits of seeing that somewhat more than halfway through, but not a lot more than halfway through. It was a very, very instructive experience to me.

GENERAL LYNCH: I think it's -- you know, one of the things you ask on the officers in Vietnam, you know, we had a brigade commander that he's talking about, it was Colonel Austin. And Colonel Austin was a platoon leader in North Africa and a company commander in Normandy and a battalion commander in Korea. I mean he just, you know, he brought it all forward with all the paraphernalia he had on, and he was a brilliant tactician, but his method of leadership left a great deal to be desired. And sometimes in the Army and sometimes in Vietnam, you figure that out. In the Army, you figure up, you know, this guy is -- that's his type of leadership, so you don't necessarily change yours. You just sort of cushion yourself a little bit around him. I was sent down there directly from the Pentagon through the division commander to go down and be his executive officer to prepare the brigade to go to Vietnam. And I soon discovered that this, this guy was an alcoholic.

MR. FLOOD: Now you know you're on tape now.

GENERAL LYNCH: I know.

MR. FLOOD: Okay.

GENERAL LYNCH: I don't care.

MR. FLOOD: Okay.

GENERAL LYNCH: And, and I think that the man was a brilliant tactician and he, he gave the battalion commanders a lot of latitude and he just had, he brought me in to move the brigade to Vietnam, and he flew ahead with the battalion commanders. We moved the thing to Vietnam. I went aboard the ship, but there was a Major on the ship that outranked me. I was only a Major then. And he told this other Major, he said, "Tom Lynch is in command of the troops. You do everything he says." You know, in the Army you don't do that. And so McGinley and I, we got along good. So McGinley was, quote, "the titled commander", but I was doing it. So we sat down and, and, and Whipcrack was his name, the brigade commander, and he says, "When those troops get off that ship, I want them ready to fight and that's your job. Do you understand that?" I said, "Yes, sir." And that's what we did. We PT'd every compartment and I had a man come up to me the other day, last month, and remind me, he was in the artillery and he reminded me of making him do all those -- the ship would rock. We did PT every morning and every evening and the officers did it twice. We tapped classes. And the Navy said we couldn't fire our mortars. We fired our mortars off the back deck of this troop ship and we fired all our weapons and we just, we had classes and we just did. And it was so, I think so hard, that the troops were glad to get off that ship, but they also had movies and they had everything else, you know, and we didn't have any trouble on that ship. And I think as they got off, they got off of there trained, I think they were ready to go. In fact, we committed a battalion the fastest of anybody in Vietnam. We committed a battalion in seven (7) days after landing and those troops went right to that jungle and took off Harold Lee's battalion and went in there. And we worked in there and that, this guy, he'd only tell you once, and so you had better be quick on the uptake. And if it was after five (5:00) or six (6:00) o'clock in the evening and he'd been drinking, you don't want to. He said, "You've got the brigade. You wake me up if there's a fight." So all night

the brigade, and I did it, the battalion commanders knew it, the battalion commanders respected that, the battalion commanders and I got along just fine. And it was a good brigade; it was. It didn't have any problems like the other brigades. But he was a fighter and he was flamboyant.

MR. FLOOD: Oh, definitely, yeah, with a Confederate flag above his tent.

GENERAL LYNCH: Yeah. And he, but he...

MR. FLOOD: His father had been a calvary officer.

GENERAL LYNCH: Yeah, but you've got to understand that that man as a Lieutenant, as a young man, went through that, got shot up in Sicily, got to go into Normandy, you know, and then into Korea and all the way up to the reservoir, frozen feet, you know, and then here he comes again. Here comes Vietnam; here he goes again. And he was a brilliant leader. We had all good brigade commanders and that's when I said, '66-'67, we weren't out of talent yet. Later on we had brigade commanders that never heard a shot fired in anger. You know, if you hadn't walked that way and all of a sudden you're in _____? directing the efforts and you can't understand why you're dots aren't on the map where they're supposed to be, you've got a problem.

