

**FIRST DRAFT**

**ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW  
WITH  
SERGEANT MAJOR OF THE ARMY  
WILLIAM G. BAINBRIDGE (USA-RET)**

**SERGEANTS MAJOR OF THE ARMY  
HISTORY BOOK PROJECT**

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

**Interviewer: SGM Erwin H. Koehler (U.S. Army, Retired)  
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US ARMY MUSEUM OF THE NONCOMMISSIONED OFFICER

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INTERVIEWER: SGM ERWIN H. KOEHLER (U.S. ARMY - RETIRED)

INTERVIEWEE: SMA WILLIAM G. BAINBRIDGE (U.S. ARMY - RETIRED)

**Interviewer:** Today is Thursday, March 10, 1994. My name is Sergeant Major Erwin H. Koehler, United States Army, retired. I'm in the home of Sergeant Major of the Army William G. Bainbridge, United States Army, retired, located in Palm Bay, Florida. My interview with Sergeant Major Bainbridge will cover the time frame from his birth through his tenure as Sergeant Major of the Army. Sergeant Major what is your date of birth and where were you born?

**SMA Bainbridge:** 17 April 1925, in Gailsburg, Illinois. That's G-A-L-E-S-B-U-R-G. Galesburg, Illinois.

**Interviewer:** And where's Galesburg located in the state of Illinois?

**SMA Bainbridge:** About a hundred and sixty-five miles southwest of Chicago. About forty miles east of the Mississippi River.

**Interviewer:** Were you raised in Galesburg?

**SMA Bainbridge:** No, I was raised all my life in and around

Knoxtown, in Warren County, within, I guess, forty miles of Galesburg.

**Interviewer:** Was there a certain town that you were raised in?

**SMA Bainbridge:** No, as a matter of fact, Butch, I was born in Galesburg. My Dad was a railroader, and then he went to farming and I spent most of my time on the farm. I guess probably the first farm was in Elmwood. The local address was Elmwood, Illinois. I remember it was a nine hundred and ninety-nine acre farm; they had taken an acre off for a road junction. We farmed with horses and mules; no tractor. We had two or three hired hands. I can remember that; I was about a four year old. Some of those things I remember. Then my father died when I was about six, and my mother remarried and we stayed on the farm for all those years. I lived in Elmwood, and then lived in a place, another farm--again the address was Elmwood--and Cameron, Alexis, and Dahinda; that's where I was when I graduated from grade school. It was a local school; Trenton Corners Grade School.

**Interviewer:** Is that Trenton Corners?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Trenton Corners Grade School, in Illinois. From there I went to Williamsfield High School, for four years, and graduated from Williamsfield High School, in Williamsfield, Illinois, although my address was Dahinda. I rode the bus everyday to school and spent four years in a community high school. But we had my brother--an older brother--and then I had a sister, and a younger brother. My step-father and my mother had two children. So we grew up on a farm.

**Interviewer:** Was your sister older or younger?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Younger. I had an older brother, a younger sister, and a younger brother; a half-brother and a half-sister.

**Interviewer:** Where was your father born and do you remember the date?

**SMA Bainbridge:** He was born in Soperville, Illinois, on the 23rd of April, 1897.

**Interviewer:** Where was your mother born, and when?

**SMA Bainbridge:** She was born in 1904, in Columbia, Iowa. You know, I don't know how the two of them got together. I think probably because my mother was working, I think, probably in Galesburg, as a young gal and she met my father. They must have been married about 1920, somewhere along in there. My older brother was born in 1922, so it was about 1920 when they married.

**Interviewer:** Where were they married?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I think in Galesburg. As I say, he was a railroader, and then was in a couple of pretty bad wrecks and left the railroad and started farming.

**Interviewer:** What railroad did he work for?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Chicago, Burlington and Quincy. I think the Burlington Northern is now what they call the two of them together. He was a fireman on the old CB&Q.

**Interviewer:** Did he say he was involved in a few wrecks?

**SMA Bainbridge:** In two wrecks. As a matter fact, I was going to say that one of the wrecks was one of the reasons he died, but he died of stomach cancer, actually. He was injured pretty bad in one of those, as I understand, but there was absolutely nothing left of him, Butch, when he passed away. I guess he was about 5'8", maybe a hundred and sixty-five or seventy pounds, normally. He probably weighed sixty-five pounds when he died; the cancer ate him alive. The bad part about it was, my mother knew it was happening for, probably, four years before my Dad did. He had been operated on and my mother was told there was no way he was going to make it. In those days, there was very little that could be done with a cancer, so he died a relatively young man.

**Interviewer:** You said your father was about five foot eight inches. Tell me a little bit more about his physical characteristics.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Well, he was not a big man. Like I said, he was about 5' 8", and weighed about one hundred and sixty five pounds. Probably if you saw a picture of him, you're seeing me. We looked an

awful lot alike. He was kind of a happy-go-lucky, hard worker. I can remember that he was good with my brother and I. A disciplinarian, but I thought he did it well. We certain chores to do, as young kids, before we went in for the evening. I can remember coming home from school one time and we were going along making tracks in the snow with our dinner buckets. He had told us not to dally on the way home. So he met us at the neighbor's house, which was about, maybe, five hundred meters up the road. He was very good with the big old whip. Both of us had leather jackets and he whacked us all the way home. He never hurt either one of us, but that whip on that leather made us think we were getting killed. We never drug our buckets in the snow anymore, but in those days, Butch, I remember the neighbors would watch for us, particularly if it was snowy or something; if it was real cold. They would call us in, you know, to warm your feet in the oven. They'd call ahead and tell mother, "The kids are here warming their feet and we'll have them on the road in another few minutes." That's the sort of thing that I grew up with. And I remember those things because they don't happen like that anymore.

**Interviewer:** I remember reading in one of your interviews, an incident about your father and a guy with milk.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah. Yeah. That was my stepfather.

**Interviewer:** Oh, that was your stepfather.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah, that was my stepfather. My older brother and I were both in the Army at the time. My stepfather had a milk route picking up Grade A milk from his customers. They would pay him to haul the milk to the dairy. One of his best customers, about a hundred gallon a day customer, was telling him about the great things that Hitler was doing in those days; the fellow was of German heritage. Well, that sort of upset my dad. He had about half of this gentleman's milk loaded on the truck. So he just stopped, and started setting it back off on the ground. He got it out of a cooler, but he just sat it

on the ground. The gentleman said, "Well what are you doing with the milk, Leon?" He said, "I'm setting it off." He said, "I have two boys in the Army right now, that are trying to get rid of that S.O.B.," and he said, "I don't need to haul your milk if that's the way you feel." He drove off and never went back. And that was probably ten bucks a month out of his pocket, which, in those days, was good money, you know. That was the sort of stepfather I grew up with, Butch. He really wasn't a stepfather. He was really the only dad I ever knew. Because, like I say, I was just in the first grade when my dad passed away, so I didn't really know him that well.

**Interviewer:** When did your mother remarry?

**SMA Bainbridge:** She remarried about two years after my dad passed away. In those days, I know we had very little; like nothing. She had two boys to raise and we were both in school. She was on the farm and couldn't run that farm by herself, although she tried, so she remarried. I thought she did pretty well. He raised us and he did a good job of it.

**Interviewer:** What was your stepfather's name?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Leon Simkins. S-I-M-K-I-N-S. Middle initial E. Leon Eugene Simkins.

**Interviewer:** Tell me about his physical characteristics.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Well, Dad Simkins was, I guess, about 6' 1", about 190 to 220 pounds, and a real hard worker. He would run that milk route lots of time when he was too sick to run it. I can remember him, lots of times working well into the night, and maybe into the early morning, to repair something on the truck so he could go the next day. One thing that was sort of peculiar about his trucks, he got into a deal with the Coca-Cola Company in Galesburg, Illinois. They would run their trucks about a year-and-a-half, then Dad would buy that truck from the Coca-Cola Company. Then he would run that truck for another three years. He put lots of miles on, recapped tires, and all that business. I can remember him, as I say, at night working on those trucks so he

could go the next morning. (NOTE: Hazel brought in a group picture and handed it to Sergeant Major Bainbridge.)

**Hazel Bainbridge:** Here's your dad.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Oh yeah. (NOTE: Sergeant Major Bainbridge took the photograph and he pointed out the location of his father in the photograph.) Second from the right, in the bottom, front row. We look a little bit alike.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, you sure do.

**SMA Bainbridge:** He was in the First World War, in the Engineers. He never went to combat, but he was in fact a soldier. As I say, He didn't enjoy this great country very long. I think he was thirty-five when he died.

**Interviewer:** The one that gave you a little switching on the way home, was that your stepfather?

**SMA Bainbridge:** No, that was this fellow. That was this fellow. I don't think my stepfather ever raised a hand to me. I can't remember him ever raising a hand to me. I can remember him with his younger son, his son, you know, whacking Danny a time or two, but I don't remember him ever raising a hand. Of course I was older and didn't need the same kind of guidance, I guess, that young Danny did. No, Dad was very good with us and provided us with a home. Again, we didn't have a heck of a lot, Butch. But we had a lot of TLC, and we always had plenty to eat and we always had clothes. They might not always be new, but we made out very well, I thought. It is a good part of my philosophy of life, I guess, is that I learned what a buck was worth long before I got out of grade school. As a matter of fact, in grade school, the last four years I went to grade school, fifth through the eighth, I was the janitor at the school. I lived about a half mile from school and I would start the fire in the morning and have the water carried, because the school house had been moved and set back from the road, so the pump, of course, and the well stayed where it was. There wasn't any running water. I

did that for four years, for fifty cents a week. But that fifty cents a week bought my clothes for school the next year, because it went to my mother. So, as I say, I early on learned the value of a buck.

**Interviewer:** Tell me a little bit about your mother.

**SMA Bainbridge:** My mother's maiden name was Wells, Beatrice Wells. She was a small woman. I guess Mom was about 5' 4". She was strong-willed, had a love of family, heck of a cook, and just fun to be around. I suppose I caused a good portion of her first grey hair. When I was a youngster I used to kid Mom a lot and tease her. I used to help her around the house. She always used to tell everybody that I was her girl, until Patti was born, because I used to help her around the house. I didn't really appreciate being her girl, but I helped Mom and I could help her with a meal or help her with the house. I can recall one incident with Hazel's cousin and I. Saturday was the day Mom always cleaned the house up real good and Gale Brooks and I were trying to lob snow balls in the chimney. It was the old chimneys that would come half way down in the wall and then, of course, there was a soot trap in there. We couldn't get one in there, so I said I know how to this, "I'll get up on the house." Gale threw me one up and then I rolled it on the roof. I had it almost the size of the chimney, so I threw it down the chimney. It didn't no more hit the bottom, when there was a scream that come out of the house and my mother come out, and she said, "I want you to come into the house and see what you just did." I don't know whether you're familiar with how soot does when it gets on the smooth floor, but it was all over that kitchen floor, Butch. I guess it must have taken us two and a half to three hours to clean that mess up. We didn't have a vacuum cleaner, and you can't sweep the damn stuff, you know. So that's the sort of thing I used to do with my mother. But she was a hard worker. As I say, mother had an older brother who outlived her. Mom worked hard all her life. Of course, she had my brother and I, and she had four children by my step-father. They lost a pair of

twins before my younger sister and brother were born to her. But she could work right along with a man, and did a lots of time. She did a lot of work in the fields. She was a very loving woman and a great mother. I was lucky. I was lucky.

**Interviewer:** As you were coming up, what were some of the rules that your parents laid down for you, and if you broke those rules, what was your normal punishment?

**SMA Bainbridge:** When I was a little guy, my mother was pretty good with a switch. I guess some of the rules that were laid down was that, you know, if you had chores to do, you did the chores and got them done. You didn't need a lot of prompting. If the things weren't done, then you had a problem. Case in point. Kindling was one of the things you had to get on a farm so you could start a fire in the morning. We had places to get dry kindling and if you was a little bit late, or tried to be a little bit slick and got wet cobs or something that wouldn't start the fire the next morning, you had to get up, that was the rule, you got up and help start the fire. There was not much corporal punishment in our house; some. There was more of the stern talking, or something withheld. We didn't get a heck of a lot of things, so when we had some play time to do, you couldn't go over to the neighbor kids. When you went to the neighbor kids, there it was to ride the horse, so maybe you couldn't ride the horse. It was pretty much, do what you're supposed to do and we'll get along okay. But one thing was, that as long as we were under that roof, we went by the rules of that house. We didn't set any of our own standards. We knew that early on and that's the way we conducted ourselves. I think that pretty much stuck with me too, Butch.

**Interviewer:** Do you think that because your mother was such a tender, loving person that was one of the reasons why you didn't get into a lot of trouble?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I think so. I think so, and there wasn't much of a chance for us to get into trouble. We lived on the farm, and to go to

town was a big deal, you know. The vehicles we had were for working purposes. There wasn't gasoline to go to town, and if you got to town, there wasn't any money to spend anyway. So going to town, I think was one of the big treats when I was a kid. We had a hired man by the name of Charles Nolan, who used to take my brother and I to town with him on Saturday night and we could go to the movies. I think the movies were fifteen cents in those days, and ten cents for me; it cost fifteen cents for my brother. So fifty cents, you know, would get us popcorn, into the movie, and the whole works. But that wasn't an every week thing. That might be once a month, or maybe not any that month. There wasn't a lot to withhold and there wasn't a lot of activities. Most of our things were done right there on the farm. We learned to sort of play by ourselves, if there was any playtime, but there wasn't a lot of playtime because there was something to do.

**Interviewer:** How far did you live from town?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I guess, when I was just a little tyke, maybe fifteen or twenty miles to town, and a good part of that was dirt road. So in the spring, you couldn't get out in some of the areas we lived. You could plan on getting stuck two or three times. I remember we had an old '27 Chevrolet. I guess we probably bought it new. It was an axle-breaker. If you would get stuck in the mud, you could just bet you were going to have to put in the left or the right axle on that thing because it would twist the axle off. It had the old disc wheels, no spokes, you know, and mud go up in that thing, that old Illinois clay, and it would just twist an axle off. So we didn't go to town if it was muddy. We just waited until the mud dried up, or froze up, or whatever. But I loved my childhood. I wasn't missing anything because I didn't know what the hell was going on out there anyway, you know. A lot of the things we done was family stuff. We had the school picnics at the end of the school year, where the teacher would provide, you know, a five-gallon can of ice cream; that was great. Everybody would bring

potluck. So that was a big deal. Let's jump ahead here a little bit. When I got to be in high school, or even before I got to high school, we had a free movie in Williamsfield. We could get to town, we'd have a dime for an ice cream cone and a candy bar, or something like that. In those days, I think it was Sealtest that put out cones of ice cream, and in the bottom was a little paper slip. If you were lucky, you would get a free ice cream cone. Of course, the next week when you went to town, you didn't get the nickel or dime whatever it was, you took your free along to get your ice cream cone. But the movies were held out in the park, and if it rained, there wasn't any movie. So those were the sort of things that we looked forward to, Butch. The summer softball league, and that sort of thing, we looked forward to that. In the little town of Dahinda, where I first met Hazel, we were about a mile, I guess, from Dahinda. It was big town, two-hundred people, maybe, but we had a softball team every summer. We used to have church ice cream socials at the church, and that sort of thing. We used to go to Sunday School so we could race our horses after Sunday School. I rode a horse to Sunday School. I think the horse race after Sunday School was a bigger attraction than Sunday School.

**Interviewer:** What town was this?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Dahinda, it's a little town six miles from Williamsfield, and a mile-and-a-half from Trenton Corners, where I went to grade school. It's an Indian name which means "between the hills." It kind of sits down in a little pocket, where Cork Creek and Spoon River come together. We went down there to go to church. That's where I first met Hazel, when she was a fourth grader and I was a fifth grader.

**Interviewer:** Tell me about your elementary school. What was the name of the school?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Well let's see, Butch. I went to Reed School, which was my first school. Now that was three miles from the house, and

we walked to school; my brother and I. That's where the neighbors, when the weather was cold, used to call us in to warm our feet. That was my first school and I went there two years. Then we went to Cameron Elementary School, which was a Cameron address, but we were twenty miles from Cameron, Illinois. Then I went to Alexis High School, or Alexis Grade School. Then I went to the Trenton Corners. So I went to one, two, three, four, four different grade schools. Reed, Cameron, Alexis, and Trenton Corners. Yeah, four different grade schools. All of those schools was a one-room school house. Everyone of them had one teacher. The closest I was to the schoolhouse, I guess was there at Cameron, because we could walk across the field, from out house to the school. It was only about, maybe, six hundred meters to the school, and maybe a half-mile around by road. I think that school teacher, at Cameron School, she and one other probably had the most influence on me in grade school. Her name was Marie Harshbarger. And to tell you what kind of a teacher was, whooping cough came around during that time. My younger sister, Patti, had whooping cough; she must have been about two years old, or maybe a year-and-a-half. I remember I used to rock her to keep her from choking when she would cough. I think there were fifteen of us in the grade school, and everybody in grade school had whooping cough, except me and the teacher. She had already had it. She said, "I'll teach as long as the kids come to school." That was probably the noisiest school room for about three weeks. The kids kept coming to school, if they felt like it, and she kept teaching. Everybody in there had whooping cough. I never did get it. I never did catch it and I sat and rocked my sister all the time she had it. I guess then we went to the grade school in Trenton. I went my fifth through eighth year at Trenton. I had two teachers there; they were sisters. Eleanor Stevens was the teacher the first two years I was there, and her sister, Patricia Stevens, was the second teacher. Those were the two teachers I worked for, for the four years before I went to high school; where I

made my fifty cents a week taking care of the school.

**Interviewer:** You said a Mrs. Marie Harshbarger is the one who influenced you the most?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah, I think because of her sense of values. She was going to take of those kids as long as the kids came to school. I know it must have must a heck of a chore for her to teach ten or fifteen kids, all with the whooping cough, but she did. She went through that trauma, and it must have been a trauma for her. So, you know, anybody that would do that to make sure that the kids got what they were supposed to get was a special person, because see, in those days, school year went from X to Y, and then you had to start working in the fields and one thing or another. There wasn't any extended school and snow days and all that business. You got school over as quick as you could.

**Interviewer:** Back in those days also, school was based on the harvest. The planting and the harvest.

**SMA Bainbridge:** That's right, so in the spring you got out of school and started to work in the fields. In the fall, school didn't start until you got most of the crops out.

**Interviewer:** What's the furthest distance you had to travel to school?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I think when I was in the first grade. Three miles.

**Interviewer:** You had to walk?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Had to walk.

**Interviewer:** In the snow.

**SMA Bainbridge:** In the snow, whatever.

**Interviewer:** Dragging a lunch bucket.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Dragging a lunch bucket. Once in a while you'd get a ride, you know. When we went to Alexis, I think was about two miles, maybe two-and-a-half miles over mud roads. I remember the weather was bad one time and Dad put us on one of the horses; her name

was Babe. We could walk faster than Babe could get us to school. But, she carried both of us. I remember one time, we just turned her loose and she went back home. Well that upset Dad. He thought maybe we'd been hurt or something, but we hadn't. We just got off and let that old mare go back, because we got to school a little bit faster. We didn't like riding her. You couldn't get her into a trot. She just took her time. That's why he put us on her, you know, because he knew she was safe. We decided we weren't going to wait that long, so we sent her back. But we didn't do that anymore. After that, Dad come to school and got us, and after that we rode the horse when we were supposed to.

**Interviewer:** Tell me about the punishment that the teachers dealt out if a person messed up and got into trouble.

**SMA Bainbridge:** I got one whipping in grade school. Duane Gibbs, a buddy of mine, sat right behind me. You remember, they still have them, Butch, those little blunt nose scissors they used to give to the first and second graders so they wouldn't stick somebody in the eye or yourself in the leg. Well, Duane Gibbs sat behind me and we'd been playing out at recess, or something, we came in, I don't know what caused this to happen, but he reached up and clipped me on the lobe of my right ear with those scissors. I mean just cut them, just like, you know. Of course, you're bleeding pretty good there, it hurt. I hollered and jumped up and hit him and knocked him out of his seat. We both got a licking for that. Well, I always thought I shouldn't have got the licking, but I took it. It wasn't bad anyway, cause Miss Reed didn't hit very hard. She was an old woman, she was probably forty. She was an old woman, but Duane and I both got a licking. I got another one when we got home, because that was the rule. If you get a licking at school, you get one to match when you get home. That was this fellow here. (Pointed to photograph) So we didn't have anymore of that in school. One time, years later, I was talking to my older brother about our school days. He asked me if I remember chewing tobacco when I was in

the first grade, and I told him that I didn't remember that. According to him, I used to chew tobacco during class and I would use the ink well for a spittoon, and then I would clean out the ink well during recess. He said that I didn't get caught, so maybe that's why I don't remember that. But anyway, in those days the teachers could keep you in after school. I may have stayed in once after school, I don't recall, but I think everybody at least had to stay in once after school for talking in class or something like that. But I don't know if you're familiar with that kind of school. I'll use the one in Trenton as an example. If you talked back to either of the Stevens' girls, you stayed in after school. Earlier I said, Patricia, but Georgia Stevens was the other teacher's name; Eleanor and Georgia Stevens. I graduated under Georgia. I don't remember either one of those teachers ever hitting anybody. I remember a Merlin Caldwell, who was in my class in Trenton. Merlin was the oldest kid in school. Let's see, he was in the sixth grade for three years, and the seventh grade for two, and I think he graduated with me. I think he was only in the eighth grade one year. He was the oldest kid in school. We had sort of a little study hall that you got your lessons at. We had it in the back room, and in the back of the room was a big, it was big to me at the time, bookcase. It must have had six or seven years of National Geographic Magazines. Of course, that was in the days when there was no advertising in the National Geographic, and that's what used to be my reading. Whenever I got all my lessons done, I'd go back and read. I think in the four years I was there, I must have gone through that whole stack at least twice. Of course they had great photographs, and one thing or another. That's when I got interested in redwood trees. Now here I am, sixty-nine years old and still haven't seen the redwoods. I've always said to myself, "I'm going to see the redwoods." So this summer, Butch, we're going to California and we're going to see the redwoods. I think, probably, as an extension of the July trip to the Academy. I think we're going on to Las Vegas and then

go from there, because it's not very far from there. I'm going to do that. If you'll look out here at this hibiscus bed, the General Sherman is that thick through, forty feet; the diameter is forty feet. Now, I've got to see that. I have to see that. That's where I decided that I wanted to see the redwoods. Here I was in school, probably about the seventh grade and I wanted to see those redwoods. Now I've been all over that part of the country while I've been in the Service, but I never got a chance to walk up to one of those trees and touch it, and to lay down beside that and look up. I had a friend at the Soldier's Home who I worked with said, "When you get out there Bill, lay down on your back with your head up against that tree and just look up." He said, "That'll make you feel like there's not much to you." So I'm going to do that. I'm going to do that.

**Interviewer:** Those and the giant Sequoias.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. So we're going to go out and take a look at that, Butch. That schoolhouse, I say, the teacher taught all eight grades. There may not be somebody in all eight grades. When I graduated from the eighth grade, there were four of us in the class, which was about a third of the school.

**Interviewer:** How many did you have in the first four grades?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Students?

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Not more than, maybe fifteen in the whole school and probably two or three in my class. That was about average when you went through those. There would be maybe fifteen or twenty in the school, and not over twenty. There wasn't that many more seats. There was one room and there would be two or three in the class. You know, you're in the seat in the front, sitting on the bench, and the teacher is teaching the third grade, then the fourth grade is next, and then the fifth. So she's teaching all eight grades right there in that one-room schoolhouse.

**Interviewer:** Basically, you're learning more than just your grade.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Oh yes, you are, because you always were listening, particularly to the upper grades, you know. Something is going on and maybe you could go check on that. I didn't like math. I just didn't like math, and I don't know why. I liked history and I liked geography, but I did not like math. So, I said, "Boy, when I get out of grade school, that's the end of it for me." Well, little did I know I had to take General Business in high school because that was required. My Dad said, "You're also going to take Algebra." I said, "No." He said, "Yeah, that's one of your electives, so you can take the others if you want, but you have to take Algebra." Well I ended up taking algebra, advanced algebra, physics, and trigonometry, before I got out. Because I got into it and liked it, I found out that it wasn't near as tough as I thought it would be. It was sort of strange, but the group that we I started out with, everybody was in general business; the whole class. When we ended up in the Physics class, there was only one girl and the rest were boys. The girls seemed to drop out of that sort of thing.

**Interviewer:** Didn't you say you moved from farm to town, a little later on?

**SMA Bainbridge:** No, I never did, Butch. The folks moved from town out to the farm. All the way through high school, we lived in the country. Of course, we had rural route addresses, even when I went to high school. I never lived in town. I never lived in town. And then, of course, when I got out of the Army, I stayed with my folks the first time. I stayed with my folks about six weeks, while I was looking for a house and working for the CB&Q. We'll get to that later.

**Interviewer:** So actually, when you moved, you moved from farm to farm.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah. Down in this part of the country, they called them sharecroppers, but we weren't sharecroppers. We rented on

the shares. We provided the work and the rent was part of the crop. So what you did is, each year, or two years, or three years, as you went down the road, you could get a few more horses or another piece of machinery, and you could farm more land, then you went to a better farm or you got a better deal on the break of how much you would give to the landlord. There wasn't any money, you know. We just used the commodities to work from farm to farm.

**Interviewer:** What about during the summer vacations?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Being a farm-boy, the summer vacation amounted to a hell of a lot of hard work. The garden had to be put in, the crops had to be tended. We had hogs and cattle. We had corn and once we grew it, had to be cultivated. In those days you cultivated it both ways. You planted it; then you cultivated it the way you planted it; then you cultivated it across; and then you cultivated it the way you planted it. "You laid it by the fourth of July"; that was about the third time you plowed it. You cultivated with horses, and by that time the corn would be up beyond their belly. You had to be careful you didn't break some of it over. You know, little did we know, in those days, by plowing on both sides of the corn, we were actually reducing the amount of the crop. They don't do it that way anymore.

**Interviewer:** That's right, they don't.

**SMA Bainbridge:** We planted it with a check-wire, so you couldn't go across it. Once in a while though, Butch, I can remember a big vacation for us was to go to the Iowa State Fair. My grandparents, my mother's parents, lived in Iowa. We'd go to Iowa and go to the Iowa State Fair. I've spend a couple of days at the Iowa State Fair. That was a real vacation, or going, spending the weekend with your buddy. You know, walk over to his house. Old John Folger's Dad run a grocery store right across the road from Trenton schoolhouse. John could get things like ammunition for our rifle, you know. He also could get pork and beans, if we was going to go camping on the river for two or three

days, that sort of thing. Again, I had three buddies that I grew up with. I really got to where I could spend the summer with them. That was of course, John Folger, Gale Brooks, who I mentioned before, and Russ Smith, who was Hazel's brother. It seems like we was always paling around together.

(End Tape OH 94.4-1, Side 1)

(Begin Tape OH 94.4-1, Side 2)

**Interviewer:** Sergeant Major, as the last tape ended, you gave me a list of your friends that you grew up with. Just for clarification, we was talking about elementary school, but during the break you said that you did not have such a thing as an elementary school and a junior high, it was just all considered elementary school, correct?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Right, one through eight was elementary school. Then we went right into high school.

**Interviewer:** Then you also were talking about Eleanor Stevens and Georgia Stevens. Which grade did Eleanor teach?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Eleanor taught me the fifth and the sixth, and her sister, Georgia, taught the seventh and the eighth grade.

**Interviewer:** As you got a little older and approached your teenage years, did you have any kind of a part-time job, outside of the farm work that did, or was all your work confined to just the farm.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Most of it, Butch, was just the farm. I'll tell you one little story about my high school days. We talked about my Dad and his milk route. One of his customers passed away and his wife left the farm for the summer and Dad volunteered me to take care of the lawn. Now this was a push-type mower. The farm was fifteen miles from where we lived. I had to borrow my brother's car to get over there, probably once every couple of weeks. I got two dollars each time I mowed the lawn. The lawn was three times as big as the one I have here. It seemed even bigger than that with a push-type mower. I did that all summer long, in addition to helping on our farm. When the summer was

over and I paid for my gas and the whole works, I made a dollar and sixty cents for that whole summer, doing that lawn. We didn't have to worry too much about paying income taxes in those days. No, most of my work was done right at the home place, although during my junior and senior year, during the summer I did work in Galesburg I stayed with my cousin and I worked at a truck terminal at night. I worked the eleven to seven shift at night, loading and unloading trucks. I can remember one particular time we were loading gate valves with the two-wheeled truck dollies. I don't know what those gate valves weighed, but they were humongous. I can remember struggling with those dog gone things night after night, loading them out of that terminal. I think my only outside employment, away from the farm, was during my junior and senior year of high school.

**Interviewer:** Let's talk about your high school years. Where did you go to high school?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Went to high in Williamsfield Community High School, in Williamsfield, Illinois, which was seven, eight miles from where we lived in Dahinda; rural Dahinda. It was a consolidated district high school. I guess there were two or three bus routes. I think the school had, maybe, two hundred students, total, in all four grades; freshmen through seniors. I went all four years there. I think we started out with thirty-some in our class. Twenty-four of us graduated and there's something like sixteen or seventeen of us left. In fact, we just had our fiftieth reunion last year. Jean Dawson, who was one of my classmates, was responsible for getting it set up. About half way through, I got a letter from her asking me if I would be the master of ceremonies. So we had our fiftieth anniversary last August, as a matter of fact. I had a good time. Oh, I had a good time. We went all four years, there in Williamsfield. I had to catch the bus at seven o'clock in the morning and I had to ride the bus for forty-five, fifty minutes, maybe an hour, maybe an hour-and-a-half. In the winter

time maybe even more. Sometimes maybe I would miss the bus because of basketball practice, something like that. Then I walked down the railroad tracks, six miles, to go home. It was a great school and we had good teachers. It was big enough to have a lot of friends, and yet small enough so everybody was an individual and taken care of real well. We had a lot of good teachers, but I think my best teachers, I had two, but I think the ones I remember the most were probably Mr. Gier, who was the science teacher, and Shaw Terwilliger, who was the agriculture teacher. Kenneth Elliott was the principal of that high school when I graduated. He wasn't the only principal while I was there; we had two different principals. Neil Henry was our first principal, and then we had Kenneth Elliott. Kenneth Elliott, incidentally, was a classmate of my stepfather. He graduated from that same high school, of course years before. I can remember that you could read Mr. Gier, like an open book. When he was upset with someone, there would be a little red flash that would go up his neck. If he was really upset, it sort of got blue. When his neck got blue, you had to pay attention. I can remember in one of his science classes the tables, Butch, were heavy tables with the round pull-out stool. There was a swing-out stool that hooked right to the table. I guess there were about six or seven of those around each of the tables, where you could sit down and do your experiments and that sort of thing. All around the class was biology specimens and that sort of thing. Well, I came to school... I cut my finger off, as a matter of fact. Russell Smith, Hazel's brother, and Gale Brooks, who has been mentioned before, and I were changing the tire on my brother's old Model A Ford. He had made some home-made snow tires. He'd cut another tire to put over the regular tire with slots in it; it worked pretty good. We're changing that tire and I reached under to pull the tire out, and they pushed down on the tire tool on the other side of the rim. I felt my finger and I said, "Hey, you guys almost cut my finger off!" Well, sure enough they had. It got the end of it, and when I jerked it out, I

jerked the fingernail right out by the roots. Well, it was laying in the bottom of the tire. I don't know why, but I picked it up and put it in my pocket. Well, I went to Doc Oberholtser, who was one of those old country doctors. He wrapped it all up and said, "Well, there's not much we can do with it. You got a little piece of the bone and that finger is going to be a quarter of an inch shorter than the rest of them, but the nail will grow back." Well, this was on a Saturday. Monday I was sitting in class and Beverly Carrigan, one of my classmates, said, "Bill, what did you do to your finger?" I started to tell her, but then I said, "Wait a minute, Beverly, and I'll show you." I still had that piece of finger in my pocket, so I reached in my pocket and took out that piece of finger and I laid it up on the table. Beverly took one look at that piece of finger, with the nail still hooked to it, and fainted; she fell right off the stool. Well, Mr. Gier was upset. He didn't know what was going there, and he came over. His neck was blue by that time. But we described to Mr. Gier what the problem was, so he smiled and said, "May I have this?" I said, "Sure." So he took it and cleaned it all up and put it in a jar of formaldehyde and put it up with the rest of the specimens. He labeled it "Bainbridge's digit." I guess it remained up there for the rest of the time I was in school; my nail and the piece of the end of my finger.

**Interviewer:** You said a little earlier that you stayed after school to play sports, and then you followed the railroad tracks and walked home. Did you participate in organized sports there?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Oh, I did, I did, Butch. One of the things that I mentioned earlier, you know, we had the summer softball league that we played on. I played right field on that softball team. Those were days when you had ten men on the team; you had a short-fielder and so forth. We had a guy by the name of Stevens, and he played with us during this time. He was a senior that year, and I was a freshman. They had one of the other kids from Williamsfield, who was in the outfield. We were

playing Yates City, which was one of the teams in the league. We were playing Yates City in softball. The kid in right field dropped three fly balls, and the coach was exasperated. Kendall Stevens, who was our catcher, told the coach, "Put Bill Bainbridge in right field. He won't drop any balls." I had played with Kendall for two summers, as a grade school kid. So I played the next four years on the Williamsfield softball team, in right field. I never missed a game after that. Then I was on the basketball team. I run on a cross country team and I run track. I liked hurdles; full hurdles. Since we didn't have any hurdles, I used to practice at home with the chicken coops. I set chicken coops up. They weren't the right height, but I could set them the right distance apart. But I learned to do hurdles over chicken coops, but I did it wrong-footed. You are supposed to go over the hurdle, if you're right-handed, with your right foot first, but I always went over with my left foot. The coach was trying to teach me. He said, "You're going it wrong-footed." I said, "No." He said, "No, you're supposed to go over it right-footed." I said, "It's not natural for me." So he said, "Okay, take this basketball and dribble it." So I dribble it and did a lay up. He said, "Well, you're right." He said, "Your take off foot is your left foot." He said, "You put your left foot up first." So I ran low hurdles for four years. When I was a senior, I think there were about twelve or fifteen of us on the track team, from all four grades. There was Galesburg, Abington, Knoxville, and some of the other big towns around there. In 1943, my last year in high school, we took the Knox County Track Meet, by I don't know how many points. I've got the year book here someplace. That was the first time Williamsfield had ever won it. We shocked all those other schools. Galesburg probably had seven or eight hundred students, maybe a thousand students in the school, and Abington the same way. But the reason we did it, we had this young coach and he entered us in everything. I wasn't a high hurdle runner, but I run high hurdles. I

got third in high hurdles. Harry Thurman, who was our miler, won the half-mile. The coach said, "Harry, you did so well on the half-mile, we're going to enter you in the mile." Harry said, " But there's only events between here and the..." He said, "That's alright." Harry took second in the mile. Old Fuzz Engle, another one of my classmates, had never thrown the discus, all year. The coach said, "Fuzz, I'm going to enter you in the discus." Fuzz said, "I can't do it." He said, "That's alright." Fuzz threw one time, one time, and took third, I think. So we overwhelmed them with seconds and thirds. We got a lot of first too, but we entered somebody in everything. Guys that went to that track meet didn't know they were going to be in those different events. For instance, I didn't know I was going to be in the high hurdles. Harry didn't know he was going to run the mile. Fuzz didn't know he was going to throw the discus. Bob Tucker was the broad jumper. The coach told Bob, "I'm going to lay this handkerchief out here, X number of feet." He said, "You try to get to it." He said, "We've a good chance." Well he put it about eighteen inches further than he told Bob, and Bob jumped over that. Bob won. You know, it was just a team effort. That's all in the year book; the fact that we won that. I think one of the things that kind of helped shape me, if I'm shaped at all, Butch, is that my real roots. I always kind of go back to that. I don't guess there isn't anything you can't solve if you just kind of work at it a little bit. I also think it's helped me in my philosophy toward life. I don't let things bother me.

**Interviewer:** Back in those days, you didn't that many discipline problems in the schools, did you?

**SMA Bainbridge:** No, we didn't, we didn't. You know, we sort of took care of it in-house. This Ken Elliott was a paddler. He used to have a wooden paddle, and if somebody messed up, they would have to go to the paddling. One of the other guys would hold your head in his lap and team members would give you a whack with that paddle. I never got a

whack with the paddle. I don't guess we had maybe, two or three or four that did that. But one time it was bad, worse than it should be, and the young fellow got hit more times than he should. We decided, the class members decided, there won't be anymore of that. Old Fuzz Engle, who had been the holder, took the paddle and broke and that was the end of that. It was just a little too much for us. But that sort of thing shaped us to the point that we made our decision that we weren't going to do that and we would do our own discipline, so we didn't have that problem. I had a classmate, by the name of Darryl Carrigan. We would fight roosters. We had some bantam roosters crossed with gamecocks. Darryl thought he had a real good one, and I thought I had a real good one, so we brought them to school, on the bus, in a little cardboard box. We were down in the dressing room, next to the gym, and we had those roosters fighting. Neil Henry, who I mentioned before, was our principal. We heard the principal coming. He spoke to somebody, so we knew who it was. We charged out of there, left the roosters in. Well, we stayed away as long as we thought Mr. Henry might be there. He would probably be out looking for whoever owned the roosters. In maybe twenty minutes, we came back and he was still sitting there on the bench. The roosters had quit fighting. They were wore out. He said, "You boys should have stayed, you missed a good fight." And he just walked out. Now he never done a thing, but he didn't have to, we felt about that high, and that was the end of it. There was no publicity on it, or nothing. We shouldn't of had those roosters there. We should have been up in study hall, or someplace else. But Mr. Henry never said anything except, "You boys missed a good fight." That's kind of the way things were taken care of in those days. Like you say, we really didn't have any big problems, because the families took care of it if there was. They didn't mess around with it.

**Interviewer:** What were your favorite subjects during high school? I think earlier you said you liked geography and history, but you didn't

like math. But also, you said as you got into high school you started liking math.

**SMA Bainbridge:** I think math turned out to be one of my favorite subjects. There's a couple of reasons for that. One was, Dad said you are going to take math because you're going to need it. The other was that we sort of got started with a group, as freshmen, and we stayed with that group. Some of us started in the General Business classes were still in the physics classes at the end of the fourth year. It stood me in good stead, we'll talk about it later, when I got in the Service. In physics, particularly, and I'll mention that when we get to Grand Forks, North Dakota.

**Interviewer:** Did they had an FFA (Future Farmers of America) back in those days?

**SMA Bainbridge:** They did have an FFA, and I was in the FFA. We had Shaw Terwilliger, who I mentioned, was the Agriculture teacher. He didn't come to this last reunion, but he came to our forty-fifth reunion, five years ago. He, Mr. Gier, and Kenneth Elliott, all came to our forty-fifth reunion. Shaw Terwilliger was real humanitarian and knew how to take of kids. He would get us into jobs in the summer. Earlier you mentioned the summer jobs. There was another one, but it was kind of tacked on to what we did at the farm. We would get into the detassling business for the seed corn companies, you know. Shaw Terwilliger was instrumental in getting those of us that needed the work, into that. Of course it didn't really hurt what we were doing at the house, because our stuff was done pretty much then. We were waiting for the next crop of hay, so we sort of had a little slack period. So we were making a buck or two doing that. I don't know what it was we made, it wasn't a lot money, but it was a lot of money for us. That's hard work, Butch, and hot. You had to wear long sleeves or you'd be cut up.

**Interviewer:** Back in those days, what did you do, detassle four

rows and leave one?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Leave two and detassle four, as I recall.

**Interviewer:** I've done that many a year, back in Alabama.

**SMA Bainbridge:** It's hard work. Your arms get tired you know, no higher than I am, and the corn was normally higher than I am so I had to reach up and pull up even more. That also was a learning thing, because we also get a chance to see the guys we went to school with too, that we normally wouldn't see during the summer. We'd all end up in the same corn field together. We did some of that, but not a lot of extra outside work. There wasn't much around those days, I say, because all the guys were working at home. The high school I went to has been torn down. As a matter of fact, my mother got me a brick. I still have that brick and her note is still glued to the bottom of it. She got me a brick from that high school. I think it was there sixty years. They've built a new one since, of course. Still have a Williamsfield Community High School. Each year the town honors certain classes, and this year they honored the Class of '43, but Hazel and I weren't able to go back and participate in that. Again, I think we got a lot out of that high school because, as I said before, it was big enough to get a lot of the extra-curricular activities we needed, and yet small enough that everybody was taken care of.

**Interviewer:** Do you have anything else you would like to add about your school years?

**SMA Bainbridge:** One other thing, Butch. I think probably that high school, and the group of people I went to high school with, probably also helped me to become the kind of person I am, because it taught me that other people's problems can be a heck of a lot worse than yours and that you got to have to kind of pull together. We had a rowdy bunch of kids, but our fun was clean, you know. Although I would say that one time on Halloween, there was a fellow by the name of Ensley, that had an old team of horses that were blind. The stage for the high school was

like here and then the wings were here, the wings were about six feet off the ground and the stage another six feet up. A bunch of us worked all night; we built ramps. We got them out of the barn, hitched them to a wagon and put them up on that stage. When we come to study hall the next morning, here they are out there, standing there asleep, tied to the study hall window. Of course, nobody knew how they got up there. Then we had all day to get them down. That's the kind of kids that I went to school with and grew up with. As I said, we worked like the devil to get that done, but we didn't hurt anything, and the town got a little fun out of it too. To this day I don't guess nobody really knows who did all that, or if they care. But I enjoyed school. I really did. Of course, when you look back, it's a lot more enjoyable than it was at the time. But even at the time, I enjoyed it, because as I say, it was a pretty close-knit group of people. They were all from the same type of background, not that everybody had the same kind of resources, but we were all from the same part of the country there.

**Interviewer:** You just about was raised with them, from day one.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Almost, almost. You've known some of those kids in there all your life.

**Interviewer:** Did you get to attend college or university before you went in the Army?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Did not, did not, Butch.

**Interviewer:** You did that after you were discharged.

**SMA Bainbridge:** As a matter of fact, I graduated from high school on the twentieth of May, I believe, and the seventh of June I was in Camp Grant, Illinois. So it didn't take me long to get into the Army. Everybody was going into the Army, so that's what I did. That's where I got my schooling. The college that I had, I got in the Service. As I look back, it might have been good to go to school, but I don't have any regrets in not going, because the thing to do was to go into the Service, if you could. My older brother was already in the Service and

everybody that I knew, that could, was gone. It just didn't seem right for me to not go, so I went.

**Interviewer:** You volunteered for induction, right?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I volunteered for induction. My mother was a little bit upset about that, but she did, in fact, sign for me. I was eighteen years old and couldn't get in by myself. I went to the draft board in Galesburg, Illinois and I said, "I want to enlist." They said, "You can't enlist." I said, "Well then, how do I get in the Army?" "Well, you have to wait to be drafted." I said, "Well, how long will that take?" "Well, probably six to eight months." I said, "That's not soon enough." "Well, you can volunteer for the draft." "How long will that take?" "Well, that will take maybe, six to eight weeks." I said, "Okay, that's what I want to do. I want to volunteer for the draft." Well it took less than three weeks, and I was gone. I went home and I told my mother what I had done, and she said, "I'm not going to sign." Well, my Dad said, "You might just as well, because he's going to go anyway." I said, "Yeah, somehow or another I'm going to go." I said, "Jim's there, everybody else is there, and I'm going to go." So I did, and as I say, in less than three weeks I was gone. Because that was the twenty of May, and seven June I was actually inducted into the Army. Then I went from Galesburg, to Camp Grant, Illinois. I found out later, when I worked at the Soldier's and Airmen's Home, the reason that I couldn't enlist is that at 1420, on the afternoon of 8 December 1941, the Congress said, "No more enlistments.", because the Army wanted to put you where they wanted to put you, and not where you wanted to go. You could volunteer for induction, but you couldn't enlist. My brother was so upset over that because I got a three on my serial number and he thought that instead of a three six, I should have got a one six. Well I thought so too, but I said, "I can't. The thing is, I'm in." Then I found out later, as I say, working at the Soldier's Home, that was actually in the law. They said no more enlistments.

**Interviewer:** Plus, they could keep you as long as they wanted to.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Right. My tour was for the duration, plus six. Six months then. Of course, then on the other end they could do the same thing, Butch. They could get rid of you anytime they want to. They could say, "Okay, we don't need you anymore.", and you're gone, period.

**Interviewer:** When you were inducted, did you have a choice of the Service, or did they just automatically put you into the Army?

**SMA Bainbridge:** No, I was in the Army, but when I got to Camp Grant, they were interviewing, and so forth, for the bombs and all that business, and you had an opportunity to go into the Navy. I remember that, because there was a Navy chief--I didn't know he was a Navy chief at the time, but it turned out that he was--said, "You know, you ought to go in the Navy." He said, "You know, Bainbridge is a famous name in the Navy." Well that didn't mean anything to me, because I didn't know anything about it at that time. I said, "Look chief, I can always walk further than I can swim." He said, "Oh, get the heck out of here." So I ended up in the Army, and I glad I did. I don't think I could have... Well I supposed I could have joined the Navy, but the Navy just wasn't my cup of tea, although a heck of a lot of people in the Navy came from the Midwest. But that was the only opportunity I ever had to go into another Service, but the Army was my choice.

**Interviewer:** So you entered the Army at Camp Grant, Illinois.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Camp Grant, Illinois. I was issued my clothes, got my shots, took the exams, and all that business, at Camp Grant. I was actually sworn in on the seventh of June, 1943. We were there, I think, less than ten days. We weren't there long enough to have any details, other than police up and that sort of thing. I had never tied a tie in my life. Whenever I needed a tie, which was about three times I think. When I graduated from high school and going to the Junior-Senior Prom, and another time, my mother tied it for me. Well, I could

remember standing there with a bunch of clothes, and right there on the top of the clothes being issued to me, was a tie. Of course we've got on khakis or whatever it is. There was a PFC standing up there. I didn't know he was a PFC at the time either, but he was. He said, "Get that tie on." I think I got that tie on and tied, and clothes never hit the ground. I was getting with the program. I tied my tie, Butch, somehow. But anyway that was my induction into the Army. We were there, I guess, less than ten days, and then headed for Camp Wallace, Texas.

**Interviewer:** While you were at Grant, that was basically like a reception station, right?

**SMA Bainbridge:** It was, it was.

**Interviewer:** You had your physical exam, your testing, etc, right?

**SMA Bainbridge:** All your shots, and in those days they didn't give you a shot and let you sit down for twenty minutes and then tomorrow give you another one. I think we got five or six in each arm, you know. As a matter of fact, I think we got the shots probably in the morning and then took our tests in the afternoon to make them as tough as possible. It was an induction station, a reception station. We did all the things we needed to do, from uniform issue to the other things to make a soldier out of you. Then they'd head you off to your first assignment.

**Interviewer:** What day did you say you received your oath of enlistment?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Seven June, '43.

**Interviewer:** What was your first impression of the Army, based on what went on at Camp Grant?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I thought it was kind of confusing, because there was always somebody telling you to do something, send you here or send you there, and it didn't seem like there was any order to it, you know. As I look back, there wasn't a lot of order to it. Those folks that

were up there telling us what to do, turns out probably hadn't been in the Army six or seven week themselves. Maybe they had a little training. Someone of them had none. I know, looking back. It was just sort of confusing and confused. Things were awful drab. We didn't have a heck of a lot, but here you are, you got that old bunk and the bare walls, two by four studs sticking out there and that sort of thing. It was hot and the windows were open. Illinois gets hot in the summertime.

**Interviewer:** Where was Camp Grant located?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Up by Rockford, Illinois. I have a book around here someplace that my lawyer buddy, that took care of me when I was Sergeant Major of the Army, gave me. I was on active duty at the time he was. Some estate that he handled was throwing this stuff out and he saw this big book, and he knew that I came in at Camp Grant, so he saved it. So I have a big old yearbook from Camp Grant, 1943. There's nothing there now, Butch, that Grant. I think it's all gone.

**Interviewer:** Where did you say you took your Basic?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Camp Wallace, Texas. Just about, I guess, twenty north of Galveston, south of Houston, in the swamp. They built that thing in the swamp. I remember all the barracks were up on two-and-a-half, three foot concrete pilings, with steps up to them. I didn't think much about that when we first got there. There was white sand as far as you could see, along with a little black top. There were berms built around it. I guess the berms would keep the Gulf from blowing in around you if you had a hurricane. We had one while we was down; while I was going through basic training. There was rain and the wind was blowing. We went through about four or five days of that. You couldn't use the toilets in the barracks, because when you flushed them, water would come up instead of going down, so you had to go across the berm to use the latrine. I guess the berm must have three hundred meters or so from the barracks.

**Interviewer:** I guess there was quite a bit of humidity too, wasn't

there?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Oh, the humidity was high. The mosquitos were crossed with turkeys, I think. Man there were big mosquitos down there. San Jacinto Beach was where we used to go out to fire the machine guns and the heavy weapons. I took my basic training and AIT together. I was there for seventeen weeks, and we trained on the triple A, 90mm guns. My first weapon was an Enfield, British Enfield, and then I got an 03 Springfield. I had two different rifles while I was taking basic training. I took training on the heavy .30 caliber, that had the water jacket; the heavy .50, that had the water jacket; the .90mm; the Thompson submachine gun; the carbine; and the .45 caliber pistol. We fired all of those weapons. Of course, the training was primarily with the guns and the 90's. I say, I had seventeen weeks of that. You know, there was a question here in this interview outline, Butch, and as I recall, it asked, "Was it tough." You know, the Army was easy for me. I came off the farm, and I was convinced that I was invincible. I guess all of us thought that at that age. But I was in good physical shape. The obstacle courses were nothing for me. PT (physical training) was nothing. I didn't have any problem with the classroom work. When I finally got out of that seventeen weeks of basic, I could identify every enemy and every friendly aircraft in the world. That was part of the business of firing antiaircraft weapons. I could do it, flashed on the screen, like that (He snapped his fingers.). Not only could I tell you what it was, I could tell you what it could and couldn't do. That's the sort of training we had. Later on, when I became an Infantryman I got over in Europe, when we would have classes on aircraft identification, my platoon leader would send me over to get the news releases. He'd say, "You don't need any of this stuff." I think I had good basic training. I had a good friend by the name of Danny Russell, from Hereford, Texas. I've tried three different times to find him, but obviously he moved out of Hereford, Texas, because I couldn't find him

in the phone book there. He was a big, tall drink of water. I think after we had been there eight weeks, Danny Russell and I got the first two passes out of my platoon; we got a pass to go into Galveston. Danny knew Texas, because he was from Texas, so we went in and did Galveston. He didn't drink and I didn't drink, so we just walked around and had a lot of fun.

**Interviewer:** It was a change of scenery.

**SMA Bainbridge:** It was a change of scenery, and we felt good that we got a chance to be there. As I say, the training was easy for me. I was still in kind of a cut-up, I guess, and I enjoyed what I was doing. I really enjoyed what I was doing. I was in the Army, that was the thing I wanted to do, and I was sure, as I said, that I was invincible; nothing was going to happen to me. I was going to help do the world a favor and get rid of all those guys out there that done us wrong. We had good trainers, for the day. We'll get into that later on. But in comparison, there is none with today; there just isn't any. But my platoon sergeant was a buck sergeant--a three stripes--from Denora, Pennsylvania, and his name was Simpson, S-I-M-P-S-O-N, Simpson. I don't remember his first name, but I sure have a lot of respect for that guy, because he had our best interest at heart. I don't know what his background was, except I know he was from Pennsylvania. He trained us and told us the little things that we should do when we got on guard duty. The things you ought to do right; the little things you shouldn't do; how you end up being the honor guard guy, so you don't have to walk post; if you do have to walk post, what you can do on that post so you don't have to walk post the next time. But anyway, he also took care of us on our training. I can remember, I was acting corporal; I had the brassard put on. An officer walked by my group when we were doing PRI, Primary Rifle Instruction, and I had my rifle. I took my rifle away and give this officer a hand salute. I knew enough to call the group to attention, and I gave him a hand salute. Well, he stopped and came back

over. His name was Lieutenant Ho. He started to dress me down about giving him a hand salute, when I had my rifle. He said, Wait a minute. Wait a minute." He said, "You haven't been here very long, have you?" I said, "No, I sure haven't. Did I do something wrong?" He said, "Yeah, you did" So then he told me, "When you've got a rifle, you do it this way, you don't put it in the other hand and do it this way." (The Sergeant Major demonstrated the proper way to render a salute while armed with a rifle). So you see, I wasn't as smart as I thought I was, Butch. I enjoyed that training down there. We stayed seventeen weeks.

**Interviewer:** How was the food?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Terrible.

**Interviewer:** Terrible?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Terrible, and I'm a good feeder. The only kind of food I don't like is none. The rest of it I can handle. But, when you look back, the food was good, but it was the preparation. We had been in a war for two years and there was some meat shortages. I remember, we got a lot of goat meat. God, we got a lot of goat meat. In the mess halls they had ten-man tables, you know. There's a quart of milk on this end, and a quart of milk on that end.

**Interviewer:** Family style.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Family style feed. The coffee was good. They'd take a big bag of coffee, wrap it in a piece of muslim, and just throw it in the water and boil it down. But it was the proper preparation of the food, I think, that was lacking. I got a lot of time in the kitchen. My name, being Bainbridge, I was always at the head of the list when it came to KP time. When I got to Camp Wallace, Texas, it was just before the Fourth of July weekend. Guess who was on KP on the Fourth of July? Old Bainbridge. Of course, there was an open house and we had visitors. The mess sergeant and the cooks were out of the mess hall. These people came in and said, "Oh, that sure was some good looking beef." I said, "Well, it isn't beef, and if we could, we would sure give it to you."

It's goat meat." One of the nice things about when you had a twenty-five march or something, the cook would always stay in the mess hall and when you got back there was coffee and doughnuts. Because of that weather down there, you usually started your marches at nine o'clock at night, and it would be three o'clock in the morning when you'd get back, and good hot coffee and doughnuts was a good thing. That part of the food was good. As I told the graduating class down here in January, when we talked about schools, and one thing and another. I know they didn't have any cook schools, using my mess hall as an example for World War II, there sure wasn't any good cook schools in those days.

(End of Tape OH 94.4-1, Side 2)

(Begin Tape OH 94.4-2, Side 1)

**Interviewer:** As the last tape ended you made a remark that there sure wasn't good cook schools back in those days. I also asked you the question, when the tape ended, how often did you have a chance to pull KP?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I think Butch, too often, as I recall. But I probably pulled KP three or four times during the time I went thru basic. Sometimes it was a treat to be able to get in there and maybe help the chow a little bit.

**Interviewer:** Didn't you make a remark also, during the break, that you had something that you wanted to add about your high school?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yes, I did Butch, I just wanted to add that our class, the Class of 1943, published the first yearbook that had ever been published by Williamsfield Community High School. They're still publishing that. I think they've changed the name of it, but they are still putting it out. The first one was dedicated to Kendall Stephenson; he lost his life in a plane accident in the Air Corp. It was dedicated to him. Of course we had in that yearbook all the accomplishments of the class; our operettas, our class plays and that sort of thing. It's the first time that there had been a history of what had happened with

the class. I was going through it at our fiftieth reunion, here last Fall, and I was commenting about the advertising in there. Almost every bit of the advertising in there was hand-printed, but we got money for it.

**Interviewer:** What percentage of those businesses are still in business?

**SMA Bainbridge:** It's surprising, there quite a few of them that are still in business. Baird Seed Corn, which is one of the local families there, is still putting out seed corn. That's where I used to detassle.

**Interviewer:** That's who you detassled corn for.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Right.

**Interviewer:** Back to our discussion on basic training. The fellow recruits that you had, were they basically from the same part of the country?

**SMA Bainbridge:** For the most part, they were from the Chicago metropolitan area. There were some others, from the Midwest, for the most part. I can remember one time we were firing the .50 caliber machine guns, out on the beach. The old B-34 Ventura bombers were used as tow planes; they towed a sleeve target. We had a young fellow out of Chicago, of Greek heritage, by the name of Katcharubis; that was his last name. Of course, Sergeant Simpson was always checking. It was Katcharubis' turn to fire the .50's. He just happened to walk behind him, before he was getting to fire. Guess what he was getting ready to fire on? Not the tow target, but the tower. Needless to say, Katcharubis came off of that .50 in a hurry. We used to go out there, Simpson used to tell us, "Now you don't have to worry about getting your hot water for shaving. We'll just go out and fire a few burst with the .50 and we'll have hot water for shaving."

