

## LOU REYMANN, ARMY: TANK CMDR(1) & S.O.G (2-3)

Lou: My name is Loy Reymann, L-O-U R-E-Y-M-A-N-N. I served in Vietnam three tours from 1968 to 1971. My first year was with the 11th Armored Cavalry, and the second and third year was in special ops.

I was born and raised in Akron, Ohio. I'm one of eight children. How did I end up in the military?

Interviewer: Where'd you go to school? What kind of [education did you have 00:00:34]?

Lou: High school or college?

Interviewer: High school and then college.

Lou: I graduated from Hoban High School in Akron, Ohio. I got my first degree from John Carroll University. I got my second master's, MBA, from the College of William & Mary. What else?

Interviewer: Now you got that degree, you master's and MBA. [Crosstalk 00:01:01]

Lou: I got that while I was on active duty.

Interviewer: Why didn't you end up on Wall Street or somewhere like that?

Lou: I was commissioned, married and went on active duty within a four-day period. I was commissioned a regular army officer out of John Carroll's ROTC program. I was the commander of the core cadets and number one in my class as a college graduate. I went directly on active duty.

Interviewer: Did you get into ROTC because you came from a military family?

Lou: I don't know why I did, but I did. There was no college tuition offset back then. I just felt an obligation to serve because there was a war going on, and, yes, I came from a military family. My father is one of 16, 13 boys, 3 girls. Of my father's 12 brothers, 7 served in World War II, and 7 came home. Of those 7, every one of them were in combat-related positions.

They were not supply clerks running a [recurring 00:02:25] depot in Las Vegas. I definitely came from a military background.

Interviewer: Vietnam was, at that point, starting to heat up pretty intensely. If you would, when you mention ROTC or when you became commissioned, give me the years if you would, just so I have that. Give me the timeframe of when these things happen as you [tell the story 00:02:49].

Lou: I graduated in '66, so in my junior and senior year, '65, '66, the war was heating up. I was in ROTC for two years, my freshman and sophomore year, and I chose to stick around for the last two years.

Interviewer: Where did you do your basic? [Crosstalk 00:03:18]

Lou: Where did I do my basic? Officers don't necessarily have basic training. When you're commissioned, you're commissioned into a branch of the army, engineering, artillery, quartermaster, ordinance corps. I was commissioned regular army into armor tanks, and upon commissioning, I went to armor officers basic. Then I went to other schools, and I went to [Vietnam 00:03:54].

Interviewer: How did tanks operate in Vietnam without getting stuck?

Lou: You nailed it. The image of tank warfare is a whole bunch of tanks on line attacking a whole bunch of other tanks on line in a desert. I was assigned to a tank company within the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, and we had 17 tanks, 53 tons of steel that move and shoot and communicate.

We were primarily employed to bust jungle. What that means is the jungle was so thick that the tanks went through them, busted the jungle, busted the trees down.

Most of our assignments were to bust jungle, to go from point A to point B. Now the shortest distance between two points is a straight line, so wherever we were and wherever we thought the bad guys were, we just hauled ass and went straight towards them. Most of the time, there was very, very thick jungle between us and them, which brings up an interesting point.

A tank is a very formidable, scary object if you're a bad guy. One of the things that can stop a tank dead in its tracks is ants, red ants. When you're busting jungle, you can't see 20 feet in front of you because it's very, very thick vegetation, very, very thick vegetation. We were lucky if

we were able to see the tank, quote, next to us, maybe 20, 30 feet away or 50, 60 feet away.

Unbeknownst to us we could be riding over ant hills, and it's funny when you look back on it. We're busting jungle, bang, bang, bang, pushing trees down and bamboo and all this other good stuff. All of a sudden, we stop, and our driver jumps out, and he's going like this. We're wondering, initially, what the hell are you doing? Then we found out. We got accustomed to it.

The problem is, you get ants inside of a tank, little teeny ants that like to bite you, they ended up biting us, the crew, at the most difficult times. That's the first thing that can stop a tank.

