

Oral Transcript

Interviewer: Sharon Milligan

Oral History Candidate: Mitchell Lewis, Class of 1966

June 4, 2011, Palm Springs, Bi-Annual Reunion

*Okay, we're getting going and my name is Sharon Milligan. I'm at the Brown Military Academy reunion. This is June 4<sup>th</sup> and we're in Palm Springs and if you could state your name, age, address and class year.*

My name is Mitchell Gordon Lewis. I live in Ataskadero at 11850 San Marcus Road and the zip code is 93402 and I'm the class of 1966, Brown Military Academy and we were the last class before the academy closed.

*Excellent, so we've been listening to all these alumni stories and we've been hanging around with a lot of your peers here; just tell me your experience of how you got to Brown, why you got there, what that was like for you.*

Well my father was an optometrist, and he was doing pretty well and my mother and father travelled a lot; I have a sister who was 5 and a half years my senior. So once my sister got through her school and such, they were left with me and they wanted to travel and actually, when they were younger, travelled for about a year in Europe and my sister and I were taken to a boarding school in Switzerland in Sheshevelars, which is near Lake Geneva and so my third grade experience was split between a school in Alfacina California and in Switzerland and it didn't turn out very well. The school was actually a German and Hungarian based school; there wasn't much English and my sister and I and one other American girl were the only English speakers there and so we needed to learn gorilla French pretty well, pretty quickly and the school would have made Charles Dickens sweat; it was not a very good place for children. I had some pretty awful experiences there; I was not sexually abused or anything, but abused by one of the dorm supervisors one time when we were having boiled beets and rhubarb pie and I threw it up and they dragged me into the kitchen and made me eat it. So it was things like that and so when we got home, I had to learn because I didn't have my parents there and had limited languages that I had to learn kind of independent and my parents didn't care for that much at all, so when we got home, they had a custom house to build in Alfacina and I went through my junior high school experience at a public school, but my sister graduated from high school and was in college and they wanted to travel again and so what Brown basically was, was someplace where they were going to park me so they could travel. Actually, I didn't like the idea at first, because I still thought that there was some hope for there to be some time of family that would evolve out of the four of us, but that really never took place, but being an optimistic kid is that I thought there might be. I didn't like to be away from home, but I didn't like to be at home either. So Brown, once it settled in that that's where I was going to be, I had a family and I had the male role-models that were missing in my life and even though I was in athletics and such when I was with my birth family, now I had people that were in their own way, as a plebe going through Brown, cared about me, took care of me and so gave me the security to settle back down to bring my academics back to where they should be and there was a man my Sophomore year at Brown in Glendora, he was my Algebra teacher and I was doing real well in my other classes, but in math, from my experience in third grade, I fell behind and really didn't catch back up much and so I was failing that class miserably and he was aware enough to know that I was trying and he started to talk to my other teachers at Brown and said, what's with this cadet Lewis? He's not doing well, he seems to be doing well in all your classes and they said, well yeah. So he took the time to sit down with me after an algebra class once and he said, why aren't you doing well? And I said, well I don't know, I just don't