**Interviewer:** Drain it out of the jacket.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Right out of the jacket.

**Interviewer:** Did you feel pretty close to your fellow recruits?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah, I think so. For the most part, they all had the same feeling I think that I did. There were a few that would have rather been other places, but that's always the case. I think most of them were wanting to do their part and get the job done. You had an eight-ball here and there, because you always have that, but for the most part, it was a pretty good group.

**Interviewer:** Did you have pretty good team work?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Pretty good team work, and we had another battalion. I think the number of it was the 34th, and they would go to that battalion if they couldn't make it. I was sort of a remedial learning battalion, if you will, for those that had a tougher time to get through the courses. We, for the most part, had good camaraderie within the unit.

**Interviewer:** What time did the normal training day begin and end?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Probably about five o'clock in the morning, Butch. We had first call, and then reveille was at five thirty, breakfast was at six, and then into the training day. The training day normally would end with retreat, and retreat probably was five, five-thirty. Of course, you would have to get out of your uniform and get into Class A's. That was part of the training. You could handle that. Some days we would have to use the leggings, and we had the lace leggings in those days, with the buttons on the side. They were not the wrap leggings; I missed the wrap leggings. We used the leggings and the low-quarter shoes. It was like a work shoe, you know, the old Army shoe.

**Interviewer:** Did you have the requirement at that time to stand retreat in Class A?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yes, we did. We did. We would have to fall out on the company street. Of course they played the retreat over a loud-speaker system. Each two or three buildings within the area had sort of like a quadrangle and it had the speakers on it, and every platoon would

be in front of their barracks.

**Interviewer:** What was your normal duty uniform, during that period of time?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Herringbone twill. The old herringbone twill fatigues, and the boots, and the leggings, and a helmet liner. Of course you carried the raincoat over the pistol belt. We had a pistol belt with a raincoat wrapped over the back, or a poncho. As I recall, we didn't always use the protective mask, but we would have training days with the protective mask. I chewed tobacco in those days, and I can remember one march we were on. This Lieutenant Ho was walking alongside of me and he hollered, "Gas." He said, "Bainbridge, if you spit, I'm going to kick you right in the rear end.", because he knew I was about ready to so. I had to put on the gas mask and all this business, and it seemed to me that we wore that protective mask for a much longer period than we would, normally, because he'd do it two or three times during a march period. When he finally got ready, he walked alongside me and said, "Now I'm going to give the 'all clear'." He said, "I want to make damn sure you test for gas." I about drowned, Butch, because I knew if I was to expectorate in that mask, I'd be in trouble. As a matter of fact, I think I was probably a little sick after that thing was all over, because I was like my grand dad Wells, my mother's Dad, I never learned to swallow that stuff.

**Interviewer:** Did you train very often during the weekends and holidays?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I think we trained six days a week, as I recall, but I don't believe we trained Sundays. I don't believe we trained on Sundays. If we were in the field, a little bivouac or something, of course, Sunday didn't make any difference. As I recall it was a six-day training period, and Saturday afternoon was for care and cleaning of equipment and that sort of thing. Of course, on Saturday morning there would be an inspection; a foot-locker inspection. Friday night was the

old G.I. you know. We would always have a PX (Post Exchange) detail, some guy who wouldn't get wet and sloppy, and he would take all the canteens to the PX and fill them up with soda, and bring back chips, and that sort of thing. Always some turkey, or two turkeys, would get somebody's footlocker the next morning, just before it was time for inspection, and pick it up and give it two or three spins, because you always everything laid out. He'd go to the latrine or something and it would be spun while he was gone. The poor guy, whose footlocker was spun, would be lucky if he got things squared away before the inspection. It was pretty tough to put one of those things back together, when you're hurrying and they're inspecting downstairs. People would sleep on the floor so they wouldn't have to mess up their bunk. That sort of thing really wasn't necessary, but we did it because that's the way things were supposed to be done.

**Interviewer:** Was that your Saturday morning inspection?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Right.

**Interviewer:** Tell me about your daily inspections.

**SMA Bainbridge:** As I recall, our daily inspections had to do with bunks, whether the bunks were lined up head-to-toe and whether the dust covers were right and lined up. We couldn't lock the footlockers, and maybe they wouldn't check yours, but they'd check mine, or vice versa. They'd check cleanliness of the barracks, and that sort of thing. We had inspection in ranks, probably just before retreat to make sure the uniforms were proper. We had the old "short arm inspections", you know, once a month. You'd fall out in raincoats and boots, and that sort of thing.

**Interviewer:** In your barracks, you didn't have the wall locker, did you? You just had the bar and a shelf, right?

**SMA Bainbridge:** We had a shelf and a wooden bar. As I recall, Butch, I don't think we could have civilian clothes. I think it was all uniforms.

**Interviewer:** As I recall, from the beginning of the war, until 1945, you couldn't wear civilian clothes.

**SMA Bainbridge:** I don't think you could, because I know when I got a leave out of basic training, I wore my uniform home, because I don't think I had any civilian clothes at all. There wouldn't have been any room to put them. As a matter of fact I don't think I had many civilian clothes until I got to Camp Atterbury, Indiana, which would have been in '44; early '44. Then we could have civilian clothes, but then I was assigned to a regular unit.

**Interviewer:** On your weekend inspections, did you ever have a full-field layouts? Did they have such a thing then?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I can recall one time, during basic training, at the end of our AIT, maybe about the fifteenth week, we had to lay out with the rifle all the cleaning gear, all that business on a shelter half. I think we only did that one time, as I recall. As I look back, Butch, I think that was more or less to find out if we still had all the equipment we had been issued and was in good order, as opposed to whether we could lay it out properly.

**Interviewer:** I think a lot of people don't realize the reason we had a lot of our standby inspections. It was not only for cleanliness, but to make sure you had everything.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Exactly, exactly.

**Interviewer:** The reason you had standardization, it would be a lot easier looking to find the same item in the same place. I think that most of our inspection were more for accountability and cleanliness than for harassment.

**SMA Bainbridge:** And serviceability.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. Also on your weekly inspection, your Saturday morning inspection, did you have your inspection in ranks?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yes. Yes we did. In those days, we tied the tie and tucked it in, between the second and third buttons. They'd check to

see whether that was done properly, and take your handkerchief out to see if it was marked, and that sort of thing. And again, the inspection was not a harassment type thing. It was to find out whether you were together. Was your equipment marked properly and was it serviceable. Although you thought it was kind of harassment, when you looked back it was not. It was not. It had a purpose.

**Interviewer:** You said that you had the Enfield, and then later on you were issued the .03 Springfield. Did you ever get issued the M1 while you were in Basic?

**SMA Bainbridge:** No. I don't believe I had the M1 until I got to Atterbury, when I joined the 106th Infantry. Because when I left there, of course I went to the Air Corps, and I didn't have a weapon when I was in school; when I went to Grand Forks, North Dakota. I didn't have one at Santa Ana Army Air Base. I didn't have one at St Louis. I didn't have one in Lowery Field. I was really bouncing around there for a while. We didn't have units. We were in transit, or waiting for school, or something. We didn't have individual weapons, and I guess that was probably a good thing because we really weren't in a unit and there would have been a problem with accountability. If we had been in a unit, accountability would have been easy to handle.

**Interviewer:** What was your first impression of your drill sergeants?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Well Butch, we didn't have drill sergeants. I mentioned Simpson, you know. He's the only guy I really remember. He and Lieutenant Ho. But we had some second lieutenants, who now I realize were getting as much training as we were, teaching us the basics about weapons, and that sort of thing. We were in an artillery training battalion, and the instructors came from a pool. Although, they didn't call it that at that time, I guess it was probably, like the old committee group. So Simpson was ours and Ho was ours, but most of them came from some place else.

**Interviewer:** What you're saying is, Simpson or Ho would march you to wherever the training was to be held, and then someone else conducted the training.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Right. I recall anybody except Simpson and Ho. The rest of them were strangers, so I'm sure they came from a pool.

**Interviewer:** Was most of the instruction given by noncommissioned officers?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yes. I think, some of the things, such as the Articles of War, were required to be given by an officer, periodically. But for the most part, it was given by noncommissioned officers. A lot of those had been cadre from active duty units, and had been called up from the Reserves, or drafted. They had been in the National Guard and had a little bit of grade already. They were used as instructors to teach us, who were really green.

**Interviewer:** You talked about Simpson. He was from Pennsylvania, correct?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Uh huh.

**Interviewer:** Do you remember the names of any of the sergeants that you had dealings with, other than Simpson?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I remember one. His name was Pritchard. I believe it was John Pritchard. The only reason I remember him is because the first time I ever was on guard, he was my Sergeant of the Guard. He gave us some pretty detailed, explicit instructions about how to remember his name, and that sort of thing. That's the only other noncom that I can remember, while I was going through basic training.

**Interviewer:** What kind of influence did Simpson have on you during your later military career?

**SMA Bainbridge:** One very profound influence on me, Butch, and that was, you have to take care of soldiers and you can't do it by lip service because they will find you out, in a heart beat. It has to

come from the old heart. If it isn't genuine, they'll know it in a minute. You can't do it by telling them, "Yes, I care for you." It shows up. As one of my former bosses, General Rossen, who I served with out in USARPAC (United States Army, Pacific) said, "You spend your whole career taking care of soldiers, and suddenly you realize that those soldiers, all through that period of time, have really been taking care of you." That started with Simpson and ended up with General Rossen, in my view. I always tried to take care of soldiers and it always came from the heart. Don Peroddy, when he was Eighth Army Sergeant Major, he used to say, "I don't understand it. You have a unique way about you." He said, "If there's a soldier with a problem, walking across the damn compound in Korea," he said, "damn if you don't see him and go and talk to him every time." I'd see some guy and just knew if he had a problem of some sort. That all started with old Sergeant Simpson, because he cared. He didn't tell us that he cared. He didn't have to because it was obvious; he took care of us. Just like that business about the hot water. "Don't worry about getting hot water, I'll get you hot water for shaving. I know how it is to shave with cold water. We don't have to, so we're not going to." Now that was an extra. He didn't have to do that. He could have been hard-nosed. He was a sergeant and he could get hot water, and he could have said, "The hell with you guys.", but he didn't.

**Interviewer:** I think that some of the other things that you said, earlier, was about how he told what to do to get out of extra duties and guard duty.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Right, and he wasn't telling us things that were not above board and that would get us in trouble. He was telling us the finer points of soldering. That was because Simpson cared. He cared what happened to his soldiers, and we were his soldiers. There wasn't any question about that.

**Interviewer:** How often did you do PT? Do you recall?

**SMA Bainbridge:** As I said, PT was so damn easy for me so I guess I didn't pay that much attention to it. I don't recall how often we did PT. I do recall going through the obstacle course. I was the first one through. I was small enough to get through those old culvert pipes they used to use. So PT to me was a treat, as opposed to a problem. I don't recall if we actually had PT as we know PT, today, except maybe for the obstacle course, or something like that. I just don't recall PT classes. You know, the side straddle hop, and that sort of thing; I don't recall that at all.

**Interviewer:** How often did you perform dismounted drill?

**SMA Bainbridge:** In the seventeen weeks, I think we probably did dismounted drill, maybe a half dozen times, and that was in the latter part of our training, in what would now be the AIT phase. It was not necessarily just learning the commands, but also how to give the commands and how to give the command on the proper foot, to make sure that when you were in charge, that you were taking care of your soldiers. I think maybe we had dismounted drill once a week during the last four of five weeks of our training.

**Interviewer:** Did you have a final parade for graduation?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah, we did.

**Interviewer:** Do you think maybe that's why they started giving you dismounted drill near the end?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I think so. I think so, so that we would not mess it up too bad. I think we probably had in the neighborhood of a hundred people watching, you know, in civilian clothes. Somebody in that battalion had family that came to watch the parade. I suppose that there were some older folks in that battalion that maybe had a wife that came down to see him graduate from training, because in those days they took everybody, you know, up to a certain age; it didn't matter if you were married or not. I'm sure some parents were there, like Danny Russell's folks, I'm positive they must have there, because

Hereford isn't too far from where we were taking our training.

**Interviewer:** You said, earlier, that you fired the water-cooled .30 caliber and water-cooled .50 caliber machine guns, also the Thompson submachine gun, the Enfield rifle, the .03 Springfield rifle, and the 90mm antiaircraft gun, right?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Uh huh. Right.

**Interviewer:** When you fired the 90mm, that was your qualification weapon for your basic antiaircraft training, wasn't it?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yes. for antiaircraft. I started out to be a "loader." My first job on the 90mm was a loader. As it turned out, the damn round weighed almost as much as I did, so they made a "fuse cutter" out of me. But we had all phases of the training. The .50 calibers and the .30 calibers were defensive weapons to defend the perimeter. We set up four 90s. (The Sergeant Major drew a rectangle and placed an "X" at each of the four corners.) And out in the middle of that (He placed an "X" in the center of the rectangle.) rectangle, we had the fire control for the four 90s. We would fire the pattern. The pattern in the air was the same as it was on the ground, and the shrapnel overlapped, so you would fire the pattern as the aircraft were coming through. We went out on San Jacinto Beach, there at Galveston, to do that firing. We also fired the 50s and the 30s there. As I say, they were the defensive weapons. We fired the KD (known distance) range for both the Enfield and the .03. We fired the Thompson and the pistol just for familiarization. I enjoyed the 90mm training. About halfway through our training, several of us had two choices. One, was to apply for Officer Candidate School, and the other, was to apply for the Air Corps pilot training. I opted for the pilot training, and of course, later on I was selected for that.

**Interviewer:** How realistic was your training?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Butch, I guess, at the time, the training that we were taking, if we had ended up as antiaircraft folks, I guess it was

probably pretty good, for the time. Actually, the training we received was not good training, and that wasn't really the fault of the service, I don't think. I've made the comment, and you may have heard me say it several times, that, "The squad leader of today is better equipped to do his job in combat, than my Company Commander was during World War II." And that's not shooting at Norman at all. The opportunity to better trained is there. And I've quoted General DePuy, God rest his soul, on may occasions. As a matter of fact I got permission to quote him. He always used to say, "We went into World War II trained just a tad above the ridiculous." He was right. He said that he was scared to death during the D-Day business, because he knew they weren't up to par in their training, and that sort of thing. But it just was push, push, push, push. We trained guys for just seventeen weeks and sent them into battle. The Army had nothing before that.

**Interviewer:** Some of you National Guard didn't even get that much training.

**SMA Bainbridge:** No, because they we already a unit, so zap, away they went. They got on the boat and away they went. But during our training, there wasn't any rhyme nor reason, I don't think, to the training. I'm sure there are general officers of my age, or older, who have retired, who will tell you, "Yeah, we had some great training." But overall, they have to admit that we didn't have good training. We weren't a militaristic country. We had what? What did we have? Ten thousand people in service when the war started in Europe; something like that. We didn't have much of an army, and that army became the cadre for an army that was to number eight million; just in the Army. The figures are out there. I think there were twelve million under arms and about two-thirds of that or three-fourths of that was Army.

**Interviewer:** That was a carbon copy or what happened to us in World War I. The same thing happened in Korea.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah, exactly.

**Interviewer:** We had a big draw down after World War II and we had to build up so fast.

**SMA Bainbridge:** And they're trying to do it to us again. No, we just don't seem to learn. We've got enough strong voices now that it appears that we're going to be more successful than we've ever been in the past. I hope so. I hope so. because we can't afford to do that again, because we're not going to have the time, the next time, I don't think. With the weapons delivery system there are out there today, we may not be as fortunate as we've been in the past. Some of those big bangs may be here.

**Interviewer:** That's right.

**SMA Bainbridge:** But the services did as well as they could, I think, under the circumstances. I've always said, too, the training must have been fairly good, because if you could ask Mussolini or Hitler, they'd say, "It wasn't bad."

**Interviewer:** Tell me about some of the most humorous things that occurred while you were in basic training.

**SMA Bainbridge:** One I have already told you about; the chewing tobacco thing, you know.

**Interviewer:** Uh huh.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Lieutenant Ho was going to get old Bainbridge and drown him in his own spit. I think the Katcharubis thing, where he was ready to fire, not on the tow target, but on the plane itself. I don't recall his name, and I probably wouldn't put it in this interview if I could, but I can remember one of our compatriots in my platoon went home to Chicago on emergency leave. We were only about five weeks into our training, and we had no qualifications of any kind except, you could wear the uniform, legally. When he came back from Chicago, he had an expert badge pinned to his shirt and he had at least six different qualification bars on that. He didn't intent to wear it back into the platoon. That was, I think, one of the high points, because that fellow

was the brunt of many jokes about all the things that he was able to qualify for while he was on leave in Chicago. That went on until we all graduated. I think there was another thing. It may not be too funny now, but it was funny then. I told you about the hurricane that we went through. On one of the barracks, a screen was coming loose. One of the guys was going to be a hero and go out and take care of that screen. Everybody told him, "Let the screen go, because it's going to fly off anyway. Don't go out there." But no, he put on his raincoat and his boots and he goes out there. He got that screen off of that barracks and he took one step, and he was out in the middle of the quadrangle, right now. He was not hurt, but he was all skinned up. We talked about this guy and his flying attack on the quadrangle, because he was out there, Butch, (The Sergeant Major snapped his fingers.) that quick.

**Interviewer:** That screen acted like a sail.

**SMA Bainbridge:** That's right. That's what took him there. I bet he was a hundred and fifty feet before he decided he had better turn loose of that damn thing, you know. I think our First Sergeant was probably one of our funniest guys, because you only saw him, maybe once a week. We all thought that was kind of odd. But really, he didn't have anything to do, except the morning report and that sort of thing. When that was done, he was done, because other people were doing the instructing. He was an older first sergeant, but he sure had a lot of philosophies he laid on you whenever you got ready to go on pass.

**Interviewer:** A little earlier we were talking about chemical warfare training. You talked about having to wear your protective mask...

**SMA Bainbridge:** On a march. If we were doing a road march or maybe going from one training area to another, we would get a gas alert, so we had to put on our mask. We'd wear that for awhile. Maybe you'd do this two or three times. This was training on how to use the protective mask. The big part about it, of course, was testing for gas when you

got ready to unmask, and doing the proper fitting of the mask, etc. We did a lot of that.

**Interviewer:** It was very uncomfortable down in that part of the country.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Oh, man. It was very uncomfortable. You would get half a mask full of perspiration, just wearing that thing, maybe a half hour or so. The humidity was high, and of course we sweat like troopers because we weren't used to that. Most of us were from a different part of the country.

**Interviewer:** Did you go through the gas chamber?

**SMA Bainbridge:** We did. We went through the gas chamber with tear gas. You always had to go in and, of course, unmask. Then you put your mask on and cleared the mask. There wasn't anyway you could do that without getting something.

**Interviewer:** They always asked you some questions to make sure you got a good whiff of the tear gas.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah. Not only could you not think, you didn't want to say what you thought.

**Interviewer:** What do you think was the most difficult thing you had to do during basic training?

**SMA Bainbridge:** For me, training was easy, Butch. I don't recall anything in the training that was tough for me to do. I think the toughest thing for me to do, was to adhere to all of the rules. Not that I was a rule breaker, but I never had that much organization, you know. I think getting used to the schedule. You know, breakfast was at this time, lunch was at this time, dinner was at this time, and to bed was at this time. I think the adjustment to the regimentation was probably my toughest thing. As far as the training was concerned, there was one thing that probably bothered me as much as anything, and that was all the classroom time we had to spend on aircraft identification. In the latter part of our training, we spent eight hours a day on

aircraft identification, somehow or another; in a manual or watching a screen. They'd flip the picture on and you fill out the data on what it did and what it didn't do, etc. I'd rather be outside, or someplace else. But the basic training was not hard for me. I was not hard for me. The regimentation was a different problem. As I say, not that I didn't want to be part of the group, but it just seemed to me like it didn't have to be like that. But I understood later, that's exactly how it had to be or you became a group instead of a unit. The school was easy for me and the training was easy for me. I was eighteen years old and in as good a physical shape as I have ever been in my life, so training wasn't a problem for me.

**Interviewer:** Is there anything you can think of that was scary for you to do while you were in basic training?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I'm not sure that it was scary, but I think the responsibility we had the first time we were in an area that required live ammunition for guard duty. If I had to use the live ammunition, I wasn't sure, at the time, that I was ready to do that, because there was too much uncertainty about the guy who ought to be there, and then there were the stories that you heard about how different sergeants of the guard or officers of the guard might try to pull something on you. So there was a question in your mind, "Am I going to be able to do what's required of me, if that requirement actually comes about?" That was a pretty big piece of responsibility. You're eighteen years old and you have never fired a weapon in anger, except at a squirrel, and here you are, charged with the responsibility of making sure nobody gets around that 90mm antiaircraft gun.

**Interviewer:** Do you think that being stationed right there on the Gulf of Mexico, there was also that added pressure of the vulnerability of the base to possible enemy landings parties, or something like that?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I don't recall whether that was a part of it, but you're probably right, Butch. Some place in our training they probably

said, "Not only that, you're not far from the Gulf here. Who knows, we've got our defenses out there and we don't know what they're going to be coming with."

**Interviewer:** What significant impact did basic training have on your early military life and then, later on in your military career?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Two things. It provided me with the knowledge of the basic soldering business. You know, there's some things you do in basic training that you never forget. I don't care if it's because of the situation or where's it's at. You couldn't have given me all of Texas, after I finished my basic training. I love the place now, because I didn't know anything about it then, except Camp Wallace, Texas; I knew about that, and that was Texas to me. But it taught me some organization and give me the basic things. It also taught me, like I mentioned, you have to take care of soldiers, and you have to do it with feeling. And again, I got that from Sergeant Simpson and I don't think I ever lost that, Butch. I don't think I did. I think you can talk to a lot of soldiers I've dealt with and I think they will agree. And again, I got that from basic training. I got part of that from Mom and Dad too, but basic training just reinforced it. It put it in a different light, because it enlarged my family from my immediate family to my soldiers. Later on, when you got to be in charge, or something, you remembered those things. I remember, in basic, things that I didn't like to do and when I became the Training Center Sergeant Major, at Fort Benning, Georgia, I made damn sure we didn't do those things. Like, inspections just for inspections, and details just for details. Later I'll get into that. I remember things I had to do in basic training that I didn't think were necessary. They were at the time, but they weren't when I was in charge of basic training, so we didn't do them anymore.

**Interviewer:** Do think that a lot of times in the Army, we do things just to fill-up time?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** With no rhyme or reason.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Exactly. Exactly, and that's what was happening when I got to Fort Benning, Georgia. I was appalled at what they were doing with Zero Week trainees. I'm surprised that all of them didn't go AWOL.

**Interviewer:** Before we move on and discuss your other training, is there anything else you would like to comment on concerning your basic training?

**SMA Bainbridge:** No, I think we've pretty well got it, Butch. I thought I had good enough basic training, at that point, even though it wasn't. It wouldn't touch what we do today, primarily because of the instructors and the method of training. But for it's time, it stuck with me. It stuck with me.

(End of Tape OH 94.4-2, Side 1)

(Begin Tape OH 94.4-2, Side 2)

**Interviewer:** We finished up the discussion of your AIT and your basic training. According to my research, after basic training and your AAA (Anti-Aircraft Artillery) AIT, you went to Shephard Field, Texas, then later on you went to the University of North Dakota, for a year, and then to Santa Ana air base. Is that correct?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Right. I spent about five and one-half months at the University of North Dakota. I got a year college, but did that in five and one-half months.

**Interviewer:** Shephard Field. That was an Army Air Corps base. Is that correct?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Right.

**Interviewer:** Was were you sent to Shephard Field?

**SMA Bainbridge:** After I had been approved to go into the Air Corps Cadet Program, Shephard Field was the place where we got our orientation, etc. I'm going to have to go to the door, Butch.

(NOTE: There was a pause in the interview so Sergeant Major

Bainbridge could answer a call at the front door.)

**SMA Bainbridge:** Shephard Field was where we got our orientation, our tests, etc., to determine whether or not we were going to make it into the cadets. I remember in particular, I pulled, I think, one KP there at Shephard Field. The thing I remembered about Shephard Field was, Oklahoma sand blew in on day and blew back the next. We weren't too far from the Oklahoma line. I can remember going to the psychiatrist for an interview, which was part of the processing. That fellow had a little cubicle. He had somebody else in there, and he came out and said, "Sit down." He sat down and fiddled around with some paperwork. It must have twenty minutes, and he never said a word to me; I just sat there cooling my heels. Finally he looked up and he said, "Bainbridge, is your mother and father married?" I said, "Doc, damned if I know. They were when I left home." He said, "You'll do." That was the only question he asked me. So we were there for only a short period, then we went on to the University of North Dakota, at Grand Forks, North Dakota.

**Interviewer:** That was after you were given the option of going into the Army Air Corps. Right?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Right.

**Interviewer:** Why did you make the decision to go into the Army Air Corps?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I wanted to be a hot pilot, Butch. I wanted to fly a combat aircraft. I liked airplanes and I thought I would like to get into that; in the combat business. It seemed a little bit more glamorous, and one thing and another. Well, it turned out that I didn't get into it, but I was selected for the cadet program. I went to the University of South Dakota, for five and one-half months, and learned to fly an airplane; a Piper Cub. I had a year of college in that five and one-half months. It was the only place I think I was ever stationed that I didn't get to pull KP. They started at the back of the alphabet, with the Z's instead of the A's. They never did get to me. That was good KP

duty there, because it was colder than the devil and you could be inside all day. They had a good course there. I mentioned earlier, that I had taken physics before then. I was in a large room in the dormitory with twelve other people. Of the twelve people in that room, I was the only one that had high school physics, so I was sort of the instructor at night, for physics. What happened, the physics classes that they were giving there was almost identical as what I had in senior high school; it wasn't that more advanced. I wasn't having any problems, so I was doing the instructing. We flew every day, about the last six weeks. I think, about the last six weeks we flew. The last two hours of the day was flying instruction. We did not solo because of funds, but we were certified if we could solo or not, by the instructor. If you were certified that you could solo, you went on from there. If not, that was the end. I was certified as being able to solo, so I went on the Santa Ana Army air base, in California, for more advanced training. While at the University, we were studying one night and I was sitting on a lower bunk. At about eight o'clock, one of the officers walked in. They called "attention" and I came to attention real quick. The rail of that bunk above me caught me across the back of the head and shoulders, and I was gone. I woke up, about two hours later, in the dispensary, where I spent the night. They had a little article in the newspaper about me being very military, but I wasn't too careful with my body. There was sort of a unique deal here. During President Carter's campaign, his security detail included a special agent by the name of Rufus W. Youngblood, who had been stationed in the Atlanta office of the FBI. He had been my Squadron Commander at the University of North Dakota. When I got to be Sergeant Major of the Army, I called him in Atlanta and had a good talk with him. I found out he was on the President to Be security detail. There was sort of an unusual twist there.

**Interviewer:** When you first decided to go into the Army Air Corps and they sent you to Shephard Field, that's where you saw the

psychiatrist and they evaluated you to find out if you were acceptable to go into the Air Corps.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Right.

**Interviewer:** About how long were you there?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Two weeks, I think.

**Interviewer:** Where was Shephard Field located?

**SMA Bainbridge:** We just spent the night in that town. It was right up on the border of Oklahoma and Texas; just shy of the Oklahoma border.

**Interviewer:** That was up near Amarillo, wasn't it?

**SMA Bainbridge:** It may be Amarillo, but Amarillo doesn't sound right. (The location was near Wichita Falls, Texas.) Yea, that was what it was for; to determine whether or not we were physiologically able to get into the Air Corps and be a pilot.

**Interviewer:** What was the purpose of sending you up to the University of North Dakota?

**SMA Bainbridge:** To get you some additional education and also to get the time in the Cub to find out if you were airworthy, I guess, and that sort of thing; that was part of the program. If I would have had a year of college, I would have went directly and probably I would have gotten checked out on an airplane, and then went to Santa Ana, but that was the program in those days.

**Interviewer:** When did you go to the Santa Ana air base?

**SMA Bainbridge:** After we finished at the University. I guess it must have been February of '44, when we went to Santa Ana. It took us about six days on a troop train. When we got to Santa Ana we started our orientation, and our shake-down, and took more aptitude tests, etc. About that time the Army decided that they had more pilot training candidates than they needed. There were thirty-six thousand throughout the system; that's the number of personnel that they gave us. I always said there were thirty-five thousand, nine hundred and ninety-nine, and me, were sent back from that; anybody that had any previous ground force

training. Some of them had gone directly into the Army Air Corps, out of school or out of college, and they stayed on for training. Of course I came out of the AAA training, so I, along with the others who had ground force training, went on. From that there was sort of a little oddity. We went from there to Lowery Field, Colorado, and we were going to go to gunnery school. I spent six weeks at Lowery Field, Colorado. It was the most miserable time I ever spent in my service career, because they had consolidated messes and they had enough troops, waiting to go to school, for two shifts of KP, so you were on eight, off eight, on eight, and off eight. For six weeks I did that.

**Interviewer:** You did this while you were waiting to go into training. Right?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Six weeks while I waiting to go into training. I though that the whole service, at that time, really stunk. I didn't come in there, surely, to do KP. I didn't mind doing my share of KP. I've told everybody, "Any KP you did, you had coming, because I did enough for at least ten or fifteen other soldiers. And if you didn't do any KP, I did your's for you." I transferred out of there because they figured they didn't need that many gunnery students. I stopped off at Jefferson Barracks, Missouri; St. Louis. I was there something like two weeks. It was really a processing center to get us other places. Then that's went I to Camp Atterbury, Indiana.

**Interviewer:** How long were you at Santa Ana?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I think maybe less than a month.

**Interviewer:** What did you do most of the time you were there?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Just processing. Taking Aptitude tests, and that sort of thing, and orientation on what sort of training you were going to take. They were trying to determine what kind of airplane you would be most adapted to; whether heavy stuff, navigator, pilots, or whatever. According to my size I was headed for combat aircraft: P-51, and that sort of thing. It never happened. I kind of glad it didn't.

**Interviewer:** At the time, were you disappointed?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Oh, I was highly disappointed. The whole thing, after Shepherd Field and the University of North Dakota where everything was really looking up, now the whole world was crashing down around my ears. Then when I get to Lowery Field, the six weeks of KP, at least sixteen hours a day, out of every twenty-four, I was on KP. You might be eating your lunch at midnight, or your breakfast might be six o'clock in the evening.

**Interviewer:** The training at Lowery, was that training supposed to be for aerial gunnery?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Aerial gunnery. Tail gunners and that sort of thing.

**Interviewer:** You were lucky you didn't get that. Right?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah. I'm very lucky. Very lucky.

**Interviewer:** With the high combat losses in bombers in Europe.

**SMA Bainbridge:** That was really getting to its peak in those days. I'm glad it turned out the way it did. It turned out very well for me. As I said, it was just sort of a processing thing for me at Jefferson Barracks. That was a great place. I remember, we were fairly well restricted there. We couldn't go any place; we had to stay right there. Of course, orders were coming down; requirements and levies from all over the place. I'll tell you, I had just about had it with the Army at that time. Thank goodness, along came the 106th Infantry Division.

(NOTE: There was an interruption in the interview.)

**Interviewer:** We just took a short break here and reviewed the video tape that we were shooting. We decided that we would reposition the seat so we wouldn't have so much light behind Sergeant Major Bainbridge. So we'll resume the interview now. Where did you say you went to, after you left Lowery Field?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I went to Jefferson Barracks, Missouri; St. Louis, Missouri. Again, for just some processing and to determine what was

going to happen to Bill Bainbridge, and the other folks that went there with me. We didn't do anything there, except wait for further orders. I was there two weeks, at the most. I remember my mother came down and visited me one weekend, so we weren't there very long before we ended up over in Camp Atterbury, Indiana.

**Interviewer:** Before we proceed on to talking about your military assignments, I would just like to ask you a few additional questions about your additional military training. When I say "military training," I guess I should say "training in the Army." During the period of time you were in the Army, your assignments were predominately in the combat arms. Is that correct?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Predominately. Right.

**Interviewer:** What branches did you serve in?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Well, I started out with the artillery. After the schooling business, in the Air Corps, I went to the infantry, at Camp Atterbury, Indiana. I trained there with the infantry; Company A, 423rd Infantry, 106th Infantry Division. From Camp Atterbury, Indiana, I went overseas.

**Interviewer:** So after you came back, you got out. When you reentered the Army were you in the infantry, at that time?

**SMA Bainbridge:** No, I was not.

**Interviewer:** You wasn't?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I was not. I had an infantry MOS, but I went to Camp Atterbury, Indiana, of all places, to a food service school. The only thing I knew about cooking was how to eat it. But I did end up in the food service school as an administrative NCO. I started out there as the platoon sergeant, with the additional duties as the I and E (Information and Education) NCO, and that sort of thing. After I had been there a short period, I became the First Sergeant of the Detachment. It was a split detachment; half Army and half Air Force. The reason it was half Air Force was because the Air Force didn't have a

food service school, so the Army's Quartermaster Corps was teaching the Air Force cooks. We had cooks, bakers, and meat cutters at the school.

**Interviewer:** But throughout the majority of your Army career you were in the infantry.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah. One way or the other, either operations sergeant or... I went there, Camp Atterbury, and then to Fort Sheridan and Fort Riley, in the school business. But I was always on the administrative end of it, as a first sergeant or sergeant major. We'll get into that a little bit later. Then, of course to Europe where I was an operations sergeant, on the other side of the infantry. Then back to Fort Riley as an operations sergeant and then a sergeant major. That's where I ended up my career before I went to the food service school.

**Interviewer:** So mostly you were in the 11 Series.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Right.

**Interviewer:** Did you attend an NCO academy or NCO school?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I went to one NCO school while I was stationed at Fort Riley, Kansas. It was an eight week advanced Army administration school, you know, where you learned about the business of morning reports and regulations: SRs (Standard Reports), ARs (Army Regulations), and all that business. I had that at Fort Ben Harrison, Indiana; eight weeks.

**Interviewer:** That was an administrative school.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Right.

**Interviewer:** What about a leadership oriented school?

**SMA Bainbridge:** None. I was always the guy that couldn't go because the unit would fall apart, which isn't true, so I didn't go to any school. It took me forever to get to go to that admin school, and I was a sergeant major of a unit at the time. I talked my commandant into letting me go. He said, "I'll get you there, if I can." I guess it took us a year to get into that.

**Interviewer:** That's one on those deals where, when they come down

with an allocation, they send the guy they could afford to do without.

**SMA Bainbridge:** That's right. That's right. Remember when we used to send the guy to the NCO academy two or three times.

**Interviewer:** He went there dumb and came back dumb.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah, but also he had been there and he passed it one time, so he could do it again.

**Interviewer:** You didn't attend any special schools such as rigger school, glider, or pathfinder, or anything like that, did you?

**SMA Bainbridge:** No. I never was fortunate enough to.

**Interviewer:** Shortly after you were assigned to the Air Corps, and you had gotten much of your training, when you got to Santa Ana, they decided that they had too many pilots. In late '43, early '44, you received assignment orders to join the 423rd Infantry Regiment, where you served as a squad leader. Tell me about that reassignment.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Well see, actually, I got there in the Spring of '44, from Jefferson Barracks, Missouri. There were a lot of other folks just like me. There were some cadets that were there and some from other Army training programs. They were students to fill that division that came out of places like I came out of. Jim Poole, Jim Harper, Walter Ware, and I, all ended up in the 1st Platoon in Company A, 423rd Infantry. We were all from the same background coming into the Army. We were new soldiers and hadn't really been established in any unit until we got there. The division had just returned from the Louisiana maneuvers and they had been levied for a lot of folks, so we were the fill ins to bring that division back up to strength.

**Interviewer:** That was 106th Infantry Division, wasn't it?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yes, the 106th Infantry Division. It was the last division formulated during World War II; the highest number and also the largest, numerically, divisions. We started unit training with that unit, at Camp Atterbury, Indiana. We got some new lieutenants, and one that ended up being my platoon leader in combat; a guy by the name of

Jackson Behling, who is now a retired from, I think, from Standard Oil out in Tulsa, Oklahoma. I visited Jack and Stanley, his first wife who has since passed away, in Tulsa, Oklahoma when we were stationed at Fort Riley in the '50s. But back to Camp Atterbury. That was where we got our training; endurance training with twenty-five mile marches under full field. We learned to be squad leaders and assistant squad leaders. As a matter of fact, the other three gentlemen that I mentioned, after we began our training, the Platoon Leader said that Walt Ware and Jim Harper would be the Assistant Squad Leaders of the 2nd and 3rd Squads, and Jim Poole and I became the Squad Leader and Assistant Squad Leader of the 1st Squad, and he said, "I'm going to alternate between the two of you, a week at a time, until we find out who is going to be the Squad Leader and who is going to be the Assistant Squad Leader." Jim was the Squad Leader one week and I was the Assistant. I was the Squad Leader the next week and Jim became my Assistant. We spent a lot of time together, from then on during our tour with the 106th Division. As a matter of fact, Jim was recalled to active duty during the Korean War the same as I was, under little different circumstances. Jim was a graduate of Clemson University by that time and was an engineer. He had a first lieutenant commission. He married a nurse our of Fort Belvoir, Virginia and he now lives up in Tennessee. I talked to Jim on the phone here the other day, on the anniversary of our capture. So that's the configuration we were in when we went to Europe in October '44.

**Interviewer:** When you joined the 106th, the group that join the division with you was to make it a full division.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Right. We had a lot or replacements. Not only in the 423rd, but throughout the division. They were filled very heavily with individual levies when the came out of the maneuvers. I started out, Butch, my first job was as an RTO (radio telephone operator) for the Company Commander. That lasted for about a week and then they put

me in a squad. About three weeks later they decided that they had some potential leadership there, so that's when Jim and I started swapping back and forth.

**Interviewer:** What percentage of your company were, I guess you could call them "old timers" by that time, who were original members of the division before the fillers were assigned?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I'd say probably thirty or forty percent in our company. Of course, I had a lot of people in my company. We had a first sergeant by the name of Chandler. I remember the first morning I was there I didn't hear the reveille, and evidently none of the other people did, because my bunk came up off the floor, about four feet, and then was turned loose. It was old First Sergeant Chandler making sure Bainbridge was awake. He was walking down through those barracks, checking who was sleeping late. I never did that again. Like I said, I don't think I heard reveille, because I wasn't going to be a troublemaker. It didn't take long because in about six weeks I felt like I was back in the Army again, after doing all that KP, and nothing in St. Louis, at Jefferson Barracks. We were getting ready. We had field training exercises. I can remember we fired an infantry weapons demonstration with all the infantry company weapons, for Under Secretary of War Patterson, at Camp Atterbury. That was a highlight, I think, for a lot of folks. It was part of the demonstration as to whether or not we were ready to go to combat, I think. I can remember the old 37mm anti-tank gun. It might shoot through a Coca-Cola can, but that was one of our big weapons at that time. We were just getting the bazooka; the new 3.5 bazooka.

**Interviewer:** The 3.5?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah. That was a pretty formidable weapon. We had some 57mm's. I can still see it going off. It would jump about four feet off the ground when it went off. We had some good training there at Atterbury. We also had some German prisoners of war there, who

worked in the laundry. I can remember, after one particular hard week of training, they were going to have a work stoppage; they weren't going to do any laundry. We ended up as the company that, in case they rioted, we were going to be the ones that took over the laundry. Thank goodness they didn't, because they issued us live ammunition and we were in depilated positions around the laundry. We were ready to take it over, but the German POWs decided against it and that it was better that they go ahead and do the laundry. I don't know what would have happened if that transpired. You know, that was one of the things. The training that we had then, that we talked about earlier, eluded to the fact it was nothing like it is now. Because of the fact that the division had been reduced dramatically, and because of the levies, we had to learn together strictly from lesson plans. There wasn't that backup from the older NCOs that had been there. We had a couple of NCOs. We had a mess sergeant I remember, by the name of Minkowicz. I don't remember if he was a staff sergeant; I don't remember that. But he turned out some of the lousiest chow. I remember one time we had a pea omelette. I don't know whether you ever eaten a pea omelette or not, but it didn't sound good and it didn't look good. It probably wouldn't have tasted as bad as it looked, but after about a half a dozen people just dumped it out on the counter as they went by, they decided they'd take that off of the line and not serve it. Everybody always accused that old mess sergeant of selling the good stuff. I don't think he did because he didn't have the opportunity. You know how those rumors go in a unit. I think that's when maybe my first leadership potential began to show, when I was a PFC and so were the rest of the guys. In those days the Company did the promotions and they promoted us after they had decided who was going to be what. They promoted those four of us; the three that I mentioned: Poole, Ware, and Harper, and myself. We all went from PFC to buck sergeant and took over the positions. I stayed as a buck sergeant when we got into combat, even though I was a squad leader and

was supposed to be a staff sergeant. I was a staff sergeant but the orders never did catch up with me. When we got back from overseas and when I got to Camp Maxie, Texas, my promotion order caught up with me.

**Interviewer:** You skipped corporal then, right?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah. I never was corporal, Butch. I never was corporal.

**Interviewer:** Tell me a little bit about your training program while you were at Atterbury. You knew you were going overseas. Is that right?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Tell about your training.

**SMA Bainbridge:** It was all focused toward that, so what we were really doing was training those replacements; that thirty percent that was there was training the replacements. We were forming the units and forming the squads, and getting the first scout training. It wasn't fire teams in those times; it was just a straight squad. But you had the BAR (Browning automatic rifle) team and they were getting that team established. We ran some field problems on taking objectives and that sort of thing. I can remember one endurance march we made where each company was sort of in competition, and each platoon within the company. We decided that nobody in the first platoon was going to fall out, so a lot of us ended up carrying different things. I ended up carrying two rifles and two packs, for maybe the last three or four miles, so that guys that might have fallen out wouldn't. But you know, I was better off than they were, because I was really balanced. It worked out well. We trained there, Butch, for the EIB; Expert Infantry Badge. We took the test for the EIB and I don't remember how many of us got it, but a number of us in the Company got it. I got five dollars a month for that EIB. That was a big pay raise, from fifty dollars a month. Five dollars tacked on to that made quite a difference. Like I said, the twenty-five mile marches that we took were endurance marches to find out how well

the Company could stay together, under stress. Maybe after that we had an exercise of some sort, or an objective to take. But we had some small unit training, like the BAR team. I had a guy by the name of Robert L. Woods. He was a Cherokee Indian out of Oklahoma. That guy could move faster with a BAR than I could with a pistol. We also got to know the strengths and weaknesses of everybody within the squad and the platoon. We had some good shakedown training.

**Interviewer:** Did you have pretty good morale in the Company?

**SMA Bainbridge:** We had excellent morale, I think. Yeah. Excellent morale. I suppose a half a dozen people out of our Company had to leave for one reason or another; for physical or mental reasons. It was pretty tough even to go on sick call in those days. I had a tooth pulled. I took a leave. The tooth was a dead tooth that they had taken the nerve out of when I was in high school. They took the filling out of it and sent me home on leave, and when I came back they pulled it. They had to dig the tooth out. I got what they call a "dry socket." You know what that is; it's when the bone is exposed. I couldn't talk, because every time the air would hit that damn thing, it would hurt so bad. So I went to the orderly room and said I needed to go on sick call. The First Sergeant said, "What do you mean you need to go on sick call. You're a squad leader." I said, "I know, but I can hardly talk." I tried to explain to him without opening my mouth too much. Of course, the First Sergeant, being master at everything, he wanted to see what my problem was. I opened my mouth and he said, "Write this guy a ticket to go to sick call." He said, "That even hurts me." That old first sergeant was a tough old bird. We had a platoon sergeant by the name of Lindsey; I can't think of his first name. When we got to Europe, we came up with a nickname for him. It was "old ground hog"; G.H. He wondered what those initials were and we told him they were for "ground hog" because we could never get him out of his hole. But Jack Behling turned out to be one heck of a platoon leader. He was just a young

fellow. And I found out, just since we have been down here, when I was talking to him on the phone, that as a POW, he and another buddy of his escaped from the Germans along towards the end of the war. I didn't know that until then.

**Interviewer:** How long from the time you were assigned to the 423rd did the unit was deployed to Europe?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Let's see, we got there in February. About seven months. We went in late September or early October of '44. We went from Camp Atterbury, Indiana, by troop train, to Camp Miles Standish, in Brockton, Massachusetts. It was just outside of Boston. Of course, Brockton, you remember, was Rocky Marciano's hometown. We didn't know of Rocky Marciano, in those days. In Camp Miles Standish, they were doing some reorganization in the Company; we had lost a couple of people. The Company Commander was going to take two of my men and put them in another squad, and give me two men from that squad. They were going to make a swap of four people. That didn't sound reasonable to me, so I went to Lieutenant Behling and I said, "We need to talk to the Captain." I said, "That's not fair, because it doesn't make any sense to me to take those two good people that we knew the capabilities of, and put them in another squad, and then give me somebody else." He said, "Well, let's go and talk to the Company Commander." So we did. We argued the point for a while. What we didn't know at the time was, the two that we were getting were troublemakers, who were in the other squad. In their platoon, there was a problem. I said, "Why don't you take care of that problem over there?" I said, "You're going to do two things. You're going to give me that problem and you're going to send two good men over there, and maybe you're going to double your problems. I may or may not be able to straighten these guys out, but certainly, the two guys we're sending over there are going to be unhappy." The Company Commander said, "Look, you've got one of the best squads in the whole Company." I said, "That's exactly my point." I interrupted him.

I said, "That's exactly my point. Why do you want to change that?" He said, "I'll give you my decision in the morning." I didn't lose my two men, because I think he got to thinking about what the deal was and it just didn't make sense. They got their own problems squared away, and I'm sure the two troublemakers were happy to stay where they were. Not that we didn't have a problem or two in our squad, from time-to-time, but it was taken care of.

**Interviewer:** You took care of it. You had that teamwork built up.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Exactly.

**Interviewer:** What do you feel were the strong points in your unit, prior to your deployment to Europe? Do think you were well trained?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I don't think we were as well trained as we could have been, Butch, but I think the strong point is that everybody knew the weak points and the capabilities of each man in the squad and in the platoon, as a whole. We knew maybe that this guy over here was a little bit suspect in that squad, but there was enough strength to take care of it. Since it was a little suspect, we tried to handle it then, because we were at the point then that we weren't going to get any changes we were going to go with what we had.

**Interviewer:** What do you feel were the weak points?

**SMA Bainbridge:** The weakness was that we didn't have the training we should of had, or that we might could of had, but under the circumstances, we at least knew what the strengths and weaknesses were, and I think that was a strong point; knowing those capabilities.

(End of Tape OH 94.4-2, Side 2)

(Begin Tape OH 94.4-3, Side 1)

**Interviewer:** How many combat tours of duty did you have, counting Vietnam and also World War II?

**SMA Bainbridge:** That's it Butch. World War II was the first one, and then Vietnam was the second one. Although I was called back in during the Korean Conflict, I didn't go to Korea.

**Interviewer:** So you had one in Vietnam, correct?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Right.

**Interviewer:** Okay. During which years did you serve your first combat tour, and where?

**SMA Bainbridge:** The first combat tour was 1944 and '45, in the European Theater of Operations, during World War II.

**Interviewer:** When where you in Vietnam?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I was in Vietnam from August of '65 to August of '66; a year. We left Riley in August and came back in August.

**Interviewer:** When did the 423rd Infantry Regiment deploy to Europe?

**SMA Bainbridge:** It deployed to Europe in October of 1944. First we went first to a staging area in England, by Cheltenham, England. We were on an estate, as I recall it, in little quonset-type huts. One squad per hut; twelve men per hut. We spent about, I guess, three weeks there. Long enough for a good number of the troops to get to London, etc. I never did go myself. We were there to get outfitted and get ready to go across the Channel to France. We did a lot of classroom stuff there, waiting around. You know, bone up on training. I mentioned earlier the aircraft identification, and that sort of thing, uniform identification, gas protective mask training, and just kind of filling in, getting ready to go into combat.

**Interviewer:** What was your port of debarkation?

**SMA Bainbridge:** When we left the States?

**Interviewer:** Yes.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Well we were supposed to go out of Boston, and that's why we went to Camp Miles Standish. But, at the last minute, they decided the ship we were supposed to go on couldn't get into Boston, because of the size. Boston wouldn't take her. So they took us, by train, down to New York. We left out of New York on the largest ship afloat; the Queen Elizabeth.

**Interviewer:** You went on the Queen Elizabeth?

**SMA Bainbridge:** We went on the Queen "E."

**Interviewer:** It wasn't a luxury liner, though, was it?

**SMA Bainbridge:** No, it sure wasn't. Remember, she had been sneaked out of Southampton. She and the Queen Mary, both. They were just building them. They quit outfitting them and reconfigured them for troop ships. That's what we went on, was the Queen Elizabeth. I didn't know one boat from another, in those days. We didn't know we was getting on the Queen Elizabeth. It was early in the morning, because we went down, I think, about three o'clock in the morning, as I recall. By about noon, we were clearing the harbor. It took damn near all night to load us. They had a lot of people on that ship. I forget what it held, but it was a lots of people. It had bunks in all the, what would become later, staterooms; four and five deep. There was just enough room to turn over on your side. We spent one night on deck and one night below deck. But I remember a story that the Captain of the ship told, when we actually cleared the harbor. He said, "Well now that you can't get any messages off the ship or anything." He said, "We'll tell you that you're on the largest ship afloat." He told us that it'll take us about five days, and that we will change course every five-to-eight minutes, because in those days, the word was that it took a ten to twelve minutes for a submarine to lock on and fire a torpedo, so we changed course. So we zigzagged all the way over there. We went alone, unescorted.

**Interviewer:** Is that right?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah, and that's why. Because she was fast, and changed course, so we went alone. The Queen Elizabeth, the figures are close to right here, was X number of feet longer than the Queen Mary, but the Queen Mary was X number of knots faster than the Queen Elizabeth. It wasn't much; a hundred feet and four or five knots, or something like that, but not much. The Captain of the Queen Elizabeth,

said, "The story goes that Roosevelt and Churchill died and they went to Heaven, and the gates of St Peter were closed. So they knocked, and they knocked, and they knocked, for an hour or so, and nobody answered. Finally, Roosevelt turned to Churchill and said, 'I'll tell you what Winnie, you kick them down and I'll pay for them'." Those were the days of lend-lease, you know. "You kick them down and I'll pay for them." I'll always remember that story. But, anyway, we went on the Queen Elizabeth, and landed in Scotland, and they took us by train, down to England.

**Interviewer:** Was your trip over to Europe pretty uneventful?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah, yeah. We had a few seasick folks, but nothing else; no problems with any submarines or anything like that. I made my first big haul, as a gambler, going over. Jim Poole, my assistant squad leader, and I got into a blackjack game; it was one of those nickel, dime limits. Neither one of us were gamblers, but we were playing blackjack. We made quite a bit of money. I think we had about a hundred-and-fifty, two hundred bucks apiece. So we got the deal, and Jim said, "I'll tell you what, let's just go in a partnership." He said, "You deal and I'll bank." I guess we played cards for three or four hours, and lost the deal about three times, and bought it back every time we lost it. When we finished up, we had more money than we knew what to do with, and that was about three-hundred dollars apiece. So we went down below decks, got in a crap game, lost sixty bucks at one pass and I quit gambling, Butch. We got fed twice a day on that ship. But you can imagine the number of people we had and the galleys weren't set up to feed lots of people, so they only fed us twice a day. They fed us British chow. It was terrible; mutton, grease. It was terrible, terrible chow. I can't handle that mutton. Lamb's alright, if it's fixed right, but I can't handle the mutton.

**Interviewer:** How do you assess the leadership ability of your noncommissioned officers, there in the 423rd? Pretty good NCO's as far

as leadership?

**SMA Bainbridge:** We had some good NCO's, and we had some that weren't so good. But the three guys I just mentioned were excellent. The platoon sergeant, Lindsey, bless his heart, wasn't that good. But, he made out all right. We sort of took care of him. But under the circumstances, Butch, I think we probably had some pretty decent noncommissioned officers. I say under the circumstances. You have to sort of remember the difference in 1944, and just the training methods, and the people who were trained to train. It wasn't like it is today. So in those days, I think it was pretty good. But today, they wouldn't have a prayer in being able to lead, the way they were taught.

**Interviewer:** When did the 423rd make its landing in Europe? And what was your first combat engagement?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Well, we must have went in about the first of November. Then we walked and trucked up as far as the Siegfried Line. That's where we relieved the 28th Infantry and the 2nd Infantry; up in that area.

**Interviewer:** Where did you make your landing at?

**SMA Bainbridge:** La Harve.

**Interviewer:** La Harve, France?

**SMA Bainbridge:** At La Harve. Then we did a lot of walking and we did a lot of Red Ball Express, here and there, but a lot of walking, until we got to the Siegfried Line, up in the snow mountains; the Sneeifle. We were stretched out across the line. I say we were stretched out. The company frontage was about two hundred and fifty meters, in those days. I mean, that's what the planned. We had fifteen-hundred meters for my squad--for twelve people--which included the assistant squad leader and myself. You could damn near drive a tank between outposts. We relieved in what was supposed to be a quiet section of the line there. So we had combat patrolling, intelligence gathering patrols, you know, where you tried not to make contact. If

you did, you tried to sneak away. We had reconnaissance patrols and we also had combat patrols. We did some probing at night. But primarily, we were in kind of a stationary area, there in the Siegfried Line. We were there until, oh, I guess it must have been about the 13th of December, when the Germans started their movement forward for their last big push.

**Interviewer:** There in the Siegfried Line, was that in the North of France, or was that in the Belgium area?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Belgium. Yeah, Belgium. We were part of the Malmedy-Saint Vith line. Saint Vith, Belgium, was our Division Headquarters; 106th Division Headquarters. I want to say Schoenberg, but that's not right, Butch. I'll tell you, I didn't know too much about the towns, and one thing or another in that area, because, as I say, we were in the Siegfried Line, which was really a defensive position. We told our higher headquarters, for several days that, number one, there were patrols out and about, probing in our area as we were probing theirs. We didn't have any artillery support to speak of. I don't know whether it was the lack of ammunition, or what. We had one bunker out there, and everyday, they would expend their ammunition on it, and then they'd say that was all the ammunition they had. There was one German in that bunker. They'd say, "No, no. There's a lot of people in there." So we took the patrol out and got that German, and we knew that there wasn't anybody else in there. Then, it must have been about the fifteenth, a group of American prisoners, in one of our ambulance, with a German driver, he got lost, and we recaptured our own prisoners. It came through "Woody," Robert Woods', BAR (Browning Automatic Rifle) position. He was on a road, and we got two Germans and, I think, six or eight people in the back of that vehicle, that had been American prisoners. So we sent those back to the rear, along with the two Germans. Whether or not they got far enough back to not get caught, five days later, I don't know, or recall. But we were in that

area and then, on the morning of the fifteenth, all hell broke loose, about three o'clock in the morning.

**Interviewer:** That started the Battle of the Bulge, right?

**SMA Bainbridge:** That started the Battle of the Bulge.

**Interviewer:** It must have been very difficult trying to hold position when your company frontage is so wide and so spread out.

**SMA Bainbridge:** We couldn't hold it. We couldn't hold it. And everything the Germans had left was coming through. See, their mission was to get to Antwerp, to get back to the Sea. They had given themselves forty-eight hours to do that. Well, it took them five days to get through us. So we were just sort of a delaying action, Butch. Well, I've read several book and reports on it, I know now that we were up there, more or less like bait. They knew damn well we couldn't hold all that. Of course, they weren't really sure the Germans were going to push like they did. But I'll tell you, after we were captured, we marched by an awful lot of heavy German equipment. It seemed like for days, actually it was only about two days. I mean it was lined up all over the place. But anyway, they didn't get any of it back, to speak of. Once they got across the Ruhr River, that ran through there, they'd had it, because by that time, Patton's forces had begun to come up from the South. But anyway, we held off that force for almost five days.

