

**ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW
WITH
SERGEANT MAJOR OF THE ARMY
SILAS L. COPELAND (USA-RET)**

**SERGEANTS MAJOR OF THE ARMY
BOOK PROJECT**

**Center of Military History, United States Army
and the
United States Army Museum of the Noncommissioned Officer**

**Prepared by: SGM Erwin H. Koehler (U.S. Army, Retired)
October 1993**

PERSON INTERVIEWED

COPELAND
(Last)

SILAS
(First)

(Middle)

US Army Museum of the Noncommissioned Officer
Noncommissioned Officer Oral History Program
Fort Bliss, Texas 79918

Accession Number

Person Interviewed SMA SILAS L. COPELAND (U.S. ARMY-RET)

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Historical Importance RECORD THE HISTORY OF SMA COPELAND FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD THRU HIS TENURE AS SERGEANT MAJOR OF THE ARMY.

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US ARMY MUSEUM OF THE NONCOMMISSIONED OFFICER

SERGEANTS MAJOR OF THE ARMY BOOK PROJECT

INTERVIEWER: SGM ERWIN HENRY KOEHLER (U.S. Army - Retired)

INTERVIEWEE: SMA SILAS L. COPELAND (U.S. Army - Retired)

INTERVIEWER: This is Tape OH 93.1-1, Side 1. This interview is with Sergeant Major of the Army Silas L. Copeland. Sergeant Major Copeland is retired from the Army and resides in Huntsville, Texas. This interview took place at the home of Sergeant Major Copeland on October 19, 1993. Sergeant Major Copeland, first of all what is your date of birth and where were you born?

SMA COPELAND: Date of birth is 2 April 1920. I was born near a little rural village district by the name of Embryfield and/or Staley, Texas. That's located in the southeastern

part of Texas, and the nearest large city for that area would be where we are currently located, on the outskirts of Huntsville, Texas, with a population of approximately 30,000, the county population near 60,000.

INTERVIEWER: Were you raised in a rural county or small town environment?

SMA COPELAND: Small town. Very small. As a matter of fact I would not refer to it as a town per se. We had a post office, located in the area; a grist mill; cotton gin; and a mercantile store that sold everything from soup to nuts; there was a church located nearby. And that was the extent of the little rural village town, if you will.

INTERVIEWER: So you were raised on a farm then, right?

SMA COPELAND: On a farm. Raised on a cotton farm.

INTERVIEWER: Tell about your farm and your days as a young boy on that farm.

SMA COPELAND: Oh, it was horrendous, I'll tell you. It was exciting, to say the least. On this farm we primarily raised cotton, corn, peanuts, peas, potatoes, practically all the vegetables that we needed to feed the family. We had chickens, geese, guineas, turkeys, from which we derived a great number of eggs. We milked thirteen head of cattle. We had butter, milk, milk butter, cream, sour cream. We picked grapes, which mother made into jelly and jam. We grew peaches, pears, plums. We raised hogs. We butchered hogs. We ground them up into sausage, we made bacon of them, we ate them. We had horses. We owned oxen. Did you even see a yoke of oxen?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

SMA COPELAND: It's quite interesting. But growing up on a farm gave me, what I would consider, a fine foundation. A foundation in which you had to be responsible. Everyone on the farm had his or her place, and chores that they had to do. They just went about doing those things, that is: feeding the pigs, or slopping the pigs, if you will; gathering

the eggs; milking the cows--we milked the cows twice a day. We needed to do that before we went to school, in the morning. Mother would take this milk and she would strain the milk, put it out in the sun, whereby the sun would sour the milk before putting it in a churn, then you'd put it in a churn and you churned it and you got the butter, etc. When we came in from school, we had fresh butter milk, we had fresh butter. Those are some of the things that went on when on a farm.

INTERVIEWER: I guess your day started kinda early on the farm.

SMA COPELAND: It started early; at first light. We could say at five or six o'clock, but then it would be a misnomer because our light did not always occur at the same time. We usually started our daily chores at first light.

INTERVIEWER: I guess your daily chores greeted you when you came home from school, too.

SMA COPELAND: Absolutely. Absolutely. You pulled off your clean overhauls, if they were clean--which they usually were--and you put on your dungarees--which was another pair of overhauls--and you went about your farming chores. You gathered in the cattle--the milk cows--and you went through the same routine again; milking the cows and taking the milk. And if there was any milk left over, of course then that went to the pigs to fatten the pigs up in preparation for an on-coming slaughter during the fall and winter months.

INTERVIEWER: So your father was a farmer then, right? By occupation.

SMA COPELAND: Father was a farmer, by occupation. Father was born in that general locale, as was mother. Dad was, I believe he was born in 1893, and mother, being five years younger than that, would have been born about 1898. And they were married in that general vicinity.

INTERVIEWER: About how old were they when they got married? Do you know about when they got married?

SMA COPELAND: I believe they were somewhere... Dad was probably about twenty-one or twenty-two. Mother would have been about seventeen, eighteen, thereabout.

INTERVIEWER: Why don't you tell me about parents. Kind of describe them, their physical characteristics, what they were like.

SMA COPELAND: Well, you know, I am glad you asked that question, because I just happened to have a picture of my mother and father. This picture was taken when they were quite elderly, probably four or five years before their death. Dad was a slim individual, standing, I would say, five eleven, five feet eleven inches, near six feet tall, weighing about a hundred and seventy-five pounds. Mother, she was a little bit heavier. Of course, mother would have, in statue, would have been four foot eight or nine. (From the adjoining room, Ann Copeland corrected the sergeant major.) How much Ann? (Her response was, "Five four.") Let's see, mother in later years put on considerable weight.

INTERVIEWER: For the record, when he said, "How much Ann?", what Sergeant Major Copeland was doing was getting verification of his mother's height from his wife, Ann. What kind of a background did they come from? Your mother and father.

SMA COPELAND: They came from a rural farming background. Now you have got to remember, Butch, we're going back into the 1890's. Down in this part of the world most people were engaged in farming and ranching. So they came from a farming background.

INTERVIEWER: What type crops did your father... What was the predominate crop that he grew? Or did he have several?

SMA COPELAND: He grew, primarily, cotton. Primarily, cotton. And then, of course, any time you are farming--back in those days--you needed livestock to help you till

the soil, to pull the plows, etc., therefore you needed to grow some grain. So you got into growing, in addition to cotton, growing corn, maze, mallow and those things that you needed to feed the stock.

INTERVIEWER: Since discipline is extremely important in raising a child, what were some of the things your parents forbade you to do? And, what sort of punishment did you receive if you broke one of your parents' rules? And, do you feel their rules and forms of discipline were too harsh or too lenient?

SMA COPELAND: Well I think they were just about right. They forbade smoking, drinking. Of course, this was during the Prohibition days. Guess I must have been eighteen or twenty years old before I saw a bottle of whiskey or a bottle of beer. No lying, no cheating, no fighting, and be truthful and honest with yourself and with other people. They taught us courtesy. For example: When I first entered the military, it was very easy for me to become adjusted to military courtesy. For example: Back home--in those days--when an elder came in your room, in your house, you just got up out of your chair and you offered the chair. And you spoke courteously; "Yes, Ma'am," "No, Ma'am" "Yes, sir," "No, sir." And you had a great deal of respect for your elders, as you did for your teachers. For example: At the little village school that I attended, I can recall very, very few times whereby we had a disciplinary problem. But when we did have, the male teacher, usually, had a way of dealing with those problems. And some of the methods that he would use, was use the paddle. If you got a few swats on the rear, you usually straightened out from there on in. Now in a less severe incident, you were stood up before the class, and that was really embarrassing. Only about one time did a student ever had to be stood before the class. And in addition to standing before the class, just standing and looking, observing the class and saying nothing, sometimes they would have you go to the blackboard, and the

teacher would give you, for example: a mathematical problem to work out on the blackboard. And when you have students in the classroom eyeballing you trying to endeavor to come up with the correct answer, and then finally you're seated, that just about cured that kind of problem. So we had minor infractions of rules, back in those days. The teachers had a method of dealing with them to the extent that the students would be so embarrassed and so hurt, that usually they were not called upon the second time to come before the class.

INTERVIEWER: Now, if you broke a rule in school and your teacher gave you a whipping, I guess you probably wouldn't go home and tell dad, because he would probably give you another one. Is that the way it worked? I know when I was going to school, that's the way it was.

INTERVIEWER: I've know that to happen. But, in my case, or in the case of the Copeland children, I don't think Dad would have used a double jeopardy system, so to speak. Most certainly he would have talked with us; maybe have given us a verbal reprimand. But as far as giving us a few lashes with a switch, or usually a razor strap, if we needed discipline at all. However, there are other incidents where I know that some students would have been disciplined after arriving home. Whether that's because they really needed that to clinch the correction, so to speak. Yes, I've known that to happen.

INTERVIEWER: How did your dad discipline you? What methods did he use?

SMA COPELAND: Dad had an old razor strap that he used primarily for honing his straight razor. And in addition to honing that straight razor, it was very conveniently located for dad just to reach up, or walk into the house, and get his razor strap. It was about two inches wide and about two and a half feet long. But, when dad gave you a couple of strappings with that old razor strap, he usually got the message across. Now I would

consider my dad as being, as compared to some parents back in those days, as being a little bit lenient with his children. But I think that was because he knew his children, and knew that just at talking, talking to Silas... I don't ever remember Dad hitting me with that razor strap. I think Mother probably spanked me on the bottom a few times; I'm sure she did. But I wasn't a type individual... Now I can remember being a little bit rowdy. But, Mother was a good one to shake her finger, and that got her message across to this old boy, young boy, and also to the other children of the family.

INTERVIEWER: Your father, did he get involved in anything in the community, such as, maybe the school or church?

SMA COPELAND: Got involved in the church. Not so much in school. But primarily in the church. Now back in those days--in this community--there was not a great deal, if you want to compare it to today's communities, there was not a great deal of socializing other than the church activities, and school activities. So Dad and Mother became involved--as we all did--in our church on Sunday. And it was at this old church house, that would accommodate, I would estimate approximately 150 or 200 personnel, which would accommodate everyone living in the community, in that general rural community.

INTERVIEWER: I think we kinda touched on it briefly, but how did the standards of conduct your parents required of you influence you as a young man?

SMA COPELAND: Well, it influenced me throughout my life. Even today. Because I think it instilled in me--back during those formative years--the need for discipline, the need for respect, the need for admiration. And I've drawn upon those young formative years throughout my life, and think that, that is what made it less difficult for me to, shall we say, maneuver my way through the military. The military, to some people, is a very difficult

maneuver for them to negotiate. I say that because of the many problems that we have had in the military--and no doubt having some still--being able to cope, and being able to receive, and obey, and carry out without much reservation or hesitation. And I think one reason why I was able to do that so easily is because it was my formative years, back when I grew up, was growing up on the farm here in East Texas.

INTERVIEWER: Earlier, we talked about your brothers and sisters. How many brothers did you say you had?

SMA COPELAND: I had two brothers. One is deceased and one is living still.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Were they younger or older than you?

SMA COPELAND: They were older than I. One about four and a half, five years older, and one two and a half years older.

INTERVIEWER: What were their occupations?

SMA COPELAND: You're talking about after they went out away from home?

INTERVIEWER: Right.

SMA COPELAND: One, the one just older than I, two and a half years older, went to work for an oil company--Gulf Oil Company--and I believe he worked some thirty-five years, or so, for the oil company, and retired somewhere in East Texas. And my oldest brother, he worked at odd jobs around, usually with oil companies. Did not live to enjoy retirement age; he died of cancer, I guess in his, about his sixteenth year, or that age thereabout.

INTERVIEWER: What about your sisters? How many do you have?

SMA COPELAND: I have four sisters; all younger than myself. The oldest sister is living in Houston, Texas, with her husband. And the next oldest sister is living near Fort Polk, Louisiana. She works for the state, and has been working for the state for several

years. I spoke with her just recently; she is getting ready to retire from that position. The other sister lives in the Houston area. She is a housewife. She and her husband live there; have been living there for several years. My younger sister lives in a subdivision out of College Station, known as "Hill Top." She is working for Texas A&M University. She has been there for about twenty years. I think she is getting ready to retire and just take life easy.

INTERVIEWER: What was the name of the elementary school you attended, and where was it located?

SMA COPELAND: Oh, the school, elementary school. This is back from day one. The elementary school was located, from my residence, three and one half miles, and two miles, or so, from this little town seat, if you will, from Staley, in the opposite direction from where Silas lived. Therefore, it made negotiating to and from that school a pretty far piece. As I recall, we would depart fairly early in the morning, walking to this school some three and one half miles away. Probably going to take you, what, an hour? Probably, to cover that three and a half miles. And school would probably begin somewhere around eight o'clock in the morning because it was understood..., or it may have begun at eight thirty. It was understood--back in those days--that first and foremost was taking care of that crop, taking care of the stock, and then after that you would go to school. But your livelihood depended upon the farm and the stock. And if you were absent from school a few days because of some chores that needed to be done on the farm, well that was understood by the teacher. Well, I think school began somewhere around eight o'clock, or shortly thereafter, and then it let out in the afternoon somewhere around three or three-thirty. And then we would arrive back at home at around five o'clock. In the winter months it was getting dark; it is dark.

INTERVIEWER: When you were in school, in elementary school, did you have any favorite subjects?

SMA COPELAND: I think it was math. It sort of caught my fancy. Now, I'm not real good at math, today. Math and Science, I think those two subjects would probably have been my favorite subjects, if I remember correctly.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have a subject that you didn't like at all?

SMA COPELAND: Oh, I'm sure. But what were those subjects, I'm not sure at this time. Let me explain the layout of this little elementary school. A building with a partition down the center. And back in those days, we had grade one through eleven; we didn't have twelfth grade back then. You graduated from high school when you went through the eleventh grade. So, from grade primary--or grade one--through about grade four or five, all students were in the same, were situated and seated in the same classroom. And then, on the other side of this partition, were the other students; grade four or six through eleven. Now I have often wondered--since those days--how were we able to cope with grade two, for example, when they were up at the blackboard doing their work--math, adding, subtracting, multiplying, etc. But the rest of us out in grade one, what were we doing? Were we watching? None the less, we were able to get through those sort of things. And as I understand it, from talking to the old timers my age, they were situated with about the same environment. But that was the extent of our school back in those days.

INTERVIEWER: About how many did you have in your class? In the school, I should say.

SMA COPELAND: It would only be a guess at this time. Thirty, thirty-five personnel.

INTERVIEWER: And you had one teacher for that?

SMA COPELAND: We had one teacher for each side of that one building. I remember the names of my first teachers; Mr. and Mrs. Todd. Now if I remember correctly, Mr. and Mrs. Todd were not college graduates. As a matter of fact, they may not of had any college training at all. They may have had only a high school certificate. It was very difficult for the School Board to attract a teacher with a college degree to come to the way off rural district in Southeast Texas --to Staley--and teach children when they could of had a teaching job here in Huntsville, or Cold Springs, or New Waverly, or Conroy, etc. therefore, the school board--I think this is correct--had to settle on getting a couple who had some education--a man and wife, for example--to come in and live in the neighborhood. And so, I remember that couple. Mr. and Mrs. Todd used to invite a student--almost daily--to go home with them to spend the evening, until all students had spent the evening. And I thought about that considerably since it happened. What was the motive behind this? Now I think the motive was, to get to know Silas better.

INTERVIEWER: Outside the environment.

SMA COPELAND: Outside the environment. What is Silas really like? We'll invite him home. We'll sit him down at our dining table and we'll feed him. We'll sleep him. We'll talk to him. And we'll see what he is really like outside of his habitat.

INTERVIEWER: Normally, we ask which teacher was a person's favorite, but I guess these two were, actually together, influenced you greatly. How did they influence you?

SMA COPELAND: I guess if you were going to ask me who my favorite teachers were, or my favorite teachers, it would have to be Mr. and Mrs. Todd, because they seemed to take a great interest in teaching all students. And Mr. Todd, he could deal with discipline problems. But they've had an impact on my growing up throughout the years, because I

think the way that they treated us, the way they taught us. Mr. Todd... The school was located--from the post office--approximately a mile and a half, maybe two miles. Mr. Todd received his mail from that post office. When school was out in the afternoon--three or three-thirty--sometimes he would walk with the children to that post office, and then he would return to the school and pick up Mrs. Todd, and they would walk another mile or mile and a half to their residence; it was an old country home situated a mile, a mile and a half from the school. So we all came to have a great deal of respect and admiration for Mr. and Mrs. Todd.

INTERVIEWER: When you were in school, what was your favorite sport?

SMA COPELAND: Well, it would have to be channeled to basketball, because we did not have a football field in which to play football; we didn't have football. But it would have to be basketball and volleyball. I love volleyball, today. I played volleyball in the Army. i just love volleyball. But it would have to be basketball. Now I'll tell you another thing, another sport we had ongoing as country boys, and country girls, as a matter of fact. That was, shooting marbles. I'm not good--today--at putting the golf ball into the hole on the green. But I'll bet if you'd go back to those days, I could put that marble in there. We had another game ongoing; we shot marbles. And we heard about it when we got home, because you had to get down on your knees and you'd shoot those marbles, and that would wear out the knees of your overhauls. And mother was always patching our overhauls. She would say, "Stop shooting those marbles."

INTERVIEWER: During your summer vacation, how did you, your brothers and sisters, and your friends, how did you spend your free time, other than working?

SMA COPELAND: Other than working. Well, usually... Of course there was some work to be done, being on the farm. But other than working, we would have parties. Not

frequently; maybe once a month, thereabout, at someone's house. Then you'd invite the neighbor children over, the neighbor being two or three miles, four miles down the road. Saturday night and Sundays, we would go to church. Back in those days, we had dinner on the ground. We would spread the meal under an arbor--if you will--using limbs and shrubbery, etc. We would go swimming. We would go to the creek--located two, three miles away--find a nice cool, clear pool of water, and we would swim. We would go hunting. We made slingshots. You know what a slingshot is, what it looked like. So we would go out and we would hunt rabbits. We would hunt squirrels. We would hunt birds. And we would just roam the woods. So to speak. Back in that part of the country--in those days--we had an open range. The only fencing that you saw--back in those days--were those fences encompassing your farm. The rest of it was wilderness. And let me go back to walking to and from this elementary school. There were many days that as we came back from school--primarily in the afternoon--we had to climb trees to protect ourselves from the wild Brahma bulls. Have you ever seen a wild Brahma bull?

INTERVIEWER: Right.

SMA COPELAND: We had wild cattle roaming freely in the open range. And you had to be very careful as you came home from school in the afternoon, lest suddenly, you would be approached by a wild Brahma bull. Well, what happened in that case? You would just remain up that tree until the bull decided to go away. And then you came down and you proceeded--on a double-time basis--right up that hot sand burr roadbed. What about your shoes? What shoes are you talking about? Barefoot. You'd go barefoot to and from school. So our activities through the summer, Butch, were devoted primarily to those little incidentals that, I guess, students do today when they are out of school.

INTERVIEWER: Who were some of your best friends?

SMA COPELAND: Well, best friends. Let me just name the friends, or the neighbors. That would be the Williams boys, the Coward boys, the Durdens, the Joneses, the Pippins. I would say these were friends. These were neighbors--your neighbors--that lived a mile, two miles, or three miles down the road. But I'd have to say that all were friends.

INTERVIEWER: You said you had grades one through six in the elementary school. Right?

SMA COPELAND: Thereabout. It would have been grade one through five, or maybe six. I don't remember correctly.

INTERVIEWER: At this time, what I'd like you to do is tell me about is your years in your junior high school, and lots of the questions I will ask you about junior high school will be similar to elementary school, as far as your favorite subject, your teachers, etc. What was the name of the junior high school that you attended, and where was it located?

SMA COPELAND: Well, the first one would have been in Oakhurst, Texas. Again, from this location here at Elkins Lake, Huntsville, would be approximately fourteen miles east of here. And located about six or seven miles from where I was living. We met the school bus on the main rural country road. My residence--at that time--was located a mile from where we caught the school bus. We would go into the little town, by the name of Oakhurst. And frequently that school bus would become mired

in the mud. The roads were not paved in any area. When it rained, we just knew that, that school bus would not make it to school by the time the bell rang. Consequently, there were many a day that we would get to school at midmorning, sometime at lunchtime, sometime not at all. Now how did you get that school bus out of the mired mud? The bus driver, whose name was Mr. Griffin, would send a student--high school student, someone up in

years--to a neighbor located a few miles down the road and/or off in the distance, and try and solicit a team of mules, a team of horses from the farmer. The farmer would come with his team, and with the help of the students and the team of mules or horses--or both--we would literally push and drag that school bus out of the mud. That would be going to school. Now reverse the procedure. What about coming back from school? The same thing. Did I ever spent the evening with friends along the route, along the way? Yeah, all because the bus became mired in the mud. And you can't see in the evening how to get this school bus out. So you would spend... All the children, you would come in to the nearest house, or maybe a couple of houses if they were nearby, and the students would be farmed out, and the resident would put pallets and quilts down on the floor, and you slept. Now, what about parents? Did you call them? No, there were no telephones in the area. It was just understood, Butch, that "Well, the bus is stuck again and they're having to spend the night somewhere along the route." But this gives you some idea of what we were going through back seventy odd years ago when you lived in a rural district on a farm.

INTERVIEWER: At your junior high school... Earlier we talked about your favorite sport, was volleyball and basketball, was that a carry over as a favorite sport?

SMA COPELAND: That was a carry over. Then I moved from the school in the Oakhurst District to another district in another county, in Walker County, located not far from where we're currently sitting. The carry over was again, volleyball and basketball. No football. That carried me up to about year fifteen and to the eighth grade level. For some reason, I did not see fit--beyond that time--to continue my education, for some reason. Let me back up. There was a good reason. We lived at least four miles from the schoolhouse. As we moved, we were not getting closer to the schoolhouse; we were getting farther and farther away. And it was about year fourteen and a half or fifteen, that I came down with,

what the doctor--an old country doctor--said was, rheumatism. I was bedridden for six, eight months. I thought I was going to die. Mother and Dad said they thought they were going to lose me. I don't remember it in those terms, you see, but Mother and Dad looked at it and said, "Yea, Silas is bad." "What is the treatment, doctor?" "What is the cure?" Just like I asked my doctor not long ago when I went to him with an ear problem. I said, "Well see, what did you do way back when, doctor?" He said, "You would have died." Well, they were looking to lose Silas at about the age fifteen. And when I got up to where I could begin motoring again, I had to learn how to walk all over again. Now we're four miles, Butch, from the schoolhouse. How was I going to get to school? The bus didn't run in my area. And then this brings me into year sixteen. And so I began to, I think, look upon it unfavorably. And so, sometime during my eighth grade, I just didn't go back. But I got to where I could walk again.

INTERVIEWER: So you actually attended two different intermediate schools. Is that right?

SMA COPELAND: Yes. One in Oakhurst and one in Riverside. The last one in Riverside.

INTERVIEWER: So after you... What did you do when you quit school?

SMA COPELAND: When I was up and about, physically again, after having not fully--but partially--overcome this motivation problem, I worked at a service station in the little town of Riverside. I worked as a delivery boy. We had a little business when we closed the farm down; it was about 1935 when we closed this farm down. It wasn't feasible to continue farming because--that was back during the "New Era Days." The government was paying you not to gather your farm, but to destroy it. We destroyed our farm--literally--and was paid for it for doing so. So there was no point in continuing farming, so dad went into

a little ice delivery business. He bought a truck, and the three boys made the deliveries. We'd deliver twenty-five pounds of ice, fifty pounds of ice. Back in those days--in my area--no one to my knowledge had electrically operated refrigerators; it was all ice boxes, per se. So what did I do after I decided not to go back to school? I never liked to use the term, "quit," because I continued to go to school still, when I was seventy years old, as far as that goes. So we delivered the ice and we worked at service stations. We cut wood. There were two oil industries--or refineries, if you will--located in the area and the boilers were fired using oak wood. And using the same truck that we delivered the ice. After we delivered the ice in the early morning of the day, we used that truck to go out into the woods to haul this wood--or transport the wood--for these plants. And then there were some government programs. I went to work for a government program, commonly referred to as the "AYA," American Youth Association. Now that was a program whereby young men--such as myself back in those days--could sign-up and work two weeks out of each month. And you were paid a sum of twelve dollars for having worked two weeks; that was the normal nonprofessional or labor wage, back in those days.

INTERVIEWER: What type classes did they have in the Army for you? Explain your progression through your high school education while you were in the Army.

SMA COPELAND: When I came back from Europe, in December '45, and then took the three-month delay en route, having arrived at Fort Hood in March of 1946, I went to the Education Center and inquired about continuing my education to obtain a high school diploma. After having explained it to me what it entailed, I was permitted to check out books; math, science, English. Five subjects, I don't recall what the other two were. I proceeded to go about comprehending what was listed in those books. And when I thought I was ready...

(End Tape OH 93.1-1, Side 1)

(Begin Tape OH 93.1-1, Side 2)

INTERVIEWER: Sergeant Major, when side one ended, you said, "And when I thought I was ready..." What were you going to say? You were talking about the book that you picked up, etc., and when that tape ended, you said, "When I thought I was ready..." Were you talking about, ready for the examinations?

SMA COPELAND: Yeah. Ready for the examinations, Butch.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

SMA COPELAND: And obviously I was ready, because I passed all of the examinations. What happened, I went back to the Education Center and talked with the officer and expressed that I thought I was ready to take the examination. So he administered the examination right there in the building. And as I recall, it was some time--a few weeks--before I got the results. I guess it had to go out of state somewhere.

INTERVIEWER: How many different tests did he give you? Did he just give you one long test, or several?

SMA COPELAND: It was a series. Five. Five different tests. One on each of those five subjects that I had been studying on. And if I remember correctly, four or five weeks later I got the results of the tests back, which was mailed to my unit, as a matter of fact. And I was one proud soldier.

INTERVIEWER: I guess so. So you got your GED (General Educational Development) then.

SMA COPELAND: Got my GED and I took that certificate right over to the battalion personnel officer, because I knew that it was very important for this soldier that I have the results of those tests entered on my record. So this was sometime late 1946.

INTERVIEWER: Talking about the GED. Back in the Army, when you were the Sergeant Major of the Army, of course we had a lot of soldiers that were still working towards their GED. It isn't like it is right now. Did you ever have an occasion to tell that soldier, "Hey I did it. You can do it," or something similar to that?

SMA COPELAND: Oh, yes! Yes. Absolutely. It was after I attained that GED certificate that I became somewhat of low key or low caliber educator in the Army. I could see that--for each and every soldier--it was going to be necessary that he or she have that high school diploma. And they could obtain it very easy by pursuing the same course of instruction that I pursued. So my being enrolled, and having obtained a GED high school certificate, impacted upon me throughout my Army career. Wherever I was assigned after that, be it as first sergeant, or as a sergeant major, I always impressed upon the noncommissioned officers to impress upon their men how important it is to obtain a high school certificate. And then after that, we got into the business of being MOS (Military Occupation Specialty) tested. It came into being, when was that? The early fifties, thereabout. I don't recall exactly what year. But here again, we are talking about continuing your military education. In my battalion, the noncommissioned officers set up a program whereby, we would bring noncommissioned officers into a classroom and have them studying for examinations to be conducted on certain MOSs. And then a noncommissioned officer, an outstanding person who was able to instruct and convey a message, etc., would be selected to conduct the classes in preparation for taking your annual MOS test. Now, in addition to that, we always encouraged soldiers--even after obtaining the GED high school education--or for those who had already graduated from high school prior to coming into the military, that this isn't the end of your education. Education is a continuous, on-going part of your military training. Because of evolution, things are

changing. So you have to continue to strive to be as good or better--more knowledgeable in the subjects of military science--than your men. So it behooves each and everyone of us,--you, you, you, and we,--as a group, to continue our military training. So that's the three things--so for as military education--that I always stressed to my men. If you don't have a high school education, go to the education service center, enroll, and get your GED. If you do have your high school education, continue working on your MOS or your specific field of endeavor and pass your annual test. And then enroll in a college course, some place. Just keep striving. Take correspondence courses.

INTERVIEWER: How old were you when you came into the Army?

SMA COPELAND: I was twenty-two.

INTERVIEWER: Twenty-two. Were you inducted or did you volunteer for induction?

SMA COPELAND: I was conscripted. Inducted into the military right here in Huntsville, Texas.

INTERVIEWER: Were you married at that time?

SMA COPELAND: We were married. Yes, married. Had one child. Actually, I received an induction call, I guess about six months prior to my being inducted. My mother suggested that I go to my local draft board and just explain to them, "Hey, look. Ann is pregnant. She is about four months, three or four months into her pregnancy." I asked my draft board if he would be agreeable to my delaying going in the military until after that child was born. Well, he agreed to it. He agreed. We moved from this area to the Houston area, and I went to work for Mosher Steel Company, located on the outskirts of Houston. And I worked there until our first child, Dorothy Ann, was born. Of course, the draft board was well aware of the approximate date of delivery of this child. And shortly after her arrival on the scene, from Heights Hospital, on the outskirts of Houston, I received my

induction notice to report for physical examination. So I did. The examination station being located, I believe it was on Banning Street, Houston, Texas. We were physically examined, medically examined, and sworn in. And if I'm not mistaken, that was the 28th day of October 1942. And they must have given us a few days delay to go back home and say, "Yes, I've been examined. I'm physically fit. I'm now sworn-in. I am now a soldier." Go back home and a certain day, you report to your induction... Well, that was the induction station. But to report to, in my case, Fort Sam Houston.

INTERVIEWER: Let me ask you a question about the induction station. That time it was called the "induction station." Now, I think they called it the "reception station." Tell me some of the activities. About the physical testing and the different activities that went on when you first went into the Army. And then, the next thing is, your first impression. Here you are, a draftee in the Army. What was your first impression? Tell me about that reception.

SMA COPELAND: Well, at the reception station, as far as the physical examination, I think the first thing that you had to do was open your mouth and stick out your tongue; the doctor would put a paddle on your tongue, and you were to say, "Ah." He would look in your ears. Examine your eyes; I believe he would put a chart in front of you for you to read. He would inspect your body, to include your bending over. You were to do a couple of hop, skip, and jumps, side straddle hops, stand on one leg, jump up and down a little bit, change over and stand on the other leg, jump up and down. Move your arms and move your fingers. Just a general physical examination to see if you could manipulate your body.

INTERVIEWER: Did they give you any kind of written test, or anything like that?

SMA COPELAND: Not at the induction station.

INTERVIEWER: When you received your induction notice, what was Ann's reaction?

SMA COPELAND: Oh. I wish you could ask her that question. However, she... Of course, when I got back home and informed her that "There was no question about it. I am in the Army." I had been sworn in at the induction station. I had about two weeks. I believe it was two weeks from that date to report to Fort Sam Houston, Texas.

INTERVIEWER: When you got to your induction station, did you have a choice of the branch of service to which you'd be assigned, or were you automatically assigned to the Army?

SMA COPELAND: I had no choice, to my knowledge. I was automatically in the Army, having no idea that I was headed--or going--the direction of the Army Air Corps. But we had no idea. We had no rathers whether we were going into the Army, the Navy, Marine Corps, or the Army Air Corps.

INTERVIEWER: What was your term of service? Your term of enlistment?

SMA COPELAND: Term of service, at that time, was for the duration of hostilities, plus six months.

INTERVIEWER: Duration, plus six.

SMA COPELAND: In my case, that took me out... At the very earliest, I could have been mustered out of the Army, under the condition in which I served, would have been about mid-'46. Now all during that time, let me just add, once you were inducted into the military and you put on that military uniform, it was an offense, you were violating a uniform regulation and you were subject to court martial, if you were caught in a uniform other than your military uniform. For example: From October 1942 until sometime during about mid-48, I could not wear civilian attire; no Army military person could, until they changed the regulation. Therefore, when you came home on leave, you came in uniform; you went in uniform. Wherever you went, you were in uniform. Right away--when I was

inducted--what few clothing I had, I gave to my brother; my older brother, being about the same stature as myself. A suit, coat, tie, trousers. I had no need for them.

INTERVIEWER: After your induction, did you go directly from the induction station to basic training, or did you have time to come home for a while, or what?

SMA COPELAND: Went directly from the induction station, at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, to my intermediate basic training station. In my case, from Fort Sam Houston to St. Petersburg, Florida.

INTERVIEWER: How long were you in basic training there?

SMA COPELAND: Basic training at St. Petersburg must have been for about six weeks. Because it was from late October until about twenty December. Yes, about six weeks basic training.

INTERVIEWER: So then, you were in the Army Air Corps?

SMA COPELAND: I'm not quite sure. But it turned out later that I was in the Army Air Corps. But let me just go back to this basic training in St. Petersburg. On the train going from Fort Sam Houston to St. Petersburg, a big question mark in everyone's mind. Well, "Are we in the Army? Are we in the Air Corps?" We have on khaki uniforms--shirt and trousers--but no brass; nothing on our uniforms. "So where are we going? What branch of the service are we in?" If you asked a question, none of the cadre would communicate with you, reference that type question. "You're going for basic training." So we arrived in St. Petersburg, Florida, on the train. We were off loaded, loaded onto two and one-half ton trucks and we were transported further downtown. We stopped in front of a high rise hotel. I'd never seen such a tall building in my life. Okay. So they off loaded us. A PFC (Private First Class) cadreman lined us up and began calling the roll. He called off about eight or ten names, and then he would stop and say, "You're assigned to room ten, floor

one, room ten," for example. I'm still trying to comprehend what's going on. And then another eight or ten, "You're assigned to room so-and-so." But it turned out, Butch, that what he was doing was assigning us a room in the resort hotel.

INTERVIEWER: Is that right?

SMA COPELAND: I think I was on about the fourth or fifth floor. They had cleared out all the furniture--most all the furniture from the rooms--and had installed bunk beds, stacked three high. Therefore, you could put about eight or ten personnel in each room. Then we were ordered as to where we would be having our meal, which was in the dining facility of that hotel; commonly referred to as "the mess hall." And we thought, "Well, that's fine. You know, this Army is turning out to be, it's okay, if it's the Army that we're in." So we remained there for approximately six weeks. And we were taking close-order drill, formations, customs and courtesy of the service, getting our shots, learning first aid, and this sort of thing, during the time that we were there.

INTERVIEWER: So actually, that was your basic training?

SMA COPELAND: That was my six week basic training.

INTERVIEWER: Probably some of the best basic training any soldier had during that time.

SMA COPELAND: Best. The best. That was about it.

INTERVIEWER: What time did you start training in the morning?

SMA COPELAND: It was early; seven o'clock. Yeah. Get up and make our bunks, fix up the room for inspection, and then go down to the mess and have breakfast, and then, I think we would fall out on the street somewhere around seven o'clock in the morning. And we would march... Well, the beach was located close by and we would march out from the hotel towards the beach and get out in the area where we'd have close-order drill. The

cadre would stop and they would explain a few things to us, and so on.

INTERVIEWER: How was your cadre? Did you have pretty good cadre?

SMA COPELAND: We had good cadre. Had good training cadre. Now, there would be one regular, what I would call "a regular soldier." He would probably be a buck sergeant or staff sergeant. On his uniform you could see hash marks, from the chevron way to his wrist, indicating that he had been in the military several year. He was the guiding light. He was the father. You very seldom heard from him. He would be around, but the people who were working for him were PFC's and corporals, who were doing the drilling and doing most of the instruction; the customs, formation, courtesies, etc., the medical, first aid, etc. I don't ever remember during basic training being hollered at or screamed at. I've often heard the story told about, you know, during basic training, learning right and left face, and about face, etc., that a drill instructor would stomp on one foot and he'd say, "Now pick up the one that doesn't hurt." I never seen that happen wherever I was stationed. Now I've probably been guilty of telling that story also. But we thought that was pretty good type basic training. Everyone fell in line. But you've got to keep in mind, Butch, that the group which I entered the military with, came from my general locale and they all were about--most of them--the same caliber person. They come from the same environment, about the same education, some with more education; no college students. But you see, that's why I think--going back to the early formative years--that we were able to fit in, so to speak, into the military. It was no problem accepting orders or following instructions.

INTERVIEWER: There are two questions here and I think they were pretty well answered. First of all, we ask "What were your fellow recruits like?" And then, "Did you feel you were close to your fellow recruits?" Evidently, coming from the same backgrounds and such, I think those two are really answered well. What about a spirit of teamwork

amongst those recruits, during that training?

SMA COPELAND: Teamwork we had. Teamwork was good. We all followed the instruction. Supported, etc. Just like back... Well, I was going to say, back on the farm, but back in your community. If you received instructions or comments from your elders-- regardless of what it is--reference performance of duty, carrying out tasks, etc., that was very simple for my group of people to execute.

INTERVIEWER: About your drill sergeants. Did they teach all the subjects? Did you have any officers involved in any of the training?

SMA COPELAND: We had officers, occasionally, that would teach a subject. I'm trying to think of a subject. Perhaps when you get into medical, first aid, this sort of thing. Gas chamber. Of course, it was the cadre noncommissioned officers who actually conducted us through the chamber. But I do recall that we had a first lieutenant who instructed us during our basic training, probably explaining the effects of the gas, and what you did in the case of a gas attack. But as far as fitting the gas mask and putting us through the chamber and bringing us out of the chamber, that was conducted by the drill sergeants. However, there was a commissioned officer in the area.

INTERVIEWER: What was your first impression of your drill sergeants when you first got off that bus, and then as your training progressed?