## Oral Transcript

Interviewer: Sharon Milligan

Oral History Candidate: Mitchell Lewis, Class of 1966

June 4, 2011, Palm Springs, Bi-Annual Reunion

understand what's going on. So he said, well why and so he said, have things happened, you know, what's your background? And so I told him about Switzerland and you know the struggle through, particularly with math and a couple years of public school before I got to Brown. And he says, well, tell you what, we're going to fix that and so he says, I want you to come here during study hall and I'm going to stay on campus during the study hall hours, which I think were from 7-8 and we're going to work on your math and so he did and it took a couple months, but he brought me back up to speed. So that was an extremely positive experience in terms of somebody cared. There was kind of almost like a father-figure there. He was a very kind gentleman and so I was able to kind of catch speed with my classmates, because it was a very good academic founding, Brown was; they had good teachers there and the standards were very high. If you achieved academically, you got certain perks, you know what I'm saying, like Class-A Pass, where you got to go out on Wednesday night to Glendora to see a movie or get a hamburger or something; you gotta be in uniform, but you got to go. And for those of us who were on the campus 24/7 that was quite a privilege. Plus you got a little ribbon and all that, so it was very reinforcing. So in my first year there, 1963-64, is that I guess there was a conversation in the officer's house between the NCOs and the officers and Rich Parker, who is here was in the class before in '64, needed some help in the armory and so my platoon leader, his name was Bob Smit-we called him Smitty-he says, well I got this Lewis guy over there who seems to be pretty good with weapons, cause I'd been trained in the NRA program when I was younger and he seems to be interested in them, so why don't you talk to him? And so Rich did and he brought me from the line company into special staff, which was the grooming place for future officers of battalion staff and I stayed there and I really didn't understand at that time what had happened; Rich told me this only a couple of years ago. I just knew that I was pulled from the line to special staff and I was working in the armory, which had its own little perks too, so that was nice and then in 1965-66 is that I was on battalion staff and I was the S4 and so it worked out very well. We were struggling with knowing that there was something in my senior year going on that was affecting the academy and the class of '64 had the same problem as the administration wanted to de-militarize the academy and within the tradition of 1910 is that that wasn't going over well with the cadets and we later found out that in '64 there was one of the administrators who was embezzling money from the academy and was weakening the structure within the academy and so in '64 the battalion staff, which was Rich Parker, went and met with this individual actually the whole administration and they told him, no we're not going to de-militarize. They wanted to take away mandatory formations, they wanted to take away marching to meals, they wanted to reduce the exposure to uniforms and exposure to weapons and such and they just said, no we're not going to do it. '65 tended to be a little laissez-faire and when we got to battalion in '66 at seniors, is that they were trying to do that again and in certain ways they were towards the end somewhat successful in that they just announced that these things were no longer required and for 16 and 15 year old boys, that was all they needed to hear and so it was hard to keep the tradition of the academy going when the option was given that, from the administration that it was optional and, but we did our best and we kept our heads high and then we found out three days after our graduation that they were closing the academy.

*Wow. How'd that feel?*

## Oral Transcript

Interviewer: Sharon Milligan

Oral History Candidate: Mitchell Lewis, Class of 1966

June 4, 2011, Palm Springs, Bi-Annual Reunion

Pretty bad. We were not able to have the opportunity to be honest with the people that we were training for our positions for the following years because we thought it was going to continue in some form and so there was a young man, named Roy Paul, who was a junior when I was a senior and he was my assistant in the armory, so I was training him as Rich Parker trained me and it just devastated him, you know, to know that hey he wasn't going back to school where he thought he was going back to school for and you know, he was, no that the training for the armory wasn't useful, but he wasn't going to be able to do it and we had no idea that this was going to happen and so, if we had know, if they had even pulled the battalion staff together and said, this is it for the academy, we're closing, we could have, I think, as older brothers, prepared our underclassmen for quite a shock that was coming-well, you know what, this is what's happening, so let's talk about it, but it was very sudden and very cut-and-dry and as an alumnus, you know, I had no place to go back to; even though the physical campus was still there, it was traded by a lot of church organizations. I think the Church of the Open Door bought it for a while and Mazusa Pacific had it as kind of hill-side campus for a while and I think the Church of the Open Door has it now, last I heard and you know, certain buildings have disappeared over the years as we've gone up and just kind of walked around the facility. It's kind of sad, but on the plus side is that I didn't find out there was an alumni association, let alone reunions 'til just after the 2001 reunion; I found out about two weeks after that happened, so I went, okay, cool. So I was able to find Rich-I hadn't seen Rich since he graduated in '64 and it was like we never missed a beat and some of the other people that had come along and so it's, even though it was painful at that time, is that through the efforts of a lot of people, is that we've been able to, not only put closure I think to the physical facility of the academy-I'm sure the people from San Diego could echo that as well, I mean, they were ripped from their roots and even though I didn't experience San Diego, I can empathize with, you know, here is this tradition that's gone on for so long and now it's someplace else, at least for them is that it was continuing; they had another place, but the facility's gone, you know and so, it's like a family member, that facility and it's gone, so this is now helping a bunch of guys that I think had similar experiences, participate, it's still kind of living and we know that certainly when the last members of my class are gone, when I and Mike McCray and some of the people are gone, the academy's gone, it's dead. There are no more boys from Brown and so I appreciate and I think we all appreciate the opportunity that someplace, that, if you know someone is interested in the future is that they could say, well there was this group of guys. I pontificate, as you can see.

