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The Vietnam Archive
Oral History Project
Interview with Cecil Shrader
Conducted by Laura Calkins
[January 15, 16, 2004]
Transcribed by Eunice Lee

NOTE: Any text included in brackets [] is information that was added by the narrator after reviewing the original transcript. Therefore, this information is not included in the audio version of the interview.

1 Cecil Shrader: Ford dealership in Salem.

2 Laura Calkins: And did she hold that job for quite awhile? [This refers to Colonel
3 Shrader's sister Janice, who is deceased. She went DC to work during World War II and
4 was employed at the Russian Embassy. After the war she returned to Salem, West
5 Virginia and worked at the Ford Dealership.]

6 CS: Yes.

7 LC: And did she get married along there?

8 CS: Yes. She got married. She was single for quite awhile, married probably
9 around 1965, sometime in there, then she was divorced two years after that.

10 LC: Now, talking about your younger years, do you remember much about World
11 War II?

12 CS: Yes.

13 LC: What kinds of things do you remember?

14 CS: Well, like most young boys I remembered that there was always a shortage of
15 toys in that day, metallic, bubble gum, and that sort of stuff in short supply. Used to go
16 out and collect scrap metal, you know, took it to school. Just part of the scrap metal
17 drives during that period of time. Also, you ran out and gathered Kapok [milk weed
18 strands] you know, that they used in vests, flotation vests. They used to, depending on
19 how much you brought in and what have you, they would give you a little arm band or

1 what have you with the corporal stripes and sergeant stripes and that sort of stuff [to
2 signify your efforts]. And of course you bought the savings stamps to put in a book [to
3 buy] bonds and what have you. And of course I was interested in aircrafts. I had that
4 interest for a long time so I would build models of Japanese, German and American
5 fighter planes.

6 LC: Did you listen to the radio very much or what was your source of news of the
7 war?

8 CS: On the radio.

9 LC: And did you kind of listen to that with your folks or kind of with your friends
10 or just by yourself?

11 CS: Most of the time with my family.

12 LC: Okay. Did you have any uncles or grandfather on either side who had served
13 in the military?

14 CS: Yes. I have several cousins, one of which I know fairly well. He was a radio
15 operator and part-time tail gunner, what have you, on B-24s in the Pacific area.

16 LC: Oh really? Wow. Did you kind of try to get as much news about him as you
17 can? Do you remember being concerned about him?

18 CS: I think we were all always concerned about him because, you know, there
19 were all of them overseas in the combat area. My brother-in-law, he was a navigator on a
20 B-17, flew twenty-five missions over Germany. So—

21 LC: Wow. That's pretty incredible. Did you look up to those guys, your cousin
22 and your, eventually, your brother-in-law and their military service? Did that have an
23 impact on you?

24 CS: Oh yeah. I was interested in the military for a long time.

25 LC: Well, can you tell me a little bit about your life as a student there at West
26 Virginia? What was school like? Were you a good student?

27 CS: Yes I was.

28 LC: What were your favorite subjects?

29 CS: I think probably all of them. I can't think of any of them I was not interested
30 in.

31 LC: You were kind of like a sponge, just kind of soaking it up?

1 CS: I guess so.

2 LC: Did you play sports at all?

3 CS: Yes. I played football, and then I played basketball and baseball but not on

4 the organized level, just football.

5 LC: Did you play football at high school?

6 CS: Yes.

7 LC: What high school did you go to?

8 CS: Salem High School.

9 LC: Salem [West Virginia]?

10 CS: They had not had—at the beginning of World War II they stopped or dropped

11 football and they didn't start it again until, I guess, 1951 or '52.

12 LC: That would be just about in time for you to play.

13 CS: Yeah. I graduated in '53, so—

14 LC: And what positions did you play?

15 CS: I played end.

16 LC: Defensive end or what we call wide receiver now?

17 CS: Well, Salem is not a very big school so we played six-man football.

18 LC: Oh okay. Right. Like they do here in Texas, they still do play it down here.

19 CS: Not very many anymore because they all used the—they've gotten a little bit

20 bigger.

21 LC: Was sports ever a really big interest for you or was it kind of a social thing

22 more?

23 CS: No, I'd say more of a social thing.

24 LC: And so you were probably a good student there. Do you know where you

25 graduated in your class?

26 CS: Yeah. I was number two.

27 LC: You were number two? Who was number one? Do you remember?

28 CS: Mary McNutt was the valedictorian.

29 LC: And Mary was pretty smart, huh?

30 CS: Yeah. She was an intelligent young lady.

1 LC: What happened—you graduated in 1953, did you say? I'm sorry, yes. And
2 what happened to you after graduation? Were you thinking of getting a job or were you
3 always thinking about going to college?

4 CS: No. I knew I was going to college. I'll back up a little bit to, I guess, my
5 senior year in high school and making something about wanting to go to West Point.
6 Well, my mother was active in the committee chairwomen of the Democratic Party and
7 she got a hold of our congressman; and he did not have an opening for anybody to go,
8 you know, for the class of '57. So I did have an appointment then for the next year. But
9 I went one year to Marietta College in Marietta, Ohio, awaiting, you know, an
10 appointment to West Point.

11 LC: What was the congressman's name?

12 CS: Bailey, as I recall.

13 LC: And your mom was kind of active on the local party level. What kinds of
14 things did she do?

15 CS: Oh, I guess she was an organizer and watched polling places and that sort of
16 stuff.

17 LC: I see. Had she always had kind of a political interest?

18 CS: Yes.

19 LC: Where did she go to school, sir? She had qualified as a teacher. Where did
20 she—?

21 CS: What do—Salem had a little college then, so she went there.

22 LC: As a teacher training course at the college?

23 CS: Yes. You got to remember back in those days things are quite a bit different
24 as far as—but yes, she went there and taught school after that.

25 LC: What grades did she teach?

26 CS: I do not know.

27 LC: Okay. Now, you're going over to Ohio to go to college. How did that come
28 about? How did you select Marietta College?

29 CS: Well, first of all, they gave me an honorary scholarship. All I had to do was
30 maintain a B average.

31 LC: Okay. That's a good incentive.

1 CS: And so did Salem College; gave me like one semester, but Marietta was a
2 much better institution than Salem College.

3 LC: What kinds of things did you study that first year? Do you remember?

4 CS: I studied biology, trigonometry, of course English, and German.

5 LC: Were you thinking at that time that you might tend towards the sciences when
6 you got to West Point?

7 CS: Well, I enjoyed the biology course, which, you know, if I had not gone to
8 West Point I probably would have continued doing biology or—you know. But see,
9 West Point, when I went there, the only alternative you had was what foreign language
10 you took.

11 LC: Everything else was a straight program?

12 CS: Everything else was dictated.

13 LC: Okay. Well, after you left Marietta College at what point did you learn that
14 you had secured, actually secured that appointment to go to West Point?

15 CS: Well, the congressman had already given [the appointment] to me so I knew,
16 [that I would enter with the class of 1958 in July 1954]. I went to take the test. You had
17 to take a physical aptitude test and, of course, a physical. Because I was in college and
18 making fairly decent grades and what have you, I did not have to take any of the written
19 tests and what have you. So basically it was physical aptitude—you run, jump, that sort
20 stuff—and of course you had to pass the physical part of it.

21 LC: It must have been a pretty big deal for you to have secured that appointment.
22 I mean, coming from a small town, you must have been something of a celebrity. Did
23 everybody know you were going to go to West Point?

24 CS: Yeah, I think so, but I wouldn't say I was celebrity. But the congressman—
25 my mother did mention to me—he was happy to [give] an appointment because not very
26 many people, particularly from that small a town, you know, they were going for.

27 LC: Oh I'm sure. I'm sure. That was quite an accomplishment for a very young
28 man. You were only, what—you weren't even twenty years old.