SMA COPELAND: My first impression was that, here is an individual from his stature, from the long years of service as indicated by those hash marks on his sleeve, the way he spoke, the way he conducted himself, the way he moved, that here was a person that you could look up to. Here is a person who knew his stuff, so far as the military is concerned. Therefore, you better respect this individual. You did. I mean, he just carried himself in such a manner, and spoke in such a manner, that you just couldn't help but have a favorable

impression. Now he could have very well turned it in the opposite direction. Had he been out there yelling in front of the formation, and cursing, and violating the dignity of "We Recruits," and what not, I'm sure I would have gotten a different impression from my drill sergeant. But in my case, that didn't happen. Therefore, from day one when I arrived at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, and then went through basic training in St. Petersburg, Florida, until I got off the two and one-half ton truck coming from the train station in El Paso, arriving at Biggs Field, I had a favorable impression. And that favorable impression was all because of the first impression that I received at the induction station, all the way through my basic training, out through to my first unit assignment.

INTERVIEWER: What was the name of the drill sergeant that impressed you the most? Do you remember?

SMA COPELAND: Just don't remember, Butch. I just do not remember his name. And I'm not sure that he had on even a name tag back in those days. Surely, had he been wearing a name tag, his name would have stuck in my mind, because I can go back farther than that when we were talking earlier about my primary school days, etc., I know the names of who my teachers were and this sort of things. But, what was the name of my drill sergeant? I wish I knew.

INTERVIEWER: Just "Sergeant," right?

SMA COPELAND: He was just "Sergeant." Just "Sergeant."

INTERVIEWER: The one that we were talking about, that had the service stripes and that spoke with authority, and presented himself so well, what influence did that have throughout the rest of your military career? When you reflected back, did that have a lasting impression on you?

SMA COPELAND: It definitely had a lasting impression. We're talking about his

statue, his posture, his erectness, his forthrightness, what appeared to be truthfulness in addressing the troops, his honesty, his integrity. You learn these things pretty quickly. See, having come up during my formative years, those were the things that I recognized. I didn't have to be taught those sort of things, because I knew them back in my neighborhood. I could see that in this soldier, in this cadreman. He had an impact I emulated. In fact, I said, "Okay. If I'm going to wear this uniform, I can not have a belly sticking out. I'm going to be slim, trim. I'm going to fit into that uniform. I'm going to have it tailored." I even patterned my uniform after that drill sergeant, in so far as possible. Later, when I got out to my unit, the sergeant said, "Wait a minute, Copeland. Little bit too tight here." You know, obviously. But that first drill sergeant has had a lasting impression upon me as trying to present myself in the very favorable manner that he presented himself.

INTERVIEWER: Did he conduct the inspections? What type inspections did you have?

SMA COPELAND: He would inspect us in rank. Now most of the inspections, if you were standing by your bunk inspection, he would be on the side. But it would be his lieutenants or his, well not actually lieutenants, but his PFC's and his corporals who were actually inspecting the bunk, inspecting the soldier, shoes, uniform, your posture. You see, I think that is where I learned to stand erect when I was going through that basic training, because these corporals and PFC's who had been through the school, and they would teach us how to stand. They would teach us how to salute. They would teach us how to do a right and left face. You know, for an awkward soldier, Butch, trying to do an about face, did you ever see a civilian, who had no experience, trying to do an about face? Fall flat on his face. So they were teaching us the basic fundamentals of soldering. How to move from point A to point B. And once we caught the knack of it, I said, "Gee, I can do that. That's

a simple thing. I can do that." But that drill sergeant has had a lasting impression upon me, you see. And I'm glad you asked that question, you referred to it, because, looking back on those days, and I had to be favorably impressed or I would never have agreed to remain on in the military. But ever since then, I've tried to impress upon my noncommissioned officers, "Stand up. When you stand before this guy or this gal, they're going to see you for the first time and the impression they have of you is going to be a lasting impression. We're talking about no more draft to an all-volunteer force. You and I are going to have to change our way of doing things. Now you can either run them off and get no more, or you can make a favorable lasting impression upon them and retain them and train them and educate them." I go back and I say, "Oh, oh..." I'm going back to Fort Sam Houston and to St. Petersburg, Florida, when that first drill sergeant, in 1942, stepped out in front of the formation and introduced himself, he favorably impressed me and he motivated me. It's been a life lasting impression and motivation.

INTERVIEWER: What kind of inspection did they give you in your rooms there?

SMA COPELAND: Stand by our bunks.

INTERVIEWER: It wasn't a real chicken type inspection, was it?

SMA COPELAND: It was not a chicken type.

INTERVIEWER: Uh huh.

SMA COPELAND: It was no a chicken type inspection. I've often thought about that now. Of course, you had to be taught how to make your bunk and how to make that blanket tight enough that they could flip a coin and it would bounce and this sort of thing. But they were not nitpicking. They were just teaching; this was a teaching method. But as far as nitpicking, in my outfit, there was no nitpicking. It was, give us the basic fundamentals, basic training, get us in, teach us, get us out, and get us to a unit. And that's

what they did with favorable impressions on most everyone. Well, I'd have to say for everyone, I don't know anyone who became ticked off, so to speak, or was mad at the drill instructor.

INTERVIEWER: You were in this nice hotel. How was the food in the restaurant, which now became the mess hall?

SMA COPELAND: Butch, I'm not sure that I could compare today's meal with the meal back in 1942. But I could say this, because of the environment in which I was brought up, raised... I keep going back to the formative years. I was brought up on a farm where we raised most of our food. The food was good. We ate it. We survived. Nothing, in so far as food, was bad. I thought it was delicious. The food at St. Petersburg, Florida--in that dining room--was delicious. And I ate everything on my plate, except one time after I left St. Petersburg.

INTERVIEWER: What about KP (kitchen police)? Did you get a chance to pull KP?

SMA COPELAND: I got a chance to pull KP. Sure did.

INTERVIEWER: What was your first experience with KP in the Army?

SMA COPELAND: Well, there was no problem with it. We usually washed pots, pans, and I would suppose some plates, dishes, knives, forks, etc. But that didn't really matter. I had no qualms with performing KP, as I did later on as a noncommissioned officer.

INTERVIEWER: What about your physical training program? Tell me about your physical training.

SMA COPELAND: First hour in the morning, as a shoot off after we were marched from the hotel, we went to the exercise area and we performed calisthenics for physical exercise. And here again, we had an instructor, a noncommissioned officer, a staff sergeant, who was stripped down to the waist, on the platform. So they would give you "open ranks,

march." Then they would give you "right, face," and "open rank, march." again, to give us some room in order to complete these various asunderous exercise movements. Now when this physical exercise instructor stripped down to the waist the first morning, his chest stuck out. He had muscles in his arms, and it appeared to me--of course at that time I had never heard of steroids--but you would think that this guy had been raised on steroids, because he was musclebound. And when he would demonstrate, "the next move will be thus and thus and thus, and here's the way we do it," you could see the muscles come in his arms and in his chest, and all over, in his legs. And this was a guy to be admired. And he went through these drill for fifty minutes or so; one hour. And that's what we did the first thing in the morning. We looked forward every morning to fall out in front of the very articulate, well built, well muscled soldier. He appeared to me to be about twenty-eight years of age, thereabout.

INTERVIEWER: How was the weather down there during that period?

SMA COPELAND: The weather was nice. In December, the weather was lovely. It was sunshiny. And for that reason we... Of course, you know there are all kinds of latrine rumors floating around as to where you are going or to what branch of the service you are assigned to. So, from our hotel window we could look out across the beach, across the water. We could see boats anchored off in the water. We said, "Well, they brought up to St. Petersburg, Florida for one reason. After basic training we're going to catch the boat. We're not going to Europe because this time of year it is freezing in Europe. They haven't issued us a winter uniform, so we're going to the South Pacific." "Okay, yeah." So that was pretty well figured out, you know. "Well, they're not giving us infantry insignias because some of us might want to jump ship." You know, you didn't want to go to the infantry if you were going to the South Pacific, because boys were getting hurt. Not that

there were any cowards, but the rumors are going around. So we surmised two things, I think. That after basic training, loading on ships, and then from there in which direction, because of the warm weather uniform; it's got to be overseas to a warm climate, i.e., the Pacific. Well, that didn't come about. After basic training they put us back on the duce and a half ton trucks, took us to the train station in downtown St. Petersburg, Florida, and off loaded onto a troop train. Now, there were several hundred on this troop train. We were instructed before we left the hotel billet, that once you go aboard the train the venetian blinds will be pulled and you're not to let the blind up and raise a window and talk to anyone. If you do, this is a violation because this movement is secret. All troop movement back in those days were secret. Furthermore, they're not going to tell you where you are going, except you're leaving St. Petersburg. So we left St. Petersburg, and invariably, in the dark, in the night. So you don't know in which direction you are going, except being at St.Petersburg--South Florida--you could go in only one direction and that's north from there. But where from that? So we rode seven days and seven nights on that troop train. Two meals a day; morning, night. On Christmas Day, the 25th day of December 1942, we pulled into a siding. A cadreman came through and said, "Okay, you're off loading." "Where are we?" "You're in Salt Lake City, Utah." Snow is knee deep. It's freezing. It's cold. No coats. Get on the two and one-half ton truck, then you motor. So we did and we rode for, I don't know, maybe an hour. Then we wound up at an air base outside of Salt Lake City, Utah. And we got there just about noon time for Christmas dinner, our first Christmas in the military. Now they lined us up and we went in this mess hall. It was a consolidated mess on an Air Force base. I discovered that they didn't have, at that time, individual company or flag messes; they had consolidated squadron mess, I come to learn later. And this is where we had our first Christmas dinner or lunch. We went in, and having ridden

that troop train for seven days and nights with only two lightly fed meals per day, we were hungry. We went through, picked up our tray, went through the line and we got turkey, turkey, ham, dressing, cranberry sauce, rolls, out the end and pickup as much cold milk as you wanted. You got everything you wanted and as much as you wanted. And you went over and you sat down at the table and you proceeded to consume that very delicious Christmas meal. And we could see this cadreman, you know, just going back and forth, sort of maneuvering around through the aisles up and down the mess hall. Well, this friend of mine, he and I decided, we sort of buddied-up together there, and we decided "Well, we've eaten just about all we can of this delicious meal." We've got some turkey left on the plates, some ham left, probably a roll or two, and we've got some milk left in our container. So we get up and we go over to the can, disposal can. I guess it was put up there to put your bones and whatnot in, because no food was going in it. So, one of the cadremen just taps us on the shoulder and he pointed to a sign. Not until that time did my friend and I read that sign. And the sign read, "Take all you can eat, but eat all you take." Then he pointed to the table. "Take your tray and sit down." So we did. We sat there and we gorged ourself. We ate and we ate until we consumed all the food that we had taken onto our tray. So that was lesson number one in so far as "What do you do with all this good, delicious, perfectly prepared meal?" You eat it. But you take no more than what you can eat. So I learned a lesson right up front in so far as consuming a meal in the military.

INTERVIEWER: Let me ask you a couple more questions about down at St. Petersburg before we go on to your assignment out there at Bliss. What type of chemical warfare training did they give you?

SMA COPELAND: Let me back up a little bit and try to recollect. I'm not sure that we had a gas mask. I don't believe we were issued gas masks that far up front. It may

have been that this officer that I spoke of earlier was explaining gasses, different gasses, and how it would effect us in so far as performing on the field in battle. I also mentioned about the gas chamber, but I don't believe we did have a gas chamber back at St. Petersburg. That would have to come later. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: What about your weapons? When you did your dismounted drill, did they issue you weapons then?

SMA COPELAND: Did not have a weapon. Had no weapons at St. Petersburg.

INTERVIEWER: What was one of the most humorous things that you can recall from that training?

SMA COPELAND: One of the most humorous things, and this may not be humorous, but it was sort of. Back in those days, very seldom were young people inoculated. Now I remember back in my early on school days, you know, we were vaccinated for diphtheria and they vaccinated Silas in the buttocks. But back at St. Petersburg we went through taking these series of shots. Now the word got out... Now we're grown men, but it's humorous. We had one guy that just almost threatened going over the hill because the word had gotten out that, "Boy this one shot, I'll tell you, all others are good except this one, and they do it with a forked needle." But it was sort of humorous and it caught on. We knew that that could not be so. But there was one guy that thought, "Yeah, it could be and I take exception to it." But sometime during the day, each day, somebody in the rank would bring up, "Hey, look, let's watch out for that forked needle." But I remember that back there in those days. Maybe it was humorous and maybe it wasn't.

INTERVIEWER: To you, what was the most difficult thing that you had to do during basic training?

SMA COPELAND: Well, the most difficult thing, I guess, was writing home to Ann

and tell her, "Gee, I don't know where I'm going. I don't know how long I will be there. I don't even know that I will ever see you and Dorothy Ann again." That was a very difficult thing for me to do. Because, at that time the Nation was not very mobile and I had not been out of the state of Texas until that time. So just getting up and suddenly leaving a close-knit family that you have never departed from, and not knowing when you're coming back, and knowing that eventually you're going overseas and you're going into battle, and you're going to do this for one reason--it's either you or he. You think about those things. So a difficult thing, the most difficult thing for me to do is to sit down and try to communicate this by way of written communication to Ann. And then getting a response or reply back somewhat encouraging. And she's probably thinking the same thing that I'm thinking, except she's not saying it in those terms. She's trying to elevate my morale or boost it somewhat. Thank God, she always did that.

INTERVIEWER: So after you left St. Petersburg, your stop at Salt Lake City, was that just an intermediate stop?

SMA COPELAND: That was an intermediate stop to serve us that Christmas meal and to give every soldier twelve silver dollars. The first payday in the military for my group. And why they chose to pay in silver... There were a lot of silver dollars back in those days for some reason. I don't know, maybe they were just printing silver dollars as opposed to script. But I recall that I carried those silver dollars in my pocket, weighted down. I'd have to sort of put four or five in one side and five or six in the other side, you know, to maintain some balance. And I wasn't one for spending a lot of money in those days, because I didn't have no money. But that day, that first day, that stop over in Salt Lake City was to feed us the first Christmas meal, initiate a pay record on us, and then pay us that first, well, shall I say, partial...

(End Tape OH 93.1-1, Side 2)

(Begin Tape OH 93.1-2, Side 1)

INTERVIEWER: Sergeant Major, when the last tape ran out, you were talking about getting your partial pay. You ended up saying "...first partial." You were talking about your first partial pay then, right?

SMA COPELAND: Right. From Utah, back on the troop train and proceed to El Paso, Texas. Once arriving in El Paso, off loaded onto two and one-half ton trucks and was transported to Biggs Army Airfield. Biggs Field, Texas, located just on the outskirts of El Paso.

INTERVIEWER: So you got your advanced training there at Biggs, right?

SMA COPELAND: At Biggs. When we first arrived, during in-processing I was assigned first of all to, I believe it was, the 528th Heavy Bomber Group. That Group consisted of B-24s, B-17s, with crews and maintenance crews, and flight crews, etc. And they were packing gear in preparation for an overseas movement to England, as a matter of fact. A few days later some of the recruits, including myself--that had arrived at that time--were called out and they said, "Well, you all are not going with us. We're taking only experienced people. We're going into combat." And we didn't know where they were going. But we found out later that their destination was England. "Therefore, you're not mature enough," or words to that effect. "You don't know airplane maintenance. You don't know flight maintenance." "As a matter of fact, you don't know much of anything, so why should be... (Sergeant Major Copeland was laughing when he said that last sentence.) Anyway, we were reassigned after having been there for four or five days in that 528th Heavy Bomber Group. We were assigned to the base squadron. Now the mission of that base squadron was to support all the aircraft and their crews who were training around the

clock, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. We were formed into three shifts, three eight-hour shifts. And you worked eight and you were off sixteen. And you did this for two weeks and then you swung the shift, so to speak, until you went on the midnight shift and you did that for two weeks, and then you went on the eight o'clock to four and you did that two weeks, then you went on the four to twelve and you did that for two weeks. This was for the duration.

INTERVIEWER: What kind of a job did they have you doing?

SMA COPELAND: Well my job, I guess because of some of the jobs that I had performed in civilian life before having been conscripted into the military, one of them was transporting logs from the forest to the mill, sawmill. Making lumber and making boards, etc. Upon my in-processing that was noted on my record. So when I arrived at this base support squadron I guess they recognized right away, "Well here is a guy that already trained in wheeling and dealing an 18-wheeler." And that's what they assigned me doing. In my cadre an old army master sergeant, I guess he had been in the Army thirty-odd years at that time, talked to me and he said, "Well, I know that you have experience, and I'm going to assign you to this 18-wheeler." Now, we had several of those 18-wheelers, and that was just a portion of supporting those bomber groups who were there training, twenty-four hours a day. But what was my job? My job was to take that 18-wheeler, go to the refinery and load it up with AVGAS (aviation gasoline), return to Biggs Field and park it. When a B-24 or B-17 came in, go to that airplane immediately and contact that crew chief, who was a tech (technical) sergeant in the Army Air Corps. He knew why you were there and he would proceed to assist you in refueling that aircraft. When you refueled that aircraft you moved to the next aircraft. You kept going until you had expended that 8,000 gallons of fuel. Then you went back to the refinery, you loaded

up, came back and waited on the flight line until aircraft begun coming in. And you did this. And so this was happening 24-hours a day, seven days a week. It was in that job that I was promoted to sergeant E... What was it? E4 at that time. You had three rockers. Sergeant E4. And my immediate supervisor was a Sergeant Carpenter, who was a sergeant E6. But this is what I did during my duration at Biggs Field.

INTERVIEWER: So in other words, you really didn't have any specific training, other than your prior civilian training.

SMA COPELAND: That was it. That's it. Yes.

INTERVIEWER: On your first assignment when you were at Biggs, did Ann get to join you while you were there?

SMA COPELAND: Yes. Ann and my Dorothy Ann came, oh, it must have been February or perhaps March of the following year, 1943. I was able to locate a place for us to live off-base. This was situated just about downtown El Paso on 811 McGoffin Street. A very kindly lady had a beautiful home and she had a little chateau out back. She was good enough to let Ann, Dorothy Ann, and I reside in that little chateau. It was literally in the backyard. But we were very thankful that we were able to rent that place for twenty-four dollars a month. Keep in mind that my pay was only thirty dollars a month. However, Ann, about that time, had begun getting an allotment, if you will. I think she received thirty dollars for the spouse and probably twenty dollars for the first child.

INTERVIEWER: While you were there at Biggs, you said you were promoted. How was the promotion system? How did it work during that period of time?

SMA COPELAND: I've often thought about that, because I was never called before a board, a promotion board, or any board for that matter. Someone just told me, I guess it had to be the first sergeant. You know, you had to go in and pick up your pass from the

first sergeant or the clerk to get off base. I guess it must of been the first sergeant, or perhaps the clerk said, "Hey, you're promoted to corporal," or "You're promoted to sergeant." But you see, Butch, that was the last thing in my mind. I could look upon that as being favorable only from the standpoint of giving me a few more dollars to support Ann and Dorothy Ann. You see, because I was not career oriented. I wasn't even thinking in that direction at that time. So, in so far as what procedure was used, I think maybe they... Well, surely my section leader had to recommend me. I am sure of that.

INTERVIEWER: What about the NCOs (noncommissioned officers) that you had there in your first unit? Were they good NCOs? What about their leadership ability?

SMA COPELAND: They were good. I can recall the name Master Sergeant Raymond, who had a long career. I think he was at Pearl harbor probably when Pearl Harbor was bombed, as were many others who were in my base squadron at that time. Raymond was the chief noncommissioned officer in charge of the refueling of every flight that came on that air base. He was an articulate NCO. He was an impressive NCO. He appeared to me to be about forty-five years of age. He'd talk with you, communicate with you. Never hollered at you. Then there was another noncommissioned officer, I guess you would call him his deputy, who was likewise was an outstanding noncommissioned officer. An old Regular Army type person who had a long distinguished service. But they were impressive people. These were people who, I guess, had been in that Army Air Corps since its beginning. I don't know. They treated people well. All you had to do is do your job. Now, if you didn't do your job it was quite evident. All they had to do is just check the register the next morning when they in, or whatever. It tells who was and who was not refueling or maintaining aircraft. The record spoke for itself. But Silas Copeland endeavored to refuel as many B-17s as I possibly could because I knew, and I wanted it to

show on that document. Now that may be one way that you were promoted. You didn't go before the promotion board per se, but you went before the register; what does the register indicate?

INTERVIEWER: Job performance.

SMA COPELAND: Job performance.

INTERVIEWER: What about the morale within the unit?

SMA COPELAND: The morale was outstanding! Outstanding morale! Good morale. Now you could go on passes. You were on the eight-hour shift, but when you were not on shift and you got in your uniform, and you were blitzed up, if you went in that orderly room to get a pass, you usually got your pass. But don't get locked up in Juarez; some of the guys did, I'm sure. Ann and Dorothy Ann and I, we went to Juarez, but of course you know we were not locked up. But back in those days there were so many children out begging. It may be the same today; I'm not sure. They wanted to shine your shoes. They wanted to shine your brass. You couldn't walk down the street with your wife and child for the multitude of children trying to do something to earn a nickel or a dime. Anyway, morale was high. You could go on pass and occasionally you could go on leave, if you had leave time coming, etc. They had clubs. That old club that used to be there until a couple of years ago, I think, was there when I was there. And that big old mess hall, dining facility, we all ate in that one consolidated mess. Earlier we spoke of performance of KP. Well, you see, there were a lot of noncommissioned officers around in those days. Someone had to do the KP'ing. Consequently, corporals--a three-striper--would perform his or her share of KP, and you were on duty for seven consecutive days. And then you would not come up on the roster, KP roster again for maybe six or eight months. Most everyone, especially the lower ranking noncommissioned officers, performed KP.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have very many discipline problems during that period of time? And, if so, how would they normally handle a discipline problem?

SMA COPELAND: I don't remember any disciplinary problems. I remember one time, as far as myself is concerned. Mother and Dad had driven up from Huntsville to visit with Ann, Dorothy Ann and I. They were going to be there two or three days. For some reason I didn't check with the First Sergeant, I just said, "Ann, I'm not going to work this morning," or tonight, whatever my shift was. I just laid out. Maybe I had checked with my buddy and said, "hey, look. You take my shift." We did that sometimes. The First Sergeant had said, "Well, this is okay, but you got to coordinate it." All they're interested in is that those planes were serviced and ready to go when the next crew come out, and that was immediately after it was serviced. When that crew chief said, "We're ready to go," they were off running. But obviously I failed to properly coordinate and have my friend or someone take my shift. And when I showed up, man that first sergeant was looking for me. Well, he called me in and he slapped me on the wrist, you know--he chewed me out. He wasn't an old timer either. He was one of the newer comers, but they pinned those first sergeant chevrons on him. You know, they could make you first sergeant over night back in those days. If there was a vacancy and all, all you had to do, the company commander said, "That's it," and you cut an order and put it on the morning report. For a while, he stood me to, to say the least. Anyway, I learned to coordinate things through the orderly room. Now I don't know of any real harsh infractions of rules, you know, that went on in those days, because everyone was pretty well lined up. You had a job to do and you did it and you'd go off on your eight hours when you're off, or your sixteen hours, as long as you were back there when your shift turn came and you reported in. So I was not aware of any real disciplinary problems.

INTERVIEWER: You said that Ann came down and join you. Did you have very many enlisted persons at that time that had families there at Biggs.

SMA COPELAND: A considerable number.

INTERVIEWER: Where did most of them reside?

SMA COPELAND: Most of them reside in El Paso; in the outlying area. I recall that there was a young couple from Alabama who lived in that little chateau in back of the house; it was sort of a duplex affair. We lived in one side and they lived in the other side. But you could go up and down the street and see these different places, in little, I'll call them "cubbyholes." That's about what they were. Today you would call it a "chicken coupe," I suppose. But none the less, yes, there was a considerable number of young married couples living off post. Now on Biggs Field property, I don't think they had any government quarters. Now right outside of Biggs... Now I believe some of those very housing areas are still there today; they may have been just torn down. There was a project, or a series of houses--low cost houses--etc. I believe that was government-sponsored area. I think you had to be an officer, I'm not certain, in order to occupy those quarters.

INTERVIEWER: What do you feel was the most common problems that faced the married enlisted soldiers when you signed in your first unit there?

SMA COPELAND: I think the biggest problem was trying to subsist on what monetary allowance; I would call it an allowance. It wasn't a pay roll. Trying to subsist on the money that you were getting from the government, from the Army, to maintain your family. You could rent a room for twenty to thirty dollars. And then it's going to cost you--back in those days--it would probably cost you forty or fifty dollars to eat; for a family of three. Dealing with the food ration, the young married soldier... Now we're talking about; you could not buy sugar; you could not buy meat; you could not buy condiments--black

pepper, salt, etc.--unless you had a ration stamp. And even if you had a ration stamp, your money would usually run out about the 20th, in our case, of the month. I recall that the last few days of the month we would eat potatoes and beans. There was no other money. There was no source of income, other than what you was drawing from the military, and that was not sufficient enough--in many cases--to properly clothe and feed your family. So that was a problem; I think that was a major problem with many of the young married people. Now many of them came aboard not with one child, but with two or three children. Many of them were older people, not just young people. And it got to be a real problem trying to maintain your family--feed, clothe, and shelter them--on the income that you were deriving from the Army.

INTERVIEWER: Particularly during the time when you had so many people inducted, right?

SMA COPELAND: Absolutely.

INTERVIEWER: Throughout your Army career, your assignments were predominately in combat arms, correct?

SMA COPELAND: That is correct.

INTERVIEWER: What was the MOS series that you held during that period of time?

SMA COPELAND: Well, my number, Butch, I'm not sure. The armor was 17 dash something, and the infantry was, I don't know. Predominately it was armor and infantry.

INTERVIEWER: So you were armor and infantry.

SMA COPELAND: Armor and infantry. All the way.

INTERVIEWER: Did you attend an NCO academy or NCO school during the time?

SMA COPELAND: Yes. Yep. I attended an NCO academy at Fort Hood. Now the duration of this NCO course, I believe it was two weeks or maybe three weeks. But

primarily it was an operations and intelligence course. Also in Europe, with the 4th Infantry Division, I attended a school setup to train first sergeants of the division on the proper procedures of the division administration--morning report, courts and boards, law, supply, mess--administration in general. So I attended that school.

INTERVIEWER: So that was more of an NCO school.

SMA COPELAND: That was more of a first sergeant school.

INTERVIEWER: First sergeant.

SMA COPELAND: And the one at Fort Hood was primarily an operations and intelligence school. Making out operations orders, how to formulate plans, how to conduct the researches, and how to publish the order.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, because during much of your career you were either a reconnaissance sergeant or an operations and intelligence or operations sergeant.

SMA COPELAND: Reconnaissance, Operations, Intelligence. That is correct. Also platoon sergeant and first sergeant. Those five duty assignments would just about cover my entire military. Operations, Intelligence, Reconnaissance, first sergeant, and platoon sergeant.

INTERVIEWER: What about special qualifications, such as: parachute, rigger, glider, pathfinder, EOD, airborne, anything like that? Did you have any special training?

SMA COPELAND: Well, you see, Butch, I always stuck with the more demanding assignments... (He laughed after making that statement.)

INTERVIEWER: That's right.

SMA COPELAND: ...with the armor and infantry. Of course, those services that you just mentioned, they're also armor and infantry. Primarily I kept my feet on the ground, throughout.

INTERVIEWER: Shortly after you entered the Army you were assigned, of course, to the Army Air Corps and then in late '44 or early '45 you received assignment orders to join the 2nd Armored Division, where you served as a tank commander. Where, when, and what sort of armor training did you receive prior to your assignment to the 2nd Armored?

SMA COPELAND: Well, my armor training, my background, let's go back prior to my induction into the military. And when you say "armor," the first thing you think about are those tanks; big monstrosities. A humongous steel outfit moving across country on tracks, etc. But you go back prior to my induction and we get into that logging business and the 18-wheelers. And then you go on active duty with the air corps and you again get into that refueling operation, again in the 18-wheeler business. So you have to be maintenance wise. You have to be able to detect and correct whatever goes wrong with this humongous piece of machinery. In those days an 18-wheeler was humongous, and they are today. If you don't believe it, go out at I-45 (Interstate 45) and watch them go to and from. I think when I was retreaded, we'll call it, and that's what we called it back in those days, as I retreaded from the Army Air Corps to the ground force, and looking from a personnel officer's standpoint, "Where should Silas be assigned? With his civilian background and his previous military background, we should assign him to a mobile unit, because he is mobile. He's maintenance conscious and he's maintenance proficient in that respect. So when he leaves advanced individual training and he goes to Europe we're going to annotate his record for an armored division, i.e., Hell on Wheels, 2nd Armored." So that's exactly what happened. I'm just surmising what was in the eyes of the personnel officer. I think that's the way I came to be assigned to the 2nd Armored Division.

INTERVIEWER: I forgot to ask you the question about why you were, as you say, a "retread"? Why did you leave the air corps?

SMA COPELAND: I didn't leave voluntarily. I had a good thing. Why would I want to give it up? But you're hearing the news. You're seeing what's happening world wide. We all knew at that time that the war in Europe was over. It was just a matter of days. After D-Day and the big push across France, Belgium, Holland, etc., we knew that was it. Just a matter of days. Now before that, I'm sure the powers to be said, "Okay, look we've got to replace the combat troops who've been in Europe a good many months. We're setting up a point system." If you've been overseas thirty-six months fighting a war, 2nd Armored Division, 1st Infantry Division, 4th Division, 89th Division, etc., just by the sake of being in combat, you have a lot of points that you have accumulated. If you've been wounded two, three, four times you have five points for each combat wound. If you have a Silver Star or a Bronze Star, you've been awarded a Combat Infantry Badge, you're accumulating all these points. Now the boys in Europe are not knowing this, what's happening. But that's what's happening. These are the plans. To get back to trying to answer your question, "Why were we retreaded?" That's why. See, we didn't have points; we had Stateside points only. I'm sitting back here in the States with about 57 points and those guys over, they've built up 150, 175 points in Europe--they've been fighting the war for three years. Why was I retreaded, along with many thousands of others? To go to Europe, make the final push, relieve the worn-out combat troops so that they could come home and be mustered out of the military. Now I think that's why. I'm sure it is. Because I found later, as I arrived, who were coming in on my rear? More retreads. More retreads. Now, when I arrived in my unit the guys already knew that I was coming. And they hung a handle on me--a name--and they knew from where I was coming. You know the word get around. Maybe the first sergeant had an advanced copy. "Hey, you're getting Copeland. He's coming from the air corps and he's been refueling B-29s and B-17s." They began

calling me "Sergeant B-29." I said, "Man, where'd you get this?" But, you see, Butch, I had no problem fitting in to that tank. Now I had never been aboard an M4A3EA, or an M4, or an M26 tank. The newest tank going at that time was the M26 tank. In my platoon I had the old M4. I had one M4A3E8, which had a 76 millimeter on the chassis. But you see, my gunner... I went in as a tank commander, and my gunner--by the name of "Renfroe"--from Oklahoma, Ardmore, Oklahoma. He said, "Sergeant, don't worry. We'll teach you about this tank." The crew took me in, you know. The crew consisted of: a driver, assistant driver who was the bow gunner, the gunner for the big gun, and the loader, and the tank commander. Five-man crew. They taught me what I needed to know about that tank. How to traverse it. How to elevate the gun. How to use the radio. How to talk over the radio. So I fit in real well. Then later something happened to the platoon sergeant. Maybe he became sick. I don't think he was wounded. Maybe he just rotated right on out. But when that happened... Now there were other buck sergeants in the platoon, in the company, but then Silas was chosen to be platoon sergeant for the platoon. Now in lieu of having one tank, I now have five tanks with twenty-five men.

INTERVIEWER: Where did you serve your first combat tour?

SMA COPELAND: The first combat tour was in Germany. The division, 2nd Armored Division and my regiment--66th Armored Regiment, Echo Company--was in the vicinity of Colon, Germany when I joined them.

INTERVIEWER: So, when did you receive your orders to leave Biggs to go to the 2nd Armored Division?

SMA COPELAND: I think I received them probably sometime in December '44.

INTERVIEWER: When did you depart the United States, your port of debarkation?

SMA COPELAND: Debarkation was somewhere in New York. It must have been

from Pine Camp. I think I processed out of Pine Camp, New York and went to the dock, aboard two and one-half ton trucks, and went aboard ship at night; everything had to be done at night. And they're not telling you where you are going.

INTERVIEWER: Just tell me about you trip across to Europe.

SMA COPELAND: Well, we went aboard this victory ship. I come to learn later that, "Oh, you're on victory ship? Oh, big deal." But a victory ship was nothing more than a large long ship that was hastily welded together; many times by some welders who were not very proficient at welding. Sometimes they did breakup, I found later. But we went aboard this victory ship at nighttime. Then the next morning we knew when we were leaving shore and going out deeper and deeper, because soldiers began to become nauseated and sick. But anyway, the next morning they conducted a fire drill and at that time everyone goes out on top deck with life vests on. You look around you and all you can see, just as far as you can see, are ships. You could count hundreds of ships. What's on those ships? Troops and supplies. The other ships are having their drill so you could see other soldiers; troops, troops, troops, troops. And then you'd look back, you know, and you could see the Statue of Liberty. Man, you looked at that Statue of Liberty as long as you could. But anyway, they conducted a fire drill and then we went back in the compartments. From New York harbor to Le Havre, France, thirteen days and nights. We would change course frequently. That's one reason it took so long to go across the Atlantic. Today you do it in what, three days or three and a half. When I came back on the U.S.S. United States one time from Europe, we did it in three days and nights. But it took us thirteen days and nights in World War II to go across. They would go in a direction for a few minutes and then they would change to another direction. We were informed that they were doing this to keep the wolf packs--German wolf packs--disoriented from torpedoing the convoy. I guess it must have

been the third or fourth day out, we were pretty well out in the Atlantic, when suddenly there was a big explosion; a shocking. It literally jarred the ships, or ship. And I thought, "My gracious, we're torpedoed. Grab that life jacket." Then they announced over the loudspeaker that we were not under attack, probably yet, but there was a wolf pack in the area. What they were doing, they were shooting off the depth charges. And when those depth charges would go out and go down underneath the water a ways and explode, it would rattle our ship, as well as the wolf pack. So this went on, after that first time it happened, just daily and nightly. But at that time, even as near as the war being over, the wolf packs were still in the area and endeavoring to destroy the United States Navy. But we made it to Le Havre okay; we lost no ships in my convoy, to my knowledge. And we off loaded at Le Havre, again aboard two and one-half ton trucks. That was the primary mode of transportation back in those days, as it is today. Well, I think we have busses, air conditioned busses today. We went to a rendezvous and from there I guess we were assigned to our units. Mine being the 2nd Armored Division, 66th Armored Regiment.

INTERVIEWER: You said, prior to this, that you were assigned to Echo Company, right?

SMA COPELAND: That is correct.

INTERVIEWER: What rank were you when you joined Echo Company?

SMA COPELAND: Buck sergeant E4.

INTERVIEWER: While you were there... Where you promoted while you were with Echo Company?

SMA COPELAND: I was promoted to platoon sergeant E5. That would have been a staff sergeant in those days.

INTERVIEWER: How long did you serve with Echo Company?

SMA COPELAND: I served with Echo Company until early December '45.

INTERVIEWER: Early December '45. How was the morale in the 66th Armored?

SMA COPELAND: It was high! It was good. We had old tankers in that outfit. Not old by age, they were all young troopers, but most of them were old by virtue of having been there from North Africa, Sicily, Anzio, France, Belgium, Holland, Battle of the Bulge, Rhine River, Ardennes. They had battle scars. They had tanks shot out from underneath them, pickup another tank, get their wounds dressed, go back in. You see, Butch, back there during the World War II days, you didn't serve an eleven month tour and then rotate back to the Good Ole U.S.A. You were there for the duration. When you were committed to battle in World War II, you were assigned to that tank. If you lost the tank and you retained you senses and your limbs, you picked up another tank and you kept going. That's still the case today, but there's a limit, you know. Today it's eleven months, twelve months, or thereabouts and you rotate; which is good. But what I'm saying, the demand was so great back during those days, because that convoy of ships that I went over on there's a good possibility that that convoy would not make it. Therefore, don't look forward to rotation because Silas is not coming to relieve him. So what I'm saying, we had a group of people when I arrived in Echo Company, 66th Armored Regiment and I began to associate with those professional soldiers and those noncommissioned officers. They had to know what they were doing or they wouldn't have survived. They were in some real battles; we all know that. I looked at them and they told me, "Don't worry about it Sarge, we'll teach you." They did. They did. You see, when I got there and looked around the countryside and I saw those German 88's and those German tanks, and I saw those German soldiers, and I saw those bayonets, I said, "Oh, this war is not over yet." They're going to teach me how to survive.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me about some of the missions that you had when you were a tank commander.

SMA COPELAND: Well, of course, the mission was fighting.

INTERVIEWER: Right.