**Interviewer:** You think maybe the Germans thought you had more troops there than you did?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Well I think they must have, because we had some open areas and we were holding it off with cooks. We had one cook, I remember, he had been a machine gunner before; he was an old soldier. He was one of those up and down, up and down soldiers; he had been a sergeant about five times. He was a good cook. He had been a machine gunner, and he said he would never fire a machine gun again. Well he was firing a machine gun. We was kidding him, you know. We said, "How come?" He said, "Well, his is necessary, you know. You got to do

what's got to be done." But then's when we really found out the caliber of our border line folks. We had one staff sergeant named Bochamp. He never left his bunker; he could not. He was a squad leader, but you couldn't get him out of his bunker. Lindsey finally got out the bunker, but Bochamp died in his. But the open areas that we were able to defend, the Germans would try to get across and they weren't able to do that. But as it turned out, there just wasn't any way, with what we had, that we were going to get out of there, because what we didn't know at the time was, that the Germans had hit our reserve regiment first, you know, so we didn't have anything to come help us. It was either get out of there with what you got, or not get out. When we surrendered, it was the 19th of December, about fifteen hundred in the afternoon. It was about this sunshiny, but not this warm. First time we had any good weather like that through the whole Bulge. Of course, we had no artillery support and no air support. They couldn't get it in, because the ceiling was right down on the ground. Had they been able, the Germans didn't have anything to put back at our Air Force, but our Air Force couldn't see what the hell we were doing. So they couldn't help us. A few buzz bombs were going the other way. But there wasn't any way, we was going to get out of there. But a major, who was foreign to us, and I don't even know the guy's name, but he surrendered our company. He didn't belong to us. He got to us from another unit. But he surrendered our company, and as it turned out, there wasn't anything else he could do; we had had it. But for five days, we disrupted the German timetables to the point where they never did get close to Antwerp. I mean it wasn't all 101st, I'll tell you. Some of us old 106th guys caused some of that delay in action in there. Of course, McAuliffe and "Nuts," got all of the glory. When I was Sergeant Major of the Army, I gave a talk to a group in the Personnel Officers Course, at Fort Ben Harrison, Indiana. One young captain said, "You know, don't you feel kind of bad about your time there in World War II, being

captured?", and one thing or another. I said, "Well, I feel bad about being captured, but I certainly don't feel bad about what we did in that area at that time." I said, "Because we traded our lives and space for time, because we held up long enough that the other forces could come in there. The weather cleared, and a few other things, and the Germans had lost the last wad they had to shoot, because of that action." I don't think I have ever been in a more miserable time in my life. It was cold, and wet, and snow, and it'd freeze, and then it'd thaw out. And what really made you feel bad, after we were captured, we marched by a lot of our folks, that had been slaughtered, unnecessarily. Lines of ambulances that had been loaded with wounded, that had been shelled; they were clearly marked. We didn't have too good a feeling about the Germans at that point. But, I have learned to outlive that sort of thing. When you get to looking back at it, they were doing what they had to do, and they were doing a soldierly thing, although some of it in the field wasn't maybe like you would have done it. We had some good treatment. The first day we were captured, I lost a wristwatch. You'd be marching along and they'd just reach out and grab your arm. They'd always grab your left arm, and if there was a watch on it, you lost it. Even though you might resist, you was going to lose it. I remember Jim Poole had gotten a new watch, a self-winder, just before we went to Germany. When I lost my watch, I just sort of started dropping back. Jim was five or six people behind me, and I got back to where Jim was and I said, "Jim, get your watch in your pocket, someplace, because," I said, "they're going to get it. They just got mine." And Jim managed to just slip his watch off and put it in his pocket, and he managed to keep that watch. Some two months later, in prison camp, we traded it for two-and-half packages of Lucky Strike cigarettes. But we were surrendered about three o'clock in the afternoon, and right up until that time, we had been fighting like the blazes, but we just didn't have enough fire power.

**Interviewer:** Where were your positions? In the trees; in the forest?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah, we were. We were. When we got captured, we had moved out of the Siegfried Line and we were in sort of an open area. I can remember there was a hill, and we were in a village there. There was a road that came up like this, and around. (On the coffee table in front of him, the Sergeant Major moved his finger upward, approximately eight or nine inches, and then made an arc to his right.) There was a log laying here. (He pointed to the table, where he had traced the imaginary bend in the road.) We were lined up on the bank--maybe half-a-dozen or ten of us--maybe thirty feet apart. (To show the location of the bank, he moved his finger along the coffee table, at the top of the imaginary tracing, parallel to where he was sitting.) We were trying to get as far apart as we could, and still keep cover. A machine gunner came around that bend in that corner, (He pointed to the bend of the road, at the bottom of the imaginary tracing on the coffee table.), and he hit every other man. My first scout was a fellow by the name of "Cockran," from Brockton, Massachusetts. We called him "Pop." He was thirty-three years old. Because he was so old, we called him "Pop." When we were in Camp Miles Standish, he went home on pass because he lived so close by there. I told the Platoon Leader, "You got to let him go home and spend the weekend with him wife." They had been married six or seven years, I guess. He said, when they got married they had bought a fifth of Golden Wedding Bourbon and they were going to keep that until their fiftieth anniversary. Well, when he got back, he said, "By golly, we drank that Golden Wedding." "Because," he said, "I don't think I'm going to get back." I said, "Aw, come on now." You couldn't talk him out of that. You could not talk him out of that. I don't know whether he had a premonition, or what. But he was one of those that was on the bank with us, and that machine gunner hit him seven times, right down across the body. (The Sergeant Major pointed to

the top right side of his head, and moved his hand, diagonally, downward toward the left side of his waist.) He never knew what hit him. He never knew what hit him. But, as I say, the machine gunner hit every other man. My second scout's name was "Royal Merservy." He was a Mormon out of Salt Lake City. We had been in a fire fight the night before. When that German come around that corner, he fired his burst and then he went behind that log. I fired one round, and my extractor jerked the top right off the round. I didn't have a rod that I could get right to. So across this little road from me, was a weapons platoon guy with a carbine, and he had been hit, and he was dead. My first scout was dead. My BAR man had three or four shots in his leg. I got the carbine from this weapons platoon soldier. By that time the German was behind the log. Old Merservy was a devout Mormon. Neither one of us had a helmet by that time; we had both of us had lost our helmets. I'm sitting cross-legged, just like this, (The Sergeant Major moved to a cross-legged position, in his chair, and pretended to aim a rifle.) and he's over here on this side. (The Sergeant Major pointed to his right.) His M1's working okay. He's saying, "That's okay, Sergeant Bainbridge, we're going to get out of here." I said, "Maybe so, but keep your eye on that machine gunner." Old Royal said, "I can see one of his feet." I said, "Okay. Let me change positions, here." When I got ready, and I could see about where he ought to be, I said, "Where do you think his head ought to be." He said, "About x place on this log." I said, "Okay, shoot him in the foot.", because that's all you can see. He shot him in the foot, and it was good enough. He rolled up over that log, and that was the last time he shot. So Merservy was right; we did get out. We went around that, and we were getting some fire from the second story of a frame house up there, but we couldn't get to it. We couldn't get to it. So I finally got around a little church there, and I got up along side that church, (The Sergeant Major held his right hand outward, and then moved his left hand parallel to his right hand to show his movement

along the side of the church.) and there was kind of a little entrance way. I got in that little entrance way, on the outside, and the building was over here. (The Sergeant Major held his right arm upward, at approximately a forty-five degree angle, and pointed straight ahead.) It took three grenades. I finally got a grenade in that window that was open. I don't know what was in that house, but there wasn't any house left, above the first floor. That was about the end of our combat. At that point, the Germans were all over that place. Our last command was to be sure we stripped down our weapons, threw away the bolts, and whatever. I don't think they got any good weapons from us, but they sure got a lot of good soldiers.

**Interviewer:** How many did they capture at that time, from your regiment?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I don't know how many from the regiment, but the figures I've seen since, is that, killed, wounded, and captured, we were down to about eighty percent. But I know they got Jim, Walt Ware, myself, and Jim Harper. They got the platoon leader. They didn't get Cockran; well, they killed Cockran. They got a guy by the name of "Schafer," who I later saw in Fort Sill, Oklahoma; he just died a year ago.

**Interviewer:** Was that "Schafer?"

**SMA Bainbridge:** Schafer. Harold Schafer. He was captured. A guy named "John Smith," from my squad was captured. He was from Chicago. I later went to the dog track with him, in Miami Beach, Florida. We won about three hundred bucks betting on a dog, in one night. We never went back. A guy by the name of "Lagrande," who now lives up in Chicago. A fellow by the name of "Dinkus," from Magazine, Arkansas. They was all 1st Platoon guys. Dinkus and Schafer and Lagrande, they all stayed at our reception station. We were separated. After we were captured, they took the officers, and the NCOs, and the soldiers, and put them in three different places. But it was sort of a... Well it wasn't sort of, it

was a hell of a humbling sort of thing. You know, as I said earlier on in our interview, that I knew I was invincible. I wasn't sure about the rest of the Army, but I wasn't. I had told my mother, before I went overseas, I said, "Now you may get word about me that something's happened." I said, "Don't you believe it." I said, "I'll be back." I firmly believed that. But I got to thinking after I was captured, "Well, I wonder if Mom is going to remember that? Will she remember that I told her, don't take the first word you hear." I have over there, in my old records, a copy of the telegram that was sent to my mother, telling her I was missing in action, and then another one where they found that I was in a prison camp.

**Interviewer:** A guest of the Third Reich?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah, guest of the Third Reich. But I was convinced that I was going to come back, one way or the other. I got to thinking about whether Mom would believe that. when she got word that I was missing.

**Interviewer:** What day were you captured?

**SMA Bainbridge:** The 19th of December, 1944.

**Interviewer:** Where in Belgium was that?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Just outside of... I just said the word a while ago. My memory is getting bad, Butch. I'll think about it in a second here.

**Interviewer:** After they captured you, how...

**SMA Bainbridge:** St. Vith. Not too far from St Vith and Malmedy; in that area.

**Interviewer:** After they captured you, how were you treated by your captors?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Well, you know, it was interesting. We were captured by some pretty crack troops. I had two "D" bars. Are you familiar with what they call, "D" bars?

**Interviewer:** Are you talking about chocolate bars in the C-

ration?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Well no, this was separate. It was an auxiliary ration, actually.

**Interviewer:** Right. Uh huh.

**SMA Bainbridge:** It was about, maybe an inch thick, and four inches long, and two inches wide. It was a concentrated bar that you could get by on for a couple of days. I had two of those in my field jacket pocket. Those guys were taking everything. They had us open ranks--double open ranks--and they were just going down, patting you down, and taking everything. The fellow that checked me, patted my field jacket, and reached in my pockets, both at the same time, and pulled out those "D" bars. He got them about half-way out, and said, "Chocolat?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Gute," and dropped them back in the pockets. I know the guy might have been hungry, you know?

**Interviewer:** Oh yeah.

**SMA Bainbridge:** But he left me the chocolate. The guy behind me was getting everything he could get, and the guy in front of me was getting everything he could get. So it's just the difference in soldiers. I've never forgot that. So old Jim Poole and I, we wore about five sets of guards before they got us to a railhead, where they could put us on a railroad train. Jim and I lived on those two "D" bars. That was all we got to eat for about five days, except maybe a rutabaga or something that we could get out of a field, when we was filling our canteen. But that German did me a favor. He did me a favor. I didn't gain weight on it. They marched us off, with old soldiers who couldn't fight any more. Some of them were probably as old as I am now. We'd march a while, and then we'd get another set of guards. We'd go through little old towns--it was colder than hell--and people would come out and throw water on us, you know, and that sort of thing. They would whack us with sticks. Then at night, they'd put us in some farmyard some place. That's where we were; in a barn. You'd bed down as best

you could, in a group--four or five together-- and you'd try to keep one another warm. Maybe freeze down in a manure pile or some damn thing. If it was a manure pile there, you'd try to get on it so you wouldn't freeze down.

**Interviewer:** You actually had guards, who were marching, that were so old that they couldn't really fight.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah, they were auxiliaries, I'm sure, of some sort, that were pressed into service. At that time of the War, see, it wasn't long before the end. I just watched a film the other day. They were down to young boys and old men. They were using them for stuff like this, since they couldn't fight with the seasoned troops, or with the troops that could fight. They got us to a railhead, and we spent the next four days and five nights in railroad cars. We had forty, fifty, sixty, or however many they could pack in. There was straw on the floor, and barbed wire on the little old window. The door locked from the outside. We had one stove in the center, but you couldn't put a fire in it, because somebody would burn up.

**Interviewer:** You didn't have enough room.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Didn't have enough room. So we did that four days and five nights, with nothing to eat and nothing to drink.

**Interviewer:** Did they ship you from Belgium into Germany?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Into Germany. We had no latrine facilities, so we designated two or three steel helmets, and used them, and then we would throw it out that barbed wired window. But after about the second day, there wasn't any urine. During this period, we were twice strafed by our own aircraft. The train wasn't marked, but it should have been, but it wasn't marked as POW. You know, at that time, our Air Force was shooting anything that moved, and that was moving in the daytime, so they were shooting at us. We lost some soldiers. But when we finally got something to drink, it was at the end of the fourth day and five nights. If you can believe this, when it come my turn, I drank a steel

helmet full of water.

**Interviewer:** You were dehydrated, and it's a wonder it didn't do you some harm, because normally when you drink that much, your stomach and everything just can't tolerate it.

**SMA Bainbridge:** That's right. That's right.

**Interviewer:** But it didn't bother you that much?

**SMA Bainbridge:** It didn't bother me. It didn't bother me. I don't recall it bothering anybody. Everybody was drinking, you know, and those Russian railroad workers, who were working on the railroad, they were carrying water to us as fast as they could. I know we had people who probably didn't get as much water as they wanted before they moved the train out. Then they unloaded us at a place called "Bad Orb," just east of Frankfurt. I've been back to there a couple of times. That was sort of the reception station, Butch, where they took anything else we had, like our money and so forth. I had some Invasion Marks and some Reich Marks. I don't know how much money, because I sent all my money home. I probably had forty bucks, but I had two or three months worth of money. I remember the guy that interrogated me. He segregated it out and he said, "Now when the war's over, we'll pay you for the Reich Marks, but Uncle Sam will have to pay you for the Invasion Marks, because he printed them." I said, "What are you going to use to back it up?" He said, "What do you mean?" I said, "You guys are going to lose the war, you know. You're going to lose. I'm here, but you're going to lose." He threw me out; he was done interrogating me. It's a wonder he didn't shoot me, you know. That was part of my invincibility, I guess. I was kind of hacked off, but we got a receipt. I had a pen and pencil set left, and I put down on, just a piece of three by five paper, that the troops had taken my watch, and he put down the amount of money it was, and he gave me that for a receipt. When I got back to Fort Sheridan, Illinois, our government honored that receipt.

**Interviewer:** Is that right?

**SMA Bainbridge:** They sure did. They paid me for whatever that money was I had, and paid me for what I thought the pen and pencil set was worth, and paid me what my watch was worth.

**Interviewer:** So your interrogation was short and sweet?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Short and sweet, you know.

**Interviewer:** What about the rest of the guys?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Well, a lot of them kind of felt the same way, you know, but that pain went on for about three or four days. They moved the officers out right away. The NCOs were there for about a couple of weeks, and then they moved all the NCOs out, one cold morning. They got us up early and got us out in the yard. I was wearing a pair of old OD trousers, and I fell in a garbage sump, with my right leg, clear up to my crotch. I'll never forget that. I was out of there so quick, because somebody grabbed me, but it was cold enough, that froze almost immediately. My leg was really nice and warm. I tried to walk stiff-legged as long as I could, because it didn't let any of the wind in through those pants. But they kept us out in that yard until about ten o'clock in the morning, and at that time our feet were cold, and some of them froze. They marched us down to the railhead again, and we spent, I guess, two or three days, that time, in a little better circumstances. They moved us up to a place called "Zigenheim," up by Geissen.

**Interviewer:** So Bad Orb, that was like a reception station.

**SMA Bainbridge:** A reception station.

**Interviewer:** It was where they segregated you, and so forth.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Right.

**Interviewer:** With your group did you have just NCOs, or did you have NCOs and lower-ranking enlisted?

**SMA Bainbridge:** At Bad Orb, it was everybody.

**Interviewer:** When you left there. When they broke you down?

**SMA Bainbridge:** NCOs, NCOs.

**Interviewer:** Just NCOs.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah, yeah. Corporals and above. The private soldiers stayed at Bad Orb. That's where they remained.

(End of Tape OH 94.4-3, Side 1)

(Begin Tape OH 94.4-3, Side 2)

**Interviewer:** Sergeant Major, as we ended the last tape, you just talked about you being sent up to the Stalag at Zeigenheim, up near Geissen. What Stalag number was that?

**SMA Bainbridge:** That was 9A, because the one at Bad Orb was 9B. We always said that the German's got it backwards. They put us in "B" first, and then sent us to "A." Somewhere in my memorabilia, Butch, I have my German dog tags; they gave us dog tags to make sure we didn't get away.

**Interviewer:** Tell me about your arrival at that camp.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Well we came in at the railhead there, in Zeigenheim, and then we were walked into the camp. It was an unusual camp. There were a number of other nationalities that were there at Zeigenheim. There were some British; there were South Africans; and there were Poles, that were in that camp. We were the first Americans to arrive, so we were greeted and, of course, asked a lots of questions, any one thing and another there, about what was happening. We had a fellow that kept us in contact. His name was Phillip J.W. Glissner.

**Interviewer:** Was he an American?

**SMA Bainbridge:** He was an American soldier that was in the prison camp with us. I don't know how many languages Phil spoke, but he could speak to anybody in that camp. So he used to listen to the German broadcasts and talked to the work details that came in. A lot of the other nationalities that were there, worked. The Americans wouldn't work. They said that they would give us extra soup if we helped repair the rail yard at Zeigenheim. They'd bomb them out in the daytime, and they wanted us to go and fix the railhead at night. We told them what they could do with their soup. But Philip kept us in contact. He knew

what was going on. The reports would come back from these work details, on what was happening here, and what was happening here. The Germans, of course, would give us broadcasts of how many of the Armor Division tanks that they had destroyed. There weren't that many tanks ever built, let alone in combat. We were pretty much up to speed, because of Phillip J.W. Glissner; he kept us up to speed. We were hungry there. We got soup. Our fare was two-thirds of a canteen cup full of soup, once a day. You really couldn't call it soup.

**Interviewer:** Was it potato soup?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Well, it was anything. It could be potatoes. It could be rutabaga. It could be carrots. Either one, or all. We got a lot of barley. A lot of barley. There was very little meat. Once in a while a piece of horse meat was in it; you could tell by the color. One of our private jokes was, "We were still adding to the war effort. We were eating the German transportation." One of the things that we thought about all the time, Butch, was food. You would believe the number of recipes that would come out of people's minds, because we were hungry. On Sundays we got, what they called coffee. It was roasted barley versus coffee. We drank that; it wasn't too bad. In the mornings we would get hot tea. We couldn't drink their tea, but we used it to wash socks, underwear, and that sort of thing in it. That was the only hot water we got. We had no way of heating any water, in our billets. We had one inside stool in each two hundred and fifty man billet, and then outside toilets. We had to use the outside ones. The inside ones, of course, couldn't handle it. The living conditions were intolerable. They were almost unbearable. Lice, bedbugs. We got a bath every six weeks, whether we needed it or not. We also got deloused. We didn't, but our clothes did. They heated our clothes while we took that bath. Of course, it would kill anything in our clothes, but our excelsior mattress, and our bunks, etc., were still pest ridden, and we still had the nits in our hair, that would hatch out. That was one of

the things that really bothered us, I think, was having to live with the damn body lice, bedbugs, etc.

**Interviewer:** Did you say that you had two hundred and fifty men in a barracks?

**SMA Bainbridge:** About two hundred and fifty men each. It was a five hundred-man barracks, I think it was, and in the center of that barracks--between the two barracks--was a long trough, that went all the way around; that was our wash basin, you know, with cold water running out. That water was so damn cold it almost tinkled when it hit that trough. Man that was cold!

**Interviewer:** Approximately how many people do you think was in that camp?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Three thousand, four thousand.

**Interviewer:** What percentage do you think were Americans?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Very small. It was a very small percentage of Americans. Most of them were other nationalities. I think we had one bulb--one light--per cubicle that had to go out at ten o'clock. We used to sit up and talk, in some of those cubicles. There was a hole in the floor, I remember. A cat came through the barracks one night. We would have had roasted cat of some sort, but that cat hit that hole and nobody was strong enough to pull it out. A couple of us had a hold of it's tail, but the cat was stronger than us. We couldn't get him back up through that floor board. Jim Poole and I shared, two men to a bunk. The bunks weren't very wide. When we got liberated from that place, Jim and I could lay on our backs on that bunk, and just barely touch. That's how skinny we were. Because, with that one bowl of soup a day, you didn't get many pounds. On Sunday, at noon, we got one slice of German bread, from a normal size loaf, sliced maybe a half of an inch thick. I still like that German bread.

**Interviewer:** The black bread or the brown bread?

**SMA Bainbridge:** The black bread, with the kind of a doughy strip

down along the bottom of it, you know. That was really good stuff. Some times we would save some of our soup solids to make a spread to put on that bread when we'd get it on Sunday. We could eat it with our coffee. It turned out pretty well. We carried our own soup. We'd go to the kitchen, with a big wooden tub. There was a line on that tub that was used to dole out so much soup for X number of people. We had one guard by the name of Pop Kramer, who had a son who was a prisoner of war in Jefferson Barracks, Missouri, where I had been. So we told him how the prisoners were treated there, and how they were fed, and how they were housed, etc. We had some other guards where we might come up shy on soup, but when Pop Kramer was on duty, when that old soup bucket came back, it was at the mark, or above. He always took good care of us. We had another guard that we called "Horse Face." He was a mean son of a gun. Old Horse Face, he did care if we got our soup or not. But at the end of the war, when we were finally liberated, we took care of Pop Kramer, and we also took care of old Horse Face, in the appropriate manner.

**Interviewer:** What's the old saying? What goes around, comes around.

**SMA Bainbridge:** That's right.

**Interviewer:** What kind of an organization did you have setup in the camp, such as a chain of command?

**SMA Bainbridge:** It was pretty good, I think. If somebody were to get out of order, we would set up a courts martial, and that sort of thing. Although we never had to use that, we were told afterward, had we used it, it would have been honored, because under the circumstances, that's what they expect you to do, is to take care of your own, in whatever manner that is necessary. We had a few cases where somebody might try to get extra soup, or something, and we'd handle that in our own way, by saying, "Okay, you tried to get a little extra, so you're going to get less." One time would be all that would take. As a whole,

Butch, there wasn't any problems in there.

**Interviewer:** Did you setup your chain of command, by rank, date of rank, or how?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yes, by seniority, and people who had some extra smarts. Maybe they knew a little something about the law, you know, or military justice, because we had no officers. Later on we got one, just before we were liberated. A doctor was sent in there, specifically by the Germans, because they didn't have a camp doctor to take care of us, so they brought him in. He helped us get organized when the liberation movement started coming through.

**Interviewer:** Do you think that's one thing that's unique about the United States military? When they're put in a situation like that, they automatically setup some sort of a chain of command.

**SMA Bainbridge:** I do. I do. I kind of goes back to what the Germans used to say about the Americans. They said that they could depend on what the French were going to do, what the Russians were going to do, and whatever, but the Americans would do it this way this time, and in the same situation, next time they would do it different, and both times it worked; so they adjusted. I think you're right, Butch, that's exactly what happens; they do what's necessary.

**Interviewer:** Prior to your capture, were you ever given any kind of orientation that told you that, in case you became a prisoner of war, you should do such-and-such?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yes, but it was not as thorough as it is now. Of course, the Korean situation is what caused that to change. But we were told to give our name, rank, serial number, and date of birth, period; that's it. And that's what we did, for the most part. You know, they wanted to know where you lived, and what kind of family you had, and if you were married, but we wouldn't answer any of that stuff. I think, for the most part, the Germans honored that. They did take our Red Cross boxes. We got one Red Cross box, one time. I don't know if

you're familiar with those, Butch. I'm sure you are. It was a small box that was setup with emergency rations for one person, for one week. It had some dried milk, some canned meat, some biscuits, some cigarettes, some candy, coffee, cocoa. That's where I got my first M&M candy; at least it was like an M&M. As I recall, we divided up one box among seventeen or eighteen people; it was a large number. That was the only time we ever got them. But I do remember that my share of the M&M candies, was five. Those five pieces of candy lasted me five days; I ate one a day.

**Interviewer:** One a day, huh.

**SMA Bainbridge:** I had one-a-day candy. I talked about the recipes, and one thing and another. People would describe recipes that their mothers had made, or that their wives had made. I was talking about a recipe, one time, for my mother's amber pie. Old Walt Ware, from Alabama, was listening. I was telling them how it was made and what was in it. I got about half way through the recipe, and he said, "Stop." He said, "I can listen to any of these guys talk about their recipes, and that all right. But when you talk about them, I can taste them. I don't want to hear any of them." But we did have a good organization there. Again, the camp was not marked, in anyway, as a POW camp. They had tower guards, and I remember this airplane, a P-47, came through one day, and a tower guard fired on it. Well, that 47 went out and made a turn, and came back. He made about four passes on that camp. I mean he shot the hell out of it. Some where in my memorabilia, I have a .50 caliber slug that was in the washroom, out of his machine guns. There were slugs ricocheting around that place. All of these other guys, who had been in there for years, they were out, waving their arms. The P-47 killed something like forty or fifty people, out in the compound, and not one American got hit. Not one American got hit, because we was headed for cover. But he got pictures in his kill camera, of what turned out to be GIs, heading for cover. So they decided then, that

this was a POW camp. I supposed they made some other passes at it, but they knew we were there. They didn't know how many, but they knew there were American prisoners there. So when the 6th Armored Division came through there, they made a push for that camp to liberate us, and they did. This doctor that was with us, came in and he said, "Now I've just had a meeting with the Camp Commandant." He said, "They're going to come in here, about two o'clock tomorrow morning, and try to get ready to move you guys out." He said, "They're going to be moving everybody first." So they started moving the other nationalities out. Two or three weeks before that, we got some British soldiers in, and we got some more word on what was going on. They had been moved from another camp. The doctor said, "When they come in, I'm going to be with them. We'll holler about getting ready to move, and one thing and another." He said, "But until I say, 'I mean it,' you guys just mill around and don't make any moves to get our of here. Just act like you want to," he said, "but don't go." Well it was ten o'clock the next morning, and by that time there was artillery going both ways, you know. He came in and said, "I mean it." So everybody started doing our thing. In the mean time, we had planned on this one falling out, and doing anything we could to delay the action. I can remember one particular fellow was going to pass out, so he figured if he passed out in a water puddle, it would be a little bit easier on him when he fell, because he didn't want to brace his fall. He fell into a water puddle, and there was a rock in there; he was really out. When we noticed that he wasn't moving, we flipped him over, you know, and there was a big cut on his head. They fooled around until one o'clock in the afternoon, and then they finally decided that they couldn't handle us anymore, and they just turned the camp over to us and left. Well, about eight or nine o'clock that night, the 6th Armored Division rolled in. By noon the next day, we had them all back; the whole camp. The Commandant and everybody was back in the compound. Now they were the ones standing out, with no shoes.

**Interviewer:** Did they capture them and bring them back?

**SMA Bainbridge:** They captured them, and they said that the best place they could figure for those guys to be, was back with us.

**Interviewer:** Was Horse Face and Pop there?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Horse Face was in there, and so was Pop Kramer.

**Interviewer:** What did you do with Horse Face?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Horse Face didn't make it. Horse Face didn't make it. He was given a sedative by a medic, because he was in such bad shape. He just didn't make it.

**Interviewer:** What about Pop?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Pop made it. Pop never had a mark on him. Pop Kramer made out fine. We had one Black soldier with us, who had been captured with us. He was with a tank destroyer outfit, and was doing liaison. In those days, there were still segregated units. One fellow, from this tank destroyer outfit, was in the camp with us. Probably the most tragic thing that happened in that camp, while we was there, about two weeks before we were liberated, he tried to escape, and they killed him in a trench, right outside the camp. We really felt bad about that, you know, but he did it on his own. He didn't ask anybody, he just took off.

**Interviewer:** Did you ever have any other attempted escapes from the camp?

**SMA Bainbridge:** That's the only one we had, because there wasn't any opportunity. The damn thing was so well guarded and it had too many fences, and floodlights, and all that business. There was about four fences between you and the outside. By the time anybody thought about getting out of that thing, we really weren't in physical shape to get out of it. That's the only one that I remember, and it ended up very tragically.

**Interviewer:** The way you was raised at home, and your belief in God and your country, as you came up as a young man, do you think that

belief system helped sustain you and your fellow prisoners?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Oh, I don't think there's any doubt about that, Butch, because, as I said, I told my mother, "Don't worry. I'm going to make it back." And I was convinced that I was going to make it back. I know that my love of country and the way I had been brought up, and my family life, helped sustain me, and I also like to think that it had a very definite effect on people around me. I know some of those guys had a big effect on me. Old Poole, and Harper, and Ware, and I, that was the four musketeers. We really leaned on one another.

**Interviewer:** Was Glissner the one you said could speak all of the languages?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Glissner. Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Other than in information that he picked up from the work details, going out, did you have any sort of radio transmissions that you could overhear, as far as getting information?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Only the loudspeakers that the Germans provided. But see, with the information that Phillip was able to pick up from the work details that were returning, and just the information contained in those broadcasts, we could figure out what was going on, because they would tell us about some of the units that were being destroyed, etc. Hell, we knew that some of those units weren't even in the area, so we knew a lot of that had to be propaganda. When they start putting out propaganda like that, you can just put two and two together and figure, well they're going to have some problems, because they're trying to make it look like they were getting all of the wins. We knew, at that point, that they weren't. There wasn't any way in the world they was going to be getting all of the wins.

**Interviewer:** When were you liberated?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Good Friday.

**Interviewer:** Good Friday, huh.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Good Friday, 1945. "Eggs for Easter" was the big

goal. We didn't get eggs for Easter, but we did get good soup. We did get good soup. They started putting meat in it, and they started putting salt in it. That's all they gave us; soup and a little bread. They didn't raise our fare too much, right away, because they were afraid it would make us sick.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**SMA Bainbridge:** So the soup was cooked with meat, and good vegetables. It was seasoned. They had the field bakeries, in those days, and they made a little old square loaf of bread, about like that. (Using his hands, the Sergeant Major indicated that the size of the loaf of bread was approximately 8" x 8" x 4".) And each of us got a loaf and a half of bread; I remember that. I never tasted anything closer to angel food cake in my life. But we stayed in camp about three weeks. I think it was about three weeks. Everything was going into Germany. There was nothing going the other way. They might have been able to get us out quicker, but they were trying to strengthen us a little bit. Give us some good baths, delouse us, and kind of build our strength up a little bit. When they finally got ready to move us, it think that was one of the best organizations that I had seen, up to that time. They came in, picked up a duce and a half load, and move out to a grass strip, unload the guys, and in come a C-47. They would load up on that C-47, and off it would go. It was just like clockwork. Here would come another truck, and another C-47, to fly us back to Camp Lucky Strike, at La Harve. They were all named after cigarettes; Lucky Strike, Camel, Chesterfield. I happened to go to Lucky Strike. After we got back to La Harve, that's when we really got into the business of immunization. We got good food. Eisenhower's Headquarters had put out the word that kitchens would be setup in those repatriation camps, and that those ex-prisoners would be fed at any time of the day or night that they came into the mess, so they operated them around-the-clock. I can remember one of the great things was, egg-nogs. You could get that. It seems

like there was a big old thirty-five gallon tub of eggnog, about every time you turned the corner someplace. There was plenty of orange juice, but I couldn't drink orange juice, for the first week or so, because of the lack of vitamins that we suffered over that time, and then all of a sudden they started feeding us properly. My tongue must have been that thick, (Holding two fingers apart, the Sergeant Major indicated that his tongue was approximately three-quarters of an inch thick.) and it was just like a piece of raw beef steak. Orange Juice, or acidic food like that, would just set me on fire, and that lasted for about ten days. They said the reason for it was the type of diet we had been on. They us clothes, and deloused us, gave us haircuts, and deloused us again, and gave us another haircut. Gosh, you could get a bath everyday, and a fresh cot to lay on. We thought we were back home, Butch.

**Interviewer:** With three meals a day.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Three meals a day, four meals a day, or five, whatever you wanted. The mess was open to you any time you wanted to go and eat. We all ate kind of slow and easy. By the time we got ready to get on the boat to come back, we was ready to do some serious eating, I think.

**Interviewer:** Do you have anything else you'd like to say concerning your internment as a prisoner of war?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I'll tell you. It's an experience that I'll never forget, but I wouldn't give a nickel to do it again. If you're every going to have any humility, it's something like that, that will do it. But, on the other hand, Butch, I'm not at all ashamed of being a POW, because it certainly something I would do, just to go through the experience. As I said earlier on, I think we acquitted ourselves very well, given the circumstances we were in, and the number of soldiers we had up against what we were up against.

**Interviewer:** Talking about prisoners, during the Second World War. I'm sure you've had an opportunity to talk to others that were held as

POWs in Europe, and some that were held in the Far East. There was a complete different philosophy of the enemy, in the ways they were treated. All-in-all, from your experience, and during your talks with other people, how do you think the Germans treated the American POWs? Once again, they were limited in resources, but as far as the treatment itself?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I think as well as could be expected. At least, they pretty well went by the Geneva Convention, even though I don't think they were signers of it. I guess they were. I guess they were. But they didn't shoot prisoners and treat them at all like the Japanese, and I think it was because of the philosophy. We were all from the same cut. Once the real soldiers got a hold of you--I mentioned the chocolate bars--I think a soldier is a soldier, and there was respect going both ways. Although, at that time we didn't realize it. But the two chocolate bars was respect. He could have taken those two chocolate bars, that was his right, but he knew then where I was headed, even though I didn't know. But I have a lot of respect for the ability of the German soldier, during World War II. He was well trained. At the end he wasn't. At the end he was a hell of a lot worst than we were, because as I said, it was the old men and the young boys; that's all they had left. Now, I cannot complain about the treatment that I got. The thing that bothered me then the most, I think, Butch, is the fact that, having been in places and knowing how we treated their's, and then how they treated us. I was really upset at the time, not realizing at the time, that they didn't have the resources that we had. Had it been the other way around, I think the treatment would have been as good as we gave.

**Interviewer:** Probably the guards in those camps weren't eating much better than you were.

**SMA Bainbridge:** I'm sure they weren't. They probably got bread with their soup, but they were probably eating the same damn soup that

we were. Incidentally, the guy that shot up the camp, when he was fired on by the tower guard, disrupted the kitchen for three days, too. So we were kind of unhappy with him over that too. The cook pots had a few .50 caliber holes in them.

**Interviewer:** Normally, near the end of the interview, we get to a section called "Reflections, Observations, and Opinions." I think this would be a good time for me to ask this question, and what I'm going to do is read it directly as it is written in the interview guide, and allow you to comment on it. It reads: Many people in America have never understood the philosophy of Asian armies involved in war, especially the Asian philosophy when dealing with prisoners of war. Such as the Japanese, North Koreans, Chinese, and North Vietnamese. Also, in Vietnam, a woman or child could be just as dangerous as a Viet Cong or North Vietnamese Army soldier. Do you have an opinion concerning these two statements?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Well, that last part of that first, Butch. A child or a woman being as dangerous. I know I've been shot at by female Vietnamese, and maybe children. But I know damn well that I've been shot at by women. And after I was over there for a while, I know I would have replied in kind, but it would have been tough. But, you know, when you spend as much time soldering as we have, and whoever's got a hold of that other weapon, if their intent is to get you, you've got to get them first; whoever's holding it. You may end up getting somebody that shouldn't have been gotten, but in the heat of battle you don't always have the luxury of waiting too long to make the decision. But as far as the philosophy of the Asian people, it's just different. It's different with their own people. You know, the things that used to happen in Korea, to female babies. They didn't keep them. I just watched a documentary, the other day, about India. They don't keep their female babies; it's a liability. They want sons. That's the same way with a prisoner of war. A prisoner, to the Asians, is the spoils of war, and

it's not something to be coddled. I mean, that's just the way they look at it. I don't agree with that, but it's just different from the anglo side of it. They just look at it different. I'm not sure that I should be the judge of which is right. Should I change their philosophy? I think that's one of the things that we did wrong in Vietnam. We tried to Americanize the Vietnamese, and you're never going to do that. Shame on them if we could. We damn near did the Japanese, after the war. I think that there is a different philosophy, and when you're dealing with a different philosophy, then you have to treat them accordingly.

(End of Tape OH 94.4-3, Side 2)

(Begin Tape OH 94.4-4, Side 1)

**Interviewer:** Today is March 11, 1994, and this is a continuation of the interview with former Sergeant Major of the Army William G. Bainbridge. Yesterday, we ended out interview with a discussion of the liberation of the POW camp. Also, I asked you to give your opinion on the Asian philosophy in regards to POWs, women and children. That's where we ended. What I'd like to do now is pickup the interview with a discussion of your return back to the United States. How long after your liberation from the POW camp did you return from Europe?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Remember, I told you that we spent a couple of weeks at the camp, because all of the transportation was going in and nothing was coming out. When we got to Camp Lucky Strike, in La Harve, I believe we were there about two weeks, getting deloused, and fed, and one thing and another, and then we were out aboard ship, in La Harve harbor. We came back by convoy. On that ship, I recall, we had about four hundred ex-prisoners of war, and we had fifteen or sixteen hundred returning air crews; those who had completed their missions. The ship's was very upset about the ex-POWs, because of the physical condition that most of us were in. They thought maybe we could not handle the trip too well. Well, as it turned out, their fears were unfounded, because they only people that got sick on that ship were the air crews that were

coming back. The ex-POWs, we were eating so much, almost all day long, solid food, that we didn't think about getting sick. I don't think there were any sick ex-prisoners. You know, they say the way to beat seasickness is to eat good solid food. We ate a lot of that. The ship that we were on, it took us about sixteen or seventeen days, as I recall, to get back. As I said, we came back in a convoy. They said that if they ran the ship by itself, there would be no problem--one of those old sea stories--but in a convoy, they always had rudder problems. We did have rudder problems on the way home. We spent about four hours, one night, going around in circles, but we caught up with the convoy. They had enough rations aboard that ship--to show you how they fed us--for about a six month tour, with a complement of about three thousand passengers. In those seventeen days, by the time we got to New York, the rations were almost completely depleted on that ship, because we ate all the time. Normally, they only feed you twice a day, on a ship. They fed us around-the-clock. Most of us tried to work in the galley, if we could, so we could have our hands on food all of the time.

**Interviewer:** How much weight did you gain on the way back?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I guess about fifteen pounds. I just come up about a pound a day. I guess I weighed about eighty-five or ninety pounds when I got out of that prison camp. By the time I was home, for a couple of weeks, I weighed the most I have ever weighed in my life. I was up to a hundred and seventy-five pounds, but I was like a silk worm; I was an eating machine. I ate all of the time. I've never been that heavy since, and certainly, I had never been that heavy before. I went from about a hundred and forty-five, down to about eighty-five pounds, during the time we were in the prison camp; on that good soup ration.

**Interviewer:** Tell me about your return to Williamsfield.

**SMA Bainbridge:** We went to Camp Kilmer, New Jersey and we were there about three days. Then we were sent to the nearest military installation to our home. I went to Fort Sheridan, Illinois. We got an

issue of clothes every place that we stopped. We were always turning in clothes, at one place, and getting a new issue. Probably because, I think, we were outgrowing the ones that we just. One little incident happened while we were at Fort Sheridan, Illinois. A German POW was serving in the mess hall. One of our group was refused a second dollop of mashed potatoes. There was all kinds of ruckus after that. He jumped over the serving line and was working this guy over. He said, "Here I was in your prison camp, and not getting anything to eat, and you're telling me, in my own mess hall, I can't get mashed potatoes." The next day we noticed there were MPs (Military Police) in the mess hall. Somebody asked one of them if they were guarding the prisoners. He said, "No. They have free run of the camp. We're here to keep you guys off of them." Anyway, it was one of those incidents that happened. We spent a few days there. I called home and told them when I was going to be coming home. I had a cousin, who lived in Galesburg; Mary Daniels and her husband, Jim. I was going to get in late, and my folks then lived in Woodhall, Illinois, so Mary and Jim said they would pick me up at the train station and I could spend the night there, and then Dad and Mom would come and get me the next morning. My mother wouldn't come with Dad to pick me up. She didn't want to see me, away from the house. She figured that she would breakdown. So Dad came and got me, and I went home to Woodhall. Then, about a week or so after that, they had a little shindig for us in Williamsfield, at the high school. Everybody was glad to see us back. I mentioned, yesterday, in the interview, Gale Brooks, Hazel's cousin that I grew up with, he also had been a prisoner of war, but he was caught in Italy. He was an air crew member. So we had quite a homecoming.

**Interviewer:** Let me ask one other question. I don't know whether we have it on tape or not. When did you depart Germany, to come back?

**SMA Bainbridge:** It must have been about the fourth or fifth of April, Butch, because I spent my birthday, the 17th of April, on the way

home. So it was the first part of April. I don't remember the exact date.

**Interviewer:** Whenever I interrupted you, you were talking about the get together they had for you in Willimsfield.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah. We had it in the gymnasium, and I remember Jim German, one of the fellows there, his job was guarding prisoners in Galesburg. We still had prisoners of war--Germans and Italians--in the Galesburg area. He was guarding some of those at one of the defense plants. He said, "Is there anything you would like to have me pass on to those fellows?" I said, "No, Jim you just take care of them just like have been taking care of them, because I'm sure they would like to be like I am. I'm sure they would like to be home." After that homecoming, Hazel was down visiting with her aunt. I had a sixty day delay enroute, so this was probably now the first of May. So I got together with Hazel, and during that sixty day leave, Hazel and I were married. 20 June 1945.

**Interviewer:**What was her maiden name?

**SMA Bainbridge:**Smith. Hazel L. Smith. I always used to kid Hazel. I said, "The one good thing I've done in my life is get rid of one Smith and change the name to Bainbridge."

**Interviewer:** Where was she born?

**SMA Bainbridge:**She was born in Momence, Illinois. M-O-M-E-N-C-E. In 1926.

**Interviewer:** What was her parent's occupations?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I think they were probably farmers, at that time. I'm pretty sure they were.

**Interviewer:** How long have you known Hazel?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I've known Hazel since she was a fourth grader. I used to tell everybody, when I was in the Army, when I mentioned Hazel, which I did almost every time that I spoke to somebody. I've always called her my bride. I said, "I've known her since she was a lowly

fourth and I was a sophisticated fifth grader. The problem is, now she has graduated and I'm still a sophisticated fifth grader." When Hazel and I were married, her dad worked at a defense plant, and her mother, I think, was a telephone operator at the time. Hazel's mother was a telephone operator for a long time. As a matter of fact, she's was a retired telephone operator. She retired from U.S. Rubber, as a telephone operator. She is now since deceased, but she worked a long time as a telephone operator. As a matter of fact, she worked as a telephone operator when I first met Hazel. Remember when they had the telephone system right in the house? She would run the switchboard there. It had, maybe, twenty lines. Dad Smith did the line maintenance and Mom run the switchboard. I remember one time they went on a picnic with the neighbors, one Sunday afternoon, to Lake Story. This was while we were still in school. I said that I'd run the switchboard for them. I got one call on that switchboard. They wanted to speak to the folks that Hazel and her mother had gone on a picnic with; The Woolsey's. I said, "They're not home." They said, "What do you mean, they're not home?" I said, "I just know that they're not home. They went to a picnic." They said, "Would you ring them anyway?" I said, "Okay." Well, I just sat there for about two minutes. I said, "They don't answer." That was the only call I got all day. Like I say, Hazel and I were married in 1945. When I came through Fort Sheridan, Illinois, they interviewed us and said, "If you're married, you're going to be going to Miami Beach, Florida when you finish your delay enroute. If you're married, fill this slip out and let us know if you're married. If you are, your wife is authorized to go with you down to the hotel, etc." I wasn't married at the time, so I said, "No. I'm not going to go." Hazel always kids me about not taking her to Miami Beach with me when I went. As it turned out, I could have taken her. You know, when we got down there, there wouldn't have been any questions. Because when we got there, that slip of paper wasn't even mentioned. "If you're

married and you've got your wives with you. Over here." "Those that are not married. Over here."

**Interviewer:** How long were you down there?

**SMA Bainbridge:** We were there a month. Two weeks of convalescent. As I told you, Butch, when I grew up there wasn't much money in our house. I can remember the Coke machines that they had in the mess halls and around different places, all you had to do is go up and just punch the button for whatever you wanted; there wasn't any money. They were contract messes that were running those hotels; the Army contracted that out. They fed us anything we wanted to eat, cafeteria-style, anytime you wanted to eat. There wasn't any particular mealtime. You just went in there when you were hungry. Soldiers, you know, always make up their bunk in the morning. There were two or three of us in a room. When I got up the first morning, I made the bunk, and I went to breakfast. I come back and there was a maid in the room, cleaning up the place. And I'll never forget Do you remember the old song "Caldonia"--"What makes your big head so..."--was kind of going around then. This lady's name was Caldonia; that was her first. She said, "Did you make this bed this morning?" I said, "Yes, I did. Why?" She said, "Don't do that anymore, because that's my job." I said, "Well that's fine, but I'm just used to making my bed." She said, "I know, but when you're here, we're going to make your bed, just like living in any other hotel."

**Interviewer:** That was convalescence for the ex-POWs. Right?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** About how many were down there with you?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Oh my goodness. I don't know, but the hotel that I was in was full. There must have been six or seven hundred in the one hotel that I was in. It was full. I believe it was "The White House Hotel." It was. John Smith, my buddy from Chicago, and I were there together. We went to the Greyhound tracks, and while we were there to play the dogs. Neither one of knew anything about Greyhound racing. I

would bet on the configuration of the dog, being a farm boy, and John would bet on their names. So we would kind of go together. We did real well. But we never went back. We figured that one time we made a little money, and that was going to be the end of that, so we didn't go back. We had one formation a day to go to; at ten o'clock in the morning, and that was to determine if you were on orders. So at ten o'clock, you would go down there, and they would read out all the orders. If you weren't on orders, you would go back the next day. I think that lasted about ten days, and then I came out on orders to Camp Maxie, Texas, which was then an IRTB, Infantry Replacement Training Base. I was assigned to Camp Maxie.

**Interviewer:** Where was Camp Maxie located?

**SMA Bainbridge:** At Paris, Texas, in east Texas. I remember, Paris, Texas, of course, was in a dry county. Hazel came to visit me down in Texas. We had an apartment and we stayed in that apartment. Upstairs, one room, with a bath, and we had kitchen privileges. We would go down and make a sandwich, or something like that. I forgot what we gave of that. Six or seven dollars a week--a buck a day--to stay in that place. It was their son's room and he was off somewhere; in the service or in school, or something.

**Interviewer:** You were on the tail end of your duration, plus six.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Right. Right. As I said, "I was assigned to Camp Maxie and they made me that armor artificer. I kept the arms room going. Hazel spent that time with me. We were there from August until October. We closed up the Camp. We had the last training cycle there. So Hazel went home, and I was transferred to Camp Roberts, California. Which was sort of ironic. That had been my brother's first training station when he went into the Army. I was to end up my first stint in the Army, there at Camp Roberts. So Hazel went back, and I went to Camp Roberts. I spent the rest of my tour there, and the 7th of December 1945, I was discharged, at Camp Roberts, California. I took a train back to

Galesburg.

**Interviewer:** Did you ever get a chance to revisit you old POW camp, later on?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I did. I did, Butch. When Hazel and I were stationed in Germany--we were there for 1959 to 1962--we had a friend up in Frankfurt that we went to visit. So we decided that we would drive to Bad Orb and see if we could locate the prison camp. Hazel said, "Do think you can find it?" I said, "I have no idea. But Bad Orb is not that big of a town. Certainly some body will know." We drove into Bad Orb, to the center of town, I made a left hand turn, and drove up the hill right to it. Just like I had been there the day before. Something told me which way to turn. We drove up to the camp, and there was a guard there. It was a kinderheim, a children's home, and the guard said go in there. He didn't know much English, and I didn't know much German, but I said, "In 1944. I was a kreig here. I want to take some pictures." (When the Sergeant Major said "...take some pictures.", he made motions like he was taking pictures with a camera.) "Ah gute," he said. He opened the gate up and let me go take some pictures of Bad Orb. That was our first trip back. I tried to find the camp at Zigenheim, but we could not find it. I was just reading in "The Cub" here, this morning. My old unit's little pamphlet that they put out, 106th Infantry Association. It says that it was in an open field. It was. I can remember that. It was just out in the open, so obviously it has been torn down, or whatever. It was just a barbed wire camp; a temporary camp. The buildings were almost temporary. There were the half-wooded kind, you know that they have over there. Half-timbered, I guess they call them. So that was probably destroyed. I don't know, maybe the 6th Armored Division destroyed it after we left. That's very possible. But I couldn't find it. But I've flown over Bad Orb, two or three times. I'd be over there and I'd have some young pilot and he'd said, "I understand you were a prisoner of war up at Bad Orb. We'll

just take a little side trip over that way." We'd fly over it and would be all painted up, brand new. It was a kinderheim, or a children's home. But it was a little bit different situation. I was just looking here, in this Cub, and there two or three pictures of Bad Orb in here, and also a crew at Zigenheim. A burial detail at Bad Orb. I'll talk to some of those guys, at the reunion, in September of this year.

**Interviewer:** What I want to do now is discuss your second combat tour. When did you serve you second combat tour, and where?

**SMA Bainbridge:** 1965, '66 In the Republic of Vietnam. I departed Fort Riley, Kansas in August of 1965, as a unit rotation. 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry, Mechanized. But we left our tracks in Fort Riley. If you remember, during the early days they decided they did need any armor or any transportation--mech--over there. It was changed later on. We went to San Francisco. My part of the party flew out of Manhattan Airport, right east of Fort Riley. We went on Constellations. We flew out of there on the old Constellations. I was on the advance party. My Old Man was on the advance party. I was selected by the Brigade XO (executive officer) to take the troops over. My battalion went on a troop ship, so I was the Troop Ship Sergeant Major.

**Interviewer:** You were the Battalion Sergeant Major of the 1st Battalion when you got orders. Right?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Right. I was the Sergeant Major and Lieutenant Colonel Bob Haldane was our Battalion Commander. We served most of that year together. I was later on to go to II Field Force, during that tour. That was my second combat tour.

**Interviewer:** Where was the area of operation of the 1st Infantry Division?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Our particular area, Butch, was War Zone "C". My battalion was at a place called Poc Vinh, which just up on the Suoi Gui, the River Gui, about, I guess, sixty miles from Saigon, on Route 1. So that was our area of operation. They had an air strip at Poc Vinh and

we went into the wood cutters area. I remember Colonel Haldane saying that, "We're going to take the worst area up here, Top." The 1st of the 2nd (1st Battalion, 2nd Infantry), 1st of the 26th (1st Battalion, 26th Infantry), and 1st of the 28th (1st Battalion, 28th Infantry), were in the 1st Brigade. And he said, "We're going to consolidate the area, because I know the area on this side of the airstrip is going to have to be secured." The other units have better places to start out with, but they all had to move. We never did move. The Old Man knew what he was talking about when he picked that place. We were able to consolidate that and we stayed there--the 28th Infantry--stayed there the full time, while we were in that particular area. Our base camp was always the same place.

**Interviewer:** Compare the leadership abilities of the noncommissioned officers of the 28th to those you served with in the 423rd.

**SMA Bainbridge:** There no's comparison. Really, Butch. Not only had we had good training up to that time, in the 28th Infantry. We knew for some time that we were going to be going. As a matter of fact, the 2nd Brigade went to Vietnam, I believe it was in May or June of '65. So we just knew that the rest of the division was going to follow a little bit later, so we were orienting our training toward that, and that's about the time we got Colonel Haldane as out Battalion Commander, thank goodness, because the gentleman we had would not have been the proper Commander to take us to Vietnam. We had our training oriented toward Southeast Asia, and we were all in good shape. We had good training. The professionalism and the soldier qualities of the noncommissioned officers that were there, and what we had in 1944, are a hundred and eighty degrees different, because of the time. The training was different, the trainors were different, and we had better trained replacement soldiers; soldiers that were just coming into the service. Their training toward an infantry unit was better. And we knew far

enough ahead of time that we were going to Vietnam, so we were able to know what the strengths and weaknesses, again, of our noncommissioned officers. One big problem with us, when we went to Vietnam with the 28th Infantry, was the fact that when the Division sent the 2nd Brigade over, earlier, they took the "cream of the crop" out of the Battalion, and the rest of the Division. So when the 2nd Brigade went, they had every position filled with the proper grade, the proper MOS, and with the best the Division had to offer. They didn't say, "We're going to levy the 28th Infantry for a platoon sergeant.", they levied by name. They took this guy, they took that squad leader, they took that section leader, so they got the best we had. They did the same thing to other units. Now I suppose that was the way to go, but if they knew that we were going to be going, why did we have to give up some of our very best people? As it turned out, the Commander we got in Colonel Haldane, we turned that around. But we got some replacement noncommissioned officers that were almost dropping their families on Custer Hill, and saying, "Good by.", and heading for the airplane. I mean, that's how close it was for some of our replacement folks. They didn't know us and we didn't know them, but we did have enough time when we got to Vietnam to get those folks squared away. We did have enough of a nucleus of our old folks there. Again, I can not give enough credit to Colonel Haldane. You've heard of people having a sixth sense? I think he had about an eleven senses, because he just knew when to do the right thing, at the right time and he really whipped us into shape. A little aside. I knew as much about tennis as I knew about rocketry, in those days. But we had a young clerk, who was a college kid, and he played tennis in college. I thought tennis was a sissy game. Let me tell you, that will get you in shape. We were at Camp Funston, at Fort Riley. Just across the railroad track, which is about a quarter of a mile, or maybe a little longer, was a tennis court. So four of us: my PS (Personnel Service) NCO, myself, the assistant S4, and that clerk, instead of

having lunch, we would go over there and strip down to our waist, and play tennis in our combat boots for forty minutes. Man I'll tell you, along with the other training we had, when I got to Vietnam, Vietnam wasn't any problem for me, as far as the weather and the heat and the humidity was concerned; I was ready.

**Interviewer:** How was the morale?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Oh, it was good. We had good morale. I don't think we had anybody that really was complaining about going to Vietnam. That was the thing to do. Part of the unit was already over there, and we were highly trained, so we were ready to go.

**Interviewer:** I think you also had the advantage of being there early on in the war.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah. Yeah. We were first; the 1st Infantry Division and the 1st Cavalry Division. The 1st Cav went in and then the 2nd Brigade of the 1st Division, and then the rest of the 1st Division went in. Then it started filling up. Yeah, I think so too. You can take away the firsts, you know.

**Interviewer:** That's like me. I was over there in '64 and '65. And I went back in '69 and '70, and I saw a difference; a tremendous difference.

**SMA Bainbridge:** In '69 and '70, from '64 and '65, you did see a big difference. I was fortunate. I went back over there from '69 to '72, at USARPAC (United States Army, Pacific). Every quarter we went to Vietnam. Man, you're right, Butch, what a difference.

**Interviewer:** During that time, did you have any problems with drugs and alcohol?

**SMA Bainbridge:** None. None. For a couple of reasons. Number one. Like I say, We were first. We were over there with a mission. And we were at a place, that even if you wanted to, there wasn't any of it available. We were the only battalion that didn't have a barber, for example, a Vietnamese barber, or something like that in the area to come

in during daylight hours and cut hair. We were the only battalion in the Poc Vinh area, for a good while, that didn't get mortared too. Those guys were bringing in coordinates, you know. Telling them where the mess hall was; where the headquarters was; etc. We were the only battalion that, when you went downtown to pick up supplies or something, we were the only ones that had steel helmets. You could tell the 28th Infantry because everybody had a steel helmet on. We spend most of our time in the field. We didn't spend much time keeping the area squared away. Soldiers don't like to keep the area straight. They like to be out in the field.

**Interviewer:** What was the mission of the 28th Infantry at that time?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Our's was about the same as the rest. Security of that corner of War Zone "C". Search and destroy. We went out on the missions; a lot of them. In fact, The Old Man kept us in the field. I think that's what kept our morale so high.