29 CS: Yeah. Probably eighteen at the time.

1 LC: Yeah. How did that sit with you? I mean, did you feel proud of yourself?
2 Were you anxious, were you couldn't wait to get there or—how did it kind of sit with you
3 while you were there in Marietta taking those classes and looking forward to it?

4 CS: Well, I was looking forward to it because like I said I always wanted to be in
5 the military and, of course, I had no one that I knew of that had gone to the Academy so I
6 really didn't know what was going to be in store you know.

7 LC: Did you have any jobs the summer before you reported up there to West
8 Point?

9 CS: No. I worked while I was a freshman in Marietta College.

10 LC: What did you do?

11 CS: My father who was a union man—I mentioned this stink bitter, five bitter
12 type thing—bought me a union card, which allowed me to, you know, work in the—they
13 had a factory near there [at night]. [I would] basically grind down [welds] and what have
14 you and pipes. But I found going there working [from] five thirty to midnight and trying
15 to do that and keep up your schoolwork [was too much.] I did it for a few months and
16 then it got to be too much so I just went back to doing my schoolwork.

17 LC: And your essential expenses were being met by the scholarship?

18 CS: Yes, half the expenses. The other thing I did [was to] work in the biology lab
19 for the instructor.

20 LC: Okay. What did you do?

21 CS: Basically clean test tubes and equipment, that sort of stuff. I think it was
22 something like seventy-five cents an hour.

23 LC: Did you spend the time before you left for West Point at home?

24 CS: Yes.

25 LC: Can you describe, if you remember, the day you left for New York?

26 CS: I don't remember too much about it. I went by train. I think I spent the night
27 in the Thayer Hotel, which is a hotel there over there by West Point. And then I got my
28 things together and walked up to what they called the Sally Port, and once you went
29 through the Sally Port, you know, your life changed.

30 LC: Do you remember your first impressions, your first visual impressions, of
31 Point?

1 CS: Well, I don't know if you've ever been there.

2 LC: Yes, sir, I have.

3 CS: Okay. You're impressed with the granite buildings and of course once you
4 walk through the Sally Port then you are met by first classmen, basically he told you to
5 put your bags down and then starts telling you what it was and what you were supposed
6 to do. And of course, as a plebe every place you went you went double time. So it was
7 somewhat of a shock.

8 LC: A shock, yeah. And you had not had any real preparation for this at all?

9 CS: No. The only thing they did tell you was you better get a real walk and get in
10 pretty good physical shape before you showed up, which I did.

11 LC: Well, where did you live?

12 CS: You mean before?

13 LC: No. Where were you housed there at the Point?

14 CS: At the Point? Well, as a plebe you were broken into six new cadet companies
15 and in those days those companies were made up by people of the same height, so I was
16 put in the 6th New Cadet Company, which meant I was a little bit taller than most of the
17 people in 6th Company and at that point in time we were housed over in the North
18 Barracks.

19 LC: North Barracks. Okay. And did you stay there your first—the entirety of
20 your first year?

21 CS: No, no, no.

22 LC: What happened?

23 CS: What?

24 LC: Where did you move after the North Barracks?

25 CS: Okay. You went on about a seventy-five or eighty mile hike during your last
26 week of Beast Barracks. Then when you come back you go into what they call
27 reorganization week, and then I was assigned to my permanent company which was K1.
28 And K1 was housed in the South Barracks, which is about as far away as you could get
29 from the North Barracks at that time.

30 LC: Let's talk about your first, your initial, couple of weeks there at West Point
31 where you're truly and truly a plebe. What did that mean for you? What kinds of things

1 did you have to do and what experiences did you have that kind of broke you in to the
2 idea of being a plebe?

3 CS: Well, I don't quite know how to answer it because, you know, like I said,
4 every place you went you had to, unless you were in formation or what have you, you
5 had to double time. You had to keep your chin in, shoulders back, and [everywhere] you
6 went—that time you marched to all of your meals and you had to sit there and, you know,
7 eat square meals, so to speak, and of course you had to respond to the first classmen.
8 First classmen are the only ones who are what they call beast details, beast one and beast
9 two. But ones that had the first beast detail, once they finished that then they [left] on
10 leave, and the people who were on leave would come in and they would become the
11 second beast detail. So they would sit up there and make sure you learned all your plebe
12 knowledge that were in the Bugle Notes, you know, about the stuff you're supposed to
13 memorize and what have you and they would check and see how well you knew that and
14 if you did anything wrong then, in those days, they could just tell you to sit up and pass
15 your plate out. Which meant you weren't going to get anything more to eat. That and
16 then they taught you about the honor code, you know, meaning of that and spent a lot of
17 time marching [and doing] the manual arms. Very little tactics courses; you learned how
18 to live in the field before you went out on your seventy-five mile hike.

19 LC: How did you respond to this imposition of military discipline really quickly?
20 How did you respond? Did you kind of thrive in that kind of atmosphere or was it a little
21 bit tough?

22 CS: Well, there were a lot of things I had to learn. Fortunately, one of my—well,
23 the two people that I had [as roommates in Beast Barracks]—matter of fact in all cases
24 here, three men to a room—and one of my roommates had been through a prep school.
25 In other words, they went in as enlisted men and sent them to prep school, [to] teach them
26 some things [about West Point]—and they had the fundamental things about how to shine
27 your brass buckles [and shoes] and all that sort of stuff—and the other roommate was the
28 one beyond us who was a Peruvian [and had graduated from the Peruvian Military
29 Academy]. (Tape cuts out of recording.) And then later you had courses in electrical
30 engineering, which then also included some nuclear engineering.

1 LC: Now, with the nuclear engineering for example, did you study radiation
2 protection, for example? How to protect yourself, how to shield body from radiation in
3 the battlefield situation?

4 CS: No, this was strictly an academic type course, more of a nuclear engineering
5 thing. I did reasonably well in that and went on a field trip. We went down to one of the
6 nuclear [facilities]. I think maybe it was Brookhaven, anyway, down in the New York
7 City area.

8 LC: Sure. Brookhaven National Laboratory?

9 CS: Yeah.

10 LC: And did you look at the—they have reactors there, small sort of test facility
11 reactors—did you go through those?

12 CS: Probably did but I don't remember that much about it.

13 LC: Really? How much were you able to take in about international politics at
14 this time? Was it something you had any time at all to pay attention to—the newspaper,
15 the radio?

16 CS: You were required to get and read the *New York Times*.

17 LC: Oh really?

18 CS: Yes.

19 LC: Wow. And how did they know whether you had read it or not?

20 CS: Well, when you went to some of the classes they would quiz you on it. Let
21 me—I don't know if you may have been told, but everyday that you went to class you
22 would be graded on your performance.

23 LC: Every single day?

24 CS: Everyday. So, you know, particularly when you were in a math class or an
25 engineering [class] what have you, the instructor would normally go and may say a few
26 words and then ask if anybody had any questions, and if they didn't then they would say,
27 "Take boards." And you would go to the board and work problems or what have you.
28 They would—on a weekly basis they would post your grades in the Sally Port. You
29 would go over and you would see exactly what your grades were. I don't know if they
30 still do that. I guess they may do that now just over the Internet.

1 LC: Probably. But it's a lot of pressure there that some people would probably
2 respond very well to but others might not.

3 CS: Yeah. They had a 3.0 system so 2.0 and above was passing. If you were
4 below a 2.0 then you were known as being deficient.

5 LC: And you couldn't be deficient for very long, right?

6 CS: No. If you were deficient at the end of the semester then you took what they
7 called turn out exams, and if you failed that then you were gone or they might turn you
8 back, I guess you were allowed one time. [Then if turned back you could] come back in
9 as a recognized plebe.