SMA COPELAND: And secondly, if you're going to fight you have to have equipment to fight it with. The mission is to maintain that tank and weapon in an operable order at all times. Be ready to combat the enemy wherever he may be. And thirdly, arrive on the objective as safely and as mobile as you possibly can, because when you get on that objective you can look forward to a counter attack, right away. So you had to have your senses together and you had to have your equipment together, not just so far as reaching your objective is concerned, because if you're not very careful he will take it away from you once you arrive there. And too, we knew that Berlin was our objective. The 2nd Armored Division had an objective of Berlin, as did many others. That intrigued me. We'd been back there at Biggs Field, Texas listening to the radio, you know, Berlin, and Paris, France, and London and all, so I knew where Berlin was located. I'd look on that map. Every tank, every tank commander had a map. You would learn how to read that map and I did quickly, and that was no problem. Our objective was Berlin. In our mad dash, shall we say, for Berlin... Of course, General Eisenhower, Supreme Allied Commander, had stopped the American forces temporarily. "You hold in place," so to speak. "We're going to let the Russians move in close, and as a matter of fact, take Berlin. Then when that has happened, then we're going to move you into your assigned sector of Berlin." So we knew that we were not going to do much fighting unless the Russians were really crushed. I had no qualms about that. You could see the hand writing on the wall, because when you pulled that tank out on the autobahn and you saw divisions of German soldiers throw down their

weapons and moving out in a formation, somewhat of a formation on the autobahn, you knew that it was over.

INTERVIEWER: So actually, after you got there you didn't have any engagements.

SMA COPELAND: Any real engagements, No. Nothing in which I had to engage my tank in a tank battle, for example.

INTERVIEWER: When did you depart Europe to come back?

SMA COPELAND: I believe it had to be somewhere around the first part of December 1945. Because I was back here for the Christmas holidays, and it took us a little time, about six days I think, maybe, to come back across that ocean.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me about that arrival back home.

SMA COPELAND: Oh, man it was one happy arrival! Oh, you bet! I came back on the S.S. Buckner. A ship that was far advanced over that old victory ship going over. I got back to New York, processed out, caught a train and I guess came to someplace down in Arkansas. Yep, I think it was. And from there went to Fort Sam Houston. I went to Fort Sam Houston and I had in my hand a set of orders that...

(End Tape OH 93.1-2, Side 1)

(Begin Tape OH 93.1-2, Side 2)

INTERVIEWER: Sergeant Major, when the last tape ended, you said that you caught a train and went down to Fort Sam Houston and it ended with "I had in my hand a set of orders." Do you want to continue from there?

SMA COPELAND: Yeah. Let me back up just a little bit, Butch, I think I said earlier that from New York I went to Fort Smith, Arkansas. But that's not the case; that was on a later assignment. I went from New York directly to Fort Sam Houston with a set of orders in my hand that read, in essence, that... It was a set of reenlistment orders. That's what it

really amounted to. In Germany, prior to departing the 2nd Armored Division, I had reenlisted to serve three consecutive years with the 2nd Armored Division upon its arrival in the United States. I thought that was one way for my getting out of Europe without staying over there and doing a long drawn out occupation forces type duty and being separated from the family. So the first sergeant and I, Robinson, were talking one evening and he said, "Hey, you know I'm leaving here pretty soon." He's a high point person that had been over there quite a while. Highly decorated, etc. So he's the first sergeant, he's coming home. "You want to go with me?" "Man I can't get out. How can I get out of here?" "Aah, become Regular Army." "You reenlist." "Under what division do I reenlist?" But he had already checked this out with the regimental headquarters personnel officer. He said, "Well there's one way that we can do this so we can get home fairly soon, and that is to agree to go regular." There was a provision in the regulation whereby we could do that. We could enlist from US (conscriptee) to RA, Regular Army, for a period of at least three years and remain with the division upon its return to the United States. Now in that provision we could also take a ninety-day leave. So I thought about that. I said, "Hey, what a good way for me to get home and rejoin Ann and Dorothy Ann, and at the same time take three years and look at the Army and see if this is what I want to do." With that set of orders in my hand, I arrived at Fort Sam Houston and I came home to Huntsville, Texas. I spent three months on delayed en route, so to speak, with pay and allowances. At the end of that three-month period I went to Fort Hood, Texas and rejoined the 2nd Armored Division. It had arrived about early March, I believe it was. They had redeployed from Europe to Fort Hood.

INTERVIEWER: What I'm going to do now, I'm going to ask you about your next two combat assignments and then later on we'll go back and talk about your assignments as

a platoon sergeant, first sergeant, and right on up the line. When did you serve your second combat tour, and where?

SMA COPELAND: I served the second combat tour in Korea. I was stationed in Japan at the time with the 8th Cav (cavalry), 2nd Battalion, 8th Cav Regiment. I believe we were located approximately twenty, twenty-five miles northwest of Tokyo.

INTERVIEWER: That was up in the Camp King area, right?

SMA COPELAND: Camp King. Omiya, Japan.

INTERVIEWER: Did you deploy with the 2nd Battalion?

SMA COPELAND: Deployed with the 2nd Battalion into Korea. Yes, on 18 July of 1950.

INTERVIEWER: Where did the 2nd Battalion land over there?

SMA COPELAND: It landed on the southern portion of the Peninsula. The name of the little town, I want to think it was Yungdungpo, but that may or may not be correct. At that time we were trying to form the Pusan, the Pusan Perimeter. We landed a little bit north of Pusan using assault boats because of the tide. The old LST (Landing Ship Tank), I think that's what it was, could not go close enough into land for us to get off the LST. So we went over the side, using the rope ladders, and came into the assault boats and then made that landing, unopposed, in the assault boats. Then we went inland and began to move north in the direction of Taegu, because Task Force Smith--which was a reinforced tank battalion--that was sent over there initially, was in serious trouble. They had lost personnel, they had lost equipment, they had lost ground. They needed reinforcing, quickly, badly. My unit was earmarked to reinforce Task Force Smith, the task force being commanded by Colonel Smith. So when we went inland and turned north; we headed in the direction of Taegu. I believe the name of that river is the "Han River." Right away we

began to draw fire; we drew fire from day one. We were under continuous fire and/or observation from the North Koreans for ninety-three consecutive days. But what we was really trying to do was to take the pressure off Task Force Smith so that they could withdraw, regroup, and reequip, which was a hard thing to do in those days because everything was being done in a retrograde movement, so to speak.

INTERVIEWER: Did the entire 1st Cav Division deploy at the same time?

SMA COPELAND: I don't think so. I think we probably went over in regimental force. I believe my regimental commander was Colonel Palmer at that time.

INTERVIEWER: What rank were you?

SMA COPELAND: I was sergeant first class at that time. Now what E wise, what would that have been? An E6? Yes, an E6. Sergeant first class E6. I'd been promoted at Fort Hood in the intel and operations department, been promoted to sergeant first class E6.

INTERVIEWER: What was your duty assignment while you were with the battalion?

SMA COPELAND: By duty assignment. When we arrived in Korea, my duty assignment was intel and reconnaissance sergeant, battalion intelligence. They call it I and R; intelligence and reconnaissance. Of course, the Korean Army was no more. They had been annihilated by the North Korean Army. What few remnant forces of the South Korean Army that was left, the American forces, as they came into country would take these remnants and try to integrate them into our ranks. Now back in Japan... Well, we went over there with only fifty-five to sixty percent in strength, and that strength was mostly recruits. Consequently, when we arrived in country we needed personnel to fill up our ranks. And whom did we use? We used what they called the "KATSUSA" (Korean Army Troops Supporting the United States Army) or remnants of the Korean Army. They fit in very well. Now getting back to your earlier question "Now what did Silas Copeland do?"

Well, as intelligence and reconnaissance platoon sergeant of their battalion, I integrated those personnel. As a matter of fact, I had forty-two Korean soldiers. They had on their steel helmets--American steel helmets--and American-type uniforms. Because we wanted to be able to easily distinguish between some other uniform and the American, we gave them our steel helmet and our uniform; we gave them a number on their steel helmets. My lead man, who could speak broken English and understand, also could speak Chinese, Korean, and most likely Vietnamese, his number was 608. I'll never forget, because later on I'll tell you why. When I needed those soldiers to do something, it was through 608. So 608 and our men went on reconnaissance. We were the eyes and ears, so to speak. We didn't go on a combat reconnaissance because we didn't need to. You know, you didn't have to go on a combat recon. You know, they were pushing you, the North Koreans. We knew where they were at all times. So anyway, it was my primary mission, at that time, to just do reconnaissance. See what was there, what they were doing, where were they disbursed, and then inform the battalion commander.

INTERVIEWER: Did you do a vehicle reconnaissance or by foot?

SMA COPELAND: Foot. Foot reconnaissance.

INTERVIEWER: What type tanks did you have in the regiment?

SMA COPELAND: We had M24 light tanks, for a few days, and then they were no more, because a bazooka would knock out one of those M24 tanks; which it did. Our unit lost, well I guess we lost all of those tanks. We lost supply trucks. We lost reinforcement trucks. This was because our forces were so thinly disbursed. When we arrived over there, our battalion--2nd Battalion, 8th Cav--for example, would occupy a position that normally a regiment or maybe two regiments would occupy. Consequently, you were thinly disbursed. When the enemy moved in on you and you tried to concentrate your forces to block or

contain that attack, in essence, what you were doing was leaving a gap open on either the right flank and/or both flanks. The enemy was free to go at will. He would flank you. He would get in your rear. Because, you see, he wanted Pusan. MacArthur said, "There's no way." He said, "If you're thinking..." He's talking about the American forces now, and that is before the United Nations part came into it, came into fighting and to assist us in any way. MacArthur said, "There's not going to be a Dunkirk here. You're not going to be evacuated. It's either do or die." So, what the enemy was endeavoring to do was: bypass you; flank you; get in your rear; and go to Pusan. Then all he had to do was wait for you to make you retrograde movement and he would annihilate you. But we had a surprise for him.. What he didn't know... Well, I guess he did because it went worldwide. It was you know... There was no censoring of the news. We knew that MacArthur was coming to Inch'on. We knew the minute he began landing that he was going to take the pressure off of us. But until that ninety-third day, if I remember correctly, we were hard pressed. I wore my boots... They're sitting in there. You didn't see those bronze boots.

INTERVIEWER: Bronze Boots, Yeah.

SMA COPELAND: Those boots were made for fighting and walking. I went into Korea with those boots on. There were many a night and day that I did not remove those boots, because the first day, first night in combat, even though you talk to these young inexperienced, untrained soldiers and tell them, "Be advised the enemy is coming in on us tonight. He has bayonets." Their bayonets were about that long (He made a hand gesture indicating that the bayonet was approximately two and one-half feet long) on those old Japanese-type rifles. It would put the fear of God into you when you looked out and you could see them, you know. So you'd explain to your soldiers, "Hey, Look. Have somebody awake at all times. Do not pull off your boots. Do not get undressed. Do not lay your M1

rifle aside; sleep with it and keep it with you." But some of them didn't heed the warning. Consequently, some of them were bayoneted in their foxholes, barefoot without their boots on. HOT! JULY! In Korea it's HOT! HUMID! Pull off that jacket. So a couple of times like that then the soldiers began to wise up to the fact that, "No, it's not a good idea to remove my boots and jacket and lay my weapon over to one side." So, we made a lot of mistakes and we corrected a lot of mistakes, but not until lives were lost and prices were paid. Nobody had any idea when we were sitting back in Japan that, that the... One Sunday, the twenty-fifth day of June--Sunday--and we heard over the radio--the radio was playing--that the North Koreans had crossed the 38th Parallel. We knew right then what it meant.

INTERVIEWER: Back during the Korean War the 1st Cav Division received some bad press concerning its combat readiness and performance in combat. How do you assess the readiness of the 8th Cav that you were in, when you arrived in Korea? How did they perform?

SMA COPELAND: Well, I'll have to say this, Butch. They performed well. However, they were ill prepared. They were not prepared to fight in terms of equipment, personnel, and training. As I said earlier, we went over there at sixty percent strength. It wasn't intended that we be full TO&E (Table of Organization and Equipment). For all divisions, all units in Japan at that time, that was the order of the day; only sixty percent. That's all you're getting. And secondly, "Who wants to train? We fought the war. We won the war in Europe, Pacific, wherever. We don't need soldiers trained to fight, it would seem." Consequently, you could preach and talk and tell them, "Unless you do this, and this, you're going to die." They wouldn't take you seriously until they could see it with their own eyes. So to answer your question. We were not adequately trained. We were not adequately equipped. We did not have adequate personnel to do the job that we needed to

do in order to contain the North Korean Army below the 38th Parallel. Consequently, the American forces, what few were there, were hurt and hurt badly. Our regiment was chopped to pieces. Time and time again our leadership was inexperienced. Our officers did not have any prior combat experience. We had a few NCOs who had been to Europe and who had been indoctrinated over in Europe, you know, who had some combat time. I would have to say they were seasoned noncommissioned officers. But you see, the soldiers that he was sending were basic training soldiers who were there facing a seasoned, hard seasoned, North Korean Army who had already whipped the socks off the South Korean Army and now willing to take on whatever came their way; they were not waiting. They were moving and moving fast. So we were pressed. Yes, the regiment received some bad publicity. Ann was saving articles for me. It was being published in the paper, over TV, radio, all the media, that the 1st Cav Division, the 8th Cav Regiment, had been annihilated; they were no more. Well, you can imagine how Ann was taking this. Her husband is there, as were other people right here from this area. I could take you up to the cemetery and show you graves of those who didn't survive the onslaught. And I'm told that the regiment lost its regimental colors. Now Butch, I don't know if that's so or not. Maybe during your research in history and what not... I don't know. People have asked me, "Didn't the 8th Cav lose..." "Man, wait a minute. I wasn't a color-bearer. I'm a fighting man. I don't know where the colors were located. Maybe someone threw 'em down or ran with 'em."

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. I've heard a lot of comments concerning the 1st Cav Division colors and the units within the 1st Cav. I think what I'll do is make sure when I get back to El Paso, I'll research that. There are a lot of rumors...

SMA COPELAND: There is. There are some rumors floating around. Gee, I don't know what happened to our battalion colors, because I know that the sergeant major and the

adjutant... That was before the sergeant major became a combat man, you know. Today, all sergeants major, you know, are combat ready. But back then the sergeants major were awarded an administrative MOS 1502; I believe it was. And it was their business to be with the adjutant because he was administrative. You know, keep the duty roster, check the morning report, first thing and another. So, what I'm saying, maybe during this big battle in North Korea when the Chinese overran us, it maybe that our battalion colors, I'm just surmising, you know. I don't know. It may have been that they were lost. I'm not sure. I'M REALLY NOT INTERESTED IN IT! Because those colors are not going to save my life. Well, where were we. Back to your question that you understood that we had some bad publicity.

INTERVIEWER: Right.

SMA COPELAND: Yes we did. We did. We had every cause to have some good and some bad. I would like to look at it as favorable publicity, but that's not the way it is pitched a lot of times. You know, if you lose your colors, this is not favorable so far as troopers are concerned.

INTERVIEWER: During your year when you were with the 8th, tell me how the tactical situation in Korea had changed. By the time you got ready to leave, had it improved? Had it deteriorated? Or what?

SMA COPELAND: By the time I got ready to leave, on or about 25 June 1951, the situation had improved tremendously. But let me go back a little bit and just tell you what happened. Of course, when General MacArthur made the landing at Inch'on and he put the 7th Division, and I believe the 2nd Division... Anyway I know it was the 7th Division plus a lot of other troops. When he put them aboard in the rear of the North Korean Army, it immediately began to relieve the pressure on what was left of the 1st Cav Division, 24th

Division, and maybe the 25th, I'm not sure. Then after that we were able to lick our wounds, reorganize, resupply, and begin to push forward to reestablish the 38th Parallel. We did that and we did it in a somewhat of an orderly fighting fashion, based on my knowledge of tactics during World War II and then studying the terrain boards, and maneuvers, etc. We were doing this in an orderly tactical fashion. And we were not getting a lot of people hurt, lost, etc. We went to the 38th Parallel and we reestablished the 38th Parallel. And we sat. This must have been about October 1950. Then from the 38th Parallel it was decided that we're going to move into North Korea; we're going to reciprocate. We're going to kick some butt with this North Korean Army. We're going to take their capital, Pyongyang, and we're going to lay it to the ground. And we did. We did that. We moved on into North Korea and we pushed the North Korean Army back, back. We inflicted casualty after casualty. We took prisoners, POWs (prisoners of war), and we took his capital away from him. My regiment moved in there and established a command post in the North Korean capital. Up in that area the peninsula comes together, narrowly. Then it spreads out as you go north again. Now it was decided, I think by General MacArthur, primarily his decision, that we would not stop at the capital. We would move farther north and establish a "MacArthur Line," and that line was north of the capital where the peninsula was narrow, therefore, not needing as many troops or you could better utilize what troops we had to maintain a line across that narrow peninsula. Then the word got out, "Home by Christmas." Home by Christmas. We've wiped the North Korean Army; it's no more. We're in, we've taken their capital. We've taken what few prisoners they have, you know, taken what soldiers they have prisoner. Anyway, "Home by Christmas." Morale shot up. I think I sat down one night in the moonlight and... In Korea is the brightest moon on earth. On a clear night when the moon is out, a full moon, you can read a letter sitting

there, by the moon. I think I wrote home and told Ann, "Hey honey, I'm coming home for Christmas." You're not coming home, Silas. The Chinese had a different view of the thing. We began to edge. Head North. Head North. We were wanting to cutoff the evacuation of our POWs, the POWs that they were holding; American POWs. They had captured a lot of our people and they were taking them north. So my battalion was assigned a mission after we reached the North Korean capital. We was assigned the mission of forming a task force and then going in and cutting off, pinching off, the evacuation of the American POWs. And we did that. The 187th Airborne dropped behind and then we went through and made a tie up with the 187th Airborne; that was Task Force Rogers. We recaptured some of our Americans that they had captured. We got them back and medicated them, and evacuated them, etc. But then General MacArthur decided, "Well, we'll just keep pushing. We'll keep pushing. We'll go to the Yalu River." And we did. And I still have these KATSUSAs, what few I hadn't lost, you know, were still with me. They had to be, some of them, evacuated for various asunderous reasons. Some of them were wounded. I guess some were killed. Some were sick. But I still had 608 with me; he was my interpreter. We got in a position, my battalion, not too far from the Yalu River. The farther north you go toward the Yalu River and Manchuria, the wider that peninsula becomes. So we positioned ourselves--my battalion--a ways from the Yalu River. We have an outpost on a mountain top; my men. And we have a CP (command post), Battalion CP, setup below in a little valley. We'd been there three, four days, something like that, doing reconnaissance, and looking, and waiting; I guess waiting to move on to the Yalu River. I think that was General MacArthur's ultimate plan. Well, his ultimate aim was to nuke... He wanted to nuke China. But you see, all the time that we reconning... Now keep in mind, there were no North Korean soldiers to contend with; that was a thing of the past. It was merely a

thing of occupying the ground and going as far north, I guess, as we could. But anyway, my 608 came to me and he said, "We have a prisoner." "You have a prisoner?" "Yes, and he's not a Korean prisoner." "What is he?" So I told him, I said, "Well, go and talk to him. Interrogate him." This guy was telling me, "Well, we can't interrogate him. He doesn't speak Korean." I surmised that they may have ruffed him up a little. Anyway, he came back and said, "Yeah, He's talking. He China." He was Chinese. Then immediately I went to the battalion commander. I said, "Sir, we've got Chinamen in our area." "Oh, yeah. Okay." But what had happened, even at that time you see, they had went around us. They had infiltrated us and they had setup positions in the rear of all American forces. I keep reading reports that there were a half million or three hundred thousand, but whatever it was they succeeded in over running all American forces. That's why the evacuation from Hungnam, or whatever, you know over on the Japanese side, by boats, to get them back down south and try to reestablish some element of fighting. But we were overrun. The Chinese... Of course we alerted our troops right away; what few we had. I don't think we ever had more than sixty percent, and maybe it got down to forty percent. I'm not certain. So it was just a matter of a little push. It was late in the evening; eleven or twelve PM. We had our lookers out, our feelers out, our outpost out. And we were sitting in a valley with mountains on either side. I heard a bugle blow. Now that's unusual. Then, off in another direction on another mountain top, I heard a response, using another bugle. And then on another mountain top you would hear another bugle. They were communicating. They were saying, in essence, "We are in place. Start your attack." The attack began with a series of rockets. You've seen the Russian rocket launchers, mobile rocket launchers, about twenty-four to thirty-six on each launcher, I think. This went on and on and on into our position. Rockets and artillery and mortar. So what are you going to do? Are you going to

attack these guys? You don't know how many there are out there. But one thing you're going to do, you're going to try to get some cover some way or another. When the fire was lifted, we knew what was coming, that is those who were familiar with battlefield tactics. We probably wished that they'd keep firing the rockets, you know, because as long as they do that they can't attack you. The minute they lifted the rockets and artillery and mortar, they began an attack, an cavalry attack, on ponies.

INTERVIEWER: Is that right?

SMA COPELAND: Yeah, ponies. How I thought I'd never love to see the day that I would witness a real live battlefield pony cavalry attack. But they were on those small Mongolian ponies when they were attacking. They were attacking on foot and they were attacking in waves. They came at us in such volume until there was no way that you could contain them. All you could do is begin making your retrograde movement, trying to get back in a position where you could reconsolidate, because we had our people spread thinly, spread out, you know, and it was hard to communicate, difficult to communicate with them. We lost a lot of people that night, as did most all the units that were on that Yalu River, shall we say, "line." In order to make a retrograde movement, you had to withdraw through the little village so you became involved. Now they had the village occupied. Before they began their bugle blowing and before they began the rocket attack, they had already flanked us and gone around and gotten themselves in position. So when we made the retrograde move... They started pushing us from the front and they were going to hit us from both sides. And they did. Consequently we became involved in village fighting that night. I went down; I was hit that night. Something hit my helmet and it knocked me down. Something hit my leg. I don't know what it was, and I went down. There was another little soldier who was working with me. He was hit because he began to holler, "Sergeant

Copeland! Sergeant Copeland! I'm hit! I'm hit!" The battalion operations sergeant, who was a big guy by the name of "Mask," he's hit. Well, we were together because we were working as a team in the reconnaissance and operation section, you see. When we began moving we kinda sort of stayed together, and we pretty well did. But anyway, we were hit and we were badly beaten in there that night. We finally went through and out of that village and I carried what people... Now the operations sergeant was hit so badly until he was immobilized. I carried him up a mountainside and got him in a position, he, myself and the battalion surgeon, and the S3 (operations section) clerk. We waited until morning so we could look around and see what was happening. The next day, in the afternoon, we went down off the mountainside to the road. There was a vehicle there. Somebody was there in an old three-quarter-ton truck and we just put him on that truck and then he motored out, and I never saw him again.

INTERVIEWER: Who was that? Which one did you...

SMA COPELAND: The operations sergeant.

INTERVIEWER: Operations sergeant.

SMA COPELAND: Master Sergeant Mask. After I had rotated back home and had been at Texas A&M, I guess a year, I received a letter. I've never thought about it much. I received a letter from Master Sergeant Mask. He said, "I want to thank you for saving my life." Man I didn't save you. He said, "I would've been left in that ditch that night had you not have been there and drug me up the mountainside." The other little guy that followed, he had a wounded leg. But anyway, we went back and then... I think we're trying to answer your question in comparing the old days to the later days, or the new days to the latter days. But as we began to go back, of course, we were rendered completely unfit for combat duty because the elements of the battalion were split far and wide. So many people were lost,

wounded, evacuated. We went into reserve until we could get some replacements from the States.

INTERVIEWER: When you first arrived in Korea, on your resupply. Since you moved from Japan, they had not built themselves up to resupply until later on in the war. Tell me about you problems with resupply as soon as you landed.

SMA COPELAND: Well, I think on that first ninety days, you know that we were holding the line in the Pusan perimeter, I don't think we had a problem with resupply because resupply was coming in from Japan and could be quickly expedited to the troops. However, I do understand that not all units were able to obtain all the ammunition that they needed, even back during the early on days. Now as far as I am able to recollect, it wasn't until after we made the exodus out of the Pusan perimeter and began the rapid movement north, did we begin to have a resupply problem. As a matter of fact, after the onslaught, the Chinese onslaught I would call it, it was getting pretty cold in the evenings at that time. We did not have winter gear. In as much as the Chinese Army had already infiltrated us and cut us off, he had gone into our rear, then the problem of resupplying what troops were left in the northern portion of the peninsula became a most difficult one. They had air drops, but not always did we... The Chinese took some of those air drops supplies. So I think it did become a problem of resupplying the troops who were fighting in the northern portion of the peninsula. Some did not have boots. Some did not have a heavy coat. Some did not have a sleeping bag. Some did not have a blanket. Some became injured from trench foot. Some lost their toes. Some froze to death. But it was one of those trying times.

INTERVIEWER: Let me ask you another question. If you compare the NCO leadership in World War II with Korea, why don't you try to give me a comparison of the leadership abilities of those NCOs.

SMA COPELAND: Well, Butch, you know, very few wars have we lost. Going back in history, the noncommissioned officer has always performed and performed well. He did the best he could with the provisions that he had at his disposal. In World War II, they won the war; they contributed. They were big contributing factors until the end of the war. The noncommissioned officer, he knew his business; he did it well. The same thing applies in Korea. Now we took a licking in Korea, but I would have to say that what noncommissioned officers were there, early on, they were usually combat trained. Most of them had been in World War II, but they were very few and far between. They performed well, considering the limited number of troops and the limited amount of equipment. But you see, that didn't last long; only a few days. And thank somebody, the reserves were called up. We received noncommissioned officers and officers who came in right from working in the store, doing their jobs--whatever it was in their business--and what not, I think without the benefit of having some refresher training. Consequently, when they arrived in Korea... Now if you're asking me to compare this noncommissioned officer with the noncommissioned officer that I reported to when I first arrived in Europe in World War II, I would have to say that the performance of duty and the knowledge of the noncommissioned officer in Europe, for various asunderous reasons, would exceed that of the noncommissioned officer reporting for combat in Korea. As I said earlier, there's a reason for that. It's not that this noncommissioned officer was hesitant to perform his duty, it's just that suddenly he was taken out of civilian life, shipped overseas, and immediately thrown into combat without any benefit of a goodly bit of refresher training or orientation as to what he was getting into. None the less, with what they had and under the conditions, he did his job.

INTERVIEWER: What about the similarities in soldiers between the two tours?

SMA COPELAND: The two tours in uh...

INTERVIEWER: Korea and in World War II.

SMA COPELAND: The similarities. I could not tell much difference, really. Of course, during World War II, the Nation, the Nation was at war. Consequently, you had a conglomerate of personnel all thrown into the pot, so to speak, and all willing to go and willing to do their duty as best they could. But during the Korean situation, even though the reserves were called up, you still had a nation who was not supporting that war.

INTERVIEWER: It was basically the mindset of that soldier. One war they were supportive, and now here's another one that came along that the Nation didn't support.

SMA COPELAND: That is correct. The Nation did not support it. And...

(End Tape OH 93.1-2, Side 2)

(Begin Tape OH 93.1-3, Side 1)

INTERVIEWER: This is a continuation of the interview with Sergeant Major Copeland. The date is October 20, 1993. Sergeant Major, we're going to wind up our discussion on Korea. When we ended yesterday, we were talking about the similarities in the soldiers, and we were talking about leadership, etc., comparing the ones in Korea with World War II. Would you compare the discipline during the two tours? Was there any difference in the discipline? Had the way of disciplining the troops changed? Or anything as far as discipline is concerned?

SMA COPELAND: Well, Butch. Really, I could not see an appreciable amount of difference in the leadership and the discipline during the Korean War as opposed to World War II. Of course, keep in mind that during World War II, the Nation had been at the war, been involved in the war for somewhat four or five years. Then as we wound down from World War II, you came out with a seasoned group of noncommissioned officers who had a

great deal of combat experience, etc. Then five years later, 1950, you become involved suddenly in a police action. It was a different type war in Korea than what we had in Europe. Fighting a different enemy in a different style, etc., with a different group of people. When you came aboard with Reserve noncommissioned officers who did not have the benefit of the long training prior to going into combat, so therefore you could see, see some difference in the type and the style of leadership among noncommissioned officers during the Korean Conflict as opposed to World War II.

INTERVIEWER: When did you depart Korea?

SMA COPELAND: I departed Korea on or about 25 June 1951. My unit, the 2nd Battalion, 8th Cav Regiment was located in the vicinity of Panmunjon. That's where the headquarters, I believe, if you could call it that, of the peacekeeping force are located. I'll never forget, one of the officers, matter of fact, several of the officers and the noncommissioned officers that I was working with or fighting with at that time... Dean W. Myerson, Lieutenant Dean W. Myerson, who came to the battalion early on in Korea and he was just about a year, maybe a year and a half out of the Academy, West Point. Dean was sort of a gungho type individual. The battalion commander, of course, assigned him as a platoon leader in one of the companies; I believe it was Charlie Company. It appeared to me that Dean thought he could just whip the entire North Korean Army, by himself, to the point that it got to be dangerous letting Dean continue to lead that platoon into combat. As Dean became more aggressive and more persistent in pursuing the enemy, so did his men, trying to emulate his leadership style. Well, Dean made out alright. However, the battalion commander, I think after about four or five months--that was about the normal stay for a lieutenant in a platoon at that time--but the battalion commander saw fit to pull Dean out and make him the assistant S3; the assistant operations officer. I could tell that Dean was

very uneasy with that job. He would fidget around as if he wanted to get back out with the troops, which he did. But the old man would not let Dean go back to the troops. He kept him in the operations section. Dean and I became big buddies. Like I said, we were situated, at that time, just prior to my departure from Korea, in the Panmunjom area. So the morning of my departure to go back on rotation and return to the States, I talked to Dean considerably. "Well sir, most likely our paths will not cross again." "Oh yes, sergeant, it will. One of these days." So I bade him good bye and departed. And I thought of Dean, a many a time. "What happened to him?" "Did he survive in Korea?" "If so, where is he stationed?" "What is he doing?" "By this time he must be at least a three-star general somewhere in our Army." It wasn't until I became Sergeant Major of the Army, when one day someone knocked on the door and entered; it was Dean W. Myerson, whom I served with some thirty years prior in Korea. He was in a civilian suit of clothing. So we grabbed one another and we hugged, you know, and we sat down and we drank coffee and we reminisced. We relived those days when he and I were in Korea together. Well, what was Dean doing at that time? I'm not exactly sure of all the things that Dean was involved with, but he had an assignment with the Department of Defense and that assignment carried him to various places all over the world. Dean would come into my office, occasionally, and we'd just sit and talk and drink coffee and reminisce. One day Dean showed up with his beautiful lady, Bea--I think that's what he called her--and his two sons. He introduced them--they were about fifteen or sixteen--and told me where they lived, which wasn't too far from Ann and I were living at Fort Myer, Virginia. We invited them over. They came over one Sunday and Dean brought with him a pair of bronzed combat boots, and he set them on the floor. He said, "Well, you don't recognize these boots?" I said, "Yeah. They're made for walking." He said, "Absolutely. Those boots walked in Korea, Silas." What had

happened, Mrs. Myerson had his combat boots that he used during the Korean Conflict, had them bronzed. He was proud of them and he brought them in and he wanted to show them to Silas Copeland. So that's how Silas came into his bronzed boots. Unbeknownst to me, Ann and our two daughters one day eased those old boots out of my closet. I never was much for throwing things away, so I held on to those boots. They sent them off to be bronzed and brought them back in the beautiful shiny bronze-looking configuration, and they presented those "boots made for walking" to their father, their husband. You've seen them. They're sitting in there on the hearth,

INTERVIEWER: Right.

SMA COPELAND: the fireplace, right now. I departed Korea 25 June 1951, en route back to the United States, by boat. I went to Japan, out-processed again from Japan, and came to the States on a thirty day delay en route to a new station. I guess it was ten days or twelve days before it was time for me to go back to Fort Sam Houston, Texas and assume my regular assignment to some unknown unit; unknown to me. Ann and I borrowed a car-- Ann's brother's car--and we drove to Fort Sam, Houston. In the quadrangle of 4th Army Headquarters, at that time, and we're walking along in front of the headquarters--I had on my uniform and I had that 1st Cav patch on my uniform still. As we were walking in front of the headquarters, a person on the second floor stuck his head out the window that he had raised up and he said, "Soldier." He meant the soldier. Well right away... First of all, I'm looking for a button unbuttoned somewhere on my uniform. He said, "Can you come up here for a minute?" I could see that he was an officer. So Ann and I meandered up to his office and opened the door, and went in. He introduced himself as Lieutenant Crittenberger. His father, I believe, retired as Lieutenant General Crittenberger, who has served long in World War I and World War II. Lieutenant Crittenberger said, "Well now. In case you're

wondering why I called you." He said, "General Gay would like to talk with you." Now General Gay, Major General Gay, at that time, was the deputy 4th Army commander. However, General Gay was my division commander of the 1st Cav Division, in Japan. He's the one that took the division to Korea. After about six months or so, I believe the general was wounded and he was evacuated. He was reassigned to 4th Army as the deputy army commander. Lieutenant Critenberger said, "Now the general was looking out the window." Just standing, you know, like generals will do, as anyone will do sometimes. Just get up and gaze out, look out the window. And he recognized me right away, because you could see that cavalry patch. One of the best looking patches, shoulder patches in the United States Army. He said, "The general asked me to call you up here." "Okay. Fine." So he knocked on the door. I entered the general's office and reported to him. This was history for Silas Copeland. I've never reported directly to a general in his office in my life; in my military career. He said, "Well, I see you're wearing the 1st Cav Division." "Yes sir." I recognized General Gay right away as my former division commander. "When did you get back, sergeant?" "Sir, I got back about two weeks ago, as a matter of fact." I left the division 25 June and this was mid-July when I talked to the general. "Where was the division located? What were they doing?" I knew about the time he departed the division, six months prior, and I tried to fill him in as best I could from a front line infantryman's combat view of what took place. Of the onslaught, Chinese Army over running us, Mongolian ponies, bayonets, machine guns, troops, etc. He just sat and listened. He said, yeah, he'd been reading the reports and hearing it on the news, etc. But it just seemed to me that the general wanted some "fresh blood," so to speak, to reinvigorate him, I think. He would very well have liked to be there. So we sat and talked I guess forty, fifty minutes it seemed. It seemed to me forever, because I'm ill at ease sitting there in that big plush

leather chair in front of this two-star general deputy 4th Army commander. I'm wondering what the outcome really is going to be. After a while the general asked me the question. "What are you doing up here?" My response was, "Well, sir, Mrs. Copeland and I are up here to try and ascertain my next assignment." I said, "Right now I'm on delay en route and my leave time is coming to a close in about ten or twelve days." The general said, "Well, where would you like to be assigned?" Immediately, I didn't have an answer; that was unexpected on my part. Well, I knew we had Senior ROTC (Reserve Officers' Training Corps) ongoing over at Texas A&M University, at College Station, Texas. Now that was the first thing that popped into my mind. I responded and answered the general's question. I said, "Sir. I thought about Texas A&M University." The general said, "Well, that's where you'll go."

INTERVIEWER: Before we get into assignments... We've completed World War II, and also Korea. Let me ask you about your combat assignments in Vietnam, and then from there we'll proceed over to the overseas tours. That way we can kinda compare World War II with Korea and then with Vietnam. How many tours did you have in Vietnam?

SMA COPELAND: Actually, I only had one tour. The tour was broken by the 1st Infantry Division phasing out of Vietnam and a crew returning the colors; some two hundred and fifty or three hundred personnel who were already qualified for rotation back to the States by virtue of having completed their eleven month tour. I had seven and a half months in country at that time. I had not had an R&R (Rest and Recuperation) out of the country, which I was due. I was a little bit overdue. So I approached my division commander and asked him to grant me permission to accompany the division colors back to Fort Riley, and at the same time authorize me to take my seven day R&R in the States as opposed to going to Hong Kong, or going to Australia, or going to Hawaii. It's about the

same distance in some cases. The commanding general said, "Yes. That'll be fine." So he put me on orders. Had the staff put me on orders accompanying the colors to Fort Riley, Kansas.

INTERVIEWER: That was "The Big Red One," right?

SMA COPELAND: That was "The Big Red One." We had the ceremony changing... What division was stationed there at that time? The Twenty... The Twenty something. Maybe it was the Twenty... I'm not sure. But we exchanged colors and that became the home of the 1st Infantry Division. The Secretary of Defense was down there. I met the Secretary of Defense; I was introduced to him. Matter of fact, I introduced myself. After the change of the colors, and the ceremony on the field, we went to an area, a dining facility, sort of, and there were several people, officers--high ranking officers--from the Pentagon there. The chief of staff was not there, but I think probably the deputy, perhaps, and the DCSOPS (Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations), DCSLOG (Deputy Chief of Staff for Logistics). I met those people, and they looked at me and I looked at them, and we reminisced, and I'm in my combat fatigues--jungle fatigues--and in my jungle boots, etc. Clean, mind you, starched, pressed, because this is a show that we're conducting. I recognized Secretary Laird right away. He'd been talking to a group of officers and suddenly they departed Secretary Laird's area. I grabbed Ann by the hand and I said, "Look, let's go over and introduce ourselves to the Secretary, and just talk." We went over and I introduced myself and he knew that I had just returned because I was on display out there with the Big Red One colors. I introduced Ann and we just stood there for a few minutes and talked to the Secretary. He had the normal questions that anyone would have. "What's going on in Vietnam?" "Where were you stationed?" Of course, the Secretary knew this. He'd been to Vietnam several times. But that was my first time to meet

Secretary Laird. At the conclusion of the ceremonies, Ann and I boarded a plane and flew to Houston, Texas, and from Houston, Texas, by automobile, back to Huntsville; that's where Ann and the two boys were residing while I was in Vietnam. Now my orders out of Vietnam read: "Upon completion of seven days TDY (temporary duty) in the United States, return to headquarters, 4th Infantry Division." It was located in the Central Highlands; in the Pleiku area. Was it An Khe or Lai Khe? I don't remember which one it was. Either An Khe or Lai Khe. (Note: An Khe is in the Central Highlands.) I went in and reported to the commanding general, General Walker. He said, "You know, we've been waiting for you." "Oh, yeah." It seemed from the tone of the general's voice that I had over stayed my time. But anyway, I had not. I was, perhaps, a few hours early in reporting. During the mean time they'd had an interim sergeant major. They brought the division artillery sergeant major up to fill-in that division command sergeant major slot while I was doing my en route to the "States and back to Vietnam. So it was a happy meeting with General Walker. I was happy to see him and it appeared that he was happy to see Silas Copeland.