MR. FLOOD: I want to just add something. I mean I think it ties in very much with this, but it goes to my air force experience. The Colonels with whom I was living, full Colonels, this was their last gasp. They had been the dashing, young Army/ Air Corp cadets in the beginning of World War II. One of them had even been in the Royal Canadian Air Force before he came into the American military. And one of them was very -- and they were all, most of them were very nice guys, but he was a very winning sort of guy, but he had a sort of almost naive sweet thing about him and he said to me once, he said, he said, "It's very interesting", he said, "some of these officers, you see them again war after war after war." And I felt like saying

to Frank, that's because good I want to be there and if they don't want to be there, by their second or third war, they sure as hell would have figured out some way to skip this dance. And those are the men as Tom has said and I'll...

GENERAL LYNCH: Yes.

MR. FLOOD: ... just say it again, is the famous Kipling poem, which I'll mess up, but, you know, about Tommy Adkins, that contempt for him in peacetime, but when you need him, you need him -- you don't need anybody else and you've got to have him. You got to have him good and right and, and that's the problem. As historians, I mean I, I'm sure you see what needs to be done here. You can make a judgement about whether it's a war we should have participated in, but then there's another judgement as to the conduct of the war and its many dimensions of what's meant by conduct including efficiency. I hope somehow that comes out. My guess is that most of your interviews, and I may be mistaken, will be with people who were in relatively briefly, you know, and then went on about their lives and I think the great thing about talking to this man is that you're talking to somebody who made it his life for so many, many, many years.

INTERVIEWER2: I'm curious. What were your all's impressions of the South Korean forces and the South Vietnamese?

MR. FLOOD: And what else.

INTERVIEWER2: South Vietnamese.

MR. FLOOD: South Koreans, the hired hands. They struck me as very efficient, rather unimaginative, and absolutely brutal. And I didn't know about it or I learned about it late in the year and I don't know that there was anything I could do about it. It wasn't really in my purview. Apparently they had done a massacre of some villages that eclipsed me in its scope and apparently there were some villages that they felt, and I suspect rightly so, had

cooperated and hidden -- it was in their area and the Koreans were very, very touchy about their area of responsibility, which included our air base fortunately speaking in terms of they never, none of them, what we call bad guys ever got through, ever got through or even near our...

GENERAL LYNCH: Yeah.

MR. FLOOD: ... not very near our air base. And so they weren't a mobile force such as, they didn't have the right equipment to be a mobile force. They were really, at best, a sort of infantry unit of the Korean War at best. I mean they just didn't have the kind of equipment to move around. We were equipping them with sort of really our second string equipment, and they were just, as I've described, when they found out about this, they apparently went in these villages and just massacred everybody. I mean there was several hundred people. I think Me-Lei(?) was no more than two hundred (200). I mean I never knew it directly. It could have been an impossible story, but having watched these guys operate, I have no doubt that it was probably true and they were, they were mercenaries. We had hired some Koreans so there would be fewer American body bags coming home and the Koreans were happy to do it. They were making money for their government. As far as I know, the, the deal was turned out of profit.

GENERAL LYNCH: Yeah. The Koreans first. I went over there and I wasn't, I wasn't in command yet when they came on down and relieved us around the air field. Now we were moving out in the area above _____?, in the highlands, and the Koreans came in. So we went on down and we briefed them. They're, they're very -- I don't like to say arrogant. They're different. They're different in terms of they have no, they don't have any compassion for anybody non Korean. They put up with us and they'll put up with you, particularly if they find out that you've been in Korean. Well, both the brigade commander and I had been in Korea, so, you know, that was okay, but you go to a dinner, you can see it. I mean they're, they'll get up

and cuff an officer. You know, it just starts -- their discipline system is different than ours and they're a different Army. They're effective. In the Korean War, they were effective, if they're properly led and properly supported. And a lot of times, Charlie has alluded to the fact, you know, they didn't have choppers and didn't have access to the choppers. So it was difficult for them to get in operation when the U.S. Army didn't have enough choppers and we're moving around. So it comes in the corp and the corp manager, "Who am I going to give my choppers to, the ones guarding the air field or the ones out in the, in the jungle?" So, you know, they didn't have much chance. I don't know. I wasn't, I wasn't privy to that. I didn't like their operation. I, I think that -- I learned that in Korea, the extent of human, human lives are just, they're just a casual expenditure. That's the way I look at it, both ways. We are a different mindset. I mean we're, it's an oriental -- we're different. You know, I can soldier with them and I did soldier with them, the South Koreans, but in Vietnam, they, they -- when you say go out and sweep a village, they swept it, I mean everything, you know, and just rattle people.