The second thing that can stop a tank, now you've got 53 tons of steel that's capable of going 35, 40 miles an hour. The second thing that can stop a tank is bamboo. Most of the jungle was bamboo-infested, unless we were in rubber plantations, which was another story. Michelin had a rubber plantation all over Vietnam, and they were pristine. Why were they pristine? Because the bad guys didn't destroy them. Michelin had a deal with the bad guys to leave the trees alone, which is why I'm very careful about what brands of tires I buy.

Anyways, bamboo can stop a tank dead in its tracks. Why? Because it's so thick [ahead of you 00:07:56], and, two, once it's knocked down, if it gets caught up in the tracks, we could throw a track. The last thing you want to do is throw a track in the middle of the jungle in vegetation so thick that you can't see what's going on 20 feet from you, which means that if you're fixing your track in that that thick of a jungle, the bad guys literally can walk upright on you unless you have perimeter security. It's not a neat thing to do.

Interviewer: [Crosstalk 00:08:31]

Lou: We were all over the place. The 11th Cav, I Corps, II Corps, [Block Men 00:08:40] a Fishhook. We were capable of moving 100 miles in two days. When Tet of '68 came, we were 125 miles outside of Saigon, and we were ordered to come down to protect Long Binh Air Base, Long Binh Base, which was headquartered for General Westmoreland's headquarters. We made that trip in about 36 hours. We were all over the place.

Interviewer: [Crosstalk 00:09:24]

Lou: Excuse me, the function of the cavalry was to find the bad guys and then bring in the soldiers, air strikes, artillery to deal with them. A cavalry unit is primarily intended to find the bad guys and to protect the flank of a larger unit, a corps, two or three divisions, et cetera. That goes all the way back to Gettysburg, but that was what we did. We found the bad guys and then called for help.

Interviewer: Did the NVA have many, or any, tanks? I would imagine they had a few, supplied by the Russians or Chinese?

Lou: To my knowledge, they never deployed them in Vietnam. They definitely had them staged along the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Cambodia and Laos. When you look at the movies of the Vietnamese taking over Saigon and driving into the presidential palace now, you see they came in on a tank. They had them, but we never encountered them. To my knowledge, they were never deployed in South Vietnam because we would have destroyed them real quick. We had far superior firepower. I don't know. That's my personal opinion.

Interviewer: That first year you were in the tank corps, in the cavalry, did have many firefights with your group of tank commanders, et cetera? Did you run into a lot of bad guys?

Lou: Yes, to answer your question. I was there a year. We had a lot of combat. Interesting, my first metal was earned two weeks after I arrived at Vietnam, two weeks. We were in a gunfight, and I did some neat things, and I got a metal. The interesting thing about that is the press release of my award got back to my hometown newspaper before I told my parents.

My mom was very upset. She was very concerned that her son, two weeks into the war, was in a battle. I made arrangements, so throughout my remaining three years, there were no press releases on anything that I was involved in. I kept my father informed. My father knew about what I did and what my unit did and whatever because I wanted him to know and because he wanted to know.

My family, my mother in particular, never knew anything about what I did other than the fact that I was in armor, and in the next two years I was running patrols to find the enemy. I'm sure that never sunk into my mom what the heck that meant.

Interviewer: Can you tell us what happened two weeks into your first tour and [how you got that metal 00:13:08]?

Lou: Yeah. We got intelligence that the bad guys were in this village, and we attacked the village. Now we had a platoon of armored personnel carriers with us. You never send tanks out by themselves. You always have infantry with them, with us because the tanks' guns can only depress so low. We needed infantry to protect us in close encounters.

Here we are, we're attacking this village. Between us and the village was nothing but rice paddies, and I had an experienced platoon sergeant that never made it home. He made it home, but he made it home in a bag.

When we were planning the assault, I couldn't figure out how we were going to get at the village because it was surrounded by rice paddies. He said go right through the rice paddies. I said, you're out of your mind. We're talking about 53 tons of steel going through muddy rice paddies. I can just picture my five tanks getting bogged down and getting the hell shot out of us.