**Interviewer:** You moved right with the troop, then.

**SMA Bainbridge:** I moved right with the troops. I never missed an operation with the 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry, in Vietnam, until I reenlisted in December of 1965. We were preparing for an operation and we prepped the area and we went in on the C&C (Command Control) ship. Colonel Williams, who was the 1st Aviation, in the 1st Division, we went into the zone. Some of the shell holes were still smoking when we landed. The Old Man swore me in right there. I'll never forget. We got off the aircraft and the pilot, Colonel Williams, got out. We had the assistant "3", or he was coming on to be the "3" for the 1st Brigade, with us. We got off and he was just getting ready to get off and he still had one foot up in the aircraft. He said, "What are your guys doing?" Colonel Haldane said, "I going to reenlist the Sergeant Major." He said, "You're going to WHAT!" He stood there about thirty seconds, with his foot still up in the aircraft, trying to figure out

what in the world we were doing, reenlisting out on that hot LZ (Landing Zone). But reenlist, I did; right there. When I raised my right hand, Colonel Williams, the pilot, raised his hand, when Colonel Haldane said, "Raise your right." He got about halfway through the enlistment oath and he said, "Willy, what the hell do you have your hand up for, you're not reenlisting." But he just automatically put his hand up.

**Interviewer:** That's what is know as "getting caught up in the moment."

**SMA Bainbridge:** That's right. That's right. I reenlisted right there, and The Old Man said, "Get back on the aircraft. Colonel Williams has got orders to..." I said, "Hey, wait. We've got an operation we're going on. That's what I'm out here for." He said, "I don't think you heard me, Top." He said, "Back on the aircraft." He said, "I want you to go to the Division Headquarters and get all of the stuff squared away and send that money to Hazel like you said you was going to, because you're going on R&R (Rest and Relaxation), right?" I said, "Yeah, after this operation." He said, "But you're not going on this operation. Get on the aircraft." That was the only one I missed. I'll talk more about that later on.

**Interviewer:** How was you selected as the Sergeant Major of the II Field Force? First of all, the II Field Force was new at that time. Right?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah. It was a brand new unit. I had been formed at Fort Hood, Texas, by the III Corps Commander, who at that time was General Ralph Haines. Lieutenant General Ralph Haines. I guess I was selected because they wanted to get the best sergeant major, Butch. No, I just kidding. I was a battalion sergeant, and our Division Sergeant Major was Bill Wooldridge, and our Division Commander was General Jonathan O. Seamon. General Seamon had been selected to be the new II Field Force Commander. He asked Bill Wooldridge to go with him to be his Sergeant Major at the Corps. Bill said that he wanted to stay

with the Division, and I can understand that. So he asked Bill Wooldridge for a recommendation. Bill Wooldridge recommended me. General Seamon said, "That's a good recommendation. He's the only sergeant major in the Division, to my knowledge, that's always in the field with the unit." He said, "I've never seen him at base camp when the 28th Infantry is in the field." That's how I got to be II Field Force Sergeant Major.

**Interviewer:** When did you go over to the II Field Force?

**SMA Bainbridge:** March of '66. Bill recommended me and General Seamon had already, I guess, had his eye on me when Bill decided he didn't want to go. If I had been the Division Sergeant Major, in Bill Wooldridge's shoes, I sure I would have done the same thing. The Division Sergeant Major is a pretty prestigious position.

**Interviewer:** How many divisions, brigades, or regiments did you have under the II Field Force?

**SMA Bainbridge:** We had the 1st Infantry, 25th Infantry, a brigade of the 101st Airborne,

**Interviewer:** Didn't you have the 11th Cav.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah, the 11th Cav. The Black Horse. And a whole host of support units. Of course, you know that it was a typical corps, Butch, corps headquarters. The reason they called it field forces is because the Vietnamese had corps, and we were in the Vietnamese III Corps area. So things wouldn't get confused, we became Field Forces. They had an I Field Force, up at Nha Trang. So II Field Forces was down at Long Binh.

**Interviewer:** The II Field Forces was actually the coordinating headquarters for the different divisions.

**SMA Bainbridge:** It was. It was. It operated like a typical III Corps, or XVIII Corps, or I Corps, the tactical headquarters. General Seamon, I think, was probably one of the best damn commanders they could of had for that thing, because he took that job as it was intended to be

and he had some of his staff. Some came from Fort Hood. Some came from the divisions around Vietnam. I can recall that we would have a meeting every morning, about seven o'clock in the briefing room. They would brief him and I was always at the back of that briefing room. Messages would go out to do this or do that, telling the divisions what to do. About two or three different times, General Seamon made comments about the messages going to those field commanders, directing them to do this, thus, and so. His message was, "Make sure that messages are not so directive in nature. Coordinate, support, etc. We're the coordinating headquarters." Well, one particular morning, I can remember, they did all of the briefings and there was a big operation getting ready to go on. At the end of the briefing he said, "I've been talking to the staff about the type of messages that I want to go to the divisions." He said, "I've seen three or four messages this morning that are not what I want to go to go out." He said, "You may have time to catch them, or you may not. If those get to the divisions in the format that they're in now, there going to be some field grade Article 15s around here or there going to be some hefty donations to the Dong Nai Orphanage." I'll tell you, that staff meeting broke up right now. And a couple of them did make it. You know the 2, the 3, and all of those guys had messages out there; the wrong type worded messages. So the Dong Nai Orphanage was the recipient of some hefty donations.

**Interviewer:** What occupied most of your time when you were with the II Field Force?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Butch, there were two things that kept me going. We had a new headquarters and a lot of senior NCOs in that headquarters. The headquarters commandant, the sergeants major of the 2, 3. All of them had come from Fort Hood. I had been over there for a while and knew what was going on, and I was trying to get them in the same frame of mind that General Seamon wanted everybody to be in, as far as taking care of the troops in the field. Taking care of the troops there. We

had nothing at Long Binh. We had tents. The headquarters building was there, for The Old Man., but the rest of it was tents. I was trying to get the headquarters going, trying to get the headquarters commandant and the guys doing what they were supposed to be doing, and also taking care of soldiers. Making sure they had everything that we could give them, which wasn't a hell of a lot, at that time. Then the rest of the time, was making trips out to the field. Was there something we could get to the troops that they weren't getting, that the Corps could assist them in getting. I remember one time we visited the brigade of the 101st. They had been in a pretty pitched battle and had a few VC (Viet Cong) lying around, and on one of those VC they found a new car order, a copy of reassignment orders, and one other piece of paper for a guy by the name of Jake Holland, who had been a company commander of our "A" Company in Funston, and was levied to go to Vietnam as an advisor. He had been killed in Vietnam. My boss, Colonel Fleeson, and I had went out and presented the Purple Heart to his wife. Here, almost a year later, the 101st Brigade had been in a fire fight and they had killed the guy with these papers on him, who obviously had killed Jake Holland, because his position was overrun and they found his decapitated body. This guy was pretty suspect, because he had all of those personal papers.

**Interviewer:** The order slip was for a car that he had ordered through the PX.

**SMA Bainbridge:** He had ordered that through the PX. It was an invoice for a new car. He was getting ready to go back home. The Army probably does more bringing folks together, around and around and what goes around, comes around. But I'll never forget that.

**Interviewer:** Your greatest accomplishments were getting that II Field Force going and then going out and visiting the units.

**SMA Bainbridge:** I think so. Those two things, and to get us organized to support the troops in the field, and then to let the troops

in the field know that we were there. Can we help you? As a matter of fact, I think it was part of our initiative at II Field Force Headquarters, General Westmoreland had a meeting at Nha Trang. Wasn't that the big headquarters up north? Yeah. I get Nha Trang and Da Nang confused.

**Interviewer:** Nha Trang is where the 5th Special Forces was.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** The I Field Force headquarters was right inside the 5th Special Forces compound.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah. General Westmoreland used to have meetings up there. He had commanders meetings and he'd have senior NCO meetings. I remember one time I went up with General Seamon. After he had his commanders' meeting, he met with us. One of the things that we had a problem with in the division, we couldn't promote people into positions to replace battle casualties. They said, "Well you've got to have a quota." Our argument was, we have a man here already qualified to take that job. Certainly he's not going to be taking a job that isn't pro....

(End of Tape OH 94.4-4, Side 1)

(Begin Tape OH 94.4-4, Side 2)

**Interviewer:** As the last tape ended you were talking about the promotion of personnel to replace somebody that was killed in action. They said that they wanted you to not use somebody that was already there but wait until somebody else comes in to fill that slot.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Or a quota to promote

**Interviewer:** Go ahead and continue.

**SMA Bainbridge:** And so we had been at the commanders meeting with General Westmoreland and when he met with the senior noncommissioned officers, I told him about the problems I had in the 1st Division in getting promotions. All of the other noncommissioned officers there agreed with me, that there ought to be some system devised where if you

had a KIA (Killed in Action), that division ought to be able to promote within if you had somebody to fill that slot, rather than wait for a quota to come down at the end of the month, because you know you're not going to be taking over and promote somebody ahead of somebody else, because the guy's gone, so you won't have excess promotions. And he agreed. It wasn't too long after that, that we were able to do some of that sort of promoting, if somebody was killed in action.

**Interviewer:** Tell me about your transition from a battalion level to a corps level.

**SMA Bainbridge:** As I mentioned earlier, I had been recommended by Bill Wooldridge and then General Seamon said that he always saw me where the battalion was located. But anyway, we got a call one day at Poc Vinh, from Brigade. They said that Danger Six was inbound to the pad up there and he wanted me to come up and pick him up.

**Interviewer:** Who is Danger Six?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Danger Six was the 1st Division Commander. So I said, "Fine." I went to Colonel Haldane and I said, "Danger Six is on the way, and they said they want me to meet him at the pad." I said, "I sure that's not right. They want you to go." He said, "No Top, you just go up and pick him up." I said, "Okay." So I went up and picked him up. He was going to have lunch with us. He and his aide, which was Captain William D. Merritt, they came up to battalion and had lunch with us. During lunch he said, "Colonel Haldane, I want to tell you that I'm up here on a mission." Colonel Haldane said, "Yeah, I think I know what the mission is." He said, "You're after my Sergeant Major." He said, "Yes. That's right. I want to take him to II Field Force with me." Colonel Haldane said, "Well I don't want to lose him." He said, "I'll tell you what. You can have him, but on condition." He said, "This fellow carries the heaviest pack in the battalion. He marches all day with the troops. He's on every operation. When we get ready to RON (remain over night) in a position someplace, he has a defensive position

prepared for both him and for me." Then he said, "He ready to walk the line when I'm ready." He said, "So you've got to get somebody that can do all of that." I think that was the best compliment I was ever paid by a combat commander.

**Interviewer:** Did General Seamon go from the 1st Division to II Field Force?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah. He knew he was going over there, so he was looking for a sergeant major to take with him. The other sergeant major that came over, brought that group over, but he was administrative or military police, but he had been selected to bring the headquarters over; he really wasn't going to stay. So General Seamon took me over with him. I said, "Well, I planned on going on R&R to Hong Kong to meet Hazel." He said, "Go. Continue your plans toto go on R&R. As a matter of fact, I have three restaurants that I'll give you names of, try to eat in every one of them." That was General Seamon. So he gave me the names, and we ate in all three of them. One of them that I can remember is "Jimmy's Kitchen." It was back in a little alley of Hong Kong. We got good food. Another thing that turned out when we got ready to leave, Captain Merritt said, "The Old Man is going to need a driver over there." He said, "How about you bringing a driver." So later on that day I told Colonel Haldane, "General Seamon wants a driver." The aide said, "Bring one from here. One that I knew." He said, "That's make good sense. You're going to take Johnson, aren't you?" I said, "Well, that's who I want to take." He said, "You take him." He said, "I don't want you to take some guy that don't pan out and then The Old Man will come here and say that we sent him a dud."

**Interviewer:** What rank was Johnson?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Spec. Five. He was the PLL (Prescribed Load List) clerk in the motor pool, and a good one. Mr. Thurston, who was the Motor Officer--a warrant officer--he was really upset with me. He wouldn't talk to me for about three days, when he found out that I was

going to take Johnson with me, as a driver. Johnson didn't want to go. I said, "Johnny, you don't have a choice." I said, "Your next assignment is going to be as the driver for General Seamon." Johnny was good. He had the PLL down pat. He knew where all of the parts were. But what Mr. Thurston didn't know, he also had his assistant that knew it backwards and forwards too. He said, "You're going to take my best man and then things will be all screwed up." He said that he had it with me. So I let him simmer for about three days. I went down there and I said, "Well, did you find out that it's not going to be as bad as you thought, Mr. Thurston?" He said, "Yeah, Top. I did. We're going to be in pretty good shape." He said, "I can understand why you're taking Johnson with you." So it turned out that when I went to First Army, a year or so later, General Seamon asked me to come up the. When I got there, Guess what? He was looking for a driver. Johnson was stationed at Fort Knox, Kentucky, which was one of our school posts, so Johnson came to First Army.

**Interviewer:** He probably didn't mind that too much. Did he?

**SMA Bainbridge:** No he didn't. He sure didn't. Just a little aside. When I became Sergeant Major the Army, I got a call at Fort Bliss, from the Master Sergeant Johnson, who was working at the White House motor pool. He said, "When you get to town, Top. Call this number and you've got all of the transportation you need."

**Interviewer:** That's outstanding. How long were you assigned to the II Field Force?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I was with them from March until August.

**Interviewer:** Do have anything else you would like to say about your assignment to II Field Force?

**SMA Bainbridge:** No, we talked about what I did there. I think that pretty much covers it. One other thing. It's just a family sort of thing. We had a division base at Bear Cat, about a twenty minute chopper ride from II Field Force Headquarters. Our oldest daughter's

husband's brother was stationed at Bear Cat, with the engineers there. I called him up and The Old Man's pilot and I went out on Sunday afternoon and picked him up and brought him to II Field Force Headquarters, for the afternoon and the evening. Neil never forgot that. Every time we go to Salines, Kansas--he works for his brother out there--he always mentions that.

**Interviewer:** What was his name?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Neil Koop. K-O-O-P. I think he was spec. four. I went out there and got him, in that chopper. Gosh, he never got treatment like that before. Yeah, old Bear Cat.

**Interviewer:** That's where the Thai's had their headquarters.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Right. Right. Was that built as a Special Forces camp, to start with? No, I don't think so. I think that was built for the Thai's and they also had an engineer unit there. Neil was with a welding outfit out there.

**Interviewer:** Your first overseas non-combat tour was with VII Corps, over in Germany. A little later on we'll take about your decision to reenter the Army, what prompted that, and the circumstances the surrounded that. What I'd like to do now is discuss your non-combat overseas tours. During your tour you were assigned to Headquarters, VII Corps. Where were you assigned when you received orders to go to VII Corps?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I was at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. Did we talk, yesterday, about that, Butch? No, we were just up through World War II.

**Interviewer:** Right

**SMA Bainbridge:** Okay. I was at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, in the 3rd Battalion, 4th Training Regiment when I got orders to go to VII Corps.

**Interviewer:** Where was VII Corps headquarters located?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Stuttgart. At Kelly Barracks. I went from Fort

Leonard Wood, Missouri to the Corps Headquarters. Hazel and the girls went with me. We had a trailer at Leonard Wood. We took it home and my brother parked it. Then we went to New York, and went by ship.

**Interviewer:** You had concurrent travel.

**SMA Bainbridge:** We had concurrent travel, and since I was accompanied, we had a cabin, which was below the water line. Of course there weren't any port holes or nothing. Our youngest daughter, Mary, it didn't bother her. But Cathy, our oldest daughter, was sick all the way over. We had a real good steward at the table where we ate. He was always feeding them chicken, and telling them that it was sea gull. The one morning that Cathy felt like she was going to be able to eat, after about four days of being real sick. At breakfast, when they gave you cereal they poured the milk in the bowl first. Mary, sitting across from Cathy, picks up this bowl of milk and says, "Look Cathy. Back and forth." (The Sergeant Major held his hands as if he was holding a bowl, and he rocked from side-to-side.) Cathy said, "No!" She put her hand over her mouth. Needless to say, Cathy didn't get any breakfast. But we went to Europe, and we went into Bremerhaven. Then we went, by train, down to Stuttgart. Of course, we knew that Hazel and the girls were going to be quartered down in Munich, at Warner Kaserne. So I checked in and they gave me a pass, to take Hazel and the girls and get them setup in quarters down in Munich, and then I went back to Stuttgart.

**Interviewer:** Why were they quartered down at Warner Kaserne?

**SMA Bainbridge:** There wasn't any quarters available in the Stuttgart area. So in order to bring them over, we took the quarters in Munich. You're going to ask me a question, later on, about the best and worst quarters we lived in. Those were the worst.

**Interviewer:** How long were they there before they were able to join you in Stuttgart?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I think it was about four months, Butch. I was

very fortunate. On the weekends I could go down there. The first couple of weekends I went down on the train, but when I car came in, I would go down on Friday night. I had a good boss and he gave me Saturday mornings off so I would be able to spend time with the family. It was about a three and a half hour drive down there; down the autobahn.

**Interviewer:** You know, that's kind of unusual, because over there they usually made you wait until they had quarters right there in your locale.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Right.

**Interviewer:** How did you swing that?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I don't know. I just asked for concurrent travel and they came back and said, "Would you take temporary quarters at Munich for your family. It's commuting distance on the weekend." I said, "Yes, we would be glad to do that." At least they would be there.

**Interviewer:** In country.

**SMA Bainbridge:** In country, anyway. So I'll just tell you what the worst quarters were. Those were the worst quarters we ever had. They were the old maid's quarters. Remember, those quarters over there were three-story quarters, or four-story, depending where you happened to be. Then up on the top, they had enough maid's quarters to take care of those apartments. The four of us had a kitchen, a sitting room, two bath rooms, and eight bedrooms.

**Interviewer:** You had the whole attic area.

**SMA Bainbridge:** We had the whole attic and it was a peaked roof. You had to be careful when you got to the edge or you would bump your head on the ceiling, but at least the family was there. We got to travel around Munich a lot, on the weekends. It was worth it, but terrible, terrible quarters.

**Interviewer:** What rank were you when you were assigned to VII Corps?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Sergeant first class E6. See, that was just after

the master sergeant E8 and sergeant major E9 had been established; in '58. In June of '58 was when the first master sergeants were promoted. We left in January of '59, to go to Europe.

**Interviewer:** You were in Operations, weren't you?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I was in Operations. I was a couple of things. When I first got there, Butch, I was the Top Secret Control NCO. God, what a pain in the rear end that was. It's in the G3. In addition to being the G3 Air Sergeant, I would double as the G3 Air Officer. I was also the Operations Sergeant, in the Ops portion. We didn't have a G3 Air Officer at the time, and I'll get into that a little bit later. We had the operations and the plans, etc. I was sure glad to get rid of that Top Secret Control Officer business. I can remember one particular incident. We had a Major Forbes, who pickup a top secret document from me. You know, they had annexes, and appendices, and all that business. You really had to be careful going down through those things. I said top secret. It was Secret Control, because the TS (top secret) was a warrant officer. He had everything in the whole Headquarters for the TS, but I was the Secret Control. But Major Forbes signed out a document from me one time. About three days later he came back over and checked in the document with me from the Plans Office. I said, "You're missing Annex C." He said, "No I'm not. There wasn't a Annex C with it." I said, "Major Forbes, of course there was. It's right here on the log, and you signed for the whole thing." He said, "Damnit Bainbridge, take the document." He said, "It's all there." I said, "Sir, you can do a lot of things and give a lot of orders, but you can't order me to take that secret document back if everything is not there. You know that. Sir." He said a couple of oaths and said, "You better take that blank, blank document back." Lieutenant Colonel Vogelsang was the XO. He said, "Forbes, get all of the documents, and then he'll take it." He stomped out of there, and in about an hour he came back. He said, "Here is your damn Annex C." It was laying right on his desk and he had just

taken it out. He wanted to use it a little bit longer. Major Forbes was my buddy after that, but he was really upset with me that day. You know, I had to inventory those damn things every quarter. That was many, many hours of work. It seemed like it was unnecessary, but of course it wasn't, but you still had to go through item-by-item. So I was glad to get out of that. We got a warrant officer in by the name of Mr. Chase. He took all that stuff off my hands. I didn't have to fool with it anymore.

**Interviewer:** So basically, what was your job as the Ops Sergeant there?

**SMA Bainbridge:** As I say, I was the G3 Air Sergeant and also the Operations Sergeant. My job was to make sure we had all the maps and things ready to go. In the Ops portion we had a big wall map, and we had to keep that posted as to where all of the units in VII Corps where, whether in the field or whether at base camp, etc. We had to keep the traces of the Cavs; the 2nd and the 11th ACR (Armored Cavalry Regiment) up on the border, and the divisions; the whole works. Then we had the operations plan. When we got ready to go on a field exercise, make sure that all the vans and all the things were ready to go to the field. My God, what a job when we moved that headquarters to the field. We used to call the V Corps the "Paper Tiger," because they always went over to the gymnasium, you know, when they went to the field. The VII Corps went to the field.

**Interviewer:** The VII Corps had the maneuver elements, and the V Corps had the support elements. Right?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Right. When we went to the field, it was a major operation to go out there. We had every kind of setup, Butch, that's imaginable, in the three and a half years that I was there. One, we had the maintenance tents. Do you remember the old steel-frame maintenance tents?

**Interviewer:** Uh huh.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Well, we had two of those. One of them was the G2, and one of them was the G3, and then in the center we had a GP (general purpose) medium what was the War Room, where The Old Man would sit. Then we went from that to a hospital tent. It has two ends and as many middles as you needed to setup the tent. We had duck boards and all that business. When the Chief of Staff went out there, we took his over-stuffed furniture, and all that business. So it really was a major logistical job to move that damn thing to the field. We would have to go out two or three days in advance to set that up, and we always used to gripe. "Damnit, we would be better if we was at war. We could take a building someplace." Then we went to the vans that were on a duce and a half frame, with the expandable sides. We would setup everything in that van. You could just drive it to the area where you were going to go, stop it, hook up your telephones. Your telephones were already installed in there. They had their own heating element. So we kind of went full circle. We'd have the alerts and I was always in charge of making sure the troops got in there, and keeping the alert notification list up-to-speed so that you call me, and I call the next guy. There was always a change. You know how that stuff goes. All of those things was my job.

**Interviewer:** Didn't VII Corps have three infantry and two armored divisions, and two cav regiments?

**SMA Bainbridge:** We had two cav regiments, three infantry divisions, and two armored. It kept us busy. It kept us busy. We worked a lot with the II German Corps. I think their headquarters was down in New Ulm, down in that area. We worked with the operations plan. Those had to be updated it seemed like every time we turned around. We had to make sure that the Loesheim Gap and all those corridors were completely covered. But I enjoyed that. I enjoyed that. I can remember one Chief so Staff we had was always calling for a briefing. I'd have to get the map updated with the stickers on them, you know. We had to

make the film unit insignias so you can put Scotch tape on them so you can stick them on the map, so you could see through the damn things. He called for a briefing on something one time. I said to Colonel Paul A. Baltes, who was my boss, "Colonel Baltes, why don't we just put this briefing for the Chief on butcher paper" He said, "Do you thin it will work?" I said, "Hell, he can't do anything more than fire us. He wants a briefing on this particular operation that we're going to." I said, "But there's about five or six different overlays. Let's put it on butcher paper and you can just flip it over." So we did. He thought that was the best thing since sliced bread. It saved us as lot of work, and yet he got his stuff done. We was making those things up and he was thinking, all the time, "Why are they doing this?", I'm sure. When we came up with that, it worked very, very well, and we could just throw the damn things away and make a new one.

**Interviewer:** Who was the Corps Commander?

**SMA Bainbridge:** General Oaks was the Corps Commander. And then after General Oaks was General Milloy. His son commanded the 4th Infantry Division in Vietnam. He replaced General Oaks. I remember an operation one time, and we were down in these vans by that time. We had the G3 and the G2 and then the War Room was in the center; three vans. The reflection from the acetate on the map would bother his eyes. So I took some blue construction paper and put the blue side next to the map and toned down the light from map lights. He really thought that was great, so he could read the map without all that glare. I remember he came in one time and we was on a FTX (Field Training Exercise) with the Germans and the British. The Germans had crossed the Danhau River, in one area, but we hadn't. He came in and said, "How old is that trace, Sergeant Bainbridge?" I said, "It's about forty minutes old." He said, "Move the American symbols to the other side of the Danhau River." I said, "Sir, they're not over there yet." He said, "Just move the symbols over there. It looks better." I said, "Yes, sir." I moved the

symbols over there and I told Colonel Baltes. He said, "Yeah, The Old Man likes to have a nice smooth line. Well, from then on, if they were almost ready, I already moved them up. Or if the Germans were almost ready, I'd move them up. He liked that smooth line. I can remember one time, we were over at Robinson Barracks. That's where the "Jay Hawks: played their ball games, over on this hilltop at Robinson Barracks. They had a ball game. The Old Man drove a white Chrysler. He was in his own car, Sunday afternoon. He took off and went home, going like a bat out of hell. Hazel and I were leaving, and I saw him take the corner, heading back toward Kelly Barracks. Hazel and I got almost to Kelly, and I said, "Let's go over and see Johnny Johnson and his wife, over at Panzer Kaserne. Let's go over and talk to them a little bit." I said, "Ah no, let's just go home and make ourself a sundae. We'll go over there another time, because it's getting kind of late in the afternoon." About five-thirty, six o'clock, we went in the house and had just got the sundae made, and the phone rang. An alert. The Old Man didn't say anything to anybody, he just drove home after that ball game, and called an alert. I said to Hazel, "I sure wish we would have went on over to see the Johnsons." But anyway, he always liked to have the trace of the front line units nice and even; both on the same side of the river.

**Interviewer:** I wonder what he would do in combat?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Probably not move them up.

**Interviewer:** During that period of time, what do you think were the most common problems the soldiers had, living in Germany? I'm referring to either the single soldier or the married soldier.

**SMA Bainbridge:** I think one of the biggest problems, of course, was not enough quarters for soldiers. It was awfully tough for those who had to live on the economy. I can understand why they lived on the economy. It was because they wanted their family with them. But I would say the lack of sufficient quarters to take care of the number of married soldiers we had over there was one of the big problems. And

also, those single soldiers that had to live in some of those old World War II German barracks. That wasn't any better. I can remember Kelly Barracks. I used to have to pull charge of quarters, when I was the Operations Sergeant. It was just a dark old dungeon, it seemed like down there, you know. Those young enlisted soldiers did they best they could to fix the place up, but there wasn't much you could do with them. And you know, I was Sergeant Major of the Army before they started working on those things over there, to make them right again.

**Interviewer:** If it wasn't for VOLAR (Volunteer Army) they probably would have never changed.

**SMA Bainbridge:** That's right. That was a tough time for anybody over there. Of course, a lot of soldiers that were over there, not only did they have the problem of the quarters, and one thing and another, it was the first time they had a family that far away from home. You couldn't just jump in the car and drive over to see mom and dad. Even though they're on their own, it's still sort of traumatic to be that far away from the U.S. of A.

**Interviewer:** When did you depart Germany?

**SMA Bainbridge:** August of 1962. We left VII Corps and went to Fort Riley, Kansas. We flew back. I had extended for six months. As a matter of fact, I got assignment orders to go to the 12th Infantry, at Fort Riley, Kansas, I think, but because of my extension, those orders were cancelled. Then I extended and got my next set of orders. I can remember the AG Sergeant Major coming up, with a big grin on his face, and saying, "Hey, I've got your orders, Bill." I said, "Oh? Where am I going?" He said, "To Fort Riley, Kansas, how does that grab you?" I said, "God! That's great!" He said, "What!" He said, "That's out in the middle of nowhere." I said, "Have you ever been there?" He said, "No." I said, "I've been there before, for several years." I said, "I happen to like it." He said, "Well, I'll be damned. I thought I was going to be able to hack you off." You know, I went to Germany, as a

sergeant first class E6, Butch, and that was, of course, after the E8s and E9s came in. When the E8s and E9s came in, it didn't do anything for E6s. It only did something for E7s, if you recall at that time. I had been in an E7 position, from 1953 on: all that time. I spend ten and a half years as an E6. I thought it was a permanent grade. I was pretty damn permanent for me. There was also a period in there, if you recall, that there weren't any E7 allocations that came out of the Department of the Army. There were a few "blood stripes" floating around, but there were so many overages in the senior NCOs, after Korea, there weren't any vacancies.

**Interviewer:** They either had to die or retire.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah, and all of those officers that got riffed, I believe they gave every one of them a 1502 E7, I think.

**Interviewer:** You know, later on in the interview we normally ask about that situation whenever the Army allowed officers that were going to be riffed to become a noncommissioned officer, and take up those slots. For years it help stagnate the promotion system. Why don't we just continue to discuss that.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Okay.

**Interviewer:** Go ahead and give me your views on what had happened, how it affected you, and how you think it affected the Army.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Well I think it was devastating on the enlisted folks. Because of the fact that you couldn't be promoted from captain to major--because there was a stagnation there too--didn't mean that you was going to be a great NCO at the E7 level, for goodness sakes. That's what happened. It seemed that everybody that got riffed, that wanted to stay in the Army, came back as a 1502 Administrative Specialist E7. I can remember, you know, that they were all over the place. They hadn't been through the business of really paying their dues, as far as competing within the Army. Even though this was before, what I think one of the great things that happened in my career in the Army, the

centralized promotion system. We'll talk about that some more, I'm sure. This was devastating, because you could be the best damn platoon sergeant in the Army, as an E6, and you weren't going to make E7, I'll guarantee you, because there wasn't any vacancies, first off, Army wide. If there wasn't one on your post, you sure won't going to be promoted. That was just a terrible, terrible thing. They finally got their act together and said, "No, there's going to be a grade determination. If you want to stay in the Army as an enlisted person, then we're going to determine, from your record and your qualification, at what level you'll enter. But you're sure not going to be a master sergeant." But that was a long time coming, and it hurt a lots of folks.

**Interviewer:** Do you think, also at that time, a lot of those people were filling a slot but weren't doing the job they were supposed to, because they were off somewhere else?

**SMA Bainbridge:** There's no question. There's no question. When the master sergeant E8 and sergeant major E9 grades were established, in June of 1958, I don't thin the Army promoted the right people. In every instance, there were folks like you say. The weren't doing the job. They were out on the range, and they were running rod and gun clubs, and that sort of thing, but as soon as the E8 and E9 came along, that master sergeant E7 became an E8 or an E9. The Battalion Sergeant Major, whose name was Markham, in Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, he was one of the first master sergeants E8 made at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. That was a logical choice. He was an 11 series. He was an operations sergeant. He knew his business, so they promoted Markham. That's great, but there were others that weren't in the position, that got promoted. But it was a transition period for the Army, Butch. Now everybody was really tuned in. They knew they had to do something to take care of this grade stagnation at the E7 level, and the E8 and E9 helped, but it didn't help guys like Bill Bainbridge, in the E6 grade, because it took another two or three years to get that squared away to where some of those E6

positions were upgraded to E7 positions, etc. So it was a terrible transition time for those of us who were struggling, trying to make a grade, and we couldn't. But when I went to Europe, from Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, I got there in '59, and in 1960, I made E7. I didn't change my stripes. I made sergeant first class E7. Then in 1961, I made master sergeant.

**Interviewer:** Whenever they introduced the grades of E8 and E9, that also created a big confusion with the stripes, with the wear-out period, and reintroducing the three-striper. The sergeant was no longer, what is now the staff sergeant. It created a lot of confusion, didn't it?

**SMA Bainbridge:** It really did, and I have a theory about that, Butch. You know, people were worried about taking off a stripe. They said, "You know, people back home will think I have been demoted." People back home couldn't have cared less, number one. Number two, they didn't know what the stripe was in the first place, unless you told them. If we would have just said, "Okay, this is the first of June 1958. The master sergeant E8 and sergeant major E9 program is going to be established, effective the first of June. You're going to be a master sergeant E8, okay? You don't change your chevrons." "You're going to be a staff sergeant E6. If you don't make sergeant first class E7, you take your stripe off: you just take one off." I would have been a war story in the bar room, for about six or eight months, and would have been the end of it. But instead of that, we went ten years before you could tell the top three guys without asking, "Are you an E7 or are you an E8?" "Oh, I'm an E8." "Are you an E6 or are you an E7?" "No, I'm an E7." "You two guys have got the same chevrons on, but he's one higher than you." "Yeah, right." That was all in the name of economy. Well it still would have been in the economy, and you wouldn't have to do anything except cut one off. They said, "Well, the chevron would have shown where it was." So what, it wouldn't take long for that khaki

to bleach out and it would look just like it did before.

**Interviewer:** That's right.

**SMA Bainbridge:** We would have been done with it, but ten years? Ten years? Well again, that was a transition thing, but we didn't do what we were supposed to, in my view, and it took ten years to fix it.

**Interviewer:** What I'm going to do is talk about your stateside assignments. I'm going to skip over the discussion of your second overseas tour, which was at USARPAC. I'm going to bring that in just before we talk about your assignment to the Sergeants Major Academy.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Okay.

**Interviewer:** I think that those two assignments are so closely related, it makes more sense to do it at that time. You were recalled to active duty, in January of '51, during the Korean War. I would like for you to tell me about that recall, to include when you received the recall, what your employment was at that time, and what steps you had to take to prepare yourself to answer the recall.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Okay Butch. As I recall, I was given my recall to active duty, in the fall of 1950; October, maybe. When did it all start?

**Interviewer:** In June of 1950.

**SMA Bainbridge:** In June of '50, was when the Korean War started, and I believe it was about September or October--somewhere along in there--when I was alerted to go back to active duty. Hazel and I were farming, in Victoria, Illinois. It was the third year of our own farm, after working for my old school teacher's husband for a year, and for Roy Taylor for a year. In two years I had my own farm. We were just beginning to kind of be able to tip our head back so we weren't drowning with all the debts, and one thing and another. We had a big mortgage, because Hazel and I had gone into partnership with the owner of the farm's daughter and her husband. We did all of the work and we split it with them because they had the farm. We had part of the machinery and

they had part of the machinery. It was a fifty-fifty deal. So here I was, with a crop just about ready to start getting out, one hundred and fifty or two hundred head of hogs just about ready to send to market, twelve or fifteen head of milk cows, about thirty head of cattle, three hundred chickens, two little girls, and a wife. Here I am, going back into the Army. I said, "I'll be glad to go back if you need me, but I need time to get my crop in." Well, I was granted that extension, and I had to report in January of '51. In the mean time, between the time we got our first orders and when we actually went, I bought an old trailer so we'd have quarters for the family. I bought a Pontiac trailer; I remember that. They called them "house trailers" in those days. Now they call them manufactured homes. We got the crop out. Sold the crop. Sold the cows. Sold the machinery. But we couldn't satisfy the mortgage with the bank, with the money that we got. I suppose we got, maybe, forty cents back on the dollar that we had invested. So that meant we couldn't satisfy the mortgage with the bank, so we had to pay that off later, with Army pay.

**Interviewer:** Where did you say the farm was located?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Victoria.

**Interviewer:** Victoria.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Victoria, Illinois. The farm was a hundred and ninety-three acres. Hazel and I did it by ourselves. The guy that had been there before, also had his father and a hired man. So there were three of them farming it. The fences were run down, and the shed was full of manure, and all that business. The buildings had to be painted. I did it by myself, but I worked all of the time. So anyway, we went back in the Army, in January of '51. I went to Fort Sheridan, Illinois, for processing, and was headed for Camp Breckenridge, Kentucky. Some colonel got a hold of my record, and was looking at it. He said, "I'm not going to send you to Camp Breckenridge, Kentucky. I'm going to send you to Camp Atterbury, Indiana." He said, "The Army is getting ready to

open up a food service school down there and they need somebody with some leadership skills, and who's willing to work." He said, "I've looked at your record here, and I see why you were called back into the service, so I'm going to send you to Camp Atterbury." So to Atterbury, Indiana that we went. I became the I&E (Information and Education) NCO, and a few other things. I was a platoon sergeant for about sixty guys, I guess; students in the platoon. I set the standards for that. That was Hazel's first stint in the Army. She got upset with me because every Friday night I had a G.I. party, and she was at home. You know, I never thought to explain to her what a G.I. party was. They say that husbands are the worst provers of information to Army wives.

**Interviewer:** She just thought you were out partying with the guys.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah. Yeah, and here I was, down on my hands and knees. I had a room in the barracks. I would G.I. my floor, six inches outside of the door, and the troops had to match it.

**Interviewer:** At what rank were you recalled?

**SMA Bainbridge:** As a sergeant first class. As an E6 sergeant first class. We were there, I guess, a little over a year. And then they closed that detachment. It was Air Force and Army. I think I mentioned, yesterday, the Air Force didn't have a food service school, so they were satelliting on us.

**Interviewer:** You were assigned there in January of '51?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah, January of '51. We took the trailer down there, and the trailer was in Columbus, Indiana, just about twelve miles south of Atterbury. Atterbury is located at Edinburg, Indiana, which is only a little town. There weren't any quarters. There were two houses on Camp Atterbury. One for the Division Commander and the other for the Chief of Staff. But...

(End of Tape OH 94.4-4, Side 2)

(Begin Tape OH 94.4-5, Side 1)

**Interviewer:** As our last tape ended, you were talking about where

you had your trailer parked, out there at Columbus, Indiana. What we'll do, we'll continue our discussion, with Camp Atterbury. How long were you stationed at Camp Atterbury?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I think it was about a year. Then the detachment closed up and we went from there to Fort Sheridan, Illinois.

**Interviewer:** When you were first assigned there, you were a platoon sergeant, and later you became the first sergeant. Is that right?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yes. I was a platoon sergeant. As I said, I had all of the other things that we had to do at the time; the extra I&E NCO, and all that business. Then I became the Detachment First Sergeant, as a sergeant first class. Of course that was in the days when E7 was the top grade; I was an E6. Actually I wasn't. I was an E5. I was a staff sergeant E5, when I got called back in, because I was promoted in June of '51, to sergeant first class.

**Interviewer:** In fact, when you became that first sergeant, you was a sergeant first class, and there were twenty-four master sergeants in the company that didn't want to be a first sergeant. Tell me about that selection process.

**SMA Bainbridge:** As you said, we had about twenty-four master sergeants there, but they were all cooks, bakers, meat cutters, and whatever. None of them wanted to be a first sergeant. They liked the certain hours in the classroom, and that was it. They didn't want to be a first sergeant, so the Company Commander, Captain Hudson, asked me if I would be the first sergeant. I said, "You bet. There's no problem there. The only thing is, I need to have the backing. If I'm going to be the First Sergeant, I'm going to be the First Sergeant." He said, "There isn't any question there. You're going to be the First Sergeant." So I was. I didn't have any problems with those fellows there. I was going to have a problem a little bit later on, when I got to Fort Riley, when the same situation came up; but it was a problem that we handled.

But it was the same situation there; about the same number of senior noncommissioned officers who wanted nothing to do with that position of first sergeant. I jumped at the opportunity, because it was a challenge and it certainly was time consuming, so you didn't get bored. You know the feeling, Butch.

**Interviewer:** When you went from a platoon sergeant to a first sergeant, that was a big transition, because of the administrative requirements that you had to perform as a first sergeant. How did you make that transition? Who assisted you with things like the morning report, duty rosters, and all of the other administration?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I had a good company clerk on the morning report business. Being a school unit, one of our biggest challenges was doing the paperwork transferring the students in--they well all TDY to us-- and transferring them back out, and keeping contact with their units. As I said, I had a good administrative company clerk to help me there, and I handled the troop end of it if we had a problem with a student, or something like; I took care of that. I was quite a transition, but I was looking for that. I was really wanting to be the First Sergeant and I enjoyed doing that. I really did. You remember the old morning reports. You kept them X number of months and then they had to be destroyed. I remember, you couldn't have a mistake on the morning report.

**Interviewer:** If you made a mistake on the last line, you had to do it all over again.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah. We had some humongous morning reports. Well, we got ready to close that place out and the morning report, as I recall, was something like eight pages long, because of all the troop assignments; everybody was going here and everybody was going there. And what happened to the unit copy of that morning report? You destroyed it. I pretty near destroyed me, because I was the guy who had to put that thing together. I said, "There's got to be some other way to do

this." I thought about taking it home with me. The original copy, of course, went forward for permanent record. The unit copy was destroyed as soon as you got it approved. That really bothered me.

**Interviewer:** So the mission of your company was the training of cooks, bakers, meat cutters, etc.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yes it was. The mission of the unit was to train both for the Air Force and the Army.

**Interviewer:** About how many individuals did you have in the company?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I think we had something like two hundred and fifty students in the different phases of the training. I'll tell you another guy that helped me during that transitional phase there, Butch. We had a master sergeant by the name of Robert Young, who was the supply sergeant. He was in the same boat as I was in. He was recalled to active duty, but he had a lot more service than I had. He was a master sergeant and he had ten or twelve years of service. That fellow really helped me out in that transition from platoon sergeant to being the First Sergeant of the outfit. I used to talk to Bob Young, almost daily. I can remember one day, he put his arm around me and said, "You know, you don't need to come back for any more help. You're doing fine." But I did. I came back to Bob almost on a regular basis. But he was one of those guys that you could sit down and talk to, and you could trust him.

**Interviewer:** When did you leave Camp Atterbury?

**SMA Bainbridge:** It was in the Fall of '51.

**Interviewer:** You went from there to Fort Sheridan.

**SMA Bainbridge:** We went from there to Fort Sheridan. We were at Fort Sheridan until the Fall of '52. We were there for only about a year. When I got to Fort Sheridan, we were still in the same kind of a unit, and I then became the personnel NCO. I took care of the records of all of the students that came in. I had one other clerk, and we had

about three hundred and fifty students in the school there. That was a full-time job.

**Interviewer:** That was when they moved the school from Atterbury to Fort Sheridan.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah. See, the school was at Fort Sheridan; that was the headquarters for it; the 5012 ASU; Army Service Unit. The other two were branches. Then a year later they closed the one at Sheridan and moved us all out to Fort Riley. Then Fifth Army, instead of having three schools, had only one school.

**Interviewer:** What unit did you say you were assigned to at Fort Sheridan?

**SMA Bainbridge:** It was the 5012 Army Service Unit. That was the numerical designation of it. It was the Fifth Army Food Service School. The 5012 ASU. I had reenlisted in the Reserve Corps to finish out the tour down at Atterbury. When the Army said, "You can go home again," I said, "We've got to talk about this. This is the second time this has happened to me." I came in the service and I had been in just long enough that the mortgage was paid off. I could see going back to that thing, right back into doing that again. So I asked for the opportunity to reenlist in the regular Army. I asked Fifth Army for that permission, and Fifth Army came back and said, "You can reenlist, but you have to reenlist as a corporal." I said, "There isn't any way I'm going to do that." I said, "I never was a corporal, in the first place." I went from PFC to buck sergeant, back at Atterbury, Indiana. The same Camp Atterbury I had been to just before that. I said, "I'm not going to reenlist as a corporal, for a couple of reasons. The fact that I had never been one before. And number two, I've gotten all of my promotions competing with the active Army. I've gotten nothing out of the Reserves." I never attended any meetings. To this day, Butch, I can't tell you why I joined the Reserves. Of course, I joined after I got out of the Army. I didn't do it when I was getting out; I did it later.

I wrote a letter to Fifth Army, through my company commander. The Company Commander put a strong endorsement on it. When it came back they said, "Reenlist Sergeant First Class Bainbridge in his current grade in the regular Army." So ask and ye shall receive, sometimes.

**Interviewer:** So you were well on your way to a military career.

**SMA Bainbridge:** I was on my way. Hazel and I talked about it and she agreed that we should do this. We had two little girls, at that time. Of course, we had those two little girls when we went back into the Army. One of them had been born when we were at Roy Taylor's, and one of them was born when we were in Victoria.

**Interviewer:** When you left Fort Sheridan, your next assignment was to Fort Riley, Kansas. Correct?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Fort Riley, Kansas.

**Interviewer:** To what unit were you assigned?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Again, this was the only food service school left in Fifth Army. They just transferred us right on out to Fort Riley. A little aside here. There was about a dozen of us that had trailers in the trailer park there at Fort Sheridan. That's where we lived. We was looking all over for a place where we could get the cheapest license for our trailers. We were looking in an atlas, or something, and it indicated that Mississippi would issue mobile home license for two dollars. So I just picked out a town; Yazoo City, Mississippi. I wrote to the sheriff and tax collector of Yazoo City, Mississippi and told them what I was going to do. I was going to go from Fort Sheridan, Illinois to Fort Riley, Kansas, that I had a house trailer and I wanted to get a license for it. I got a form letter that came back. It said not being a resident of Mississippi, you can't do that. But on the bottom was a handwritten note. "If you wish to register your trailer in the State of Mississippi, please send two dollars to the sheriff and tax collector, Yazoo City, Mississippi." So that's what I, and about four or five others did. We transferred our trailers to Fort Riley, on

Mississippi tags. I kept Mississippi tags on my trailer for, I guess, five or six years, because it only cost two bucks a year. But then we went to Fort Riley, and after about two or three months out there, I became the First Sergeant, again. And it was for the same reason. There were about twenty-four or twenty-five master sergeants in the unit and nobody wanted to be the First Sergeant. The First Sergeant that was there transferred out. Jimmy Wagers was the Sergeant Major of the Food Service School. He recommended to the Company Commander that I be the First Sergeant. The Company Commander said, "That's fine." Jimmy was a master sergeant. We had some good times there. I think I probably had my best experience, to that point, Butch, working with soldiers and handling problems, etc. My Company Commander's name was Robert A. Berg; R.A. Berg. B-E-R-G. He gave me a little orientation on what he wanted me to do, as the First Sergeant, and some of his philosophy. I had been First Sergeant for, I guess, three or four months. In those days, there was company punishment, and they had a company punishment book; it was kept in the safe, etc. He said, "I noticed that we're not having as many company punishments as we used to have." I said, "Yeah, that's right." He said, "How do you explain that?" I said, "Well, I'm taking care of it." He said, "Come in my office." We went in and he said, "Shut the door." He said, "You can't handle company punishment. You don't have the authority to do that." I said, "I didn't say I was giving company punishment." I said, "I'm giving them the opportunity of working Saturdays for me, or fourteen for you." I said, "They've been taking my Saturdays." He said, "Okay. That sounds alright." I'd say, "The old man usually gives fourteen days extra duty, but I'll give you seven and there's no record of it." It worked every time. We used to have to have bed check, in those days. I didn't agree with bed check, but bed check was the rule. For the school, you had to have bed check. If you didn't make bed check, there was usually an Article 15, or something. I told the old man, "We don't

give Article 15's for missing bed check. We can handle that." We had a pass board. It had pockets and you'd just put your pass in a pocket. When anybody missed a bed check, I made him bring his bunk down, right after the dinner meal, and go to bed right under the pass board. They didn't get any sleep, because of the guys coming back in. Up until bed check time, there was no sleep for that guy, because they're leaning over him and putting their passes in the pass box. I never had a repeater. I never had a repeater because they didn't like that business at all. There's things like that, that I learned to do there. We had food service officers, too; mess officers. They were most second lieutenants. I can remember this one guy came in, in civilian clothes. The order was, you would report in uniform so we know who you are and what you're doing. So I'm getting the old class transportation out. We used to send them out of Fort Riley at the train station there. This young buck comes walking in, in civilian clothes, and he said, "Is this the Food Service School?" I said, "Young man, just go out there and sit down on that bench, outside the door. I'll get to you when I finish. I'm busy. You interrupted me. I'm working." So he went out and sat down. So when I got finished with the students, I called him in. Second Lieutenant Jones, or whoever it was. I just went ahead and processed him. I said, "The rule is, One, you don't report in civilian clothes. And two, you don't come busting into the orderly room when I'm busy with somebody else. And three, if you think I'm going to apologize because I got on your rear end because of the way you reported, you're wrong. I'm not, sir." He moved out. About three days later, he came in, asking what the address was." He asked old Jimmy Wagers. Jimmy said, "Son, can you read?" He said, "Yes." Jimmy said, "Then go out and look at the bulletin board. The address of this unit is posted clearly on the board." When it got around to the time we were going to issue the cooks whites, he went down again, out of uniform. Vernon Reed was the Supply Sergeant. He said, "I'm in here to get my whites." Vernon said, "I'm

busy right now, young man, and besides that, go get in uniform. I don't know who the hell you are, or whether you're supposed to get whites." It was the same lieutenant. So when he went back to get his whites, he was in uniform. Sergeant Reed took care of him and gave him his whites. So on the critique sheet, he said, "One thing I learned while I was here at this school is that you report properly, in the proper uniform, and you don't talk back to the First Sergeant, the Sergeant Major, or the Supply Sergeant." He was a very nice young guy, but he screwed-up three different times, with three different NCOs in the unit. We were there through a lot of classes, then that begin to draw down to where the Food Service School no longer a viable thing, as a sperate unit; that size of a unit.

**Interviewer:** That's when you went to Fort Leonard Wood.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Then we went to Fort Leonard Wood, from there.

**Interviewer:** What unit were you assigned to at Fort Leonard Wood?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Company K, 3rd Battalion, 4th Training Regiment. It was a unit PCS (Permanent Change of Station) for the Food Service School--what was left of it--for the personnel out of Fort Riley, Kansas. Let me tell you one little war story. Our Commandant's name was "Crocker." Captain Berg was still the Company Commander. We got one of those "sale bills" in. It was one of those funny sale bills, you know, one of those political oriented sale bills. I though it was funny as hell, because they had different people on it. John Foster Dulles was Secretary of State. Anyway, this was a farm sale bill, listing these different people. One mower: Dulles hell. I just put the stamp on it. I was Sergeant Major of the unit at that time. I put the stamp on it and sent it through distribution. I sent it to the Company Commander and he thought it was kind of funny too, so he initialed it, and somebody else would initial it. It got to Colonel Crocker, and he didn't think that was a damn bit funny. I'm sitting in my office, during the lunch hour. Here comes Crocker. He had that

sale bill in his hand. I think that was the worst rear end chewing I ever got from an officer in my whole career. He chewed on me, Butch, for at least fifteen minutes. He told me the things he could do because I had done this. He said, "When I finish here, I'm going across to the Company Commander." I was first. When it was all over, Captain Berg came over and said, "I don't believe we ought to run them through distribution anymore, at least to the Colonel." I said, "No, we won't do that anymore."

**Interviewer:** When did you arrive at Fort Leonard Wood?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Oh my goodness. I guess about February of '58, Butch. Yeah, it must have been February of '58, because we were at Leonard Wood for about a year, and we went to Europe in January of '59. It must have been February of '58. As I said, the unit moved down there and there wasn't any place for a sergeant major, so I became sort of a loose cog there, so I was transferred up to battalion. The guy who was the First Sergeant then, of course, remained as the First Sergeant. He was a master sergeant. That was the first time we had a master sergeant in that position for a long time. His name was Donald Harrington. I saw Donald several years after that. He was Major Harrington. He had taken a direct commission in the Quartermaster Corps. We spent that year there. I'll tell you a little incident with the Company Commander that they got in. You know, I don't recall his name, to this day, but he replaced Captain Berg. Berg went somewhere else. Berg didn't retire from the Army; he got out as a captain and went back to Minnesota. That captain really was a pain in the butt. I had already transferred to battalion, but I was a in car pool with several of the guys from the Company, because we all lived in the same trailer park out on Route 66. I was driving that day and this fellow came up to Battalion Headquarters and he said, "Are you getting ready to go home?" I said, "Yeah." He said, "Would you take me back down to the company?" I said, "Yeah." On the way down, he said, "I'm

really having troubles in the Company." He said, "Nobody cooperates with me, or nothing." I said, "Yeah, that's what I understand." Because the guys would complain to me, when we were riding back and forth to work, what a "horse's rear end" this guy was. He said, "What do you think the problem is?" I said, "I'll tell you what the problem is." I said, "You're a real horse's patoot." I said, "You don't care about the company, you don't care about the troops that are running it." I said, "That's what they're telling me. They're not telling you that." I said, "You're going to have to change. You've got a lot of good noncommissioned officers down there, but you're going to have to change." He said, "Drive around the block, would you." So we drove around the block and I explained to him what I thought he needed to do. I said, "You don't have to run that company. Let those NCOs run it. They know more about that company and what goes on there than you'll ever know, because they have been doing it all their career. Some of them have been in that food service business ten or fifteen years." I said, "You've got to trust your noncommissioned officers, because that's what they're there for; to run that unit for you." So I let him out. The guys said, "What was that all about?" I told them. I said, "You guys have been complaining about him and I got the opportunity to tell him right up front, just the two of us." That really turned that young captain around. He came up to see me, I guess maybe six weeks after that, and he said, "That was the greatest fifteen minutes I ever spent in the Army." I said, "Well, that's what it takes sometime. You can't see the forest for the trees, but you were just trying too hard."

**Interviewer:** You know, another advantage, you had him in your automobile, just the two of you, one-on-one.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Right, and he had asked the question. He had asked the question. I felt it was up to me to help him, because the guys had been complaining to me about him. Now he was complaining about them. They both had a problem. He just wasn't doing what he should do,

as a company commander.

**Interviewer:** During the time you were at Leonard Wood, what was your predominant duty assignment?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I was the Operations Sergeant of the 3rd Battalion of the 4th Training Regiment. They had all of the common subjects there. The Food Service School now was "K" company. They had field communication wire men, mechanics, all of those common subjects. My job was to make sure the lesson plans were being followed and I would sit in the classrooms and check lesson plans, and just check the training schedules. I did that for about a year, then we got orders to go to Europe, to VII Corps. As a matter of fact, the Battalion Commander's name was Major Hellweg, H-E-L-L-W-E-G. I had only been in the battalion for, I guess, about eleven months. I didn't know it, but that guy put me in for an award. I got it when I got to Europe; the Army Commendation Medal. Everybody said, "How long were you in that battalion?" I said, "about eleven months." That was almost unheard of you know, to get an Army Commendation Medal in eleven months. But Major Hellweg was impressed enough with what I had done in the Battalion. I made some changes in training schedule preparation, and that sort of thing, and a better way to check out the different classes, and a schedule to check the different classes. By golly, he put me in for an award, wrote up a good recommendation, and I got an Army Commendation Medal. That was the first one I ever got.

**Interviewer:** Now what I want to do is discuss your promotion to Sergeant Major E9, and your E9 positions USARPAC (United States Army, Pacific), at the Infantry Center, and also while you were at First Army. Before I ask you about those different assignments, you made a statement when I first came in this morning, and we got a chuckle out of it. I think I'll let you make it, for the record. I asked you if you had any airborne training, Special Forces training. You said you wanted to make it clear that you were, what in the Army?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah, that i was strictly a straight-leg, Butch, and proud of that, you know. I don't know if it would have made any difference in my career if I had a couple of those other badges, or not, but I'm proud of the fact that I always got out of the airplane, using the ramp, instead of jumping out of it.

**Interviewer:** You didn't eat any snakes?

**SMA Bainbridge:** No, I didn't eat any snakes. Probably in Bad Orb and Zigenheim, if I would have got a hold of one of them, I might have.

**Interviewer:** When were you promoted to E9?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Let's see, I was promoted to Sergeant Major on the 26th of January, 1963.

**Interviewer:** Where were you assigned at that time?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I was assigned as the Sergeant Major of the 1st Battle Group, 28th Infantry. We were on Operation Long Thrust, and I was in the Training Center in Germany, up in the mountains. What's the name of that damn place? It's a V Corps training area. Why can't I say that name, Butch? I just got a mental lapse here. But anyway, Colonel Joffre Boston was my Battle Group commander, and he promoted me. The 55th Engineer Group Sergeant Major came over to the office and said, "I need to see the Colonel right quick." He went in there to see the Colonel. He came back out and said, "See you." He had brought over a set of chevrons. The Colonel didn't want me to know, because I didn't know I was going to get promoted.

**Interviewer:** What was the Colonel's name?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Boston. Joffre, J-0-F-F-R-E Boston. He had about as much hair as Glen Morrell.

**Interviewer:** Is that right?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah. On my goodness, why can't I say the name of that training area? There's three major training areas in Europe.

**Interviewer:** You've got Hohenfeld, Wildflicken, and Grafenwohr.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Wildflicken. Wildflicken. I could remember. It

was drawing a blank. I can't tell you why. I told Hazel, "You'd love this place. We're so high up in the mountains, that when you open the windows, large birds and small airplanes fly through."

**Interviewer:** That's the only place, no matter which direction you're walking, you're always going up hill. You never go down hill.