MR. FLOOD: The other part of that, I think, was the South Vietnamese. I think Tom and I probably had a somewhat different experience. I mean I don't know about different conclusions, but different opportunities.

GENERAL LYNCH: Are you talking about the Army now or the sector or the district people, the politicians, or point at leaders or what are you talking about? They're different categories.

MR. FLOOD: Okay, well, shall I lead off with this?

GENERAL LYNCH: Yeah. You can start.

MR. FLOOD: Because I was able to move around quite a bit, I mean my self-assigned assignment was to stay in the two (2) corp area, that part of Vietnam. And as far as the Vietnamese components went, I naturally turned -- I wouldn't go to a town far away when

there was everything of every kind near me. And my impression was, to start with the province chief, who really was more of a Frenchman in some ways. He was raised and spoke fluent French and had been in the Army when it was really a French Colonial Army, has been a Colonel, and very eloquent individual, and I think probably thought the Americans were barbarians. I don't think had any other political principles and that he wasn't going to do well if the other side won. A reasonably efficient man -- not a coward. I mean he did not take flight in some of these situations. Going on down the line, our Vietnamese district chief, it's a province and then there are districts within the province, was indeed a coward and a bit of a problem. He was Captain Hy, H-Y. He was indeed a problem to the American advisory team that tried to work with him. He just really wanted to vanish, not commit ever, and so forth. And this was essentially just defensing, defensive holding operation. I mean nobody was asking Captain Hy to go very far out in the hills or do anything very dashing. And the soldiers that I saw, but I saw very little of the, the Arvin, the regular Vietnamese Army, the soldiers I saw were these regional forces, which is the next level of incompetents down, I'd say, and then the popular forces really were just guys standing around with rifles on their shoulders and told to be out there a certain number of hours a day at a check point or something. And the contrast to the Americans in terms of training or certain kinds of motivation and so forth was just so dramatic that I was surprised that they did as well as they did. And there was some wonderful American advisory officers, not all, but I mean with all respect to Tom's guy, a Captain, we had a wonderful Captain, a Major Kabota...

GENERAL LYNCH: Yeah.

MR. FLOOD: ... a wonderful guy, and a Captain Dooley, and he remained with me in my mind very, very clearly and these guys, believe me, they were taking their lives in their hands when they went out with these Vietnamese troops because they had no

idea who would stay and who would go and I'm surprised they got as good results as they did out of them. And then I did get down to Saigon occasionally, not nearly -- I mean in contrast to ninety-five (95%) percent of the correspondents, I wasn't even in the country in the sense that -- you know, my home was two hundred and forty (240) miles away, a little air conditioned trailer on the South China Sea that I shared with one of these last guest Colonels. Down there, I met some Vietnamese who were very eloquent like staff officers of various kinds and so forth. It was pretty hard to tell how good or bad they were at their jobs. Turning now to the other side of the coin, the opposition side of the coin, one of the first times I went to Saigon, I had done some work with the Associated Press before I ever got to Vietnam. I was not affiliated with them. I did them a couple of little favors here and there. They did me some favors, but certainly no official relationship. But I did know these guys and I use to go out to lunch with people like that, Peter Arnett and correspondents and so forth, and I think I have this in my book. But in my friendly, tail-wagging, naive way, when I first arrived, I was asking all kinds of questions. I remember asking Horst, who had already won a pulitzer prize for his combat photography. He had been doing it in Africa before he ever came to Vietnam. And so I said, "Well, who are the best troops in the country?" And I didn't know, you know, whether he was going to say the Marines or -- he just looked at me and he said, "The VC", and there was no question in his mind. Okay. That's a professional judgement. The other thing was that I remember going with an American, American military and civilian advisors on the province level. There was one man who was a police advisor. He had been a policeman somewhere in the United States and he took me around quite efficiently to see different things, skipping the interrogation center that I really never was fully aware of. That was right on the soccer field, and I don't question for a moment there were tortures performed, and I went past it dozens of times on different days for different reasons, but never understood what probably was going on in there. The, ah -- anyway, he took