He said, no, trust me. I did, and we assaulted the village going right through the rice paddies, never stopped, never had a problem. I just couldn't believe it.

Anyways, so there we are assaulting this village, and the bad guys had considerable tunnels in this village, rooms, tunnels connecting firing positions and had rooms where the bad guys were underground and what have you. The village looked rather innocent when you just saw it, but underground was a whole bunch of stuff.

Here we are attacking this village. We cleared the rice paddy, and we go into the village, and a couple of my tanks fell in the ground. The weight of the tank collapsed the ground above these tunnels and rooms, and we're talking about large rooms. Here I was with five tanks, two of which were now in craters, sink holes, call it whatever you want.

Now they're in a hole. Their main gun is like this, and now all their weapons are pointing like this. They were ineffective, so they had two choices, to dismount, get off the tank and fight as infantry, or have the other five tanks, have the other two tanks pull them out of the hole. I chose to have the other two tanks pull them out of the hole.

Now you've got to remember we're in a battle. All hell was breaking loose. We've got the two tanks stuck in the holes, the two tanks pulling

them out, and here was me and my tank. I'm the only operational tank. We and my crew pretty well wiped out the whole village. We ran over hooches, ran through hooches. I don't why, the grace of God, we never fell in like that other tanks did. Somebody thought that was pretty cool, and I got an award for that, so that was my first one.

Interviewer: What village was it? Were you in II Corps then? Do you know what village that was?

Lou: What?

Interviewer: What village was that? [Crosstalk 00:17:34]

Lou: I have no idea. I couldn't tell you. I don't know. We were in [Loc Minh 00:17:46] which is northwest of Saigon, four or five miles from the Cambodian border. We were along a bad guy infiltration path.

Interviewer: Did you lose any tanks?

Lou: Absolutely. I lost two of my tanks from bombs, two of my tanks. In my platoon, we lost five tanks from mines, two of mine and three that belonged in my platoon. These weren't mines. These were bombs. I have photographs. The bad guys would go through a field that's been bombed and find duds that didn't go off. We're talking about 750 and 500-pound bombs. We're talking about bombs as big as I am. They wow pick them up and move them out of the bombed out area.

They would do one of two things with them. They would either take the fuse out and the tail assembly and somehow drain the explosive powder out of it and then make lots of little bombs, or they would use them intact.

Now if you want to ruin your day, drive a tank over a 750-pound bomb. Fifty-three tons of steel, literally, gets raised up off the ground. Your hearing is destroyed. The track and the suspension system and the wheels that run the track are all blown off, so you basically have a 53-ton radio that can't move, not a good thing.

Now we also had diesel engines, but at one time, we had gasoline engines in our tanks, and that was not pretty because the gasoline would ignite. The tank would catch on fire. We had M48 tanks, that's the model, and they came out with both diesel and gasoline. The gasolines were scary.

Because I had a job to do. There was a need to win the war, and there was a need for people at the company level, at the lower officer level, second lieutenant, first lieutenant, captain. There was a need for experienced combat leaders. I felt it was my responsibility to stick around.

Interviewer: How did this group with the unusual name, "Studies and Observation Group", how did they reach out to you?

Lou: I reached out to them. Several times during operations, tank operations, we would be in the middle of the jungle at night, and we'd have to be a 'logger', i.e., make a circle in the middle of the jungle. Just run the tanks around in circles, knock everything down, and we'd deploy our tanks and personnel carriers in a circle. That's called logger in a NDP, night defensive position.

We would be in a night defensive position, and we were alerted that a LRRP unit was going to come into our lines. LRRP stands for long-range reconnaissance patrol. Several times, nighttime was falling, or it was night, and out of the jungle in front of us came a group of guys that gave the proper signal, that came into our position.