INTERVIEWER: When you got your assignment to Vietnam, where were you stationed?

SMA COPELAND: We were stationed in Girppengin, Germany with the 4th Armored Division. We had been in that location approximately a year; maybe thirteen or fourteen months. We came there from Erlangen, which I think we discussed previously. The division commander came to our area, General Sutherland, James Sutherland, Major General James Sutherland. He, I, and the brigade commander, Colonel Perczdirtz--later, Major General Perczdirtz--were just reminiscing in our brigade conference room. The general looked me right in the eye and he said, "When are you coming to division?" Well first, I looked at my boss--Colonel Perczdirtz--and then looked back at the general and attempted to

answer his question to some degree of satisfaction. I think I responded, "Well sir, I have one of the best assignments that I have ever had in the Army. Brigade sergeant major, 2nd Brigade, 4th Armored Division." I don't recall what his other comments were. I think, "Well, most likely you will be leaving your assignment." That dropped it right there. But I know that he had talked with Colonel Perczdirtz previously to that and said, "Look, my sergeant major is rotating." Sergeant Major Strickland had been there almost three years and it was time for him to rotate. He was an outstanding division sergeant major; later corps sergeant major. But none the less, when Sergeant Major Strickland departed, that left a vacancy at division headquarters. Shortly thereafter, Ann and I and the two boys displaced from Erlangen to Goppengin; the division headquarters.

INTERVIEWER: What was your assignment when you joined the 1st Infantry? Were you assigned as the division sergeant major?

SMA COPELAND: My mission assignment was that of the division sergeant major. When I received orders while assigned to headquarters, 4th Armored Division, in Europe, the order did not specify any brigade, any battalion, or any specific assignment. So I began to wonder, "Well, am I going to a battalion? Am I going to a brigade? Just what will be my assignment in the Big Red One once I arrive in Vietnam?" Well, that question was answered somewhat when I received a letter from the division sergeant major who was currently stationed in Vietnam as the division command sergeant major. He was welcoming me to the division. He was pointing out that, just suggesting, that I should bring certain items of clothing in preparation for a forthcoming R&R once you were about six or seven months in country. I should have this and I should have that in order to enhance the housekeeping part of it, so to speak, in Vietnam. I judged from the comments that the division sergeant major was making in his letter to me that I was going to be his

replacement. It wasn't long after I received his letter, until we received a copy of orders from DA--from the Department of the Army--in the Pentagon assigning the sergeant major--The Big Red One sergeant major--to my slot in the 4th Armored Division. However, he did not arrive there. I understand that the division commander wanted to bring an in-house sergeant major--as he brought me as an in-house sergeant major--up to be division sergeant major. So that's what happened in so far as my replacement with the 4th Armored Division. I arrived in country--in Vietnam--the nineteenth day of September 1969. At that time the division sergeant major had departed about a week prior to that time.

INTERVIEWER: What was the area of operation for the 1st Infantry Division?

SMA COPELAND: Were situated in an area covering many square miles, as you can well imagine, about twenty-five miles north, northwest of Saigon. The division headquarters per se, division forward headquarters --and that's the headquarters in which I operated out of as the division sergeant major--was located in a beautiful rubber plantation. There were some Vietnamese villages situated close by, and we took a look around, you know, the first day. I think I arrived thereabout ten or eleven o'clock in the morning. I was taken in and introduced to the chief of staff. We sat and we talked a little bit and he gave me some guidance. I'm sure based on what the division commander, General Guy S. Malloy, had already given to him that, "This is the way I would like for Sergeant Major Copeland to function in this division." So the chief of staff of the division proceeded to convey to me the general's wishes and desires. And that is, that I was to accompany the commanding general and his aide-de-camp. As the division sergeant major, and as spokesman for all enlisted personnel in the Big Red One, I was going to be by the side of that commanding general. When the commanding general is among the troops doing his thing, his observation, his talking, etc., with the officers, the division

sergeant major will be among the noncommissioned officers doing his thing with the men and the noncommissioned officers. When we would fly in to a firebase, for example, the first thing that happens, the division commander will be briefed by the battalion commander, the battalion S3, and the battalion S2, on: what the current situation was; what had happened; what do you foresee is going to happen. The division sergeant major, Silas Copeland, is skirting the firebase looking at emplacements, talking with men, the soldiers, accompanied by their noncommissioned officers. Are they properly fed? Do they have the equipment? Do they have ammunition? Do they have weapons? Are they operable? How's their morale? Are we doing everything at division level that we can do? How can I support you? The battalion sergeant major, his post is also on that fire support area. But all during my tour, which was seven and a half months with the Big Red One, that's what I did; day in and day out. Now occasionally, about every two or three months, the division commander would depart the area and fly back to the Philippines, because his family was in the Philippines. I think they called that "Operation Handshake." Well, what did Silas Copeland do during the three days or so the division commander was gone? I would switch over to the ADC--the assistant division commander--and accompany the ADC and his aid in their helicopter. But you see, that was quite different and quite an experience because General Wolfe, who was the ADC for Maneuvers... General Wolfe, as Colonel Myerson--later General Myerson--in Korea was a real aggressive, gungho type individual. He took a lot of chances. So that was a real eye awakening for Silas to get on the chopper and accompany the ADC for Maneuvers for three days. Sometimes I'd be glad to see the division commander return, you know. I think it was an un-written policy, probably was put out by General Abrams at that time, that, "Hey look. We've lost a lot of division commanders." You know, everybody needs to be shot a few times just to keep the blood

circulating, etc. But I think it was an un-written policy that as the commanding general, you do not become engaged directly. Therefore, when that chopper, when you lift off, that chopper should be out of rifle range or out of machine gun range. Now the general... Before we left the division forward headquarters, the helicopter pilot would keep circling round, and round, until he gained enough altitude that he had that division commander and his entourage aboard the helicopter, and he had them safely out of machine gun range. As he approached the firebase, in the jungle, he would get right over the firebase and let down. But not General Wolfe. General Wolfe would go in aggressively, dodging fire, dodging machine guns, dodging rockets, etc. He came out okay. I've since met him back here in the States and talked to him several times.

INTERVIEWER: Was he a brigadier general?

SMA COPELAND: He was a brigadier general. He retired as Major General Wolfe. I later met him down at Fort Jackson, South Carolina. I was invited down there to speak to the area AUSA, Association of the United States Army. We were at a meeting, and there I met General Wolfe again. He was a cigar smoker and he always put the bite on the division sergeant major to keep him in a supply of cigars.

INTERVIEWER: How was the morale in Vietnam compared to Korea and Germany?

SMA COPELAND: The morale in my division, the 1st Infantry Division, in Vietnam, I sensed that the morale was high. You'd see some low ebbs here and there, but I've been in the jungle. For example: When my division commander would depart on his "Operation Handshake," and I went out with the ADC for maneuvers, sometimes those operations would consist of accompanying the troops in an assault. Now I've talked to many a combat soldier--infantryman--in Vietnam. Many a time they would be quite surprised...

(Interview session briefly interrupt)

INTERVIEWER: We just had a little break here and what we're going to do is continue on with the discussion of comparing the morale of the soldiers in Vietnam with those of World War II and Korea. Do you want to continue on where we were talking about the morale?

SMA COPELAND: Well, I was going to add, Butch, many times when I would be in the company of soldiers in the jungle, they would look around, and of course they could recognize that you were an old timer. "Who is this fellow?" "Who is this soldier?" Then they would recognize the sergeant major, command sergeant major insignia, but here is a foreigner that has shown up. Then you would introduce yourself and this seemed to boost the morale of the young soldier out there to have a senior noncommissioned officer accompany him on whatever his mission was. So I encouraged the sergeants major of the division that whenever possible, and they should encourage their first sergeants too... They don't necessarily have to go on each and every assault, but they should let the young soldier know that they're in the area and their primary purpose of being there is to support that combat soldier and make sure he gets everything that he needs to accomplish his mission, and that he is not the only one directly involved in the war; generally, Vietnam. Now if you can inview the minds of the young soldier, his morale is boosted a thousand fold. I found that to be a fact, and that's what I endeavored to do when I would accompany the general to the firebases in those jungles.

INTERVIEWER: When you take a look at... During that period of time, we went in Vietnam, up and down as far as drug and alcohol problems, etc. Will you address that part for me? As far as in the division? First the soldier in the field, versus the soldier back in garrison. And then what type problems did you have in that area?

SMA COPELAND: You're asking me the same question, Butch, that the Chief of

Staff of the Army asked me when I went before him for an interview prior to becoming Sergeant Major of the Army. The general said, "What kind of problems? Do you have drug problems? Do the soldiers use drugs? What about alcohol?" My answer was, "Yes sir. They use drugs." "What do they use?" "Marijuana." "Do they use alcohol?" "Yes sir, alcohol." Because we issued it to them. We made it available to them. The alcohol portion, not the marijuana, the hashish, or that stuff. Men used it, but it was controlled by the noncommissioned officers. As an example: This one particular time we were visiting an artillery firebase located way in the jungle. Everything is located in the jungle in Vietnam. As the commanding general was talking to the battery commander and the officers around there, I could see a few beer cans strewn around here and there, near the gun emplacement; 105mm artillery gun emplacement. It appeared to me, that based on the number of beer cans, that perhaps someone in that battery, some soldier, was probably getting more than his fair share of the beer. Now if that be the case, that's going to deter his ability to comprehend setting and laying that artillery piece where it should be in order to fire upon the enemy as opposed to firing upon his friendly troops. You have to know a little bit about artillery fire to realize just how important it is for each and every individual in that gun crew to know his stuff, otherwise that artillery round is going to go astray and it's going to fall right in friendly territory. Anyway, I called the section chief--a sergeant--to one side and asked him about those beer cans. I gave him my view that it appeared that there were an excessive number of cans, and if that be the case, some of your men are probably a little bit woozy, or have been. He said, "No Sergeant major. That's not the case." He said, "I only let them drink two cans of beers a day." "Well, do they drink it all at one time, or do you sort of let them drink one this morning and one this afternoon?" "No. It's spread out." He assured me that there was no intoxication. I said, "Well, that's

fine. Now that we've got over that hurdle, what about the police of the area?" Now the young sergeant--that day we called them what? Shake and Bake--a young buck sergeant who had been, I guess in the service for about a year, looked at those cans thrown around the area and he said, "Yeah. I guess we could do a little policing." But getting back to your basic question, Butch. What were the problems? There may have been times... I can not sit here and tell you knowingly and tell you truthfully that there were not some problems. I heard of some problems whereby men had been intoxicated on beer, and maybe they went off their rocker for having smoked too much marijuana, and this sort of thing. But that's where the noncommissioned officer came in; when that happened. I cannot cite any specific example at this time. But in meeting with the sergeants major and first sergeants on firebases, we always discussed these sort of things, that "This is an area in which you and I have to keep our fingers on because it can get out of control easily." Did the troops use it? Yes. Was it a significant problem, one that would detrimentally affect the operation of the mission? In my area, I would have to say, not to my knowledge.

INTERVIEWER: So in other words, if you did have a problem. The NCOs at each level below, did their job and took care of it.

SMA COPELAND: They did their job. They did their job and took care of it. Let me back up a little bit. You asked the question earlier on when I was first assigned to the Big Red One division headquarters. I knew that I needed a way to, earlier on, introduce myself to the senior NCOs and let them see me, and let them talk, and let them get to know me, and vice versa. So after having been in the division for a few weeks, I called a meeting of all the sergeants major, all the command sergeants major in the division. We met at division forward, in the chapel.

(End Tape OH 93.1-3, Side 1)

(Begin Tape OH 93.1-3, Side 2)

INTERVIEWER: You were saying that you met with the troops in the chapel. That you were going to introduce yourself to the senior NCOs.

SMA COPELAND: To the senior NCOs, especially the sergeants major, command sergeants major of the division. I relayed to them my views of what we, as sergeants majors, should be doing to make sure that we were supporting the troops to the best of our ability. Then I let them know that I was there for one purpose, as division sergeant major, I was the person they could call upon for support. I was the person they could turn to if they needed a senior noncommissioned officer. They did that many times. I recall one time that this would not have been a problem, but it was on a Christmas, Christmas Day 1969. The general and I had been visiting a firebase, which was normal. Each day we visited several firebases. They were preparing the noon meal. The general was looking over the meal being prepared and talking to the cooks and wishing them a Merry Christmas. We got back on the chopper and departed. The general came on the intercom and he asked a question. He said, "Sergeant major. Did you see any ice in the kitchen?" "As a matter of fact, I didn't see ice, sir. No ice." He said, "Neither did I." General Malloy said, "Sergeant major, take care of that." You know, that was it. Well, I switched to another channel on the radio. I guess we were at a thousand feet altitude, and I called the DSCLOG, the support command sergeant major. Normally he doesn't stand by the radio, but I got a message to the support command sergeant major; Sergeant Major Ortiz. I said, "Hey, look. We are at so and so and we just departed a firebase located at such and such a coordinate, etc." There was no point in giving it in code because the enemy knew we were there. They were watching us and we were watching them. But anyway, I said, "The general and I have noted that--more probably the general had noted--there was no ice at the firebase." So in

about the same tone of voice and about the same wording that the general used on the division sergeant major, I used that same tactic on my support command sergeant major. I said, "Sergeant major take care of that, and please call me back." Well, in about an hour he called me back. He had ice, by way of helicopter, delivered immediately to that firebase. Well, what I'm saying here, the general was more observant than what you might think. You know, he picks up on these little things, and that's where the division sergeant major comes in. I should have caught that before the division commander caught it. More importantly, that battalion sergeant major and/or the... maybe he did. Maybe he knew there was no ice. But what was he doing about it. He may have been endeavoring to get ice and someone may have told him, "There's no ice available." But ice was available. I cite that example, Butch, just to give you an idea of some of the things that we became involved with. Primarily, the division command sergeant major is not someone who picks up an M16 rifle, or an M15 rifle, or a bazooka and a handful of grenades and starts running out through the jungle shooting and firing here and there. His primary mission in life is to make sure that those soldiers in the jungle, and everyone else supporting him, is doing everything humanly possible to make the completion of his mission as easy and comfortable as possible.

INTERVIEWER: When we take a look at the soldiers that we had in Vietnam... Once again, we fought three different type wars. World War II was one sort of a war. Then Korea was a different kind of war. And now here we are in South East Asia fighting the Vietnam War. When we take a look at those young soldiers, and try to compare those to, once again, to Korea and World War II. What was similar about them? Maybe, what did you see that was a little bit different in the quality of the soldier, etc. Just kinda compare them.

SMA COPELAND: Well, let me give you some similarities, Butch. Prior to my departure from Europe--en route to Vietnam--our deputy chief of staff of the 4th Armored Division, Major Ecoppi, came to my office one day. He had just recently returned from Vietnam; from the 1st Cavalry Division, located, area wise, just adjacent to the Big Red One Division. Major Ecoppi pulled up a chair and sat down. He said, "Sergeant major, I'd just like to talk with you a little bit about your forthcoming assignment to Vietnam." He said, "I realize that you were in Europe for a while during and right after World War II. You were also in Korea as a straight leg, as an infantryman." "But," he said, "I have to tell. The war that you are about to become engaged in is unlike any war that you have ever fought in;" meaning World War II, and Korea. I found that to be very true. Now the similarities of the soldiers in Vietnam as opposed to Korea, and as opposed to World War II. The similarities were, here are American soldiers--either voluntarily or by conscription--in Vietnam waving the flag, hacking out the jungle, hacking their way through the jungle, following their young officers, following their young noncommissioned officers; most of the time very young noncommissioned officers. You go out and you talk to them. You meet with them. You rap with them. You find, that in similarities, THIS soldier is no different than the one that you fought with during World War II and/or Korea. Now what is his opinion of this war? Opinionated soldiers were different in Vietnam than those in World War II, and Korea. The opinion of the young soldier, by in large, in Vietnam was, "The war stinks! It literally stinks. Why am I here? Why are we here?" They're getting the news over the radio. When they go back for a little rest at the firebase, they turn on the TV, and they watch it on TV. They know what's happening in the United States. The whole United States, as far as they are concerned, is against the war. Opinionated. He is a hundred and eighty degree opposed to the Vietnam War; now this is generally speaking. Now about the soldiers during

World War II. The young soldiers that I operated with, being a young soldier myself in World War II, never questioned the loyalty of the United States. They never frowned upon what the President had to say or the Secretary of Defense, or what their leadership had to say. You accepted that. That was it. Because of your loyalty to your Country, you went ahead and you did your job, in World War II. I think primarily because there were sixteen million men and women involved in that war, you could see and you knew full well that "I'm not here alone, because there's sixteen million brothers and sisters here with me. The Nation is behind me." It was an all out effort. Then four or five years later, now you become involved in another type war in the Far East; Korea. You could see, shall we say, "the loyalty." You could see the loyalty of the soldier. Not that he is not still a red blooded American, but could see that his mental support of that was not like those in World War II. Then a matter of five or six years later, you carried over into Vietnam. The support, the mental support, the physical of a soldier on the front line is going down, is going down. The reason being, it's not only the soldier, but it's the Nation. The demonstrations on campuses. The demonstrations in the street; "Hell no, I won't go." "I'm burning my draft card." The boys that fought in Vietnam were the poor, the destitute, the defenseless person out here in our communities that had no other monetary means of going to college, enrolling in the universities, or going into the Reserves. He didn't have money to buy a slot, if you will. Slots were being sold. But you see, these had that only one alternative, and "I'm the bait." "I'm the guy that's going to take the blow in the jungles in Vietnam." I've had young soldiers talk to me just on those terms. "Why me?" Then they see it on the news on television and read it in the papers--The Stars and Stripes, etc.--that the entire Nation is thinking along those lines. Consequently, he becomes disenchanting and his morale is lowered. He gets a letter from mother, from father, from sweetheart, from wife. Sometimes

he gets one from his children, if he's an old timer. "Dad, why are you there? Come home." Many times the only way home was in a body bag. This hurt the soldier in Vietnam. Then you might want to ask sometime, I'm pretty sure, that... Butch, you'll probably ask me how did the news media treat us.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. A little later on I'm going to get into that.

SMA COPELAND: Yeah. But you see, all this is taking a toll on the morale of the soldier.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think one of the biggest challenges for a noncommissioned officer in Vietnam was to try to build that morale? You know, you can teach a soldier leadership, but when you get into that psychological portion, I think they were really challenged to try to build the morale of that soldier. Do you have a comment on that?

SMA COPELAND: One of the biggest challenges for the noncommissioned officers, that is from squad level, fire team level, right on up to the division sergeant major--Silas Copeland--is to maintain morale among the troops. Deterioration of morale in a fighting unit can be catastrophic. It can tear the unit to pieces. It gets young innocent soldiers killed. It gets commanders relieved; it ends their careers. It gets senior noncommissioned officers relieved, also. The big challenge, Butch, for the noncommissioned officer at all levels, from the division level right on down to the fire team leader, is to keep the morale of that soldier. How do you do that? One way to do that is to show him, by demonstration, that he is not alone in the jungle, and that although you may not be there by his side, day and night, wherever you're located in those firebases, you're his prime supporter. Whatever he needs, all he needs to do is just say what it is. I need clothing. I need food. I need ammunition. I need weapons. But you see, he shouldn't have to tell you that. If his fire team leader, if his platoon sergeant, if his first sergeant, if his sergeant major were doing

their job, then that soldier is not going to have to turn to him and say, "I need this and this and this." But many times it will happen, you see. Just like there was no ice on the firebase. The noncommissioned officers at the lowest level should have... And most likely they did. I'm not saying that they were not aware of it and they may have been endeavoring to do something about it, but you see, they were not able to do it successfully. That's where the division sergeant major came in. But the big challenge for the noncommissioned officer is to keep the morale of that soldier boosted. If his morale is good, his fighting ability is good. If his morale is low, you have a malfunctioning weapon in the area. When that happens, you have a problem.

INTERVIEWER: Whenever you left to bring the colors back to Fort Riley for the 1st Division, couldn't they consider the amount of time you spent there as a full tour? Or was there an understanding that "you take this division back and then you return." How did that work?

SMA COPELAND: Well now, Butch, they could have. Now they, meaning, I guess, at theater level, could have said, "Okay, he's completed seven and a half months in country. He has been authorized to accompany the colors back to the United States. Why not reassign him and give him credit for having completed a tour in Vietnam." Now the in-theater ruling was... When all this draw down began, they had to start somewhere. Is it going to be six months, eight months time in country before you were authorized to rotate? For example: My division was earmarked to draw down, or phase out of Vietnam and return to the United States. Well, who is going with the division and who is going to stay in country? The in-country ruling was that all soldiers that had completed eight months in country would be phased out and redeployed to the United States. Now THIS sergeant major had completed only seven and one half months, and he too should comply with the

rule just like all other soldiers. So it was determined that in as much as I had served, only seven and one half months, that I should go back to Vietnam and complete my tour and be given credit for completing a tour in Vietnam.

INTERVIEWER: In the 1st Infantry Division, did just the colors change? Did most of the troops and everything stay in place or did they physically bring the troops back from the 1st Division?

SMA COPELAND: Only the colors changed. A contingent of probably 350 personnel who had completed eight or more months with the division were returned with the colors. So when we made the landing in Fort Riley, Kansas--by way of C-141 aircraft--we had with us a contingent of soldiers who had fought in Vietnam eight or more months. They had completed their tour. I think that probably was the case. But most surely, they would have to had completed more than eight months in country.

INTERVIEWER: Now, the 4th Infantry Division. Was it in place in Vietnam, or was it another movement of colors to Vietnam?

SMA COPELAND: The 4th Infantry Division, when I joined them, they were in place.

INTERVIEWER: You joined them as the division command sergeant major.

SMA COPELAND: As the division command sergeant major.

INTERVIEWER: Why don't you take a few moments to kinda compare the two. First of all, the area of operation. What was the area of operation for the 4th Division?

SMA COPELAND: Well, the area the 4th Division was occupying, terrain wise, was considerably more mountainous because we were situated in the Central Highlands. The area extended from the coast, on one side of Vietnam, to the border on the other side; Cambodia. We were occupying that area where it was very mountainous, if you will. It was very difficult, as it was during the Korean Conflict, for soldiers to negotiate those

mountains. When they would go into an attack or defend their positions, it's more strenuous, shall I say, to tote the ammunition up the mountainside as opposed to where the 1st Infantry Division's area of operation was located; farther south.

INTERVIEWER: Where was the headquarters for the 4th Infantry Division?

SMA COPELAND: The headquarters was located at Lai Khe, I believe it was. Now I get Lai Khe and An Khe mixed up a little bit. The headquarters for the 1st Division was either An Khe or Lai Khe, and vice versa for the 4th Division.

INTERVIEWER: Actually, the 4th Division was up toward the Pleiku area. Up in the Central Highlands.

SMA COPELAND: Up toward Pleiku.

INTERVIEWER: Right.

SMA COPELAND: In that general area.

INTERVIEWER: In the 1st Division you were further south, just north of Saigon in a more open area.

SMA COPELAND: More flat. More flat terrain.

INTERVIEWER: Now the 1st Division, was that II Corps? Were you in the II Corps area?

SMA COPELAND: We were in II. II Corps area.

INTERVIEWER: What about the 4th Division?

SMA COPELAND: That was III. That was a completely different corps. The III Corps. I believe that was it. But it was a different corps. Yes.

INTERVIEWER: We know that terrain had a bearing on the operation of the 4th Division. What effect did that have on the soldier, having to operate in that area versus, say, the 1st division?

SMA COPELAND: Well, as you well know, the units go into the jungle and establish, what we refer to as a "firebase," using the old television wagon train method, if you will. You lift the soldiers by way of helicopter into those areas. Usually the engineers go first, and with their bulldozers and other heavy equipment, they hack out and build a firebase from which the ground infantry and artillery soldiers can operate, as opposed to them walking or climbing the very rough mountainous terrain. In some cases, they had to do just that when they would go out on patrol or defend their firebase. You take that type terrain as opposed to flat terrain down south, I would say that it was more demanding so far as physical being is concerned. But as far as facing the enemy and dealing with the enemy, I personally, could see no difference.

INTERVIEWER: You did have a little difference in weather too. Sometimes in the evenings, late in the evening, it could get chilly up in those mountains; versus the heat down in the Delta area.

SMA COPELAND: Yes. Yes it could. Yes it could. As you well know, it could be raining twenty-four hours a day. If it wasn't raining, the humidity was such that your jungle uniform was completely wet anyway. Now the 4th Infantry Division made an excursion over into Cambodia. This as about July or August of 1970. When the word got out back here in the United States... As a matter of fact, I think the word was out before we even put troops into Cambodia, that we had a plan to go into Cambodia. My division went into Cambodia. The general and myself and his aide-de-camp, and the gunners, door gunners on the gunship, went in after the infantry had been inserted over in Cambodia. We knew where these cache were located. When we say "cache," we're meaning stockpiles of weapons and ammunition. The North Vietnamese soldiers had come down the Vietnamese Ho Chi Minh Trail and had stockpiled this cache to be used against the 4th Infantry Division personnel,

which they were using then. That's why we went in there; to upset their plan to continue attacking the personnel of the division. So when our troops were airlifted and made an attack on that cache of ammunition, weapons, etc., the general and I went in and we took a look at this cache. It was humongous. They had enough weapons and ammunition stored in bunkers and underground embankments, etc., to last them months and months. They'd come across the border and attack us at night and then go back across the border and take up their area of operation around their caches. But that didn't last very long because the opposition and demonstration back here in the States was such that the President... I don't think he ordered us to come out of Cambodia because, officially, we were not in Cambodia. But physically, Silas Copeland and the troops of that division were in Cambodia fighting the North Vietnamese Army. We withdrew and we did not go back into Cambodia.

INTERVIEWER: Sergeant Major, when did you leave Vietnam? Before you left Vietnam you were selected as the Sergeant Major of the Army, is that correct?

SMA COPELAND: Yes. That's correct.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. A little later on in our interview, we will get into details about you selection, etc. When did you leave Vietnam to come back to the States?

SMA COPELAND: I left Vietnam on the nineteenth of September 1970.

INTERVIEWER: Then you reported to Washington, D.C.

SMA COPELAND: Went to Fort Myer, Virginia. Well, first of all I came back to Huntsville, Texas and picked up the family and packed the household goods and moved to Fort Myer, Virginia.

INTERVIEWER: During your career, you were command sergeant major of four divisions, right?

SMA COPELAND: Four divisions. Two infantry divisions and two armored divisions.

INTERVIEWER: That's just about a record.

SMA COPELAND: Well. I think that would be a record. I don't know of any other command sergeant major who has been fortunate enough to have been assigned to four different divisions as the division command sergeant major. I believe that is a record.

INTERVIEWER: Let's talk about your non-combat overseas assignments. A little earlier we talked about the 1st Cav going from Japan into Korea. Where were you assigned in Japan with the 1st Cav?

SMA COPELAND: My battalion, 2nd battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, was located at Camp King Omiya. Now Omiya, Japan is located, in relation to Tokyo, approximately 20 or 25 miles northwest of Tokyo.

INTERVIEWER: And when did you arrive in Japan?

SMA COPELAND: I arrived in Japan, I think it was mid-March. I know it was in the month of March. I believe it was somewhere around the fifteenth. Probably the twentieth of March 1950.

INTERVIEWER: Where did you come from?

SMA COPELAND: I came out of Fort Hood, Texas. I believe from the 66th Armored Battalion. I believe that was my assignment at that time.

INTERVIEWER: What rank were you when you arrived in Japan?

SMA COPELAND: I was a sergeant first class. E6.

INTERVIEWER: What was your job?

SMA COPELAND: My job was battalion intel sergeant. Battalion intelligence sergeant. Well, at that time, the table of organization and equipment, the TO&E, specified that the battalion commander would be authorized and I&R, intelligence and reconnaissance platoon within the battalion. It was that position that I filled. As battalion intelligence

sergeant, also operated as the I&R, intelligence and reconnaissance, platoon sergeant. Of course, we all can imagine what the mission of that intelligence and reconnaissance platoon was. It's just what the term implies. That is, recon and reconnoiter the area and determine what's out there. Where, when, why, etc., and keep the battalion commander informed as to the enemy situation, if you will.

INTERVIEWER: The 1st Cav Division there in Japan. What was its mission in Japan at that time?

SMA COPELAND: It's mission was purely occupation. After the war, World War II, the 1st Cav moved into Japan and they took up the duties as that of occupying the country. That's what the mission of the 1st Cav Division was during my tenure with them in Japan.

INTERVIEWER: And you did say that the division and you battalion was operating, actually, under strength according to the TO&E. Right?

SMA COPELAND: Well, we were, in so far as strength was concerned. Now my battalion, strength wise, was only about sixty percent of the personnel authorized by the table of organization and equipment, by the TO&E. Now we had our headquarters company, A, B, C, and I believe, Delta Company. At the time the TO&E specified those five companies. But each of those companies were operating at a reduced strength. That strength was somewhere around sixty percent.

INTERVIEWER: What kind of a training program did you battalion have?

SMA COPELAND: Field training wise, the battalion would displace from Camp King Omiya to the foothills of Mount Fuji, located some thirty or forty miles away. In that area we would conduct battalion type operations; fire and maneuver, scouting, patrolling, and the normal field type training that a normal infantry battalion would conduct.

INTERVIEWER: What kind of problems did the American soldier have living in

Japan during that period of time, the difficulties that he may have faced.

SMA COPELAND: In my battalion, as far as living conditions are concerned for the single soldiers or unaccompanied soldier, they lived in adequate billets. They were well maintained. They were well furnished. The food was good. We had a chapel located right near the troop billets. Many soldiers attended chapel services on Sunday. Now for the accompanied, married soldier, their living conditions, I would say, were not quite as adequate as the single soldier living in the billets on post. As you know, the Chinese quarters, or their houses, are quite small. If you arrive in Japan with a large family, as some of our senior noncommissioned officers did, you were assigned two sets of quarters; they were built close together. I recall that our battalion supply sergeant, when his family arrived... They had arrived prior to my arrival there. But he was telling me that, I think they had six or seven children with them. He was assigned two sets of Chinese quarters in order to accommodate his family of about nine or ten. But to hear this S4 (Battalion Supply) sergeant talk about those quarters, he considered them adequate. He was happy to have been assigned those quarters because he could be with his family, and vice versa.

INTERVIEWER: What did the soldiers do for recreation and entertainment over there, on their off-duty hours?

SMA COPELAND: A lot of them would catch a bus into Tokyo; downtown Tokyo. Now what they did in Toyko, I do not know. I guess they attended clubs.

INTERVIEWER: That was an unaccompanied tour for you, right?

SMA COPELAND: It turned out to be an unaccompanied tour. When I was assigned to the 1st Cav Division in Japan, you did not have concurrent travel with the family authorized. The reason being is that the quarters were not readily available for a family upon the arrival of the soldier in the area. Consequently, the waiting period could be

anywhere from six months, to a year, or fourteen, sixteen, or eighteen months. Upon my arrival, I immediately went to the personnel officer and submitted an application for government quarters and movement of my family from Huntsville to Japan. I think some four months later, Ann and the two children, Dorothy Ann and Paula Gelane, were in the process of getting their inoculations in preparation for movement to Japan. But then I'd been there only four or four and one-half months when the war broke out in Korea. That stopped or curtailed their movement to Japan. Then from Japan, I went into Korea and fought the war for eleven months, while Ann and the two girls continued to reside here in Huntsville.

INTERVIEWER: Is there anything else you would like to mention about the 8th Cav Regiment before we move on to discuss your tours in Germany?

SMA COPELAND: Well, you know, I've always looked back on the 1st Cavalry Division and the 8th Regiment, to which I was assigned. I've always been proud to have been assigned to such a unit who has a long combat record, dating back, way back. That's one reason why, after the draw down, after World War II, they retained the 1st Cav Division to continue on active duty because it had a long proven historical combat record. I'm very proud to have been assigned to that division. I've always looked up to that division.

INTERVIEWER: The 1st Cav goes back to the Indian War days.

SMA COPELAND: Goes back to the Indian War days. They fought here in Texas. They fought at Fort Bliss. They were stationed at Fort Bliss, Texas before they moved to the South Pacific during World War II. I watched them train, using mules, going up the old Logan Height mountainside. When I was refueling B-17's, and B-24's, and B-29's, stationed at Biggs Field, I could observe the 1st Cavalry maneuvering up the mountainside. I used to stand and watch those horses, having been raised on a farm, and I admired their

function, their operation during their maneuvers prior to moving out to the South Pacific in World War II. I have a great deal of pride and esprit de corps with the 1st Cav Division.

INTERVIEWER: I may be jumping ahead, but when you became Sergeant Major of the Army, when you went back and visited the 1st Cav Division, I guess you had a lot of pride in your heart about that.

SMA COPELAND: I did. I certainly did have a lot of pride. I went back. I visited with them in their area of operation in Vietnam. I had a great deal of pride, even though the manner in which they went about performing their mission, during that time while stationed in Vietnam, was quite different from the way they were performing their mission during World War II. One thing that was very obvious; horses and mules were not being present, you see.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. They were airmobile.

SMA COPELAND: The helicopter became the horse and mule. Absolutely.

INTERVIEWER: And they were probably one of the hardest working divisions in Vietnam.

SMA COPELAND: Yes they were. Yes they were. I will have to mention Sergeant Major Kenneth Cooper, who was my corps sergeant major in Europe, prior to my going to Vietnam. He had come out of Vietnam from the 1st Cav Division. I admired Sergeant Major Cooper. I would put him among the top of the tops command sergeants major in the Army. We all respected him; he and his family. We got to know one another in Europe. I was easy to know them, understand them and socialize with them. He was a guy you appreciated being around. When I was alerted to come back and be interviewed as Sergeant Major of the Army...

(End Tape OH 93.1-3, Side 2)

(Begin Tape OH 93.1-4, Side 1)

INTERVIEWER: Sergeant Major, when the last tape ran out you were talking about Sergeant Major Cooper. And I don't know if we have it on tape, but anyway, you said he was in the running for Sergeant Major of the Army the same time you were. Do you want to go ahead and continue?

SMA COPELAND: Yes. This was Sergeant Major Kenneth Cooper, who I knew very well. When I was scheduled to come back to be interviewed for the Sergeant Major of the Army job, Sergeant Major Cooper, who was the command sergeant major of the 1st Cavalry Division, he was scheduled to come back also, to be interviewed. However, he ran into a little difficulty. I understand that his chopper--the chopper in which he was riding--was shot down and he was lost in action. But I have to back up a little bit from that. There was another outstanding command sergeant major, who was my corps sergeant major; III Corps sergeant major at Fort Hood, Texas, when I was stationed there. A sergeant major by the name of Joe Venable, who was command sergeant major of the 1st Infantry Division in Vietnam. Actually, I was his replacement. I was to be his replacement because he and his division commander, Major General Keith W. Ware, was shot down near the Cambodian border. Both of them were killed.

INTERVIEWER: To add to that. At the Academy, we had a building named in honor of Command Sergeant Major Cooper. We had the Cooper Lecture Center, and then we had the Venable Conference Center, too. So I thought I'd add this in for historical purposes.

SMA COPELAND: Yes. Absolutely. You see, Butch, here are two outstanding sergeants major that I had, over the year, personal association with and they were my command sergeants major, even though I was division sergeant major, both Venable and Cooper were my corps sergeants major. Venable was the III Corps command sergeant

major at Fort Hood, when I was command sergeant major of the 2nd Armored Division. Kenneth Cooper was command sergeant major of the VII Corps command sergeant major, in Stuttgart, when I was division sergeant major of the 4th Armored Division. So I got to know these two outstanding command sergeants major. To go to Vietnam, and suddenly they come missing or killed, you know, you've lost a lifelong friend. Then you take over as the replacement for Venable in the 1st Division, you know that you're subject to lose your life. But that's understood.

INTERVIEWER: Right.

SMA COPELAND: Then when I go back to be interviewed and then a person whom I'm to travel with--going back to report to the Chief of Staff of the Army--suddenly loses his life in Vietnam. You look around and you say, "My God. How fortunate are you, Silas Copeland. Both sergeants major that you've served with over the years are suddenly gone and you're en route for the interview." But you see, we miss those guys. Now the reason you miss those guys so much more than you miss some of the other personnel who lost their lives also, is because you did have the honor and the privilege of serving long tours of duty with the young soldier and you didn't know them as well as you did some of the other senior noncommissioned officers.

INTERVIEWER: Now on your second non-combat tour, you were with the 22nd Infantry, in Germany. When did you serve with the 22nd, and where were you stationed?

SMA COPELAND: Well, I was stationed at... At...