me to see their jail where they had very big primitive cells, those things were an individual cellar, I think. And they very clearly had people who were common criminals, which they would in a province like, like his, that size. And then they showed me this group that were political prisoners, either captured Vietcong or people that they found in the, still in the infrastructure but definitely helping the Vietcong, and I have to say it was a great looking group of guys, I mean great looking, fine looking men, despite, I'm sure, some pretty harsh treatment and, you know, I'm sure nobody in the Vietnamese jail got a lot to eat and so forth. And I remember talking to one of the American civilian advisors, a high ranking one, and he looked at me and he said, speaking of the Vietnamese now, "The best people in this province are out in the hills." And that didn't change my mind very much. I mean I, I still wanted to see our effort succeed and we can go into that or not, but those are some of my reactions to the Vietnamese as I knew them. I would also say this, "As far as the rank and file of Vietnamese went, all they wanted was for the shooting to stop." They didn't care a damn whether the VC won or, you know, the Americans went home or didn't go home or whatever it was. All they wanted, just as your infantry men in Tom's outfit was going to fight, all this man wanted was for the shooting to stop and to be able to take care of his family, and amazing that stuff still went on, I mean during all this time, weddings, funerals, high school graduations. It was just astonishing. You know, it wasn't like the battle of the bulge all the time. You had fighting here and there and deep in the jungle, but the average town, if you went through _____? in an average day -- the city of _____? had about forty thousand (40,000) people, you would have certainly noticed an American military presence and a number of people -- it was business as usual. I mean people were going, going to the dentists, going to the doctor, going to market, I mean, you know, having lunch. And so I think when I came back and realized, and it was a pivotal year by the time I got back in '68, to have left in late '66 and come back in '68, to realize that the Vietcong were evermore becoming

popular heroes. I did not believe that was what was going on in Vietnam. They were becoming popular heroes here. I'm leaving aside further who was right or who was wrong, but just perceptions of the matter, and they -- I would say if you had to try to weigh it out among the Vietnamese, on both sides if you will, with the Saigon government, I think you had far more corruption and far more weakness of will; and on the Vietcong, North Vietnamese side, you had strength of will, but also a, an iron discipline, iron to break under the Vietcong and join out of the local farms, and they were very, very brutal to their own people. You can say we used an A bomb and some got on the Vietnamese. There's no question. But these were people, and I just offer you one thing because I saw it, I've taken a, I won an American Civilian Advisor's Medical Advisor through an Army hospital among other things. He was showing me a lot of different stuff. And there was this boy there. I don't know just what age he was. A Vietnamese boy being treated in our hospital, being treated very well, along with some Vietnamese, captured Vietnamese who were also being treated very well as I recall it. And he said, this poor kid, he doesn't know what's wrong him, and he, as we walked away and walked past him, he was bringing me to show me Exhibit A, which is this ward and so forth of Vietnamese people in there for various injuries, either battle inflicted or whatever, people we were taking care of. I said, "Well, what's, what's the problem?" He said, well, his father was loyal to the government village chief, and so the Vietcong came in and they killed the father and then they shot this boy's genitals off to just let everybody understand what -- but, you know, those were things that really happened and I think in the telling and preconceived notions and so forth that I ran into when I got back here after all that, that I think some of that has gotten, the balance has gotten pretty much askew. If you want me to go to the, you know, cut to the chase, I'd say it was an irretrievable disaster. Had I known along with everybody else, looked into a crystal ball at the beginning, I would certainly not have made or welcomed or endorsed the commitment, but that

is not really the job of history, I don't think. Is this all still picking up?

INTERVIEWER2: Yeah.

MR. FLOOD: Okay.

GENERAL LYNCH: Is that it?

MR. FLOOD: Yes, sir.