They looked like they just climbed out of a sewer. They were dirty, filthy, tired, unshaven, et cetera. What these guys did is they went out, acted as infantry, and spied on the enemy. They did a lot of things [inaudible 00:22:59]. I thought that was pretty cool.

Lieutenant General Bruce Palmer, who was the deputy, was Abrams' deputy ... Abrams was a four-star. Palmer was a three-star ... came to our unit to give out some awards, one of which was to an outstanding lieutenant by the name of Kent [Hillhouse 00:23:34] who retired as a major general. He awarded him two silver stars in one day. You don't see that very often.

Anyways, Palmer's there and gave out metals. I walked with him, as I was the senior guy, the commander at the time, because our company commander was evacuated. I was the executive officer. As I walked Palmer to his Jeep, I saluted, shook his hand, and in my hand was a piece of paper with my social security number on it. I told him while we were walking that I wanted to be a LRRP. Here's my social security number, my service number. If you can help me out, fine.

To make a very, very long story short, after my tour with armor was over, I came home, and I was sent to a whole bunch of schools. I was

reassigned back to the Vietnam theater to a unit of both Navy Seal and Army Rangers and Air Force .. I forget what they're called ... and Marine Recons. It was an inner-service group that ran special ops.

Our job in special ops was to go into Cambodia and Laos and North Vietnam. I never got into North Vietnam, but some of our guys did, and spy on the Ho Chi Minh Trail and bring in air strikes, B52 strikes on the Ho Chi Minh Trail to blow it up, et cetera, basically, to provide enough damage to the supplies that came down the Ho Chi Minh Trail that the bad guys diverted combat divisions to the trail to protect it. We did all kinds of things along the Ho Chi Minh Trail to disrupt the flow of stuff, men and material.

I gave a shout-out earlier to Lieutenant Hillhouse, retired major general, and I also mentioned something about a platoon sergeant, if I can digress. This platoon sergeant that told me that tanks can go through rice paddies, his name was [Glenn L. Nicholson 00:26:52]. Glenn Nicholson was killed in action, and when he was killed, he left 7 children, the oldest one 11 years old.

I'd like to share a little story with you about this outstanding NCO. When I first got to 'Nam and I reported to the tank company and I was given command of a platoon, my platoon sergeant, Sergeant Nicholson, pulled me aside. I fully expected that the reason he pulled me aside was to tell me who were the duds and who I could count on to give me a heads up, what's going on in the platoon. He said, let's go for a walk, so I thought he was going to give me input on who was doing what and who I could count on.

We're walking along, and he says, you want to go home in a bag, or do you want to go home upright? I looked at him, I said, excuse me? He says, if you want to go home upright, you let me run the platoon. You command it. I'll run it, and I'll get you home upright. I said, whoa, okay, so I did.

Now let's fast-forward two weeks later. We got into this big gunfight that I already mentioned. Sometime after that, I really don't know, several weeks, couple months, don't know, but we were busting jungle. We could not see 10 feet in front of us, the last place you would put a tank. We were busting jungle, making hallways through the jungle to get from point A to point B.

Tanks are noisy. You can hear us coming miles away, so to make a long story short, we ran into an ambush. They heard us coming, and they set



up an ambush. All hell was breaking loose, rockets going off, machine guns going off, grenades going off, radio chatter, people screaming, et cetera. I'm fighting. I'm trying to lead the fight as well as fight.

All of a sudden, bam, somebody ran into the back of my tank to the point where the tank [inaudible 00:30:00]. I was so mad, and I'm up top. My crew is inside the tank, and I'm exposed. I'm shooting, and, bam, and I turn around, ready to yell and scream and give the one-fingered salute or do something with the idiot that ran into me.

I turn around, and there was Sergeant Nicholson's tank hitting the back of my tank, and in-between them was three bad guys who were climbing over the back of my tank to get at me. Nicholson saw it, and I found out this later, it just so happens that his tank was pointing that way, and my tank was pointing that way, so he told his driver, reverse, full throttle. The driver didn't know, didn't ask why. He just did it, and he squished the three guys that were climbing up the back of my tank to get at me. He saved my life.