10 LC: You mentioned that there was some attrition during the, on the academic
11 side, after the first year particularly. By the time you got to, say, cow year was it pretty
12 well set who was going to stay in, who was going to hang in, and who could perform?

13 CS: I could probably answer that best by telling you that most of the academic
14 attrition occurred during plebe year, mainly in the first semester, and mathematics was
15 the big killer there.

16 LC: Was it really?

17 CS: Yeah, and maybe language. But mathematics did in a lot of people. In cow
18 year the electrical engineering course, I mean, you know, they had a lot of people not as
19 much as you did in plebe year, but you know, most of the people found deficient in cow
20 year was because of electrical engineering.

21 LC: Yeah, we used to call those weed out classes when they'd just separate
22 people pretty quickly. Did you go home during the breaks, during the, say, during the
23 summers?

24 CS: Yes.

25 LC: Okay. Did you get a job or what did you do when you got home?

26 CS: When I went home I enjoyed myself.

27 LC: Okay. Was there somebody special that you were seeing at home?

28 CS: You mean a girlfriend? Yes, I had one.

29 LC: Okay. And you would live with your parents then when you came home?

30 CS: Yes. I would go home and then go see her or, you know—

31 LC: Your parents must have been incredibly proud of you.

1 CS: Yes, they were.

2 LC: Did they tell you that?

3 CS: Yes.

4 LC: So they were really supportive of what you were doing and of you having this
5 incredible experience?

6 CS: Um-hm.

7 LC: That's wonderful. As you progressed to your senior year at West Point, what
8 were you anticipating in terms of your life after West Point? What did you think it was
9 going to look like? Did you have any idea? Did they talk to you about it?

10 CS: Let me go back and say something. We were talking about, you know, if you
11 stayed at West Point. Things have changed but when I was there, you know, all the
12 upperclassmen left at Christmas time, and that's when they left the plebes there. And the
13 plebes was, you know—the powers to be was established—the chain of command or
14 what have you, and [plebes] were free to walk around without being, you know,
15 [harassed by upper classmates]. [Plebes] would have dances quite often through the
16 holidays and that sort of thing so it was a nice break.

17 LC: A little breather there.

18 CS: Yeah. You didn't go any place. You stayed at the Point. The same thing
19 that—what's now known as spring break, I think they've given maybe four, five, or six
20 days. Again, the plebes stayed there, and the upperclassmen went away. Now, you
21 know, all that has changed. After the graduation parade was over, then you would line up
22 and the upperclassmen would come by and recognize you, in other words shook your
23 hand and you were officially, so to speak, you know, [accepted] into the corps and you
24 became a yearling. Now they do that sometime, I guess, in March timeframe or what
25 have you. [Now] they let people go home at Christmas and I guess over the spring break
26 time.

27 LC: Which do you think is better? Do you think the way they used to do it when
28 you were there where it's a little tighter, a little harder on the plebes, do you think that
29 was probably a better system?

30 CS: My perspective, yes, but you know times change.

1 LC: Sure. That's true. I had begun to ask you about your thinking about your
2 career after graduating from West Point. What information did you get about the
3 possible assignments that might come your way and/or continuing your education at the
4 graduate level?

5 CS: Let me address that. In your junior and senior year we went on what were
6 known as trips, and basically what we would do be to visit different military installations
7 and other services and they would basically give us an orientation on what [they] do, how
8 they operated, and all that sort of stuff. I guess while we were—one of the times when
9 we were Fort Benning we actually went out and did patrolling and [other field exercises]
10 that sort of thing, as I recall. But those—being exposed to those people from different
11 branches and what have you began to tell you, you know, what you were basically most
12 interested in or what have you, particularly if you were at Ft. Knox and you got to operate
13 the tanks and learn about them more, [and how armor operates] and what have you. You
14 know if you were at Ft. Sill in the artillery then you got to shoot the Howitzers and all
15 that sort of stuff. So that background would begin to tell you, you know, form your own
16 interests—where it is you'd like to go. Now back in the dark ages, the branch that you
17 could choose was based upon your class standing, so normally the first people that would
18 [get] the branch [of their choice]. [The branch that] first got filled up [was] the engineers.
19 But in my case, you know, the first two or three people in the class chose armor, and
20 armor went [out] pretty high in the class. Of course, the engineers still went out higher
21 but—then you would talk with TAC (tactical) officers and other people and get some idea
22 of what you would be doing. A lot of times you'd be sent, you know, to jump school and
23 ranger school or aviation school. I wanted to be an aviator so I went armor and into
24 aviation.

25 LC: You went to the armor course first?

26 CS: Yes.

27 LC: What year did you actually graduate then? What year was it that you
28 graduated from West Point?

29 CS: Fifty-eight.

30 LC: Okay. Nineteen fifty-eight. And before we talk about going to armor school
31 can you describe your feelings at graduation? What was that day like?

1 CS: Well, that was a great day. You know, my parents were there and my sister
2 and what have you, and that was when they pinned on lieutenant bars and you know they
3 had a—I've forgotten who the graduation speaker was, but not one of the presidents or
4 one of the secretaries or what have you—but—you know, plus the fact that, you know,
5 you'd gotten through a pretty demanding set of four years.

6 LC: That's for sure. Yes, sir. Did you feel proud of yourself and glad that – I'm
7 sure you made your parents exceedingly proud – did you feel pride in the corps? What
8 kinds of things? Do you remember?

9 CS: Oh yes. I think all the West Point classes have a great deal of camaraderie,
10 and, you know, I don't know if you've ever read *The Band of Brothers*, but after you go
11 through four years of something like that then—yeah you have a lot of things to share,
12 and particularly in your particular company.

13 LC: Had you made very close friends in your company?

14 CS: Yes.

15 LC: Where were some of those men from and what were their names, if you
16 remember?

17 CS: Well, my roommates—Tom Sands was from Nashville, Tennessee and he
18 was the company commander. Mel Drisko was from Alexandria, Virginia—he was the
19 company first sergeant. Then I was the platoon sergeant. And during the winter time
20 when they put in, switched over [to a temporary] chain of command—then I became the
21 company commander of K1.

22 LC: Really? That's quite an honor as well.

23 CS: And Hugh Trumbull, he was a New Englander. And Bill Serchak was from
24 the east coast, I want to say from around Philadelphia, and Ron Turner from Georgia.
25 You know, about all of those people, you know, and sometimes I might get where they
26 are. I know pretty much where most of them live now, but—

27 LC: Right. Were any of them particularly intrigued with aviation like you were?

28 CS: Yeah. Brad Johnson, an aviator, Tom Sands was an aviator.

29 LC: Did any of those guys actually go through aviation training with you down in
30 Alabama later on or not?

1 CS: No. Gus, Norman Gustitus—he currently lives in Tennessee—I think he
2 went through flight school with me.

3 LC: And he was from your company?

4 CS: Yes. There was a Larry Kirkegaard—I think he was from L1; classmate of
5 mine was also in the same group that went through flight school.

6 LC: He was in company L1?

7 CS: Um-hm.

8 LC: You had decided then that you wanted to go to the armor course first?

9 CS: Well, the Army decided that.

10 LC: Oh, they kind of helped you decide. They nudged you along.

11 CS: No. I went through—the first thing you had to do was go through your basic
12 branch course.

13 LC: Okay. Where did that happen?

14 CS: In Ft. Knox.

15 LC: Okay. How long did that last?

16 CS: About two months.

17 LC: Okay. Did you go pretty much straight from West Point there or did you
18 have a little bit of a break before you went over to Ft. Knox?

19 CS: No. After graduation they gave you close to sixty days of leave and then I
20 reported in to Knox I think in the latter part of August.

21 LC: And on that leave, that sixty days, what did you get up to? What did you do?
22 Did you go anywhere special?

23 CS: Well, before I left West Point I attended a lot of my classmates weddings, and
24 then I went down to Nashville to Tom's wedding and that was about it other than, you
25 know, doing the normal dating and [enjoying life] that sort of stuff.