**SMA Bainbridge:** That's right. When we got there, in January of '63, there was snow up to an elephant's eye then, and it snowed, I guess, the first three weeks we were there. When we got ready to go to Berlin, three months later, it started melting. We must have policed up deuce-and-a-half loads of trash everyday, after it started melting. Yeah, there was sort of a funny thing about my promotion. I was selected as the, quote, acting Sergeant Major, when we left Fort Riley, because Colonel Boston had relieved Sergeant Major Brown. We were getting ready to go on our ATT (Annual Training Test) and we were in our assembly area. Do you remember how you used to go to the Assembly area the day before, to get everything ready?

**Interviewer:** Right.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Then they'd send you off on your AIT. This was a Saturday afternoon and we go into the assembly area. When the Sergeant Major came out, he didn't even know where he was; he was so inebriated. Colonel Boston relieved him right on the spot. I operated as the Operations Sergeant/Sergeant Major of the Battle Group through the ATT, and took the advance party to Europe. Then in February of '63, I was promoted. Billy Don Church was the adjutant of the Battle Group. They sent a message back to Fort Riley saying they wanted to promote me, and they did promote me. Then they sent a message back saying I was fifteen days shy of enough time in the service to get promoted and should the promotion stand or should it be rescinded. The message from Fort Riley came back just before we got ready to go to Berlin. Remember in those days, to save money instead of sending it by TWX (Teletype Writer Transmission), they mailed them? So the message came in and

Billy Don Church opened it up and he saw the word "rescinded," and he just shoved it back in the envelope. Now he waited two months. Here I am, promoted to Sergeant Major. Again, a Saturday afternoon, up in Berlin, and I hear, "Top! Come in here! Hurry up!" I went in his office and he was sitting with his feet up on his desk, a big grin on his face. He was a cigar smoker. He said, "I'm going to have to have a fresh cigar." He said, "Let me read you something here." He said, "We sent this message back and we got the answer before we left Wildflicker, whether or not we should leave your promotion, or should it be rescinded, because of the fifteen days." He said, "I opened this up, back at Wildflicker, and the first word I saw was "rescinded." He said, "I didn't have the guts to call you in or tell The Old Man that they rescinded your orders." He said, "But I knew I had to do it sooner or later." He said, "I pulled it out and what it said was 'order will not be rescinded. Promotion will stand. Waiver granted for the fifteen days'." He said, "Ain't that something?"

**Interviewer:** He probably lost a lot of sleep over that.

**SMA Bainbridge:** He did. He did. So anyway, I said, "Well, I'm glad the way it read."

**Interviewer:** That was when you were with the 1st Battle Group, 28th Infantry. Right?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yes. 1st Battle Group, 28th Infantry.

**Interviewer:** You started out as the Operations Sergeant, then you became the Operations and the Battle Group Sergeant Major.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Right. I went through the ATT, and then was promoted. My assistant was a guy by the name of Owens, and he became the Operations Sergeant then, and I became the Sergeant Major. Colonel Boston called us both into his office, when this first started. He said to me, "You're going to be the Sergeant Major. You're going to be the Operation Sergeant, Owens." He said to Owens, "I know that you think you're the best Operations Sergeant going." He said, "Maybe you are,

but I know that there are some others that are better." He said, "So I'll get along good if you just keep that in mind." Neither one liked the other one. But when we got to Berlin, Owens couldn't stand prosperity. He was late for reveille one morning. Captain Cottingham was our S3. Cottingham liked Doug Owens. He really liked him. Doug Owens was a good Operations Sergeant, but he was a cocky fellow. Cottingham really protected him, but he lied to him. Cottingham came up to me and said, "Top, I like Owens. He's been a good Operations Sergeant, but he lied to me." He said, "That I won't take." So Douglas Owens, in two days, was heading back." Not as an E8. We had the E8 promotion in the Battle Group Headquarters, from Fort Riley. He went back as an E6. They reduced him from E7 to E6, and sent him out of Berlin.

**Interviewer:** Instead of him making E8, he went down to E6.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah, he made E6. The S2 Sergeant was a guy by the name of Hank Weir, who was an E7 master sergeant. W-E-I-R. Hank Weir. Billy Don Church said, "We're going to have to send this allocation back to Fort Riley." I said, "No you're not. Why send it back to Fort Riley?" I said, "They just sent us an allocation for a master sergeant E8. They didn't say it had to be Doug Owens. He's gone. He obviously is not going to get it because he's an E6." I said, "But Hank Weir is in an E8 position. Let's promote Hank. He's doing the job." "By gosh, that's a good idea." So we promoted old Hank Weir to master sergeant.

**Interviewer:** That was when you were over in Germany on Long Thrust. Right?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** What was Long Thrust?

**SMA Bainbridge:** What it was, it was a show of force, Butch, when they started building the Berlin Wall. As a matter of fact, a little aside to this story. We were about the fourth or fifth battle group to

do the Long Thrust Operation. All of the battle groups in the division did it. Do you remember, I said I was assigned to the 12th. The 12th came over on their Long Thrust. I was only back four months and we came right back to Germany on Long Thrust, with the 28th. I have mentioned Colonel Sinclair, who had been the G3. When they started building the Berlin Wall, Colonel Sinclair came in and he said, "You're on staff duty tonight." I said, "I can't be on staff duty, because I've just pulled it not too long ago." I said, "It don't come around that fast." He said, "Trust me. Tonight you're on staff duty." I called Hazel and said, "I'm on staff duty tonight." He said, "It will be evident to you later on." So about ten thirty that night, he came in and I had a stack of messages for him. They were getting ready to move one of the 24th Infantry battle groups up as a show of force to counter the starting of the building of the Berlin Wall. He came in, with a big grin on his face, and said, "Now you see why I wanted the Operations Sergeant on duty instead of somebody from the staff." The next three nights I spent as the Staff Duty NCO. Then later on we went back over as one of the battle groups.

**Interviewer:** You were with the 1st Infantry Division when it deployed from Fort Riley to Vietnam. Is that correct?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yes. In the meantime, you see, the battle groups went from ROCID (Reorganization of Combat Infantry Divisions) to ROAD (Reorganization of Army Divisions) and they came out of the battle group configuration and into the battalion configuration. The 1st Battle Group, 28th Infantry, became the 1st and 2nd Battalions, 28th Infantry. I took the 1st Battalion, and a guy by the name of Cliff Weatherby took the 2nd Battalion. The 2nd Battle Group, 28th Infantry, which was in Europe, had already been reorganized into, I think, the 21st. There's another little parallel here, Butch, on my becoming the Sergeant Major; actually promoted to sergeant major. Colonel Boston, who was our Battle Group Commander, and who made me the acting Sergeant Major to take the

unit on Long Thrust, had asked Bill Wooldridge to be his Sergeant Major for the 1st Battle Group, 28th Infantry, to take us back to Fort Riley, and then he'd be the Battle Group Sergeant Major. Bill Wooldridge was about ready to rotate out of the 24th Infantry Division.

**Interviewer:** At that time, the 24th Division was stationed in Germany, wasn't it?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah, the 24th was in Germany. But General B. Frank Taylor--Benjamin F. Taylor--had asked Bill Wooldridge to become the Division Sergeant Major of the 24th Division. I believe that's so. Yeah, that is so. So he didn't want to go to the 1st Battle Group, 28th Infantry and rotate back to the States within, on his PCS (Permanent Change of Station). So Bill is responsible, two different times. One unknowingly I guess, for me being picked for a particular position. I got promoted because Bill Wooldridge decided he was going to stay in Europe for a while and work with General Taylor. General Taylor is now dead.

**Interviewer:** I think we've covered everything, up until you took over as Sergeant Major of the Infantry Center, at Fort Benning. When did you make Command Sergeant Major? When were you selected for the CSM Program?

**SMA Bainbridge:** In the first group, in 1968. I think it was February of 1968.

**Interviewer:** So you were also in that first group?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** So you, Wooldridge, Dunaway, Copeland, and uh...

**SMA Bainbridge:** Van Autreve. The first five Sergeants Major of the Army were on the first list. In fact, I still have two or three copies of that circular. I sent George Dunaway one, not too long ago, with a little note, "George, don't lose this one. I'm not going to make you any more."

(End of tape OH 94.4-5, Side 1)

(Begin tape OH 94.4-5, Side 2)

**Interviewer:** As the last tape ended we were discussing the promotion orders for Command Sergeant Major. You said that you were on promotion order number one, along with Silas Copeland, Leon Van Autreve, Bill Wooldridge and...

**SMA Bainbridge:** George Dunaway. Department of the Army Circular, as I recall. There were a lot of old timers was on that one, Butch.

**Interviewer:** Also, during the break, you mentioned that you would like to make a comment about the 28th Infantry. Go ahead.

**SMA Bainbridge:** I would, Butch, because I think it was very important as a milestone of contributions, if you will. In those days, the division was doing the promoting, of course. We established, with the Brigade, and within my battalion, a promotion board to screen the folks that would go before the Brigade board, and then maybe go before the Division board. So Colonel George Fleeson, who was my commander, said, "You're in charge of the promotion business." So I set upon internal promotion board, which I chaired. I had my S3 Sergeant, my S2 Sergeant, my PS (Personnel Service) NCO, and a first sergeant on that battalion board. We rotated the first sergeants. Every time we had a board, there would be a different first sergeant. We would have our board to determine who went up, that was within the zone for promotion, before the Brigade board. Because of that board, we really made sure that when we got a promotion in the 28th Infantry, it was the best promotion there was. The 28th Infantry personnel did very, very well when they went before the Brigade board, who recommended promotions within the division. We got a new executive officer in and he asked about the promotion board. The Colonel said, "Well, Sergeant Major Bainbridge is taking care of the promotion business. The exec said, "I'd like to chair that board." Colonel Fleeson said, "I'll tell you what you ought to do. You sit in on one of the boards that the Sergeant Major holds, and then you can come back and we'll talk about it." We

had a board and he sat in on the first three candidates that come up before that board, and then he left. He went back and told Colonel Fleeson. He said, "I wouldn't want to appear before that board." He said, "Forget about me chairing that board." He said, "I couldn't do as well as those guys are doing." Later on, in 1966, we got a lot of promotions that came to the field, from the Department of the Army, for master sergeants, sergeants first class, and staff sergeants. The 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry, really cleaned up when we sent those guys up before the board. So I was having lunch one day with the 28th Infantry, and the S1 of the Brigade was down there. This was after I left the 28th and went to II Field Force. During a conversation, he said, "You guys really G2'ed my promotion board." Colonel Haldane said, "What do you mean we G2'ed it?" He said, "You guys really cleaned up. You got five of the seven promotions of that board." Colonel Haldane jerked his thumb at me and said, "There's the guy that G2'ed your board. He did it a year-and-a-half ago." He said, "These guys have been before his board a couple of times, that's why they did well up there." I really was proud of what we did, because we got a good percentage of promotions because of the way we screened them at battalion level. Of course, this was before the centralized promotion system came in. I always felt that you ought to get the best guys promoted that you could. By having that local board, which had nothing to do with them getting promoted except they were ready to go when they got there.

**Interviewer:** It took the politics out of it?

**SMA Bainbridge:** That's right.

**Interviewer:** When you made Command Sergeant Major, where were you assigned?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I was First Army Sergeant Major, at Fort Meade, Maryland. I have a picture of General Seamon and Hazel pinning the stripes on.

**Interviewer:** Your assignment to the Infantry Center was before the

CSM came out.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yes it was. I'd first like to add something about the CSM, Butch. When this all started, we went to Vietnam with the battalion, in August of '65. In July of '65, I had in my desk drawer, a pair of CSM chevrons. Because, if you recall, the CSM was going to be only color bearing units. Do you remember?

**Interviewer:** Right.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Battalion, brigades, numbered. So that meant that somebody who was Sergeant Major of First Army would not be a command sergeant major; only color bearing units. Well, that caused all kinds of heartburn. I think maybe it should have caused all kind of heartburn. Then General Johnson said, "It's just not the time, we're going to have to wait awhile." It was economics that did that. So it was three more years before it was instituted. It really wasn't economics, they just had to go back to the drawing board because there was too much furor over who wasn't going to get that wreath.

**Interviewer:** I think Sergeant Major Van Autreve really brought it out, the other day, when he was talking about CSM. He said when it came out, a lot of us didn't know what the heck it meant. He said when he got promoted, everybody was congratulating him and the Colonel said, "Sergeant Major, exactly what does it mean." He said, "Heck, I don't know."

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah, that's right. General Johnson said, "It's not time. It would cost too much money to turn it over like this." But the real problem was that color bearing units were going to get it and other people weren't going to get it; and that left a lot of folks hanging out there. I think they should have gone back to the drawing board, because why should somebody at a battalion level--infantry or armor--be a command sergeant major, when the guy that's over him isn't; that didn't make any sense. I think you're right. When it first happened, nobody knew exactly what it was.

**Interviewer:** In September of 1966, you were assigned as Sergeant Major of the Infantry Center, at Fort Benning. How long did you serve as the Center Sergeant Major?

**SMA Bainbridge:** From September '66 until August of '67. I replaced a fellow by the name of Benefield - B-E-N-E-F-I-E-L-D. When I first got orders for Fort Benning, I was going to the Committee Group as an instructor within the Training Center, but General Charles Mount, who had been one of our ADCs (Assistant Division Commander) when we went to Vietnam, had just taken over the Training Center as the CG (Commanding General) of the Training Center. He said, "No, Sergeant Major Bainbridge is not going to the Committee Group. He's going to be up here in the head shed." So I became General Mount's Sergeant Major. One of the first things that I did there, we had zero week for the trainees. The zero week was really for orientation, getting all of their clothes issued, and getting them ready to start training. That's when they used a lot of details. When Benefield gave me my orientation, he said, "You know, the Post will ask for so many, the Chaplain gets so many." So I listened. We would put out, Butch, two hundred people for details; or maybe two-hundred-and-fifty. They were all over Fort Benning. The old stake-body trucks would come down and take loads of trainees to here, there, and everywhere--the zero week trainees--to perform details; cut grass and that sort of thing. Well, I told General Mount. I said, "I'll continue to do what they've been doing, but I'm going to take a little look around here. That seems like a heck of a lot of folks for details, even as big as Fort Benning is." They had engineers cutting grass and that sort of thing. So the first one I worked on was the Chaplain, right next door. He got four a day, for one little old chapel. So I nosed around there a day or two. I told the Chaplain. I said, "We're going to cut your detail down to one a week." He said, "Oh my gosh, you can't do that." I said, "Yes I can. That's what you've got that chaplain's assistant for. He's sitting in there on his fanny,

doing nothing about half the time." I said, "When he gets your programs and all of that done, he can do a little pew dusting, and one thing or another. That's part of MOS." He said, "Oh, I got to have details." I said, "You're going to get one a week. What day do you want him?" He wanted him on Fridays. I said, "OK, you'll get one man on Fridays." He came up to The Old Man. The Old Man said, "Well, that's his business." So I just kept working that out. I went up to Post. We sent the Post a hundred or a hundred-and-fifty people at seven o'clock in the morning and they'd be sitting around until nine o'clock. Well that was pretty discouraging; just sitting around and waiting. I finally decided that the Post could handle about twenty-five people and really put them to work. So I talked to the Post Sergeant Major. He said, "No, no." I said, "You're going to get twenty-five. If you can show me you need twenty-six, fine, but I'm going to cut you to twenty-five." He said, "I've got to have a hundred or so." I said, "No, you're not going to get them." And I didn't give it to him. The whole Post finally realized they weren't going to get a whole bunch of people. If they had something to do, we'd send them a detail. If they didn't, we didn't send anybody. You'd be surprised the number of people we cut down by first driving around and looking at what they were doing after they got them. A lot of them were doing nothing. Ask I said yesterday, in one of these comments, it's a wonder they all didn't go AWOL, because they were just sitting around doing nothing. So we cut our Zero Week down to about three days to get them in training, and still had plenty of people to do the Post details.

**Interviewer:** There's nothing more discouraging than to be put on detail and find out you've got nothing to do when you get there.

**SMA Bainbridge:** You know what some of the things I remembered. I talked to you yesterday about pulling six straight weeks of KP. I remembered that when I got to the Training Center and I saw these guys doing nothing.

**Interviewer:** During the Vietnam War, because of the large turnover we had of noncommissioned officers, the Army adopted the program where we would train newly enlisted or drafted enlisted men to be fire team leaders or squad leaders prior, to their assignment to Vietnam. These people were known by the unflattering title of "Instant NCO's," and many people resent that title and

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah. I'm one of them.

**Interviewer:** that in itself was a misnomer. They were just a bunch of kids that did a good job. But anyway, since you served as the Sergeant Major of the Infantry Center, there at Fort Benning, in '66 and '67, you became familiar with the Noncommissioned Officer Candidate Course (NCOCC) that they had there. Give me your opinion of that program; it's advantages and disadvantages. Also, how did that program either help or harm the Army?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Well, from the start, I agree with you, Butch. I think that call them "Instant NCO's or "Shake and Bake" was a terrible, terrible disservice for the young men that did one heck of a job. They did what they were trained to do. It was a matter of necessity. With the one year rotation in Vietnam, we were either burning out or killing off all of our experienced squad leaders and fire team leaders. Platoon sergeants were getting promoted to first sergeants, and that sort of thing. So we really needed some way to go, kind of like the OCS (Officer Candidate School) business, to replace the junior leaders. So at Benning, they set up the NCOCC. The first enlisted commandant was Sergeant Major Donald Wright, of the Infantry Center. Sergeant Major Wright was the Commandant of that school. We took from the top fifteen percent. The top five percent became Staff Sergeants and the other ten percent became sergeants. They went through that school and they were trained to do one thing, at one time, and one place in the world, and that was to be fire team leaders and squad leaders in the Republic of Vietnam. I felt, and still do feel, that it was a heck of a lot better

to do it that way--train somebody to do a specific job--than it was to try to bring somebody out of the ranks that maybe didn't have any kind of training. So what we did, those buck sergeants that were promoted, they went right into their AIT), did their AIT and then they went right into the school, and then went to the units. The ones that were promoted to Staff Sergeant when they came out of school, they went back through a training cycle with the Training Center and acted as assistant drill sergeants, and that sort of thing, to kind of get the feel of giving troop commands, and one thing or another. Then they were assigned out to do their job. I think they did one hell of a job. When we got people back that had rotated through that system, a lot of folks said that they didn't know how to inspect the barracks, they don't know how to do this, or they don't know how to do that. I said, "Of course they don't, because we didn't teach them any of that. We taught them one thing, for one place in the world, and they did that very, very well." Of course, the other schools picked up on that; the artillery, engineers, etc. I think it was a hell of a good program. It meant that we got some squad leaders and fire team leaders a little better trained than they would had been if we had selected them out of the ranks, because they were trained for a specific duty.

**Interviewer:** How did that training change between the time you got there in '66 until you left in '67? Did you see it getting more fine-tuned?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah, it did get more fine-tuned, but actually it started, I guess, about the end of '66. I was at the first graduation. In fact, Bill Wooldridge was the guest speaker. I was just going through some papers the other day and I came across the comments he made that day. I didn't see a lot of the transitions within that school, but I saw some of those guys that ended up in Vietnam, later on, in that business, and they did one heck of a job. Sure, there were some of them who failed, but that happens in any system. But it was a lot better

than what we had before, which was zip. Yeah, those folks that called them "Instant NCOs" and "Shake and Bakes" certainly pay a disservice to those soldiers, because they did what they were trained to do. I can remember General Charles Brown. I think he was the deputy in I Field Force. He had been the Commander at the Artillery Training Center, at Fort Sill. He came across a young NCOCC sergeant on a fire base in Vietnam. He found out that he had taken his training at Fort Sill. Of course, he didn't know General Brown was there at the time. General Brown asked him how the training was. He said, "It was easy. We didn't have to pay too much attention." General Brown said, "Did you listen to your instructions." He said, "Oh, sometimes I did and sometimes I didn't." He was a smart kid and it was easy for him. General Brown was trying to find out whether the training was good enough. He was trying to get this kid to evaluate General Brown; that's really what he was doing. General Brown said, "Well what about here on this fire base? Do you listen to the NCOs here?" He said, "Oh, you bet, General." He said, "I pay attention up here to everything that goes on and what the experienced folks tell me, I listen. I pay attention." General Brown said, "What's the difference between here and Fort Sill?" He said, "Up here, General, your ass is in jeopardy." In the 173rd War Room they had, "Sergeant to General Brown; Up here your ass is in jeopardy." So it kind of makes a difference in the situation you're in, Butch, how much attention you pay at times.

**Interviewer:** That's right. While you were there at the Infantry Center, what occupied most of your time?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Two things. One was that the troops were being treated fairly, and that we weren't harassing soldiers. I never was a division sergeant major, but I had more soldiers in that Training Center, a couple of times, than most division sergeants major have, and I think, a lot of the same problems. I wanted to make sure the trainees were getting training and not harassment. And that the noncommissioned

officers we had in charge were in fact up to speed on the things that they needed to do to train the people properly. After I got that detail business situated, I spent most of my time out with the training.

**Interviewer:** Other than getting the details squared away, what do you think was your greatest accomplishment while you were assigned to the Infantry Center?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I think other than the details, and it was probably a continuation of that, was taking as much of the harassment out of the training of raw recruits as humanly possible. There are some things you have to do to get their attention, but you don't need to humiliate a person in order to get him to pay attention. You don't have to yell at him to get your point across. I think we toned down the harassment and made sure that they were treated with dignity.

**Interviewer:** I have one question here. Did you institute any programs designed to improve morale. I think that goes back to straightening out the detail situation.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yes. Yes, if anything it improved morale. It sure improved the morale of the recruits, and I think it might have improved the morale of some of those noncommissioned officers at the places we were sending those folks, that were trying to make work for more soldiers than they needed, you know. I sure as hell rather have enough soldiers to do the job than have fifteen more standing around and try to figure out what to do with them, if I didn't have something for them to do. That was exactly the situation. I think I might have also helped some of the permanent party personnel's morale a little bit too.

**Interviewer:** When did you depart the Infantry Center?

**SMA Bainbridge:** It was after Labor day, mid-September '67. I remember, General Seamon said, "I can't get quarters for you until after Labor Day." So we went up there in mid-September.

**Interviewer:** So General Seamon was the one that selected you to be the Sergeant Major of First Army.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yes. As a matter of fact, I got a call from him and he said, "How would like to come to First Army and be the Sergeant Major up here?" I said, "Well it will take me about thirty minutes to pack." He kind of laughed. He said, "Now I'm not going to tell Charlie Mount. You tell him, because he'll get mad at me." So I told General Mount, after lunch that day. I said, "I got a call from First Army this morning, Sir." He said, "Oh Christ, when are you leaving?" I told him what the situation was. I left in September, and in November, General Mount came up as the Chief of Staff of First Army. I think I mentioned it before. Remember, I got the driver for General Seamon when I went to II Field Force. When I got up to First Army, General Seamon didn't need a driver, but when General Mount got there, he did. So guess who it was that came to First Army, from Fort Knox? Johnson, again. He was the driver at First Army.

**Interviewer:** What had Johnson been doing down at Fort Knox?

**SMA Bainbridge:** He was at Fort Knox and he was in the supply business down there, so he was very happy to get back with his old crew, up at First Army. I think I mentioned to you also, when I went to Washington as Sergeant Major of the Army, I got a phone call just before I left Fort Bliss from, then Master Sergeant Johnson, who worked at the White House motor pool. He said, "You've got all of the transportation you need when you get here. Just call me."

**Interviewer:** Where was the First Army Headquarters located?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Fort George G. Meade, Maryland. We got there in '67. I think it was back in the early 60's or late '50's, when it moved to Fort Meade. It used to be at Governors Island, in New York, and then they consolidated First and Second Army, and First Army Headquarters moved to Fort Meade. You used to call Governors Island, after the Coast Guard took it over, and say, "Is this Governors Island.?" They'd say, "We never heard of the place."

**Interviewer:** How long did you serve as the Sergeant Major of

First Army?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Let's see. I was at First Army, Butch, from September of '67 until December of '68. I went from there to USARPAC and reported in out there in January of '69.

**Interviewer:** You said that you were appointed as a command sergeant major while at First Army. Is that Correct?

**SMA Bainbridge:** February 1968.

**Interviewer:** What kind of ceremony did they have when you became a CSM?

**SMA Bainbridge:** It was kind of a simple ceremony in General Seamon's office. Hazel was there and she assisted General Seamon in pinning on my stripes. I still have the photograph of that in his office.

**Interviewer:** You must have had a good working relations with General Seamon.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Oh, it was super. I need to tell you. When I got up there, there were a couple of things he wanted me to do. One was to work on homesteaders. See, now this was mid-'67. We still had a lot of folks that hadn't gone to Vietnam that should have gone to Vietnam. So I started working on those, and getting rosters from posts, camps and stations, and that sort of thing.. I didn't know a hell of a lot about the Military Academies, and how they operate. So I came across this roster from West Point. Some of those guys had been there since the late '40s; master sergeants, etc. I said, "Oh boy, here's one." So I worked on that one and sent in my report. I got a phone call one morning from his office; it was just at the end of the hall. They said, "The Old Man wants to see you." I said, "Fine." So I went up to his office, and walked in. He said, "I've been reading your reports and you're doing real well on this." He said, "But let me tell you about this roster you have here from West Point. They're all band members of the West Point Band, that's why they've been there so long." He said,

"When they get to the West Point Band, unless they really mess up, they don't ever leave." He said, "So you can forget about this one, Sergeant Major." I said, "You know, I didn't realize that. I understand why that happens," I said, "but I didn't realize that. I should have asked you." He said, "There wasn't any reason for you to ask. He said, "I gave you a mission and you're performing it pretty well." He said, "This one you don't have to worry about." That did make sense. Later on, I got into the business of aides to generals. They used to call them "house boys," but they were enlisted aides. That's the same thing. If The Old Man gets somebody, or the house gets somebody, and that person runs that house real well, why move him to another house? You've not only got a hacked off soldier, he may not do as well in the house. If he's doing well, leave him there. There are some times when you need to leave the soldier where he's at. It happens in the Army Band, and in the Marine Band. I didn't understand that at one time, but I understand it now. I understand it now. I think that was one of the things I did. I think one of my best accomplishments, or milestones if you will, was at First Army. That was, I think that I brought First Army's senior NCOs together. Not only on post, but those posts, camps, and stations that were under the command of First Army. They were under the command for certain aspects, such as logistical support, but they were in the First Army area and we had a piece of the action in every case. I had Sergeants Major Conferences with the senior guy from each of those posts, camps, and stations that was in our realm of responsibility. It did much to bring us close together. You could put a face with a name when you're talking to Cahill at Post X, Y, or Z. You know who you're talking to and you know how he feels about things. It just helped to pull the together. I did the same thing at First Army Headquarters. We used to have luncheons; staff luncheons. It took fifteen or twenty minutes extra for the lunch, maybe once a month, but it pulled those folks together and when we needed to get something done, we could get it

done a heck of a lot easier. The first Sergeants Major Conference that I had, was in the Fall of '67; the first year when I was there. I told General Seamon what I wanted to do. He said, "Fine. Bring them in and we'll fund them coming in." I had a lunch set up, and all that business. He said, "Tell me a little bit about how you're going to operate here." So I told him that we were going to bring them in and then the next day we'd have a conference and discuss the problems that they might have, and any support that we can give them. Then we'd have lunch and then we'd go back to the meeting. Then that evening, we'd have a dinner with the wives, if some of them had their wives with them and with the staff and their wives, plus the guys that come in TDY (temporary duty)." He said, "How are you going to pay for that?" I said, "Everybody is going to buy their own." He said, "Well, I'll tell you. I have a little fund here, as the CG (Commanding General). He said, "I'll pay for the dinner." That was something that I didn't know could be done. So General Seamon paid for the dinner. I appreciated it, and those guys and their gals really respected that. They didn't know either, see, that sort of thing could happen. They said, "Okay who's going to pay for this?" I said, "General Seamon has a fund and he's going to take care of it." That helped too, you know. "The Old Man's behind it. He even bought us dinner." That was a simple thing, but yet that helped to pull those folks together. I really enjoyed that duty there. I got an education too, Butch. One in particular. To me, Transportation was a greasy, infantry truck driver out of the motor pool. Then I met up with Fort Eustis, Virginia. Then I found out what Transportation was all about. It is a hell of a lot more than a greasy truck driver. So old Bill Bainbridge got some education too. The same thing when I visited the Quartermaster School. I know who issued your rations, and one thing or another, but when I visited Fort Lee, Virginia, I got another education on what holds this Army together and what makes it tick, and that sort of thing. Then when

I went down to Fort Knox, Kentucky, I found out why those guys were so good, in the tanks. So it was a real learning process for me, too.

**Interviewer:** Under the reorganization, the First Army included the old Second and Third Army. Correct?

**SMA Bainbridge:** No. the First and Second. Fort Meade was the Second Army Headquarters, and then it became the First Army Headquarters and Second Army was deactivated.

**Interviewer:** I thought that included the old The Third Army; down in Georgia, and that area. I know when I was with the Redstone Readiness Group, in Huntsville, we were under First Army..

**SMA Bainbridge:** I think later on, Butch, that was right. There was another reorganization, because just before I left Fort Benning, to become the First Army Sergeant Major, Bill Craig, who was in one of the artillery battalions in the 197th down there, was selected by General Truman to be the Third Army Sergeant Major, at Fort McPherson. I think it was Fort Mac.

**Interviewer:** Yes, Fort McPherson.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah. This was, of course, when there was no FORSCOM or TRADOC; it was CONARC (Continental Army Command). Remember?

**Interviewer:** Yeah, it was CONARC.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Then later on, Third Army disappeared, and then it became part of First Army. Now Second Army is back down there, isn't it?

**Interviewer:** I don't know if it is or not.

**SMA Bainbridge:** In Fort . . . uh . . .

**Interviewer:** Gilliam?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Gilliam. I think that's Second Army.

**Interviewer:** I don't know if they reactivated the Second Army or not.

**SMA Bainbridge:** I'm sure they did. But anyway there been several changes. What goes around again, comes around again. But that's how I

operated at that point. I enjoyed my tour at First Army.

**Interviewer:** What do you think was your greatest accomplishment as the Sergeant Major of First Army?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I think what I just described, Butch; bringing together those NCOs of the Fort Meade area; First Army and the Post. Fort Meade was a First Army post, yet we were on there as the Army Headquarters, and to get all of those guys in one chain, if you will, so that they could recognize one another. The guy from Fort Knox could call the guy over at Eustis and get something he needed that he might not have been able to get before. So pulling the NCOs close together into a working unit, I think, was the best thing.

**Interviewer:** Once you get to the Army level like First Army and USARPAC, at the star level, the commander selects his CSM. Correct?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah. There's one other thing, Butch. You mentioned the accomplishments. There's one other thing. When I was in Europe, we were waiting for housing. Remember, I told you we were down in Munich--my family was--and I was waiting for housing in the Stuttgart area. I was number four on the list, so Hazel and the girls could move up to the Stuttgart area. Nothing happened for about ten days, so I called back over to Ludwigsburg, where the housing headquarters was. We were number twenty something. I said, "How in the world did that happen? I thought we'd be moving in already, and here we are twenty something down the list from where we were before." "Well, that's just the way it is." I said, "Wait a minute, that's not the way it is." I hung up. I told the G3, I said, "I need to go to Ludwigsburg." I told him why. He said, "Go to it." I went over there and talked to the same clerk. I said, "Who do you work for?" He was a German civilian and he worked for another civilian. There was a sergeant back there. I said, "Who do you work for?" Well he worked for a colonel, so that's where I ended up. I told him what the situation was. Well, some how or another, the list reverted back, and we moved into quarters in about three days.

I said if I ever get into a position where I can do something about quarters, so things like that don't happen, I'm going to do. Well at First Army, I got my chance. They had a group of quarters up there that were detached, individual houses. I was trying to make senior NCO housing out them. We had scads of senior NCOs . We had NSA (National Security Agency) up there, which was the Intelligence Headquarters, and all kind of senior NCOs. So I told General Seamon what I wanted to do. He said, "That sounds like a good idea." I said, "We've got a problem. The regulations call for X number of bedrooms, and it doesn't make any difference what your grade is. You know, if I'm a sergeant major and we don't have anybody at home, I'm only authorized two bedrooms." I said, "That isn't right, because if you have a colonel over here, he gets colonel's quarters, and they've got all kind of bedrooms in them." I said, "I'm not fighting for those. I just want my NCOs to have more bedrooms, than two." I said, "In fact they have a house full of furniture, they've got to sell their furniture, or the government has to store it for them, just because the family is gone." He said, "That makes a lot of sense to me." He said, "What do the Engineers say about that?" I said, "The Engineers go strictly by the regulations." He said, "Well, we're going to have a little meeting." He said, "I'm going to have a meeting the Engineer, and he doesn't know you're going to be at that meeting, but I want you to sit in on the meeting." So I did. We started out talking about the quarters. General Seamon said, "I want you to hear the Sergeant Major's quarters business here," so I went through the whole thing with him again; he was a colonel. General Seamon had a junior aide by the name of Bruce Hurry, who had five children, and Bruce was in a three-bedroom set of quarters. He called the Colonel by his first name. He said, "John, how many children do you and Mary still have at home?" The Colonel said, "We don't have any." He said, "How many bedrooms do you have in your house?" General Seamon knew. It was one of those big oversize six bedroom houses that was

built by the WPA (Work Projects Administration) in the '30s. He said, "Oh, uh. . ." He said, "You really don't need them." He said, "The way your regulations read, Bruce Hurry, my aide, ought to have your quarters, and you ought to have his." They were over in the housing area and he was on Colonel's Row. He said, "Oh no, no, no sir. No sir, those are 06 quarters." He said, "The point I'm trying to make, is what the Sergeant Major is trying to make. Your family is grown and you're in that set of quarters because you're authorized that set of quarters. What the Sergeant Major is saying, his senior guys ought to be authorized that set of quarters, with four bedrooms, regardless of the fact the family is not with them." He said, "Do you have any problems with that, John?" "No sir, no sir." So we got the houses. Later on, a good friend of mine, Art Carver, had the 6th Armored Cav up there. There was a house across the street and people were moving in. I thought, "That's kind of funny. It's Saturday afternoon and they're moving." There was a deuce-and-a-half full of furniture over there. So I went over and there was somebody out of the 6th Cav moving in. I knew the next guy to move in was a sailor. I said, "Who's moving in here?" "First Sergeant so-and-so from the Cav." I said, "No. Stop. He's not moving here." A retired lieutenant colonel, by the name of Brown, was the housing officer. I went down there Monday morning and I said, "Now somebody tried to pull a funny on us here, Mr. Brown. The problem is, there's a sailor that was supposed to move into that house. He was next. I stopped the movement on Saturday. We're not going to have that." He said, "That part of it is you and General Seamon's business." He said, "I want you to tell General Seamon when you get back up there . . . ." I said, "Just a minute, just a minute." I dialed The Old Man's number. I said, "He'll be coming on. You tell him." He said, "What! Damn!" He slammed that phone down. He said, "I don't want to talk to him." I said, "I don't want to hear you talk about the Old Man like that anymore about messing up the quarters." We got along fine

after that; me and Mr. Brown. We got the quarters situation squared away. So that, probably, is one of my big accomplishments up there too. There were all kinds of noncom's that got a kick over that thing. But I had a Commander, in General Seamon, God rest his soul, who understood I wasn't trying to get anything for Bill Bainbridge. I was trying to get something for my soldiers. I had a house. I could have said, "What the hell. I've got my house. These guys just have to wait their turn." But they shouldn't have to wait their turn. They should get what they deserve, one way or another. They should get what they deserve. So we got the houses for them. There were about forty-two sets of quarters that we got there. There were some down by the commissary and some along Washington Avenue, but we got what we was looking for. I did the same thing when I got to USARPAC.

**Interviewer:** How did you get selected to go to USARPAC?

**SMA Bainbridge:** You know, that's funny, and kind of tragic too. General Haines' former Sergeant Major at III Corps was named Joe Venable. You know about Joe?

**Interviewer:** Right. He was the one who got killed in Vietnam.

**SMA Bainbridge:** He got killed in Vietnam

**Interviewer:** In a chopper crash.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yes, along with General Ware. When I was at the Academy, we dedicated a building to him while I was there.

**Interviewer:** Right.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Joe was coming back to USARPAC. General Haines was out there and had asked for Joe Venable to come to USARPAC. I believe that Joe was killed in September of '67, just days or weeks before he was to rotate back to USARPAC. So they had to send a list, a slate, out to USARPAC to General Haines. I didn't know this until later on, but they sent it out and he sent it back; he didn't find anyone on there that he wanted, or liked. They sent another slate out. I was on the second slate and was selected. I didn't know anything like this was

happening. I got another call from General Seamon. He said that he wanted me to come down to his office. He said, "Did you know that you have been nominated for USARPAC?" I said, "USARPAC?" He said, "Yeah. U.S. Army, Pacific, Hawaii." He said, "You didn't know that you were nominated for USARPAC by the CSM Branch?" I said, "No, I did not." He said, "Well, what's more, you've been selected." He said, "Let me tell you something. I don't want to lose you, but I don't want you to give me an answer not either. I want you to go back and talk to Hazel about being stationed in Hawaii, and all that business." He said, "Ralph Haines is one heck of a guy. I've known him for a long time." He said, "You just think about it." This was on a Thursday or a Friday. He said, "Come in next week and tell me what you think." So Hazel and I talked about it for a while. Even though we had been there a little over a year, it was a chance to move up, so we decided to take a whack at it. When I told that to General Seamon, he said, "If you had given me any other answer, I would have thought there was something wrong with you." He said, "Because for you to refuse this, would be the same as me getting the chance to be the Chief of Staff of the Army and say, 'No, no. I've only been here for a little time.'" He said, "You've got to move when you have to move." So...

(End of Tape OH 94.4-5, Side 2)

(Begin Tape OH 94.4-6, Side 1)

**Interviewer:** As we ended the last tape, we just finished discussing how you were selected to go to USARPAC. What was the mission and function of USARPAC?

**SMA Bainbridge:** USARPAC was sort of the logistical coordinating headquarters for everything in the Pacific, short of Vietnam. We had no command authority over Vietnam, but we were in the logistical chain; for ammunition and that sort of thing. Of course Japan, and the rest of Southeast Asia, belonged to USARPAC, including all of the areas where we had military detachments out there, like New Zealand and Indonesia,

those belonged to USARPAC, and all of the places were we set up R&R (Rest and Recuperation) Center; that's one of the things I got to check to make sure those things were operating right for those folks coming out of Vietnam.

**Interviewer:** It was basically the headquarters for all of the Army in the Pacific.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah, United States Army, Pacific. That's exactly what it was.

**Interviewer:** Where was the headquarters for USARPAC?

**SMA Bainbridge:** In Fort Shafter, Hawaii.

**Interviewer:** Tell me about your job at USARPAC, about some of your visits to the field, and your activities.

**SMA Bainbridge:** When we got ready to go out to USARPAC, one of the things that I was told was that I had to get a passport because I was going to make a trip right after I got out there. The old man was going on about a four-week trip out through Southeast Asia and I was going to have to have a passport. Frank Wickham was the Sergeant Major out there, who I was replacing. Frank said, "Be sure you do two things. Get yourself a set of "whites" before you get out here, and also get that passport." I went down from Fort Meade to the Pentagon to get the passport. The bureaucracy, being what it is, some lady at the counter said, "You don't need a passport to go to Hawaii." I said, "That's not the point. I need a passport." She said, "No." I said, "Who do you work for?" So I went through five people and I finally got back to the gal I started with, who was told by her boss to issue me a passport. I didn't tell all of those folks what I needed it for, but I told the boss, "Look, I've got to have it because I'm going to be going to all of these different places." He said, "There shouldn't be any question. If you ask for a passport, it's your right as a citizen to get a passport." But it was an official passport. Anyway, I got the passport and went out there. One of the things about USARPAC, I think it was the

first time I was fully sponsored, going to a unit. The Sergeant Major out there, Frank Wickham, called me and got me squared away. He even had them make an announcement on the airplane, when I got there, that we were to wait until the rest of the plane unloaded and then they were going to escort us off so we could be greeted by Frank and his wife. That was all new to us. Bill Yarborough, who was the AG (Adjutant General) Sergeant Major, was assigned as our escort. He showed us where our quarters were, made sure that we got all of our inprocessing done, and the whole works. He helped us go down and pickup the car and all that business when we got there. I made a trip and we didn't have our household goods yet when I took off on the trip. So here's Hazel, in an empty set of quarters, except for a few things that they issued to us from the Army Community Service to setup housekeeping for a short period of time. But Bill Yarborough and his wife made sure Hazel was taken care of. Don't you know, she held off unpacking that shipment of household goods until I got back. I always talk about that. It was a good thing she did, because we had some damage and we got that squared away.

**Interviewer:** Were your quarters right there at Shafter?

**SMA Bainbridge:** They were right at Shafter. General Haines had a welcoming ceremony for us, within just a couple of days. All of the staff came in and greeted us at the NCO Club. General Haines gave me a little guidance about what he wanted me to do with the troops units, and what he wanted me to do at Fort Shafter, etc., and about keeping the working relationship with the Company and the staff, because the staff and all of the folks that work in the Headquarters belong to the Company, yet they don't belong to the Company, so it's kind of hard to keep that straight. You know how that works. So I was sort of the ombudsman to make sure everything worked right on both ends of that. We went on that first TDY trip. In USARPAC, the old man had a dedicated aircraft and his own crew. He had an Air Force C-118 that had been

VIP'ed out in Taiwan, I believe. He had a cabin back there, and there and were bunks in it. It had a galley on it. It had bunks for a double crew, if necessary. We made this trip, which I think was about three and a half weeks. We went to South Vietnam, Okinawa, the Philippines, and Japan. When we got ready to head back, we were having dinner in the old man's cabin; the aide, Mrs. Haines, the old man, the executive officer, and myself. We normally ate outside of his cabin, but coming back we had dinner with him. He said, "Well, after this little shakedown cruise, the Sergeant Major is not going to have any problems operating in this command." He said, "He knows everybody out there." Every place we'd get off the airplane, somebody would come up and grab me, that I served with before. He said, "So he's going to make out alright." We were still working on Saturday mornings, in those days, when we went to USARPAC, but Saturday mornings were sort of catchup time. That's when I always had a hour scheduled with General Haines. Sometimes it wouldn't take an hour. It was to kind of layout what I had done or what he wanted me to do. It was just sort of an orientation period. For example. One trip we made to Korea, he was asking about my impressions. I said, "One thing I find in Korea, and not is every case, but in some cases, I find where the distaff side of the house is married, but the other side isn't." He said, "I've never heard it put that way, but I know what you're saying. I know what you're saying." But that hour or half hour, or whatever it took, was sort of a direct feedback to him, from me. He knew what I was doing and I knew what he wanted me to do. We talked about sergeants major were supposed to do, and one thing and another. I remember one time, Butch, we had just came back from a Commanders' meeting where the Sergeant Major of the Army also had his meeting; I think it probably Si Copeland. He went to his meeting and we came back. General Haines was talking about a commander; he didn't say who the commander was. But he said he was sort of distraught about his sergeant major. He said, "There they are. They're down there

having their own meeting while we're having this one." He said, "I don't even know what's going on." General Haines said, "I told him, 'Look at the fellow that you shave in the morning, he's the guy that's responsible. My Sergeant Major is in the same meeting and I know exactly what he's putting out in there, because we've already discussed it. And if I hadn't wanted him to do it, he just wouldn't be discussing it. It's just as simple as that'." He said, "I don't understand where some of these folks are coming from." He never did say who it was. I can admire him for that. I respect him for that. There wasn't any rapport there. General Haines and I had that rapport. We trusted one another, and I wouldn't have said something in there that I hadn't cleared with him in the first place if it was coming from USARPAC, because I already had my meeting and he had approved what had gone on at that meeting. When we got out there, I also setup, I think, the first Command-wide Sergeants Major meeting that had ever been held out there. I brought in Thailand, USARV, MACV, even though MACV wasn't directly under us, it was important to have that guy in that meeting. I brought in an Australian and a New Zealand sergeant major. When I talked to the old man about this, we had been out there on a trip. I said I would like to bring those folks in here because I think they could gain something from us. He said, "That's an excellent idea, and we'll just pay their way in here. We'll give them TDY and per diem, and just pay their way in here." That's what we did. It went so well that the next year we got the one out of Korea. Then we got one out of Indonesia; that one didn't pan out to well. He just wasn't with it. He got his pocket picked down at the International Market, in Honolulu. We had already given them their TDY pay in advance so they would have money to spend, so he was destitute. But that group of sergeants major coming in for the meeting, and my staff sergeants major took up a collection. He had more money after we got done with him than he had with his TDY money. But anyway, it worked out well. Again. it was sort of a bridge

builder, if you will, to bring those commands together so they could sit down around the table and eyeball one another and say, "We should have had this," or "We should have had that." I'm preaching to the choir when I tell you what we do, but it was just something that hadn't been done before. It was necessary. Again we got into the quarters business there, where we didn't have the right support from the staff. General Haines squared that away. An example on quarters support. We were up in a duplex apartment. Have you ever been to Fort Shafter?

**Interviewer:** Yes.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Okay. Do you know where the PX complex is?

**Interviewer:** The PX complex is off to the left when you come in the gate. Are you talking about that one?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Then you move around and the chapel sits up on the right. The NCO Club is right up on the hill.

**SMA Bainbridge:** You turn left to go to the NCO Club, and you turn right to go to the fire station and the service station. There were three sets of quarters down through there, and one of them belonged to the Post Commander and the other two had staff officers in them. One was 313 and I think one was 311. There had been another house in there that had burned, years ago. General Haines said, "You know, I think you ought to have a bigger set of quarters." I said, "Yeah, that would be fine." He said, "I want you to go over and look at 313." He said, "I think you'd enjoy those quarters." I went over there and it was a three-bedroom frame house. It had been used for everything. It had been used for nurses quarters and it had been used for a little school. It had a big patio out back and a great big tree that grew completely over the patio, and over about half of the house; it was just a beautiful backyard. So we looked at the quarters and said we'd like to have them. Well there was a lieutenant colonel living in there. He said, "When the lieutenant colonel rotates, we'll paint the quarters and renovate them

a little bit. You and Hazel can have that set of quarters." It was close to the Headquarters. So the time came for us to be moving in there, and the guy hadn't moved out. I didn't say anything. One day at one of our Saturday morning meetings, the old man said, "When are you moving into your quarters?" I said, "I'm not sure, because Colonel So-and-so is not out of there." He said, "He's not?" Bucky Harris was his exec. He said, "Bucky, check on that." Colonel Harris said, "Yes sir, I will." Come to find out, the G1 had extended that Colonel for six months in USARPAC, but he didn't tell General Haines. General Haines didn't tell me this, but I found out later that he got a hold of G1 and I guess G1 had a lot of explaining to do. He said, "I don't normally check on you when you extend officers, because that's your business." He said, "But you knew I wanted that set of quarters." So he didn't get another extension, I can tell you that. So we moved into that set of quarters. We celebrated our twenty-fifth wedding anniversary in there. Our youngest daughter set it up. It was a secret deal. It was supposed to be secret. but she ran out of money. She had invited everybody; the old man included. Mary came to me and said, "Dad, this was supposed to be secret, but I'm out of money." So we helped her out on that. We were standing under the eve there, talking, and it was just kind of a misty rain. When you have a function like that, if it rains on it in Hawaii, it's good luck. Some water dripped down General Haines' neck. He just kind of turned around and said, "Sergeant Major, you ought to have an eve trough along there." The Post Commander, Dave Milota, was standing there. He said, "Don't you think so, Dave?" Colonel Milota said, "Yes sir. Yes sir." This was Saturday. Monday morning they were putting up that eve trough. That's the sort of rapport we had with General Haines. He and his wife Sally, were just great people.

**Interviewer:** He was responsible for you going to the Academy as the Sergeant Major.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yes he was. He was. His executive officer, Carl Morton, was going to be the Commandant of the Sergeants Major Academy. He suggested to Colonel Morton that he contact me and see if I would be interested. He said, "I think he'd be a good Sergeant Major for you." So that's how I got my first invitation to go to the Academy.

**Interviewer:** Who was the USARPAC Commander whenever you left for the Academy?

**SMA Bainbridge:** General Rossen.

**Interviewer:** General Rossen?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** General Haines had already left and went to the Pentagon. Is that right?

**SMA Bainbridge:** No, General Haines went to CONARC (Continental Army Command).

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**SMA Bainbridge:** You see, it was still CONARC when we started the Academy. He went from USARPAC back to CONARC. We had a talk before General Haines left. He said, "What do we need to watch out for when we get to CONARC?", because CONARC had all of the schools. I said, "One of the things you need to be aware of, sir, is that we need to keep the emphasis that we've got started here on the NCOCC." I said, "That's really turned out very well. We need to continue to work toward that sort of thing." NCOES was just sort of a "think" thing there. I said, "We've got to improve the educational system. Maybe we don't want to keep that in place, but we've got a nucleus." He said, "You're right. We need to keep working on that sort of thing." I think he was as much a supported of that NCOES business as General Westmoreland, and then later General Vono and some of the others that really kept it going. As I mentioned, I think yesterday, Butch, he said, "We know the NCOs read the sports page. We would like to have them also read the editorial page." That's part of the outgrowth of that. I think I served with

General William Rossen about, maybe a year and a half of that three and a half years out there.

**Interviewer:** When did you leave USARPAC?

**SMA Bainbridge:** We left USARPAC in October of 1972.

**Interviewer:** That's when you were assigned at the Sergeant Major of the Sergeants Major Academy.

**SMA Bainbridge:** As a matter of fact, Butch, we went from USARPAC back to the conference that TRADOC held when we were getting ready to start the Academy, to get the lesson plans built and come up with a draft curriculum. What do we want to teach these guys? What do we want to have in the curriculum? We had civilian educators and senior noncommissioned officers and officers. Dandridge Mike Malone was a War College instructor at the time. I'm sure you've heard of him. He was our brain storming expert. He had the board up there. We had all kind of expert folks down there. I knew at the time, because I had already agreed with Colonel Morton to be the Sergeant Major there, when we went on this TDY trip to get things started. I knew I was going to be the Sergeant Major, although the rest of the staff didn't. It worked out very well. We spent about ten days, sitting around in those old hot building they had out there at the time, coming up with ideas. It was just exactly that; it was just a brain storming session.

**Interviewer:** When you got the call over in USARPAC, from Colonel Morton, wanting you to come to the Academy. Tell me about your thought process and making the decision to accept that assignment.

**SMA Bainbridge:** I'll tell you what, Butch. I probably made that decision as quick as any I have ever made, in my own mind, because I had been a proponent for so long of having an educational system for NCOs that I thought maybe this would be my chance to kind of put my ideas into this thing, because I knew it was important. Number two. I had been in USARPAC almost three and a half years. The main function out there, the Vietnam thing, was winding down. As a matter of fact, we

had been out on a trip and you could see how things were winding down. There weren't many troops left over there. Let's see, we went there in '72, so this would have been in '71, because Christmas of '71, General Rossen and I made my last trip to Vietnam. I knew then that I was going to be the Sergeant Major of the Sergeants Major Academy. I was foraging for people to help staff that place out there. I told Colonel Morton that I was going to be going. He said, "There's a lot of folks out there to look at." Some of them I knew. Don Kelly, for example, out of Japan. I knew I wanted to get that guy. Bill Sweeney, who was the Eight Army G3. I knew I wanted to get Bill Sweeney. I was doing a lot of sowing on that trip out there. So I talked to Hazel and I talked to General Rossen. I told General Rossen, "You've extended me out here and I appreciate that, but Vietnam is winding down. I think I've done good here, but I think this is where I ought to go." He said, "I agree. You don't worry about the extension." He said, "I'm not going to be here that much longer myself. You go ahead and go." So I really jumped at the chance. I really did, and I'm glad. You've got the question some place else in here, but that has to be the best assignment I ever had in the Army. The reason it has to be the best is, Colonel Morton, who I think has forgotten as much about noncommissioned officers as most people will ever know, let me have my rein to do the things for the Academy that I thought ought to be done for it, to make sure we fought hard to keep it going, and to run the NCO side of it. It was a challenge for both Hazel and I. Everybody used to kid me, but it was a fact. General Haines said, in the first volume of the history of the Academy, he said, "Hazel was the reason I was selected to go to the Sergeants Major Academy, and also to become the Sergeant Major of the Army." She's the big reason behind it. See, General Haines knew how Hazel operated in Hawaii, in ACS (Army Community Services) and with the childrens' school. They had one school out there for children with learning disabilities. The wife of the Tripler (Army Medical Center)

Sergeant Major was the instructor there. She was in charge of it, as a matter of fact. They never had enough funds, so Hazel got a "Monte Carlo Night" established at the Club. They made four or five thousand dollars for that school. So General Haines told Colonel Morton, "You're going to get a pair, because Hazel is the kind of gal that will setup something for the wives." He was really looking for that too. He wanted the wives to be involved. That's why he fought so hard for a place like Fort Bliss, where there were quarters, so we could get families out there. There isn't any question, the student whose family is there with him is a better student than the student whose family is off at X, Y, or Z. I've seen it proven with every class while I was there. I used to tell them, "Sally breaks an arm, over in Fort Eustis, Virginia. Your wife says, 'Oh she's doing fine.' You're not really sure whether your wife has said that so you won't worry and do good in school, or whether she really is. If she's here, you run her up to the hospital and you know she's okay. So that makes a difference." That makes a difference. General Haines had two people for one, when he sicked Colonel Morton on us.

**Interviewer:** When you were assigned to the Academy, the curriculum had not yet been determined and the Academy hadn't really been staffed. Tell me about the development of the curriculum and how you went about getting your staff.

**SMA Bainbridge:** You remember, we had the brain storming session. That sort of laid the parameters out for what we would like to have in that. Then I was on my little foraging trip to get some folks. After we got to the Academy we had all finds of feelers out, to different places trying to get folks of your caliber in there to do the things that we needed to have done. In early October of '72, Colonel Morton told General Haines something he said he had never told his boss in all of his life. He said, "I can't start this Academy in January of 1973, and make it they type of Academy we want it to be." General Haines

said, "Oh yes, You're going to start it. But you tell me what you need and I'll provide the resources." And provide them he did. You know, from the War College, from the C&GS (Command and General Staff College), from the Chemical School, and from all over. We had Reserve colonels who had masters degrees as librarians. All of these things were pulled together and we had borrowed help from all over the Army. We were looking for the McNeills, and Offuts, and Ferrises, and those folks to come in there and set that place up. So we were looking at every places we could get people. We were going to the Pentagon to ask friends in the Pentagon if they had leads on officers like George Stoffer, for example, who we got from the War College, and Ron Rasimusas that came from the War College; they were both in the same class. George Stoffer's branch, the Infantry Branch, told him, "It's the death now of your career if you go to that Academy. It's a new academy and they don't know what they're doing yet, and you're going to go out there." George didn't do too bad; he ended up as the Fifth Army Commander. It was a real struggle. We had people putting together vault files of lesson plans for Phase II, while Phase I was going. One of my best stories about that is, Stoffer said, "Put tactics in it. I want you to teach it in the small group." Two guys, a colonel and a major, from C&GS, said, "You can't teach tactics in the small group." He said, "Are you guys telling me that you're not capable of coming up with that? Then maybe we can't do it." He said it pissed them off. He said they were really PO'ed. They told him later, they said, "We ran back there and we brained stormed that damn thing for about four days. We brought it back and said, 'Here you are. We did it'." But that's the sort of challenges we had. My Thanksgiving story of '72. Those of us that were in quarters there invited the other people to come for dinner; the borrowed help. The old man said, "Now this is one day we want you to take off. There's no coming back after Thanksgiving turkey and working on the vault files. We just might be checking." Well, we

did. We found a dozen or so back in there working. We ran them all off, because I don't care how dedicated you are, once in a while you've got to take a break. That's the sort of challenges we had to try to get that thing going. I just told this story to this graduating class. When the student went to the Learning Resource Center to get a reference, the librarian would probably say, "Let's see. That's box forty-two, which is over there." We didn't even have shelves for the references yet. It was in one of those little cantonment type buildings. We finally got it setup in the old PX building. I don't know what's down there now.

**Interviewer:** That was the big building down by the flight line.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah. It was the old Vallent Learning Resource Center, and of course they moved it up to where it is now. We had the study hall where the Hazel L. Bainbridge Little House is now. That was our first auditorium, you know. We were building one down next to the flight line. The only way we could go, because of the flight line, was elongated. So we put, I guess, another forty feet on that.