On May 8th of 1968, he was killed, and I made it a point to visit his family. It was a very emotional experience, and to this day I am in frequent touch via emails with his family. A couple of times I went and visited. They had a family reunion, and I joined in. I lost 19 guys in my three years, and I was successful in personally visiting 16 of their families. It's an experience that I cherish very deeply. That's my shout-out to Sergeant Nicholson. He was an outstanding mentor to me and leader of the enlisted in my platoon.

Interviewer: Were you fatalistic, just saying when your time comes it comes, or what'd you think? How did you feel you could beat this?

Lou: If you're going to play poker, rely on luck over skill any time, every time. What's that got to do with this? I was in the right place at the right time with the right people for three years. Let me give you an example. We were running special ops along the Mekong River. At one point in time, the river was the border between Thailand and Laos. The Mekong River goes down through North Vietnam, Laos Thai border, Cambodia and ends up pretty close to Saigon.

In addition to the Ho Chi Minh Trail, the bad guys brought supplies down the Mekong River. One of our missions was to disrupt a certain barge that was coming down. Intelligence told us that there was some very special stuff on this barge that was coming down the river.

One of the thing that we did was we were able to rehearse our missions for several days and maybe several weeks before we executed them because we executed our missions with 5, 7 and sometimes 9 men on a team, and that was it. We went into our missions with 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 days worth of stuff on our backs, ammunition, food, et cetera.

We only had one chance, one shot at accomplishing our mission, unlike conventional warfare battles where you have reserves and what have you. We were it, so we, fortunately, rehearsed our missions a great deal, and we did pretty well as a result of it. We had to rehearse destroying this barge, but we didn't have a barge.

To make a real long story short, we got a barge, and this was as very, very large barge. Actually, there is a swimming pool outside of one of the condominiums [in Inner Harbor 00:35:39] that is a barge. It's a super-duper expensive condominium, and they've got a swimming pool, and the swimming pool's actually a barge. We acquired a barge, and we rehearsed, and we executed the mission. We accomplished the mission.

Here we are with the barge leftover on the Mekong River, and the Mekong River is a toilet, filthy. We had this barge, and the guy who ran our operations from the embassy in Bangkok, which I'll name him later, was a brigadier general. We had this barge, so I had an idea that I wanted to make this barge into a swimming pool.

We sanded it and blasted it and painted it [inaudible 00:36:52] made sure it could hold water, so we had this barge now that was pretty good. We had it painted infantry blue, which was pale blue, so it looked nice when we filled it with water. The problem is we didn't have water. We didn't have 60, 70,000 gallons of water to put in it.

I asked this brigadier general. We've got this barge. Who visited us one day, visited us a lot, and I asked him. I said we need a water filtration unit so we can suck water out of the Mekong Delta and put it in this barge so we can have a pool. He says I'll look into it. I don't know how many days or weeks pass, but X period of time later.

We were about 100 miles away from where this general's office was, so X number of weeks later, days later, whatever it was, into our camp comes this convoy of tankers, truck tanks full of water. I don't know how many trucks, 9, 10, 11, 12. A whole bunch of 5 and 8,000-gallon tankers full of water came into our base, put the water in this barge, and we had a swimming pool. This brigadier general made it happen.

Now you asked me was I lucky. I said I was at the right place, right time. What's that got to do with a swimming pool? This brigadier general ended up being Reagan's chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, [ Jack, John, Jack Vessie 00:39:21], the number one guy in the military. If you're ever going to have a buddy, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs is a pretty good guy to have on your side. Long story short, yeah, I was very lucky in many regards.

Interviewer: What happened when you found this large ammo dump?

Lou: Please understand that the Ho Chi Minh Trail was not a trail. It was, for all practical purposes, a super highway. Yes, there were portions of it that were dirt and what have you, but the Ho Chi Minh Trail included a rail spur with trains, as we know trains. The Mekong River with barges, individual folks on bicycles. Walking beside bicycles and on bicycles with a whole bunch of supplies. Everything from man carry to trains.