*That's fine. That's what we're hoping for.*

So Brown, looking back, is that it provided me with a surrogate family. As we were going through Brown, of course, we got to know everyone that was coming in, there seemed to be about 3 general classifications of cadets: very few, but some were kind of trouble-makers, it was like you're going to a military academy and they'll straighten you out; they didn't do too well. There were people that were put into it very early, like some of the San Diego people, because it was just, that's what was going to happen and so it was a natural part of life. And then were the class of cadet that I kind of fit into and that's where, this is where they're family parked them, so they didn't have to deal with them, or they could go do what they wanted to do without the burden of a child. That's kind of our gang that formed

## Oral Transcript

Interviewer: Sharon Milligan

Oral History Candidate: Mitchell Lewis, Class of 1966

June 4, 2011, Palm Springs, Bi-Annual Reunion

at Brown Military Academy and the trouble-makers, they didn't get and could not conform to the discipline and the regulations at Brown, they were gone pretty fast. Sometimes even the cadets went to the administration and said, get this guy out of here, that's what sometimes they did. But generally speaking, there was of course, your dad may have told you, we had our own little law enforcement that we could try to modify somebody's behavior with certain counseling techniques and sometimes it worked and sometimes it didn't.

*Was that a kind of impromptu type thing or did amongst you, not in the traditional orange chart, there was just leaders amongst you, you guys would talk. Like, how did that come about, in terms of you guys deciding that you need to push this guy or press down a little to try and get some change in behavior? Was that because you had authority or it just kind of came up as the group, kind of group-think?*

It was kind of a group-think thing. It was guys trying to take care of guys and keep the harmony of the place where it should be and so I imagine that, in the ones that I was involved in that the platoon leaders would talk to the company commander, the commander might say yeah, we'd all live together, so when somebody was acting up, we all knew about it and so then the company commander may or may not take it to the battalion staff, but sometimes, it was just some of the platoon leaders from not only the company where the individual was housed, but other platoon leaders would say look, we're just going to kind of take care of this and it was a conversation that they would have with the person, sometimes it would get a little physical and they either straightened out or they were gone. It was not a school-sponsored, organizational chart, I don't think. There was that in place too, if there was an infraction, then it would be brought to the student court and they would decide, you know, what the punishment was going to be and in some ways, that was used as a testing ground; if you got the merits, you lost privileges and off-campus activities and such. When I was in my first year, I was a cross-country runner and I was very good at it and actually league champion and was MVP for the school and all of a sudden, about two months into my experience at Brown, I was brought up on smoking charges that I didn't have a smoking permit and somebody had turned me in for smoking. So they brought me up against the court and it was, you know, the honor system, you know, if they asked you a question, then you answered it and so they said, did you smoke? And I said, no, I hadn't and so they said, we have a witness that says that you did and said, they're mistaken. And they said, well we take that this is a credible witness and therefore, if it's a credible witness, then we don't believe you and I said, well, okay and they said, were you smoking and I said no and they said fine, 25 demerits; that meant 25 hours of marching on the quad before you erase that infraction before you can gain your privileges back. So I did it and did my 25 hours and afterwards I had to report back and say I've done this and here's my slip, you know, people who have supervised me marching by myself and they said, fine, okay and one of the guys from the court said it was a test and we wanted to see what you were made out of and you kept your stance, you kept your word; we knew you weren't smoking and so now you're on special staff. So it was kind of a test to see, was I good enough or honorable enough to go from a line company and be groomed for my senior year of battalion staff position? So that's some of the things, how they kind of handled...

Oral Transcript

Interviewer: Sharon Milligan

Oral History Candidate: Mitchell Lewis, Class of 1966

June 4, 2011, Palm Springs, Bi-Annual Reunion

*Is that something that you would have told somebody else what happened or did you just understand the honor code, that you were tested and therefore others might be tested, so you're going to just kind of keep that to yourself?*

Right.

*Right, cause you got it, you got, this was my test.*

I thought, well that was cool. I didn't enjoy the 25 hours out there but...

*And just out of curiosity, if you were marching out there, was it like a lot of people could have ended up in that position, there could have been a few people out there or was it lonely, just usually there was one person?*

Well, in my experience, it was just me out there.