**Interviewer:** That became the Venable Lecture Center

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Named after Joe Venable

**SMA Bainbridge:** Right. I can remember when they were bringing the screen in. Colonel Morton got a call from some trucking company up at Truth or Consequences, New Mexico. A wind storm had come up and it had blown that glass rear projection screen off the truck and broken it. He said, "You have a problem. Your screen is broke." Colonel Morton said, "No, I don't have a problem because you have never delivered it." He said, "You've got the problem." Some how or another it wasn't insured, or something. It wasn't our fault that it wasn't insured, so they had to get a brand new one. They had to build it because of the size, so it had to be made. There was just one thing after another, but because of the dedication of the people that we had there, we got that

thing going. I think it's going to be there to stay now, Butch.

**Interviewer:** How do you think that Academy has changed the way that the Officers Corps looks at the Noncommissioned Officers Corps?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I think they now finally realize that we've got smart sergeants. As we were talking out here in the yard the other day, World War II was won in the classrooms of Carlisle and the C&GS. I think as much as anything, the conflict in the Gulf was won by NCOES, because everybody was trained to do their job, and trained well. I think NCOES is the reason for that. Never in history have we had a system like we've got now. Nobody has had a system for enlisted folks. If you don't think it's a good one, how come all of the other services are trying to do it, and any foreign country that comes in says, "We wish we had something like this." It's just the way to go. It's a proven fact that it's a good system. But I'll tell you, it wasn't easy and it still isn't easy. There will always be somebody that is shooting at it, but it's like shooting yourself in the foot, I think, to try to try to say that this isn't necessary. It's like General Sullivan said. If he only has one division, give him the capability and the resources to make it the best division in the world. So even if we don't have but one class a year, give us the resources to make that the best learning experience that we can make it, because the Army loses if we lose it.

**Interviewer:** For the record, why did the DCSPER reject a request to allow first sergeants to retain their first sergeant chevrons while they were attending the Academy?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Butch, I don't know whether it was a DCSPER decision or not; maybe it is. Let me tell you. I made the decision first, for the first class. We had I don't know how many first sergeants in that class, but it was a good number. We had one hundred and five people in the first class, and one hundred of them graduated. I did it because of Jessie Mills, who was the Student, Staff, and Faculty Company First Sergeant. We gave them the master sergeant

chevrons and we sewed them on their uniforms for them, free of charge. We didn't make them change them on the blues. They didn't have the dress mess at the time, but we didn't make them change them on their dress uniform, and they could wear them at graduation. But first sergeants are exactly what they say; there's one in an outfit. My explanation was to everyone of those people when they asked, "Look, if you were in Jessie Mills' shoes, you wouldn't want Jessie Mills wearing his first sergeant stripes. You're assigned to this unit. You've got the patch on your left shoulder, and there's only one first sergeant, and that's Jessie Mills. We'll take care of your duty uniform for you, but you can't wear those stripes. Now DCSPER may have gotten into the act and said you've go to report with them off, but I not aware of that. But that's how it first started.

**Interviewer:** What it amounted to, DCSPER supported your way of thinking.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah. It may well have happened, because that was the philosophy behind the decision to do it. When the first question was asked, Colonel Morton said, "There's your answer right there." He said, "Sergeant Major." And that's the answer I gave them. That was the end of it; there wasn't anymore questions.

**Interviewer:** When did you say the first class began?

**SMA Bainbridge:** It began in January of '73, and it graduated in July of '73. There was one hundred and five in it, and one hundred graduated. One soldier in that class didn't graduated because he could not write a twenty-five hundred word paper. His faculty group member and his faculty advisor, and everybody talked to him about what he ought to do. I also talked to him. He said, "I've got two or three waste baskets full of starts and stops on it, to try and fix this paper." He said, "None of it is any good." I said, "Who's the judge of that? Have you ever shown any of those papers to anybody?" He said, "No." I said, "Take it to your faculty group members. Take it to your faculty

advisor; that's what he's for." He said, "No. No. I want to resign from the Army. I'm going to take a discharge> I want to get out of the Army." I said, "What are you going to do?" He said, "I'll get a job here." So we let him go. We let him go. He was a first sergeant, with sixteen or seventeen years of service. He let his enlistment expire and he didn't reenlist. He went to work for Ma Bell, digging post holes. He called me about two weeks before it was time for him to be finished in the Army, and he said, "You're the only hope I've got, Sergeant Major." He said, "I've changed my mind. I need to stay." I said, "Friend, if I'm your only hope, you're lost." I said, "The problem is the next time you get this kind of problem, you're going to do the same thing. It's time for you to leave now." And he left. Every time he would have faced a problem, he would have quit.

**Interviewer:** Tell me about Hazel's involvement. At the Academy, like Helen Hayes is the first lady of theater, Hazel Bainbridge is the first lady of the Academy.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah. Bless her heart. She really put everything into that Academy. Again, back to what General Haines said. He said that he knew that she would. She got the wives together and she got some great help from Mrs. Morton. Bless her heart, she hadn't always been an Army wife, but she jumped right in there. I think it was good that she hadn't been, because there was no "old boy network" with her. If it didn't look right, she support Hazel on how it ought to go. She just supported Hazel one hundred percent. George Stoffer's wife, and Virgil McNeill's wife, and Don Kelly's wife, all of those gals just did great. Jean Morton, Betty Kelly, Maxine McNeill, and uh... Oh there was others. Uh...

**Interviewer:** Was Jan Anders involved at that time?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Jan Anders wasn't there at that time, but Jan was there before we left. There were just all kind of folks that came on board like that. Hazel has a lot of funny stories about having one

of the coffees and somebody looking at her shoes. One of them said, "Hazel, have you got another pair of shoes like that?" He had one blue shoe and one brown shoe. She hadn't even noticed. She had been jumping from one spot to another. But the program was to get a viable wives association going so that now only would the husbands benefit, but the wives would benefit from their husbands attending the Academy. Henry Ferris' wife, Yko, both of them are gone now. Yko was a Japanese girl. Henry was one of the first faculty group members. I think he must have been there about a year and a half, and he made CSM and went to a unit of his own. Yko told Hazel, "Before I came to the Academy I didn't know about being a CSM's wife." She said, "But now I can be a CSM's wife anywhere." Yko was sort of a mild gal, but she was ready to be a CSM's wife anywhere. There were literally hundreds of wives, while we were there, and I know there's more since that have benefitted from that program, that can be a CSM's wife anywhere. They did things that they never thought they could do. As a matter of fact, we have a painting here that was done by one of the student wives. She never had a paint brush in her hand in her life before. She got interested in painting and she and her husband, when they left, went to Fort Riley, Kansas, I believe. He was an artilleryman. She ended up having her own show, selling her paintings. Things like that just make for a better family life. So Hazel really gave her all for that place, in getting things established to make it operate favorably. We had a fellow by the name of Howard Rounds, who was my admin guy. He lives over here in Punta Gorda, Florida. He's a bachelor; he's never been married. He was always getting things for the gals. When we tried to get information through the husbands, home to the wives, something was always falling through the cracks. Well someplace, Howie came up with a bunch of mimeograph paper. I mean there was several hundred cases of mimeograph paper, and it was pink. Somebody was trying to get rid of it and Howie said, "I'll take all of it." Howard said, "Hazel, everything that you

want to go to the wives we'll put on this pink paper. The word will go out to the students, 'If it's on pink paper, you'd better get it to your wife'." That pink paper lasted for a good three or four classes, and the wives' information went out on pink paper. There was support from the rest of the staff and they just helped Hazel get that thing going. She just worked her fingers to the bone, setting up coffee groups. They had the meetings in the homes and some of those quarters weren't big enough, but they'd stick them in there. Then along come some renovation programs out there. Where the original Hazel L. Bainbridge Little House was, was the orderly room. Then the orderly room moved up next to the chapel and next to the headquarters building. They were going to tear that building down, so I talked to Colonel Morton and I said, "Look, we ought to give that to the wives, that way they could have a central place to meet for all their meetings." He said, "Great." Well, our S4 said, "No, we're going to tear it down." I said, "No, we're not going to tear it down because Colonel Morton has already given it to us for the wives." They said, "No, No. We've got to tear it down." I said, "You better go tell the old man before you turn that over to the Post to be torn down." So he convinced him that he wasn't going to tear it down. Then they even added another piece to it, and then of course...

(End of Tape OH 94.4-6, Side 1)

(Begin Tape OH 94.4-6, Side 2)

**Interviewer:** When the tape ended, we were discussing the evolution of the Hazel L. Bainbridge Little House, there at the Academy, where it started out as one small building, almost like a one room schoolhouse, and now it almost looks like a college.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah, from one orderly room size building, and now it's in Building 368, or is it 268? Well, something. Half of that building was our first lecture hall. I could remember, during Class One, General Abrams was down there and he was standing behind the podium

on the platform, which we built; Don Kelly and company, and everybody built that thing in the middle. Somebody asked General Abrams what his open door policy was. He said, "Well, when you see my door open that means I'm out visiting with the troops. Next question." But that wives program, in my estimation, Butch, has been as much a part, and you talked about the evolution of the house, it's as much a part of the evolution of that whole Academy outlook as any single thing done out there, because you see, the problem with doing a wives program is that if you and I head up the unit, I'm the Sergeant Major of the Academy and I can pretty much get things going the way I want them to go, within reason, but it's not that easy if you have no command authority. There isn't any way you can say, "You're going to do this." It has to be worked out so either you think it's your idea or you think it's a good idea. So it's just tough to do, so my hat will always be off to her for what she did there. As you say, I think so have the hats of a lot of wives that have been out there.

**Interviewer:** Who was the Sergeant Major of the Army when that first class was in session?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Si Copeland.

**Interviewer:** Silas Copeland.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yes. As a matter of fact, Si came to the first graduation. I believe General Bill Rossen was our guest speaker. At that time, he was SOUTHCOM (Southern Command) Commander.

**Interviewer:** Sergeant Major Copeland said the only thing he regretted about that graduation ceremony was the fact he didn't have the honor to speak, but he could understand why. He talked about that graduation quite a bit. And then when I talked to Sergeant Major Van Autreve, he was involved in those early days too. Both of them speak with so much pride because they, like yourself, had a part to play in the establishment of the Academy.

**SMA Bainbridge:** And it comes from the heart of those two guys,

because they in fact were very, very instrumental in getting that Academy started. About three years ago I was at the AUSA (Association of the United States Army) annual meeting and they had a booth. I'm listening to a young major who as telling a couple about how much influence he had getting that Academy started. My mind went to work. "Let's see, this is 1990, and this major probably has been a major maybe a couple of years, so we go back to at least 1980 or 1979, when he probably entered the Army." I wanted to know how much he had to do, so I asked him. He didn't know who I was. I asked him, "What did you have to do with it." Well he was thus and so. I said, "That's strange." I would bring up somebody else that had done that. Finally he just turned around and walked off. He had nothing to do with that. He couldn't even spell "academy." (Sergeant Major Bainbridge addressed Hazel, who was in the next room.) Hazel Louise, what's Jean Offut's first name? (Hazel responded by saying, "Thelma.") Yeah, Thelma Jean. I told Butch I can't remember, but when we visited them in Berlin, you said, "Jean?" She said, "Yeah, I just decided one day that I wasn't going to be Thelma anymore, so now I'm Jean." Thelma Jean Offut. (The reason Sergeant Major Bainbridge was referring to Jean Offut was because, during the previous break, he and I were discussing Jean Offut, who is in charge of the Public Affairs Office at Fort Bliss. Jean's husband, Joe Offut, worked for Sergeant Major Bainbridge.)

**Interviewer:** While you were at the Academy, you were selected as the Sergeant Major of the Army. Is that correct?

**SMA Bainbridge:** That's right. Yeah, in 1975.

**Interviewer:** Before we discuss your tenure as Sergeant Major of the Army, I would like to ask you some questions about your family. We talked earlier about you and Hazel getting married right after you came back from World War II. You said that the first Post where Hazel joined you for the first time was up at Camp Atterbury. You had two children at that time, and you stayed in a mobile home. Is that right?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Right. See, we weren't married until after the war. Well I say after the war, but after the war in Europe was over in June of '45. Hazel did come to Camp Maxie, Texas. She was there for a short period of time. Then I got out of the Army. I went from there to Camp Roberts, California, and Hazel went home. When I got discharged I went back to Illinois. When we got recalled, then we had the mobile home and she was with me in Columbus, Indiana, at Camp Atterbury. Of course the girls had been born while we were out of the service. We were married in June of '45. Our oldest daughter, Kathrine, was born on 1 June 1946. Then our youngest daughter, Mary, was born on 25 September 1949. As a matter of fact, I was milking one morning and Hazel sent Kathy out to the barn and she said, "Daddy, mama says that she has to go to the hospital." I said, "Okay." I went on milking. About forty-five minutes later here came Kathy again. "Daddy, mama says you better hurry." So I relieved the pressure a little bit on all of the cows, and off we went to the hospital, Gailsburg County Hospital, and the next morning Mary appeared. Not that morning, but the next morning. So when I go home, those cows were looking at me like I was the cad of all cads.

**Interviewer:** Do you have just two daughters?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Two daughters. Kathrine and Mary.

**Interviewer:** What is Kathrine and Mary doing now?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Kathrine is in Salinas, Kansas, about forty miles west of Fort Riley. She and her husband have two girls and a boy, in that order. Our oldest granddaughter has two boys, so we're great grandparents, twice. Somebody said, "You great grandparents." I said, "We've always been 'great' grandparents, but now we're great grandparents." Mary and her husband don't have any children. They live here in Orlando. Both of them work for Disney World. They're doing well. Kathrine and her husband, in Kansas, have a service station, and a convenience store, and two pizza stores, and a couple of rental

properties, so they're doing alright too.

**Interviewer:** How old were Kathy and Mary when you came back into the service?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Well, let's see. I came back in '51, so Kathy was five; she was born in '46. Yeah, she would have been five. Mary would have been two. Mary would have been two.

**Interviewer:** How did they adapt to the frequent moves that you made?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I think they adapted very well. I think, in those days, they were like other kids. You know, they were leaving their friends, etc., but they made new friends easily. I think, on balance, they benefitted far more than they suffered in the frequent moves. They had a chance to live overseas. They wouldn't have gotten that chance otherwise. They were old enough when we were in Europe so we could do some traveling that they would remember. Hazel took them to England on a Girl Scout trip. We went to Switzerland and to France. We drove all over Germany. They got some things out of it. Mary started grade school in Augdon, Kansas, just right outside of Fort Riley, Kansas. Then we went to Fort Leonard Wood for a year, and then to Europe for three and a half years, and back to Fort Riley. Mary graduated from Augdon. Kathy graduated from high school in Manhattan, Kansas. Mary graduated from high school in Columbus, Georgia, while we were at Fort Benning. I think they did fine. They gained more than they lost.

**Interviewer:** Whenever you deployed and went overseas where your dependents couldn't accompany you, where did your family stay?

**SMA Bainbridge:** When I went to Vietnam, they stayed in Augdon, Kansas. We had a mobile home there so they stayed there. Augdon is right outside of Fort Riley. As a matter of fact, Augdon butts right up against the eastern edge of the Fort Riley reservation, on highway K18. When I went on "Long Thrust," the six months TDY (temporary duty) trip.

They were there. That's when Hazel learned to drive. Hazel never drove before I went on "Long Thrust." They had a little driving range right inside the Post. We went out there with an old '53 Buick and drove around three or four loops at a time, and by golly Hazel picked right up on it. The learned the under the wheel stick shift. She did very well. That's the only two times they didn't go with me. When I went to Europe, they went. Of course, when I went to Hawaii, they went.

**Interviewer:** One of the questions here concerning the family is back to what we talked about before. You told me about the worst quarters you ever lived in, which were the maids' quarters on the third or fourth floor on the quarters there in Germany. What do you think were the best quarters that you lived in?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I think that probably the best quarters were in Hawaii. (Sergeant Major Bainbridge called to Hazel, who was in the next room.) Hazel, come here a minute. You've got to help me out here. This is a family question. We already know that the worst quarters were those maids' quarters.

**Hazel Bainbridge:** No, I changed my mind. I think the worst were at..." (Her further remarks could not be heard on the tape, but the Sergeant Major responded to that portion of her remark.)

**SMA Bainbridge:** Oh, at Columbus. Oh yeah. We'll tell Butch why. (He asked Hazel, "What was the best? Did we say Hawaii?")

**Hazel Bainbridge:** We've had some good ones. The best, location wise, was probably Hawaii. The friends that we made and we still have fond memories of would be at the Academy.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah, I think that's what we wrote down.

**Hazel Bainbridge:** I think we decided on the Academy.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah. Yeah. Because we had some nice quarters there. And again, that's because of Colonel Morton.

**Hazel Bainbridge:** Are you talking about quarters, or just where we enjoyed it?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Quarters.

**Hazel Bainbridge:** Quarters. Oh. Alright, let me think.

**SMA Bainbridge:** I think at Shafter.

**Hazel Bainbridge:** Hawaii.

**SMA Bainbridge:** It had to be Shafter for the quarters. Our quarters at Fort Bliss weren't ready. The Post thought they were ready, but Colonel Morton inspected them and said, "No, those are not ready." He made them repaint them.

**Hazel Bainbridge:** We hung around for about two or three weeks.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah, and do you know where we lived? It has never happened to us before or since, and probably not to many other people. Colonel Morton lived on main post in those big old detached single quarters. He said, "We've got more room than we'll ever use." He said, "We've got a bedroom and a bathroom upstairs. It's all your own. We got a kitchen and we'll just eat like family." We did that about two and a half weeks.

**Interviewer:** You lived with Colonel Morton.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Right with Colonel Morton and Jean and Carl Jr. They've got a Carl Jr.; that's the little guy.

**Hazel Bainbridge:** Are you through with me?

**SMA Bainbridge:** No, not quite, but.

**Hazel Bainbridge:** Well give me a yell.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Hazel was talking about the maids' quarters; they were actual quarters. But the trailer that we lived in, in Columbus, Indiana, our own trailer, that was alright. But we lived in this trailer park, right across the street from the cemetery. You couldn't use the bathroom. You could just wash dishes, but no solid waste. You had to go to the bath house for that. There was a sump for the water drain, but the water line, for fresh water, was three-eighths OD (outside diameter) copper tubing. We were about the sixth or seventh trailer from the supply, so if anybody between us and the supply wanted

to take a shower, we just had to wait. That's one of the reasons that she thinks that was the worst, and I agree with her.

**Interviewer:** Was that a military trailer park?

**SMA Bainbridge:** No, that was civilian. And then later on, they opened a trailer park right on Camp Atterbury. So our rent went from something like thirty bucks a month, down to six. That included water, sewer, and lights, so we really made out like a bandit because we wasn't making a heck of a lot of money. From thirty dollars to six dollars made a big difference; that was one more trip to the commissary. You know, they talk about Hamburger Helper, and all that business?

**Interviewer:** Uh huh.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Hell, Hazel had Hamburger Helper invented years before anybody thought about it. She would fix it forty different ways, but all of it was good.

**Interviewer:** Let me ask you about your civilian education. Did you attend any college level courses while you served on active duty?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yes I did. When I went to the Air Corps, back in '43, I went to the University of North Dakota, and in five and a half months, I got a year of college, flying a Cub. That's the only college that I actually had. I never did get any when I came back in. Looking back, I think I might have liked to go to school, but it never worked out.

**Interviewer:** You did go to some classes right after you got discharged, right after World War II.

**SMA Bainbridge:** I went to Williamsfield, as a matter of fact. I was farming at the time, and part of the GI Bill allowed you to go to agriculture classes. I think they paid me ninety dollars a month to take those courses. I think we went one night a week. Hazel and I lived in a rural area around Maquon, and it was about twenty or twenty-five miles over to Williamsfield. I made that once a week for two years; I think I got two years out of that. I got a lot of good

information on the latest things in farming. As a matter of fact, when I went to farming for myself, I used a lot of the knowledge that I gained there. As an example. Farmers in those days couldn't make any money on chickens. I made money on chickens, because I followed some of the guidance that I got going to that school, under the GI Bill.

**Interviewer:** Where was that you said you lived? Around Maquon?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Maquon. M-A-Q-U-O-N. When I worked for my former school teacher's husband, that was our address; it was still a rural route. I'll tell you how rural it was. The REA (Rural Electric Association) came through there in that year while we worked there. We got lights.

**Interviewer:** Now I would like to ask you about your tenure as Sergeant Major of the Army. When did you serve as Sergeant Major of the Army?

**SMA Bainbridge:** July of 1975 through June of 1979; four years.

**Interviewer:** Which Chief of Staff Selected you?

**SMA Bainbridge:** General Frederick Weyand, who was serving out the term of General Abrams, who had passed away in Office. General Weyand was Chief of Staff when I was selected as Sergeant Major of the Army.

**Interviewer:** So you served both General Weyand and General Rogers.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Both General Weyand and General Rogers. About sixteen months for General Weyand, and about thirty-two months, I guess, for General Rogers. It was a little less than that, because General Rogers left the same time I did, so he served about three years as the Chief of Staff, before he went to SHAPE (Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers, Europe).

**Interviewer:** How was it that you came to serve a four-year term?

**SMA Bainbridge:** When I went up, the term was two years. I was talking to General Weyand about something that we had been working on. I said, "Just the other day, this particular situation came up." As we talked about it, I said, "Wait a minute. Just the other day, that's

been five months ago." We went on talking. We had just about finished, he said, "You know, you talk about something 'just the other day' and it turns out it's five months ago." He said, "You're here for two years. Some of these things are still going to be in the working process that you've got started and you're going to be gone." He said, "What would you think about making this a three-year tour?" I said, "I think that would be appropriate, not just for me, but for anybody." I said, "Two years is pretty doggone short." He said, "Well, let me talk to Dutch about this, and we'll discuss it." That was General Kerwin.

**Interviewer:** Dutch Kerwin?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah. So in about three or four days, I got a DD 95, you know, the buck slip. It was from General Weyand to General Kerwin, with a note on it that General Weyand and I had discussed the tour and General Weyand thought maybe it ought to be three years, and I agreed to that. It said, "What do you think?" General Kerwin wrote, "Concur," and he sent that note over to me with another scribble on it, "This is what we're going to do." So that's how it became a three-year tour.

**Interviewer:** Was Dutch Kerwin the DCSPER then?

**SMA Bainbridge:** No, he was the Vice Chief. He had been the DCSPER, Butch, but he was the Vice when I got there. When General Abrams passed away, General Weyand was the Vice. He moved over. I'm not sure whether General Kerwin came up from Forces Command. He was the DCSPER, but I think just prior to being the Vice, he was FORSCOM, because General Kerwin... The first Sergeant Major of FORSCOM was Ray Martin. Then General Kerwin came up to be the Vice, and General Rogers, who was the DCSPER, went to FORSCOM. Then he came up to be the Chief.

**Interviewer:** Whenever you were selected to be the Sergeant Major of the Army, what was the reaction of all of the people at the Sergeants Major Academy when they found out that you had been selected?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I think they all appreciated the fact that I had

been selected. I had been there over two and a half year. I can remember when I got the word. I got a call from Colonel Eldon Honeycutt, who was the Commandant at the Sergeants Major Academy at the time. I got a phone call and it said, "General Levan wants to see you in his office." Somebody called me; I was down in one of the classrooms. Somebody called me from the office and said, "General Levan wants to see you." I said, "He wants to see me?" "Yeah." So I called Colonel Honeycutt's office and I said, "I've been told that General Levan wants to see me at Post Headquarters, in his office. I just wanted to let the old man know." His secretary said, "He just got a call from General Levan's office and he's on his way up there." So I drove from wherever I was, and just as I was driving by, Colonel Honeycutt went out and just waved at me. So we went up to the office. He said, "What do you think he wants to see you about?" I said, "I don't know." We had already been up to be interviewed for Sergeant Major of the Army. We were getting ready to have a visit, and he would call sometimes to tell us what he wanted us to do at the Academy. Honeycutt said, "That's probably what it's all about. We've got such-and-such a visit coming from TRADOC." We went in and General Levan used the old business, you know. He said, "You guys out there are going to have a visit from so-and-so, and I want it to look a little better than it normally looks out there." Then he started grinning and he said, "You've been through too many of these." He said, "I've got a message here for you, Sergeant Major. It's for me, but you've been selected as the next Sergeant Major of the Army." Old Honeycutt said, "I knew God damn well that's what it was." But General Levan said, "The announcement is going to be made tonight." This was a back-channel message. "The announcement is going to be made tonight by the Chief's office, so it will be on the news down here." It was on the ten o'clock news. The next morning, Virgil McNeill, who lived just two streets over, came walking through between the quarters. He had heard it on the news and he was coming over to

congratulate me.

**Interviewer:** Who were some of the other Sergeants Major who were considered with you?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Okay. There were five of us as finalists.

**Interviewer:** The final five.

**SMA Bainbridge:** There was Johnnie Jones. J-O-H-N-N-I-E Jones. He was the Fort Bliss Sergeant Major; General Levan's Sergeant Major. John Spooler, who was Sergeant Major of Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, and who succeeded me at the Academy. John Lavoy, who was the TRADOC Sergeant Major, and Melvin Hollifield, who was the Post Sergeant Major at Fort Sill. And of course, my self. That was the five. I can remember John Lavoy saying, "This time, the Johns have the Bills outnumbered." I said something about having to go to the John or something. We were in the Arvin Hotel, you know, right across the street there from Fort Myer. John said, "No, you've got to go to the bill. There's three of us to one Bill this time." That's the five of us that were the finalists and who were interviewed by the Chief. We were interviewed by Lieutenant General John Forrest. General Forrest was the president of the board. Major General James Hamlitt, Major General John McHenry; M-C-H-E-N-R-Y, and Major General Charles Ott; O-T-T, and Sergeant Major Van Autreve. That was the five people on the board. All of them had just come out of command. General Ott was the Post Commander at Fort Sill. General McHenry was at Fort Knox.

**Interviewer:** How long did the interview last, and what did they ask you during the interview?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Well, you know the big deal then was we had to pass the MOS test, and we were getting into the soldier evaluation business. They wanted to know whether or not we thought that would be a good idea. They wanted to know our philosophy on how we would handle the job of Sergeant Major of the Army, and what we thought we should do. I don't know if you've ever met General McHenry, but he's a head and

shoulders taller than your are, Butch. (The interviewer is six feet, one inch tall.) He was a big tall man. I always said that he was six foot, nineteen. He said, "Sergeant Major, you're not a very big man." He said, "Do you think that would be a detriment to you if you was selected as Sergeant Major of the Army?" I said, "I'm not very big, physically, sir, but there's nobody in this Army that's got a bigger heart than I've got." He said, "No more questions." It kind of to get you to talk and to see how you expressed yourself. I think it was one of the two best boards I've ever been before. I went before the board when Van (Sergeant Major Van Autreve) was selected. I enjoyed every bit of that, and I enjoyed this one too. There were fair questions. There were no trick questions at all. It just was a good board.

**Interviewer:** Where were you assigned when you went up the first time?

**SMA Bainbridge:** At the Sergeants Major Academy. I had just gotten there. See, Van was '73 to '75, so I had about six or seven months at the Academy when I went up for that interview. I was in the final five of that group, and I talked to General Abrams. He was quite a guy to talk to. Like I said, I thought it was a great board. I know Van had a lot to do with how the board went, because he knew me. He knew me probably better than any of the rest of them, although I knew General Forrest from before. I didn't know General Hamlitt. I had known General McHenry before, but not personally; I just knew him.

**Interviewer:** What was the length of time between your appearance before the board and the time you were actually notified that you had been selected?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I believe, Butch, if I recall correctly, it must have been about April that we were told we would be going before the board. By that time they narrowed it down to about ten of us, I think. Then in late April or early May we actually went before the board. I must have been late May, maybe a couple of weeks after we attended the

board, that I got notification that I had been selected. As a matter of fact, General Levan had this back-channel, and when I left Fort Bliss, he said, "I'll see that you get a copy of this." I've got that rascal hanging on the wall in there.

**Interviewer:** Is that right?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah. That's right.

**Interviewer:** Once you went up to the Pentagon to assume your duties, did you have a transition period with Sergeant Major of the Army Van Autreve?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yes I did. As a matter of fact, Van asked for that for a couple of reasons. He asked that Hazel and I come up there early because they were having the "Spirit of America" at the Capitol Center. So Van said, "This would be a good way to introduce you to the rest of the folks up here." So we went up and attended that with Van and Rita, on his night. Hazel and I went, and I was in whites. Of course they introduced Van and Rita, because that particular performance was in their honor. Then they introduced Hazel and I as the "man and woman in waiting," I guess; the designees.

**Interviewer:** That's when they had the "Spirit of America" at the Capitol Center. Later they moved it to Ceremonial Hall, at Fort Myer.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah. Then they went back to the Capitol Center.

**Interviewer:** That is very impressive.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yes. It got too big for Ceremonial Hall. It was just too big. That was very impressive; very impressive. Butch, why don't you shut that thing off so we can get you out of the sun; I know that sun is hot.

(NOTE: There was a pause in the interview.)

**Interviewer:** We had a short pause in the interview, and now we'll continue. After you met with them, and attended the "Spirit of America," what type of a transition did you have with Sergeant Major Van Autreve, there at the office?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I had a little time with him in the office, but he was so busy getting ready for his departure, and we were trying to get into some quarters. I don't know if you know where Bragg Apartments are, but that's where we were quartered for a while; in one of those long kitchenette-type things. Of course, my two daughters and family were up there, so they were with us. We were really cramped in there. But I did have about ten days with Van, where I could kind of shadow him a little bit and see what was going on there. I can remember one thing. He said, "Try the seat out, Bill." I said, "No sir. When you walk out the door, then the seat is mine. Until then, it's yours and I'm not going to sit in it." He put his arm around me and said, "Okay."

**Interviewer:** Did he give you a pretty good briefing on the ongoing programs?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Did he tell you the problems he could foresee or the problems they had?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Right. And what he had been trying to do to get the things squared away. During his two years, I think Van really added a lot of dignity to the NCO Corps; I really do. He sort of began to pull everybody together. He was a "no nonsense guy." He didn't put up with a lot of guff. I enjoyed working with Van. We spent enough time for me to kind of get the feel for it. You can't get the real feel for it until you do the job, but at least I knew which end of the hall to head for to go to the DCSPER, and that sort of thing. Of course I had a good left-over from his staff; Raylene Scott.

**Interviewer:** Raylene Scott.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah, she was a super gal. I don't know what we would have done without her. She was a real portion of the transition too, because she was the institutional memory of that office. She came in there, I think, just the last couple of days or so of George Dunaway's tenure. I know she was there with Si.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, she was there with Silas.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Right. Of course, then there was Van. She spent up until February of '79, with me.

**Interviewer:** She knew the "E" Ring from one end to the other.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Oh yeah. She sure did. She was just a great asset to that office; she was a tremendous asset. When talking to Raylene, you never got the idea that Raylene Scott was running that office. You never got a sharp answer from her. If she could answer it, she did. If she couldn't, she'd say, "I'll get back to you with that." She was just super.

**Interviewer:** Your predecessors said that she treated a private the same as she would treat a general. She was very courteous.

**SMA Bainbridge:** That's right. She was an excellent gal; an excellent gal. We really thought a lot of her. Van and Rita think a lot of her too. She still lives up in that area, someplace. While she worked for me and for Van, that gal drove seventy miles, one way, from out in the Blue Ridge. I can't think of the town, but it was about seventy mile away. She said, "I got more sleep in the car pool than I did in bed." But she and her husband, Gene, were building a house out there, and she just felt it was better to have their own car pool trips so she could help build the house; and she did. She'd pound nails and haul cement, or whatever it took to get the house finished.

**Interviewer:** Describe the ceremony when you were sworn-in as Sergeant Major of the Army.

**SMA Bainbridge:** We had the ceremony in General Weyand's office. General Weyand was there; Hazel was there; The General Staff was there; and the AG (Adjutant General) was there. Vernon L. Bowers was the AG that swore me in, and signed the oath and got my scroll of office, which was signed by Secretary of the Army Calloway making it official. That's the only enlisted office that I know of that gets that scroll. At one time, I think they were going to do away with that. I think Van Autreve

was probably one of the reasons we still have it. You know, he raised sand and said, "Why do we want to get rid of it?" So we still have it.

**Interviewer:** What was the most difficult thing you found in your transition from Command Sergeant Major of USARPAC, of First Army, and of the Academy, to the high visibility office of the Sergeant Major of the Army?

**SMA Bainbridge:** As strange as it may seem, Butch, I really didn't have too much of a problem. I think one of the reason I didn't was because of the fact that I had been at First Army and at USARPAC, and the two and a half plus years at the Sergeants Major Academy. At that time, I couldn't travel anywhere or go into any office without running into someone who had been through that Academy, or who had served with me at USARPAC or at First Army. So it was sort of like "old home week," really. I felt comfortable with that. My philosophy was that I really wasn't in a much different position, as far as my relationship with the troops; I still wanted to take care of those soldiers. I just had a little bit more clout to do it; I could go to a bigger guy to get what I thought the troops deserved. One thing about the swearing-in ceremony. A few years earlier I had been to General Bowers' promotion ceremony, in Vietnam; he was the AG over there. It just happened to workout that way.

**Interviewer:** What were the major guidelines that the Chief of Staff, General Weyand, gave you?

**SMA Bainbridge:** General Weyand said, "I want you to just operate like you've been operating; taking care of soldiers. Just let me know what you're going to be doing." I would tell him when I would be going someplace, and I would debrief him when I got back. But the general guidance was, "Look for the things you think soldiers need, that they're not getting. Let us know if we can help from this office." And taking care of soldiers. Butch, my philosophy always was, I always worked with the Staff, in the four years I was in the Office. I only took to the

Chief, or the Vice, things as information, unless it was necessary that he get involved. I always found that it was much easier to work with the Staff, who were committed to do their job, rather than have it come from the Chief, as a directive. It was easier for it to go from the Staff, up to the Chief, as a solution. Sometimes it's tough to do if you give it to the Chief first.

**Interviewer:** Did you go through the Secretary of the General Staff, or did you usually work directly with the action officers?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I did a lot of work with the action officers, but I also worked directly with the DCSPER, or with the DCSLOG, or their aides, or whoever happened to be in the action business. But I did a lot of work with the action officers, and I found out for sure, quickly, the people who really run the Army are the lieutenant colonels and colonels, who are the action officers up there. Later on, or even about the time I got there, senior noncommissioned officers were taking over the former officer positions. Those guys knew chapter and verse. Like Jim Hughes, who was over in the DCSPER, and later with the Secretary of the Army's office, those guys, they had chapter and verse of what was going on in the Army. Those were the guys I went to, if it was possible. But sometimes when you got down into the bowels of the DCSPER, there wasn't a sergeant major you could go to; you had to go to an action officer, because that was the only guy that was doing anything. I don't know if you've ever met Tom Ryan. Did you ever meet Tom Ryan?

**Interviewer:** No.

**SMA Bainbridge:** He came in after Jim Hughes. He was the same kind of guy. Tom knew everything about the personnel end of the DCSPER. He worked for General Max Thurman, when Max was the DCSPER. He said he didn't know there were that many hours in a day as there was when he was working for Max.

**Interviewer:** If you tried to keep up with Max Thurman, that was a

job.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah, it really is.

**Interviewer:** I guess one of the biggest differences the prior Sergeants Major of the Army had, that I talked to, was the difference in the ways the different Chiefs worked. Some Chiefs had the SMA attend all of their meetings. When Van worked with General Abrams, he hardly ever saw him because General Abrams let him work with the action officers. There was such a difference in the ways the Sergeants Major of the Army dealt with their Chiefs. Was there a difference in the ways General Weyand and General Rogers operated, or did they operate about the same?

**SMA Bainbridge:** They operated about the same. When it came to specific guidance, I got nothing. I might be going on a trip, and I always let them know I was going, but I never did travel...

(End of Tape OH 94.4-6, Side 2)

(Begin Tape OH 94.4-7, Side 1)

**Interviewer:** Sergeant Major, a little earlier I asked you the question about the tour. The tenure when you got there was two years, and then General Weyand asked you if you would like to stay for the third year. After General Weyand, you had General Rogers as your Chief of Staff.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Right.

**Interviewer:** Was it General Rogers who asked you to stay the fourth year?

**SMA Bainbridge:** It was. General Weyand's rationale was the fact, as I said, that we were discussing some things that, I thought was just the other day, but that was five months before that. That's when he made the comment, "You need a little bit longer. How you think about three years?" Then when General Rogers came on board, we just had the process started for the selection of my replacement. I was getting ready to go on a trip out to the 7th ARCOM (Army Reserve Command). Donny

Worley was the Sergeant Major. I stopped off in Illinois to see my mother, who had broken her arm. When I got back to O'Hare Airport, on Monday morning--to continue my trip--I called the office; I had some time between airplanes. When I called the office, Sam Walsh said, "The Old Man wants to talk to you. Oh, you got my message." I said, "No I didn't get any message." He said, "I paged all of the airlines out there trying to locate you." But anyway, General Rogers wanted to talk to me. I had briefed him, just before I left town, on the process and where we were at, and what would be coming up to him for his approval, etc. I called his office and his aide said that he was indisposed. He said, "Where are you at?" I told him that I was at a pay phone, at O'Hare. He said, "If we don't call you back in the next twenty minutes, you call us." In about ten minutes he called and said, "The Old Man is going to come on the phone." He said, "I don't know what he wants to talk to you about." General Rogers said, "Where are you?" I said, "I'm at O'Hare." He said, "Oh, you're going out on the rest of your trip." I said, "Yeah." So anyway, He said, "I've decided who your replacement is going to be." I said, "You do you mean, you've decided who my replacement is going to be?" He said, "Well, what I really mean. Would you stay another year?" I said, "Yes I would." I said, "I'd like to tell Hazel." He said, "Well, I'm going to ask you to stay another year. I'll take care of the announcement, and one thing or another, on this end." He said, "I've got a question of you." He said, "Do you know of anybody out there that would be upset if you stay?" I said, "I'm sure there's a lot of folks who are waiting to get a chance to get this job." I said, "But I don't know anybody that would be upset if I stayed another year. He said, "I have already queried two or three of my senior commanders and they don't have a problem, so that's what we're going to do." So here I am, for about four weeks, traveling through all of the ARCOMs and the Reserve units, out in the western part of the country. Everybody that I would visit would say, "Well, who's going to

be your replacement?" I would say, "Well, I don't really know." Well, we think it's going to be so-and-so." "Do you think it might be so-and-so." I never told them a fib. I never lied to them. I just said, "I don't know." I got to thinking about this, and I told Sam about it. I was thinking about Raylene. I was out in Utah, and I asked them if they had a secure line that I could use. So I called Raylene Scott at the office. I said, "Raylene, are you alone in the office? She said, "Yeah." I said, "Okay, put me on hold, go in my office, and shut the door." So Raylene did; she went in my office. So I told her what the situation was. She started laughing, and started crying. I said, "What's the matter?" She said, "I was just getting ready to go down this morning and turn-in my resignation, because you was going to be leaving next summer." She said, "Now I'm not going to do it." So that's now I got to stay the fourth year. I think that the three years is about right. But I also think that two years is definitely enough. Two years is definitely not enough. I know Van (Van Autreve) had things moving that he would like to have seen come to pass, but he wasn't able to do. Even if you stayed ten years, there wouldn't be enough time. At least with a three year tour, there's a little more chance you can see something develop and be on its way. But I also feel, Butch, the fourth year, the Chief of Staff ought to have the opportunity to extend it for the fourth year, because if he feels good about the working relationship with the Sergeant Major he has selected, and everything is going fine, then it fine for him to retain him. But that three years also leaves an out in there. I don't think you're ever going to have a problem with that in the future. The selection process is just too refined for us to have a problem. But in case you did, it's there and the Chief can do whatever he wants to do.

**Interviewer:** Since you were in the situation where you worked for two Chiefs of Staff, did you find that a problem making the transition from one personality to the other personality, or the way one did things

versus the way the other did things?

**SMA Bainbridge:** No, I really didn't, and I'll tell you why. When General Rogers came on board. I had a luncheon meeting with him, in his office. We talked about the things that I had been doing and what was going on, and what some of his philosophies were. We spent about an hour and a half during that luncheon. When I got ready to leave, he said, "Sergeant Major, I'm glad you're the Sergeant Major of the Army and I think we're going to get along great together." So that's about the size of the guidance I got from General Rogers, because he and General Weyand were buddies. He knew that General Weyand selected me and he said, in a piece of correspondence that I have, that if I was good enough for a soldier like General Weyand, I certainly was good enough for Bernie Rogers. He said, "I'm glad I kept Bill Bainbridge." I'm glad he did too, because we had a good time together and we got some things done. He was a good man to work for. He was a good man to work for.

**Interviewer:** Back to the discussion of your trips versus his trips. I think you said before that you went your way and he went his way. I'm talking about both General Weyand and General Rogers. You kept doing business as usual. Right?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Right. Right. As I say, I traveled one time with General Rogers, and that was to the Academy. We wanted to go down to the Sergeants Major Academy before we left, and we didn't travel there together, but we met there for a joint session with class that was in session at that time. I didn't travel with him, but I would bring back reports. He never said, "Go here," or "Go there." But if I was going someplace, and he had something that he wanted me to check on specifically, I might get a note from him, or something like that, or he'd tell me when I would have an office visit with him. But in General Weyand's case, and in General Roger's case, there was never any question about me getting in to see them. It was there for me to be able to do

that. General Vono, when he was General Rogers's exec., I needed to see General Rogers about something, and General Vono said, "You can't get in to see him right now." I said, "Well, when can I come back?" He said, "Well, I don't know if it will be today, or not." I said, "I have to see the Chief today. It's just something that I have to see him about." He said, "Well, I don't know when you're going to be able to do it." I started to go out of the office, then I turned around and said, "Sir, when is the Chief going home tonight?" He said, I don't know. Probably about five-thirty or six o'clock." I said, "Would you send him a note and tell him I would like to ride with him in his car?" He said, "Oh God damnit, I'll get you in there."

**Interviewer:** What was General Vono then?

**SMA Bainbridge:** He was a colonel. He went from there, out to be one of the ADCs (Assistant Division Commanders) for the 1st Division.

**Interviewer:** He's one heck of a gentleman.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah, I love that guy.

**Interviewer:** I've worked with him and he's a damn fine officer.

**SMA Bainbridge:** He said, "Oh God a damnit, I'll get you in there." He never told me again that he couldn't get me in there.

**Interviewer:** Did you have to make any trip reports? How did you record the results of your trips? Did you make an MFR (Memorandum for Record), or a formal report?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Normally an MFR, and it normally went to the staff, to an action officer, or to one of the NCOs to get this thing moving. You see, I only had two people when I was in Office. I had Raylene Scott and Sam Walsh. Sam had served in the SGS (Secretary of the General Staff) office at Fort Shafter, when I was at USARPAC. Then he went to Germany, and then he came back USARPAC; to Camp Smith. Just before we left, when I went to the Academy, I got a call from Sam. He said, "Top, you've got to get me out of Hawaii." So Sam came to the Academy with me. And then when we got ready to make the transition

up to D.C., I always knew that if I was going to go to someplace like that, Sam Walsh was the guy who I wanted to take with me, because he was an outstanding admin guy. He was smart, quick. So when I got the word, I got a hold of them and told them I wanted to bring Sam with me. Crosby Saint was a lieutenant colonel, in the Chief's office. He called me on the phone. He said, "Sergeant Major, you've got a problem. You want to bring Sam Walsh with you, and he has already had a PCS (permanent change of station) this year." He said, "Wait a minute. Wait a minute. Let me rephrase that. I've got a problem. You want to bring Sam Walsh with you and I've got to figure out a way for you to do it." He said, "I think I can get the Secretary to approve that for you." So he called me back the next day and said, "You can bring Sam with you." A little bit of my philosophy that I would like to bring out here is that, when I went to the Sergeant Major of the Army's office, Sam, Raylene, and I had a meeting. It was just to sit down and talk. I knew Raylene Scott from going up there on trips. Of course, Sam had served with me before. I said, "The one thing that I want to make sure that we don't do in this office, whoever's fault it might be isn't the question, the question will be that it came from the Sergeant Major of the Army's office, so it will fall on my shoulders, and later on, on the Office's shoulders. So one thing I want to make sure we do is not put out any information to the troops that is not correct. We want to make sure that it's right." I didn't have any problems with those two, but I was just trying to point out that we had to check, and double check, what we get here, before we put it out to a soldier that it's going to affect. I can only remember one incident, in the four years up there, that we had a problem. It was just a failure on the part of the action officer, or us, or whoever, but there was some little point... A master sergeant had written to us and we gave him the information. Sam found out, or I found out, somebody found out the mistake. It hadn't cleared the post office, I know, before we found out the mistake. I told Sam, "Get him

on the phone and tell him that his answer is on the way, read the date and everything, and tell him not to pay attention to it, because that's not the right answer. We will get the right answer for him." So that was the way we tried to operate. So what we did, when Sam would be with me, particularly in Europe where we would have a long trip, if we needed to be sure of something, we would get on the phone, Sam or I, and call the DCSPER or whoever needed to be called, and get that action working even before we got back; even before we left Europe. We might have the answer before we left. But when we got back, we write a little MFR, just to make sure that was, in fact, followed up on if it was necessary. As an example. I had a clearance to visit some of the outfits over there that a lot of other folks didn't get to visit. ASA (Army Security Agency) for example. I can remember one spec. five, who's husband was a spec. five, or a staff sergeant, who had trouble with pay. She had written our office to try to get that squared away, and we did get it squared away. I met that spec. five in an office. She said, "Thanks a lot for squaring away my hubby's pay business." I said, "Well, Sam probably did it, but at least it was squared away, and we're happy. We're glad your husband got everything squared away." She said, "And you can tell him too. He's on that desk right over there." So you run into situations like that, that made you feel good, because I'm sure Sam or Raylene was the person that took care of it. But the fact of the matter remained, the soldier was taken care of, and that's what we're there for.

**Interviewer:** Did Sam travel with you very often?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Sam traveled with me quite a bit. As I said, he was the only guy that I had. Raylene would keep the office straight. He went with me, particularly to Europe, or a place where we were going to visits a lot of troop units. He did not normally go with me to Korea, but he did on the trips to Europe, where we were meeting a lot more diversified troops, so I needed all the help I could get when I got

there. Korea is a lot different. It's a little smaller and has less troops. Let me tell you, you learn things. The first trip I made to Europe, Ken Tracy was the Sergeant Major over there. Every night we were at a different function. I'll tell you, my fanny was dragging my tracks out by the time I got back, after three weeks of that. I told Sam, "That's the last time we'll ever go on an itinerary that we don't get a chance to see before we leave the States." I told Ken, "You're not going to do this to me again." I was kidding him, because he was trying to get me to as many places as he could. It was a learning process for me too. So after that, we always made it a point that we would never spend over one night of extra curricular activity in any area. You know, dinner or something like that. We would much rather have a stand-up finger food and a cocktail, or something like that, than a dinner, because you could mill around and talk to a lot of folks. We needed at least a couple of hours a night to sit down and get our stuff together so we weren't trying to figure it out on the plane on the way home, "Well, what happened this particular time." It really worked out well.

**Interviewer:** Like Sergeant Major Van Autreve said that you get over there early in the morning. You already have the time problem. A sergeant major picks you up; shows you everything in the world; drops you off, and another guy picks you up. He said that you really don't have time to relax.

**SMA Bainbridge:** That's right. I can remember one time going to Grafenwohr, after about the sixth or seventh day on the trip. We just flopped down in our quarters. I remember Sam had laid his suitcase out to check something. I looked over, and Sam had folded-up into his suitcase; he was sleeping. I just left him alone. I should have woke him up, because he about broke his arm. I say, it was a learning process for us too, and it was better for the troops that we were visiting, with out other method of operation, because we were fresher

and we could answer the questions better. I'll tell you. There is not a better administrative guy, that's I've seen, than old Sam Walsh. He works for the Veterans Administration, over here in Tampa.

**Interviewer:** Talking about administrative assistants, that's just like Sergeant Major Connelly, when he got Don Kelly. He said that someone put him on to Don Kelly. He was also talking about Walsh.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Interviewer:** He said, "Unfortunately, when Sergeant Major Bainbridge left, he had to take Walsh with him, because his time was up, but at least he gave me Don Kelly."

**SMA Bainbridge:** You see, Bill didn't have anybody he could find; not at all. We put him on to Don. We said, "You know, you couldn't do much better."

**Interviewer:** Then Raylene had to quit, so went through that transition trying to find a good secretary.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Well actually, Bill never did have Raylene, because Raylene left me in February.

**Interviewer:** He had a colonel's wife, didn't he?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah. She was a young gal that was married to a Provost Marshal.

**Interviewer:** They had marriage problems, so she left.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah. Of course, they lived just down the road at Occoquan, as I recall. Yeah, he went through quite a transition. She wasn't a bad secretary either, except for her problems there at the end. She wasn't nothing like Raylene. Of course Raylene was the institutional memory, because she had been there so long. She started in there as a seventeen year old high school graduate, and she stayed right there until she had her first baby.

**Interviewer:** How did you determine which trips you were going to make and how often you went? How did you plan your trip schedule?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Butch, I did it primarily based on the diversity of

troops. I went to Europe every year. I went to Korea and the Far East every year. Then I tried to visit as many of the large installations--like the Fort Hoods, and the Rileys, and those places--as often I could. Some times the trips were determined by something that might be happening there; maybe a change in basic training philosophy; maybe a demonstration of a new weapons system; or something like that, that I needed to see. But primarily it was troop oriented

**Interviewer:** Was it more based on requests, than "I'm coming out to see you?" Because, once again, if they had a change in armor, most likely the Sergeant Major of the Armor School would invite you.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Exactly. A lot of it was by request, because you had a continual round robin of people wanting you to visit, etc. You tried not to visit all of the areas at the "good weather time." For example. I went to Alaska, both winter and summer. I went to Germany, both winter and summer. It didn't take me long to learn that I could get those fellows out there to provide me with seasonal uniforms, so I didn't have to carry seventeen suitcases. If I went out to Korea, I knew that when I went there in the wintertime, I had a field uniform I could wear; a parka and the whole works. It was my size and it was going to be there as long as I was Sergeant Major of the Army. The same way with Europe. There was one place that I visited every year. I visited there every year, when I was USARPAC Sergeant Major, and I visited there every year I was Sergeant Major of the Army, and that was Johnson Island. Do you know where Johnson Island is?

**Interviewer:** I sure do. Out in the middle of the Pacific.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** That's where they store the topsoil and sand taken from Bikini, in the big concrete dome.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah. When I was in USARPAC, they had the "Red Hat Operation" off Okinawa. They moved all of the chemical munitions to Johnson Island. General Rossen and I were there when they left on the

ship, and we were there when they landed at Johnson Island. It's a one year tour, and a terrible place. If you want to get an education, you can get an education. You know, college and all that business. Every year, as Sergeant Major of the Army, I visited Johnson Island. I can remember going out there one year and they told me about their movies. I said, "Movies?" They said, "Yeah, we have them outside here." It rains almost every night on Johnson Island. I said, "Why don't you have them inside?" They said, "We don't have a place big enough. Besides that, we're paying for the movies." I said, "You're paying for the movies. This is a remote area." They said, "Yeah, that's what we thought too." They said, "We pay for the movie and half of the time we don't get to see it all because it's outside." General Hospelhorn was the AAFES (Army and Air Force Exchange System) Commander at that time. I said, "I need to make a phone call." I got a hold of General Hospelhorn's aide, and I told him what the problem was. He said, "Wait a minute. Let me put The Old Man on." So I told General Hospelhorn. I said, "These guys are really getting rooked out here." He said, "You're right, but they won't be next week. So they sent free movies and they fixed a place inside an old classroom, where they could shown inside. The projectors were furnished by AAFES. Boy, I could do nothing wrong on Johnson Island. They still had the same old dog they left Okinawa with, when I left as Sergeant Major of the Army's Office.

**Interviewer:** People from that Engineer Battalion out of Schofield Barracks used to rotate back and forth to Johnson Island.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah. The first time I every visited Johnson Island, I was briefed by an Air Force guy; a tech sergeant. There's a picture of an airplane and you can just see tail stabilizer, and Johnson Island is in the rear, just off the tail stabilizer. He said, "This is the best view you will ever get of Johnson Island." Leaving! They had great chow there.

**Interviewer:** What was your normal routine once you went to visit

an installation? Let's take, as an example, Fort Hood. Say you were going out to visit Fort Hood, what is a normal routine--if there is such a thing--while you were there?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Okay. Let's say we get into Fort Hood at noon. We go to quarters, put down the bags, have lunch, pay a courtesy call on The Old Man, and then the itinerary that you had already approved before you left the office, setup to visit, maybe an ATT, maybe a firing range, maybe an armor unit out taking some training in a field exercise. Then maybe a courtesy call on, first the Corps Commander, and then the Troop Commander; but just once. Just enough time to let him know you're there. General Patton always wanted me to come out. He's a real BSer and he like to talk. The Sergeant Major would be pulling on me and glaring at General Patton. "Oh yeah. I know. I know." One time I went down there, Butch, to visit. The Corps Sergeant Major said he had been trying for ten days to get an itinerary out of General Patton; he couldn't get one out of him. Well, after the itinerary had been approved, then General Patton came back and wanted me to come out and look at some training. The Sergeant Major kept putting him off, and putting him off, and putting him off. Finally he told him, "Look, you had ten days to get an approved itinerary up here, and you didn't do it. Now you want to bust mine up and I'm not going to let you. He said, "Okay." I was coming back from Europe, one time, and General Patton was on the same airplane. I didn't know that until we changed planes at Kennedy. We went through customs, and then took a short hop down to Dulles. I'm talking to General Patton, who was back three or four seats. His aide came up and said, "Come on back here and sit with him so you can talk." There were only about twelve of us on the airplane. We were talking on the way down, and when we got into Dulles, we were waiting for the baggage--we had argued this, that, and the other--and when the baggage came through, I said, "Well General Patton, I hope you're not too hacked off at me because we didn't agree on everything."

He said, "No, you little SOB, that's what I like about you."

**Interviewer:** Sergeant Major Connelly said he is a profane individual.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Oh, yeah. Yeah.

**Interviewer:** He said the same thing. He likes somebody to tell it like it is.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah. When I visited him, he was Chief of Staff of VII Corps. Sergeant Major Rolland Williams was the Sergeant Major there. We visited him and he said, "Sergeant Major, you're sending me too many fat soldiers." I said, "Sir, I'm not in the assignment business. I don't send you any fat soldiers. But, let me tell you, you send back from Europe two-to-one, or better, fat soldiers. Now you send more fat soldiers back to the United States than we send you in Europe." "WHAT!" Old Rolland is just staring at the ceiling, with that look on his face. He said, "Alright, what about women in the Army?" I said, "Okay, I'll talk about that." Rolland was agreeing with him because he knew we was having a problem at that time. He said, "What! Okay, what about women in the Army?"

**Interviewer:** That's changing the subject fast.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah it is.

**Interviewer:** About how many complaints did you receive in your office from the field, say either on a weekly basis or a monthly basis?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I expect we averaged maybe twenty, twenty-five a week, of some sort. A lot of them were easy to answer. Some of them were tough to answer. Some of them had no answer.

**Interviewer:** Do you think a lot of those could have been handles by the command?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Ninety percent of them.

**Interviewer:** Some of them just wanted to write the Sergeant Major of the Army.

**SMA Bainbridge:** But you see, in my view, that's one of the reasons

that office is there. We probably ought to welcome a good number of those, because you need to keep that channel of communication open, because that is the representation, in the Pentagon, of the soldier. That's not to say that the Chief of Staff doesn't represent the soldier. He does; everyone of those soldiers. The DCSPER does the same thing, and so does the DCSLOG. But the soldier needs to have the feel that one of his, or one of hers, is in a seat up there that has some influence on those folks who make the decisions. Those things didn't bother me. You answered the questions if you can. Those that you can't, you send to somebody you think can answer them. Some of them were not answerable. I had a sergeant major come in the office one time and he was bound and determined that he was going to get his assignment changed, because he just didn't like the post he was sent to. He got down and finally took off his jacket and hung it up, and was really going to discuss this thing. I said, "Sergeant Major, you might as well put your jacket back on. It's finished. I can't help you. You're going to where you're going because that's where the Army needs you." But no, the complaints we got, we handled. Oh, if you got one of those that was just an off the wall sort of thing, when somebody was just feeling his oats, then you answered that a little bit different. We never tried to stop that flow, because it was kind of a two-way street.