Much of it was in triple canopied jungle. Now triple canopied jungle at 12 noon was dark, triple vegetation. Underneath all of that was this road network. Now we knew where the Ho Chi Minh Trail was, and they had continual spurs all over the place. The point is it was a logistics marvel, and one of our jobs was to check out the Ho Chi Minh Trail, spy on it and what have you and when we saw significant activity, bring in air strikes.

There we are, we're snooping around Laos, and we found a huge supply depot, huge supply depot, the footprint of two Walmart stores. This thing was huge. Everything you could imagine was stacked up on the ground and in some cases underneath makeshift roofs, everything from vehicles to canteens to water to ammunition to artillery pieces [inaudible 00:41:59]. It was a major supply depot.

When we got back, we were all excited because we found the mother load of supplies, and we told the higher ups what we found, and we fully expected that we would be given another mission. We fully expected that the B52s would come in and destroy it, and we suspected we would be given a mission, bomb damage assessment, to go in and find out and report back just how effective it was. That's what we expected.

What we were told was we were given, I don't know, 7, 8, 9 boxes, crates of AK47 ammunition that was faulty. The minute that hammer hit the round, the weapon would blow up, would explode.

The North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong were very, very apprehensive, already very apprehensive over a lot of the individual weapons that they

got from China, Russia, Czechoslovakia because occasionally they would malfunction. They would blow up. They weren't all that reliable, but 96 percent of the time they were reliable. That 4 percent started to spook them, the bad guys.

What were told was to take this ammunition back to the supply depot and stick it amongst the rifle ammunition, the AK47 ammunition that was there. First of all, how do we find where the ammunition is? We don't go in and just say to the North Vietnamese supply sergeant, where's your ammunition? We had to, one, lug this crap into the jungle. We were air inserted and then lugged it the rest of the way.

Then we had to find where the AK47 ammunition was, and then we had to put these boxes in amongst them and get out there and not be discovered. We did it, but in reflection, that mission was very difficult for us to execute because we thought the mission was absurd.

We've got enough supplies to supply months of bad guys fighting, and all we had to do was bring in B52s and blow that hell out of it, but, no, we're supposed to carry these wooden boxes and stick them in a pile of AK47 ammo that we didn't know where it was that we had to find when they could just as easily blow the hell out of it.

Not coincidentally, but it's particularly galling that we lost two guys in that operation. We lost two guys in that operation because on the way to the extraction point, which was several miles away from the supply depot, we got into a gunfight, and we lost two guys. It's often said that we would have won the war if we'd let the generals run the war.

General Giap, the number one military guy of North Vietnam has expressed wonder why we stopped bombing Haiphong Harbor. According to General Giap, North Vietnam was very close to pulling the plug because of supplies that didn't get through. I don't know. That's my opinion, and I'm sticking with it.

The maintenance and protection of the Ho Chi Minh Trail was sheer genius. First of all, you have to understand that the Ho Chi Minh Trail was 1,000s of miles of roads and detours. It looked like the veins in the human body. There were all kinds of roads all over it, roads, rails, water. The protection of the Ho Chi Minh Trail was very effective because we were effective in disrupting a lot of stuff but not nearly as effective as we could have been. We accomplished our mission by disrupting the flow of goods [the 00:47:40] Ho Chi Minh Trail, but there should have been more of us.

That aside, the projection of the Ho Chi Minh Trail was effective. Secondly, the way they repaired the bombing of the trail was rather unique. Let's imagine the trail was a single road, which it wasn't, but let's imagine the trail is a single road. Let's suppose that road was 1,000 miles long. Every 50 miles, there was lots and lots and lots of road repair equipment, bulldozers, saws, personnel, et cetera.