GENERAL LYNCH: The first time I was involved in an assessment of the Vietnam, Southeast Asia, was in 19-, let me make sure I get this right, '61, '62. I was handling all the training money for indigenous forces in Southeast Asia, but I also belonged to a joint task force, who went over to -- they sent some parties over to South Vietnam and Thailand and Cambodia and in there, and that was before it really started heating up. And then I attended a briefing in which the consensus out of the Pacific was, "Do not get involved in Vietnam", for a whole variety of reasons, which we don't need to go into. So that was a military shot that said that. Well, our famous President at that time was John F. Kennedy and he didn't quite buy that and his advisors are the ones that started the commitment with special forces and, and military assistance and MAG. It was called MAG Vietnam. We had MAG Vietnam, MAG all over there. And the buildup started and then it's a case of when you get involved in that, you get involved in the politics and then you've got to train their soldiers and so forth. So then by the time that they started the commitment of U.S. Army forces in there, it was, you know, it was indicated that there was an inadequacy of the Vietnam to handle it, and we'd escalated up. Those escalation steps were rigidly controlled by the politicians, and that is not the way to go into there. The Vietnam, I agree one hundred (100%) percent with Charlie that the normal Vietnamese just wanted the war to stop. We were also in M_____? country. M_____? were indigenous to, to Vietnam and they had been oppressed by the Vietnamese and living up there, and a lot of that was in special forces because the M_____? straddled the infiltration rods that came down in

there, and so they were trying to get the M_____?. The solution to the Vietnam on track for awhile by using special forces people and, and training teams. You know, we could have left it at that and said we did our job and left, but no, we made the commitment, but we didn't, nobody understood the application of military power, particularly U.S. military power. When I arrived in there, my experience with the Vietnamese is they were cooperative on, on the sector level, sector district level, products chief, and his headquarters was fairly cooperative. We had to, by affairs, coordinate within the military and we only told them as much as we absolutely had to to prevent us shooting Vietnamese or Vietnamese shooting us. And particularly we had to call, say, even the Vietnamese, and they drew a line on a map and that was a free fire zone. Well, we found out when we went up in there there was still Vietnamese living up there, so it wasn't a free fire zone. So your rules had to essentially be that you don't go engage Vietnamese civilians unless they're carrying a weapon. There shouldn't be any weapon carriers up there. They had regional force and popular force and they were called the rough puffs and those were inadequately trained. And they had advisors, U.S. advisors, and man, I'll tell you, their, their life was on an edge. And then they had special forces camps and they trained different types of special forces. They also did some very clandestine work up north and I was involved in it. I can go on. And then you had the Vietnamese Army units. And the Vietnamese Army units, based on the French, you know, you had an Army battalion, for example, a station at _____? So _____ in their infinite wisdom decide to take my battalion and send it on down there and show that Vietnamese battalion how to go, because I was highly successful in preventing road damage and vehicle damage and make work and such things as that. Well, the Vietnamese, first of all, the Army is not too happy about going to work at night. And neither is the American Army, by the way, but mine were because that's how we prevented a lot of the VC -- that's when we captured the VC or shot VC by ambush and catching them with weapons running and going into their villages and

intimating. And actually as Charlie said, we would give them food and medical help, and we'd pull back. And we learned that the next night that, that same night, the Vietnamese, the Vietcong would come in, take that rice. And if they lived in that area and the people in there knew who they were, but you're never going to find out, they would, they would come back in. We'd go back in again and do the same thing again. We'd treat them. What did the Vietcong do? They just took it. The people were starving and they were starving in that so called great big no fire zone. Let me say that the no fire zone would run in, in Vietnam would probably run, for the fourth division would run from Lexington to, to Elizabethtown to Louisville. That was how big our area was. In my area, I had forty thousand (40,000), yeah, forty (40) kilometers by about sixty (60) kilometers, that was my area for one battalion. And you had all these other Vietnamese units doing independent action going through, so they, they were pretty good in telling us, but when we got down to _____?, we went off and got our feet adjusted on the ground because we were in mountainyards?, and _____? in Vietnam is really central highlands and there wasn't any deep canopy jungle. It was a grazing area for the mountainyards? and the, and it was beautiful. The sunrises and sunsets in there were beautiful. And oh, you know, it was just something to amaze and realize that in this, all this beautiful countryside was this violence that was going on. So we stayed up there and we worked that for about a week or two (2) and then I met with the South Vietnamese battalion commander and he was a Lieutenant Colonel. And we knew he had pressure from his headquarters and I had mine to go out and work together. So we, we sort of sat down and talked, but when we talked we decided, the two (2) Lieutenant Colonels decided that the first operation we would do would be U.S. dreamt up, you know, our operational plan, and the Vietnamese unit would support us. And my company commander just about went ape, you know. They said, "You can't. They're Vietnamese." I said, "Wait a minute. You just let me worry about that, let me and that other Lieutenant. You worry