26 LC: Sure, sure. Can you describe one of those typical weddings that was held at
27 the Point? Where did it take place?

28 CS: Either in the Cadet Chapel or the Catholic Chapel.

29 LC: And all of you guys would be turned out in full dress?

1 CS: Yes, except, you know, weddings we were at that time commissioned so you
2 wore your dress blues or I guess in some cases maybe the dress uniform, you know, the
3 tan uniform.

4 LC: When you were a senior classmen were you still responsible for the care of
5 your own uniforms? Did you sent them out to anybody to—?

6 CS: Oh, you sent them out to the laundry.

7 LC: Okay. You did? Was that kind of nerve wrecking or was there one particular
8 place that everybody sent them that they knew they'd get done properly?

9 CS: There was only one laundry and dry cleaning facility at West Point so
10 everybody had sent them out to the same place. You were still responsible for
11 maintaining your other uniforms like your dress hat and all that sort of stuff, and the rifle
12 or the sword as the case may be.

13 LC: Looking back over your time at West Point had there been a substantial
14 amount of, sort of, out of the classroom training? You mentioned that you had to do
15 some physical training and you had to do the long—what was it—eighty kilometers or
16 something hike. Had you done a lot of outdoor work as well with weapons? Had you
17 had weapons training?

18 CS: Yes. After the graduation recognition when you went off on leave and you
19 came back and you went to Camp Buckner. And Camp Buckner, you know, we actually
20 fired—I don't think we fired the tank main gun because of range restrictions but you fired
21 the machine guns on it and what have you, you fired infantry weapons. You qualified
22 then with the M-1 rifle and you did some engineer type work, what have you, then you
23 ended up culminating in a three day field exercise.

24 LC: And was that by unit or by squad?

25 CS: Well, they reorganized everyone. You know, they put you in another
26 company. I think I was in the 2nd Company at Camp Buckner.

27 LC: Do you remember that three day exercise?

28 CS: I remember it pretty well because a hurricane came in and we went through
29 the whole thing in the rain.

30 LC: Wow.

31 CS: We were the only company that went through [the field exercise.]

1 LC: In the hurricane?

2 CS: Yes. Since we were out there they said well we'll leave you out there and
3 nobody else went.

4 LC: I bet they didn't. And how did your guys fare?

5 CS: I think pretty well. We kind of enjoyed it. Once you get wet, you know, you
6 just [went on]. It was I guess August time frame so it was warm so it wasn't bad.

7 LC: Did you learn anything about yourself or your peers on that three day event
8 that was helpful to you?

9 CS: Yeah. You had to function as a team.

10 LC: Was it a good exercise for teaching that and kind of getting the young men to
11 understand that?

12 CS: Yes it was.

13 LC: Okay. When you reported to Ft. Knox in August of 1958 what were the first
14 things that happened to you? You're a new West Point graduate and this is your first
15 assignment really is to take up the basic course. What happened?

16 CS: First of all, the way Knox did it the group of West Point graduates [were] in
17 with distinguished military graduates so that we were all regular Army graduates, so to
18 speak. And then you just went through the normal training and learning how to, you
19 know, operate small arms on a tank, tank gunnery, mortars, how to operate the radios,
20 and do that. Also do your scouting and then basically tactics.

21 LC: And how long does this course last?

22 CS: It was about two months. Also, maintenance is a big part of armor
23 operations. You have to know how to maintain the beast.

24 LC: Maintenance of the tanks specifically?

25 CS: Yes.

26 LC: Did you have to learn, for example, the engines and the hydro, all that stuff?

27 CS: Yes.

28 LC: That's a lot to take in in a couple of months.

29 CS: Yes, it is.

30 LC: Did you get much rest there during basic? Probably not.

1 CS: Yeah, back in those days you went to classes all the week and you also
2 worked half a day on Saturdays. Normally Saturdays were eaten up with physical fitness
3 tests.

4 LC: Okay. Were you allowed to leave Ft. Knox?

5 CS: Oh yeah. All those restrictions in the Academy had gone by the wayside.

6 LC: So now you could kind of go out Saturday night and do whatever you wanted
7 to do pretty much?

8 CS: That's correct.

9 LC: Okay. And did you make a new set of friends during that time period?

10 CS: Yeah. We didn't know the distinguished military graduates. Of course,
11 pretty familiar with your own classmates.

12 LC: Right. Those guys that you knew but there was this other group. How did
13 the two groups get along?

14 CS: Pretty well.

15 LC: Yeah? Not a lot of tension there?

16 CS: No.

17 LC: Okay. And did you kind of—how did you feel about your training on the
18 tanks? Was it something that you thought was fun and intriguing and, you know, could
19 work for your or were you still committed to the aviation course?

20 CS: No. Like I said, my basic branch is armor so I was very interested in the
21 tanks. At that point in time there were two tanks in the inventory. One was the M41
22 light tank and the other was the M48 tank.

23 LC: What was the difference between those two?

24 CS: Well, the light tank has basically has less fire control on it—it was a 76mm
25 gun and the armor was not all that thick on it. The M48 was a 90mm gun and had
26 considerably more armor protection on it. That was the main battle tank at the time.

27 LC: Was that light tank substantially faster?

28 CS: Yes. Matter of fact that tank was used in Vietnam, mostly with the
29 Vietnamese.

30 LC: By that you mean it was something that we gave—the United States gave—to
31 the ARVN (Army of the Republic of Vietnam) forces to use?

1 CS: Yes.

2 LC: Okay. What was the number on that tank again, that light tank?

3 CS: M41.

4 LC: The M41. Okay. Now this course just lasted two months and you did not
5 leave Ft. Knox though, is that right?

6 CS: What do you mean leave?

7 LC: Did you stay there after the first course?

8 CS: No. No, once I graduated from the basic course then I drove to Texas to
9 report in to Camp Gary, Texas for flight school.

10 LC: Oh okay. And how long was the flight school to last?

11 CS: It started in late October and I think it—was broken into two phases. It
12 started in late October and then about March of '59, after we finished the first phase
13 where you soloed and kind of demonstrated your capability of flying the thing without
14 crashing it, then you went over to Ft. Rucker, Alabama into phase two, which basically is
15 the tactical phase and that's where you operate in and out of short strips and use your
16 bomb shackles to drop cargo and that sort of stuff. And then in June of '59 when, you
17 know, they give you your wings.

18 LC: Let's talk about Camp Gary first of all. In that first phase you had—am I
19 right in saying you had not flown before at all?

20 CS: Just an orientation flying the back seat. But no, as far as actually flying an
21 airplane, no I had not.

22 LC: So this was a new ball game? And were you excited about getting into it?

23 CS: Yes.

24 LC: Okay. What did they start you off on? Can you tell me how that course, how
25 the phase one of solo flying, how did that develop?

26 CS: Well, the first thing they do is teach you how to pre-flight the airplane. By
27 the way, the course is broken into half a day you would go out and fly, so to speak, the
28 other half of the day was ground school. And so the first thing you do, you know, they
29 show you how to pre-flight and then the instructor pilot would get in with you, show you
30 how to start it, and then you learn how to taxi, and then how to take off and how to land.
31 But it took about ten hours before I soloed.

1 LC: That's actually pretty early, isn't it?

2 CS: No, it's pretty standard.

3 LC: Okay. Sounds early to me. What were you actually flying when you first

4 soloed? What was the aircraft?

5 CS: L-19 [Bird Dog].

6 LC: Okay. Can you describe that aircraft?

7 CS: It's a militarized version of the Cessna. It has, you know, its tail wheel and

8 then two main [landing] gears. It has a much higher horsepower engine in it than a

9 conventional Cessna. I think the equivalent of about a Cessna 150.