What happened was, when a particular section of the Ho Chi Minh Trail got destroyed or damaged, the equipment that was needed to fix it came from the link right above it. They moved their equipment down, and the link above that moved their equipment down and moved their equipment down, so there was a constant flow of equipment south to the damaged portion of the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

It literally started in North Vietnam, so there was a continual flow of not just equipment, in other words push a bulldozer down, but the whole unit kept moving down into the area of the Ho Chi Minh Trail that needed fixed, as opposed to requisitioning a bulldozer and having a bulldozer brought down and delivered, which is the way would have done it. They just kept moving whole units down, and they would repair a bomb damaged area very, very quickly or just leave it alone and run another area around it.

We're talking about 1,000s of people that were responsible for the Ho Chi Minh Trail, and the flow of logistics, everything from rail cars to bicycles and everything in-between was amazing.

Interviewer: They were just quite amazing.

Lou: Yes, to a point. They weren't peasants. The Viet Cong were, quote, peasants, were indigenous South Vietnamese civilians that were converted to the effort. The Ho Chi Minh Trail was mainline North Vietnamese Army units. These were a thoroughly trained, thoroughly motivated, thoroughly equipped enemy. The North Vietnamese Armed Forces had their act together.

Interviewer: Why was one group of people in the same country – the NVA and VC – so much more effective as fighters than the South Vietnamese forces we allied with? I just don't get it.

Lou: Opinion. Why would you risk your life and fight hard when somebody else will? The North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong were motivated for any one of many, many reasons, one of which was a united Vietnam. Those communist North Vietnam were motivated to make South Vietnam also communist. Why were they motivated? Pick a reason.

In my opinion, MACV, Military Assistance Command, Vietnam. In other words, I was never assigned to advise a Vietnam unit. There were some awesome South Vietnamese units, very effective, very good. They were few and far between. In my opinion, why in the hell would someone go someplace and get shot at when somebody else could do it?

Interviewer: When you have these impressive SOG units, special operations groups, going into Cambodia and Laos, and I think you even said you occasionally captured a general, a reputed, outstanding general. How did that come to be?

Lou: We didn't really capture him. We kind of relocated him. How does that come to be? You had to know where he was going to be when he was going to be someplace. That's intelligence. That's human intelligence. Then you have to assess the location where the target, the asset, is going to be. If he's in the middle of a base camp of a 15,000 man division, I'm being facetious here, you don't want to do that.

If he's going from point A to point B in his staff car, that might be the place to hit him. How does it come about? Intelligence, good intelligence, operable intelligence. You basically go in, and you wait. You don't really get a whole lot of lead time that he's coming or there. You have to be able to act very quickly or decide not to act.

What do you do? You go in, and you nullify his guards, and you take him, quickly, and you get him and you out of the area real quick.

Interviewer: The reason you don't kill him is because ...

Lou: The reason you don't what?

Interviewer: The reason you don't kill him is because you're hoping ... Is it even possible to get a high-ranking general to even talk or to share anything with you?

Lou: Yeah. That never was a problem. Our job was to get the asset, the officer, and deliver him to other people. We didn't interrogate him, but we didn't live in a hole. We knew what the hell was going on. There's a lot of ways to turn an enemy officer other than physical violence. Money, have him show up at a given point someplace, and there's his family at the same place. You say, basically, you can live a good life if you help us. There's also coercion, so I've been told.

Interviewer: Was that enough for you after two years of that out in the bush, I imagine? You just must have felt like you might have been using up all of your 9 lives so to speak.

Lou: Yeah. You've got to understand something. My family didn't know about this. As far as my wife, my parents, my children, my siblings knew. I laugh when I say this, but as far [as they 00:57:23] knew, I was running a seaport in a place called Vayama, Thailand. In other words, I was unloading ships, sitting on a beach, drinking piña coladas. I'm being facetious of course. That was my cover.

Most of our families had no idea what we were really doing. Why? Because we weren't supposed to tell them. We weren't allowed to tell them. We weren't even allowed to have cameras to take pictures of us and our buddies and all this good stuff. We weren't allowed, so every one of us had some kind of cover as to where we were.