about your troops, will you?" So we did and we went out and the operation was a good successful sweep. You know, we didn't get in any big, big fracas. There isn't any way you're going to get in a big fracas if you're working with the Vietnamese because there's so many leaks in the Vietnamese side that the Vietcong or NVA heard, but we were, we didn't have many Vietcong. We had all NVA. And I'll finish it, I'll finish this and I want to come back to that NVA and Vietcong. So we finished that operation and we had -- it came up to our area and we got some hot chow...

MR. FLOOD: Was that when we, was that when we went to see the French workers...

GENERAL LYNCH: Yeah.

MR. FLOOD: ... on their planation? That's another little...

GENERAL LYNCH: Another little incident, but anyway they came on up and we had a few drinks and, and, you know, and celebrate like. It was nothing but me thanking them for a wonderful job and how proud I was in the courage of their soldiers, and I went down and talked to their soldiers, and they're soldiers, you know, and they get all puffed up. So the next operation was his operation. Now I'll tell you where I screwed up was his operation. He got them up and he came up and told us, I said, "Yes, we can do that. Yes, I can do that. Yes, I can do it", because I had to move artillery and stuff in there. And so we started off on his operation. My company commander really was going just crazy. They said, "What if we get in a fight?" You know, and I said, "Well." And so we went in that operation and they led. And afterwards, he came and he talked. And I called my company commanders in and he got up and did the same thing. So I thought everything was wonderful, peaches and cream, and this is a good way to work to get -- you got to give them the backbone. They don't have the fire support. They don't have the gun ships and the air, access to it. They've got to go all the way to Saigon to

get some of that fire. We didn't have to. So they liked that. But anyway, I made a mistake. I put in my, my report that I had operational control of the Vietnamese and then the Vietnamese had operational control of the U.S. Okay?

INTERVIEWER2: Uh hmm.

GENERAL LYNCH: Boy, did it ever hit the fan. It went all the way to Colonel McVee and they sent it down and everybody got excited. They said, "Do you really mean that?" I said, "Oh, maybe I said I should have said something else, used some other term, but I said we did." And they said, "Well, you weren't supposed to do that." I said, "I can't tell them that, for their plan to work, you know." And so my evaluation of that was pretty good, but in that same area, we worked with the special forces and they got a delta force, omega force. They had a whole bunch of names. So we went out with them and we were working with them and they're good, and the only thing that happened to me is my, some of people, the Vietcong had strung some bees on them, the bees got into them. I had to get dropped Benadryl in. But anyway, my people and the special forces Vietnamese, they were out and CIDG, what does that mean, CIDG forces, that's what the special forces did, and they were out and they got in contact, so they called for artillery. So we fired the artillery. Well, the moment that artillery started busting through this single canopy jungle, the CIDG forces just withdrew. I mean they thought that it was the Vietcong doing that or the NVA doing it. Now I want to go back and talk a little bit about the handling of prisoners that Charlie was talking about. We really didn't have much control and we didn't have any -- occasionally had to have linguistic ability because I had to get some guy that had been over there in special forces and in an unit. We get the prisoner; we just ask the fundamentals and then we ship them back to brigade. And they got back to brigade and they had the language ability there and then they did it and then they turned them over directly to the Vietnamese. We got good feedback, but we also got prisoners, which none of the other