*That's lonely.*

Yeah, and you know, 25 hours of very strict rifle on the shoulder, marching back and forth on the quadrangle and making your turns exactly so and if somebody observed you slouching off or the rifle wasn't in the right position or the butt wasn't next to your waist where it should be and your step wasn't as crisp as it should be, they discounted that out and so, you know, you had to do it correctly and there were other, you know, we were going through the plebe system, so had had to eat square meals as plebes and there were other...what you might call hazing, but we knew it was going to happen, so hold up the sword against the wall with your back and you know, hold the push-up position for minutes and you know, that kind of stuff, but it was just kind of, you know, this is how you earn to be one of us, you know, this is how you pay your dues and it was understood, it's a system, so you did it. Those who couldn't and who whined to their parents, some of them said, oh poor Johnny and so they took him out of school and most of the time, you just passed muster and it didn't last all that long, only a year, and you're okay, you're part of the club; everybody paid.

*I would think that cause you had an experience being at a different type of boarding school, versus this, you would be able to determine, probably more than the other students, what was maybe abusive and what was just part of the growing experience.*

Yeah, and I think that back in those days, the word abuse wasn't thrown around as much as now.

*Right, but I'm saying, you experienced something in Switzerland that maybe wasn't as positive or wasn't maybe for more development or growth...*

It better prepared me and since I was, now I was in high school and I had from the third grade to high school to refine my independence in terms of behavior and thinking, that was it. You know, I never turned to home; I'd been out of the house since I was 14 and so it was just part of my process that that happened, but I think that Brown, you know, surviving the experience on a positive way and there were some guys that it's reflected in that somebody brought up today that we had x-number of cadets that

## Oral Transcript

Interviewer: Sharon Milligan

Oral History Candidate: Mitchell Lewis, Class of 1966

June 4, 2011, Palm Springs, Bi-Annual Reunion

attended Brown from 1910, I mean, it was a lot, most of them are dead, but those guys, particularly from the 40s, 50s and 60s were still around, but here we have an all-class reunion, I mean there's just shy of 50 people here. Well there's a lot of people that aren't because they remember the experience not very positively. I mean, it wasn't a wonderful time at camp. I mean, it required for you to survive there, it required you to adapt and it's not that some of these cadets maybe didn't adapt, but they just didn't have the memories of you know what, maybe it wasn't fun at the time, but it meant something and it had this effect on me, because I took the feeling of teamwork, of discipline and honor with me through my life and it paid off, I mean it really paid off well and I wouldn't have traded it for the world.

*What other experiences could have talked kind of about, working in the armory, and I'm just curious, just to put it on the record, like what was that? What did that entail and what was the honor, like you were saying being put there was kind of an honor, like what was special about that?*

Well, A) you were singled out from the line company and so you got certain perks that were good. Secondly, you got to have fun working with weapons; if your mindset is that even though it is an instrument of destruction, these are mechanical things and most teenagers are kind of mechanically oriented. If I wasn't at a military academy, I probably would have had my hands on a 383 Chevy, you know or 283 Chevy, so this is something mechanical to work with and we were the only honor military academy this side of the Mississippi as your dad probably told you and part of that implication is that we not only had to keep that honor military academy status, we had to meet standards from the department of army, which was the annual inspection. But we were also still under the Civil War Act and basically in a nutshell, in that time the Cold War with Russia was ramping up and if the Soviets had attacked the west coast, since we were under the Civil War Act, we would have been loaded up in our buses with weapons and ammunition because we were repository for live ammunition again under the honor military and Civil War Act and we would have gone and defended Long Beach, as they did in the Civil War. There were military academies in the south that were mobilized against some of the Union incursions and these kids from 7-8 years old were given muskets and they went against the Union army in certain battles. So we were subject to that, so we had to be basically battle-ready and battle-disciplined.