It was tough on the family. In my case, why would you go back to unloading cargo off a [ship fill 00:58:45] when you could be with us at Fort Knox or whatever. It got to a point where enough's enough.

Interviewer: ... being pushed off the carriers. That must have been a dark day for you.

Lou: Before Desert Storm, General Powell, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said, I'm not quoting him, basically what you do is before you engage in a war or combat, you amass all the strength you possibly can, and then you kill the snake [or was to that 00:59:35] effect. It was very disappointing that we did not fight the war the way it should have been fought.

I may be out of school here, but it's a fact of life that you win a war by killing people and destroying property. That's a fact. Once that's done, you better be able to govern and implement some form of government, as we did in Germany, as we did in Italy, as we did in Japan.

The first thing we did is we destroyed the enemy's ability to wage war, and you wage war through people and stuff. As General Giap said, we came damn close to winning it if we'd just continue to bomb the harbor. Yes, personally speaking, you wonder why. You see those 57-- 58,000 names on the wall. You look at the body bags, you think about the body bags. You think about the body parts that you put in the bag. You think about the 16 families that you visited.

You think about the reception that a lot of the soldiers got when they got back home. You wonder. You know it could have been vastly different if we were able to fight the war the way wars are fought. If it's worth the blood of one soldier, it's worth winning, in my opinion.

My father is one of 16 children. My father's parents lived in a big house, and every Christmas ... And the 16 children, I grew up in Akron, Ohio, most of them still lived in the area, so every Christmas was a big deal. We went to grandma's house, big house, lots of grandkids running around. I had something like 107 first cousins. That's a big family.

We're all running around at Christmas, and I just got back. No, I'd been back a while, but it was time to go home for Christmas. I got leave. Went home for Christmas, and I walked into grandma and grandpa's house in uniform with a chest full of metals and all this good stuff. You'd think I was MacArthur coming home because of all the uncles that I had that had served. They recognized some of the metals that I was wearing, some of the ribbons I was wearing.

It was a warm fuzzy. I have never experienced the hostility that many of my comrades have felt. I have experienced [negativism 01:03:42]. I've been involved in a lot of debates with people about the war and all this good stuff, but I've never really experienced personal attacks. I guess I was lucky.

That's an excellent question. I think about my experiences, the men I served with, the men I've led, the men that were killed, the men that were wounded. I think about them a lot. I have for 50 years. I reflect. I went to visit their families. I considered myself lucky. I thank God that I came back in one piece, et cetera. To me, that's not post-traumatic stress. That's my life. That's a significant portion of my life, and I believe I'm dealing with it rather well.

Now I am heavily involved in veterans' affairs, and I'm heavily involved in one of the DA's clinics in providing transportation to veterans that cannot drive to and from their medical appointments to the clinic. In the clinic



are three psychiatrists, and I know the staff on the clinic, the doctors, the nurses.

I talk to these psychologists a lot, and I have shared with them, in war story exchanges. I've been encouraged to apply for PTSD, post-traumatic stress financial benefit, because I qualify. My response is, how do I qualify? How has this adversely impacted my life? I've been told because you dwell on it.

My response is I also dwell on my '57 Plymouth Valiant that I had. I also dwell on my first love. I also dwell on a lot of things. That doesn't make me inability to handle trauma.

Now before anybody gets the wrong impression, I know people. I am currently helping, as best I can, a soldier that tried to commit suicide because he could not handle the stress of Afghanistan. Put a bag over his head and taped it and laid down. Fortunately, his dog came up and scratched it, but, anyways, he ended up needing psychiatric help for PTSD.

I have seen legitimate PTSD, and I think there's a place for that, but I don't believe I would qualify. I don't feel right in applying for compensation in my situation simply because I dwell on and reflect on a significant portion of my life, much of which is sad, but that's what God made me.

Interviewer: Lou, I want to thank you so much for helping us out with this project.

Lou: Are we done?

Interviewer: We're done.