INTERVIEWER: Was that the one at Kirschgoen?

SMA COPELAND: That was the one at Kirschgoen. The 22nd Infantry Regiment was stationed at Kirschgoen. I arrived there in late August or September 1953. I departed from there fourteen or fifteen months later. I believe it would have been December, thereabouts,

in 1954. Now I went over there on an unaccompanied tour. During those days it was very seldom, if ever, that you were authorized concurrent travel with your family to a foreign duty station. The reason being--in Europe--is the availability of family quarters was not such that it permitted concurrent travel, that is, take your family and move right into quarters. When I arrived in Kirschgoen, I went in and talked to the regimental personnel officer about putting in for family quarters. He said, "Well, sergeant, it's going to take you fourteen, sixteen to eighteen months to be assigned family quarters." My enlistment was coming up before that time. I thought about this and said, "What is the point in my putting in for family quarters when my enlistment is going to be up about fourteen or fifteen months hence." So I decided not to put in for family quarters and to leave Ann and the children at College Station--Texas A&M University area--where I had been assigned Senior ROTC duty. Leave them there; finish out my enlistment with the 22nd Infantry Regiment; then come home and get out of the Army. That's what I did. I came home to Fort Chaffee with eight, ten years in the Army, and I got out. I think, probably at that time, I had every intention of staying out of the Army because I had, had two BAD experiences in dealing with separations from the family. One was in Japan, which obviously, it was going to take long periods of months of separation from the family before being assigned quarters. The second one was with the 22nd Infantry Regiment in Kirschgoen, Germany; sixteen to eighteen months of separation. Why? Then the third unaccompanied tour--where? How many months? In discussing this with the family, they said, "Why don't we get out." So, we did. We got out. We had bought a home at College Station; a nice little small home. We used the GI Bill and paid it off in twenty years, at four percent interest. I said, "Well Silas. Get out. Go to Texas A&M and enroll in the school." I had become accustom. I had been hooked, so to speak, at A&M. I said, "Oh man, this is a corps, that is a corps, that

is a corps!" It was all male. I admired those cadets. I said, "I won't become a cadet. I'm too old for that sort of thing. But, I can certainly become a student." So we laid out from December... You know, you couldn't enroll during December; you had to wait until Spring. During that time, we had second thoughts. We said, "Well, maybe we better stay in the Army." You could be out of the Army up to ninety days, at that time, and then you could come back with your master sergeant rank, in my case. I mean first sergeant. I was a first sergeant, E7. So I went to Fort Hood. The stipulation was that you had to find a vacancy. "First Sergeant Copeland, if you come back into the Army, first, we have to have a vacancy for you, otherwise, we'll have to take you down a little bit, you know, in rank." So I shopped around on post. And with the 4th Tank Battalion, I went in down there... Someone had told me... I met a friend on post. He knew what I was wanting to do. He said, "Hey, I know where there's a vacancy for a master sergeant, E7. Down at the 4th Tank Battalion operations section." I went down there and went in and talked to Major Smith, Harold Smith, who was the battalion operations officer. I was in civilian attire. We sat down and talked about it. He said, "Yes, I'd love to have you." I gave him my background, the experience that I had. I'd been to the operations and intel school. I had operated in Korea. I had two combat tours. I'd sure been working. So we went and talked to the personnel officer and he began the ball rolling. They enlisted me. They enlisted me back into the Regular Army.

INTERVIEWER: When you were in your first assignment with the 22nd, you were a first sergeant, right?

SMA COPELAND: I was a first sergeant.

INTERVIEWER: That was your first time as a first sergeant.

SMA COPELAND: That was my first time to put the diamond on. Now prior to that

time, during intermittent periods, I had been pinch-hitting, or I had been understudying first sergeants of companies wherever I was assigned. I had been a field first sergeant. For example: When you fall the troops out and the first sergeant comes out and makes his announcements, etc., then from there you go to a field training area and/or you go to the motor pool, or wherever your duty assignment calls you. Well, being the field first sergeant, it was my duty to give that company "Right face, forward march" and get them to the training area, get them back, get them fed, and take care of them in the field, this sort of thing. So I had that kind of first sergeant experience prior to my putting on the diamond. When I arrived at the 2nd Infantry Regiment, in Germany, and they wanted... As a matter of fact, they did assign me for a week or so as the regimental operations sergeant. But I sensed that I was not going to like that operations section. Now one thing that really turned me off on that assignment was when I arrived in that position. The outgoing operations sergeant of the regiment had six or seven personnel assisting him in that operations. I walked in one morning and I had no one to assist me. I knew what the mission was. You know, we were in the Fulda Gap and we were to stop the Russian Army, you know, the 22nd Infantry Regiment, if they attack that Fulda Gap. Then to do all this overlaying and... But I was just very disenchanted and disappointed. I talked to the operations officer, a major. I don't remember his name now. I said, "Sir, if it's all the same with you, I'd just as soon to go back to the battalion." I think it was the 2nd Battalion, 22nd Infantry. I'm not quite certain whether it was the 2nd Battalion or what it was. But anyway, we talked about it and he said, "Well, if that's the way you feel about it, so be it." So I went back to that battalion. The first sergeant of that headquarters and headquarters company had departed on rotation back to the States. Right away the battalion commander said, "He's first sergeant of that company"; of headquarters and headquarters company of the battalion.

In the table of organization, at that time, the company commander wore two hats. Now by two hats, I mean that his primary assignment was that of company commander of that headquarters and headquarters company, but he was also the battalion adjutant. He spent most of his time at battalion headquarters, and the first sergeant ran the company. That was back in the days when they were experimenting with various asunderous tables of organization and changes in the makeup of the organization, etc. Now, the TO&E also authorized a warrant officer in the company who handled all the administrative functions; all the paperwork; therefore, relieving the first sergeant to do his duties with the troops. So it was during that time... Now I didn't have a warrant officer assigned to the company, but I had a master sergeant who filled that warrant officer slot, who could have been a warrant officer, but he didn't want to be a warrant officer. He wanted to be... So he did the administrative function of the company and I did the movement element, if you will, with the troops of the company. Now what was the mission of the headquarters and headquarters company for the 22nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Battalion? It was to furnish support; administration, logistics, and supply. That's the way we were organized. We also had a pioneer and ammunition--they called--platoon, which was an engineer platoon, really. That platoon had a master sergeant as a platoon sergeant. When we went to the field, he and his platoon installed barbed wire entanglements, concertina wire. They erected obstacles. They guarded the perimeter. What about the maintenance platoon? They maintained vehicles. Not only for the company, but when they're above the first and second echelon maintenance, they also performed maintenance for the entire battalion.

INTERVIEWER: Something we've been talking about is regiments. The Army is starting to go back to the regimental system today. At that time, how many battalions did you have in a regiment?

SMA COPELAND: We had three battalions.

INTERVIEWER: You had three battalions. And how many companies within...

SMA COPELAND: Well, there was Headquarters, A, B, C, D. Five companies. That was the table of organization makeup at that time. At that time because it was constantly changing because we were in the testing phase.

INTERVIEWER: Right.

SMA COPELAND: Even though there was a war going on--in Korea--until mid-1953, still we were testing these various asunderous changes in table of organization and makeup. But, at that time, we had the five companies. Headquarters, A, B, C, and D. Now Delta Company was configured into a fire support company. You had mortars, and I believe they had two or three 105's and some M60 mortars, 81mm mortars. But that was primarily configured whereby the battalion commander could use that as his support artillery for the line companies; A, B, and C, and the D Company being the fire support company. So I had a good opportunity as first sergeant of that company to get out and be with the troops. I depended on that admin NCO, which actually was a warrant officer position, to take care of all the paperwork. When did we see the company commander? Only when he arrived--sometime around eight or nine o'clock--to sign the morning report. During my tenure there I did not find it necessary, at any time, to call upon that company commander for his personal interjections, so to speak. We had a company, a headquarters company, where the primary mission was support. We had a group of noncommissioned officers who were satisfied to be there. Most of them had been there long enough to have been assigned government quarters; those who were married; and they had their families there. Their morale was high. They did their thing during the day and at nighttime they went home to their families. But the young noncommissioned officers, the single noncommissioned

officers, remained on site to take care of the troopers. I don't recall, during my tenure with the 22nd Infantry Regiment, having to recommend one soldier for an Article 15 or for disciplinary punishment. Now, you know, that's unusual, because there are all kinds of little infractions that CAN come up. But in that regiment, in that battalion, obviously we had a group of satisfied soldiers. We had soldiers who were continuing their education and who were enrolled in the Education Service Center on post. "You go up and you talk to the education officer and you get yourself enrolled in courses." "You enroll your buddies that don't enroll." "Or if you don't want to go to the night classes, enroll in extension courses." "Let's get a little system going." That was before we had began testing soldiers. You know, annually testing MOSs and what not. But we still have the education available to the soldier.

INTERVIEWER: And also, talking about the lack of Article 15s and discipline problems, that also reflects the quality of your platoon sergeants and your squad leaders.

SMA COPELAND: That is correct. That is correct. I had a platoon sergeant come to me one day and he said, "I have this problem soldier in my platoon. He's doing this and he's not doing that." He said, "You know, I think I'll just take him down in that little clump of woods and when we come back I think he'll be pretty straight." So I looked at the physique of this platoon sergeant--I knew the soldier he was talking about--and I said, "Are you sure you want to do this?" "Well, I think so." Anyway, they went off toward the woods, went to the woods. I think while down there, he must have just verbally reprimanded the soldier. He probably had second thoughts en route to the wooded area as to which one was going to come out the best, physically wise. But for some reason he decided not to give that young soldier a whip-lashing. Instead, he gave him a good talking to. But that was the only time that one of my platoon sergeants had approached me saying they had a

problem that they thought they needed my assistance as a first sergeant. But they got that settled. We had an outstanding group of noncommissioned officers displaying professional type leadership. Just an all around good group of soldiers, because a lot of them were specialists. They were specially assigned; it was in the headquarters and headquarters company where you usually assign your more articulate soldier. All of them had a high school education. Some of them had a few college credits, etc. So they were not prone to be troublemakers.

INTERVIEWER: During your third tour in Germany, you were assigned to the 8th Cav. Where was the 8th Cav stationed, and when did you serve with the 8th Cav?

SMA COPELAND: Now you recall, that was my second tour with the 8th Cav. The first one was in combat in Korea.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

SMA COPELAND: My second tour with the 8th Cav in Germany was at Sandhoffen, located right near the Rhine River and on the outskirts of Mannheim, a large built-up industrial area. I arrived in Sandhoffen, 8th Cav in early October 1959, and immediately was assigned the duties as a first sergeant.

INTERVIEWER: Which Troop?

SMA COPELAND: B Troop. Bravo. B Troop, 8th Cav. As an E7. E7, first sergeant, wearing the diamond. Now at that time we had begun promoting people to E8 and to E9. However, you had to be a slot, you see, to be promoted. When I arrived I immediately took up that slot--an E8 slot--as first sergeant, E7. I still have that uniform hanging in my closet, with the 1st Cav patch on one side and the 8th Infantry Division patch on the other side. It was during that assignment that there was a young soldier... I'll come back to that later.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

SMA COPELAND: But anyway, I performed that first sergeant duty there in B Troop for approximately a year. As you know, in Europe we do quite a bit of field training and maneuvering. We were in the Baumholder area during field training with my troops, and I was informed that I was to report before the division promotion board the next day. I had no class A uniform with me; I was in a field uniform. So it was being debated between the troop commander, Captain Davis, and I whether I should go back to my home station and get my class A uniform or whether I should just go on in my field uniform. So we made a decision. I guess the troop commander said, "Yeah, you look okay in that uniform." So I appeared at division headquarters for the promotion board.

INTERVIEWER: Which division?

SMA COPELAND: 8th Division. 8th Division. In field uniform. The other senior NCOs, that were also appearing before the board, were in their nice class A uniforms, spit shined boots, brass shined, etc. Well, I looked around, while waiting in the hall until my turn to be called before the board, and I had some reservations. I said, "Man this is going to create a very unfavorable first impression with this division promotion board." However, I went in and reported. I think it was a full colonel, probably one of the ... We didn't have brigades. What did we call them at that time? But none the less was the president of the board. He asked me the question, why was I in field uniform and the other candidates appearing before the board were in class A uniform. I just informed the president that, "My unit was in the Baumholder area conducting field maneuvers, field training exercises, and it is quite some distance. I had no idea that I was going to appear before the board. It wasn't feasible for my returning to my base station and then coming here to meet this deadline this morning. I chose to appear before the board in this, and take my chances." I think he made

the remark, "Well, I'm glad you did," or words to that effect. Then they went on to quiz me, you know, even though they had my record, prior military record, in front of them. But none the less, they wanted to hear from this first sergeant, a little bit about my duties, where I'd been stationed, what I'd been doing. This went on for a few minutes and then they asked me if I had anything I wanted to add. I said, "Yes sir, I do. You have not asked me about my military education and I'd just like to inform the board about it because I think that it's important." I said, "While stationed with the Senior ROTC Division at Texas A&M University, I immediately enrolled in the Precommissioning 10 Series and I successfully completed that series and received a certificate. The Professor of Military Science and Tactics, Colonel Myer, received a certificate from Fort Benning to commission me, as a second lieutenant, in the Reserve Corps. However, I chose not to opt for that commission, and instead, remain as a senior noncommissioned officer. However, I did acquire a great deal of military knowledge from having completed those courses, to the tune of some 240 credit hours, as extension courses go." I pointed out that in addition to that, during my assignment at Centenary University, another Senior ROTC assignment, upon being assigned there, I immediately, with permission of PMS, Professor of Military Science, proceeded to enroll myself as a student, part-time student, even though this was during the month of March and the regular enrollment had already passed and the deadline was over and you could not get credit for your courses, as credit hours go, but you could go and monitor the courses of the students. So I did that. The course that I enrolled for was secretarial science because I was assigned to the detachment as the sergeant major of the detachment, which primarily then, his duties was administrative. It entailed a lot of typing and filing, etc. It was the regular 1502 administrative MOS. The Professor of Military Science and myself decided I needed more proficiency in typing. Then the 25 or 30 word hunt-and-peck system

could be improved upon. So I enrolled in secretarial science. I practiced typing, a little bit of dictation, and a little bit of shorthand, and those subjects that, usually when you graduate from it, you're more proficient.

INTERVIEWER: What was the comment or the reaction of the colonel sitting on the board when you told him that you turned down that commission?

SMA COPELAND: I'm not quite certain at this time what his comments were, if any. It wasn't that I did not want to be an officer. Now I'm thinking that pay wise, I would have probably drawn a few more dollars as a master sergeant, with a good many years of service, than I would have been drawing as a second lieutenant. I don't recall what his comments were, if any.

INTERVIEWER: Why didn't they address military education, etc.? Do you have any idea? Is it that they just didn't do that in those days?

SMA COPELAND: I think it was because that they were probably looking at my record and they noticed that it was annotated on my record. But you see, I wasn't sure that they had that record before them that I had completed the 10 Series and was being offered a tenure to be commissioned in the Reserve, and probably with concurrent call to active duty and go right back to Korea. Secondly, I wanted to make sure that the board was aware that this soldier was doing something to continue his military education.

INTERVIEWER: When you left that board, did you feel confident that you had done well? How did you feel?

SMA COPELAND: I'm glad you asked that question, Butch, because my departing comment was, when he said, "Well, is there anything further, sergeant?" I said, "Yes sir." They only had one promotion quota, and I said, "Yes sir. There is another comment that I would like to make." I said, "There are several of us here vying for this promotion." I said,

"But sir, you're facing the best soldier. I'm the best soldier. I should get that promotion, based on the record." He excused me, and I saluted, did an about face, and departed. It was about a week later, after we had returned from Baumholder area to Sandhoffen, at my regular morning formation, when I was making announcements to the troops, etc., that the troop commander stepped up behind Silas Copeland, the first sergeant of the troop, and he said, "Let me take over," or words to that effect. "I have an announcement to make." He had a piece of paper in his hand, and it was a division order. He began to read the order. The order was promoting Silas Copeland from first sergeant E7 to master sergeant E8. The troops knew it the same time as Silas Copeland knew it. I thought that was good. That was outstanding, because he took that opportunity to inform the troops that, even though he had been performing as a first sergeant, he is now a first sergeant E8. But you see, during that time, the troop commander had the prerogative... Now he could have assigned me, being an E7, he could have assigned me to a platoon, as an E7. But he chose not to do that. I think because he felt that I could better serve him and the troop, with the background and experience that I had. I could better serve the unit by putting me in as first sergeant.

INTERVIEWER: You also became the sergeant major of the squadron. Right?

SMA COPELAND: That is correct.

INTERVIEWER: Of the same squadron?

SMA COPELAND: Of the same squadron. the incumbent sergeant major, Travolini, was due for rotation, I guess about twelve or fourteen months after my arrival on site, and he rotated. One day I was asked, or directed, to come to squadron headquarters and talk to the squadron adjutant. He wanted to talk to me and get my views on being assigned as the squadron sergeant major. Well, I was looking at that star. I was now a first sergeant E8 and I wanted to be a sergeant major E9. I wanted to change those chevron from a diamond

to a star. I wanted those senior noncommissioned officers back at Centenary University, in Shreveport, Louisiana, to know that, about fourteen month after Silas departed the area, not only was he immediately promoted to first sergeant E8 but also promoted to squadron sergeant major E9. I was moving! I was performing. But you see, I think... Well, I'm not sure that the squadron commander, who had a great many years in the service... I guess he may have been an enlisted man one time, and before age caught up with him he got a commission some way or another. He too wore the 1st Cav patch on his left shoulder, which means that he was with them during World War II or he performed with them during the Korean Conflict. But he talked to me briefly, and he said, "I want you to come over as my squadron sergeant major." I did, right away. Then a replacement came in, another E7, and took over my position and pretty soon he was promoted to master sergeant E8. But that was a happy day. Back during the time that we were getting the E8 and E9 functional, one rule was, that in order to be promoted to E8 or E9, you had to be in the position. Now we had many master sergeants E7 who were out on golf courses, who were working in clubs, who were doing all sorts and manners of things to evade troop duty. It was the younger soldiers who go caught up in doing first sergeants duty, doing field first sergeants duty, living with the soldiers, taking care of the soldiers, looking after the soldiers, but yet, he wasn't getting the pay as were the master sergeants that were out doing special service type duties. When the E8 came into being, then you had a great number of senior noncommissioned officers, who were out there doing duties other than first sergeant, platoon sergeant, etc., who wanted to come back to the fold, so to speak, in order to take up that promotion and then, perhaps later, go back out and start doing their thing. But you see, there was a ruling against that sort of thing. You couldn't do that. You had to bite the bullet. You had to be with the troops in that slot.

INTERVIEWER: What was the mission of the 8th Cav at that time?

SMA COPELAND: Well the 8th Cav, being the eyes and ears of the 8th Division, namely the reconnaissance squadron of the division, was just that. To perform reconnaissance missions, either in force or limited missions, for the division.

INTERVIEWER: Did you go up to Graf (Grafenwohr) or Hohenfeld?

SMA COPELAND: We went to Graf. We went to Grafenwohr for two weeks duration, thereabout, and conducted our annual training; firing. We had tanks. We had personnel carriers. We had mortars. We had machine guns. So we would go to Grafenwohr, annually, and do our firing with tanks. Then we would go to Baumholder, annually, and we would maneuver in and around on the outskirts of the Baumholder area. Then we were continually doing field maneuvers with the squadron, because, again, the mission of the 8th Cav is to maneuver for the division wherever the division commander wants.

INTERVIEWER: So you had a real good training program within the squadron.

SMA COPELAND: We had a real good training program within the squadron. Now, the squadron was made up of a headquarters troop, which furnished support primarily for the squadron, and then A, B, C, and D troops. Now, A troop was an airborne troop. To be assigned to A troop, you had to be airborne qualified. As a squadron sergeant major, I had an airborne troop in the squadron. I had a headquarters and headquarters troop in the squadron, and I had three maneuver troops in the squadron. We were situated in a nice location right near the Rhine River, in Sandhoffen, on the outskirts of a large built-up area. Upon my initial assignment I had to go without the family. I was there for about three months when I was assigned a brand new set of quarters, located near Fenelli Barracks, on the outskirts of Mannheim. The family arrive a couple days prior to Thanksgiving. We

went out to the squadron dining facility and we had Thanksgiving dinner out there. So we were thirty-nine months, I believe it was, in that area. We thoroughly enjoyed it.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Let's take a break right here.

(End Tape OH 93.1-4, Side 1)

(Begin Tape OH 93.1-4, Side 2)

INTERVIEWER: Sergeant Major, we ended up our last conversation just before the break talking about your third non-combat tour with the 8th Cav. Let me ask you about your fourth non-combat tour when you served with the 4th Armored Division. You returned to West Germany for your fourth non-combat overseas assignment, and during that tour you had two assignments with the 4th Armored Division. Where were you stationed first?

SMA COPELAND: My first station was Erlangen. Erlangen, Germany. By way of orientation, that would have been about twenty miles out of Nurnberg. It was a nice little area. The kaserne large enough to accommodate, I believe we had two tank battalions and a medical battalion located at that kaserne. Our family housing area, nice family housing area, was located right near by the kaserne.

INTERVIEWER: You were with the brigade. Right?

SMA COPELAND: 2nd Brigade, 4th Armored Division.

INTERVIEWER: What was your duty assignment?

SMA COPELAND: My duty assignment was that of brigade sergeant major.

INTERVIEWER: What was the mission of the 2nd Brigade?

SMA COPELAND: Well, the mission was to train and defend its assigned area of operation in case of an attack from the Russians. To be able to defend, delay, defend, delay, until reinforcements arrived from the States. Primarily, we were involved in maintaining equipment and field training soldiers.

INTERVIEWER: Were you able to do much training in the Erlangen area or did you have to depend on going to Graf?

SMA COPELAND: We had a local field training area in which we were able to do limited field maneuvers. But on a larger scale, when you went into a brigade size field training exercise, then we went to the Grafenwohr area.

INTERVIEWER: How many battalions did you have in your brigade?

SMA COPELAND: We had three tank battalions.

INTERVIEWER: Were they all there in Erlangen?

SMA COPELAND: No. One was located about fifteen miles away, near Nurnberg.

INTERVIEWER: At Furth, Right?

SMA COPELAND: At Furth. That is correct.

INTERVIEWER: Montieth Barracks.

SMA COPELAND: Montieth Barracks. You've been there. Nice location.

INTERVIEWER: At that assignment, how long did you remain as a brigade sergeant major? I understand you were reassigned. Also tell me about that.

SMA COPELAND: I was reassigned from the 2nd Brigade to the division headquarters as the division command sergeant major. I think we had been with the 2nd Brigade from December '66 until about June '68. While on a visit by the division commander one day, he and my brigade commander, Colonel Perczdirtz, and I were just discussing training, etc., while in the brigade conference room, when the commanding general, General James Sutherland, turned and faced me and said, "Well Sergeant Major, when are you coming to division headquarters?" I did not have an immediate answer to that question. I just looked at my brigade commander, Colonel Perczdirtz, and I think I made the comment, "Well, sir, I think I have a good assignment right here in the 2nd Brigade.

I'm really enjoying this assignment. I've been able to do some things. We have been reducing the delinquency incidents. We have been increasing the reenlistment rate. We've been training. We've been signing young soldiers up at the education center. The families have been attending chapel. I feel that we've really accomplished something during the last year. I think my commander will attest to that." So we just dropped it, or he did rather. But I knew, from that day forward, that I was going to have to give up one of the most rewarding, most enjoyable assignments in my military career, up to that time. You see, I had been battalion sergeant major and then I had been division sergeant, but I had never been a regimental sergeant major. I wanted to do that. I was thoroughly enjoying it. The closeness to the troops, I think, was one reason why I had that feeling of accomplishment, because we had all these troops located on one kaserne. You were dealing with sergeants major and they were dealing with their first sergeants, the first sergeants with their platoon sergeants, and trying to train and keep the young soldier physically fit, mentally fit, and honed, if you will. If you recall, the European Command, at that time, was being used as a replacement depot, if you will. It was from that command that soldiers were selected for assignment to Vietnam; combat duty in Vietnam. Consequently, we were continuously losing our soldiers to Vietnam. But by the same token, we were also receiving soldiers. I think it was those who volunteered, from Vietnam, upon completion of their tours to come to Europe. But we were continuously training, educating, training, maintaining soldiers in the Erlangen area. I'll never forget... This has always stuck in my mind. We were training in the Grafenwohr area; the brigade was. This was during the time that General Sutherland, the division commander, was making his exit from the division; he was being reassigned. He was coming around and visiting with all the brigades. I immediately called my sergeants major and I said, "Now look, we owe General Sutherland a bit of respect here. He's leaving. He

and his division sergeant major are coming here to visit us prior to his departure." So I talked to Colonel Perczdirtz, the brigade commander, and said, "The noncommissioned officer would like to show a little respect here and just have a little luncheon for the general and his command sergeant major." So we did that. We turned out all the first sergeants and platoon sergeants. I think we were in a resting mode at that time. I'm sure we were because we would not have been able to assemble at a nice little gasthaus, located near by. I talked to the people who were maintaining the gasthaus and told them that we wanted schnitzel and we wanted a few drinks here and there, etc., because the commanding general was arriving and we wanted to have lunch. So we went through the socializing and then we had lunch. I got up, as the brigade sergeant major, and made the remark that "General Sutherland needs no introduction. We all know him and I think we know him well. There comes a time when, even general officers have to leave the area, sometimes permanently, and this is that case." Then General Sutherland got up to make his farewell remarks to the brigade commander and the brigade NCOs. He started off by commenting that when he arrived in the division, that brigade was number five. The division had three brigades, and support command, and a medical brigade, or something like that. But there were five senior commands within that division. The general said that when he arrived, the 2nd Brigade, as far as he was concerned, would have been rated a number five out of five commands. But at that moment, 2nd Brigade stands at Number One. He went on to say, "We're talking about training, esprit de corps, the lesser amount of discipline problems. You're enrolled in this. You're doing MOS testing. You're schooling them. You're enrolling them. You have a housing area, a family community who's morale is high. AYAs (Army Youth Activities), the noncommissioned officer's wives and families are involved." The general went through, to use a term, "The whole nine yards." He said, "Today, you're Number

One." When he said that, all the noncommissioned officers rose and they applauded the general. That made us feel good and that gave us a good boost. But the general knew that he was going to raise our spirits that day, because we were fortunate enough to have been able to pay him our respect, and he was going to pay us respect, and he did it truthfully and gracefully. He said that he hoped to serve with us again one of these days. Now, later on I would like to present to you an exhibit, a piece of paper with Exhibit Number One, and just show you and have you enter, for the record, historical record, some further comments that this outstanding division commander had concerning the operation of the noncommissioned officers. Now, he went on to be promoted to a three-star, lieutenant general, and may have been promoted to general. I'm not sure.

INTERVIEWER: What we'll do, when we talk about your assignment as the Division sergeant major, we'll definitely enter that in it. You can present it, etc. I think it would be good to make it a permanent part of the interview at the appropriate place.

SMA COPELAND: Very good.

INTERVIEWER: When did you go up to headquarters, 4th Armored Division?

SMA COPELAND: I went to headquarter, 4th Armored Division in, I think it was July 1968.

INTERVIEWER: And where was the headquarters located?

SMA COPELAND: The headquarters was located at Goppengin. It was still in the VII Corps area, just fifteen or twenty kilometers south southwest of Stuttgart.

INTERVIEWER: Who selected you as the division sergeant major?

SMA COPELAND: I guess it was the division commander, who was... Who replaced General Sutherland? General Scherrer? General Scherrer.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

SMA COPELAND: General Scherrer, whom I knew as an assistant division commander from the 1st Armored Division at Fort hood, Texas. I believe General Scherrer came in.

INTERVIEWER: So you said you kinda regretted having to leave Erlangen.

SMA COPELAND: I regretted having left Erlangen, because I got to know the people. The closeness, the relation with the soldiers, the families living in the village. We had quite a bit of a esprit de corps going. You know, it can be quite demoralizing for families who are coming over from the States and arriving in a foreign country for the first time. Consequently, the family housing area had a tendency to let down... You know, there are all kinds of problems coming up; squabbles, dissatisfaction, poor police, unkept buildings, washrooms in a poor state of repair. But what we need to do is get some esprit de corps going among the families, as well as the soldiers. We did that in Erlangen, and we did it by meeting with the sergeants major of the various battalions and the first sergeants. We sat down and we just had a "skull session," as to what we can do. How can we enhance this housing area for the families living in the housing area? How can we boost their morale? How can we assist? We can assist by having... We talked about attending church services. Letting them attend graduation ceremonies. Let the families attend drill ceremonies. Anything to get them out of that house. Get them out of that apartment. In the wintertime, as you well know, it's dark about twenty hours of the day, and the morale is poor, not only among the dependents that are over there, but among many soldiers as well, so you have to do something. You have to come up with a plan to bring them out of that depressing mode. Well our plan was, "Look, in the housing area we'll get some esprit de corps going by initiating a beautification." Now most women love to become involved in area beautification. So we talked about it, and we said, "Okay, we'll get a beautification program

going. We'll plant flowers. We'll put up little fences. We'll do anything to enhance the appearance. We'll let the families do that, and it's the duty of the stairwell sergeant to begin the program in his particular area." So we got that little program going. Periodically, we would have a "walk through see." I'm not going to use the term "inspection." I was NOT an inspection. It was a "walk through" to admire all the beautification that had been going on in this housing area. It had been conducted by the wives, by the children, and being supported by their husbands, and it was fantastic; it caught on. The brigade commander said, "My gracious, now this is good. This is great." The families looked forward to it. "What kind of flowers can I set out?" "What can I do?" "What about a little picket fence here?" "Can we put up a little..." Not big, high, tall fences, but a little white picket fence, or whatever color they wanted. Let them put out their flowers. Let them be the boss. Let them do what they want to do, and then select a group of people to be the judges as to which one is first place, second place, third place, etc. They got involved in that. The first Sunday that Ann and I were there, we located the chapel on post. We attended chapel services. We noted right away that, on, my gee, there must not be many religious soldiers around here. But that's okay; to each his own. But none the less this is, to me--to this soldier,--this was indicative perhaps by some, of low morale. Well, did the soldiers even know. They all knew there was a chapel close by, but why are they not attending the chapel services. We began just talking about it. I talked to the chaplain about this. I asked him, "Sir, are you visiting the troops. Have you been around to talk to them?" We had a Catholic chaplain and a Protestant chaplain. I talked to the Father and I talked to the Protestant chaplain. But pretty soon, all because of just talking to soldiers and talking to families and letting families know that there was a place provided for them to come and worship in their religion, whether it be Protestant or Catholic, within four or five months,

that chapel could not hold all those who wanted to attend chapel services. Now the Father and Chaplain Erlangen made these religious services so interesting. There was no fire and brimstone, no hell and damnation, and this sort of thing, but a different approach for soldiers. Within four or five months there were so many soldiers and so many families turning out. I think one reason was because the soldiers that were there, unaccompanied, socialized with the families, and we had this ongoing. Some of them, many of them were invited home for lunches, for dinner. There was a time we thought, "Well, we're going to have to move out of the chapel and go to the theater for our Sunday morning services." So, we were able to boost the morale in that brigade by encouraging and talking. Then the subject came up, "Well now, what about the German-American relation?" I had heard the brigade commander talking to some of his officers that we need to get moving on German-American relations. Well, to this sergeant major, who was monitoring, I had an idea. "Well, if they're going to get moving, so are the noncommissioned officers. We're going to move now." We had an adjutant that was born and raised in Germany and he spoke fluent German. He was a helicopter pilot in Vietnam for eleven months, and upon reassignment he came to our brigade. I went in and I talked to the captain and laid-out my plan. I said, "I need your assistance." I already had the brigade commander's proposition and I didn't want to do anything that would interfere with what he had planned for German-American relations, as far as the officers were concerned. I told the Adjutant, "I plan on inviting, to start with, the Burgermeister of Erlangen, the Police Chief and some of his staff, the Burgermeister's staff, and the other entities of city government staff." I said, "We're going to move out, the noncommissioned officers, on our part of this German-American relations, and this is where we plan to start; with the Burgermeister." He said, "You know, over here in Europe, the Burgermeister is powerful." I said, "Yes sir. I know that. That's why I want

to start at the top." I said, "The sergeants major and all first sergeants who have their dress blue uniforms are turning-out in their dress blue uniforms. We're going to conduct a reception." I said, "This is going to be somewhat informal." He said, "These are formal people you're talking about." "Yep, these are formal people. We realize that. We've had meetings and we've talked about how we are going to conduct ourselves. We don't speak German, but many of them speak English because the Americans have been here forty-odd years, and they speak English. They understand." I said, "I need your assistance." I said, "I'm going to type up a draft invitation and I want you to help me word it, because you're German. You were raised here, and how would you receive this?" He said, "Okay." I told him I had the blessings of our commander. So we did. We sent out the invitations and we invited about thirty of forty of the powers to be, if you will, of the township of Erlangen. We had an upstairs to our noncommissioned officers club that would accommodate that many; about sixty or seventy people very conveniently. What we did, we laid out a buffet. You know, the Germans love sausage, they love beer, and they love mixed drinks, and so do the Americans. So we fixed it up nicely. The club sergeant did this for us. Everyone pitched in a pro-rated share of four dollars or five dollars, all the sergeants major, first sergeants, etc. That was agreed upon. All voluntarily. No arm twisting, because we wanted to do it. So they came. Most all that we invited came. Ann and I, leading off, being at the front door, we were receiving these high city government people and introducing ourselves. Then as they proceeded on into the reception room. The other sergeants major and their wives, and the first sergeants and their wives, turned out in their dress blues uniforms, etc., were meeting, mingling. Many of our noncommissioned officers were married to German spouses, so it went well; it went real well. We invited our commanders. The brigade commander, my boss, the battalion commanders, and their wives

were there. So this kicked off the German-American relationship function, in so far as the noncommissioned officers of my brigade was concerned. It went so well that, at one of our meetings, later on, someone broached the idea, "Well, look, yeah, this did go well..." Now as you can well imagine, that many of the noncommissioned officers had some reservations; that was understandable. But I said, "Now wait a minute. Let's look at the positive side of the thing, now. This is what we're going to do." But they overcame that reservation. Later on, they wanted to do this, inviting... They wanted to adopt a sister unit; a German Army sister unit. So again, "Okay. If that's what you want to do." I'm just waiting and letting them make that suggestion, and hoping that they would, you know; they did it. I went back to my adjutant, using his expertise in the German language. Let's identify a unit." We did. We identified a unit similar in size, but somewhat smaller than our brigade, and sent out these invitations to their senior noncommissioned officers inviting them and their wives. We got permission from the officers to use the officers' club, which was located right in the housing area. We sent the invitations and they came in; we sponsored them and it cost them nothing. We didn't want it to cost them. All we were interested in was becoming better acquainted and socializing with our counterparts in the German Army. We did that and the esprit de corps, on the side of both parties, was raised tremendously. So, then you ask the question, early on, why did Silas Copeland and his family hate to leave Erlangen and the 2nd Brigade. It was because we were having a ball.

INTERVIEWER: Were you able to implement the same programs throughout the rest of the division once you became the division sergeant major?

SMA COPELAND: Somewhat. Somewhat. When I got to division and talking to the other brigade sergeants major and meeting with them I would ask them if they had a similar program, like the one that we had in the 2nd Brigade, ongoing. They said, "Yes we do. We

get involved in German-American relations, but not to that extent. Now we haven't gone downtown and invited the Burgermeister in, and the Chief of Police, etc. We haven't gone that far." They said, "We get involved." I sort of kept them tickled up on that thing, but I really didn't push that now, because it seemed to me that they were a little bit reluctant to become that involved, if you will.

INTERVIEWER: Once that brigade there in Erlangen got started on it, when you made you trips back, had they continued the program? Was that morale and that esprit de corps still there? Were they continuing that effective program?

SMA COPELAND: Well, I hate to say this, and I'm sorry that it happened, but when we left there and went to division, later on we were informed that some of that had gone by the wayside and we were sorely missed in the area. They wished that we were back there. So, I take it from those comments that my replacement, and understandably so, did not pick up on that and keep it going, because troopers were continuously being deployed out and deployed in. If you don't sort of keep you thumb on those sort of things, I can see where it's easy to, over a period of a few months, let things drop through the cracks. I understand that it did not continue to that extent. That brigade commander departed. The brigade sergeant major departed. They got new personnel and new leadership, etc. Again, which understandable, they probably thought they needed to put more emphases on this area and that area. But there was somewhat of a let down.

INTERVIEWER: When you went back as Sergeant Major of the Army, of course I know that as soon as you got to Germany, the areas you wanted to go to visit were the ones you were stationed.