battalions did, which I can't draw any conclusion to that at all. We were always after prisoners because we wanted to find out, you know, what was really going on there and plus Charlie was bugging me on it. So when the prisoners got back there, we don't know, we don't know. I don't have any idea what happened to them. One of them came up and they wanted to charge us because we picked up an officer and they wanted to use some incorrect methods of interrogation, and I said, "No. You leave the man alone." But they said, "He's a Lieutenant Colonel and we can find out something." I said, "You ain't going to find out nothing. Ship him back like you're supposed to." So we shipped him back. I guess the -- I have a great deal of respect for the Vietnamese if they're properly trained and properly led. I don't like all the derogatory stuff on them. The Vietcong completed more atrocities than anything else because that's how they intimated people and they kill them and they conscripted them. In '67, our contact with the NVA, most of those dead NVA were fifteen (15), sixteen (16) years old, the ones that I told you about, the weapons strapped on. They weren't the older veterans. Now what happens is a NVA battalion is, is a lot less than ours, about three hundred (300), I think. They would form it in Vietnam and they'd train it. And we kept getting the same number in our order of battle. You know, we kept, we'd pick up a prisoner and it would be that unit, and then three (3) months later, we'd pick up another one from that unit and what they did, they reconstituted the unit and then sent them south again. Alright, now when, when a large unit like a regiment move moved and they sent security first, and we figured this out by working night and ambush. So a lot of times, we'd grab that security and we'd try to get them alive, but that was difficult because they were super-reconnaissance type soldiers. I've got an interesting story, but I don't want it on tape. But anyway they come on, they come on down and then if they got all the way down into Saigon or the coast and then they got in a fight, if they got tore up badly, they dragged their dead out and they have a little cord, and the little cord they hook in the back and they drag their dead so you

can't, you don't know whether they drag their wounded the same way. And their cord, just a little, like you see them on these motorboat pole that's got a hook on, hooks on a shirt and then they drag them away. What they don't want is that body. They're not, they're not worried, they're not worried about getting them back so his mother knows that he's dead; they're worried about getting them out of there so that it shows that they -- so they pretty well cleaned the battlefield. Now the survivors of that unit, if they're down really in Vietnam, they disappear sometimes if they don't get back to Cambodia, and what they do is they assimilate into the Vietnamese area. So you go in a village and let's say there's a hundred (100) people in the village, a good half of those are probably NVA, and now they're in Vietcong. Now the rules, their rules are is when they get down there in that shape, they then respond to the Vietcong chain of command. Okay. So you don't know this until you, until you get a prisoner or you kill somebody and you go pull the card and you try to figure out, and he's NVA, but his unit has been all tore up. He's a straggler, deserter, and he's going to survive down in Vietnam. And he goes in there and we, we got in good terms with a couple of villages and they'd tell us that he's North Vietnam and we'd yank him.

MR. FLOOD: I just want to say one thing. The interrogation center, I don't think that's where your prisoners went. That was, that was, I think the province chief, this is the local where they're picked up.

GENERAL LYNCH: Political.

MR. FLOOD: Well, or, or possibly these caught in, you know, in or near _____? city, I think that was a different just whole deal from the prisoners you caught on what I consider

the battlefield type of area. Still I mean I image it didn't look like a very pleasant place, this interrogation center, but I, I never really focused on it. I never really understood -- you know, I

don't know what went on in there and I should have figured, you know, become more aware of it. The only other incident I want to mention, again just a few miles from these areas Tom is talking about, out in the _____? Valley, and this was in the Valley itself, I went out once on, well, a couple of operations with these regional forces and a couple of American military advisers and we started out at night and pretty soon as we went up the valley, we began seeing these little, these little thatched huts as we went, these lights, and they weren't welcoming us. The lights were signaling further up the valley, you know, something was coming. So it was a done deal. I mean we never saw a bad guy all day long, but the day went on and the objective was to go to a certain distance and the sun grew high. And I began looking at these regional forces and they had bamboo poles and they had clocks slung on them, they had chickens. As they went up the valley, they were taking everybody's -- you know, talking about winning the hearts and minds of the people, now these were Vietnamese doing it to Vietnamese who lived just a couple of miles away from them.

GENERAL LYNCH: Yeah, yeah.