10 LC: Who was your flight instructor or did you have a couple of different men?

11 CS: No. The one I started out with I can't remember his name. He'd been in the

12 Air Force and he flew transports over the hump. He had about ten thousand hours of

13 flight time.

14 LC: Had he flown with Chennault and the Tigers?

15 CS: No, no. He was a transport. And he left—we took a Christmas break—and

16 he left because there were no one—they were going to transfer the operations of Camp

17 Gary over to Ft. Rucker. Lyndon Johnson and whoever the senator was from Alabama

18 made a deal that they would do that. So anyway, he left to go, you know for employment

19 elsewhere so I kind of floated around the section without a permanent instructor, which is

20 really not a good thing because [they] normally just [told] me go out and solo and fly, but

21 anyway it all worked out.

22 LC: But that was a bit sub-optimal.

23 CS: Yeah.

24 LC: At what point did you leave Camp Gary in your training? What had you, did

25 you have to accomplish before you could move to phase two which was the tactical part?

26 CS: Well, you had to take a check ride.

27 LC: Okay. Can you describe that?

28 CS: Well, obviously you had to take off and land, then you went out and you had

29 to do spins, then you had to do a figure eight around pylons and do a forced landing, and

30 of course you had to—just demonstrate the fact that you know you're in a turn and what

1 they want you to do is you maintain the same altitude and as you finish the turn then you
2 run into your own turbulence and that sort of stuff. Basic, you know airmanship.

3 LC: And what about in terms of sort of academic or book side of this, the ground
4 school, were there tests that you had to continually get through?

5 CS: Yeah. They would give you a test and you had to make it in the course. You
6 also had to do cross country [flights], which meant you would lay out your flight path and
7 what have you and you'd have to navigate it to get back [to the start point].

8 LC: Okay. And did you have to fly on the flight plan with somebody so that—?

9 CS: Oh yes. You always follow the flight path, [but you went solo].

10 LC: So you're learning all of those kind of protocols around flying as well as how
11 to actually do it.

12 CS: That's correct.

13 LC: Did you feel that you were a natural flyer, what people kind of refer to as a
14 natural pilot, you just had an intuitive sense of how to handle the aircraft or was it a little,
15 you had to kind of use your brain more and think it through?

16 CS: I certainly wouldn't think I was a natural pilot.

17 LC: Okay. Did it come fairly easily to you?

18 CS: Yeah, particularly the ground school part of it.

19 LC: Okay. How many hours did you have to do solo there at Camp Gary? Do
20 you remember? Was there a goal in the number of hours you had to have?

21 CS: Actually, it was structured to where you couldn't go over a certain number of
22 solo hours.

23 LC: Really?

24 CS: Yeah.

25 LC: What was the purpose of that?

26 CS: Well, like I said, you know, if you just floated around the [instructors] in the
27 room, you know, make this—since they had their own students and you were kind of odd
28 man out they'd tell you to go out and fly solo for awhile. You don't get much instruction
29 if you're out there flying solo except what you practice on your own and you don't know
30 if you're doing it right or not, so that's why it's required, you know, that you have so
31 much dual instruction before you can complete the course.

1 LC: Okay. And did you complete it sort of on time and on schedule the way it
2 was set up?

3 CS: Yes.

4 LC: Okay. And then you went over to Alabama, is that right?

5 CS: That's correct.

6 LC: And this was the tactical phase of your training and it lasted for about, I think
7 you said roughly four or five months? Four months maybe?

8 CS: I'd say March and then April, May, June—yeah, about four months.

9 LC: Okay. What was a typical day like at Ft. Rucker?

10 CS: It was also broken down [between] ground school and flying.

11 LC: Okay. Tell me about the ground school curriculum. What were the things
12 that you were supposed to be studying and learning—different kinds of aircrafts, different
13 maneuvers, different kinds of halos that you might have to be moving around?

14 CS: It's more on the tactical side of how you would operate in the field and that
15 sort of stuff. They would teach you how to fly in and out of unimproved strips, and what
16 I'm talking about is some corn patch or what have you, meadow, and normally there
17 would be trees at either end so you'd have to, you know, be able to fly in and land the
18 thing in a rather confined area and turn around and take off out of it. So they would teach
19 you techniques, you know, on how you did that.

20 LC: And then in the afternoons what happened?

21 CS: Well, they would teach you, you know, basically how you'd operate in a field
22 environment.

23 LC: So actually applying what you had learned?

24 CS: Yes.

25 LC: And what kind of aircraft were you using, still the L-19 or something else?

26 CS: Yes, L-19.

27 LC: Okay. Why was that preferred as a training craft, do you know?

28 CS: Well, that was the standard Army observation airplane at that time.

29 LC: Okay. Because it was so common and because that's probably what you'd be
30 flying?

1 CS: Yeah. That's the airplane—if you were going out and flying is an art, you
2 know, with an artillery spotter in the back then that's the plane you would use. That's
3 what it was used for, used for courier missions. You could lay wire with it and drop your
4 messages. You could drop cargo bundles. So you went through and you learned how to
5 do all that.

6 LC: Okay. Colonel, when was the first time that you heard or learned about the
7 possibility of helicopters being used instead of this one plane?

8 CS: Well, of course they were used in Korea so [I was] well aware of that. And
9 see, the first—also after you finished flight school and you got your wings then I
10 immediately went into the instrument flying portion of it. And that, you know you learn
11 how to fly [by] instrument flight regulations. In other words, you fly while you're in the
12 clouds and all that sort of stuff.

13 LC: And was that yet at Ft. Rucker or—?

14 CS: Yes. In that particular phase we used L-20s [Beaver]. The L-19 was not
15 instrument rated.

16 LC: Okay. And the L-20 presumably was, and that was—tell me about that,
17 learning how to fly instrument only. Scares me a little bit. Did it scare you at all?

18 CS: Pardon?

19 LC: Were you scared at all? Did you have any kind of anxiety moving towards
20 instrument only flying or was it just the next natural thing to do?

21 CS: No, not really. What they do, you know, if the weather doesn't cooperate or
22 what have you then they put you under what they call [a hood]. In other words, they
23 blank out everything and the only thing you could look at was the instrument panel and
24 so you'd, you know, once you taxi out and you put that [hood] down then you had to be
25 lined up on the runway and set your compass, directional compass, with the compass that
26 you used to line up on, go through and set your flaps and all that, then you just maintain
27 your direction and once you get up in the air you go through the normal thing and just
28 keep your eyes on the instruments.

29 LC: Right. And you're learning, I suppose, to have complete confidence in the
30 instruments even more so than your own, I don't know, feeling about how you're flying,
31 right?

1 CS: Yeah. You don't—flying by the seat of your pants gets you in trouble.

2 LC: This time period when you were training on instruments on the L-20, how
3 long did that last?

4 CS: It took about a month or so.

5 LC: Really? And that was still before June 1959 or just after that?

6 CS: No. We got our wings and then just about, you know, less than a week you
7 went right into the instrument phase.

8 LC: Oh okay. Okay. And once you completed the instrument training what was
9 next for you?

10 CS: Then I—on a personal note I got married and reported into my first unit,
11 which was the 502nd Aviation Company, 2nd Armored Division, Ft. Hood.

12 LC: Okay. Where did you get married?

13 CS: Taylor, Texas.

14 LC: Okay. And was that then someone that you had met in Texas or—?

15 CS: Yes.

16 LC: Okay. And then you went to Ft. Hood?

17 CS: Right.

18 LC: Your assignment—this is really your first kind of operational assignment, is
19 that right?

20 CS: That's correct.

21 LC: Okay. And your rank at this point was?

22 CS: Second lieutenant.

23 LC: What did you do when you got to the 502nd? What was your job?

24 CS: Well, it was basically nothing other than flying L-19s.

25 LC: On kind of continuing training missions or—?

26 CS: Yes.

27 LC: Still with skill improvement?

28 CS: Well, you hadn't maintained your flying proficiency. There were a bunch of
29 lieutenants there and so you didn't get a lot of flying time because you had to share the
30 wealth of the aircraft.