**Interviewer:** If you got a complaint from an installation where, perhaps, the chain of command at that installation didn't give the soldier an answer that HE though was right, but yet was within the regulations, how would you handle that?

**SMA Bainbridge:** That's kind of a two-edge thing. I'd write the soldier a letter saying here what I feel transpired, and why. I would also phone up that sergeant major, and say, "I'm sending you a copy of this letter." I wouldn't necessarily tell the soldier he was getting a copy. "Maybe you ought to check out with Specialist Johnson, over in the 423rd, and see how he feels about the answer he got from this office

and could he have gotten the answer out there." I never wanted to shut off the Sergeant Major, because he needs to know that he has somebody there that isn't satisfied with the answer that he got, even though it was the right answer, because he might be able to defuse something that might be coming up again. I think that would be the way we would have handled it; we probably did many of them that way.

**Interviewer:** About how much time did you spend on the road, out of your office?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I'd say probably sixty percent. Better than half of the time I was out of the office, because there also was the time you had to spend some time in the office, because that's part of the job too; being there. But a good part of the time, Butch, is just traveling; just getting there. When you've got the whole darned Army, and you're leaving from Washington, D.C. to go to Seoul, Korea, it just takes a lot of time just to get there. Of the sixty percent of the time out of the office, probably twenty percent of that time is just getting where you needed to go, and the other forty percent you spent with the troops. I don't think you could do justice to the position if you didn't get out there and see the troops, because soldiers want to see you. They want to see whoever is sitting in that chair, for two reasons, I think. They want to be able to talk to you and give you their ideas, and they also want to see if you know what you're doing. I think that's fair. I think that's alright.

**Interviewer:** Since you had to be out of the office for extended periods of time, how did Raylene, or Sam, if he was in the office, how did they keep you abreast of what actions they had taken? Did they make MFRs, give you copies of the correspondence, or make a reading file?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I'd get the reading file when I got back. If Raylene was there by herself, Raylene would handle it through action officers, unless she could give them a pat answer on something that happened before, and maybe it was just answering another soldier's

complaint that was just answered for somebody before, she might do that. But Raylene let it come through official channels. She said, "I don't want to get the office in trouble, so I'll just give it to an action person to make that answer." I always had two or three senior NCO contacts to take care of things like that. I had the MDW (Military District of Washington) Sergeant Major to go to the meetings for me. The MILPERCEN could handle that end of it. The DCSPER, there was always somebody back there that was always in communication with the office. Of course, Sam could handle a lot of that stuff with no problem. But if it was something serious, and I'll give you an example. I was on a trip to the Far East and they were getting ready to select the replacement for the Soldiers Home Governor, and I was on the Board. There was an Army and Air Force guy being voted on. All of the Army was voting for the Army and all of the Air Force was voting for the Air Force. Here we are, right down the middle. Sam went to the meeting for me. Sam said, "I'm not going to vote, and the reason I'm not going to vote is because the Sergeant Major needs to be here and see what a mess you guys got going." Bill Connelly was having his Forces Command Conference out in San Francisco, so I made a stop there. Sam called me and said, "You've got to come back here and vote this thing." I said, "Okay." So I cut my trip short, three days, to get back and cast the deciding vote for General George McKee, who was an Air Force guy. He later hired me; he didn't know I voted for him. But that's just an example of something that Sam figured not he, nor any of my senior NCO contacts there ought to be working on, or handle. He said, "You need to come back and see what a mess these guys got going here, because they need your vote, one way or the other." It was clear that the vote should have gone to General McKee, because the other candidates were far and away lesser qualified than he was. So anyway, that's just an example that the office never did let me down.

**Interviewer:** Did you get a pretty good response from the action

officers?

**SMA Bainbridge:** We never had a problem with the action officers. One time, if you recall, when we first had a requirement that a sergeant had to have a high school education to be promoted to staff sergeant. We had been through a lots of stuff to get that in concrete. There was a problem with getting enough qualified folks, during one period there. They had a lieutenant colonel come up and brief me on how they wanted a one-time waiver to not require one group of staff sergeants to have a high school education. He must have had an action paper about three-quarters of an inch, or an inch thick. He briefed me, and I said, "No sir. I can't go for that. No way." I said, "Have you ever heard of ACB-3?" He said, "No." I said, "Well, the Army Classification Battery Three, back in the '50s, after Korea, if you didn't have an ACB of three scores of ninety or above, and if you had less than fifteen years of service, you went home, buddy, because of the mandate by Congress to cut the forces." I said, "We screwed a lot of good noncommissioned officers, and then worked like the devil to try to get them back and get others trained to take their place." I said, "Now, you want to take off the high school requirement." I said, "Five or six years from now you're going to be putting those guys out, because they don't have a high school education." I said, "What are you going to do when they get ready to make E7? Are you going to waiver them again?" I said, "If that guy doesn't have the gumption enough to get a high school education--all he has to get is a GED equivalency--then I don't want him as a staff sergeant anyway." I said, "If you don't believe me, and how strong I feel about this, you're not going to get it through the office across the hall unless you get my chop on it, and you're not going to get my chop." He said that he never heard of all of those problems before. I said, "I'm not faulting you, but I'm just telling you what happened to a lot of good soldiers before, because somebody else had a waiver in there, and we screwed soldiers, and you'll be screwing these guys. But

you'll be screwing the Army if you let them get promoted one time, when it's easy to get the GED." He said, "You've convinced me." He said, "Not only is it not going back in the drawer, Sergeant Major, I'm destroying it."

**Interviewer:** When you went out on your visits, what kind of reception did you get from, I guess you could call him "Joe Snuffy." When you had a chance to really sit down and talk to him, did you find that Joe Snuffy would tell you what really was going on?

**SMA Bainbridge:** No question. No question. And I found out that it worked both ways too, Butch. I was with the NCOs all morning and all afternoon, so I used to make it a point, if we were in a unit mess, to go sit down and have lunch with the soldiers. I would just pick a table with a couple of spec. fours or a five, maybe a buck sergeant, and just sit down and talk to them and find out what their problem was. I can remember one time a group of soldiers were complaining about they couldn't get a motor pool made and they couldn't get some sidewalks. Well, their area was going to be closed down, but it wasn't common knowledge. "Why can't we get up out of the mud?" I said, "Well look at it this way. If you were in charge and you knew this post was going to be closed down, would you put a lot of money into a tank park?" "No, I probably wouldn't. Are you telling us it's going to be closed down?" I said, "No, I'm not telling you that." I said, "That's just an example what might be able to happen." "Oh." There not too dumb either. They said, "Oh, we understand that." I said, "Suppose you had some ammunition up here, because you were going to have a field exercise. You decide that you don't need that ammunition, so you let the money go for something else. So the next time it comes around, you don't have ammunition when you really need it." They said, "Are you telling us that maybe we don't have the big picture some times." I said, "That may be right." So they have to be talked to some times, and let them know that there are other decision made that hinge on whether or not they get

a sidewalk. It may not be evident to them that that's the reason, but the reason is a good one.

**Interviewer:** Since you wasn't BSing them, they understood it.

**SMA Bainbridge:** That's right. That's right. Again, Butch, I think you can tell a soldier, and do to a soldier, anything, as long as you treat him with respect and let him retain his dignity. He understands that.

**Interviewer:** What do you think were the major problems within the Army, during your tenure, and how were they solved? Granted, we are looking at a four-year span, but what do you think was the biggest problems that the Army had during that period of time?

**SMA Bainbridge:** It's not evident to the whole Army, but my contribution was to the NCOES system. We had, what General Myer talked about, the "Hollow Army, and we did have a hollow army. He had posts, camps, and stations that couldn't be manned because we didn't have enough people to do it. We didn't have enough money for this and enough money for that. But we were in a transition period for NCOES. We started at the top with the Academy, and we had some other things coming on-line after that. In my visits to the field, I found out that there was money being used by commanders--that should be used for educational purposes--that was going into field exercises, and people weren't going to school. The money was earmarked for things supporting NCOES. So I knew this was going to be a problem down the road. General Max Thurman was then a two-star--in the Chief's office--in the long range planning business, ten years down the road. I got an audience with General Thurman and I spent about two hours with him. I laid all of this out and told him what the problems were, as I saw them. What I was afraid of, when we got further down the road, what was a million here, could be three million over here, and then six million out there. Then you begin to get where it's really the crunch point. I said, "My problem is, General Thurman, if we don't do something now, and if that money isn't

fenced for NCOES, three years down the road, and is left vulnerable for some other program that seems more important at the time, we're going to throw the baby out with the bath water." As I said, we spent about two hours together. When the conversation was all finished, he said, "Sergeant Major, your money will be fenced. NCOES is not going to go away because of the money." That two hours, out of my whole four-year tour, I think was worth it to the Army, and at least to the NCO Corps, by having them keeping that money long enough for the NCOES to become something that wasn't going to go away.

**Interviewer:** A lot of times too, they look at what it costs to run the classroom, or the training environment, but forget about the travel and TDY.

**SMA Bainbridge:** That's right.

**Interviewer:** One of the things that I have picked up during these interviews is, when it comes the time to make some cuts, they want to cut the TDY expense. When you cut the TDY, how are you going to get the soldiers to school?

**SMA Bainbridge:** That's right. That's right. I think General Thurman is a brilliant guy. He's a hard task master. He understood where I was coming from. I was not looking for the short term thing. I was looking for something solid out there, so that when we get out to where we're talking big money, that it's not gone. I think about that every once in a while. I kind of get goose bumps because...

(End of Tape OH 94.4-7, Side 1)

(Begin Tape OH 94.4-7, Side 2)

**Interviewer:** You were talking about your contribution to the Noncommissioned Officer Education System, when you sat down with General Thurman and talked to him, and he assured you that the funds that would be needed for NCOES would be fenced. You were saying that, if nothing else, to you that was the most satisfying thing that you were able to do as Sergeant Major of the Army. Are there any other items, that when you

look back, were basically in the same category?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Although not of my doing, General Weyand called me one day and he said, "I'm going to put you on the Army Policy Council." He said, "A sergeant major hasn't been there before, but I think you need to be there, because a lot of things going down there that you can have some input on, that has a long range effect on the Army." So the first meeting that I was there, I sat down at the end of the table, away from the Chief. The DAC (Department of the Army Civilian) that ran the meeting said, "I want you all to note that this is the first time the Sergeant Major of the Army has ever sat in on one of these meetings, but it won't be the last. He's a permanent member, effective with this meeting, and he's down here to add a little dignity to this meeting, and to give us a little insight on what this Army is all about; that's the troops." So I spent the better part of my tour, as Sergeant Major of the Army, as a member of the Army Policy Council. Then when General Rogers came to town, he put me on the Army General Staff. So when he had a meeting of his Principle Staff, that included me. I think those two things, although I didn't personally bring them about, I think they had an impact on the Office, and also on the troops out there. Because I got information there, and they got information from me that otherwise wouldn't have been swapped at that meeting. It helped, not only the Army General Staff and the Army Policy Council, but would also help the field.

**Interviewer:** Did you have an opportunity to testify before congressional committees?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Several times, before the House Armed Services Committee. On subjects from the commissary, to troop strength, to housing, pay, and other things that affect the troops, although we just gave our opinion on whether or not they ought to have it. Also, before some of the subcommittees: personnel subcommittees, and that sort of thing. One particular meeting that I can remember, Congressman Bennet,

from Florida, and the Representative from Guam, they were just sort of trying to figure out what we did. All four of the services were there, including the Coast Guard. I mentioned something about, "I able to assist the Chief. If something was going on down at, say Fort Riley, Kansas, I could call the Sergeant Major down there and say, 'What about this, and what about that?'" Congressman Bennet said, "You mean to tell me that you can call the Division Sergeant Major, at For Riley, and try to get something squared away?" I said, "No doubt. I do it all of the time." He said, "What does the Chief think of that?" I said, "He supports it." He said, "He supports it? Isn't that kind of over stepping your bounds?" I said, "Not at all, I'm just helping the Chief do the job better. I may be able to get some information that he's not aware of, that he needs." I said, "It's certainly detrimental. It's positive." Of course, the other guys said they did the same thing. He said, "I'll tell you, I learned something now about you guys that I didn't know before." He understood, after we explained it to him. I forget the fellow's name, from Guam. He's not there anymore. But he talked about him getting some sailor an assignment that the Navy wasn't going to give him. Bennet said, "Oh, that's different." He said, "That's not fair. That's not what these guys are doing." Oh, I almost said his name. Juan Pack. It was Juan Pack. We did that quite a bit, Butch. I think they do it even more. I think each successive Sergeant Major, certainly since my time, has gone before the Congress more than his predecessor, just because of the way the Office functions, etc. But each of the Sergeants Major, that have gone before, have contributed to that, and each has added a little more prestige to it, so they listen to those guys, where they never even thought about talking to them before; they listen to them and their word is taken. I think they have a lot of influence on some of the decisions those folks make. If anybody has any influence, I'm sure they have their share. General Weyand took me the first time, to a commissary hearing. A senator from Iowa asked General

Weyand, he said, "Do you mean to tell me if the President says that we shouldn't have a commissary, that you would be against that?" He said, "No, I would support the President's decision, but I would also tell him it was a bad one." When we got in the car to go back, he said, "I almost asked you to say something on that, Sergeant Major, but I thought you were a little bit upset anyway, and I thought I'd just go ahead and handle it." I said, "You're right, I was upset." I said, "First off, the Senator mentioned his constituents from Iowa, and that they didn't agree with the commissary business." I said, "They don't even know what the commissary in the military is about. If you look it up in the dictionary, it says 'a place where you get sandwiches,' like out in Hollywood." I said, "But that ain't the kind we've got. But that's what they think we've got. His constituents could care less about the commissary."

**Interviewer:** That's right.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Even if they knew what it was, they could care less. I said, "Now the grocery men in Iowa, that's a different thing. They care about it, because they would like us not to have it."

**Interviewer:** Did you get quite a few queries from individual congressmen? As an example. How is such-and-such program progressing? Or something in that light?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I don't believe that I ever got, from an individual congressman, in the office, anything like that. I did have a nice conversation with a Russian General one time, at a cocktail party at the British Embassy. I spent the next two days with the CID (Criminal Investigation Department), to find out what the general wanted to know. I wasn't even considering, you know, what he was looking for. It was an amiable conversation.

**Interviewer:** Was that the Russian general that, when you told him what you did, as Sergeant Major of the Army, he could believe it?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Russian generals can't do what you did.

**SMA Bainbridge:** That's right. Yeah, and you'll probably run into that with Bill Gates, because he went to Russia with General Vono. He said a general over there said, "You do what!" But this guy was the same way. He said, "I don't understand you, and you're enlisted? You are enlisted?" "Yep." But he wasn't trying to find out any secrets. He wouldn't have gotten any from me anyway.

**Interviewer:** What was your interaction with the senior enlisted members of the other branches of the service?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Butch, I think that was probably one of the highlights of my tour as Sergeant Major of the Army. Bob Gaylor, of the Air Force; Bob Walker, of the Navy; Stevenson, of the Coast Guard; and John Mussaro, of the Marine Corps, we had all kinds of functions, at one another's house. We went to functions together. We'd have a party at my quarters, and then we'd have one at somebody else's quarters. I think, probably, we had as close a working relationship as we have ever had, at that level, with the other services. Bob Walker is still a great buddy of mine, and also Bob Gaylor. I see them because of my association with the AUSA (Association of the United States Army) and the NCOA (Noncommissioned Officers Association). The other two I don't see very often. But we just had a great time together.

**Interviewer:** Bob Gaylor was the one that was responsible for the Air Force sending their people to the Academy.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yes. I think one of the reasons that that worked well, we sort of pushed it from the Army side, because when I was in USARPAC, I think that was my first real association with the other services. We got in with the Marines and the Air Force and the Navy, out there. General Lucian Clay's boy was the Commander out there. I used to contact Bill all of the time. They had an award that the Air Force put out, and it was the first time they had ever put it out. It was a cooperation with the other services award, and after I retired

from the Army, I got the first one they ever gave. Because it started out in Hawaii and it continued while I was in the Sergeant Major of the Army's Office. As a matter of fact, Harmon Hodge had extended in Vietnam. He was going to come back on leave, and he was going to buy a commercial ticket. I told him, I said, "Harmon why don't you ride back with us." I said, "We're going back to Hawaii." I said, "I think I can get a ride out of Hawaii for you, back to the east coast." So, sure enough, he rode back with us. When we got airborne, coming out of Guam, I called and talked to Bill, in Hawaii, and he said, "We'll check it out." About two hours out of Honolulu, he called me and said, "We've got an airplane leaving here, within a hour after you land." He said, "Harmon Hodge has a seat on it, and it's going into Dover." He was going to Fort Bragg. Well, I talked to Harmon, later. He got up in the cockpit of that 141 (C-141) and was talking to the crew. They found out that he was an Army sergeant major. They said, "Where are you going?" He said that he was going do to Pope Air Force base. They said, "Hell, we'll just take you to Pope." They said, "It's not that much farther up to Dover." They said, "We'll be low enough on fuel. When we get to Pope we can land, let you off, and then go on to Dover." That's what they did. That's the sort of cooperation that we had. It continued there, and it just worked out real well. So I really enjoyed the other service guys. We used to have meetings with our different Chiefs, you know, the bosses. We sort of had a round robin on that. We'd have lunch with them. And that worked out very well too. So I think we had as good a rapport with them as we ever had.

**Interviewer:** When General Abrams was Chief of Staff, he decided that the Sergeant Major of the Army should be married? Why do you think this is important?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I think that was probably one of the wisest decisions ever made. The reason I think so is, just using my bride as an example. Of course, George Dunaway got it started with the spouse

being able to accompany the Sergeant Major of the Army. I believe it was George that did that.

**Interviewer:** Right

**SMA Bainbridge:** So we were able to take Hazel, like to Europe. She could talk to the wives on child care centers, commissary problems, PX problems, problems with club business, for example, and that word would get back, through me or the Chief's wife, to the Chief, or whatever. She got information that I never would have gotten, because she could go different places than I went. As a matter of fact, she was more important on a trip. I can remember one time, when we were going to Europe, the military aide to the Secretary of the Army came down and said, "You and Mrs. Bainbridge are going to go to Europe with us on our 707. Your transportation will be with the Secretary." I said, "Just transportation, sir." He said, "Yeah, that's right." He said, "You're going to go your way and he's going to go his." That was Alexander. So he came down and got everything. He said, "Now I don't know what the party is going to be made up of, so far." He said, "But I believe there's going to be one bunk left." He said, "That will go to Mrs. Bainbridge." So I told Hazel. I said, "See, I have to sit up in a seat going all the way over there, and you get a bunk." So sure enough, about three days before we got ready to go, the aide came back down and said, "That's right. We're down to one bunk, and Mrs. Bainbridge gets that." He said, "You're going to get a seat, along with me." So the Secretary and Mrs. Alexander, and Hazel, and one other, got bunks, and we got seats.

**Interviewer:** So Hazel was an extension of your Office.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Oh, she certainly was. I always took her back to the Academy with me. She went to Korea with me. You know, our working relationship with the Korean services has been great, and that was really something, when they would see that Hazel was able to travel with me. They really appreciated that. She went to Japan with me. Hazel

would try to go with me to Europe and those places, where there were a lot of troops and a lot of dependents.

**Interviewer:** So she was able to go to Japan, Korea, and to Europe.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Okinawa.

**Interviewer:** Did she go down to Panama with you, and Alaska?

**SMA Bainbridge:** She went to Alaska with me. She did not go to Panama. She went to Taiwan. As a matter of fact, she went on leave in Taiwan, when we were in USARPAC; her and her mother. Her mother came out and went to Taiwan with us. I took a hop and they took a commercial aircraft.

**Interviewer:** About what percentage of the time did she travel with you?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Oh, I would suspect maybe twenty percent of the time, Butch. As I say, to those places where there was family involvement, to a bigger extend.

**Interviewer:** I guess she got pretty proficient in speaking.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yes she did.

**Interviewer:** Of course, she was that way before.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Right.

**Interviewer:** I guess she polished that even more, didn't she?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yes she did. But she would talk to an ACS. You know, she would get involved with the ACS folks. She spend many, many, many, many hours, in Fort Benning. She got started in Fort Benning, and ACS was just getting off the ground there. I don't know how many hours she finally ended up with, but it was several thousand hours, working with the ACS. Your definitely right, she was an extension of the Office. And the wives, particularly, felt good about seeing that Hazel could come, because they would talk to her. Just like I say, when the Chief would go someplace, and I could go the same place, I'd get some things that the Chief wouldn't get. I certain that Hazel got information that we needed, that I wouldn't have got.

**Interviewer:** I guess she found out that the wife of a PFC or a spec. four is not bashful.

**SMA Bainbridge:** That's right. You're exactly right, and we were able to help folks because that PFC's or Spec. Four's wife felt she also had a representative that could get her concerns to where they needed to go. Again, I mentioned once before, but General Haines said, "One of the main reasons you got to be Sergeant Major of the Army, was your bride." I couldn't agree with him more, because she has certainly been my right hand. Not in the infantry, but certainly where we could work together.

**Interviewer:** How old were your children, when you became Sergeant Major of the Army?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Well, let's see. Both of them were married.

**Interviewer:** So you didn't have the responsibility for children.

**SMA Bainbridge:** No. No, both of them were married. So we lived in 435A, in Fort Myer. Oh, that's another thing that I was able to, as Sergeant Major of the Army, was to get a better set of quarters for the Sergeant Major of the Army; better than I had. The current Sergeant Major of the Army has got a better set than those before him.

**Interviewer:** During each tenure, they get better and better.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah. But its kind of a unique story, Butch, if we've got a minute here. I was in the latrine, just down from the Sergeant Major's office, and General Bob Yerks came in. He was the DCSPER. He had been the MDW Commander, and he tried to get different quarters for the Sergeant Major of the Army, when he was with MDW. Then he went to Carlisle, and he came back as the DCSPER. He walks in, and we're talking about that. He said, "We need to resurrect that again." Just then General John McGifford walked in and said, "What are you two outlaws talking about?" General Yerks said, "We're talking about better quarters for the Sergeant Major." General McGifford said, "Hell, I know a set of quarters he ought to have, if he'll approve them." If I would

approve them. I said, "Oh, you do?" He said, "Yeah. Quarters over at 28 Lee Avenue." He said, "The Army Chaplain lives there now." He said, "That's the only detached house on that row." He said, "We can approve that right here."

**Interviewer:** Right there in the latrine.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah, right in the latrine. I said, "Well, that would be great." He said, "Just let me run it by the Chief." The Chief said, "Super." So he approved that. About the end of my tour, General McGifford said, "What's going to happen if that set of quarters comes open and you've only got six months to do/ What are you going to do then?" I said, "I'll move into them, if that's what's necessary to hold them." He said, "You'd do that?" I said, "You damn right, to have a better set of quarters for whoever comes up here after me." He said, "Well, you're going to get them." He said, "Probably not during the time you're here." Then Bill Connelly moved into the ones that we moved out of. Then after they did some renovations on 28, he and Bennie moved into 28. Now Richard (SMA Kidd) and his wife have moved into 17, which is on the other side. I think General Shalikashvili used to live in the set of quarters that Richard and his bride are in now. So that was another accomplishment. Not for Bill Bainbridge, but for the Office. And they did another thing for the Office. I had a shield made, with the insignia of the Sergeant Major of the Army, by the good folks over at Heraldry that got the shield done. We listed all of the people and the dates they were in quarters, and they moved that to 28, and then moved it to 17, so it continues to go.

**Interviewer:** Who came up with the idea of the two stars on the chevron?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Me.

**Interviewer:** I know you did.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah me.

**Interviewer:** Tell me about. I've read some real good comments

about that.

**SMA Bainbridge:** The story goes this way. We got a lot of recommendations from the field. They said that the Sergeant Major of the Army's insignia of grade is the same as the other Command Sergeants Major. He's got the collar brass, but they think he should have different chevrons. So what does the Army Staff do, but give it to the Army Uniform Board, which I was a voting member on. So they sent it out to the field. The field come back with a half a dozen or twenty different designs, etc. In the mean time, I'm working on mine, and I'm looking at the others. Stars have always been the progression, even in the enlisted rank; a star for a sergeant major, and then a star with a wreath. So why not two stars. So I did what had never been done before. I went to Heraldry with it, and Heraldry went to work on it. They said, "What do you want?" I said, "My recommendation is two stars. You guys tell me if that's appropriate and if it's legal, and does it fall in the heraldry guidelines, etc. You let me know what it's all about." Well they worked on that for about six weeks. They came back with it and said, "Right on. No problem. It fits right in." So the Army Uniform Board came up with one that was like the West Point Captain of Cadet wears. It looks like a spec. four eagle. As far as from here to the ditch out here (Approximately twenty yards.), it look just like a blob. There was no definition to it. It, and mine--the two stars--goes to the Chief of Staff. So the Chief of Staff said, "What do you think?" He said, "I like this one." The one like the Captain of Cadets wears. He said, "I know which one you like." He said, "Tell me why." So I went through the normal progression and all the reason I thought it should be selected. I said, "By the way, sir. Heraldry tells me that's right on the mark. That's there's no problem with it, and that it falls within the heraldry guidelines." I said, "As far as this one goes, it really has no connection with the Corps of the Noncommissioned Officers. It's a West Point thing, but it has nothing to do with us." He kind of

grinned, and he said, "Who's going to wear this?" I said, "Well, which everyone you approve, I'm going to wear it." He said, "Well then, you ought to get the one you want." He said, "Approved." And that's gospel.

**Interviewer:** Wasn't there an incident when you met a specialist in the dispensary that didn't like your..

**SMA Bainbridge:** A staff sergeant.

**Interviewer:** He didn't like the chevrons at all.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah, he didn't. I went down to get a shot. I was going someplace and I had to get one of those in-country immunizations that you had to have. I took off my jacket and my shirt, and got my immunization. He said, "You know, Sergeant Major, I don't like that chevron you're wearing." I said, "I understand that." I said, "But two things here. Number one, It doesn't make any difference whether you like it or not, because that's what the Sergeant Major of the Army is going to be wearing from now on." I said, "And number two, the reason you don't like it is because it's new. You've never seen it before and it looks kind of out of place now," I said, "but believe me, it's going to grow on you." And sure enough, I was down to the same dispensary, about three months later, and the same sergeant said, "You're right, Sergeant Major, it looks good. I like it." I'm sure Bill Connelly told you a story about it to. I know there was some folks that didn't approve of that, but I don't think you'll find anybody now that doesn't approve of it, because change is always strange, and change is always resented, at the start. Not necessarily resented, but at least resisted. But I think it was a good move. I think it was a good move.

**Interviewer:** Prior to that, the only way to identify the Sergeant Major of the Army was by the distinctive collar insignia.

**SMA Bainbridge:** That was it. The collar brass. And it's appropriate, I think, to have the chevron. So that's how that all come about, Butch. It took me five minutes to tell you about it, and it took

us about fifteen months to do it, or something like that.

**Interviewer:** When you were on your trips, when you went to the Far East, how was your reception over there? Did you meet with foreign armies?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I did.

**Interviewer:** We were talking about Korea, and about your working relations with Korea.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yes. The ROK (Republic of Korea) Army Sergeant Major always hosted something for me, and I always visited their units. Like their NCO Academy, their Corps Headquarters, their senior NCOs. I did the same thing, even when I was in USARPAC. I went to Australia and New Zealand. I visited their Army Headquarters. They didn't have anything like we had, as the Sergeant Major of the Army, but they wanted one. One of those two armies, I think, now has a Sergeant Major of the Army. In Germany, I visited those folks. When I went to Great Britain I visited... As a matter of fact, when Sam and I were in Great Britain, I was hosted one time by a retired sergeant major, and he worked for Chancellor of the Ex-Chequer; their Secretary of Treasury. He said, "I want to show him the boss's office." So we walked in, and he said, "Opps, excuse me, me Lord. I didn't know you were about." He said, "I have the Sergeant Major of the Army, and I'd like to bring him in and show him around." So I talked to this fellow for a while. He gave me two autographed pictures, in his wig. One was in color and the other was black and white. His name was Elwin Jones. He said, "By the way, Sergeant Major, I'm going to have you do something that no other Yank has ever done." He said, "I want to show you two things. The mace of England." Both of them are jewel encrusted. One is gold and the other is silver. They are about that high. (Approximately three feet.) and about that big around. (Approximately six to eight inches.) He said, "I want you to hoist them both to your shoulder, one at a time." I did. He said, "No other Yank, especially no other Yank enlisted bloat, has

ever done that." So I always touched base with those folks. Hazel and I were visiting the Scot's Guards, and we got one of the finest meals I think we ever had. We were supposed to have dinner with them. The schedule got changed by them, somehow. So the Regimental Sergeant Major said, "We were supposed to have dinner with you and Hazel, and by God, that's what we're going to do. Even though it's going to be twelve noon, we're having dinner." They had dinner all prepared, so we had beef wellington, and all of the trimmings. It was in March, around St. Patty's Day. We had green wine. The mess, with a syringe, had put food coloring in the wine. It was green when we uncorked it. So we always got treated very, very well, wherever we went. But we always did touch base with them. We found out, when you do that, their problems are the same as ours. You know, a soldier is a soldier, the world over. Just like children are children.

**Interviewer:** What do you think were some of the major problems that faced our troops that were stationed in Europe, during your tenure?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I think there were two things, probably, and it got worst as it went along. That was the exchange rate for the foreign currency and that of our own currency, and getting adequate quarters; both on and off post, and for both married and single. Some of the old quarters that we had in Europe were terrible. I'm told, but certainly up through 1979 or '80, they're still living in Quonset huts, with outside latrines, in Korea. I was explained to me one time, by General Vessey, when he was Eighth Army Commander. He said, "The problem with quarters here, and the quarters in Europe, as example." He said, "We've been in Europe for X number of years; for thirty years" He said, "But we've had twenty-five one year tours in Korea."

**Interviewer:** That's right.

**SMA Bainbridge:** He said, "That's the big difference. Nobody has ever bit the bullet and said, 'We're going to be here, so we've got to provide adequate quarters.', so as a result, what you see is what you

get."

**Interviewer:** And it hasn't changed much, to this day.

**SMA Bainbridge:** It hasn't changed much to this day, and I don't suspect that it will, because again, that number of one-year tours. But that's the best I have ever had it explained to me. There is a great soldier.

**Interviewer:** General Vessey?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah.

Yeah, he should have been Chief of Staff, but of course he didn't agree with Mr. Carter when he wanted to pull the troops out of Korea. That's what prevented him from becoming the Chief of Staff.

That's right. That's right. He missed it by that far. As a matter of fact, I had a phone call from General Vessey, on the selection of my successor, because he thought he was going to be the Chief. He wanted to know who it was. He said, "I have no problem with that." But he wasn't selected. It didn't turn out. It's a great thing that it didn't, because he became the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. Well he may have been the Chairman anyway. But what a great guy. He was a "cannon cocker." I think he got a direct commission during World War II.

There's a fellow in El Paso, by the name of Bud Holschizer. He was our DIVARTY (Division Artillery) Sergeant Major when we went to Vietnam. He and Bud were Chiefs of Smoke together in Europe. General Vessey said he was going to go to OCS, and Bud said, "Jack, you'd be the most terrible God damn second lieutenant the Army has ever had." He said, "Yeah, but I won't always be a second lieutenant." I thought that was pretty good.

**Interviewer:** Let me ask you a couple more questions about Hazel. Was she included in all of the official government and military functions you had up there?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yes. Yes. Very definitely. We were invited to the White House, by the Carters. That was a real treat for the both of us. President Carter said, "I never met a Sergeant Major of the Army

before." I said, "Mr. President, you're the first President that I've ever met." He said, "Well, we'll try to do you a good job." I said, "Mr. President, we appreciate that, and the Army will continue to do you a good job." He said, "Thank you."

**Interviewer:** What kind of a function was that?

**SMA Bainbridge:** It was right after he came into Office. They held a reception, I think it was for about four different days. This particular evening was for the military.

**Interviewer:** Did you ever go to a prayer breakfast, or anything else there?

**SMA Bainbridge:** No, never. I had one invite to the White House for a Medal of Honor presentation. The Secretary had asked me to go on a trip with him, one day after an Army Policy Council meeting. He said, "I want to talk to you after the meeting." I said, "Okay." He said, "I want you to go to Fort Sill, Oklahoma with me." I said, "Mr. Secretary, when is it?" He told me. I said, "I've got to go to the White House for a Medal of Honor presentation." He said, "God damnit. I've been Secretary of the Army for so-and-so time, and you've never been anyplace with me. I'll be gone, and you won't go anyplace with me." So I had Sam check on it and it was a presentation to an Air Force officer. I was invited because that's the thing they did. I said, "Sam, cancel my invitation to that, and get a hold of the Secretary's office and tell him I'll go with him to Fort Sill."

**Interviewer:** Who was the Secretary of the Army? Was that Clifford Alexander?

**SMA Bainbridge:** No, this was Marty Hoffman. So I got a hold of the Secretary's office, and I went down with him to Fort Sill. That was the time when we were going through this business of retraining soldiers. He wanted me to go all around with him. But I didn't go with him. We went to an AUSA meeting, that evening. He was the guest speaker. The next night I was on the airplane when he got on. I found out all this

information we needed to know about the fact that they didn't have enough manuals, and they couldn't get them. I solved the problem. He said, "Where have you been, Sergeant Major?" I said, "Sir, I came down here with you and I thought it was for the AUSA. I got back on the airplane last night, and I've been here ever since, waiting on you." He said, "That's a bunch of BS, and I'll talk to you later." And talk to me later he did. After we got airborne, he come up and sat and he said, "Now give me the skinny." He was a little bit upset with me, at first. I said, "Let me tell you, Mr. Secretary. I came down here with you, just for transportation, not to follow you around." I said, "If I had followed you around, I wouldn't have found out about your artillery retraining business here, that they don't have enough manuals, and couldn't get them, and I solved the problem with two phone calls." I said, "That's much more important than me going to a press conference with you." He said, "You're right, Sergeant Major." I really got along with Secretary Hoffman just great. I still serve with him on the AUSA Council. I go to my last meeting this month. I'm off of that now. I asked to get off of it. We were talking one day, at a meeting a couple of years ago. We were talking something about Russia. I said, kind of to myself. I said, "I a hell of a lot more worried about Aids in this country than I am about Russia." He said, "Yeah, given you life style, I can understand." I said, "Come on. Give me a break."

**Interviewer:** What were some of your most memorable moments, during your tenure? I know you had many.

**SMA Bainbridge:** I think I have explained one of them. One of them was, and it may not seem like a memorable moment, but it was to me, and that's when General Thurman give me his word that he would fence the NCOES funds. That was super to me. But on the other side, again Secretary Hoffman come down day and said, "Have you ever met President Ford?" I said, "No sir, I sure haven't." He said, "You're going to at 1310. Come with me." He said, "I want you to stand right here at

1310." When he hit the top of the stairs, the Secretary of the Army greeted him, and I was the first guy he introduced to the President of the United States. That was a high point, because that was the first President I had ever met. I said Carter was, but he wasn't. I met President Ford, because Marty Hoffman knew him personally, of course. I think one of them was my leaving the Army, when the entire 3rd Regiment of the Old Guard was out there, and they were there to honor me, a farm boy from Illinois. The Chief of Staff of the Army, and the Secretary of the Army, and the Under Secretary of the Army, and all of those people were out there, just for me. To me, that was a pretty damn memorable moment, with the Chief of Staff, talking to those folks, and giving me my day in court, if you will, and giving me my fifteen minutes of glory. Somebody said, "Everybody only has fifteen minutes of glory." Well, that certainly was my fifteen minutes of glory. And being presented with the Distinguished Service Medal, by the Chief of Staff of the Army. For this old country boy, it can't get much better than that.

**Interviewer:** You're right.

**SMA Bainbridge:** It can't get much better than that. And then having the chance to stand up there and answer the Chief's comments, and thank the soldiers of the Old Guard for giving me such a send off. I had my family there; everybody but my mom and dad. My mom was ill and couldn't make the trip, but the rest of the family was there, including Hazel's mother. I believe the end was as memorable a moment as any of it, because of the circumstance, and the people that were making it so. The family being there meant very much to me.

(End of Tape OH 94.4-7, Side 2)

(Begin Tape OH 94.4-8, Side 1)

**Interviewer:** Today is March 12, 1994. This is a continuation of the interview with former Sergeant Major of the Army William G. Bainbridge. When we ended yesterday, I had asked you what were some of your most memorable moments. Now I would like you to tell me some of

the humorous things that occurred while you were Sergeant Major of the Army.

**SMA Bainbridge:** One of them that I mentioned to you, off the tape yesterday, was when the Secretary of the Army and I went to... I don't think that was on the tape, was it? When we went to Fort Sill.

**Interviewer:** Right. When you told him you was on the airplane all night?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah. Is that on the tape?

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**SMA Bainbridge:** I didn't think that was on the tape. Of course, that was one of them. You know, you think back and try to come up with something that happened, and it's kind of hard to do. One of them that I can recall, was when I told you about the chevrons. That was humorous to me; when we changed the chevrons. I remember interviewing a spec. five, in the 3rd Infantry Division. I asked him what his career goals were. He said, "Sergeant Major, I'm after your job." I said, "Well, that's great, but let me tell you. You're going to have to wait until July to get it, because I'm going to stay there until then." He said, "Oh no, I don't want it right now." There must have been a thousand of them, Butch, but just to recall one right now, I can't do it. Isn't that something? Can we go on?

**Interviewer:** Sure. If you think of one you can always tell me.

**SMA Bainbridge:** We can come back.

**Interviewer:** Oh yeah. When you were on the road, did you call your office every day?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Almost every day. Yes. To keep in contact with them and give information back to the office so Raylene or Sam, who ever happened to be there, could get that information down to a staffer so we could get something going on it, or just to find out if there was something that I needed to check, or where I was going to go the next day, or something. We did stay in contact pretty well with the office.

**Interviewer:** I forgot to ask you, yesterday, but would you please describe your working relations with General Weyand.

**SMA Bainbridge:** I would say, excellent. Excellent. Because, as I said, General Weyand's guidance to me was, "Just continue to do what you've been doing; checking what soldiers do. If there's anything here we can do to help, let us know." I never had a problem getting in to see General Weyand. I always could work with him very well. As a matter of fact, talking about humorous, it just struck me when you mentioned my working relationship with him. We came out of an Army Policy Council meeting, one day. You know, the escalators in the Pentagon go down at night and up during the day. About four o'clock they turn them around to take the traffic out. Secretary Hoffman and the Chief were going up, and when they saw the escalators going down, Hoffman said, "I'm going to go up anyway, Chief." General Weyand said, "I don't think we ought to do that." But Marty Hoffman jumped on and up there he went. I went around and went up the steps, and was moving pretty fast. Just about the time I got around there, General Weyand was coming off the escalator, limping. He said, "Damn, I think I did something to my foot." So I went on a trip the next day. When I came back, about a week later, and I went in to see General Weyand. Here he is, in a walking cast. He cracked his ankle coming up that down escalator and ended up wounded.

**Interviewer:** As long as those escalators are, they're what? Almost a couple of stories high?

**SMA Bainbridge:** That's right, and it took him a little time to get up there. It's not humorous, really, at that time. He had one of those walking casts on. It had about three inches to build his shoe up. I said, "You know, you really don't need any additional height, General Weyand." He said, "You know, you're right." He said, "I was at a cocktail party the other night, and suddenly I realized I wasn't under the chandelier. I was in it." And another thing that involved General

Weyand. I sure this story has been told many times, but I happened to be at the AUSA's Annual Luncheon where he told it. He had been over to Walter Reed for his physical. He said, "I was up there getting the unmentionable parts of my physical done." You know, getting the proctoscope. He said, "This young major in there said, 'Sir, what do I call you? Do I call you Chief, General, or Sir. Do you have any preference'?" General Weyand said, "Young man, after what you just done to me, just call me Fred." I mean he really broke up the house. That's the kind of fellow he was. You know where the Sheraton National is there?

**Interviewer:** Uh huh.

**SMA Bainbridge:** I think it might have been his first official function. The Quad-A (Army Aviation Association of America) had their meeting there. General Weyand was invited and I was invited; he was the guest speaker, of course. He was talking about being in Europe. He was flying around in a chopper. He said he just happened to notice, about the third time he got on the chopper, a little whisk of hair came out from under the helmet of the pilot. He said, "It was a woman," He said, "and I wasn't scared, hardly at all." So it wasn't hard to work with General Weyand. He wasn't a shouter and a yeller. He was easy to work with. I had great fun with him. But he did have a lot of humor and he was always that way. I've been to Hawaii a couple of times and I always call him up on the phone, or I might get a chance to go up and see him.

**Interviewer:** Tell me about your working relations with General Rogers.

**SMA Bainbridge:** You know again, Butch, we had a great working relations. I didn't have any problems getting in to see him. I told you one incident yesterday, I think, about when I wasn't able to get in, but I said, "I'll go home with him." General Vono said, "No, I'll get you in there." But General Rogers would listen. As I said, he put me

on the General Staff Council, so I sat with him and his principle staff folks in their meetings in his office. General Rogers listened very well to what input that I had, and of course to all of the staff. I felt very fortunate to be with that august group, if you will. I think the Sergeant Major of the Army still sits on those councils. It gave us an opportunity to have a voice with the folks that really make the decisions that run the Army. I had no problems at all. I told you about the chevron business. I think I also mentioned the fact that we had the luncheons in his office; we did that periodically. I could talk to General Rogers about anything, and I did. We had no problems at all. I didn't travel with the General, but we did in fact have a good working relations. As an example. He had been making the speeches at West Point, several times in a row to classes. The DCSPER, General Joe Kingston, and I were in a meeting with him having to do with West Point. We were putting "tacs," technical NCOs and sergeants major, up there. Remember? We had a time when we tried to put sergeants major in the regiments up there. But anyway, we were discussing that. General Rogers said, "I've been doing the leadership for the last three classes up there." He said, "I'm not going to do it this time. I'd like to have you do it." I said, "I'd be glad to do that." He said, "And don't be coming over here and getting any ideas either." I said, "No sir, I'll do my own." He turned to General Kingston and said, "Joe, you see that he gets up there in style." That was one of my highlights, I think, was being able to speak. I had many, but that was one highlight. The Chief of Staff of the Army, who himself was a graduate of West Point, would ask me to do the leadership and tell the cadets, that were getting ready to graduate, about their relationship with soldiers; what they ought to expect when they got out there. I really appreciated the opportunity.

**Interviewer:** With the Sergeant Major of the Army delivering that address, it may have had more of an effect than if it was done by the

Chief of Staff.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah. I could very well have. I think I might have mentioned to you that Joe McNeill, who was Virgil McNeill and Maxine's next to the youngest boy, was in West Point at that time. I had written a letter of recommendation for him, so I got a chance to see Joe in his environment at the Point. (**NOTE:** Sergeant Major Virgil McNeill was the first enlisted company commander at the Sergeants Major Academy.) I really enjoyed that trip up there to talk to those folks, and eat in the mess, of course, with the cadets. It's an impressive place; a really impressive place.

**Interviewer:** Describe your interaction with the National Guard Bureau (NGB) and the Office, Chief of Army Reserve (OCAR).

**SMA Bainbridge:** We had a good working relationship with those folks. I made it an effort to visit the Guard units or Reserve units, some times specifically to go visit a Reserve or Guard unit. I talked about the trip out to the western part of the country. A good part of that was to Reserve and National Guard units.

**Interviewer:** Did you visit mostly ARCOMs (Army Reserve Commands)?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah, the ARCOMs. But I visited the Guard units. As a matter of fact, the Commander of one Region out there gave me his C-12. (**NOTE:** The C-12 is a twin-engine, turboprop aircraft.) He said, "You won't be able to get to many of my units if you don't have this kind of transportation." So for about four days, we had a C-12 dedicated to us so we could get to as many of the Guard and Reserve units as we could. Because of that, I had a good working relationship because I was trying to find things out and trying to help those folks. Of course, the Guard at that time, had a Sergeant Major. The Reserve had a Sergeant Major. Albright Hunt, who was a graduate of the Sergeants Major Academy, was assigned there, so we had a personal relationship too, and that helped when we were going out to do our visits from the Sergeant Major of the Army's office.

**Interviewer:** Which one did Albright Hunt work with?

**SMA Bainbridge:** The Guard.

**Interviewer:** The NGB?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Do you remember who had OCAR?

**SMA Bainbridge:** He was another graduate of the Sergeants Major Academy. I'll get his name for you. Hazel will remember that. So we had good working relationships with those folks.

**Interviewer:** During your tenure, I'm sure you observed some changes in the U.S. Forces in Europe; not only the forces themselves, but the facilities we had. We touched on it a little bit yesterday. We addressed mostly the quarters. What were some of the other changes you observed during that period of time?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Well, for one thing, we were trying to build up out of the Vietnam business and trying to get a little bit more solidarity, if you will, among the noncommissioned officers and get noncommissioned officers in the right grade and MOS into those units which, if you well remember, Butch, was a terrible thing during Vietnam. The most senior NCO in an outfit could be a staff sergeant, so this was to kind of build that back up and get the training business back in. Of course, General Blanchard, who was the Commander over there, and Ken Tracy, they had a great working relationship together. I think bringing back the training, the quality of the training, and bringing the quality of life up in the European area was paramount in those days.

**Interviewer:** I think one of the things I heard somebody say was "We had to overcome the replacement depot syndrome that we had during Vietnam."

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah, that's right, because people were there less than a year, sometimes, then they went right back to Vietnam. The rotation in Europe was the same as in CONUS. You might go from Vietnam to Europe on a long tour, but the long tour might be a year or eighteen

months, and then right back to Vietnam. That was really one of the big problems; trying to get that thing turned around, but they had a great team over there in those two. Not only did General Blanchard and Ken Tracy get along well together, they understood the problem very well.

**Interviewer:** What was your involvement in the selection of Sergeant Major Connelly to be your replacement as Sergeant Major of the Army?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Oh, I tried my damnest to keep him from getting the job. (The statement was followed by loud laughter.) No, Butch.

**Interviewer:** Did you sit on the board?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yes. See, the process is, I think, one of the finest selection processes going. First there's a window that the DCSPER and everybody decides on. The CSMs that fit that window then are given an administrative screening. There may be a whole group of those, maybe a hundred, that fit that slot, obviously. So then that's administratively screened down. In my case, the board went to work and did that screening. I think we had about seventy records, as I recall, that the board actually went through, administratively, and reduced the number to the ten or twelve that was to come before that board. Then when they came before the board, we reduced that to five and gave them a numerical order. Then it went to the Chief of Staff who did the interviewing and selecting. By the time we got the sixty or seventy records to check out, all of the background checks had been done. The vault files, and the CID (Criminal Investigation Department) files, and all those files had been checked out so that when we got them, all we had to do was look at the qualifications in there; that sort of thing was done.

**Interviewer:** It seems like, probably after Sergeant Major Copeland, they started to do more in depth background checks.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Oh yes.

**Interviewer:** They added that to the system.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Not only me, but the wife is checked. I think that is important, because you want to feel that they've checked you out and that they feel comfortable with you, because if they don't, then you're not comfortable. But all that was done and then, of course, when we got the interview in, we reduced it to the five. I can remember Bill Connelly saying, "Every time I would look at you, you would be writing something down." He said, "Some times I think you were writing something down when there wasn't even anything to write down." I said, "Bill, I might have been doing that." He said, "That really concerned me." I'm sure it might have concerned some of the others too, but all I was doing was trying to keep my notes together so that I could ask what I wanted to ask, and one thing or another. I remember when we told those folks, who were going to be the five finalists, all Bill Connelly heard was that he was going to see the Chief of Staff. I don't think he heard anything else that was said. He was walking about that high (His hand motion indicated about eighteen inches above the floor.) off the ground. It's an unnerving thing, because you really want to do well, and yet you want to look relaxed. It's pretty tough to do. Here you're got a three-star general, and two two-star generals, and the serving guy that you want to replace, so there's a lot of trauma there.

**Interviewer:** In his case it was even worst because they were having a problem selecting a Chief of Staff.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Right.

**Interviewer:** In was on again, off again. There were rumors saying they were going to have another board.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Right.

**Interviewer:** Like he said, "The Army is not that stupid."

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** He said, "I was right."

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah. There wasn't any question in my mind that Bill Connelly was the guy. At least when we got down to that ten, and

after we had gone through that ten and got it to the five, my choice was always Bill Connelly. I don't have anything against the rest of the folks at all. They were great folks or they wouldn't have been up there, but Bill Connelly was my choice. Of course, the Chief talks to us, the board members, to see what our feelings are, collectively. "Why did you do this? Why is this guy here?" And then I got an opportunity to talk to General Rogers personally on that. I don't know if he talked to any of the others individually, but I know we talked. That's why I felt so good about the rapport that we had, because he would talk to me about things. He was comfortable with Bill too. Yeah, I was glad to see Bill get the job. But Bill, he was so uptight, I'll tell you. But that's alright. That's to be expected. You've been on the platform and you've briefed a thousand times, but there's always a little butterfly there. I think it's normal, you know, if you want to do good. If you don't give a damn then you don't have to have the butterfly, but if you want to do well, there's going to be a butterfly there.

**Interviewer:** Yesterday we talked about getting the money fenced for the NCOES Program. Other than that, what did you find most rewarding about being the Sergeant Major of the Army?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I think having the entire Army to explore. As diversified a career as I had up to that point, I still had a lot to learn about soldiers and different types of units. Also, to be able to walk into any type unit in the Army and know that was part of my responsibility in getting the word to the people that could help those folks to do the things that ought to be done. I think that was what really made me feel good about it, Butch. There's the old saying, "The world is my oyster." But the Army was my thing; the whole Army belonged to me. I say it belonged to me. I represented the entire Army and the enlisted folks when I was out there. I wanted to do that well. That was the most rewarding thing to me. Remember, I told you that Sam, Raylene, and I sat down together and we said, "We've got to make sure

the right word goes out." I always prided myself in not telling soldiers something "off the cuff." If I didn't know the answer, I told them I didn't know the answer, but I'd get them the answer. My integrity with that Army out there was a high point for me too.

**Interviewer:** What did you find was most frustrating?

**SMA Bainbridge:** That's easy. That's easy. To me, having been a battalion sergeant major, which is one of the greatest jobs in the world, and the Training Center Sergeant Major, etc., you could get it done right now. If you wanted to get something done out there, you did it. As Sergeant Major of the Army, you couldn't do that. You'd concur at this briefing and at that demonstration, but you couldn't get it done. It kind of goes back to what General Weyand said. "In two years, all of this stuff you get stirred up, you don't even know what's going to happen to it." So that was the most frustrating thing to me; you couldn't make it happen, as hard as you tried. But then there was a good side to that too. When it finally did happen, you know there's a good feeling in there. "Well, I had something to do with that. One more good lick for our soldiers."

**Interviewer:** Did you have a goal that you had set that you failed to accomplish?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I had a couple. I didn't set this before the press and all that business. Two things. Orders received, particularly by senior noncommissioned officers, who didn't go. I thought that if you waited until you came up on an order, then the only thing you ought to do was to go. We never did get that settled while I was Sergeant Major of the Army. The other thing was, because I came from the Sergeants Major Academy, was those folks who were able to decline attendance after being selected by a board. The Army spent a lot of good soldiers' time selecting what we thought was the best to go to the pinnacle--the top school in NCOES--and then to be able to say, "No, I don't want to go," really galled me. I didn't want that to be able to

happen, but I wasn't able to do that. I wasn't able to do that. Those two things really... The first one, people who got orders and didn't go, there was a two-headed monster, if you will, because I got my orders and I said, "I'm not going to go. I'm going to retire." Then you had to go and fill that place, and you might have had two weeks to go and you, being a good soldier, you went. It wasn't fair to you, and it wasn't fair to the Army, because the Army didn't get the guy that should have gone in the first place. Those two things really bugged me.

**Interviewer:** Sergeant Major Connelly said you should mail the check to where they were supposed to go and if they wanted to get paid, they've got to go out there.

**SMA Bainbridge:** That sounds like him, so I guess we're on the same sheet of music with that.

**Interviewer:** How has the role of the Sergeant Major of the Army changed over the years, and how do you think those changes have come about?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I think it has changed over the years, for a couple of reasons. One, because of the incumbent. Every man that has been in there has had his own style and has done what he could do to help the Army and to help soldiers. Every one of them have done a heck of a job, I think, at that. But the Army has just changed. When I was there, NCOES was just getting rolling good, but now look what it has done, Butch. It's the apple of the world's eye really, when it comes to the military side. It changed and each Chief of Staff has a different role. His role is the same, but he has a different way of going about it, and they're all done great jobs. So I think just evolution has changed the thing, and there's been different challenges for each Sergeant Major of the Army and each Chief of Staff, and that team has to rise to that challenge. But I think the thing that has happened, a little bit each time, is as each incumbent has gone through that chair, the Office has become a little more respected throughout the military.

There isn't this snipping and sniping that I'm sure you've got from some of the interviews, prior to mine. I think that has, if not completely subsided, there's certainly not much of it. There's certainly not much of it. And those who would snipe at that Office, certainly have got to look in the mirror and they've got to see a problem out there, because there isn't any question in my mind that the Office has provided a tremendous service to the military and to the Army.

**Interviewer:** In retrospect, is there anything you would have done differently, as Sergeant Major of the Army?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah. One thing, specifically, that I would have done, I would have kept better records of what I did while I sat in that chair, while I was in that Office. Not just for me, but for the record of the Office. I think right now, Richard Kidd is probably doing the best job of that has ever been done, and that's a part of the evolution of the Office. Quite frankly, I didn't think about it. I wasn't the decision maker and that sort of thing. We didn't do as good a job of keeping records of the accomplishment of the Office, I think, as we should have. In retrospect, if I had to do it again, I'd do it like Richard is doing it. I'd have a daily log and you'd be able to go right down the line and see exactly what happened. That would have been something the office staff would have done. But I only had two, and one was usually on the road, and it just didn't evolve to that. But I would have done a better job of doing that if I had to do it again.

**Interviewer:** We've talked quite a bit about NCOES. I think this is a good time to put it all into prospective. I would like you to access the Army's NCOES. What affect do you think this structured education system has had on the Army?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I has been a tremendous plus. Before NCOES, you could take a group of one hundred senior noncommissioned officers and ask them, "How many of you had additional schooling, outside of AIT?" This is excluding the medics and those people who had to have some

schooling in order to do the job. But the foot soldier, the armored guy, and the engineer, a hundred of them standing out there, you might get five that would raise their hand. Now, all one hundred of them would raise their hand, and they would have three or four phases behind them. It's just like anything else. You have the classroom to check out the theory, then you go to the field to see if that theory really works when you're out there in the real world. If it doesn't, you can take it back to the classroom, and the classroom can fix it. We didn't have that before. It was trial and error. Even NCOES fell into this business. We started the ANCOC business and we went down to Fort Benning, Georgia. We took old platoon sergeants... I say old, but experienced platoon sergeants is the word. They went through that class and when they got down to about the third class, they said, "Hey, you guys are doing it all wrong. That's not the way you do it. Here's the way you do it." Well, "here's the way you do it" was the wrong way to start with. But we had been perpetuating the mediocrity instead of fixing it some place. We had to say, "Whoa guys. We're not going to get rid of it. If we're doing it wrong, we're going to fix it. But maybe we're not doing it wrong. Maybe you just don't think the way we're doing it is right. But when you compare how you did it before, and how we're doing it now, this has got to be the best because there's been two or three checks and balances that you didn't have before." It also, I think, taught noncommissioned officers to use their time more effectively. Hell, when I was coming up, if it took two days to do something, it took two days to do something, and two nights. Now you can use your time a little better because you're taught to use your time a little bit better. That was one problem in the first class at the Sergeants Major Academy. As a matter of fact, I suspect that was a problem in the first five or six classes, is that they didn't know how to allocate their time properly, because again, they had been able to do it out there in the field. If it took two days to do it, it took two

days to do it. But when there was a deadline, it was a traumatic sort of thing to do. I mentioned the guy who left the Army because he couldn't do the twenty-five hundred word essay. He could have done the twenty-five hundred words, but he didn't know how to go about it, and he didn't know how to ask. In my mind, the NCOES has been the catalyst that has produced the finest noncommissioned officers the Army has ever seen. I'm not saying that those old fellows, like me, back there were not pretty good, because the new ones have had an opportunity to develop. We didn't have the NCOES then. But all of us old timers, who didn't get that chance, at least fought hard to provide that opportunity to those who followed. That's what the Army is all about; to make it a little better for your replacement.