MR. FLOOD: So there's that, I mean where you take that to the checkout counter I don't really know, but it cannot have been productive and this is eye witness stuff, and nobody really, nobody really tried to stop it, certainly not their own officers. The American advisors were just carrying out their operation; they weren't going to worry about clocks and chickens. I mean I think there was even furniture being carried. But these people carried it all the way up, you know, from where they picked it up and all the way back, and at the end of the day, they had enriched themselves and a totally, totally futile operation. Also one night, I got on a different variation of all this stuff, but like we, we never got beyond the _____? Valley; that was one of my benchmarks. When I arrived in December of '66, you could only go to the _____? Valley to a certain place and there was a check point beyond which we, it was agreed

we didn't have any presence or influence beyond that point, and a year later that was only the place you could still get to. And that was a year when many thousands died of Americans and of everybody else. And like so these regional forces, if they were regional, when it came time to secure this thing and go to sleep, and these guys didn't really leave out any sentries. Everybody got in the little hammocks and went to sleep. I was sleeping in a room with a couple of other American advisors and pretty fully dressed. Okay. And in the middle of the night, all this stuff goes bang, bang, smash, crack, and we're under attack. And so I come swinging out of my thing, but waiting to see what the professional soldiers were going to do. I was not the first guy out the door. It's funny. We get out there and they had made a real hit and run attack. And by now, we've finally got some flares in the area. The bad guys are gone, and there's a couple of wounded Vietnamese; nobody dead as far as I can remember. So here we are, these guys having brought this all entirely on themselves, I mean with the most rudimentary precautions not taken. The next thing you see is this American helicopter, this MediVac helicopter coming through the night, and guided by this thing and, you know, putting down their little search light, that any assurance that the bad guys weren't still, you know...

GENERAL LYNCH: Yeah.

MR. FLOOD: ... out there with God only knows what, just having, that would have made it a big, big success for them, you know, and in come the Americans and haul out the Vietnamese, but I mean I think again and again and again, you would see this, that the Americans would respond to Vietnamese appeals over and over and over again. The Vietnamese would never, to my knowledge, do anything comparable for Americans, and that was the other thing that made me feel good and, you know. I mean the Americans, if Americans were in trouble, there was nothing one American unit would not do for another in my experience, whether it was a MediVac or, you know, what it was, or planes going in. You know, everybody

said _____? shut down and you can't see a hundred (100) feet and they'd still, they'd still give it a try, and that's a lot of what made the difference.

GENERAL LYNCH: Yeah. There was a Vietcong up in the, in the _____? Valley. It was not _____?, it was some other place, Dong _____?, I think it was, Dong ____?.

MR. FLOOD: That was the farthest one up there.

GENERAL LYNCH: Yeah, that was Dong ____?, and they had been in there for some time and we went up in there and we got scarred up a little bit and they got scarred up a little bit, but the thing that we did is we were moving, only moving at night, and it was fairly successful. And in the daytime, we'd cool it, you know, and put out security in the daytime because daytime we had the advantage on reconnaissance and so forth. But anyway, we went to a hill and one of my company commanders got up on this hill, it was hill 226 or something like that. And I said, "Get off that hill." And he said, you know, come back and challenged me. I said, "Get off that hill right now." And so he got off the hill. And what that hill was is about six (6) months, six (6) or eight (8) months earlier, a company from the 101 got up there and they dug in on top of the hill and they got hit, and they took all the women and the children in the village and the old men and they put them up ahead and they gave them rakes, the Vietcong did, and they gave them rakes and knives and stuff, no weapons, and told them to charge the hill. Well, when the soldiers, you know, they, they were alert, but before they could do anything, well, they got all these women and children on them and then the Vietcong come in and they killed them all. And I said, "Man, I don't want it." You talk about something repeat...

MR. FLOOD: Uh hmm.

GENERAL LYNCH: ... but that's, that is something on a pattern of the Viet, if they're successful, they're going to come and repeat it. I mean they're, they, they build up that pattern on a system of tactics.

MR. FLOOD: Yeah.

GENERAL LYNCH: And the way they design their ambushes and so forth, they do it and they, they go on a set piece. So once you begin to smell it, then they, you know, they can, they did that, but the Vietcong, and it had been done in previous wars.

MR. FLOOD: Yeah.

GENERAL LYNCH: You shove all the non combatants ahead of you. The Russians did it. Americans haven't done it probably since the Revolutionary War.

MR. FLOOD: Where was it done in the American Revolution? Are we...

END OF TAPE