31 LC: I see. Were you happy with this initial assignment?

1 CS: I would say so-so. I finally volunteered to become—go down to the training
2 office that was down on the main post, you know, rather than just sit out there and just
3 twiddle your thumbs when you weren't flying.

4 LC: Sure. You weren't getting very much time.

5 CS: No. Plus you learned a lot in the training [room]. The aviation company was
6 a separate company within the division so it was commanded by a major.

7 LC: And what did you volunteer to do, sorry?

8 CS: To work in the training shop. In other words, we monitored the schools and
9 the training schedules and all that sort of stuff.

10 LC: Was that fun at all?

11 CS: Yeah, I enjoyed that.

12 LC: Okay. Were you working more with the people at that point rather than just
13 kind of hanging out waiting for a chance to get in the cockpit?

14 CS: Yeah. We had a—there was a senior captain who was the training officer and
15 myself, and I think we had one or two NCOs (non-commissioned officers).

16 LC: What about that was interesting or fun to you?

17 CS: Well, you learned about the administration of the Army and how the school
18 system worked.

19 LC: Okay. And that's probably invaluable knowledge if it is your career, learning
20 the back operation is very important. Did you know that you might like doing that and
21 learning that stuff? Was that part of your motivation or was it really just because you
22 were kind of bored?

23 CS: No. I thought it would be useful, and it was in later years.

24 LC: Okay. And how long did you work there in the training shop?

25 CS: I'm thinking—I think maybe while I was there I was also given the task to
26 teach the new maintenance system to the special troops within the division, 2nd Armored
27 Division.

28 LC: What was the maintenance system that you had to teach?

29 CS: Well, basically what the Army went to was a system quite similar to what you
30 used in aviation. It's called TAMMS (The Army Maintenance Management System) and
31 I've forgotten all the—

1 LC: Was that T-A-M-S?
2 CS: Yes. T-A-M-M-S.
3 LC: Okay. And that was—was it kind of a top down structured sort of approach
4 to air craft maintenance or armored maintenance?
5 CS: No. This was for all vehicle maintenance. Aviation had kind of its own
6 system and the Army went to this other system for all the other vehicles, so to speak.
7 LC: Okay. And that let you get a little bit even more familiar with the armored
8 vehicles.
9 CS: Yes, at least all the paperwork that went with it and the documentation of it.
10 LC: Okay. But you weren't seeing a lot of—you didn't have a lot of hands-on,
11 you didn't have all the series of—
12 CS: Yeah, classroom work.
13 LC: Classroom work. Okay. And you taught those courses as part of a structured
14 curriculum for maintenance chiefs and people who would be in maintenance sections of
15 the division?
16 CS: Yeah, basically.
17 LC: And this was a service basically to the division, to the 2nd Armored Division?
18 CS: Yes, for division troops.
19 LC: Okay. How long did you do this kind of work, the teaching, the scheduling,
20 all of that?
21 CS: I would guess probably a couple of months.
22 LC: Okay. No longer than that?
23 CS: No.
24 LC: Okay. Did you like the teaching? Was it something that you felt was
25 rewarding?
26 CS: Yeah. I thought that it was.
27 LC: But were you still kind of anxious to have a little more flying time?
28 CS: Well, I would like to, you know, have gotten more flying time sometime in
29 that time period since we—Ft. Hood was in relatively close proximity to Camp Wolters,
30 which is where they had, you know, taught people to fly helicopters and also transition
31 fixed wing people into helicopters. They would normally let us know when they had

1 openings then we could send people up to, you know, fill the slots, and that's basically
2 how I was transitioned into the helicopters and early 1961.

3 LC: So you were at Ft. Hood and kind of doing some flying but also learning a
4 few other things and doing some teaching until 1961? Did you actually transfer to Camp
5 Walters or did you stay based at Hood?

6 CS: No, you'd go up TDY (temporary duty) to Camp Wolters, and I think the
7 course was only maybe two months.

8 LC: It was only two months long?

9 CS: Um-hm.

10 LC: Do you remember much about that course? Can you describe it?

11 CS: I already knew how to fly so it's something, basically learning how to fly the
12 helicopters.

13 LC: Was it—did you feel like it was substantially a different ride from the fixed
14 wing L-20 that you had been flying?

15 CS: No. Not really.

16 LC: Really? It was an easy transition then?

17 CS: Yeah. The basic thing is to learn how to hover the thing and once you learn
18 that then it wasn't all that difficult.

19 LC: What craft were you trained on there?

20 CS: At that time we were transitioning on the H-23.

21 LC: If somebody was just learning about the H-23 how would you describe it to
22 them?

23 CS: Well, it only had two main rotors, of course a tail rotor. It had an enclosed
24 [tail boom], looked like kind of a stinger, and you had a bubble canopy. And it had a
25 little more power than the H-13.

26 LC: Okay. Was the H-13 still in wide use or as wide as helicopters were being
27 used by the Army?

28 CS: Yes. The 502nd Aviation Company had H-13s, H-19s, and H-34s as far as
29 helicopters went.

30 LC: And so was training on the 23, was that kind of seen as flying the latest
31 model or not?

1 CS: Probably not. When you went back to Hood, you know, it took ten hours of
2 transition into the thirteen series helicopter. That's kind of standard news as far as, you
3 know, ten hours of transition from [H-23s to H-13s].

4 LC: When you were breaking in on the helicopter did you hear much about a
5 different, the kind of warfare that the helicopter would be useful for? Did you learn
6 about what had happened in Korea or maybe what the British had been using helicopters
7 for in Malaya? Did you hear any of that or study any of that?

8 CS: No, nothing about Malayan War and basically in Korea, you know, they used
9 them for Medevac purposes and for some resupply, maybe movement of troops around.

10 LC: But at this point nobody was really talking about incorporating them into
11 tactical strategy?

12 CS: No. There were some discussion, as I recall, about arming them at that point
13 in time but the Air Force basically [was] very opposed [to] any of putting weapons on
14 [any helicopter or Army aircraft].

15 LC: Yeah. And could you explain why they were opposed?

16 CS: Roles and missions.

17 LC: Okay. What does that mean?

18 CS: It means that they didn't want the Army to become capable of providing their
19 own ground support.

20 LC: Because that would sort of take away part of what the Air Force was
21 supposed to—?

22 CS: Yeah.

23 LC: Okay. It's early 1961 that we're talking about and the Kennedy
24 administration had just come to office. Did you have any particular feelings about
25 President Kennedy? Were you a supporter or did you not really think about national
26 politics that much?

27 CS: Well, I was not a fan of President Kennedy.

28 LC: Okay. Why was that?

29 CS: Well, primarily that he was in my estimation not that good of a president, you
30 know, across the board.

31 LC: You mean across the board both his domestic policies and his foreign policy?

1 CS: Yeah the Bay of Pigs was probably a big fiasco.
2 LC: Right.
3 CS: Not probably, it was.
4 LC: Right. And that happens either while you're at Camp Wolters or maybe just
5 afterwards, the spring of 1961.
6 CS: I can't remember the exact timeframe of it.
7 LC: Do you remember it happening though?
8 CS: Yeah. I think it probably happened before I was there.
9 LC: Okay. And what was your opinion of that whole episode?
10 CS: Well, it's kind of hard now with the 20/20 hindsight and things that have been
11 written, but I think he was very lucky.
12 LC: Yeah. Why do you say that?
13 CS: The way things turned out.
14 LC: In other words that we didn't get involved in the nuclear exchange with the
15 Soviet Union?
16 CS: That's correct.
17 LC: Okay. Do you remember seeing any impact on deployments while you were,
18 say, at Ft. Hood or Camp Wolters that you think were linked, that you now thinking back
19 were probably linked to the Cuban Missile Crisis – I'm sorry – the Bay of Pigs?
20 CS: No, not that I'm aware of. The Cuban Missile Crisis, I think, by that time I
21 went to Korea and there were some troop movements down out of Hood, as I recall,
22 down towards, into Florida.
23 LC: Yeah. I think that's correct.
24 CS: Plus, we were on pretty high alert in Korea.
25 LC: Sure. When did you actually go out to Korea then?
26 CS: I went over there in October '62.
27 LC: Okay. So between, before you actually go out there where did you go after
28 Camp Wolters?
29 CS: I went back to 502nd Aviation and I can't remember the exact time frame but
30 at one point in time I was detailed to the G3 section of the 2nd Armored Division. By that
31 time I was a first lieutenant.

