

Veteran: LUCAS, Lynn
Service Branch: ARMY
Interviewer: Vargas, Laura
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Transcriptionist: Terry Moore
Highlights of Service: Persian Gulf War

Interviewer: I am interviewing Sgt. Lucas about his military experience and his experience in the Persian Gulf War. Are you aware that our conversation will be recorded and that the tape and transcript will be placed in the Lee College library. Do I have your permission to do that?

Veteran: Yes.

Interviewer: How did you get into the military?

Veteran: I started out when I was a senior in high school in 1981. I joined the Nebraska National Guard, and from there I went to active duty Army. I was first stationed in Ft. Ord, California. While I was there, I was deployed to an exercise called Nimrod Dancer, which ultimately turned into Operation Just Cause at Ft. Carson. After that, I went to the Persian Gulf October 20, 1990, and returned April 20, 1991. Then I went from there to Hawaii and spent three and a half years there. I left there and went to New Mexico and spent two years there, then went to Ft. Stewart, Georgia, and was there three years. I left there and came here. I'm still active duty, but I'm in the National Guard.

Interviewer: When you were in the Persian Gulf War, what was your daily life like?

Veteran: When we first got there it was like 2:00 in the morning. We went through approximately a week or a week and a half trying to figure out where we were going to be staged in the middle of the desert. We left this place they called Cement City, and I don't know why they called it that except that it looked like we were in a cement factory, and ultimately went out into the middle of the desert. That's where we lived, cooked our meals, set up our tents, set up cots.

When we first got out there, we didn't have any floorboards in the tent, so we had dirt floors, but in the military you know that's something that can happen and you're obviously prepared for. Time went by, and anytime you've got time to just sit there, you always have time to better your way of life or living conditions. You have to make the best of the worst situations, and that's what we did. We just continued to improve on the way of life the best we could. First we put just flat pieces of plywood on the floor. You could get sixteen sheets of plywood in a tent. Then we finally figured out we could put two by fours on edge and nail them to the plywood, so it raised them up about four inches. Time went on, and we finally ended up getting some green outdoor carpet, and that made it a lot nicer. Later on we received a few more tents, and then you didn't have near as many people in a tent. Ended up having two people to a tent, and that's not too bad. That's five on each side. Sometimes we could put tables down the middle. As far as the food went, most of the time before the actual ground campaign kicked off, we had cooked food every meal. Of course we always had oatmeal for breakfast and eggs. Bacon was kind of hard to come by because they don't eat pork in every country, so we didn't have sausage either. Sometimes we'd just have eggs and toast and boxed milk. For lunch, we'd have sandwiches or whatever. For dinner, we ate a lot of chicken and vegetables. I was in communications, so I had access to the telephone. Didn't make phone calls a whole lot just because what are you gonna talk about? The day-to-day thing, though, you'd wake up in the morning and do "P-T," or physical training, and maybe run around a little bit and play football or basketball. You always take your 'morale and welfare' stuff with you. You always have your day-to-day operations that go on—keeping in touch with other units, guard duty. We had warm showers, too. You worked a lot during the day, but at night you couldn't do a whole lot, because we didn't have big flood lights and street lights like you do at home. In Saudi Arabia, there was times it would get so dark that you could put your hand in front of your face and you literally couldn't see your hand. But when there was a full moon, there was so much reflection off of the sand that it looked just like daylight. You could easily see for a mile or possibly two. You could see shrubbery and bushes without any problem. But if it was cloudy, overcast, and dark you couldn't see your hand in front of your face.

Interviewer: What exactly did you do in communications?

Veteran: Radios, telephones, but radios primarily. We had a system that we called Mapes Subscriber Equipment (MSE). It has a range of about 25,000 miles. Around the world is only like 48,000 miles, so you could talk anywhere in the world. It operates off a satellite. That's how I made phone calls back to the states. Once the signal bounced back to the United States, you'd just tell them you wanted to speak to an operator, and wherever the operator was that you got a-hold of, then to your house.

Interviewer: What was the weather like?

Veteran: If people tell you it doesn't rain in the desert, they're lying. Ditches they had over there were called 'waddies.' We built a road through this waddy, and it wasn't during the rainy season, but it rained just like Tropical Storm Allison. It was so bad that it filled that waddy so full of water that our road was gone. You can't just haul water from dirt in there and fill it up, so we had to figure out another way around. It rained quite a bit while we were there. It got very cold, and some of the water we got out there froze solid. We were in what they called a 'GPE,' which is a tent that is approximately sixteen feet wide by thirty-two feet long. We had five heaters in there sometimes with a winter liner in the tent, and it didn't keep it warm, and that was with the floor boards. It took the chill off, but it wasn't warm in there. When I got there at 2:00 in the morning, it was so hot it was unbelievable. In the wintertime, the weather over there can range from a low of zero to the summertime of like 130 degrees. When we got there, we were just missing the real hot season, because we got there in October, and then we got out of there before it got really hot.

Interviewer: Did you like where you were—just the overall area and the people you were with?

Veteran: Yeah, because I was in what they called a task force, and there was myself and three other guys—a lieutenant colonel and two captains—that went north into Iraq. We were the only four out of my unit that went north into Iraq. The rest of my unit stayed at our base camp in Saudi Arabia. They never even left the

country. At one time, we went so far north into Iraq that we were north of Baghdad. We didn't have all the luxuries that they had in base camp, because there was just a few of us. What we were doing was getting linked up to another unit that was pushing fuel from where we were to the front line. It was just us four that made up the command structure. I've kind of lost contact with the people I was with over the past years, just because you can't keep up with everybody all the time. As far as the colonel, I've kept up with him and talked with him. He's a great guy. Of the two captains, one is supposed to be a history teacher, and the last time I heard he had moved to Michigan. The other guy went to Pennsylvania and is the manager of a paper mill, I believe. So, yeah, people were great. Anytime you're in a foreign county, you have to live by their rules and their regulations, and so a lot of times you have to adjust and adapt to how they do things.

Interviewer: You mean the way they lived?

Veteran: Well, most of the people we dealt with were what they called Bedouins. That's basically no more than a desert wanderer—sheep herders. They lived out in the middle of the desert with nothing. For the most part, you avoided them and they avoided us. It wasn't because we were enemies, but they were doing their thing and we just kind of left them alone, and they left us alone to do our thing. As far as rules on the highway, I'm sure they probably do have rules but I didn't see any. And if you think they drive bad in Houston, that's nothing. They'll pass you in the ditch over there, but that's just the way that they are. Their customs are a lot different than ours. Of course we wore t-shirts under our BDUs, so the girls took their BDU tops off {TAPE STOPPED}

{NO ADDITIONAL AUDIO ON EITHER SIDE OF TAPE FROM THIS POINT FORWARD.}