*So did you maintain all the military weapons? Is that what your job specifically told?*

Yes, the armor was to maintain and assure the readiness of the weapon cash and we had everything from 22s for target shooting and stuff-we had rifle teams and such like that, but we had 303 end-fields, we had a ton of M1 carvings. We had M1-Grands, which was a big weapon from World War II. We had a couple of 4.2 rocket-launchers, bazookas. We had mortars; during a particular time, the 105 Hauletzter was ordinance-ready. We had 19-1986s, which were 3<sup>rd</sup> caliber, belt-fed machine guns, the kind of John Wayne machine guns. We had a 50-caliber machine gun. We've got everything for war. We didn't have grenades, not that I saw. There was rumor that they were stocked up somewhere; we had rumors that the bazooka rounds were around someplace, but we never saw any of them, but we had plenty of belted ammunition for the machine guns and clipped ammunition for the rifles and we have 45 pistols and we were ready.

Oral Transcript

Interviewer: Sharon Milligan

Oral History Candidate: Mitchell Lewis, Class of 1966

June 4, 2011, Palm Springs, Bi-Annual Reunion

*Did they practice regularly or was that weekly or monthly or?*

We didn't do much live fire; you could join the rifle team, you could do some qualification on the rifle range and apparently if you wanted to, the weapons were primarily used as drill props. Once a year, we would have maneuvers on the academy, where we would fire blank ammunition and then I think '64 was the last class that went up to Fort Ord for a week and they have live fire practice and so they got some experience with that.

*That was the camp, right? We did interview somebody who went to camp, so that was Fort Ord, so you didn't end up there at...?*

No, I didn't.

*Okay, you were '65.*

I think '64 was the last class that did that, so '65, '66 didn't. And I believe it was done as a senior class errand.

*And what other experiences did you, athletic, academic...?*

Well, I was a good athlete; I ran track and cross country at school. I went to Calipoli Palmona and ran track. I ran track for the Pacific Coast club, which is an amateur track club like the Striders and such. I was training for the 1968 Olympic trials as a 400-meter specialist; I was a fast white guy and I hurt both my Achilles tendons in the summer of '67, so I missed the trials. It took a while to recover and I got back into martial arts; I practiced a Japanese art called Kokyoshen, did Judo, did some Shodokon, did some Shalin, northern Shalin Kung-fu in that Arin Palm method and I competed for about 20 years in the martial arts and did very, very little boxing, but did some. And then I became an Olympic lifter and so I didn't go to the Olympics, because Olympic lifter is in the United States, just start too late to develop international class or head of the class stature, but it was fun doing; I got on the national team level and had fun doing that and I stopped competing with everything in my early 40s, but subsequent to 66, I went to Cal-Poly, got a degree in communication arts, journalism, broadcast journalism and found out that that allowed me to sell women's shoes and so that wasn't very satisfying, so I went back to school, I got another degree in physical education, I got my teaching credential in '74 and I taught adapted physical education to exceptional children for Ellie County Special Ed. For 13 years. And I also at that time, '74, I became a certified athletic trainer, which is basically another master's degree and so I was lucky in that after doing what most young trainers do is work with a local football team and such, and we did well; it is South Hills High School in '74, '75 we took the South Section 4A CIF Football Championship, which was good. So that was a nice start as a trainer; I coached a couple little church teams and things like that and then because back in the late '60s I was a good sprinter, I knew other good sprinters and so I started to work with some of the elite class sprinters as more of a coach and I was a strength and conditioning coach primarily and so when Carder announced that we weren't going to go to Moscow for the '80 Olympics, that shut down the US Olympic program, a whole generation of athletes is completely lost and so we call it the Carder dinner team; they were taken to dinner with Carder at the White House, but