1 LC: Okay. When did—go ahead.

2 CS: And they converted the 2nd Armored Division from a training division to a
3 STRAC (Strategic Army Corps) Division, which meant that they, you know, before that
4 they were basically training recruits, and now they were going converting to a deployable
5 type unit.

6 LC: Okay. And by deployable what do you mean?

7 CS: Like if there was a reason to go overseas or what have you then they would
8 be trained up and ready to go, fully equipped and what have you.

9 LC: Okay. And equipped for a particular mission rather than the kind of general
10 issue of material that they would have had while in training?

11 CS: Yeah, they would have been assigned a specific mission.

12 LC: Okay. Now when you were made a G3 what responsibilities did you have?

13 CS: Well, I was in charge of—the Marine training unit came in and I was in
14 charge of getting them around to all the units on basically how to prepare their vehicles
15 and what have you for amphibious operation. I had to build a dry net tower out on the
16 west range for amphibious operations, and also worked in the three section. Part of the
17 thing the two week field exercise, you know, with the whole division went out to the
18 field, and then I worked in part of the three shop. Had the great pleasure of leading all
19 the ground vehicles in the division on a fifty-mile road march and shift—shift time
20 normally at night when everybody else is asleep in the division tactical operations center.
21 So that was basically what I was doing and helping prepare operations order and all that
22 sort of stuff.

23 LC: Okay. And did you enjoy that element of work as well as, you had some of
24 the earlier administrative things that you had done like the training and the...?

25 CS: Oh yeah. You learn a lot. Like I had been given the job to brief the
26 commanding general on the readiness report for the division, and it was not a good
27 situation because back in those days since it was a training division about all the gun
28 tubes in the tanks had been shot out.

29 LC: By shot out you mean—?

30 CS: They were [worn out]—you should not try to shoot any rounds out of them.

31 LC: Because they were pretty ragged?

1 CS: Well, what you do on tank guns is you do a pull gauge and a bore scope,
2 check them out, and then they all basically flunked that.

3 LC: Okay. And so the commanding general wasn't too happy?

4 CS: Well, I was given the job of briefing him and telling him about all that and he
5 was not a happy camper, but—

6 LC: Do you remember his name?

7 CS: No. I had been interviewed for an aide job for him but he was looking for a
8 social aid and I wasn't interested in that.

9 LC: I see. Sure. Right. That wasn't where you were going. So how long were
10 you in the position in the G3 group?

11 CS: Probably two to three months. I can't remember exactly. Then I left there
12 and went to ground duty as the executive officer of a tank company.

13 LC: Okay. What company was it?

14 CS: C Company, 1st [Battalion] of the 67th Armored.

15 LC: And as executive officer what kinds of duties were you supposed to fulfill?

16 CS: Basically administration and maintenance.

17 LC: So again maintenance comes up. Was that something that you were
18 beginning to really kind of pay attention to with the—?

19 CS: As an armor officer you must always, matter of fact, any officer needs to pay
20 attention to maintenance.

21 LC: Okay. I think that's something that very often students of military history,
22 students of the Vietnam War, probably don't think about as being an important priority
23 yet you had to think about it a lot.

24 CS: Well, if you were, particularly if you're an aviator, if you don't do a good
25 pre-flight and everything then that leads to a lot of problems.

26 LC: Right. And as a pilot you need to know the machine every bit as well as a
27 crew chief. Would you say that's true?

28 CS: Yeah, pretty much. Not necessarily in the same depth as a crew chief.

29 LC: But you need to be able to know when something doesn't look right.

30 CS: That's correct.

31 LC: And it's really, finally as a pilot, your responsibility, is that right?

1 CS: You're the man in charge.

2 LC: Okay. Right. At what point did you—I'm sorry, when you were the
3 executive officer of C Company where were you? At Ft. Hood yet?

4 CS: Yes.

5 LC: Okay. And so you didn't leave Ft. Hood until you were assigned to Korea,
6 would that be right?

7 CS: That's correct.

8 LC: Okay. When did the orders come through for your assignment to Korea?

9 CS: Probably September of '62.

10 LC: Okay. How did those orders hit you? Did that sounds like a good posting,
11 something you wanted to do, or not?

12 CS: No, I volunteered.

13 LC: Oh you did. Okay. Can you tell me why?

14 CS: Well, I'd been at Ft. Hood for over three years so I thought it was probably
15 time to move on and do something else.

16 LC: And were you particularly keen to get overseas?

17 CS: Yes.

18 LC: Could you say why? What was your motivation, what was your thinking?

19 CS: Well, at the time I had come out on the captains list so, you know, I had
20 wanted to go over there and get command of a tank company.

21 LC: Okay. So you wanted a field command. That makes perfect sense. Is that
22 what you got?

23 CS: After a while, but when I reported in the first thing they did was send me
24 TDY to Seoul to, of all things, an AG (Adjutant General) Message Control unit, primarily
25 because I had a top secret clearance.

26 LC: And at what point had that clearance been finalized? Had you had that for
27 many years or—?

28 CS: Yeah. I had it as a backup—I had applied for graduate school and to do that
29 you had to have a top secret clearance.

30 LC: Oh okay. And what had happened with your application for attending
31 graduate school?

1 CS: I guess it was floating around up in the armored branch. But anyways I went
2 down and the Adjutant General Message Control unit basically was charged with
3 receiving and assigning actions and what have you to all the messages that came in to 8th
4 Army headquarters.

5 LC: Was that TDY a disappointment to you?

6 CS: Yes.

7 LC: Could you say why to someone who might not understand why that was
8 disappointing?

9 CS: Well, because I wanted to go down and, you know, [command] a tank unit.

10 LC: You didn't want the desk job?

11 CS: I didn't want to go down and fool around with, basically, messages and what
12 have you. Although again it was a reasonably decent experience that—but again, to be
13 blunt about it, I did not have the best battalion commander in Korea.

14 LC: Okay. When you arrived in Seoul where did you stay? Where did you live?

15 CS: In a BOQ (bachelor officers' quarters) near Yon Son.

16 LC: And what were your impressions of Seoul? This would be the first, really the
17 first, major non-American city that you'd been in, right? What was your impression of
18 it?

19 CS: Well, I didn't really get to see much of it because I worked the night shift
20 so—

21 LC: I should ask you; did your wife accompany you to Korea?

22 CS: No.

23 LC: And where did she stay?

24 CS: She stayed in Taylor, Texas.

25 LC: Okay. Was that her home before she had met you?

26 CS: That's her hometown and we rented a house.

27 LC: Okay. Right. I wondered if—and so this probably wasn't too easy either
28 being separated. You were really quite newlyweds at this point still.