**Interviewer:** I think yesterday, you mentioned your felling on the affect NCOES had on Desert Storm.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Exactly. Yeah I did. I mentioned, you know, that it wasn't my words on the C&GS (Command and General Staff College) and at Carlisle, but those classrooms were the ones that won the Second War. I think that NCOES had a big part in winning Desert Storm, because the troops fought as they trained, and they trained as they knew they were going to fight. You can't do it overnight. NCOES has come along this far because of dedicated people like you, Butch Koehler, who took that PLDC (Primary Leadership Development Course) apart a thousand times until you got it like it ought to be. That's why NCOES is so good; because of dedicated noncommissioned officers. Specifically noncommissioned officers. The officers decide who's going to do it and what's going to be done. You and I decide how it's going to be done and get their approval on it. There isn't any question in my mind that it's the greatest thing that has ever happened to the Army. That, and centralized promotion.

**Interviewer:** I was going to ask about the EPMS (Enlisted Personnel Management System) How has the Enlisted Personnel Management System

changed and what are some of the strong points about the current system, when you compare it to the old system?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Well, under the old system, and we're talked about this before, Butch, the old system was "the right time, the right place," and you may never be in the right place at the right time. As an example. You could be the best platoon sergeant in the 1st Infantry Division, and if there wasn't an opening up above you, you never did become a first sergeant. Or a squad leader to a platoon sergeant. Then along came EPMS, where the management system, well the centralized promotion was really defined. EPMS, I think, became the fine tuner of the centralized promotion system, because we kind of got the cart before the horse maybe. But we didn't have a system before and when all of this came together, then you got a chance to compete against the entire Army. If you was the best platoon sergeant in the Army, it showed when you records came up and you got to be that first sergeant. The management of enlisted personnel, and the key word is "system." It became a system. It wasn't catch as catch can. I guess we know our own experience better than anything else, but as I told you before, I spent ten and one-half years as a sergeant first class E6, and ten of those years I was in an E7 position. I don't like to say E7, or E6, but for the record, to know what we're talking about. I couldn't do it because it wasn't the right time or the right place. There wasn't any vacancies above me. But I was filling the job, and there were lots of folks below me, below me in the position, but above me in rank. See, that doesn't happen today. Master sergeants fill master sergeants slots, for the most part. You might have some overlap, or something like that, but you don't have three sergeants major filling one sergeant major slot. Or you don't have three sergeants major over here, and a master sergeant doing the job over there. I don't think we do that anymore. I don't think we do that anymore.

**Interviewer:** What was the reaction amongst your fellow

noncommissioned officers when the announcement was made that the Army was going to add the pay grades of E8 and E9?

**SMA Bainbridge:** You know, I think there was kind of a collective sigh of relief, because a lot of us had been sitting there, particularly below master sergeant E7. There wasn't any place to go. There were such a large amount of overages up there. There just weren't any vacancies, so something had to be done to break that log jam. The elongation of the grade system turned out to be the way to go. For my part, I think it turned out well. I wasn't a recipient of any of the benefits of that for another three years, because the master sergeants were sort of put out into the E8 and E9 positions, but there wasn't any fine tuning of the positions below that to see what we could do. For Example. The supply sergeant was two ranks below the master sergeant, but in the hierarchy of the thing, how he's three below, but there wasn't anything to get him to two below again. Well anyway, I think it was needed, because when we talked about it at an earlier time here, I know we had the question again about all of the officers who were riffed, particularly after the Korean War, they all came back in. I thought they were all 1502 master sergeants, because every guy I saw had been a former captain or a former first lieutenant, some majors, etc. In the VII Corps we even had a colonel what was riffed back, but he was a master sergeant. It wasn't fair to the rest of us who were trying to go from this rank to this rank, which was already full, and "bang," here's a whole bunch of other folks who were taken care of, and really rooking a lot of other folks.

**Interviewer:** Do you think, also, the effectiveness of that program was due to the fact that not only did they add two grades, but they immediately came in with a sensible management system? Had they just introduced the grades of E8 and E9, all it would have done was just move the log jam a little higher.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Right. You right. There was a system to use

those other two grades, instead of moving the log jam up. You're one hundred percent right, Butch, there was some management at that point, but they had the two positions to work with that they didn't have before.

**Interviewer:** When the Army decided to go to the all volunteer force, many of the "old timers" were very negative about the change, and understandably so. Tell me about some of the negative attitudes that some of the officers and noncommissioned officers had concerning the all volunteer Army.

**SMA Bainbridge:** You know, I think the way we handled VOLAR (Volunteer Army) was more of a problem than what was going to actually happen. We went about it wrong when we said, "We're going to do this for the volunteer Army. We're going to give you curtains on the windows and bedspreads, and all of that. But we can't do it now because we don't have the money. We're going to do it down the road." Then it just put a bad taste in everybody's mouth. Why tell them? Don't tell them you are going to do it. Get the plan, execute the plan, and tell them in November that you're going to do it in December. Don't tell them, in 1963, that you're going to do it in 1971, because the guy is going to say, "I'm going to be gone." So they didn't go about it right and put a bad taste out there. But I think, Butch, the noncommissioned officers that I dealt with, those that were really taught discipline, didn't have a problem with it. They really didn't have a problem with it. We had a few that were concerned about somebody that really wanted to be here, against the guy that's just filling the slot. I talked before about somebody coming out of the woodwork when the chevron was available to get the pay grade, but they'd like to go back where they were instead of doing the job up here. I think that a lot of the discomfort was just that, because it was something new. It was a change, and a pretty drastic change. There was the normal grumbling, but I don't think any true professional really ever thought this was a bad

idea.

**Interviewer:** Sergeant Major Copeland was talking about some of the problems. Of course, he was the one that got beat about the head and shoulders when we started talking about the all volunteer Army. I think one of the problems we had at that time was when we came up with the Madison Avenue slogan "The Army wants to join you."

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** For a while we were going in kind of the wrong direction. Do you think that maybe the leadership sometimes forgot what it would take to hold a soldier, and they overestimated what it would take to keep the soldier or bring in a new soldier?

**SMA Bainbridge:** It isn't any question. It isn't any question. You talked about "The Army wants to join you." Stupid! Stupid. There was another one too. Remember the "Zero Defects Army."

**Interviewer:** Right.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Impossible. If you're going to have an Army, you've got to make some mistakes. You can't have anything that big and not make a mistake now and then, because that's how you learn not to make another one. But anyway, I remember at Fort Benning, Georgia, in 1967, when the "Zero Defects Army" came out. They brought all of the senior NCOs in to see a film clip and listen to somebody explain to us what it was all about. Well, they had this film clip, a five or six minute film clip, and the damn thing was in backwards, and that's just about what happened to the "Zero Defects Army." It was backwards, because it never did work. It never did work. That's why they put erasers on pencils, so you can change what you wrote down and make it right. You can't have zero defects with an organization as big as the Army.

(End Tape OH 94.4-8, Side 1)

(Begin Tape OH 94.4-8, Side 2)

**Interviewer:** As the last tape ended, we were talking about some of

the different programs. I think you had finished talking about the program we had one time, called "Zero Defects." Let me ask you another question, going back to your tenure as Sergeant Major of the Army. Did you have a formal rater, or when you came into office, was there such a thing as a requirement for the Sergeant Major of the Army to be rated?

**SMA Bainbridge:** As a matter of fact, my last rating was the rating I got at the Sergeants Major Academy. I'll tell you how that developed, Butch. I had been the Sergeant Major of the Army, I guess maybe four or five months. We get a piece of correspondence in the office that said that I had not been rated and that the Chief of Staff, or whoever he designated, should do the rating. Sam Walsh got it and said, "Look at this thing here." He said, "I know the Chief is going to be upset with this." But anyway, it went across to General Weyand, and General Weyand sent a note back out. "Not only am I not going to rate Sergeant Major Bainbridge this time, and it's not late because I don't intend to rate him. The rating system is over, as far as the Sergeant Major of the Army is concerned." As you mentioned before, Butch, it was a management tool and you got to where you're going to go, and you're not going to go any further. He said, "The fact that I selected him as Sergeant Major of the Army is the final rating he is going to get." So as far as I know, from that time on, nobody has ever been rated by the Chief or anybody else. Certainly I wouldn't have been rated by anybody but General Weyand. He would have seen to that. But I think it was a very wise thing on his part to cut it off when he did.

**Interviewer:** Did that come out of MILPERCEN or DCSPER?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I think it came out of MILPERCEN, because they were the operating agency on that end of the business. But he did it very well, I thought.

**Interviewer:** Also, during the break we were talking about various things and you brought up a good point on MOS testing, particularly for Command Sergeants Major. You said you would like to say something about

that. Why don't you go ahead.

**SMA Bainbridge:** We were talking about goals. When you're getting ready to go from a unit to be Sergeant Major of the Army, goals are kind of hard to set, because you're dealing with the entire Army. One thing that I desperately wanted to do was to stop the MOS testing for Command Sergeants Major. I spent a lot of time talking to a lot of folks on this and this is one of the things I discussed personally with General Weyand. TRADOC, of course, was the proponent of the testing. I said I just felt that the management tool, in the case of the Command Sergeant Major, was he had gotten where he was going to go and he didn't need to get an MOS test. He had been tested to get to that position and how long are we going to treat the senior noncommissioned officer in every unit in the Army like a school boy? He to the point now where he has been evaluated all over the place and by a lot of different officers, in lots of different situations, in lots of different assignments. The Army has seen fit to make a Command Sergeant Major out of this individual, so I think where the testing ought to stop. General Weyand said, "I agree and we'll give TRADOC their day in court. I'll ask them to convince me why we should continue to do testing, and I'll present your case." Well he did present the case, and they presented their case. The decision was made by the Chief that no longer would Command Sergeants Major be tested in their MOS. We had written the last four MOS tests at the Sergeants Major Academy. It was getting increasingly difficult to cover the wide range of situations that a Command Sergeant Major was going to come across. It was almost impossible to cover it in one hundred questions anyway. It just became something we thought was superfluous; it was no longer needed.

**Interviewer:** Has the quality of the soldier changed over the years? If so, what affect did the transition to an all volunteer force have on the quality of the soldiers we have in the Army today?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Well, Butch, there's been a lot of discussion on

this. I'm not sure the quality of the individual, at the time that they came into the Army, is any better at this point than it was twenty-five years ago, on an individual basis. But certainly because that soldier did what he was trained to do, and did it fairly well in most cases. But now it has changed to where you have a different situation and the training is so much better. The soldier is in the Army because he wants to be in the Army. In most of cases he gets to choose what he wants to do in the Army, so he's focused on doing that and we've provided a training vehicle where that soldier is trained to do everything he needs to do at each level as he advances. He trained now to do it ahead of the time he has to do it, instead of being promoted and then learn how to do it. Now he learns how to do it and then he gets promoted. I think you have to kind of put it into perspective. As I mentioned the other day, you know, the old people would talk about the old brown shoe Army, and I used to get my hackles up and say, "Well, if you could ask Hitler or Hirohito, they'd say it was a pretty good army."

**Interviewer:** That's right.

**SMA Bainbridge:** By putting it in perspective, I just think, again, soldiers, and there's no question in my mind, are better equipped today to do the job, physically and mentally. We didn't have physical training, that I can recall. Now people are kept in shape. If they're overweight, things are done about that. So they're just better equipped, mentally and psychologically, and all around to do the job of soldiering, but it's because the opportunity has been there to be better.

**Interviewer:** I think the saying "Fit to Fight" is really appropriate.

**SMA Bainbridge:** You're right. You're right. And those folks are. And again we go back to the staff sergeant we mentioned a number of times. When the press ask him how did things go during Desert Storm, he said, "I just fought like I trained."

**Interviewer:** What changes in the attitudes of the soldiers have you observed over the years, and has that attitude changed for the better?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Oh I think it has, Butch. And again, I think the volunteer force has changed that. The soldier is here because he wants to be here. Back in the draft days, a lot of soldiers weren't where they wanted to be. And we've changed our philosophy of training and keeping soldiers. Now if a soldier doesn't fit, that soldier is sent home before he gets to a unit where he becomes a liability. We kept soldiers, in World War II, just because they were there. We would have been a hell of a lot better off if we just sent that one home, because not only did you have to do your own job, you had to do his too, and you had to watch him. Now we send them home when we find out they can't become a soldier, and we send them home before they get any benefits. I think that's appropriate, because everybody can't be a soldier. Everybody can't be an airplane pilot. Everybody can't be a mechanic. So we find your niche and we put you in your niche, if there isn't a niche for you in the service then we don't keep you.

**Interviewer:** Do you think that the reduced discipline problems we have now also is a reflection of the change in attitudes of the soldiers?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I do. I do. We have some bad soldiers. We still have Leavenworth operating. But we don't have as many bad soldiers. And again, we kept a lot of soldiers that were bad. We just kept them because their tour wasn't up. Now we send them home. Those folks are terminated. They're not fit to fight, so we send them home. It might not be that they're not fit, physically, but their mental attitude is not what it was supposed to be. They can't accept the training, so we send them home. The volunteer force, I think, has had a heck of a lot to do with that because those soldiers are where they want to be.

**Interviewer:** How has the soldiers reasons for enlisting or

reenlisting changed over the years?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I think a lot of soldiers today are enlisting in the Army to find themselves. You know, they're just out of school. I say to find themselves. They don't know what they want to do and this is a good opportunity to get fairly good pay and get some benefits, like the GI Bill for college and that sort of thing. A lot of those stay with us when they find out that's really what they're looking for. But I think now most of them come in more on their own. It isn't because they can't find a job somewhere else, because we've got some great soldiers. They're smart, alert, and they could go a lot of places, but they're not sure they want to go to school yet. They're not sure they want to be a mechanic or whatever. The Army gives them a little time to think and it's a great place to think, I believe, because you're treated well and you get good training; it gives you some focus. I've talked to a lot of people since we've been working on this house. Different workmen come in here who have kids that have gone to the service and almost to a man, they say it has been a process whereby those young guys and gals have found out what they want to do and it's been a benefit to them.

**Interviewer:** Today we have the saying "You enlist soldiers. You reenlist families," because we have become a family oriented military. Assess the effectiveness of the Army Family Policy/support system that we have. How important is that?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I think it's very important because you're right when you say we reenlist families. If the family isn't happy, then the soldier is not going to perform up to his or her standards. I had a young man come up here the other day that worked on a window. He had been a ranger in the Army. He was in "Operation Just Cause." He was wounded and couldn't remain a ranger, so he got out of the Army. He said, "I love being a ranger." He said, "I was the first man ever from Okeechobee, Florida to go through Ranger School successfully." He said,

"Because of my wound I couldn't be a ranger and I didn't want to be something else." He said, "Now if I had been a little bit older, I would have thought this over maybe, and maybe I would have stayed in the Army. Now I'm a little more mature.:" He said, "I lost my first wife because of my dedication to the Army." He said, "I didn't realize and I wasn't thinking that she was a part of this thing too. I spent two hundreds days in the field and I wasn't able to explain to her properly." He said, "We're great friends today, but my first wife and I separated because of that." And I thought, here's a young fellow who really has his head together because he understands what the problem was. There was no animosity. It just didn't work out and he understands why it didn't work out. I think we have to be careful and make sure we do take care of the families, because had that young gal been at Fort Stewart with him, instead of down here at Okeechobee, maybe it would have made it a little bit better for him and for her. Maybe it would have worked out. So I believe that the quality of life, and that to me is not just the soldier in the barracks, but that quality of life is all soldiers; married or single. We have to have that. We have to take care of that family. You can remember when you came in the Army. There wasn't anything. Nobody took care of the family. The family was yours. "If the Army wanted you to have a wife they would have issued you one," as the old saying goes. Well, you have to take care of that family. If you don't you're going to lose a soldier. You might lose a good soldier because of not taking care of his or her family.

**Interviewer:** You have the opportunity, on a yearly basis, to see the advances we have made in the military. When you take a look at the family policy that we have now, and the support system that we provide those families, how have they changed since your tenure as Sergeant Major of the Army?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I think that what is much better today is that we have more people tuned-in to what the family problems are, and we

change, not just for change sake, we change to take care of the problems as those problems arise. I think we're tuned-in to the family better than we were when I was Sergeant Major of the Army. As a matter of fact, I know we are. I remember talking to a master sergeant in Germany who told me he was upset about his next assignment because he had just been on a two year unaccompanied tour, and now he wasn't going to be allowed to go back to where his family was. I said, "Why? Why didn't you bring your family with you?" "Well, because the kids were in school and they didn't want to come out of school." So he said he would like to get his assignment changed. I said, "I'm not going to change your assignment. I'm not in the assignment business." I said, "What school are they in?" He had two girls and they were both in college. Neither one of them were living at home. He used that as an excuse to try and get an assignment back to Fort X, or wherever his wife was. I said, "You know, you're giving me the old soft shoe here." So we ferret that out. That's not a problem. That soldier was there because it was beneficial to him, but he's trying to use the program. Now we can ferret that sort of thing out and take care of the family side of it, and take care of the young fellow who's got two kids in grade school. That's the one we need to take care of, if we can. I just think we've changed to take care of those real problems and not let problems like this, that are not a problem, that are self-inflicted, if you will. We're just better tuned-in to it.

**Interviewer:** Do you think we learned a lot, also, since Desert Storm? Up to that point we were never faced with large units being deployed quickly, leaving back a large number of dependents. I think we found that we really hadn't setup an effective system to provide the support for the large number of families left behind.

**SMA Bainbridge:** You're right. And you can go back to "Long Thrust," that I was on when the whole Battle Group went. We didn't do anything for families, except for what we did individually, but there

wasn't nothing done for the families. And the old unit rotations...  
What did they call it?

**Interviewer:** Gyro

**SMA Bainbridge:** Gyro. There was lot of trauma there. But now they bring the wives and the children in and explain to them where the hubby is going and the support groups available. Here's what you need if you need hospital help, and that sort of thing, and there's a system. I think that's the biggest thing; there's is a system. It's not a "catch as catch can."

**Interviewer:** Do you see a need for improvement in any of the areas of our family policy or support system, based on your information you get on your yearly get together with the Sergeant Major of the Army?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I think they're doing good, Butch. I just think they need to stay tuned in the changes, because there's going to be a lot more Desert Storms, or maybe smaller than Desert Storm. We've got them not in Somalia; we still have them there. We've got them in Bosnia-Hertzkervina. I just saw in the news yesterday, we're getting ready to send another three hundred soldiers some place over there to support the three hundred that is already there. In that six hundred soldiers, there has got to be a good number of spouses and children that's going to be involved. They need to know what they're going to be doing, and we never did tell them before. We can tell them now what's going on, what they're going to be doing, and what they're going to be facing.

**Interviewer:** We were talking yesterday about Sergeant Major Connelly being on the Retiree Council. When I was interviewing him he addressed something I think is a good idea. He said we have a bunch of retirees and that's a good resource. A bunch of military retirees would be more than willing to assist in these areas. He said that there's no doubt in his mind that he could get on the phone and call a list of people and they would say, "All you have to do is provide my

transportation and send me anywhere and I'll help out." What do you think of that?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I think that's a good idea. Bill Connelly was my replacement. Again, I spent five years as a co-chairman of the Chief of Staff's Retiree Council, along with General Bruce Blount. It's an excellent idea. For the first time there are now more folks like you and I than there are on active duty. The retirees outnumber the active duty. There is a tremendous resource out there. We haven't forgotten everything we knew. I think the Army is beginning to tap that. I just read in the Army Echoes the other day where the Chief had a little piece in there and he's talking about that same thing. We're not going to be able to always survive all the things that the Army has told you were going to get, because we're not going to have the resources here to provide that. We see it here. We live sixteen or seventeen miles from Patrick Air Force Base. There are thousands of retirees in this area. There's no way that a small base like Patrick can take care of that. They do what they can. You know, fill prescriptions and that sort of thing, but they're got a little old base hospital that is not much bigger than some dispensaries. There's no way they can handle it. I think we need to get the word out that there's a lot of us with a lot of experience that could get the word out to those that may don't have as much and tell them what the problem is. I think Bill is going to do well in that.

**Interviewer:** I think he will.

**SMA Bainbridge:** He and General Parker.

**Interviewer:** How do you think the changing demography has affected the Army, or will affect the Army?

**SMA Bainbridge:** We used to have all of our professional folks from one or two areas of the country. Now we've got them from all over. I think that is one of the biggest changes in the military, as far as the makeup of the military. I think that's a good thing, because we've got

a diversity of views from all across this great country. I think that has been one of the biggest changes.

**Interviewer:** We're having a change in our social-economic groups, in racial groups, and also in certain parts of the country we're having predominately minorities. In Texas, the number of Hispanics is increasing. Out in Los Angeles there is a growing Black population. Throughout the Nation things are shifting more as ethnic groups get larger. What affect do you think that is going to have in the future?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Well, I think we might begin to go back to where we did before. If we don't watch it we will be getting more people out of those areas than we want to get out of one particular area, so I think we have to watch it. The great job that the recruiters do these days, I think they're going to be able to handle that a little bit better than they did before. Before they just took what they could get. But my gosh, in the last ten or twelve years, I think the recruiters do so much better than they did years back. That's another thing that has helped the volunteer Army, because we get quality people and we've got quality commanders out there raising the standards, and NCOs setting the standards. There's not this business anymore of the judge saying, "You'd better sign up with the Army or I'm going to sign you up with the County jail." We don't have that sort of thing, and also, we don't want that kind of guy either.

**Interviewer:** We say that the Army is a reflection of society. I remember making that remark and someone said, "Thank God it is better than society?"

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah, right.

**Interviewer:** Do you think the military has always been in the forefront of changing attitudes?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Oh yeah, I do. You talked about the racial mix. The armed services, of course by Presidential direction, were the first ones to really make this thing work. I think it's worked very, very

well in the services. You get promoted, not on the color of your skin anymore, you get promoted because you can "cut the mustard." It doesn't make a damn difference what color you are. I think that's great.

**Interviewer:** Do you think that when we started integrating the Army, as you said, we no longer saw an individual by the color of his skin but rather his capabilities, and not what he was but who he was?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Right. Right. I think that's it, because you can remember, Butch, we used to get pressures saying there's not enough women senior NCOs, or there's not enough Black NCOs. My answer always was, "Look, we have to grow. You can't just promote a woman or a Black into the senior NCO business. You've got to grow them just like you grew the rest of us. We're going to get there." Well, we are getting there, and we're doing it now because of the capability of that soldier, he or she, and we've got a lot of crack troops, senior noncommissioned officers in both women and minorities, all across the board because they got the opportunity and because we have grown them. You can't pick them off the tree; you have to grow them.

**Interviewer:** Years ago we used to have the Women's Army Corps. We disbanded the Women's Army Corps and we no longer call them "WACs." We call them "female soldiers," or "soldiers." We started putting them into the Army in a great cross-section of jobs, not just in medical or administrative jobs. What affect has the increased number of women in the military service had on the Army?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I think it has made it better. I really do. Because we stopped this business of "Well, you're a woman and here's your limitations." Their limitations is the same as yours and mine. Whatever they can or can't do, that's their limitations; whatever they decide they can or can't do. I had breakfast with General Vono a year ago in August, this last August, the August of '92, down at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. He was down there because his son was graduating from the advance course. We were having breakfast together. General Vono asked

me about women in the Army; women in combat in the Army. I said, "General Vono, whether you agree with it or whether I agreed with it, it's coming and it's going to come in our lifetime, and there isn't anything we can do about it. It's just going to evolve into that." His young captain son had a grin on his face, and General Vono said, "That's what he says." I said, "Well, we agree, because it's just going to happen." I used to tell everybody that. I told General Patton one time, "The biggest problem with women in the Army, General, is men. We have said they can do this and they can't do that." I won't tell you what he told me, but you probably know what he told me. I said, "But that's a fact." We let that female soldier, or let that soldier, whatever the sex, let that soldier do what they can do and their limitations will come up. Don't hold them back just because of who they are.

**Interviewer:** Do you think a nineteen or twenty year old male can accept a nineteen or twenty year old female doing the same job as he, with less problem than, say those of our age, because we have a built-in bias and we look at things different?

**SMA Bainbridge:** No question about it. I think that was my meaning when I told General Vono it was coming. You know, there isn't anything we're going to do about it. Maybe we don't agree with it, but it is just the sign of the times. It's going to come. They talk about the glass ceiling for women in industry. There's going to be a big hole punched through that one of these days too, and it will just be another war story. We have to let peoples' own abilities decide what their top is, or their bottom. Their goals have to be decided by their own abilities, I think. If a female soldier pulls a trigger on a rifle and it hits you between the eyes, you're just as dead as if it was a male. I know I've been shot at by female soldiers. I don't know if it was a soldier or not, but she was female. I'll tell you, they can kill you just as dead as the next guy. They ask, "What about if she becomes a

prisoner of war?" Well, I don't know what's going to happen, if she becomes a prisoner of war. I'm not that much of a visionary. I could say this is going to happen, but I don't know what's going to happen. Hell, there may be as many women POWs as men POWs the next time around. Who knows. Still, I don't think you can hold an individual down on "what if's." I think you have to let their abilities be the determining factors.

**Interviewer:** What affect do you think the "gays in the military" issue will have on the Army?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Zip. Zip. They've been there forever. When they're found, actions are taken to take care of them. I think we've spent a lot more time on this "issue" than it deserves.

**Interviewer:** Do you think a lot of it is the hype by the news media because they don't have anything else to talk about?

**SMA Bainbridge:** No question. No question. And I'm not sure they know what they're talking about there either. I know that as far back as 1952, I was aware of gays in the military, and it was handled well. We had one in my platoon, in my barracks, at Camp Atterbury, Indiana, who passed away. He was a recalled master sergeant, so he had served pretty well. Of course, it wasn't found out until just before he died. But I think it will have "zip." I wrote to my representative, like a lot of other folks, and gave him my views on it, but I think it going to be a big problem. I really don't.

**Interviewer:** We were talking about the force. Even though we have an all volunteer military force right now, do you think the government should still have some sort of draft registration?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I believe they should, Butch. I don't think it would cost that much money. Now we see where even the Pentagon says they don't think they need it anymore, and so does the Chief. But in my personal view, for what little tiny bit it costs to register those folks, I believe that it gives them a little sense of responsibility if

you have to go down and register, as a young man, and maybe now as a young woman; they're talking about that. It has been tested before and of course it hasn't made it. To me that's kind of a character builder. "Okay, I had to go and register." What wrong with registering for your country? You don't have any problem going down and getting a driver's license, or going to get a library card, or applying for a credit card. What's wrong with letting the government know where they can get you if they need you?

**Interviewer:** Do you think that would help build a sense of responsibility to your country?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I do. I do. It doesn't cost us that much. At least you would have that structure there so you didn't have to start all over. You may say, "Well, we did it once before." Yeah, but things change. Just keep the structure; that's all you need to do. It doesn't cost that much.

**Interviewer:** How do you assess the readiness of today's reserve component, compared to the pre-Vietnam era?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Well, I hope they're better than the pre-Vietnam era. But in my view, I don't think they're ready yet, Butch. During Desert Storm, the 48th, up here in Georgia, they said wasn't ready. I won't get into the politics of that business, but I visited enough Guard and Reserve units during my time in the Army, particularly in USARPAC and as Sergeant Major of the Army, that I know that some units are as ready as any unit you can get. But then there's another unit that has a sixty year old platoon sergeant, or a fifty-eight year old platoon sergeant. Who's kidding who? That guy can't do the job. We have to keep working on this. If the Reserve and National Guard is going to be what it's supposed to be, and called in to do the job, then we ought to put a little more emphasis on getting them ready to do the job. And the personnel ought to be ready to go too.

**Interviewer:** Do you think the National Training Center, out at

Fort Irwin, has helped, increase the combat readiness of not only the active duty Army, but the Reserve Component units, now that we're starting to bring Guard units and Reserve units out there and put them in that realistic environment out there at the NTC?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Oh I do. General Vono put all of the former Sergeants Major of the Army on his airplane and sent us out there, after Desert Storm. We were fortunate enough to see the training that they got out there. My golly, I don't think we've ever had anything like that. I know we didn't. The fact that we run the Guard and Reserve units through there is another point that it looks like we're kind of bringing them up. But you read all of the time in the papers, Butch, about this or that. People hollering about "This Guard unit has got to stay," or "That Reserve unit can't go," or whatever. But if we're going to put our money where our mouth is, and if the Guard and Reserve is going to have to do what we say they're going to have to do, and we're going to have to depend on them, then we have to get just as tough with them. If that soldier can't cut it, then he's got to leave that Guard or that Reserve unit, and somebody else has to take his place. Because they have to be ready, right along with the rest of us. We talked the other day about some of the Guard units that were called up during World War II. Boy, they really took a whacking there for a while until they got their act together. We lost whole towns in that because everybody in some little old town was gone. Take Dahinda, Illinois for example. We didn't have Guard or Reserves there, but if we had four, we would have had a hundred, probably. It's a community thing. We have to tell the community, "If you're going to be a member of that unit, then you have to be able to perform that unit's mission. You can't be a spoke in a wheel, then you've got to cut out."

**Interviewer:** What was your impression of the National Training Center?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Oh that's great. If you can get through there

with an A+ on your report card, you're ready to go anywhere.

**Interviewer:** Did you notice the enthusiasm of all of the young soldiers out there?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Oh yes! Yes. Let's go back to Vietnam. That's why the morale in the 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry was always so high, because the old man kept us in the field. We were out doing what a soldier was trained to do. We were looking for the enemy and kicking his butt if we could, and sometimes getting our butt kicked, but the morale was always high. When the morale started down was when we went back to base camp and had to start fixing the positions for guard duty, and fixing the overhead cover, and doing this and doing that. That wasn't what they were in Vietnam for. It had to be done, but that's when the morale started down. When you put them back out in the field, although their living conditions were bad, their morale was better. Soldiers like to do what soldiers are trained to do.

**Interviewer:** During the Vietnam War, what was the greatest training challenge that faced the Army?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I think getting draftees and enlistees ready to go to Vietnam for a one year tour, with just basic AIT; and that's what we were doing. That's what we were doing. And also, what exacerbated that thing was the fact that we had the one year tour. Although nobody wanted to spend over one year in Vietnam, I'm not too sure we would have been better served if we would have had a two-year tour, or something like that over there. We would have sure run through less people, probably. The Australians, for example, they had a lot of soldiers over there but they didn't send anybody to Vietnam that didn't have at least two years of training. Now they could afford to do that, I guess. We evidently couldn't afford to do that, but we're talking about what I think was a problem. We were really turning out soldiers with just a little bit of training. We talked about the NCOCC (Noncommissioned Officer Candidate Course). They at least got additional training before

they went, and specific training for that sort of thing. But we went through some pretty tough times in the one year rotation. It caused lots of problems in a lots of places.

**Interviewer:** What changes in the method of training do you think came about as a result of our involvement in Vietnam?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I think one of the big things was that we started to do a little tailored training. That's a different word than we ever though before. I think that's why we did so well in "Just Cause" and in the Gulf. We trained for that particular kind of war and we had the opportunity to train of it. Of course, we did well in the Gulf too because we didn't start fighting until we was ready. The Commander in Chief said, "You tell me when you think you're ready." The buildup, of course, was a little different than it was when we went through our other wars; there wasn't anybody shooting our planes down or sinking our ships while we were getting ready, so it made a little difference there. I think that we just realized that, you know, combat kills you and you have to train soldiers a little bit better for a combat environment. Another thing we did, Butch. You remember, as the war ground on in Vietnam, I think we fixed some of those shortcomings by having some "in country training," while you were a replacement, before you went to your unit. I think that really turned out well, because at least you got some orientation as to the type of war you was fighting; the booby traps and the punji stakes, and that sort of thing. So we tailored training as little bit toward what we were going to do. I think the one year tour was the thing that really caused us a lot of problems.

**Interviewer:** There has been some changes in basic training throughout the years. How has basic training changed from the time you took it, through your tenure as Sergeant Major of the Army?

**SMA Bainbridge:** The biggest single thing that happened in my thirty-one years in the Army was centralized selection and training of

the drill sergeant. I believe that, without a doubt, was the thing that turned things around. We selected the trainer of our soldiers the same way we selected the people who led them. I'm talking about promotions, etc. That came on my watch, if that the correct vanacular. But I had been at the Training Center, at Fort Benning, Georgia, when the drill sergeants were doing the circuits. They were a drill sergeant at Knox, a drill sergeant at Lee, a drill sergeant at Benning, and then they would do it again. They became part of the problem, and not part of the solution. We were short of drill sergeants, yet at the Infantry Center they had three and four AIs, assistant instructors, backed up behind the instructor. So General Mount said, "Give me some of those to make drill sergeants. We'll send them to Fort Jackson to the Drill Sergeant School." Then we got a chance to change all of that and make it a centralized selection business. I'll tell you, there were scuff marks where you drug them in the door of the academy to teach them to be drill sergeants, but there were firmly planted heels when they walked out the door as graduates. They went in kicking and screaming, but they came out proud. The benefit was that the soldier was trained by a trained trainer. That was the biggest thing that I seen. Before, we did basic training in the units. We got in people right out of BCT (Basic Combat Training) and then we gave them AIT in the unit. We did that in the 20th Infantry, in Fort Riley, Kansas. We didn't do well, because we weren't setup to do that kind of training. It was on-the-job training. The most costly way you can train a soldier is OJT, because we teach them well the things we know well, but we don't teach them better the things we don't know.

**Interviewer:** Plus you have resource problems too.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Oh yeah, resource problems. When you're trained to train a soldier, and you're going to do it for two years, three years if you and the commander agree, and then you're going to go back to your unit and do the things you're supposed to do, that was one of the

greatest things that happened in the training business. If you look at the promotions, the guys and gals that were selected for drill sergeant were just like the ones that were selected for promotion. The ones that have the drill sergeant badge are the ones that make master sergeant, first sergeant, and sergeant major. You go down to the Sergeants Major Academy and look at the list of qualifications, look at all of the drill sergeants on there. Across the board, all MOSs, have been a drill sergeant. It has proven that it works. I get goose bumps when I talk about it.

(End of Tape OH 94.4-8, Side 2)

(Begin Tape OH 94.4-9, Side 1)

**Interviewer:** I think we pretty well covered the changes in basic training when the last tape ended. I would like you to do is, if you would please, is compare the enlisted leadership in the Vietnam era with the post-Vietnam War era. What differences have you observed in the enlisted leadership during that period?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Well, I think again, when we talk about the post-Vietnam business and the things we have done in training under NCOES, better recruiting, and better training in the drill sergeant program, etc., it just produced a better and more caring leader, I think, and certainly a more knowledgeable leader because, again, instead of promotion somebody and putting him in a job, now we're making sure they know how to do the job and then we're promoting them. I think that has been one of the biggest changes in leadership is the fact that the knowledge is gained before the responsibility is thrust upon the soldier. That's going to make them feel better. If you're not comfortable in the knowledge that you can teach that individual and lead him and do the right thing, then you're not going to be a good leader either, so if you get that knowledge and ability before that's thrust on you, then you're going to be a better leader.

**Interviewer:** When we take a look at our leadership training over

the years, in today's Army I think that everybody that is in a leadership position has had the benefit of some sort of schooling. Do you think that is a little different than during World War II? Do you feel that during World War II it was more of an OJT process? A leader learned the good habits and bad habits, since he was not able to be trained in a good training program?

**SMA Bainbridge:** There's not question about it, because, as I mentioned once before, the squad leader today is better equipped to lead his squad than my Company Commander was to lead his company in World War II. This not shooting at Captain Norman, this is just a fact of life. The training is so much better that they're able to lead better. They're more knowledgeable in what they do, and they don't do it with OJT. As I mentioned, OJT is a terrible way to try to train anybody. It's time consuming and it's not a good method. It doesn't do a good job and you waste a lot of resources that you can't afford to waste.

**Interviewer:** During World War II and during the Korean War, versus the Army we have today, what do you think were the common strengths that we have had in our soldiers throughout the years?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I think the one thing that has been a strong point with the American soldier, for as long as I can remember, is the ingenuity and the resourcefulness of the American soldier. He's going to find a way to do it and get it done regardless of the situation. As they used to say of the World War II soldier, even in those days, the Germans supposedly said, "We know what the Russians, or the French, or the British were going to do in any given situation, but not so with the Americans. They may do it this way, and the next time, although the situation may be the same, he goes about it differently, but the results are the same." I think that the fact that because of our society everybody can be an individual and everybody can be his own person, or her own person, that bound to come through when the chips are down. If you've got good training, and if you also know that if you adjust your

fire a little bit and still get the job done, that you're going to be praised for that and not chastised because that was not the way the book said you were supposed to do it.

**Interviewer:** If I walked up to you and asked, "Sergeant Major, what is an American Soldier, or who is the American soldier?" What would you say?

**SMA Bainbridge:** That's a pretty tough question, Butch. That's a pretty tough question.

**Interviewer:** It began before 1776, and it has lasted until today. Just define what you think the American soldier is.

**SMA Bainbridge:** I think General Max Thurman probably defined the soldier as well as anybody when he said, "When we were needed, we were there." You know, he's the guy that wrote those words, that's what I understand, and I think that has been the American soldier from "Day One." When we were needed, we were there. They were not my words but they pretty well describes the American soldier.

**Interviewer:** Colonel Malone also wrote some things that pretty well described the American soldier.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yes. Yes he did.

**Interviewer:** What relationship do you think the Command Sergeant Major should have with junior officers?

**SMA Bainbridge:** A couple, Butch. I think that the Command Sergeant Major ought to be a teacher and the junior officer ought to be a student, but there should never be any usurping of the command responsibilities of that junior officer. I think the experience of the Command Sergeant Major should be able to teach that junior officer in such a way that he doesn't realize that he is being taught until he learns it, then all of a sudden he turns around and understands that that CSM has been a mentor to him. You see, if you don't treat your officers like that, particularly your junior officers, and you try and shoot him down, it doesn't take too smart of a guy to know that when an

officer goes down, the unit goes down with him, and you're right along with the unit. So it ought to be teacher to student, but not try to take any dignity, ability, and responsibilities away from that fellow.

**Interviewer:** The Command Sergeant Major has a lot of experience, but how does he let that junior officer know that if he would like the CSM to impart some of that knowledge, that he should come to him? Do you think that a lot of times the junior officers are kind of in awe of that CSM and are reluctant to ask him for advice?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I think so. I think that's why it is up to the Command Sergeant Major, the guy with the experience, to tell that young junior officer, "Look, I've been here a long time and I know what your job is. I'll be glad to help you in any way I can, so just give me a whistle." I think most of them are pretty understanding. As I told those folks at West Point, that were going to be officers, I said, "One of the things you have to learn to do is rely on the responsibility and the training of that noncommissioned officer," I said, "because you're going to go out there and be a platoon leader. He's probably seen five or six of you come and go, and he's probably been the platoon leader longer than you've been in the Army, and he's done it three or four different times while he's waiting for another one of you to come along," I said, "so don't worry about him trying to take over your job, just use the experience that he has already gained to make it easier for you to take it." I think the same thing works for the Command Sergeant Major. We, the ones with the most experience, have to get hold of that young guy and tell him, "Here's what I can do to help you. I'm here to help you. I'm not here to take any of your job, nor am I here to try to see that you get into trouble. I'm here to make sure the unit runs right and I'll help you to do that. You're in command and I'm running it.

**Interviewer:** You have a command sergeant major sitting at battalion level and throughout that battalion he has a number of first sergeants.

What should his role be with those first sergeants?

**SMA Bainbridge:** The First Sergeant is responsible to the Company Commander and the Sergeant Major is responsible to the Battalion Commander. But the Sergeant Major's job, in my view, is to be the mentor for each one of those first sergeants and help him assist his Company Commander in doing his job, and not to take over the First Sergeant's duties, but to give him your experience when you were a first sergeant in a particular area. Have your first sergeant calls. For sure you've heard the war stories, and I have too, never, never try to take over that Company Commander's business. He knows what he's supposed to be doing, but if you can help him you can also take him aside and talk to him and tell him what you can do to help him. You can also say, "Look, this isn't going to work, because the old man doesn't like to have that sort of thing to happen." Let that Company Commander know, through the first sergeant, or directly to the Company Commander, what the Battalion Commander's thoughts are. When that Company Commander comes up and wants to see the old man, you ought to be able to lead him aside and say, "Sir, I know what you're going in there for, but today ain't the day. Wait until tomorrow, because I'll tell you, you're not going to make any headway in there today. Why don't you just leave and I'll give you a call tomorrow." That's the sort of thing I think you need to do. Captain Terry Cristy was a young officer who was our "B" Company Commander, in Vietnam. One day, when he first came to the Battalion, he stopped by my office and he was talking to me. Colonel Freeson walked by the office--I didn't have a door on my office--and he came back, came in, and he said, "Cristy, what in the world are you doing in here?" Cristy jumped up and said, "Sir, I'm just trying to get a little information here." He said, "You're in the right place." He turned around and just walked off. I think that's the sort of relationship you have to get with your company commanders, if you're the Battalion Sergeant Major. You have to make them feel that they can walk

in that door, without feeling humiliated, and ask the Sergeant Major a question. "What about this? What about that?" I'm the guy who knows how the old man feels about certain things, so I can let that Company Commander know. Again, in Vietnam, the same Captain Cristy. Colonel Haldane and I were the two oldest guys in the unit. We were on an operation and we had just crossed a little stream and we were standing on a log. We were standing on the other side as "B" Company was coming through. We had been on a six or seven day operation. Captain Cristy came across that log and he said, "Let me tell you something." He said, "You guys just did something today that I couldn't do with my Company." I said, "What are you talking about?" He said, "They've really been grumbling. Everybody is tired." He said, "When they saw you and Colonel Haldane standing up here, the word went all the way back through the Company." He said, "Those two old bastards are already up there and they look pretty good. By God, if they can make it, we can make it." We hadn't done a thing but just do our job, but those young soldiers noticed that those two old bastards were up there waiting.

**Interviewer:** Lead by example.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Right. Lead by example. So, we had done the job. I'm trying to think of something Colonel E. Lloyd Murphy wrote to Colonel Morton, having to do with noncommissioned officer/officer relationship, and that sort of thing. Colonel Murphy was an old buddy of Colonel Morton's. I've used this several times and I think it fits here pretty well. He was talking about his career. This is kind of paraphrased, but he wrote something like, "As I have gone through my career, working with soldiers, noncommissioned officers in particular, doing our job from day-to-day with the platoon sergeants and first sergeants and command sergeants major, I would like to think that those of us who get to heaven will see Saint Peter sitting there with six stripes, and a star with a wreath, setting the example as to how we should have a relationship with the Old Man." Yeah, Saint Peter will

be sitting there with six stripes, and a wreath and a star, setting the example in our relationship with the Old Man. That pretty much describes what the CSM, I think, is all about. You know, you can write a lots of things, but to me that's always been what it's all about. Colonel Morton said, "This guy always was a pretty good writer."

**Interviewer:** In one of your interviews you commented about the "quitting time NCO." I've integrated this into my questionnaires and I've talked about it with the sergeants major that I have interviewed. This is the NCO who can't wait to get in the car and leave the company area and go home, or maybe go to the NCO Club. In many of the units the old "footlocker NCO," the NCO who used to visit the troops after duty hours or on weekends, had disappeared. Is it important for the NCO to visit his or her soldiers after duty hours and weekends, and become that "footlocker NCO?"

**SMA Bainbridge:** With restraint and as necessary. Yeah. Times have changed. They don't go to the NCO Club anymore. They might go home. They used to go to the NCO Club. I think that's kind of a tragedy too. You could go to the NCO Club and do some coffee call stuff at the end of the day. You don't have to go over there and get drunk, but it's a good meeting place to talk over the things of the day. There are times, I feel, that you need to be in there after duty hours, and there's times that you shouldn't be in there. But I think if you would do right and go by your experience, you will know when to go in there and when not to go in there. If you need to be there, and it takes to midnight, that's where you ought to be. That's where you ought to be. I think today's soldiers will tell you in a minute if they didn't think you ought to be there. You know, "I don't think you're doing us any good." But they wouldn't have to tell you that if you were using your experience and you went when you were really needed. I think it is important, but I think you really need to know when to go. It's a little finer tuned now, Butch, than it used to be. We live different

and the soldiers live different. The association is a little bit different. When it comes to leadership, you can still do it when you need to do it.

**Interviewer:** In other words, if you know your soldiers there should be no problem knowing when to go and when not to go.

**SMA Bainbridge:** That's right. That's right.

**Interviewer:** Over the years, many of the senior noncommissioned officers have criticized the Army's "Up or Out Program." That do you think about the "Up or Out Program?"

**SMA Bainbridge:** I think that the "Up or Out Program" is about as important as the drill sergeant training and centralized promotions, etc. I probably isn't as necessary now as it used to be, but when that was instituted we had a lots of folks, Butch, that needed that tap on the shoulder. We also had a lots of folks that weren't providing the tapping. I think you have to be man enough to walk up and look Bill Bainbridge in the eye and say, "Bill, it's time for you to go. You have reached your pinnacle, and it's time for you to pack up. I'll help you make out the papers, but you've got to go home." We didn't have that. I think today, with the training and one thing and another, there are fewer of those people who have to be tapped on the shoulder, but certainly when the time comes, somebody has got to tap them. The "Up or Out" was the method for doing that in those days. I think it helped a lot of soldiers who were wanting to go up, but couldn't because somebody was just marking time. That was what the "Up or Out" was all about. It was to catch the folks who were just marking time. Somebody has to do it.

**Interviewer:** In contrast to the present day Army, what do you see as the future of our Army, in view of the down-sizing? Also, what affect do you think the down-sizing will have on our Army?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I think the good ones are going to have to be twice as good, because certainly we're not going to have a World War II

type army, in the foreseeable future. I think it's going to narrow the window a little bit on the number of people we are going to be able to keep, so what was good enough yesterday certainly is not going to be good enough tomorrow. Those with a little vision are going to be able to see that and they're going to work that much harder. You know, you have to always be looking for an opportunity. When the opportunity comes, you have to jump at it. There's the old saying "It only knocks once." But some times it doesn't even knock. Some times you've got to stir around a little bit yourself. I think that in the future, just like in the past, the man or woman that's going to advance is the one that's looking for advancement and looking for a challenge. They're not waiting for something to happen, but making something happen. It's going to be tougher as we down-size. We're down now, from what I read and what I hear, it looked like we were going to be able to keep twelve divisions, but now it's looking more and more like just ten. I just read in the Army Times, I think we were talking about it yesterday, it look like even the 1st Infantry Division is on the bubble if we go to ten divisions. That really tears my heart out, but I'm not in charge. I'm not up there advising the Chief of Staff, who was the Division Commander of the 1st Division. He's the guy that knows what he's got to keep and he knows the capabilities and what his prognosis out there is, so whatever he has to do, he has to do.

**Interviewer:** Do you think that the down-sizing may affect retention when people start saying, "What's my future going to be. The ten, twelve, fourteen year members of the military are going to ask, "Am I going to have a future in the military or not?"

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah, I think it is. I think it's going to be a tougher answer for the Army to come up with, because I'm not sure, at this point, that anybody has a crystal ball to tell what's going to be out there. But someone has to take a chance on the Army. I feel confident there will be enough of those young soldiers out there that

are going to take that chance. However small it is, it's going to be a good one.

**Interviewer:** What about the reduction of a large number of troops in the Reserve Components? What affect do you think that will have?

**SMA Bainbridge:** I think it will give us a little trauma if we have to call those up, not having the numbers. But as we mentioned before, Butch, we've got some in there that can't "cut the mustard" now, so maybe the down-sizing will help them as much as it is going to help to improve the quality in the regular Army.

**Interviewer:** It will eliminate the thirty-five year old PFC.

**SMA Bainbridge:** And the fifty-eight year old platoon sergeant.

**Interviewer:** Now that the Cold War is apparently over, what changes do you see in the global mission or role of the Army?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Well I guess, again, I kind of looking in the same crystal ball as everybody else. I looks pretty clear. There's nothing in there, but obviously we're going to have a lot of Bosnias, and Just Causes, and that sort of thing. There's going to be little brush fires. Obviously we're the only Super Power left, it that's the word. We're going to have to be on our toes. Certainly the dangers are there. The world is not a safe place to be in a lots of places. We thought that South Africa was right there, getting everything all squared away, then yesterday it all blew-up. We thought that the Palestinians and the Israelis had reached a settlement. They shook hands and said, "We're going to get this thing working." They're further apart now than when they shook hands. It's not safe out there yet, Butch. I just see that we've got to keep our guard up, and hopefully the Congress will permit us to keep up a good enough guard. I'm not talking about the National Guard, I'm talking about the guard of the country. We never learn, in spite of the fact we've got the Rogers, and the Vonos, and the Wickams, and the Sullivans, saying, "Look, we've done it before and it didn't work. You're going to do it to us again." We've got to be awful

careful.

**Interviewer:** They need to replay the tape when General Myer held his hands in the shape of a ball, and talked about that "Hollow Army."

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah. That's right. That's right. One thing that has happened, that wasn't happening when General Myer talked about the "Hollow Army," is this time around, we have at least gotten rid of some of the infrastructure. We just didn't keep all of the things there--all of the bases, camps, stations, and posts--and put four soldiers where four hundred should be. That is what we did before. But we still have to watch out. He's was right. Now he's in a position again, as an advisor, to say, "Shame on you. Don't do it to us again."

**Interviewer:** We have to rely on the news media to get the news on what is happening around the world. What affect do you think the American news media had on the American people, the American government, and the military forces in Vietnam? Do you think the news media was fair in reporting and coverage of the war in Vietnam?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Butch, you know, you hears pros and cons of the reporting. In Vietnam, and since, the thing that's made the media so obvious is that... Let me back up a minute. When I came into the Army, in 1943, the world was the size of a bushel basket. When I went to Vietnam, in 1965, it was the size of a basketball. Today, it's almost down to the size of a golf ball. Whatever happens in this world today, you've got it on that tube, tonight. I think that was one of the things that bothered us in Vietnam. The press was right there. My wife saw me march into the TV picture one night. She knew I was in Vietnam, but she didn't even know I was out in the field. I was in an operation. I didn't know the TV camera was there; we were busy. I've got to give them one thing. A lot of them had guts. They were out there with just a camera. But that's not fair to the American people. We had an officer that was wounded, on the news. I said, "You take that tape out of your camera." He wasn't going to do it. I said, "You're going to

take the tape out of your camera, because this guy's wife might be watching TV." He took it out. I'm not sure what he did with it; maybe he showed it. I think that's the thing that's wrong with the media. The media reports the things that they see. My biggest problem with the media is that they don't always report the news, they try to make the news. An example. When the President comes on and tells me, on his State of the Union message, and to Congress, what his visions are, I don't need Sam Donaldson, or Dan Rather, or Connie Chung, to come on right after him and tell me what he told me.

**Interviewer:** That's right.

**SMA Bainbridge:** That bothers me. So I don't listen to them. That's why they're got an "on" and "off" on that thing. That's the same thing with violence on TV. If you've got any problems with it, it's got and "on" and "off" button. Of course, I don't have any little kids sneaking in here to watch it either. That's my problem with the media. They sometimes try to make the news, as opposed to reporting the news. I know they think they are doing their job, and maybe they are. Maybe I see it different, but they sure as hell had a big impact on the American public during the Vietnam War, and I think it turned the American public off. But I think it wasn't all their fault. They reported a lot of news that the American public didn't need to have, in my view.

**Interviewer:** At the same time, when you take a look at Desert Storm, the military was smart by putting restrictions on where they could go. The way it was reported built the morale of the American people.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Super! Super! Here I am, down at Fort Jackson in a breakfast meeting with their AUSA (Association of the United States Army) Chapter, where I was going to speak. Just that morning, before I went to give my presentation, some Iraqis had surrendered to a camera man. Remember that, the guys coming out of the hole, with their hands up.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Well that's great reporting. It got a big laugh from the other people there that had seen it. Yeah, you're right. That did raise the morale, but this was a "hundred dollar war." When you have ten years of it, it's a little bit different.

**Interviewer:** How important is it that an NCO have a sense of humor?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Listen, I don't think you can get by without one. Maybe I have too good of one. I think you have to have a sense of humor, but certainly you have to also be able to laugh at yourself. If you can't laugh at yourself, you're really in trouble, because, you know, you do some dumb things. If your own mental make-up will let you recognize that, I think it makes life a little easier; it really does. Somebody says, "Did you do that?" "Yeah, I did that." I think you have to have it. I think you have to have it. Rita Van Autreve, I love her. When I gave the re-dedication speech, a couple of years ago at the Academy--I'm short--and the first thing I said at the podium, I said, "And before anybody asks, yes I am standing up." Rita said, "Don't run yourself down like that." I said, "Rita, I wasn't running my self down. I was just making a joke." "Don't do that," she said.

**Interviewer:** How has the office of the Sergeant Major of the Army changed over the years?

**SMA Bainbridge:** Butch, it's changed a little bit with each incumbent. I think it has changed a little bit with each Chief of Staff, because each Chief of Staff has operated differently. Some of it has come from experience, in my comments here, and the rest is coming, of course, from observation. The exposure of the office is much greater now than it used to be, and I think that's because it has been accepted and people realize that is an important part of the Army's hierarchy and that it, in fact, is important to the morale of the enlisted force out there, and also that it is accepted as an integral

part of the decision making body of the Army. As everybody knows, the Sergeant Major of the Army is not a decision maker, but he certainly gets the opportunity to provide input to those who do make the decisions; that input is taken seriously. So I think it has evolved to a position now that is highly respected. The incumbents have been top notch, all the way through from one through nine, in my view. I'm a little bit prejudice, I have to agree, but they've all done a tremendous job, in my view. Everybody has done it to the best of his ability, and as I said, the job has sort of evolved. Each has done it a little bit different, but each has added something to the military.

(NOTE: There was a pause during the interview.)

**Interviewer:** We had a break while I reviewed my interview outline to make sure we had covered all of the questions. I also asked Sergeant Major Bainbridge if he could think of anything else. Like he said, we probably could do about three weeks and still we wouldn't get started on it. Sergeant Major, it has been really outstanding the last three days, sitting down here and talking. I always say, "I want to thank you for letting me put on the old uniform and for letting me stroll down memory lane with you, and talk about something that is near and dear to our hearts, and that's the United States Army. On behalf of General Nelson, Dr. Dray, Major Kelly, and all the people at the Center of Military History, I would like to thank you very much for participating in this very important project. I would also like to thank you for letting me be a part of this historical event. On behalf of Colonel Van Horn and Sergeant Major Strahan, of the Sergeants Major Academy, I would also like to extend their thanks. Also, on behalf of Larry Arms, the Director of the U.S. Army Museum of the Noncommissioned Officer, I want to extend his appreciation. Finally, on behalf of myself and the NCO Corps, I would like to thank you for over thirty years of distinguished and dedicated service to the Nation, to the Army, and to the Corps, for what you have done.

**SMA Bainbridge:** I loved every minute of it, Butch. I thank you for coming down here. I know you've enjoyed it, because I could tell. I was just thinking, last night, and it's a wonder that Bill Connelly or someone else didn't come up with it, but when you get finished with all of these interviews, I guess we're going to have to have you put away because you know too much about all of us. (That statement was followed by a good laugh.)

**Interviewer:** Sergeant Major Van Autreve said, "Butch, when you get done with this, somebody ought to interview you." But I learned, while at the Academy, about the non-attribution policy.

**SMA Bainbridge:** Yeah, we've had that for years. As I told you before, I'm so tickled that you're involved in this, because I know you're going to do a hell of a job. I can tell, for two reasons. One, because of your ability, and second, because you enjoy what you're doing, and that makes a difference. There's one thing that has always bothered me, and not just within the Army, but any place I've ever been, is that people who can only be happy-go-lucky when they don't have anything to do. When they had a job to do, they were a grump. I could never understand it, because if you don't enjoy what you're doing, you ought to quit doing it. But some people would have to quit living, because they don't even enjoy that.

**Interviewer:** Thank you, Sergeant Major.

(End of Interview.)