## Oral Transcript

Interviewer: Sharon Milligan

Oral History Candidate: Mitchell Lewis, Class of 1966

June 4, 2011, Palm Springs, Bi-Annual Reunion

anyway, here we are in Afghanistan ourselves, but that's another story and so the sprinters from Jamaca, which I knew a few, Donald Cory and such, had me work with them for the '80 Olympics and then because I was a martial artist of minor renown, US Judo asked me to be their national coaching coordinator for strength and conditioning for the '84 team and so I did some coaching and became their trainer. We had a great time in '84, we had great success and also concurrently, I was asked to do the same thing for US rowing and so in '84 I was with rowing and my cousin, Brad Lewis, he was on the '80 team but he was in the quad scull. The quad-or scull is the boat in which each man had only one oar as opposed to a sweep boat where each man has two oars and there may be or may not be a coxsin, depending upon the boat, but in sculling, there are no coxsin, everybody has two oars and so Brad was in the quad scull in '80 and of course he went to the White House to have dinner with Carder and about '81 he called me because he knew I was working the Judo people and he said, my only concern is my strength because I want to be the single sculler for '84 and so can I join your group and I said, sure, train. And so he started training, brought some other rowers along with him that were from the west coast area. So anyway, in the spring of '84, we went back to Princeton, to the Single scull Olympic trials and we took second by 6 hundredths of a second on hand-held watches. It's going to be my contention till I die that we won that race, not by much, but I was there right at the finish-line, eye-balling it. The affect was that a very good rower by the name of John Bigalow, who was out of Dartmoth, he came up very strong on Brad. John Bigalow was in lane 1, which was next to the people with the stop-watched and Brad was in lane 6 across the river and so there was this little kind of timing finger-action thing and John made a brilliant dash at the end, didn't quite make it, but was the winner and so we were saddened of that and Brad says, well let's go home and as we were going to the airport, I said, you know the double and quad scull trials are just within about three weeks in Philadelphia, why don't you hang around and try to pick up somebody and see if you can row and get into the double at least because he had no interest in the quad and he goes, well, I don't think-I said, just do it, I mean, why'd you do all this training, just to go home? He goes, eh, that's true. So we wanted to still make it a west-coast statement, because the east coast has had for a millennia almost, a power for rower, where west coast just doesn't show up. So we wanted to make a west coast statement that there are west coast rowers that can be Olympic class all by themselves and at the time, Harry Parker, who was the head coach at Harvard, he still is, was the national team and Olympic team coach for '84 and he said, well you guys just aren't going to do it; you might as well just kind of go and see the race and go in quad and such and Brad says I don't want to do that. So anyway, we looked around, Brad primarily and found Paul Inquist, who was a graduate from the University of Washington and he was a national team rower and he was helping his dad on his dad's tuna boat off the shores of Washington state, so we called him and said, would you be interested in training for the double trials and at first he wasn't very enthusiastic, but we kind of sold him on the idea and he said well okay and we said we said we're going to butcher you to bring you up to speed, at least our speed and so okay, so he did and we went to the double and quad scull trials and we won. So the team left for Europe to row against some of the European teams to get ready for the Olympics because that was their own season; it was in the spring and so Paul and Brad went off with the national team and when they came back to the United States and were bilitated at UC Santa Barbara because the venue was at Lake Cacidias, very close to there. Everybody started getting



## Oral Transcript

Interviewer: Sharon Milligan

Oral History Candidate: Mitchell Lewis, Class of 1966

June 4, 2011, Palm Springs, Bi-Annual Reunion

ready, because rowing was the first week of the two-week Olympics and I was already working with the Judo team, getting them ready and so anyway, came back and so I went up there to work with them and Brad had had a bit of a running with Harry Parker, the national team and Olympic team coach, had some ideas that he wanted to do and Parker just wouldn't want anything to do with it. So in rowing, it's interesting that a boat can name their coach; they don't have to—they have to be under the organization of the national coach, but they don't have to be under his thumb, or her thumb and so they just said, well Mitch is our coach and Harry just said, fine, I want nothing to do with you guys. And so we got organized; we paid attention to the heats, kept very good records of the logs and heats and who made what moves when and we figured out that we started winning heats. We messed up on one race, we put in repshaws, we won reps, came out so we got in the semis and then from the semis went on to the finals and so we had a plan; we practiced the plan with two odometers back to back and we had some voice communication codes from the shore from me to them as to when to do certain stuff; that worked and we won. So we took the gold medal for double scull in '84 and what has been kind of interesting with that medal is that the last time a US double scull won the Olympic gold medal was in 1932, so it'd been 52 years and it hasn't done since, so we've got close to 80 years on that medal and that's very satisfying. In '88, I worked with rowing and with judo, in '92 I was with flat work and kiak and in '96 I was with the field events and track and such.

*So, in closing then, how would you say that, because I hear, just listening to you that there's something that's pretty significant about what you are, how would you say in closing, like the credit you would give to Brown, like what has that done to make you a person, it sounds like you started out looking for a family, had kind of some angst to who you are today, like what did Brown do for that?*

Brown instilled in me or at least reinforced in me, because I came from kind of a military academy, is that honor is the best thing you can do and there's a bit of a saying in that honor is a gift that a man can give to himself and only he can take it away and to keep that honor includes other things like integrity and honesty and such and you know, it has been that absolute honor system that we had at Brown that I've applied to my life. Some people may not have liked my honesty and sometimes tactlessness, because I was just brutally honest sometimes, or what I thought was honest and I wasn't going to sell myself out and I wasn't going to sell out the spirit of what I believed the academy was. That's it.