SMA COPELAND: To see how things changed. The areas I really wanted to visit were those areas in which I had served over the years. But, you know, USAREUR (United

Stated Army Europe) Sergeant Major Bill Wood, who is an outstanding sergeant major, he already had my itinerary made up and it didn't always entail visiting those areas that I was so familiar with. But in some cases, I was able to be back to some of those. One of them was not Erlangen. One was probably Goppengin, the division headquarters area most likely. I did get out to Sandhoffen, in the 8th Division area on one occasion. But I would like to go back there some day, which I probably never will, and just go back to those areas and take a look. Some of them are no longer being occupied by American forces, as I understand from the current--the incumbent--USAREUR sergeant major. Gee, They've closed even some recreation areas. Closed that out and many, many, of the other areas because of the re-deployment and the drawdown, etc. But it would be gratifying and satisfying to go back there. I received an invitation, sort of a letter form invitation from a retired General Sorley, who lives in the Washington area. I received that just recently, a few days ago. He is conducting a tour. Some of his personnel that he's working with, going back to Normandy next year, are commemorating the Fiftieth Anniversary of D-Day. No, that would be the fifty-first. Yeah. None the less, I showed this to Ann and I said, "There's no way that you and I can make that trip," but we talk about it. We think about it. You see, the family was over there six years and sort of became accustomed to the German way of life when they were over there. To the extent that the children, when it came time to relocate back to the United States, said, "Dad, can't we stay a little longer?"

INTERVIEWER: Before we get into your specific assignments, when did you leave Germany? From the 4th Division?

SMA COPELAND: I departed Germany, en route to Vietnam, by the way of Huntsville, Texas. We departed about mid-August, probably around the twentieth of August.

INTERVIEWER: Of what year?

SMA COPELAND: Of 1969. We came to Huntsville, found a place for the family to live, near downtown Huntsville. Our daughter and son-in-law were enrolled as students at Sam Houston University, so we put the bite upon them to find Ann and the two boys a suitable set of quarters for them to reside in while I was in Vietnam, so they did that. They found a nice house near town. That's where they resided--1620 20th Street, Huntsville--while I was in Vietnam.

INTERVIEWER: Let me ask you about some of your actual duty assignments. A little earlier we talked about how you got assigned to ROTC at Texas A&M. Let me ask you about that particular assignment. As I was driving to Huntsville here, I noticed that Texas A&M is pretty close to your home, isn't it?

SMA COPELAND: Fifty miles. Within fifty miles of this Huntsville location.

INTERVIEWER: So you came out pretty good on that assignment.

SMA COPELAND: I came out real good. I came out real fine. I was able to stay there two years, plus. However, when I arrived there, the sergeants that were there had been there ten, twelve, fifteen years. I thought, "Oh my gracious, this is not right. We need you in Korea." Now some of those people took a dim view of my coming in there with a bloody uniform, so to speak, from the Frozen Chosen, because they were fearful, I think that "Gee, I'm going to have to replace this sergeant in Korea." Also, I came there unannounced, because they had not requisitioned me. They had not sought out a tanker. Now they had Branch Material at that time. They had an armor branch, the artillery branch, infantry branch, signal branch, and then the Air Force was established there. Well, the artillery branch has not requisitioned an armor-type noncommissioned officer. All of a sudden I walk in there, a master sergeant, armor, and that major looked at me and said,

"Hey, where did you come from?"

INTERVIEWER: Did you tell the circumstances of how you...

SMA COPELAND: I told him the circumstances. That I was there, and gave him a copy of the orders, VCOG (Vocal Order Commanding General) 4th Army Headquarters. I proceeded to tell him how it came about; that I did not seek the position. I just made the comment to General Gay, Deputy 4th Army Commander, when he asked the question "Where would you like to go?" "Sir, I would like to go to Texas A&M University." Here I am. You're going to have to put up with me for the time being. So anyway, it was a good assignment.

INTERVIEWER: When were you assigned there? What month and what year?

SMA COPELAND: July of '51.

INTERVIEWER: Once you got established, what was your duty assignment?

SMA COPELAND: My specific duty assignment was to make lesson plans, requisition training material, and conduct instruction to the cadets. This instruction was, primarily, in their field duty. Noncommissioned officers conducted the drill, ceremony, customs of service. In my case, we had a motor pool located adjacent to the University and we had tanks and personnel carriers, as the other branches had their artillery and had their signal equipment, etc. When it came time for them to do their thing in the motor pool--become acquainted with tanks, personnel carriers, etc.--that's where the assigned noncommissioned officer came in. He did that instruction, because very seldom would the officer be as familiar with the function, malfunction, immediate action, etc., of that tank or that personnel carrier. The noncommissioned officer, having been raised up in one, he would do the instruction.

INTERVIEWER: What rank were you at that time?

SMA COPELAND: I was a master sergeant E7.

INTERVIEWER: What was the makeup of your particular section? How many...

SMA COPELAND: The section was made up of two master sergeants; myself and another master sergeant. In some cases it was a first sergeant if he was a first sergeant when he was assigned there. Of course, pretty soon after he'd change chevrons. But my armor department was made up of two master sergeants, it could have been two sergeants first class, two captains, and a major in the armor branch at Texas A&M University. When one of the officer instructors decided that he wanted to show a certain film, it was the duty of Sergeant Copeland to make sure that a projector and that film, and any other visual training aid, was readily available in the classroom for that instructor. Sometimes, depending on the subject, the sergeant would instruct the subject. However, if it was more of a technical nature, usually the officer did all of the platform instruction. That wasn't the case at Centenary University.

INTERVIEWER: When you were at A&M, you took your precommissioning course. How did that come about? Who encouraged you to do that?

SMA COPELAND: Self initiative. I did that. The Infantry Branch was located just down the hallway from the Armor Branch. The master sergeant, that was attached to the infantry branch, and I were talking one day. He already had a reserve commission. He wasn't looking... This didn't come about because we wanted a reserve commission. I wasn't ever aware, at that time, when I enrolled that upon successful completion of the Precommissioning Series--of course, "precommission" should of told me something--that you would be authorized to be commissioned in the Reserve. That wasn't my objective at all. The objective was to continue my military education; to obtain more knowledge. I felt that I wasn't ready to go and enroll as a student at that time. I don't even know if that would

have been permitted. Perhaps in the evening division it would have. But I felt that I wasn't ready for that. But an extension course, I could tread at my own pace. It was self initiative. I wanted to do that. Once I became involved in it, I found, too, that these were interesting subjects. Primarily, as you well know, it was primarily basic subjects, but a lot of it I had not had heretofore in my military career. Now having attended, what used to be referred to as Senior NCO C&GS (Command and General Staff) Course, and that was, of course, for about twelve weeks in duration at Fort Riley, Kansas, where we learned the order of battle, photo interpretation, intel, operation, etc.

INTERVIEWER: That was the one you attended to be O&I (operations and intelligence) qualified, right?

SMA COPELAND: That is correct. When I attended, upon completion of that course, I was assigned to operations and intel. Well, I was assigned there before going. "Well gee, we have a quota. Send Sergeant Copeland." So I went.

INTERVIEWER: How did that O&I training help you out when you were at A&M?

SMA COPELAND: Tremendously. It helped me tremendously. It helped me throughout my career, because I was able to articulate, because of the courses I had taken at Fort Riley. I was able to understand what the other people were talking about and how to relate to them, in so far as operations and intel. I came back with more knowledge than the usual first lieutenant had when he was assigned to an operations. Consequently, many times they would turn to me and ask questions.

INTERVIEWER: While you were at A&M, what do you feel was your most rewarding experience?

SMA COPELAND: I think the rewarding part was being associated with those cadets. As such, you had to become educationally motivated, militarily speaking. Here's a student

just starting out as a freshman, and he's training to be an officer. Well, noncommissioned officers can do the same thing. Why are you not enrolled in courses? I didn't want to go and enroll in the evening division because I'm reluctant to do that, you see. Texas A&M, that's a big step forward. That's a big university. I felt that I was not ready to mix it up with the students, per se. Many of them would have been enrolled in the evening division that I would have been enrolled in. I guess you could say it was a lack of confidence that I didn't enroll as a student, per se, like the cadets were. I decided, "Ah! I'll do it another way. There's another avenue of approach. There are extension courses to be taken." I completed that 10 Series, was offered a commission in the Reserves, and turned around and enrolled in the Company Commanders Series 20, from Fort Knox, Kentucky.

INTERVIEWER: How did you do on that one?

SMA COPELAND: I did well on those courses that I completed. I did not complete all of those courses. But I completed many of the courses.

SMA COPELAND: What did you find most frustrating? Almost every job you have you run into frustration. What was most frustrating about your assignment at A&M?

SMA COPELAND: Well, I don't think there were any frustrations. Keep in mind that I came off the battlefield in Korea dealing with the North Korean Army, and then the Chinese Army. I was fighting a war that mere survival was combative enough, to say nothing about the enemy. Then to come to A&M University, at College Station, Texas and become frustrated. I don't believe I found any frustration. I think it was all a plus. A REAL plus to this soldier.

INTERVIEWER: When did you leave A&M?

SMA COPELAND: I left A&M, I think it was September of '53.

INTERVIEWER: Then around three or four years later, you went back to ROTC

duty? Why don't you tell me about your second ROTC assignment?

SMA COPELAND: Well, the second assignment came about while I was stationed at Fort Polk, Louisiana. I was still with the 4th Tank Battalion because the division, the 1st Armored Division, had redeployed from Fort Hood to Fort Polk. We conducted a Fall maneuver in which the maneuver area assigned to the Division was on the outskirts of Fort Polk; Peason Ridge and the surrounding area. We conducted a division type maneuver. Upon completion of the maneuver we moved into the closed post of Fort Polk proper. We moved into, what we thought was a temporary area to regroup, cleanup the vehicles, re-service, etc., for what we thought was a movement back to Fort Hood. But then there was a formation announced for a certain morning at a certain time. The entire division turned out. Not in mass, but simultaneously, as I understand. The announcement was made that "Fort Polk is your new home. You're not going to return to Fort Hood. This is it. For those of you who are married and have your families back at Fort Hood, you are authorized," I believe it was four or five days, "administrative leave to go and find a place to live and make preparations, if that's what you want to do, to relocate your family to their new home in the vicinity of Fort Polk." So I proceeded back to Fort Hood and gave the news to Ann, and then picked up my car. I brought the family...

(End Tape OH 93.1-4, Side 2)

(Begin Tape OH 93.1-5, Side 1)

INTERVIEWER: Sergeant Major, when the last tape ran out, we were talking about your second ROTC assignment. On the tape you said, "...and then picked up my car. I brought the family..." and that's here where the tape ran out. Why don't you continue on.

SMA COPELAND: Well, after the maneuvers, field exercise training being conducted in Louisiana near the Fort Polk Reservation, on the conclusion of the exercise, it was made

known to us that Fort Polk would be our new home. For those of us that were married and had families back at Fort Hood, we would be given a few days of administrative leave to help find housing in the area and relocate our families. I proceeded back to Fort Hood and picked up the car, and picked up the family, and transported the family to Huntsville, Texas, and then I proceeded on to Fort Polk and Leesville, De Ridder, looking for housing. Looking for a house--quarters--a suitable place to relocate my family. Eventually I found a somewhat suitable place, but I looked at many places that were offered to me to quarter my family and I would consider them "chicken coops." But eventually, I think the owners of the property began to feel sorry for this soldier and said, "Yeah, we have one house that will probably be suitable for you and your family." They showed me the house, and of course I agreed to accept it, happily. I think the rent was somewhere around a hundred dollars a month. At that time the quarters allowance was eighty-five dollars, thereabouts. Upon my acquiring those quarters, I right away began acquiring some mops, scrub brushes, brooms, soap, etc., to GI those quarters--clean those quarters --because Fort Polk was closed and those housing facilities that were vacant, had been vacant for a good many years. So it was with this house that I had rented; it needed a good genteel GI cleaning. That's what I proceeded to do for about two days, and only then did I return to Fort Hood and made arrangements for the Transportation Department at Fort Hood to pickup my household goods and transport them to Leesville, Louisiana. Then, of course, I came back and picked up Ann and the children and transported them to the Leesville area. We had two daughters; two young daughters. Dorothy Ann was twelve years old at that time and Paula, her sister, was three years younger. Uh, three and a half years younger. They were in the local public school system. Fort Polk began to build up in troop, in training, etc. We remained there. I was operations sergeant of the 4th Tank Battalion. Then, when the battalion sergeant major

departed the area, the colonel selected me to be the battalion sergeant major, which put me in this E8 slot. But I wasn't looking at that E8 at that time. Very little was known about it, as a matter of fact, at that time in 1957. I worked in that sergeant major job for three, perhaps four months. I had already decided that Leesville, Louisiana was no place to let my two daughters attend school and grow up in that environment. It just wasn't an ideal situation. I talked to the adjutant and to the battalion commander and so informed them that I had every intention of trying to depart the Fort Polk area. Now, I have never put in a request for a transfer out of a unit or into a unit, or anything of that nature, but this is the time and place that I thought that if I could better the family by moving them out of that environment that I should do that. Well, I had been acquainted with civilian component duty, so far as Senior ROTC is concerned. I thought, "Well, let's put in for another assignment to ROTC duty." So we did and it was approved by the battalion commander and then on up to division level where it was approved, and then to 4th Army. I guess, two or three months later, after my submission of the request for reassignment to civilian component duty, it was approved by 4th Army, assigning me to Centenary University in Shreveport, Louisiana. We proceeded to move to that location in March 1957.

INTERVIEWER: Where is Centenary located? Shreveport?

SMA COPELAND: It's located in Shreveport.

INTERVIEWER: Right in the city?

SMA COPELAND: Just about. A little bit on the outskirts. Primarily in the suburbs of the city.

INTERVIEWER: What rank were you when you were assigned there?

SMA COPELAND: I was a master sergeant E7.

INTERVIEWER: What were your duties, your primary duties?

SMA COPELAND: Well, my primary duty was that of an administrator as sergeant major of the detachment. Which called for an administrative MOS. Now I did not have an administrative MOS, and had never been assigned one. I was not administrative, per se, I was a combat soldier with a lot of experience in tanks and infantry. None the less, I guess when Colonel Scott--Lieutenant Colonel Scott--reviewed my record, he had to accept me before my being assigned, as I understood later. It wasn't just a matter of 4th Army saying, "You're going here and here and here." You had to be okayed by the college and the PMS thought, "Well, he may not be a real whiz-kid in speed typing and dictation, etc., but he certainly knows his military science. That's what I'm looking for, and when he arrives," I understand the colonel said, "We can teach him to do better typing, if he needs it." So that's exactly what the colonel did. He said, "Well, let's go and enroll in the typing classes." So I did. I got in the classroom and mixed it up. This was during duty hours, in the afternoon. You know, we did most of our platform instruction in the morning part of the day. In the afternoon then we did our mostly administrative work in preparation for the next day's classes. So it was in the afternoon that I attended the secretarial science classes; typing, filing, a little shorthand, and this sort of thing. I enrolled in March. I guess the later part of March, which was beyond the cut-off date to become a full-time credited student. While I did not get credit hours for that course, which normally would have been three credit hours, I did gain considerable proficiency and knowledge in clerical work, shall we say. I thought, "Well, this is not so bad. After the semester was over and the summer training camp had begun--at Fort Hood, Texas--and had been completed, in the fall semester why don't you enroll in the evening division?" I did. I enrolled in English and found out right away that I was not a proficient person, as far as the college English professor was concerned. He knew right away that I was somewhere down South, over in Texas with that

long drawn out drawl, etc. But anyway, I got through the English course; I passed the course. I think I posted a "C." Then I decided, "Well, that's not so bad. Why not go for some more math?" So I enrolled in math courses, and did that in the evening; I made out pretty well in that. I passed my courses. This just about completed a year or a year and a half. I decided that I would hold off for the time being. At the same time, I think I was still enrolled in the Unit and/or Company Commanders extension courses; the 20 Series. I was continuing with that, trying to bring that in. I carried that forward to Germany with me. When we arrived in Sandhoffen, I was still enrolled, and continued to take courses while in Germany. However, field duty is very demanding and it was at that time in Germany, you had your family there with you. Therefore, you didn't have a lot of time in the evening, etc, to pursue your course of study, so far as correspondence or otherwise. So I decided, for the time being, that I would just set that 20 Series aside. I was about two-thirds through with the 20 Series form Fort Knox, Kentucky.

INTERVIEWER: While you were down in Louisiana, I guess your operations sergeant training helped you out also, when you made your transition. When he looked at your record, probably your background as an opns sergeant helped out a lot, don't you think?

SMA COPELAND: It did. As far as this soldier is concerned, the operations of a combat element is the hub and function of the system. That's where it starts. That's where it began. The planning starts in operations and it continues to function throughout the mission, and upon completion of the mission, it goes back in the operations. It was from that operations and intel... Well, not so much the intelligence part of it, because they too are supporting the operations. But it's that operations duty, that experience, the schooling first, then on-the-job training, field maneuvers, more schooling, more field maneuvers, more garrison duty, and I became a proficient soldier. I don't mind saying so, Butch, I'm a whiz,

a whiz-kid when it comes to operations in the field. The commanders and the officers looked to me to maintain that NCS, the net control station. When we moved out of garrison and moved to the field, then went on the air, I had written that operation order. It had been approved by the operations officer, usually the major, and then the battalion commander took a whack at it and let it go. I was thoroughly familiar with what we were going to do, when we were going to do it, operating the NCS, maneuvering the companies, while the commanders were monitoring. If I said something on that NCS that my commander, the battalion commander, did not approve of, he breaks in very politely. But the commander and I was in a command track; what we call the command track; maintaining the net control station. The battalion commander drove his jeep up one day, and the door was open, and he stuck his head in the door and said, "Say Sergeant Copeland, I like the way you handle this station." He was learning. My battalion commander was learning from the experience and the schooling that Silas Copeland had been through and on-the-job training over a long period of time--going back to World War II--when I first entered that first tank as a tank commander. You have to become proficient in handling the radio and learning to communicate. Maneuver, shoot, and communicate, as we call it. So that carried over when I became an operations sergeant. I loved it.

INTERVIEWER: I guess those young ROTC cadets down there, when it came to operations and intel courses, received some good instruction and then you had a good chance to put it in play when you went to summer training, right?

SMA COPELAND: That is correct. At the ROTC detachment, the organization, function of the mission, the makeup of an armored division, the function, the mission, the operation, I taught that on the platform. Colonel Scott said, "I want you to teach this subject. Who's better qualified than you? I have two lieutenants here. I have a captain

here. They've never had this experience. You had experience in World War II. You've had the schooling. You've had the on-the-job training. Countless number of movements. Your record attests to that. I want you to teach it." I taught those subjects and I taught them well. The reason why I can say that is because they had a little wager going at the University in the ROTC; that is, the students. They went to their PMS and said, "Look, no offense to anyone. We want to rate the instructors. Let us rate the instructors." The colonel asked, "Why for?" Well, I didn't know why they wanted to do it. But whom did they rate Number One, as far as knowing his subject and his ability to express the subject in a manner whereby young students could understand the subject?

INTERVIEWER: Master Sergeant Copeland.

SMA COPELAND: They did. And do you know who continued to teach those subjects? Master Sergeant Copeland did. I loved it. I loved to instruct. Now where did I get... Where did I gain some experience in instructing? Well, to begin with, in 1946 or '47, thereabout, I was chosen by my battalion commander to proceed to Fort Knox, Kentucky and observe a trial period of Universal Military Training, UMT. They're talking about it again today. The Nation, that is, with a view of perhaps going to a universal military training. We were doing it back in the late 40's, and Fort Knox was selected as the site to try this Universal Military Training. Silas Copeland was chosen from Fort Hood to be the senior NCO to proceed to Fort Knox as an observer. While there, you are to enroll yourself in this two-week course of instruction in the method of teaching and presenting oral instruction. So we had a professor from the University of Ohio on loan to the Army, located at Fort Knox. He proceeded to instruct us in the method... Teach us how to teach professionally. He did that for one week. Forty hours of platform instruction. The second week, the next forty hours, the students did the teaching. That was a Murder Board type.

When Silas Copeland got up on that stage to present his class professionally... It's not that I hadn't instructed, henceforth, because I was a senior NCO, as were the rest of them, or most of them in that class. They had been instructing soldiers from the word, "Go." But that's fine. "Now, let's polish you up a little bit in the instructor field. We're going to teach you the method of instructing soldiers properly." That's what helped me when I arrived at the University to teach Senior ROTC students, because I was using the same method, the same techniques that 4th Army, at Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio, Texas, had laid out and that CONARC (Continental Army Command) had laid out. This is the method you will use. That helped me, tremendously. It has helped me throughout my military career, as a matter of fact. I look back on those ROTC days. I've heard it's said among some senior NCOs, "Well, really, there's nothing to be gained, experience wise, by being assigned to such unit." If you apply yourself, there is much to be gained; militarily, educationally, esprit de corps, confidence. I gained that at those two universities; Texas A&M and Centenary College.

INTERVIEWER: You also had the advantage too. The majority of these students that you were teaching were now going to go out and become officers. You probably instilled in them, "Hey, NCOs do know what they're talking about."

SMA COPELAND: Exactly. I just want to add, Butch, when I became Sergeant Major of the Army, MANY of those ROTC students whom I had instructed, from freshmen through their senior year, invariably, at one time or another over my twenty-nine month tenure in the Pentagon, these lieutenant colonels and colonels would come in my office and sit down and they would reminisce back on those days, back at Centenary. Now another gratification. When I went to Sandoffen, Germany and joined the 8th Cavalry Regiment, and I had a considerable amount of experience in dealing with young cadets, each Summer the Military Academy, West Point, would send x-number of their junior year cadets to

Europe to observe and go with units to get some first-hand experience. I always had them with me during the Summer. They were on my track, my command track, the company commander's track. They were in the track observing me, watching me, they were listening on that command net station. I'd dare say that was their first experience, during their three years tenure at the Academy, that they had with controlling military elements using this system; through the net control station. How do you do it? How do you know where they are? You can't see them. I could see them. I have a situation map on the wall of that. When you've operated for a good many years, as this soldier has, in maneuvering in foreign countries, in the Continental United States, when you call someone on that horn, on that radio, you are looking, without even looking at that map. You are visualizing exactly where he's located. These outstanding cadets from the Academy are sitting there or standing there. They're listening. They're observing. That's why they're over there. Now their fun time will come later, after the maneuver is over. Then they're granted x-number of days, you know, to go and do their excursions and look and see, etc. Do a little socializing. But, while in that field, they're looking at those maneuver elements or support elements. So again, Butch, I was always gratified just because some of those cadets were sent to my outfit, to my unit to observe the procedure that I used in performing in the field.

INTERVIEWER: About how many cadets did you have at Centenary?

SMA COPELAND: At Centenary. The total in the corps? Our objective was to commission at least twenty-five cadets, annually. Sometime we did not meet that objective. Other times we went beyond the objective. But I think we had approximately three hundred cadets in the corps. Now at that time, the draft system was still in effect. If you went to the university and you were in that draft system, you'd better be enrolled in the ROTC or you were subject to being drafted. So I think we had no problem getting two hundred fifty

or three hundred cadets in our corps.

INTERVIEWER: How do you compare your assignment to Centenary with A&M?
About the same?

SMA COPELAND: Well, about the same. However, it would appear to me... Let's go back to Texas A&M. At that time, primarily a one hundred percent male student university. I would say ninety percent plus were in cadet uniform, meaning that it was corps, corps, corps. The esprit de corps, the morale, the unit cohesion, it was there. Now when you get to Centenary; Centenary was a private institution. It cost the cadets a lot of money to go to school there. It was more laid back, if you will. None the less, they were interested. The cadets were interested because they were there, in the corps, to obtain a commission. I have to say that some of them would have to go five, maybe six years. Now they may have been dragging their feet, you know, not wanting to graduate, get out and then go on active duty. I don't know that the reason; what the motive was. But none the less, I could see a remarkable difference in the function of the cadet corps at Centenary as opposed to the function of the cadet corps at Texas A&M. Now I can sit here and name you any number of colonels, who are retired, whom I instructed back in those days. I would not want to imply, or have anyone get the impression, "Yeah. You said we were not as good as the other guy." I'm not saying that at all. I'm just saying that it was more of a relaxed atmosphere at Centenary, because it was not as gungho as Texas A&M.

INTERVIEWER: Previously, we talked about your overseas assignments in a combat zone. Then we talked about your other overseas assignments, etc. What I want to do right now is talk a little bit about you progression from platoon sergeant on up. Many of these questions have already been answered. What I'll attempt to do is skip over them and concentrate more on your job and experience as a platoon sergeant, first sergeant, sergeant

major, etc. Before I was asking about the morale of the unit, the training of the unit. Now I'm going to try to zero in on your specific job in each of these areas. First of all, when you became that platoon sergeant for the first time, the first time you became a platoon sergeant, that was in Germany. Correct?

SMA COPELAND: That was in Germany. Correct.

INTERVIEWER: Now here you are, a young platoon sergeant for the first time. Who was that person you depended on the most and you really looked up to, to keep you on the right track?

SMA COPELAND: Well you see, Butch, I'm a big copy cat'er. There's nothing wrong with learning from the other guy if he had something good. I arrived in the company as a buck sergeant, and right away became a tank commander. But immediately I began to zero in on that platoon sergeant. How does he perform? What is he doing? Then as he called formation after formation, you know, and then the company formation, etc. Not only am I looking at that platoon sergeant function in a combat-type element for the first time, keeping in mind that I came out of the Army Air Corps. We had no such formation in the air corps, in my unit. But when I arrived in this combat tank outfit in Northern Germany, I began to zero in on what the other experienced noncommissioned officers were doing. How they were conducting themselves? Because all other things depended upon, as far as I was concerned, what they were doing and what they had done; because they had survived the war. So I learned quickly. I learned to emulate. I learned to copy. I played a copy cat, if you will, on what that platoon sergeant was doing. So when he moved out and they moved me in as the platoon sergeant, I continued to march and do my thing and function of the platoon sergeant, as opposed to a tank commander with four men under my command. Now you've often heard the phrase, "Look, enlisted men do not command." Yes they do. I was

a commander. I wa a tank commander. I commanded four men and that tank. That was the official title. It was written into the regulation; the table of organization and equipment. Authorized a tank driver, an assistant driver, gunner, a loader, and a tank commander. I felt good by having assumed the title of "commander." Maybe it was at that time that I began to think about, "Hey, this command bit, it's alright." I assumed control, and I liked it!

INTERVIEWER: We had an armor guy at the Academy who once said, "A tank commander is just as important as the captain of a ship, because he's running that tank."

SMA COPELAND: He is. Absolutely. It is in that platoon that you have four tanks, well you have five tank commanders. But one of those tank commanders will usually be a commissioned officer, as listed in the table of organization and equipment. The other four are enlisted sergeants; commanders. Now you wheel that all together, times three platoons, and you've got fifteen tank commanders in a company. You multiply that, in a battalion, times four; you have sixty enlisted commanders in a battalion. Now it's very important that each commander functions to the best of his ability. When you do that, of course the entire unit is usually successful. But I've often looked back on those days. To someone who is not familiar with the makeup and the organization and function of a combat element, when you start talking about commanders, usually they start thing about a captain, lieutenant colonel, captains by TO&E, command companies, lieutenant colonels command battalions. Of course we know that captains have commanded battalions, as have majors, many a time. But usually you think in terms of commissioned officers, but today we're talking about the noncommissioned officer corps. I functioned during World War II, and since that time until the day I retired, whereby I associated and served with, and soldiered with, and fought with commanders who were enlisted personnel. It's commanders in a small unit when you go into combat that either succeeds for that unit or they fail. It's the young sergeant and his

men, with this young sergeant commanding, who influences the outcome of the battle. It's not the colonel. Well the colonel influences it and so does the captain, but I'm talking about the guy right there facing the enemy--standing face to face, shoulder to shoulder--who says, "Buddy, it's either you or I." It's that sergeant commander.

INTERVIEWER: Also, as you were coming up, you went from tank commander to platoon sergeant. Although the majority of the troops within your platoon were seasoned veterans, as you say, they still gave you real good support. Right?

SMA COPELAND: They gave me good support. They sure did. I might add, they gave me some guidance or recommendations, if you will, from subordinate soldiers. If the soldier has something good to offer, a good recommendation, I accept that. Now I knew that when I arrived on the scene in Europe and joined this tank unit, that whatever I learned about this tank, this big steel monstrosity upon tracks, everything that I learn, everything that I needed to know about fighting with that tank was going to be predicated on what I learned from the experienced combat soldier that was already there and had been there for many months. So I was a willing learner. From the corporal, from the private first class, from the private. I watched. I observed. I listened. I learned. And I took over. I couldn't take over until I did those basic things. I crawled before I walked. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Was there another platoon sergeant within that company that you kinda pulled over to the side and said, "I need some advice. I need some help here."

SMA COPELAND: Yes. Yes. A sergeant by the name of "Robinson." He was from up in Oklahoma. Now for some reason or another it seemed that the majority of these guys, in the company in which I was assigned, were from Okie. A lot of them were from Okie. Sergeant Robinson, a platoon sergeant of that company, I sort of kept my eye on him. That's what I meant when I said, "I watched and I observed and tried to emulate what Old

Robbie was doing." We called him "Robbie." Later on he became our first sergeant. I almost became first sergeant of the company when Robbie was scheduled to depart, but Robbie talked Silas Copeland into the idea of reenlisting with him, and becoming Regular Army. Otherwise, I would have been first sergeant of the company when Robbie departed. But I'm looking at Robbie, platoon sergeant, because he had a great deal of experience. He had been in country a year, a year and a half. He had been a private in a tank, had been tank commander, and then platoon sergeant. He had a couple of Purple Hearts and was highly decorated. He had the Silver Star, Bronze Star and had a couple of hash marks. You know, at that time... I say hash marks and you may be wondering, "Hey wait a minute now. How do you know he had on hash marks?" Because that division commander made us wear our OD (Olive Drab) uniform in that tank division; Hell on Wheels, 2nd Armored Division. That had been Patton's division and General Harmon's division, Pee Wee Collier's division, who was commanding the division when I arrived. I was somewhat surprised to know that we had to be in our Class A OD uniform. But anyway, Robbie has a couple of hash marks on his sleeve. I said, "Hey, the man's got six years. Six years is a long time to be in the military," you know, back in those conscriptive days. I knew that had to have a world of professional knowledge. I said, "What better person to emulate than Robbie." He sort of liked me, too, because I'm from the country, the turf, where he grew up. He had an old, slow drawl type talk like Silas Copeland. But I kinda liked Robbie.

INTERVIEWER: You know, earlier you were talking about reenlisting and coming back with the first sergeant.

SMA COPELAND: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: That was Robbie then.

SMA COPELAND: That was Robbie. When we got back to Fort Hood, later on,

Robbie decided to become a warrant officer. At that time, I think the field was wide open; maybe they had just rewritten the TO&E. They needed warrant officer administrators. And Robbie was good at administration; that's another reason why I sort of emulated Robbie. I heard something about a morning report. Back in the Air Corps, I never heard about a morning report. I'm sure they had one. They had to, to account for personnel. Some form of reporting. But then they began to talk about morning reports, duty rosters, and this sort of thing. I said, "Okay Robbie. You've been around a long time. I'm going to look over your shoulder today." I copied him. I tried to emulate Robbie. Robbie is the soldier that we can give credit to for having enlisted Silas Copeland into the Regular Army. I don't know what happened to Robbie after he and I departed Fort Hood. We came there about the same time because he, like myself, was on the same orders. Each of us were authorized thirty days of delay en route, at government expense, with pay, to visit with our families, and then report to Fort Hood. So he and I reported in sometime the latter part of March 1946, to Fort Hood. Then Robbie, later on, became a warrant officer in the administrative field. He was there three or four years and then something happened to him, as did happen to Silas Copeland. I went to Japan, and from there to Korea. I don't know whatever happened to Robbie. But I've always looked to him.

INTERVIEWER: The next thing we're going to talk about is going from platoon sergeant to first sergeant. This would be a good time to, once again, talk to you about Robbie. How did Robbie influence you, down the road, when you were with the 22nd Infantry, in Kirschgoen, and you became a first sergeant? Did you go back to those days?

SMA COPELAND: I went back to Robbie. He didn't know it, but I went back to him many times. When I was back there serving with Robbie, when he was promoted from platoon sergeant to first sergeant, then I began observing Robbie as a first sergeant, as

opposed to a platoon sergeant. How do you conduct a formation? Why? When? What do you say to the troops? What are you going to announce? What reaction are you going to get? How do you reciprocate to your soldiers? And this sort of thing. I learned that from Robbie. Then when I became first sergeant and something like that came up, I always referred back to Robbie.

INTERVIEWER: So that imprint was always there.

SMA COPELAND: That imprint, that imprint was always there. My first impression of a platoon sergeant and of a first sergeant has always followed me throughout my career. That's where I formed some of my Regular Army foundation, from observing, looking, listening, what the guys in front of me were doing. Because they were successful. Why not emulate them.

INTERVIEWER: You also learned, the one that didn't do too good of a job, you didn't want to do the same thing that they did.

SMA COPELAND: Lay it aside. Learn from that. Learn from those sort of things.

INTERVIEWER: When you put on that diamond and became that first sergeant, what did you find was your most difficult task?

SMA COPELAND: Most difficult? Making sure that our mission was carried out. That would have been that headquarters and headquarters company of the battalion. I wanted to make sure that the commanders, that is the company commanders and the battalion commander, had put their trust in me to conduct that company in a supportive role; headquarters and headquarters company; supporting the battalion.

INTERVIEWER: Sometimes the headquarters and headquarters company can be one of the most difficult assignments because of the staff people you have in the company. Is that right?

SMA COPELAND: That is correct. It can be a rag-tag Army, if you will. Because a lot of times the soldiers have a tendency to become lax because there are not all that many... HE is not attending all that many formations. For example: If you are working in battalion headquarters, you're usually up and you're over there in the morning before the other soldiers begin functioning. If you're a cook in the dining facility, you're up at four o'clock in the morning and you're doing your thing in the mess facility. If you're in the pioneer and ammunition platoon and there are things to be done out on the perimeter, you're up and about and around. So because of the mere configuration of the organization of the administrative functioning of that headquarters and headquarters company, it's pretty difficult to get your hand on all the soldiers at any one time so you can set down and have a rap session with them. Because they're not looking so much to their first sergeant, they're looking to their sergeant major, in the case of working in battalion headquarters. You've got personnel in S1, and S2, and S3. You've got people in S4. You've got people in the motor pool. You've got people in the mess hall. They're scattered to the four winds. Consequently, there's only one time per day and that's usually at reveille. As the first sergeant of the company, did I stand reveille? Yes. Yes, I blew the whistle, or the company clerk blew the whistle. The company fell-out and they were ready for formation. I stepped forward and the platoon sergeants rendered the report; usually it was "present and accounted for." But many times I knew that wasn't the case, because Private Sam Jones would not show up. He was out in the gasthaus someplace, from the evening before, and he didn't quite make it back the next morning. But then after that official formation, then this platoon sergeant or squad leader would come and say, "First sergeant, so and so hasn't shown up this morning." He didn't want to announce it in front of the troops, you know, or that sort of thing. None the less, it was only about that first formation in the morning;

reveille formation; that you were able to contact the entire company.

INTERVIEWER: You also had a pretty heavy rank structure in head and head company.

SMA COPELAND: The rank structure. Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Which can create a problem, sometimes.

SMA COPELAND: It can. It can create a problem. Yes it can. It's a problem. It's always a challenge; one that you have to deal with. Because the sergeant major always outranks... Well, not really. Now, we all know, the first sergeant, as far as the noncommissioned officer, he is the commander of the company. He's the first sergeant of the company. If push comes to shove, you know who's going to win. It most likely will be that battalion sergeant major. But I never placed myself in a position whereby I had to push or be pushed or shoved. We always did it diplomatically. And then of course, your platoon sergeants were master sergeants. In that dining facility you had assigned to you, I believe he was a master sergeant because he was the battalion consolidated mess sergeant. I believe at that time under one of the TO&Es we were examining or testing, it called for a master sergeant. Yeah, you're rank heavy in headquarters and headquarters company as far as noncommissioned officers are concerned. And officers, as a matter of fact, because you have a captain in S1, 2, 3, 4, and then your company commander.

(End Tape OH 93.1-5, Side 1)

(Begin Tape OH 93.1-5, Side 2)

INTERVIEWER: As the last tape ended, we were talking about the rank heaviness of the headquarters company. I think we pretty well covered that portion. When you were the first sergeant, how did you handle disciplinary problems in your company?

SMA COPELAND: Through the NCO chain of command. Using the

noncommissioned officers chain of command and operating on the theory, the lower down through the chain of command to the soldier that created the problem, the noncommissioned officer is in a better position. He more understands; usually; what's going on, what caused the problem in the first place, and just as importantly, he's responsible for the well being of that soldier. So my method of operating was to use the chain of command and going down from platoon sergeant to squad leader to tank commander and/or fire team leader, whatever the case may be, and solving the problem if at all possible, at the lowest level. That way it tends to keep the problems from piling up. The higher you go the more problems, if you let it go. We endeavored to solve those problems at the lowest unit level, be it platoon, fire team, or tank commander.

INTERVIEWER: Working at headquarters company, I know your job is a trainer, and I know the involvement of the first sergeant in training. I guess that was kind of a challenge for you, wasn't it? Because of the diversity of people you had in that company?

SMA COPELAND: Well, it's always a challenge being first sergeant of a company. I guess the challenge is that you have to make sure that the troops are performing their mission or you'll have a lot of personnel down on your back, so to speak. It is a real challenge to the first sergeant, because you have such diversified duty performance in personnel who are qualified in various asunderous job entities. Some are professional cooks, while some are professional clerks. Others are professional photographers or professional maintenance personnel. You have a great number of outstanding professional soldiers in a headquarters and headquarters company. It's very difficult, it would seem, to those soldiers to set their more professional jobs aside and become a real soldier. That is, you fall out for formation, you stand formation, you stand reveille, you stand by your bunk. Some times these soldiers are referred to as "Primadonna Soldiers." Now that doesn't mean to imply

they're not outstanding soldiers or good people, because they are. But it's just that the first sergeant is not on top of this. That's where the challenge comes in at the headquarters and headquarters company. If the first sergeant lets it slide, pretty soon it can create a problem for that first sergeant.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have a special initiative program within the unit to improve the leadership of the NCO's?

SMA COPELAND: To improve the leadership of the noncommissioned officer, continue talking, continue counseling, and continue encouraging those noncommissioned officers assigned to your company to continue to further their education. Because if they don't, invariably they're going to find that in their platoon, in their squad, there's going to be an outstanding self-initiative, self-motivated soldier that steps forward and says, "Ah, I'm smarter than he or she. I have more knowledge. I've read the manual. I passed my MOS testing. I'm enrolled in extension courses. I'm taking college courses. Pretty soon I'm going to outrank my sergeant." Now I've always tried to enview in the minds of my noncommissioned officers "Unless we, as their noncommissioned officer leaders, continue to pursue a course of instruction leading to a higher degree of skill, then our soldiers are going to outsmart us."

INTERVIEWER: And also, you have that smart soldier. That's the one you want to grab a hold of; groom him for the next...

SMA COPELAND: You grab him! You send him to school. And he graduates and he comes back and he continues to pursue further courses of instruction. Now I found in Vietnam, when I arrived there, somehow or another we managed to conscript some college graduates. These highly articulate soldiers arrived on site and were put under the command of an outstanding sergeant who was not so articulate. Now where the conflict occurred was

that this newly arrived highly educated soldier, which was not usually assigned down to a fire team, but in a rear area some place, if there were any rear areas because, far as I'm concerned, it was all front line duty in Vietnam. But you would usually have a conflict where this highly educated, highly motivated young soldier was put under the command of a, shall we say "an old timer," whom he thought "Hey, look. I don't think he has much education. He doesn't have as much education as I do." Therefore, it created a problem a lot of times. So it's very important, and I've seen this from the word, "Go," back in the Army, that the noncommissioned officer--squad leader, platoon sergeant, first sergeant, sergeant major--if they don't continue to pursue their education leading to higher skills or more knowledge, the men are going to lose faith in them. You lose creditability in the eyes of your men. And your men should know. They should know that you, as a first sergeant or sergeant major or a platoon sergeant, are continuing to pursue your military education. General officers go to school. Full colonels go to school. They go to C&GS. They go to war colleges; majors, colonels, generals. Why not platoon sergeants, first sergeants, sergeants major. The other day, going back in yesteryear, I think most noncommissioned officers, when they became senior noncommissioned officers, had a feeling, "Well this is it. There's no point in my further pursuing a course of instruction leading to more proficiency."

INTERVIEWER: Did you notice any change in morale, an increase in morale after you took over the company as first sergeant?

SMA COPELAND: Well, I would have to have been assigned previously to that unit prior to becoming a first sergeant. That wasn't so, in my case, therefore I would probably be at a loss to try and compare what the morale, or what the condition of the company was prior to my arriving on site. For example: When I went to the 22nd Infantry Regiment, that battalion--the 2nd Battalion--right up front, except for the first few days, I was assigned duty

as a first sergeant. Therefore, I didn't have too much time to evaluate what had been happening and what had been going on in the past. But it appeared to me there were no real major problems.

INTERVIEWER: What about recruiting and retention?

SMA COPELAND: I've always been a big supporter.

INTERVIEWER: How did it work out in that first company?

SMA COPELAND: Well, it worked fairly well. However, this was back during the draft days with mostly conscriptees coming into the unit. On the part of the younger soldiers, the sooner they could do their eighteen months... The duty was eighteen months. I think they were drafted for two years at that time, and they would come overseas with about eighteen, sixteen months remaining. But the sooner they could complete that tour and get out of country, I think the better off they were. They felt much better about it.

INTERVIEWER: Probably a lot of them had families at home.

SMA COPELAND: Well they did. A lot of them did. And so they were very anxious to get back to the Continental United States.

INTERVIEWER: When you were a battalion sergeant major for the first time, you were with the 4th Tank Battalion, 1st Armored Division, Right?

SMA COPELAND: That is correct. For a short while. Yes.

INTERVIEWER: When did you take over that job?

SMA COPELAND: I believe it was January, or maybe December of 1956.

INTERVIEWER: Was it '56 or '54?

SMA COPELAND: I believe it was '56. I had been operations sergeant.

INTERVIEWER: Right.

SMA COPELAND: I had been an operations sergeant, and I think it was '56. '54

would have been when I came back from Europe, got out of the Army and then later on, a few weeks thereafter, went to the 4th Tank Battalion and was accepted in the 4th Tank Battalion, with grade as an operations sergeant.

INTERVIEWER: So, where was the 4th Tank Battalion located when you were the battalion sergeant major?

SMA COPELAND: Located at Fort Polk, Louisiana.

INTERVIEWER: It had moved down from Fort Hood. Right?

SMA COPELAND: That is correct.

INTERVIEWER: What occupied most of your time when you were battalion sergeant major?

SMA COPELAND: Meeting with first sergeants. First sergeant call, for example. Walking throughout the area checking police call in each area of responsibility. Doing administration in the battalion headquarters. At that time the TO&E called for the sergeants major MOS to be a 1502, which means that he had to be; he should have been; proficient in military administration.

INTERVIEWER: So actually, we've made a shift from an administrative oriented sergeant major, command sergeant major now, which actually is more branch combat oriented, and lets the real down to earth everyday administration be handled by someone else. He's really doing more because he's the command sergeant major of the battalion. We've gotten away from the admin type.

SMA COPELAND: Yes, we've gotten away from the admin type, and this was a great assist. I do not know how they failed to overlook that problem. I would consider it a problem. Maybe I didn't back in those days. But now, having gone through that era, I can look back and see very well whereby the unit, noncommissioned officer wise, could have

functioned more efficiently had we given this battalion sergeant major the rein to be out with troops, as are the first sergeants today. But then you get to looking back, during those days the first sergeants were administrators, also, until someone woke up and said, "Hey, wait a minute. Let's assign a warrant officer. Let's create a slot in each company and put that on the TO&E and authorize each company a warrant officer W1, as an administrator and let this warrant officer take care of all the paperwork, all the administration. That releases the first sergeant then to replace that field first sergeant who should really be with his platoon. So that was a big plus in so far as cohesion and functioning better in the field.

INTERVIEWER: Did you implement any kind of programs designed to improve the morale or increase readiness within your battalion?

SMA COPELAND: Always be in touch with your soldiers. Talk to them. Talk with them. Rap with them. Be there for them. And always let them know that you're available. That you're on site.

INTERVIEWER: Did you ever have battalion organizational days to increase esprit de corps?

SMA COPELAND: Well, we would have battalion parades conducted by noncommissioned officers. We would have inspections, literally inspections conducted by noncommissioned officers. And with that... Having said that, let me go back to Erlangen, Germany, with the 2nd Brigade. We were talking earlier on, how we were able to lift the soldiers. Get them up and stand them straight. The noncommissioned officers, with the approval of the brigade commander, instigated a Saturday morning command maintenance inspection. Now having been assigned to the 2nd Armored Division, back at Fort Hood, as the division command sergeant major, the division sergeant major invariably accompanied either the ADC for maneuver or the ADC for support and/or the division commander on

these inspections, because that was troop duty. I learned, first hand, all the in's and out's of the function of the supply, mess, administration, etc., of an Armored Division, because I functioned right at division, right at company level, squad level, right on through during these inspections. Then we would come back to our offices, the sergeant major, the aides, and the generals, and we'd sit down and we'd talk about the conduct of the inspection during the day. It was there that we would decide what rating we were going to award to a company or to a battalion. Now when I arrived in Germany, as we alluded to earlier, this brigade had been rated number five out of five by the division commander. The brigade commander and the brigade sergeant major knew this, because we were so informed. We began to formulate plans, right away, as to how and what approach we were going to take. Most all wheeled vehicles and most all track-laying vehicles were red lined and or deadlined, meaning they were malfunctioning for some reason or another. It appeared that no one was making much effort or taking the initiative to obtain replacement parts to put these vehicles back in Category I, shall we say. The equipment, personal equipment; TA21--their field equipment, etc.--was in a deplorable state of repair. So we talked about this and we said, "Okay, let's let the noncommissioned officers handle this. It's something we can do and it's something that all senior noncommissioned officers assigned to this brigade should know and know well, because they have a considerable number of years experience." So we got the S3 sergeant major together with the brigade and we got the S4 together and we called the S1 sergeant major in, and we all sat down, along with the battalion sergeants major. We laid it out on the table and we said, "Well, here's what we're going to do and here's the approach we're going to make on this thing in order to get your vehicles off deadline." For example: When we had an alert... When a USAREUR alert or a division alert was sounded, as you know, early in the morning--some time two or three o'clock--you

rush to your billets, you get your combat gear, you go to the motor pool to your mobile unit--which most are--and you load those vehicles and then you begin to move out. Well, many units could not move from the kaserne, because they were red lined and/or deadlined; malfunctioning. So you loaded your equipment aboard and you sat there, and you did nothing.

INTERVIEWER: Some of their loading plans didn't work.

SMA COPELAND: Some of their loading plans did not work. Absolutely. The rule in USAREUR was that... And the excuse, some of them would offer up an excuse, of course, and the excuse was, "Well gee, we're not able to get replacement parts. We've had it on requisition." "Well, move your vehicle." "Here's my piece of paper. We'll move the paper if we don't move the vehicle." That's not going to work. We move the vehicle. Having become acquainted with the USAREUR policy, right away the brigade commander said, "Okay, what we'll do, we'll move the unit to the field and we'll drag those vehicles to the field." Now if you were in the field or in a major training area, the USAREUR policy was that you had priority on replacement parts. So what we did, we took all available running vehicles and we hooked them to those malfunctioning vehicles and we dragged them to the major training area. The brigade sergeant major and the battalion sergeant major and the first sergeant, once in the major training area, we proceeded to submit requisitions. We hand carried them and follow them through until we received the replacement parts. We repaired those vehicles in the major training area, and in lieu of dragging them back home, we drove them back home.

INTERVIEWER: That's one time when an army regulation worked.

SMA COPELAND: That's one time it worked.

INTERVIEWER: While we're talking about Germany, your next assignment was, I

guess you can't say battalion sergeant, because you were squadron sergeant major of the 3rd Recon Squadron, 8th Cav. Right? **SMA COPELAND:** Right.

INTERVIEWER: That was at Sandhoffen.

SMA COPELAND: Sandhoffen. 8th Infantry Division. Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Once again, let me ask you that same question I asked before. As a squadron sergeant major, what occupied most of your time? Even though we talked about it before. Did the location of Sandhoffen, the difference in your location, effect what occupied most of your time?

SMA COPELAND: My time was taken up mostly with first sergeants and administration in the squadron headquarters. I assisted the adjutant in performing his administrative duties. I conducted my own visual inspections of the squadron area. I accompanied the squadron to the field; field duty. There again, back in those days the sergeants major were still operating under the auspices of the adjutant, almost. He was still an administrative duty type NCO. So you got caught up in... I kept the officer duty roster, for example. I worked with the operations noncommissioned officer and the intel noncommissioned officer in the battalion headquarters. Just assist wherever you possibly can.

INTERVIEWER: Back in those days, a lot of your battalions and your squadrons had their troops or their companies scattered out at different locations. Was that the same case with the 3rd Recon Squadron?

SMA COPELAND: Not with the 3rd Recon. We were located on the same kaserne; all units. But I see, had they been disbursed, that most likely what would have happened. Well, I'm sure what would have happened. The squadron commander and the squadron sergeant major would have gotten in their jeep; I don't think we had an aircraft at that time;

maybe an OH-13, but I don't think so. But it would not have been difficult to maneuver had they been disbursed.

INTERVIEWER: Now your training program that you had with the 3rd Recon Squadron. Did you kinda carry on the basic system and the way of approaching your job there as you did at Fort Polk? In other words, make sure that they had a good training program going on. Make sure they had a good maintenance program going on. And follow up on it to make sure they were doing their job.

SMA COPELAND: Well, yes. However, we have to keep in mind that on a training schedule a lot of it is dictated, Army wide. Back in those days we had the Continental Army Command. or CONARC, and so your major training directive would come out of CONARC. If you were a tank unit, in my case, they dictated the mandatory type training that you must conduct.

INTERVIEWER: Under you ATT (Army Training Test) and ATP (Army Training Program). Right?

SMA COPELAND: That is correct. Under the Army Training Program. And you did that. However, the unit commanders, by authority of the division commander, would be given some leeway to train the troops in those subjects that he thought they needed additional training in. Then, of course, you had your rainy schedule and/or you inclement weather schedule that you could fill in here and there. Now, I don't think I ever questioned the first sergeant in checking over a training schedule or ascertained whether he was or was not. Back then, usually the commanders, from battalion commander to the company commanders, got involved in that sort of thing. See, you would never know, Butch, for example: When the company commander of company "C," or Troop "C" would call the squadron commander and say, "Colonel, today I would like to do this with my troop. With

your permission I think we'll just load up and we're going to move out to the training area. We're going to conduct a vehicle march," if you will. Well you see, I wouldn't know about that sort of thing. So therefore, I would be treading on thin ice, you know, to question whether the first sergeant was following that training schedule.

INTERVIEWER: Had the ARTEP (Army Readiness Training and Evaluation Program) come into being before you left the Army?

SMA COPELAND: ARTAP?

INTERVIEWER: ARTEP.

SMA COPELAND: It sounds foreign to me.

INTERVIEWER: Well, the ARTEP... Under the ATT, uh, ATP, when you started training you had a laundry list of items. Say you had a hundred items and you got down to only number sixty, this year. Come 1 January, you started at the top and moved down again. And then, of course, you had a cut and dried Army Training Test or Annual Training Test. Which was the ATT.

SMA COPELAND: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: When the ARTEP came in, you were evaluated and those things that you were strong in, you just would do a little training in that area to maintain proficiency. Then you concentrated on the weak points. It gave you so much latitude in your training. It became realistic where the first sergeant could do what you're talking about now. He could take the convoy out for a road march if they needed it. It gave the flexibility that...

SMA COPELAND: It gave him some latitude to improve upon those things that they were deficient in as part of the training. That's good. The unit commander should have that latitude.

INTERVIEWER: Now your first assignment as division sergeant major was with the

2nd Armored Division.

SMA COPELAND: 2nd Armored Division, Fort Hood, Texas.

INTERVIEWER: And I think you said, earlier, in June of '66 you joined the 2nd Armored Division and then around... When did you join the 2nd Armored Division? Was it '63?

SMA COPELAND: Late '62.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Late '62.

SMA COPELAND: Later '62. October or November of '62.

INTERVIEWER: And you went in as an opns sergeant and then later on, around the middle of '63, you became the division sergeant major.

SMA COPELAND: I went in as a battalion sergeant major.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

SMA COPELAND: 2nd of the 37th Armored, as sergeant major. This was October, November '62. Then the division sergeant major was leaving the following June for Korea. The division commander was interviewing in-house sergeants major for someone to become his division sergeant major.

INTERVIEWER: Now we have you moving from a battalion and squadron up to a division. What was the biggest transition you had to make?

SMA COPELAND: Yeah, that was a big transition. Skipping over a combat command, as we referred to it in those days in an armored division, as opposed to a regiment in an infantry division. It was quite a step up. But I had no problem once I arrived at division headquarters, in dealing with some thirty-four sergeants major. Now this was a first for Silas Copeland, because I had been dealing with, as a squadron sergeant major, with five first sergeants. Now, as division sergeant major... It wasn't command

sergeant major back in those days. It wasn't until later when the command sergeant major program came into being. Once I arrived at division headquarters of the 2nd Armored "Hell on Wheels" Division, I had no problem, no reservation in calling together all--I think we had thirty-four sergeants major in the division--into a classroom and just sitting down and rapping; just having a skull session. Because, I think that they thought, "Well here is a sergeant major now. He sits next to the commander, and if we have something that we want to get across, our program or something we want to push that pertains to the noncommissioned officers, well here's our opportunity." General Burber--Edwin H. Burber--was my division commander at that time.

INTERVIEWER: How many brigades did you have? Was it a three brigade division?

SMA COPELAND: It was a three combat command division and a support command. I believe it was five. Maybe it was five major commands. Four maneuver battalions. Four maneuver combat commands and a support command. Well, we had Division Artillery. We had Division Artillery, Support Command, and then Combat Command A, B, and C. Five major commands, we would say, in that division.

INTERVIEWER: You had a DIVARTY (Division Artillery), a DISCOM (Division Support Command) and then your three maneuver brigades.

SMA COPELAND: That is correct.

INTERVIEWER: The 2nd Armored Division at Fort Hood was a very, I guess you could say, active division. At that time, did you still have two divisions at Hood?

SMA COPELAND: We had two divisions.

INTERVIEWER: The 2nd Armored and the 1st was there. Correct?

SMA COPELAND: The 2nd Armored was there first. It came from Europe in 1946.

INTERVIEWER: The Fort Hood training area, being a big training area, always had

units out in the field. Did you do a lot of traveling to the field? Did you continually visit your brigades?

SMA COPELAND: We did a lot of traveling. We were always training. We always had a combat command and/or battalion training on the Fort Hood Reservation proper. Visiting with the units in the field. Visiting with units doing their annual firing exercises, whether it be the infantry units or engineer units, signal units, tank units, etc.

INTERVIEWER: Did you get out and talk to "Joe Snuff," as we call...

SMA COPELAND: I got out and talked to Joe Snuff. A lot of times when they were going down range in their tanks, for example, during the training phase of it--not when they were going for scoring, going for broke--but just as an observer or rider, I'd get on the tank with them, or on the personnel carrier and go with them, be with them. Go out to the firing ranges and fire weapons with them. Go to their gas training areas and go through the gas chamber with them, not because I like it. I never liked going through a gas chamber.

INTERVIEWER: Joe Snuff wasn't afraid to talk to the sergeant major, was he?

SMA COPELAND: No he wasn't. The more I visited, the more at ease he became. We got to know one another a lot better. I got to know sergeants major real well. Now I think I fit into that program because as a battalion, as a squadron sergeant major, I had been attending division formations, you see. And here again, going back to my "copy cat days," in the absence of any formal schooling as to how do you perform as a sergeant major, I'm going to watch the guy who has been successful and who has a proven track record in the game, and who has a good batting average. I'm going to emulate this guy. You see, in that 8th Infantry Division, that sergeant major every month, that division sergeant major would have Division Sergeant Major Call. Sometime we'd meet at division headquarters. Sometime we'd meet at my headquarters. Sometime we'd meet other places; Baumholder.

But you see, that was bringing this soldier along all the time. He didn't know it, but I was keeping notes on him. You see, and I was emulating what these guys were doing. Then when I departed that division and arrived at Fort Hood, 2nd Armored Division, and that division commander began to have his battalion and combat command/brigade sergeants major meetings. Here again, you listen, you observe, and you try to get them honed on the way things are going. Then you begin to formulate "Well, one of these days I might make it up to brigade or combat command," never dreaming that I was going to be a division sergeant major. I went back to the 2nd Armored Division by way of invitation from General Price, who was division commander. We were back there because during this year--about four years ago--they were dedicating a new division headquarters building, dedication it to General Harmon who had commanded that division. Well, General Price, the division commander, and I were just standing there before the ceremony began and he just remarked to me, "You were sergeant major of this division." I said, "Yes sir. I'm proud of it. And general, I was also in combat. I didn't draw blood, but I was in combat. I wear one battle star with this division. I'm proud of this division. This is my division." I said, "Furthermore, having been sergeant major of four different divisions; two armored divisions and two infantry divisions. I've never been good enough to be a corps sergeant major." He said, "Oh man, sergeant major." But don't you know, now after the ceremony began... All the local dignitaries were coming in from Killean and Copperas Cove and throughout the post, and the corps commander was there, and General Cavazos, who had retired as a four-star general, who used to command III Corps and 2nd Armored Division, and a good many senior officers. You know, General Price had the audacity to say, "Sergeant Major of the Army retired Silas Copeland is here today and he tells me that he was sergeant major of four divisions. However, he was not good enough to be corps sergeant major." But none

the less, yeah, you just can't make all those assignments, you see.

INTERVIEWER: That's right.

SMA COPELAND: And I never really had a desire to be a corps sergeant major. I thought if I ever made it to division, be a division sergeant major, that there's where the action is. But the lower down you go, the greater the action. But I felt good about being selected. Now let me go back a little bit to that selection. I think there were three sergeants major that went up to be interviewed by General Burber, the division commander. He asked me, "Why do you want to be sergeant major of this division?" "Well sir, I'll just tell you right now, I have something to offer. I think I have more to offer. I know these other sergeants major who have been here before me. But of the three, I'm the best." "Why do you think you're the best?" And I proceeded to tell the general why I thought I was the best. And he selected me as his soldier. Further more, I let the general know... He didn't know this. I said, "You don't remember me, general, but I saw you in Europe in World War II." He was reassigned. He and General Dodge; Colonel Dodge. They were lieutenant colonels. Both of them later became lieutenant generals. I had a picture. I had an old Army Stars and Stripes, and it had Lieutenant Colonel Dodge's picture on it and Lieutenant Colonel Burber's picture on it. I said, "Another reason why I want to be assigned as division sergeant major is because this is my division. I fought with it. Not a great deal, but none the less so." But I wanted to impress that general. I wanted to prove to him that I had more to offer to that division than did the other two sergeants major.

INTERVIEWER: Basically, you were telling the truth.

SMA COPELAND: I was telling him the truth. It was not a bull session. I was laying it on the line.

INTERVIEWER: There are a lot of them that would like to have a division, but they

won't come out and say it.

SMA COPELAND: That's right. Absolutely. Like when I went up for promotion to first sergeant E8, at 8th Division headquarters, I let the board members know that while there were several soldiers lined up out there competing for that one quota, that I was the best. Invariably the question would come. "Why do you think you're the best?" And I would proceed to tell them. Now there was one time that I didn't say that, and that is when I appeared before the Chief of Staff of the Army. I had said--en route, on that plane coming back--that if asked that question, I don't know what I'm going to say, because nothing but the best of the best, considered to be the best of the best, because all the screening had been done. The process had been started months ago and some way or another, five of you have emerged to the top. Only one of you are going to be selected out of some four thousand five hundred sergeants major. But I'm not going to stand there and tell that Chief of Staff of the Army that "I'm the best for the job."

INTERVIEWER: There's a time and place for everything.

SMA COPELAND: You've got to stop it, Silas. And that was back there at division level where I stopped it.

INTERVIEWER: We talked quite a bit about your assignment as division command sergeant major of the 4th Armored Division, so I don't think we really need to get into that too much, but I would like to ask you, during what time did you serve as division sergeant major of the 4th Armored Division, in Goppengin?

SMA COPELAND: From sometime in July 1968, until around the first of August 1969.

INTERVIEWER: And then you received your orders to go to Vietnam, from there. Right?

SMA COPELAND: That is correct.

INTERVIEWER: And then you had your delay en route, here, before you went on across, and around September '69, somewhere around that time, you got to Vietnam with the 1st Infantry Division. is that correct?

SMA COPELAND: That is correct. On the 19th day of September 1969. That was my reporting date. They called it the EDCSA (Effective Date Command Strength Accountability), or thereabout. It was the 19th day of September 1969.

INTERVIEWER: We talked quite a bit about the area of operation, etc., and during that period of time, you served until around May of '70, when they deactivated, I mean, brought the colors back to Fort Riley. Now, during the time you were with the 1st Division, you spent a lot of time in the field with the troops. Is that right?

SMA COPELAND: I spent every day, every day in the field with the troops. There was very seldom a Sunday that the division commander did not attend church services. Except for Sunday mornings, all other times I spent in the field with my division commander and/or the assistant division commander.

INTERVIEWER: What about going out on operations with some of the companies?

SMA COPELAND: Occasionally. I've been on operations. Searching, and a dirty word, "Destroy." But search and destroy. Seek, protective maneuver, etc. Not so much with ground troopers, as with the vehicular maneuvering element. You would get on a tracked vehicle, for example, occasionally with troops as they would maneuver on open terrain. I've been on those operations with troops.

INTERVIEWER: Whenever the 1st Infantry... When they brought the colors back, I think you said they re-deployed with... I don't know if we put it on tape or if it was during one of the off-the-tape comments, during a break, but you said that about five hundred troops, thereabout, came back with the division, along with the colors, to Fort Riley.

SMA COPELAND: Yes, a small contingent. It could have been four, it could have been five hundred.

INTERVIEWER: So you didn't have to go through the big exercise of re-deploying an entire division back.

SMA COPELAND: That is correct. However, prior to departure with this small contingent en route back to Fort Riley, you stood that regiment down. This entailed turning in all weapons and all their fighting equipment, accounting for it, putting it in a warehouse, releasing those troops from the responsibility of caring for that equipment, and making it affordable to the South Vietnamese soldiers. As you stood down a regiment, one by one by one, you released those soldiers who had eight or more months in the Theater and they returned home. Now if they had less than eight months, they were reassigned some where in the theater of operation to complete their tour of duty; eleven months in country. So we did this, brigade after brigade after brigade until the entire division stood down, except those four or five hundred who had served in country more than eight months and were given credit for a full tour of duty.

INTERVIEWER: And those were the ones that you brought back.

SMA COPELAND: Those are the ones I brought back with the colors. Most of them were released from the service, because most of them were conscriptees, draftees, and having completed his tour of duty, as I understand it, the Army at that time had a regulation permitting the commanders, in so far as they were able to accomplish their mission, could release soldiers for early release back to civilian life.

INTERVIEWER: When you brought the 1st Division back and then you went back over and joined the 4th Infantry Division, your activity with the 4th were about the same as with the 1st. Is that correct?

SMA COPELAND: It was about the same. Yes. As a matter of fact, I could see no difference. I reported to...

(End Tape OH 93.1-5, Side 2)

(Begin Tape OH 93.1-6, Side 1)

INTERVIEWER: Sergeant Major, when the last tape ran out, you were talking about reporting, and you said, "I reported to...", and that's where the tape ended. What you were talking about was, reporting to the chief of staff of the 4th Infantry Division, right after you got to Vietnam. Do you want to continue talking about your reporting in and your job as command sergeant major of the 4th?

SMA COPELAND: Yes. Upon reporting to the chief of staff, he proceeded to fill me in or give me an overview of what the division was doing, where they were located, and a little bit about their operation. Having done that, we proceeded to General Walker's office. There, he introduced me to General Walker, and vice versa. Then he departed and went back to his office. The general put me "at ease" and we sat down and we talked for a while. He gave his overview of what was going on, what had happened in the past. It was pretty much that of what the chief of staff had already briefed me on. He let me know that I was to accompany him, he and his aide, in his helicopter and/or his jeep, whatever the case may be. So that's what I did. It was pretty well the same type function as I had experienced previously in the 1st Infantry Division.

INTERVIEWER: There probably was very little difference in the soldiers and the mission.

SMA COPELAND: Very little. The mission was the same. There were not many offensive type operations, it was primarily, at that time, a defensive type operation. Hold what you've got. Protect your soldiers and equipment. Because the word was already out

that we are drawing down from Vietnam, as evident by my accompanying one division--a contingent of the 1st Division--back to the States. It was finished in Vietnam. Now we were just in that holding pattern, if you will. So the operation, the mission, and function of that division was very quite similar to that of the 1st Division.

INTERVIEWER: Then while you were with the 4th is when you were selected as the Sergeant Major of the Army.

SMA COPELAND: It was during that tenure. Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, what I'd like to do is... now let's go back and recap your promotion when you made E9. Now prior to the establishment of the pay grades of E8 and E9, in 1958, the pay grade E7 was the highest enlisted grade in existence. Before 1958, what chevrons did the first sergeant wear, and the sergeant major?

SMA COPELAND: The first sergeant wore chevrons with three up and three down with a diamond in the center. The sergeant major, being a master sergeant E7, wore three up and three down with no insignia in the center. Therefore, there was no differentiation whereby you could distinguish between a master sergeant E7 and that of a battalion and/or squadron sergeant major E7, for example. Now it wasn't until the E9 came into being and they placed a star in the center of that three up and three down chevron that you could actually recognize that person as being a sergeant major.

INTERVIEWER: When the grades E8 and E9 came out, how did they select the NCOs for those particular promotions to E8 and E9?

SMA COPELAND: Well now. There was some shuffling that took place, to say the least. Commanders were briefed on this, but not necessarily noncommissioned officers. We were all aware what was taking place. But it was during the time whereby the Army wanted to select, I suppose that you would refer to as "the best they had," to put in those

positions that was authorized an E8 and a E9 slot. Therefore, if a unit commander had a lackadaisical low performance first sergeant E7, that commander would endeavor to have that noncommissioned officer slipped into another place. He would also endeavor to bring in, what he would consider at that time to be a more desirable noncommissioned officer for that first sergeant slot in preparation for promoting that person to first sergeant E8.

INTERVIEWER: Were they, because of the virtue of the slot, promoted or was there some competition, as far as promotion boards, etc.?

SMA COPELAND: Well, there was competition. You see, it was not a blanket order promoting everyone who was in that slot to first sergeant and/or master sergeant E8. Well first of all, I think you were promoted to first sergeant E8, and then later they said, "Okay, let's create a vacancy in the S4, for example, and make that an E8 slot." But I think what came about first was promoting that first sergeant. Now as far as competition, yes there was competition, because if you had a hundred and twenty-four slots in an armored division--there being approximately a hundred and twenty-four companies--and suddenly now, because of the change in the TO&E, you're now authorized one grade above. You're not going to just cut a blanket order for all one hundred and twenty-four. You're going to do it incrementally. Eight, ten, twelve, fifteen quotas at a time. And then... I think this came about in brigade; this month it will be this brigade and next month it will be that brigade, etc. But there was a form of control thereby only limited quotas were authorized and you could promote x-number of personnel to that E8 position.

INTERVIEWER: That also brought all the strap-hangers and jockey-straps back to roost.

SMA COPELAND: You brought them home. You could see them once again. Now the first sergeant would look around and he didn't recognize his men, as in the case of this

pinch-hitting first sergeant who had been first sergeant of that head and head company, for example. While the first sergeant was away on leave or various asunderous reasons, he would bring me in as the pinch-hit first sergeant. When this was going on, we had the guys coming out of the woodwork. Yes. People that we didn't recognize, we didn't know existed. But why were they coming? They wanted to get themselves assigned to an E8 position and therefore, compete when the quota came down; compete for that vacancy. So there was a lot of political, politicking and back-channeling as you can well imagine, because first of all, they're politicians or they wouldn't have been out there in special services, on the golf course, and running this, that, and doing everything except those things that a senior noncommissioned officer should be doing. Meaningly, troop duty. They wanted no part of it. Therefore, they would go to no ends to try to obtain one of those slots.

INTERVIEWER: When were you promoted to E9?

SMA COPELAND: One January. New Years Day, 1961? Yes, New Years Day '61.

INTERVIEWER: And what was your duty position at that time?

SMA COPELAND: My duty position was squadron sergeant major.

INTERVIEWER: That was the 8th Cav.

SMA COPELAND: That was the 8th Cav. I pulled off the diamond, first sergeant, put back on the master sergeant--three up and three down, E8--and was the squadron sergeant major. A personnel officer from division headquarters called the squadron one morning and he said, "Sergeant Major Copeland..." He addressed me as sergeant major because I was squadron, you know. A commander is a commander, whether he's a lieutenant or a captain, or a colonel, or what he is, but he addressed me as sergeant major. He said, "We need paperwork on you recommending you for sergeant major E9." He said, "Can you get it to us by tomorrow." They're located some forty miles away, up the Rhine River; division

headquarters. I said, "Sir, I can get it to you tonight!" You know, I would have taken my own privately-owned vehicle up there. But right away... I think, I'm not sure if the colonel was in the office, but immediately I turned to the adjutant and informed him about the call. He was monitoring it anyway. I said, "Of course providing you and the colonel approve." "Oh yes!" So we sat down and put it together, with the assistance of our squadron personnel officer. But the caller from division headquarters specified, effective 1 January; New Years Day.

INTERVIEWER: When did the rank of command sergeant major come out?

SMA COPELAND: That came out in, I believe, 1968. I would have to look on a set of orders in there, but I think it was 1968.

INTERVIEWER: Did you come out on orders as command sergeant major right after the rank was established?

SMA COPELAND: Yes I did. I was among the first group of seventy-two sergeants major, throughout the Army, who was on the first order to be--I consider it a promotion--promoted to command sergeant major.

INTERVIEWER: Sergeant Major Wooldridge was on that.

SMA COPELAND: Sergeant Major Wooldridge Then... Well, now... Yes. Yes, Wooldridge was on there. I think he was in Vietnam at the time.

INTERVIEWER: Right. He was on that first order.

SMA COPELAND: Yes. Then, along with the order, there was a directive that came out from the Department of the Army that the chevron would not just be pinned on, that a ceremony would be conducted. There was, in my case. The brigade commander, Colonel Cobb, held a formation--an in-house formation--and had a camera and photographer, and had a cake, and had Ann there. You know, Ann. (He displayed a picture.) You know Ann, don't

you? Ann is my better half. Ann is my support.

INTERVIEWER: That's right. We're going to talk about the family and..

SMA COPELAND: Yeah. We're going to talk about that later.

INTERVIEWER: She was in the Army as long as you were.

SMA COPELAND: She was in the Army. She's still in the Army. She still attends formation, annually, and talks with the wives and talks with the troops. She enjoys that sort of thing. She is still supporting. But we had the formation. Sort of quasi formal type affair. Colonel Cobb and Ann pinned those command sergeant major chevrons on Silas Copeland. Shortly after that I received a little note--I think I have that note in there now--from the Vice Chief of the Army, General Haines, congratulating me on having made that list, and words to the effect, "Hang in there!"

INTERVIEWER: That was General Ralph Haines.

SMA COPELAND: General Ralph Haines. Now General Ralph Haines... When Ann and I were stationed at Fort Hood with the 2d Armored Division, General Haines was our corps commander. General Haines was a great one for getting close to soldiers. Now General Haines and his lovely wife, Sally, have had Ann and Silas Copeland in their quarters a many a time for social functions. We were always invited when he invited the division commanders and their ladies, brigade commanders and their ladies, and the local civilian dignitaries. He always invited Ann and I, and we got to know them well. So when I was promoted and pinned with those command sergeant major chevrons, being in that first group of seventy-two, General Haines made it a point to send me a little note, just congratulating me. I appreciated it. I think about that to this day. There's another thing just to show you just how closely General Haines was to troops. This was after I became Sergeant Major of the Army and he was CONARC Commander and Sergeant Major Frank

Bennett was his command sergeant major. Frank was on that first list of seventy-two, also. We had this prayer breakfast, which was an annual affair. It was right downtown Washington at one of the hotels very near the Willard Hotel, which is just adjacent to the white House. Now this particular time the President was not attending; he did on other occasions. General Haines was to be the guest speaker. The moderator got up and he proceeded to introduce General Haines and gave him a good introduction, rightly so. "He's a general. He's a four-star general and he's Commander of the Continental Army Command." But then, when General Haines got up and he began to speak, and this being a prayer breakfast function, the general proceeded with some remark like, "Well I may be a four-star general but I'm a private in the Lord's Army." Meaning that he was a trooper. That he was with the troopers. The general became quite religious. He was a very religious person.

INTERVIEWER: I've heard a lot of comments saying that General Haines was a lot like Bradley. He was the soldiers' general.

SMA COPELAND: Yeah. Yeah, you could talk to him. While we're talking about General Haines, let's go back to the day just prior to our deployment; the 1st Infantry Division deployment from Vietnam. General Haines was the USARPAC--United States Army Pacific--Commander at that time: Command Sergeant Major Bainbridge was his sergeant major. General Haines and Bainbridge came to our area of operation shortly prior to our deploying the division colors back to the States. So General Haines had been visiting with the officers and reminiscing and talking. Bainbridge and I had been visiting with the noncommissioned officers. When it came time for them to depart the area, General Haines came over to me and sort of ebbled me off to one side, and he said, "Sergeant Major, how is Ann doing?" I said, "Well sir, she's doing fine. She and the boys; matter of fact, I heard

from her just recently. I got a letter. Sir, how is Mrs. Haines doing?" It had been four or five years since I had seen General Haines as corps commander at Fort Hood. He said, "You know, you've got about seven or eight months to go. You've got your assignment by this time." I said, "Yes sir and no sir." I had sent in a dream sheet--back to the Pentagon--requesting assignment back to Fort Hood, Texas to complete the remaining two years of my thirty year service. At the same time, I attached to that dream sheet a little note to Sergeant Major of the Army George Dunaway informing him that, "Never before in my twenty-eight years have I asked or requested an assignment, except by way of dream sheet. But if there was any way he can influence my being assigned to Fort Hood, Texas as a battalion sergeant major, please do it, because that's my home--Texas--and I would like to go there and prepare myself for retirement." Well, a few weeks later I received a set of orders from the Department of the Army, assigning me to Headquarters and Headquarters, III Corps, unassigned. I knew that was where I was going. When General Haines asked me the question, "Where are you going? Do you have your assignment?" "Yes I do, sir. I'm going to Fort Hood, Texas, sir." He said, "No you're not." You see, he knew that he was being reassigned, from USARPAC to CONARC. But I didn't. I didn't know that. Now he had contacted DA (Department of the Army) and requested that, upon his reassignment to CONARC, that Silas Copeland would be assigned as his sergeant major. At the same time, the deputy commander of 4th Army had called CONARC, or had called the Department of the Army, requesting that upon completion of assignment in Vietnam, that I'd be assigned to assigned to 4th Army headquarters. But the general, in a letter later, went on to say, "I found out the reason why we couldn't get you was because General Haines was after you." That's what General Haines meant when he said, "No, you're not going to Fort Hood." So I dropped it. I let it go at that. Then I went on up in the 4th Division. I was with the 4th

Division when I was alerted to report to the Chief of Staff of the Army. But let me back up a little bit again, back with the 1st Division. I don't think we have this on tape. While going to and from division headquarters to an area of operation, the division commanding general's aide-de-camp flipped on the intercom and he said, "Sergeant Major. Do you think you'll ever be Sergeant Major of the Army?" My answer was, "Unequivocally no, sir." "Why do you say that?" "Well I've had my turn in the barrel. I went before the selection board when Sergeant Major of the Army Dunaway was selected. I was interviewed in USAREUR as a candidate from USAREUR. I was interviewed by USAREUR Commander, General Polk, and I think I favorably impressed the general. But I think that I've had my turn in the barrel. No sir, I don't think I have another chance at it." So he dropped it. That was it. Then later on, when I was in the 4th Infantry Division, my division commander alerted me that they had received, what he called "a back channel"--what ever that means--to have me report to the Pentagon, to the chief of staff at the Pentagon, for an interview for possible assignment as Sergeant Major of the Army.