*That's it? That's a good thing.*

So, you know, it's reflected in my marriage; you know, I'm married to a wonderful person, who is honest as well and it sure makes life easier when you can be above bore all the time and I'm saying I'm perfect; I'm not saying I haven't done things wrong, you know and such. I wish I could hit the reset button on a few issues and such, but I didn't ever intentionally plan to do something that would cause someone some suffering and so I think that, you know, the daily life at Brown and how it gives you that good basis for doing that, because you have not only the system in place, but for the most part, your teachers and staff, certainly ROTC staff and you know the core of officers and such, all reinforce that behavior.

*Is this consistent among everybody, that it was the same?*

Oral Transcript

Interviewer: Sharon Milligan

Oral History Candidate: Mitchell Lewis, Class of 1966

June 4, 2011, Palm Springs, Bi-Annual Reunion

Pretty much...

*I mean, they're human,*

Pretty much. As I described earlier, we had our little kangaroo course when we needed it and things like that, but that was to kind of keep things going the way that it was intended to go.

*Well it sounds more peer to peer, because you know, it's not always top down; you're trying to keep, you know, peer to peer; you're looking at somebody eye to eye, saying shape up; it's what we all do in life; we all do it with siblings or say, dude!*

Yeah, we should, so that's what has kind of drawn through me and that's why I have joy coming back to the reunions, now that know that they're here and seeing the guys is that over the years, I have learned through their stories and such and as funny as we try to make them sometimes and such is that they're always that under penning and I think that the woman who got up during the meeting, I appreciated that, because we are good people and we did have a unique experience and it did help to shape us and I think it was good for the people that we've come into contact with since.

*Okay. Does that feel good? Is there anything else you would...?*

Um, you know, as you're probably starting to know, I could go on forever, but I think that's probably all you need!

*No, I think it's good. I think you covered some very good topics that, I just am picturing people down the road, just tuning in and listening and just having a-you've explained some things I think would give people some good context, what took place and I think some very positive experiences, highs and lows and it sounds real, it sounds very real what you said.*

Yeah, it was a very real experience; there wasn't any kind of glossing over or lipsticking stuff; it was just as you saw it and as you experienced it; that was that.

*Let me just ask you on a personal note, do you like watching the military channel or, like right now with the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Gettysburg and things like that and such?*

Well, yeah, I do and you know, I like logic, I like tactics and things and I certainly can't call myself a student of the military sciences and with my background in the martial arts and such is that even though I respect and understand, you know, what Jack Sparren was saying about his relationship to God and such is that over 50 years, I have been-not on a religious level, but on a spiritual level-I'm a practicing American Zen-Buddhist and it fits very well in with the military mindset; one would think that's contrary, but it's not and so that's how I kind of view life and my wife is Buddhist-oriented, I would say and so your question was, do we look at the military channel; yeah we do, because that's part of my reality, you know. Just because I happen to be a Zen practitioner does not mean I cannot appreciate those traditions and sometimes when I do a little bit of public speaking about the Olympic experiences and

Oral Transcript

Interviewer: Sharon Milligan

Oral History Candidate: Mitchell Lewis, Class of 1966

June 4, 2011, Palm Springs, Bi-Annual Reunion

such is that I will say, because in those realms, they know who I am and such, I would say, do not confuse passicism with passivism.

*...Because you see the difference as...?*

When it's time to act, and even if it might be in a fatal response, it's time to act. It's not okay for somebody to take my life or my wife's life or somebody that I love's life and so I'm completely happy with that; if there's choice not to do it, can work it, good; if not, I'm not going to try to convert-a home invader...

*Just calm down...[laughter]...that's right. Okay, well...*

Thank you very much.

*Thank you. I appreciate it and like I said, I'll look for you and make sure that we get a signature on our release so that we can give the information around if you don't have a problem with that and we'll get a copy to you, make sure you get to see the evidence, to put in your vault or whatever...*