INTERVIEWER: So General Haines didn't get you after all.

SMA COPELAND: General Haines didn't get me after all. He sure didn't. Neither did the 4th Army commander. They didn't get me after all.

INTERVIEWER: Let me ask you some questions now about the family. I know all the way through the tape we've been talking about Ann and Ann. I guess, earlier, in tape one or two, we talked about you and Ann being married. About her joining you while you were at Biggs. A lot of the questions that we have on here about the family we've answered. Once again, you were married to her before you came into the Army. I've had the pleasure the last two days of meeting Ann. She's just as army as any wife could ever be.

SMA COPELAND: She's Army. She's a good first sergeant. She's sergeant major.

INTERVIEWER: That's right.

SMA COPELAND: She's sergeant major. She has been a first sergeant. She has been a platoon sergeant. She has sewn on so many chevrons over the past thirty odd years--active thirty odd years--until she could just about do it with her eyes closed, as a matter of fact. She has changed division patches, shoulder patches, promotion chevrons from private first class right on up through to Sergeant Major of the Army.

INTERVIEWER: She has also been the IG (Inspector General) and the chaplain.

SMA COPELAND: That is correct.

INTERVIEWER: And she had learned how to....

SMA COPELAND: She has been everything! Ann has been everything. That's right. I've been the soldier out front. Ann has been the soldier within.

INTERVIEWER: How did you meet Ann?

SMA COPELAND: How did I meet Ann? That's very easy.

INTERVIEWER: You better watch it. She's listening.

SMA COPELAND: Yeah. She listening. It was very near this specific location, as a matter of fact within three or four miles of this resident. My brother Henry, who is a couple of years older than I, lived in Huntsville; he and his family. Huntsville, Texas. I was up one Sunday, from Riverside, located twenty miles northeast of here. I was up one Sunday visiting with my brother Henry and his wife and two boys. It was just about Sunday lunch time, and in walks my sister Dorothy with this beautiful dark headed young girl--young lady--and introduced us. I fell head-over-heels in love with her, eventually. We dated and we went out and we had fun. But that's the way I met Ann. She, and my sister, had returned from church that Sunday. We met. We dated. We fell in love. We married,

knowing full well that I was going into the Army, or some branch of the service.

INTERVIEWER: So she was a local girl from this area.

SMA COPELAND: She was a local girl from this area.

INTERVIEWER: What was her maiden name?

SMA COPELAND: Her maiden name was "Haltom."

INTERVIEWER: How do you spell it?

SMA COPELAND: H-A-L-T-O-M.

INTERVIEWER: H-A-L-T-O-M. What did her parents do?

SMA COPELAND: Well, her mother was a widow, her father having passed away when Ann was three years old. Her mother was living here in Huntsville, as were her elderly uncle--brother of her mother--and her two elderly brothers and her sister. I guess they were subsisting that time through the support of a government entity, being a widow with young children. Of course, both brothers went on into the military; her brother Jack and her brother Burden.

INTERVIEWER: So when did you get married?

SMA COPELAND: We got married about eleven months after we met. In early January 1942. Just about nine months thereafter, Dorothy Ann was born. We wasted no time in building our family. Then about every four years thereafter, until Ann said, "This is it," we had a child born.

INTERVIEWER: So how many children do you have?

SMA COPELAND: We have four children. Two girls first and then two boys. Our first daughter, Dorothy Ann, was born October 3, 1942 in Heights Hospital, located in Houston. Paula, our second daughter, was born on my birthday, April 2, 1947, at Fort Hood Hospital, matter of fact.

INTERVIEWER: So when Ann joined you for the first time, when you were at Biggs, you had one child then?

SMA COPELAND: We had Dorothy Ann. She brought with Dorothy Ann all of Dorothy Ann's diapers. Did we have Bird's Eye diapers back during those days? I don't know. They were pretty scarce because rationing was in effect during those days. When I was able to find--what I thought was a suitable place for Ann and Dorothy Ann and I to sleep, eat, and live together--I wrote her a letter and said, "Get on the Greyhound Bus and proceed to El Paso." That she did and we were together throughout my stay at Biggs Field.

INTERVIEWER: We were talking about how important the wife is. Prior to you becoming the Sergeant Major of the Army, what type of support activities did Ann get involved in when you were a squadron sergeant major, a battalion sergeant major, division, etc? What type activities related to your job as a command sergeant major did she get involved in?

SMA COPELAND: Let's go from Europe back to Fort Hood, Texas where I became battalion and division sergeant major. Ann got involved through the noncommissioned officers wives club. They would have... Also, in addition to the division wives club, we had the little combat command or brigade wives clubs then on to corps and post clubs. Primarily it was through a post effort, with special emphasis on the 2d Armored Division. For example: Ann, being honorary chairman... I guess she always let a lady of another sergeant major be the president of the club, as they do in the officer field. But Ann is there supporting, so she was the chairman and/or vice-chairman. They would have bake sales to raise funds. One year, for example, the wives club under Ann's guidance and support--the wives club of the 2d Division--raised enough money to buy some new uniforms for our division band. Now when we had a function and the wives were present, which was usually

always the case, the band was there and they admired the band marching, the beautiful music, etc. One of the ladies observed one day, "Gee, it looks like they could use some new uniforms." So it was suggested that they undertake a project to raise money. Now band uniforms get to be quite expensive. That's like buying a set of blues. Back in those day, I don't know, but you could spend a hundred, a hundred and fifty dollars on a band uniform with all the accoutrements and what not, so this was going to be quite expensive. So they undertook that. So while they were doing that, I so informed my division commander, General Kelly. I said, "Sir, the ladies want to do this. They have already moved out on it." I said, "You can expect, one day, that they're going to walk in here and request permission to see the commanding general. They're going to present you with a check." He said, "I don't know anything about it, sergeant major." "Okay, fine. Let it come as a surprise to the general." I think it was near a thousand dollars that they were able to raise. You know, at bake sales, etc. Then Ann worked in the ACS (Army Community Service) helping and assisting incoming and outgoing personnel, trying to make their relocation, whether it be inbound or outbound, as pleasant as possible. Ann always attended the functions and was there admiring and supporting the marching troops, etc. She attended wives coffees at corps level, at division level, post and/or corps level; just getting involved. Just being there and letting the wives... Now I have read letters from other wives whose husbands were assigned to that division or maybe assigned to our sister division, the 1st Armored Division, or maybe to corps. Upon their departure from there, and years later, Ann invariably would endeavor to keep in touch with these ladies. At least send them a Christmas card and write a little note each year. Ann would get letters. I read some of those letters that said, "Ann, it's because of you that we remained in the service." Some of those young noncommissioned officers, some of them were corporals and some PFCs at that time, but they were signing

their letters as sergeants major. They did it because the wives are influencing. You know that. Families influence you. And why not. They're your bread and butter. Your life and soul. Yes, Ann works behind the scenes, and she's done a darn good job of working.

INTERVIEWER: About your children. How well did they adapt to the frequent moves?

SMA COPELAND: Fairly well. I don't ever recall whereby when we were alerted to move that they were overly elated on getting out of the area. They were so adjusted and so overcome by the activities that were ongoing in that area to the extent that they did not want to leave, whether it be departing from the Continental United States or whether it be departing from a foreign country. I recall the first time we were assigned to Germany and were quartered near the Rhine, near Sandhoffen. Three years later they were not looking forward to leaving, really. Now Ann was, but the children, they had become adjusted. Now it takes a while to become adjusted; for a family to readjust. You've got foreign scenery. You have climate differences. You have people differences. The food even tastes different. Have you ever noticed how different the food tastes when you arrive in a foreign country, even though it's the same menu. You're going to have steak, pork chops, potatoes, biscuits, gravy, and this sort of thing, but it doesn't taste the same as that at Fort Hood or Fort Lee or Fort Rucker, Alabama; it's going to be different tasting. So you have to... There's quite a bit of adjusting to do on the part of the family. The children managed to adjust well.

INTERVIEWER: They don't want to go somewhere, and when they get there, they don't want to leave.

SMA COPELAND: Don't want to go and don't want to leave. Absolutely. Now we talked about Dorothy Ann, the first child, and Paula, the second child. The third child, was born in 1952 at College Station, Texas. Again Ann said "Gee, about a year or so after you

return from overseas we're going to have another child." Well, we did. When I came back from Korea, a year later, maybe thirteen months, Robert Silas was born. He came into this world with a big pair of ears. Robert is located, at this time, down at Spring, Texas. And then Russell came into being just about four years later. He was born at Fort Hood Hospital in October 1955. He was a small squirt when we redeployed from Fort Hood to Fort Polk.

INTERVIEWER: Where's he living now?

SMA COPELAND: He's living near Tomball. At Pinehurst, really. That's northwest of Houston.

INTERVIEWER: What about Dorothy Ann?

SMA COPELAND: Dorothy Ann is living in Bossier City, the Shreveport area. Dorothy Ann is a school teacher. She's been in the school system for twenty eight years, having graduated from Northwestern University with a major in physical education. Then she went on to graduate school and graduated from LSU, Louisiana State University, and went into the school system upon graduation. She's been in the school system some twenty-eight years. Currently, she's preparing herself to retire. She has acquired a business, a human care taker business, whereby she employs some hundred and fifty professional nurses, semi-professional nurses and some nonprofessional people, who are care giving to persons who are disabled, whether they're permanently disabled or in the hospital for a couple of days, or bedridden, and what not. So Dorothy Ann has acquired that business and she has every intention upon retiring from the public school system, of continuing in that business for perhaps several years.

INTERVIEWER: Who did you say was your youngest son?

SMA COPELAND: The youngest son is Russell.

INTERVIEWER: Russell.

SMA COPELAND: Russell Walter Copeland. Russell went with us to Fort Myer. He attended school here in Huntsville while I was in Vietnam. When we displaced to Fort Myer, Virginia, Russell enrolled in the public school in except... He did not graduate; he was lacking one subject. Why he did not take that subject, I do not know. But then I had to write a letter to the superintendent of schools requesting that he be given special permission to attend summer school. Now the rule with the school district was that you could not attend summer school unless you were failing. Well, Russell had maintained a three point nine grade point average all the way through all of his four years of high school. But that didn't make any difference with the ruling authorities; a rule is a rule. The superintendent answered my letter and he said there was a way Russell could enroll with the senior citizen course, meaning the people who were continuing their education here in Alexandria. He gave him the location, and I think, the address and the telephone number and the contact. "Now if you enroll and complete that course, we will give you a certificate of completion and therefore, you will have graduated from our high school." Russell did that and he graduated at age sixteen. Then he came back to Huntsville and enrolled in Sam Houston State University, just prior to his seventeenth birthday. I guess it was a year or a year and a half later before he decided on a major, and he decided at that time to pursue a major in business administration, which he did. Three or three and a half years later he had accumulated some ninety-four credit hours towards that degree in general business administration. By then, Ann and I had retired from the Army and moved to Huntsville to be with our two sons and Ann's elderly, sickly mother, at that time. Russell had been reading a magazine, and in essence, this magazine was pointing out that in the very near future there's not going to be a great demand for business majors. He said, "Dad, you've been telling me all these years to do your thing, to get your degree and then you go out and

get you a job. But it says in that magazine there's not going to be a demand for them.

Why don't I drop out right now and go to Houston with my high school friends, who opted not to go to college, and go to work for twelve dollars an hour as a longshoreman.

Russell's quite heavy. He stands six foot one, six foot two, has broad shoulders, weighing in at two hundred and twenty pounds. He's not obese; he's a big person. He could be a fullback or tackle or what have you. I said, "Russell, wait a minute now. You mean drop out of college and here you're in your senior year, getting ready to go into your senior year?" He said, "Well, we're talking about money, aren't we?" "Yeah. We're also talking about a degree." I talked him out of it. He said, "What would you think about my changing my major from general business to engineering?" I said, "Well, if that's what you want to do, I'll support you monetarily." I said, "Now you can't start in engineering with ninety-four hours. You're going to have to start back down." Well I agreed to do it. He and I sat and talked about it. I decided with him that, career wise, that's what he should do. So he and Ann got in the car and they proceed, with his college transcript, to Texas A&M University. He went over there and he talked to the dean of the School of Engineering and told him what he would like to do. He said, "Russell, come on over." He showed him his transcript, the ninety-four hours, and he said, "Of course, all ninety-four hours are not going to transfer with a degree towards civil engineering, but if you want to come and enroll, we'll be happy to have you." Well he did. So it took him another extra year to graduate from college, but I didn't mind supporting him; that's what Russell wanted. So he graduated and he had a job. You know, they come on campus interviewing, etc. So he had a job with an engineer firm just prior to graduation. Also prior to graduation, Russell received a packet from the corps; U.S. Army Corps of Engineer. Now I don't know how they... Well I do know. They are in contact with the universities, and one of the leading engineer schools in

the United States is located at Texas A&M University. One of the leading schools. They're looking for those engineer graduates. They had Russell's name and they sent him a packet. In there they said, in so many words, "That we want you to come work and continue your schooling in the Corps of Engineer. "He looked at the packet, and they pointed out that he would start as a GS-7, then from there, a few months later, he would be this and that and in step so forth. But the crux of the thing, what got Russell's goat is that he'd been in school some--how many years? Twelve years, eleven years of public school and then five years, sixteen years of continuous schooling. He said, "Dad, I'm tired of schooling." I said, "Yeah, but look, you don't have to go to school all the time in the Corps of Engineer. What they're telling you here is to go to school four or six weeks and then you go out on the site. Then you would be out on the site for four or six weeks. And you're on-the-job training what you learned in school. That's what they're telling you in this packet. Then thirteen or fourteen months later you have graduated from the Corps of Engineer school, and by that time you are probably a GS-9. As a matter fact, they were laying it out on the line. You see, career wise, that's what I wanted Russell to do. But he said, "Yeah, it sounds good, but I prefer to go on and accept this job with the other engineer firm." The firm was "Zapada." President Bush is a major owner in Zapada Engineer Company. So he went to work for them. Since, the construction engineering of that company has gone out of business and all that is left is the off-shore company part of it, and Russell went to work for another company. He is currently located in Pinehurst, Texas, fifty-five miles south from this location.

(End Tape OH 93.1-6, Side 1)

(Begin Tape OH 93.1-6, Side 2)

INTERVIEWER: Before we go on to the duties of the Sergeant Major of the Army, I

think there are two more of your children that we didn't talk about.

SMA COPELAND: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: We don't want to leave them out.

SMA COPELAND: No, we don't want to leave them out. We talked about Dorothy Ann and Russell. I would like to say something about Robert and Paula. Now Paula is older than Robert and she preceded Robert through Sam Houston University and graduated with a degree in journalism. She then accompanied her husband, who had been through the ROTC and graduated with a second lieutenant commission and went on Active Duty immediately. A few years later they were assigned to Hawaii. While stationed in Hawaii, Paula took advantage of the university being located close by and she went on to the University of Hawaii and obtained her masters degree in journalism. Currently, Paula is located in Laurel, Maryland, situated between Washington, D.C. and Baltimore; about half way, thereabout. She is a librarian at one of the public schools near Fort Meade, Maryland. She has two boys. One is currently a junior at the University of Maryland and the other is a senior in a local high school there in Laurel.

INTERVIEWER: Her husband was in the military.

SMA COPELAND: Her husband was in the military some twenty-two years. They have fairly recently divorced. He retired. Well I'm sure he got his RIF notice; reduction in force notice. He continues to reside in the area, just outside the Pentagon, in Alexandria, Virginia. As a matter of fact, Steve Kubiak is his name. He turned out to be an outstanding officer. He didn't do some of the things that his father-in-law suggested that he do to become Chief of Staff of the Army. But none the less he did make it to lieutenant colonel. So he retired as a lieutenant colonel. Paula has since remarried and so has he. Paula continues to live in the Laurel area. Now our fourth child, Robert Silas, graduated from

high school here in Huntsville and decided to pursue a course of instruction at Sam Houston State University. And that being, of course, in business. So he did his four years at Sam Houston and came out with a degree in general business. He went to Houston and went to work for the bank as a teller. He decided, "Well, gee. This doesn't pay much money." You Know, tellers--as salary go--I guess they're lower on the totem pole. I always thought, you know, when I drove through that bank, or went in to cash my Army check in the bank, when I walked up to that teller, I thought, "Man, if I had a job like that I'd be in gold, in riches." But I found out when my son graduated from Sam Houston and went to Houston and became a teller, that he wasn't making much money. He wasn't satisfied with that place, so he went to work for another company, I guess in the banking business. But they offered him some options. One option was that he continue to pursue his education and they would pay for it; they would pay seventy-five or eighty percent if he wanted to continue. So he took them up on it. He said, "Well, why not?" So he proceeded to go and enroll in the South Texas College of Law, located in Houston. He attended those classes, during the evening for four years, until he attained his law degree. I went to his graduation ceremony and I was so proud of that boy when he came out with that LLB degree. I threw my arms around him and I hugged him, as well as his mother, Ann, as well as his wife and his young son. Bob pursued that degree and he wasn't sure if whether he wanted to go into law practice with a firm or whether he wanted to become a corporate lawyer. First of all, even though he may have that LLB degree, in order to practice law or do most of anything officially as a lawyer in the State of Texas, you've got to pass the bar examination. Here in the State of Texas only sixty percent of personnel pass that bar examination the first. Then if you don't pass it you have to wait out--what is it?--a year, something like that. Bob was well aware of what confronted him, so he cracked the books and cracked the books in

preparation for passing this bar exam. When he went before the examining board, he passed it the first time. Again, he made his dad--this old soldier-- very proud. You see, back there my children's father, Butch, missed out on formal education. Now it was there, but I couldn't find it. Where was it? I missed it and I recognize children. The Army promised me something, way back there, when First Sergeant Robinson said, "You come with me. You reenlist. You become Regular Army." after arriving at Fort Hood, enlistment after enlistment, the Army was telling me, "You do a job for us, we'll do a job for you. We'll educate your family. We'll entertain your family. We will feed, clothe, and house them." and this country boy said, "My God. I couldn't ask for anything better. That's what it's all about." My children, unlike their parents--come hell or high water--are going to have their degrees. They're going to have an education. They're going to compete with their contemporaries and they're going to become better citizens because of it, or in spite of it. Where's the money coming from? It's going to come from our weakly, meekly, salary. That's where its going to come from. We're not going to drive new cars. We're going to wear fancy suits. We're going to dress neatly and properly and cleanly. But you children are going to go to college. Now even before they got into high school they were already discussing colleges. That time came. Russell, in Virginia, couldn't wait. He was only barely, not quite seventeen, and he couldn't wait to get in Sam Houston University. We never had any problem. We never had to ask them. We never had to boot them. They were there. They just thought this was the thing to do. Now, where did Ann and I fit in there and how did that effect the family, expense wise, from the time Dorothy Ann entered college. In 1960 she graduated from high school in Mannheim, Germany. The military transported her, gave her a set of orders, shipped her out of Rhine-Main and shipped her to Northwestern University, in Louisiana, to enter college. From that day until our fourth and

final child graduated from Texas A&M Engineer School, eighteen continuous years. This takes a licking on your pocketbook. Yeah. But we thought, Ann and I thought, as did the children, that this was the thing to do because they were motivated, they were ready, they wanted to do it. They wanted to pursue a course of higher instruction and they did that. If any of them would walk in here today, they would tell you, unequivocally, how proud they are. They've said, "Look, we've looked at this many times since we went through the courses and we still do not understand--to this day--how you and mom were financially able to do that, because we always had food, we always dressed well, we always had entertainment." You see, they were doing it without even realizing it.

INTERVIEWER: For the record. We keep talking about Sam Houston State University, right here in Huntsville, right?

SMA COPELAND: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: I know sometimes we keep talking about things, so I thought, "I don't think we've mentioned where Sam Houston is. It's a fine facility just across the interstate."

SMA COPELAND: Just across the Interstate. Sam Houston State University currently enrolled approximately thirteen thousand students.

INTERVIEWER: Now let's go to your tenure as Sergeant Major of the Army.

SMA COPELAND: Sergeant Major of the Army. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: When did you serve as Sergeant Major of the Army?

SMA COPELAND: I served from 1 October 1970 until 30 June 1973.

INTERVIEWER: I think you were telling me that you actually had three chiefs of staff.

SMA COPELAND: Well, I did. General Westmoreland selected me to be his Sergeant

Major of the Army. Upon retirement of General Westmoreland, General Abrams came from Vietnam to take over the office of the Chief of Staff of the Army. But at that time there was some controversies going on in Congress, if you will, and General Abrams was there for about, I think it was approximately three months, prior to his being confirmed as Chief of Staff of the Army; being confirmed by the Senate. During that interim period the vice chief of staff, General Palmer, took over those duties of the Chief of Staff of the Army. Then of course, later on after, General Abrams was confirmed and he was sworn-in as the Chief of Staff of the Army. So I guess we could say that I served three chiefs during my twenty-eight or twenty-nine months as Sergeant Major of the Army.

INTERVIEWER: What I'm going to do a little later on, I'm going to ask you about the personalities of the chiefs and what kind of instruction they gave you, etc. But before we get to that, who were some of your contemporaries who were considered for Sergeant Major of the Army? I think there were five, total. Right?

SMA COPELAND: There were five of us. Are you're asking me to name them. I should be able to name them, but I can't. I know from where they came. One came from III Corps at Fort Hood. One came from Fort Bragg, 82nd Airborne Division. Another came from Fort Sill Artillery Center. Silas Copeland came out of Vietnam. The fifth one, I'm not quite sure where he came from. He may have come from Europe, I'm not sure.

INTERVIEWER: Can you tell me about the selection process they went through to select the Sergeant Major of the Army, particularly, at that time.

SMA COPELAND: I can only speculate at this time, how I came to be there and I can go back during the time, two years prior to that or two and a half years prior, when Dunaway was selected, and that is, you had to be recommended by a general officer. If that general officer happened to be your division commander, you had to go to your corps

commander and/or your theater commander and be interviewed and recommended in order to be considered for Sergeant Major of the Army. In my case, being stationed in Germany when Dunaway was selected, my division commander had interviewed me many a time. Not possibly as Sergeant Major of the Army, but he would come to my AO (Area of Operation) and we would sit down and talk. Essentially what he was doing, he was lining me up; he was feeling me out. I know that now. I didn't know it at the time. But that's what he was doing. Then I was directed to report to the theater commander--the USAREUR commander-- General Polk, for that very reason to be interviewed by the theater commander as a possible selection as Sergeant Major of the Army. Well that's the process we went through during the time that Dunaway was selected. Now when I was selected, I would only have to assume at this time, that the similar process was taking place. It probably had the blessing of... It had to have the blessings of General Abrams and/or General Rosson, the in-country four-star commanders, and probably had to have the blessing of the USARPAC, United States Army Pacific, General Haines, in that case.

INTERVIEWER: You talked a little earlier about interviews. That you went back to Washington, to the Pentagon, for an interview. Correct?

SMA COPELAND: That is correct.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me a little bit about the interview. Basically, what they asked you, etc.

SMA COPELAND: Well, I was the first of the five to go in for an interview with General Westmoreland, the Chief of Staff of the Army. Now I understand there were some bets on with the officers who had been handling the records and getting five people lined up to go before the Chief of Staff of the Army. There were some bets as to who was going in first for an interview. Then there were some more bets as to who of the five was going to

be selected, because all five of us were fairly good looking soldiers and had a proven track record, if you will, or we wouldn't have been there in the first place. We were the type individuals that General Westmoreland was looking for, or we wouldn't have been there. Because he had put out guidance, you know, that "When you get it down to twenty or twenty-five sergeants major, then the field commanders screen it and send me five." Now the bet is on. Which of the five? So the decision was made, I guess it was secretary of the General Staff, General Bennett at that time, Major General Bennett, that we will go in alphabetical order. A, B, C, Copeland. "Copeland, go first." I went, knocked on the door, and entered. General Westmoreland got up from behind his desk, came over and sat in his chair, and he sat me in a leather, cushioned chair in front of him. He knew I was from Vietnam because I was the only one among the five that looked Vietnamese. The rest of them were assigned Stateside. And he knew. So right away he quizzed me, if you will, about what was going on in my area of operation in the 4th Division. "Do you have a problem with drugs?" "What about alcohol?" "How's the morale?" The General wanted me to talk; he wanted to feel me out. He wanted to listen to me talk and explain what was happening in my area of operation in Vietnam. I guess that went on for six, seven, perhaps ten minutes. And then the general got up from his chair. When he did, I got up from my chair-- which is military courtesy--and stood. The general asked me the question. He said, "Where are you going when you leave here?" I proceeded to inform the general that I had been authorized by my division commander, and okayed by the theater commander, that I could remain for seven days in the United States and take that seven days as my R&R from Vietnam, and then I was to return to Vietnam and the 4th Infantry Division, up in the Central Highlands. "Yes, yes. I was there not long ago." I know he was. That's where I first met General Westmoreland, he came to my AO. I met him.

INTERVIEWER: So he remembered.

SMA COPELAND: He remembered. He remembered me. He asked, "Where are you going when you leave here?" I said, "I'm going home to Huntsville, Texas, and I'm going to spend five, six or seven days with my family. Then I'm going to proceed back." "Can you be contacted at home?" "Yes sir, I can be contacted in Huntsville." He thanked me and I saluted, did an "about face," and I departed. Ann was in Shreveport with our daughter Dorothy Ann to attend her graduation ceremony. She had just attained her graduate degree. So I proceeded back there and picked-up Ann. We came to Houston on an aircraft and arrived at the Intercontinental Airport. My brother-in-law, by the name of Wayne Gates, picked us up and we went to their house for dinner that evening. It's about an hour drive from Houston back to Huntsville, Texas where Ann and the two boys were residing. We were en route from Houston back to Huntsville, by way of privately-owned vehicle. At ten o'clock we were on the road; we were on the freeway at ten o'clock. When I arrived at 1620, 20th Street, where Ann and the two boys... Of course they were with me. That's where they were living at the time. The telephone was ringing. We answered the telephone and it was my brother-in-law, who I had just left an hour earlier, and he was saying, "Silas, Congratulations!" I said, "Congratulations for what?" He said, "You haven't heard?" He said, "You're Sergeant Major of the Army! You're going to be the next Sergeant Major of the Army." I said, "Now wait a minute. Now I know we do a lot of kidding, just kidding around." I said, "But this is serious business, man. What are you talking about." he said, "My brother, who is in the Air Force stationed at San Antonio at one of those airfields," --he had been in the Air Force some twenty-five years--"and he picked up on the national news, and it said, "Department of Defense Announcement, General Westmoreland, Chief of Staff of the Army, has selected Command Sergeant Major Silas Copeland to be the next Sergeant

Major of the Army." That was it. Now early the next morning, the telephone was ringing. It was staff in the Pentagon calling. He said, "Sergeant Major, Congratulations. First let me say this." He said, "The old man endeavored to contact you last night." He said, "I believe, based on what the chief of staff said, you told him you were going to be in Huntsville and that's where you could be contacted. He endeavored to contact you. But right now he is en route to Europe, and he wanted to tell you personally. But," he said, "you're going to be the next Sergeant Major of the Army." He said, "Now here are your instructions from the chief. You proceed back to Vietnam. Go back to the 4th Division and make sure you complete your entire tour. But during the mean time, you take the remainder": it was about thirty days. He said, "You take the remainder of this time and you visit as many troops in Vietnam as you can, as the Sergeant Major of the Army designee." Well you see, Stars and Stripes and the news media over there picked it up even before I knew it. That same day I got a telegram from the 4th Infantry Division, in Vietnam, congratulating me and I had just barely known about it. When I got back I reported to my division commander, of course he already knew that I had been selected. I said, "Sir, here are my instructions from the chief of staff, through the secretary of the General Staff, General Bennett. That is, from here until the nineteenth of September, which culminates my eleven months in country, that I'm to visit as many troops as feasible, from the DMZ (Demilitarized Zone) to the Mekong Delta." He said, "Yeah. I think that's fine." So he called MACV (Military Advisory Command, Vietnam), or somebody down around Saigon and so informed them. Then it was only a few hours until the MACV sergeant major was calling me. He said, "Hey man, congratulations. What about your itinerary? I'm beginning to put together an itinerary and we'll go visit." So that's what I did the remainder of my time over there. I visited troops throughout Vietnam.

INTERVIEWER: What kind of reception did you get back at division from your fellow NCOs?

SMA COPELAND: I'll tell you. I got an outstanding ovation. I'll tell you, I sure did, because I was pretty well thought of in that division by the officers, by the brigade commanders, battalion commanders, and their sergeants major. I think they had a feeling that I was sincere. I was a guy that they needed in the area, that could assist them.

INTERVIEWER: Probably the same thing on your good by, too. Your farewell.

SMA COPELAND: Yes, absolutely, absolutely. I called in all the sergeants major and had a little dining-in and had farewells. They presented me with a nice little 4th Division plaque with all the accouterments and all the crests, etc.; it's displayed out there. Yeah, that was great. Now in addition to that, I was pleasantly surprised that the information had gotten out so quickly to the troops in the bush, by way of radio, by way of Stars and Stripes, by word of mouth, etc. So when this guy is coming in with the MACV sergeant major, he's coming there for one thing and that is to get acquainted and see what I can do. I received such favorable receptions from those little guys. Then when I would go back at night and get in a bunk somewhere... didn't see my assigned bunk for about thirty days after that. But when I would go back at night and I would lie down and I would think, "You know, this is quite a responsibility that you're undertaking, Silas Copeland. When you see the reception that you're receiving out here in the jungle, when you get to that five-sided building, you can make a difference with these people. I'm their spokesman. I'm their representative; it so states in the General Order creating the Office." I said right then, before I was sworn-in, that I was going to do everything within my capability to make sure that I represented our troops in a professional and in an admirable manner.

INTERVIEWER: Sergeant Major Dunaway was on board. Of course he was the one

you were replacing. He was getting ready to go out of office. What kind of transition period did you have?

SMA COPELAND: The transition period. I think I came over to the office about the twenty-seventh or the twenty-eighth of the month, keeping in mind I left Vietnam on the nineteenth. It took me a couple of days, I guess, to get back here to Huntsville, which brought me up to the twenty-first. Then we had to do household packing and get the moving van loaded up. I think it must have been about the twenty-eighth before I went to the office after arriving at Fort Myer, Virginia. Sergeant Major Dunaway had recently undergone an operation; I believe it was a hernia operation. He was taking some sick leave time out from the office about that time. The only other time that I was in the office... I had no reason to be there because Sergeant Major Dunaway had departed, for all practical purposes, recuperating from the operation, and we were getting ready, the senior noncommissioned officers in the area were getting ready to have his farewell dining-in, in honor of he and Peck, if you will, at which the chief of staff and Mrs. Westmoreland were there. It was conducted in the NCO club at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. In so far as George Dunaway being able to meet with Silas and sit down and give me some guidance or some adversities, perhaps, that he had run into, there was no time for that.

INTERVIEWER: Just the old saying that, "A good soldier really doesn't need that..."

SMA COPELAND: Really doesn't need any, because the soldiers in Vietnam had told me. You see, they told me what I should do. They sent a message to me. They got a message to me right quick, right up front while they were still bleeding. I got that message when I went in the jungle with them and I established a rapport, and they knew I was the designee. They had never met a Sergeant Major of the Army or a Sergeant Major of the Army designee, and here this guy is all of a sudden. They had read about it in the Stars and

Stripes, they'd heard it on their little radios, or they tuned their SCR-300 or whatever it was; they knew. Here I am, right amongst them, and they were sending a message to me.

INTERVIEWER: Plus, you had a secretary and also your small staff which had somewhat the institutional knowledge that you could refer back to, and then just use your common sense and knowledge to do the rest.

SMA COPELAND: That is correct. I had a professional in-house staff when I went aboard. I had a secretary who had been assigned there just a couple of days prior to my arrival. They sent, from looking at my record and talking to my past commanders... You can imagine all the telephone calling, etc., to my past commanders, in feeling them in on what's he like, etc. They knew that. They decided to assign Miss Raylene Scott, who had been working in the Pentagon for a good many years. I guess she was about thirty years old at that time. She had been there ten or twelve years, or maybe longer. Maybe she was thirty-five. But she knew the inter workings of the Pentagon backwards and forward and she had been accustomed because of her previous assignment in the Pentagon and she had been working in that 'E' Ring-- which is THE Ring if you're in the Army--all these years, and she knew the interworkings of the Army. I opted to retain Master Sergeant Bobby Alexander, who was Dunaway's chief administrative NCO. I felt that even though there was no one in the Army, no senior noncommissioned officer in the Army, that knew more about troopers or had any more experience than Silas Copeland--I didn't need any help with that. However, I was perfectly willing to accept suggestions and recommendations, etc. I thought that Sergeant Alexander... I needed help right up front because I wanted to get moving right away, based on the limited guidance the chief of staff had given me. That is, "Your business is troop business and noncommissioned officer business. The President has directed that we obtain an all-volunteer army, and it's going to be difficult. We're going to

leave no stone unturned. We're going to have to come up with plans, and we're going to, perhaps, have to alter our way of doing things. You and I go way back. We may not be able to continue using the same philosophy, same method, if we expect to obtain an all-volunteer army." Limited guidance the chief of staff had given.

INTERVIEWER: Before we go into that portion, now it's a requirement that the Sergeant Major of the Army have a formal swearing-in ceremony. Right?

SMA COPELAND: We did. We did this in the chief of staff's office. The attendees were: My family, all except Bob (Robert) who was a student here at Sam Houston University. I felt that I shouldn't pull him out of college and bring him up there, however, I've wished a million times that I would have done that. I should have done that because there's only one swearing-in ceremony and there's only one picture of that ceremony. There will never be another one with Silas Copeland in it.

INTERVIEWER: Right.

SMA COPELAND: Robert should have been there. Robert, I'm very sorry, son, that you were not there, that Dad did not send you four or five hundred dollars and put you on a plane and have you lay out a week from Sam Houston State University to attend this magnificent ceremony. The ceremony was conducted in the chief of staff's office. The Chief of Staff of the Army, General Westmoreland Secretary of the Army, Secretary Reasor; and then the General Staff, all the generals; the one, two, and three-star generals on the General Staff were present, as were some senior noncommissioned officers. I believe the senior noncommissioned officers of the other services were there. We had the swearing-in ceremony. I put my hand on the Bible, raised the other hand, and took the oath; which is very similar to the oath of reenlistment except this was for the position of Sergeant Major of the Army. Then the pinning took place. The chief of staff pinned me on one side and Ann

pinned me on the other side. Mrs. Westmoreland was standing right there by Ann, along with our children and my one son-in-law. After the pinning, I was afforded the opportunity to express myself, and I did. It was quite emotional. I proceeded to relate to the General Staff that "I did not realize what an impact the person could have that occupied that position, until I went back to Vietnam--as the designee--and began to visit with the soldiers in the jungle. Then I realized that this person can make an impact. That I can truly be their representative, and they're depending upon me. For that, I'm very proud ." I looked Mr. Reasor, the Secretary of the Army, right in the face and I said, "Mr. Secretary, you all have chosen the proudest soldier in our Army. You may not have chosen the best, but you have chosen the proudest, and I plan to carry on to the best of my ability." Then I turned and looked General Westmoreland in the face and proceeded to address him. Then I decided, well I better stop talking or I'm going to start crying. When I stopped talking, of course, there was a great big applause, hand shaking, hugging, and this sort of thing, and reminiscing. It was a great event. A great event. After that, the General Staff and the other noncommissioned officers went back to their offices, I would suppose, or about their business. I proceeded across the hallway to the office of the Sergeant Major of the Army; it was just a little while that same day. I don't recall whether it was immediately after the ceremony, but it was sometime during that day. I think I just went on back to my quarters, but I was in the office for a while. Dunaway had already departed; Sergeant Major of the Army Dunaway. He did not remain around. He and his family had departed for other places. The general summoned me back to his office that same day. He proceeded to give me some guidance.

INTERVIEWER: What kind of guidance did he give you?

SMA COPELAND: Well, he cautioned me. He cautioned me to be careful and that I