29 CS: Yeah. It was not the easiest.

30 LC: I bet. I believe, I believe you. Well, sir, how long did you serve at the
31 message control center?

1 CS: I think about a month or so.
2 LC: So it wasn't too long.
3 CS: No. They were gearing up, they went on a field exercise and they moved
4 from Seoul down to Pyongtaek, which is down near Suwon, which is an Air Force base.
5 LC: And you went along with them?
6 CS: Oh yeah. See they had an old Japanese bunker—World War II—that they
7 moved into as a temporary base and I went over and took over that and the rest of the
8 people went south, and then I followed.
9 LC: And meanwhile you were still probably, I would guess, trying to get out of
10 this assignment and back to what it was you wanted to do, which is—?
11 CS: Yeah. I was just down there TDY so—
12 LC: And how did it come about that you got away from the message center?
13 CS: Well, when my—they only asked for you for so long and then when the time
14 was up I went back to my parent unit.
15 LC: So it had an end point?
16 CS: Um-hm.
17 LC: Sir, let's take a break for just a moment.

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The Vietnam Archive
Oral History Project
Interview with Cecil Shrader
Conducted by Laura Calkins
January 23, 2004
Transcribed by Eunice Lee

NOTE: Any text included in brackets [] is information that was added by the narrator after reviewing the original transcript. Therefore, this information is not included in the audio version of the interview.

1 LC: This is Dr. Laura Calkins of the Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech University.
2 I am continuing my oral history interview with Col. Cecil Shrader. Today's date is
3 January 22, 23—I'm sorry—2004. I am in the interview room, Special Collections
4 Building, on the campus of Texas Tech University and Colonel Shrader again is in
5 Georgetown, Texas. Colonel we were talking about your deployment to Korea and you
6 were telling about your time with the message center. How long did you actually stay
7 there at the message center? You were TDY there.

8 CS: I think about a month.

9 LC: Only a month or so?

10 CS: Yeah.

11 LC: What happened after that assignment?

12 CS: Well, after I finished my TDY with the 8th Army, AG section, I went back to
13 my tank battalion and I was assigned as the S1 and then quickly became the S2 since
14 there was an opening there and I performed the S2 duties for a couple of three months
15 and I went down and took over Echo Company.

16 LC: So you did finally get a command?

17 CS: Oh yes.

18 LC: Okay. How was Echo Company structured? What armor did you actually
19 have?

1 CS: I had seventeen tanks and M48A2C. They were relatively new, not been
2 issued to the battalion very long.

3 LC: How many men did you have?

4 CS: Well, each tank had a crew of four and then you had a maintenance section
5 and there were probably about twenty or so in the maintenance section, and then you had
6 a supply section—couple or three soldiers—and then I had a mess section, probably
7 another four or five.

8 LC: Okay. Where was Echo Company stationed and based?

9 CS: We were in—tank battalion was based in one compound, and it was called
10 Camp Beavers. It was located about a half mile north of the thirty-eighth parallel. It was
11 only about maybe thirty kilometers or so south of the DMZ (Demilitarized Zone).

12 LC: And did you stay there until July 1963? Did you stay with Echo Company?

13 CS: Well, I started out as Echo Company then the Army reorganized. At that
14 time it was in the pentomic organization. In other words it had five battle groups and we
15 had five line tank companies in the battalion, eighty-eight tanks total—was a pretty good
16 sized organization. We reorganized under the ROAD (Reorganization of Army
17 Divisions) thing so I went from Echo Company to A Company and we changed from the
18 40th Armored to the 73rd Armored. And I might add the whole time I commanded the A
19 Company that organization took place probably in March, April time frame of '63. And
20 they also took from all the personnel people the adjutant section, if you would,
21 consolidated it at division level. My morning report was never correct up to the time I
22 left, but anyway.

23 LC: How did you experience that reorganization? Was it a difficult period to try
24 and keep everything straight or not?

25 CS: No. There wasn't, other than the fact that they took, you know, the AG
26 section out of the battalion and consolidated it, other than that it didn't have much impact
27 down to the company level.

28 LC: Okay. What kinds of things did your company actually do on a regular basis?
29 Were you patrolling, were you keeping everything ready and up to date and maintained,
30 or what were your primary functions?

1 CS: We were—we could roll out of the compound in fifteen minutes because we
2 were always in a high state of readiness. The troops lived in billets right behind the tank
3 line, they had all their equipment and stuff prepared, the tanks were uploaded fully with
4 ammunition, and they always had fuel in them so that if somebody sound the alarm in
5 fifteen minutes we would roll out and go to our designated location. So we did maneuver
6 training and quarterly we would go up to a range north of where we were for tank
7 gunnery. And we used that to rotate, you know, our basic load. Probably told you
8 before—we were talking about tanks and other heavy equipment—you always have to
9 devote a lot of attention to maintenance and keeping them operational. We also would
10 download our ammunition and clean it, put it back on the tanks and what have you, and
11 have it ready to go.

12 LC: During that time period did you have any special alerts?

13 CS: Yeah. I'm trying to remember, probably at least once a month we would
14 have an alert of some sort or another.

15 LC: Did you, as company commander, know what the incidence or what the cause
16 of the alert was?

17 CS: No. Those were, they were just typical unannounced alerts to where you
18 would load up and move out to your position. There was nothing necessarily that would
19 trigger that.

20 LC: Okay. Did you know when your appointment in Korea would terminate?

21 CS: That was a year tour.

22 LC: Okay. And did you know—at what point did you find out where you would
23 be going after Korea?

24 CS: Oh, I got orders—matter of fact I left Korea a little before I should have
25 because they sent me back to the career course to Knox.

26 LC: At Ft. Knox?

27 CS: Yes.

28 LC: Okay. Can you describe the content of that career course in general terms?

29 CS: It was a about a nine or ten month course so it covered, you know, tactics,
30 covered communications, maintenance, and pretty heavy on, like I say, the tactical part.
31 And then we would go out and do some field exercise and tank gunnery.

1 LC: Was the tactics curriculum at that point being influenced by developments in
2 the war in Vietnam?

3 CS: When I went through there the war in Vietnam was kind of on the back
4 burner. It was not very hard or hot at all. We were basically training to fight against the
5 Warsaw Pact.

6 LC: Okay. And in that potential conflict tanks were going to play a very
7 important role, correct?

8 CS: That's correct.

9 LC: Okay. Can you describe in general what the role of the armored tanks would
10 be in a planned conflict with the Warsaw Pact?

11 CS: Well, basically since the Warsaw Pact outnumbered the U.S. and NATO
12 (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) forces you would normally go in to a defensive
13 posture. That does not mean that you wouldn't attack whenever the opportunity presents
14 you [an opportunity to] counterattack or what have you, but basically, you know, you
15 were in a defensive posture and then you would do your best to destroy as many of the
16 enemy that came across the border as you could or, in Korea in the case, North Koreans
17 coming across the DMZ.

18 LC: Yes, sir. Did you study much in the way of military history to, as a vehicle
19 for studying tactics during that course?

20 CS: I believe there was some in there. I also forgot to tell you they spent a lot of
21 time on map reading too.

22 LC: Okay. As a skill development or sharpening the map reading?

23 CS: Yes.

24 LC: Okay. Do you remember what the gauge of the maps was that you were
25 studying? Was it one to fifty thousand or do you remember anything like that?

26 CS: Basically you would—your standard thing would be one to fifty thousand
27 scale. Sometimes you use a one to twenty-five. I also need to tell you—drudging up
28 memories—we also took a course in nuclear weapons deployment, what they called a
29 prefix five course.

30 LC: Okay. Can you tell me about that?

1 CS: Basically just analyzed the targets for, you know, that you might deploy
2 nuclear weapons on and gave you some idea of, you know, what weapons—the defects of
3 them and what have you.

4 LC: Right. These would be primarily battlefield and tactical nuclear weapons?

5 CS: Yes.

6 LC: Okay. What kinds of targets were discussed as being appropriate for those
7 weapons systems?

8 CS: Well, you're normally talking about any massing of either tanks or personnel.

9 LC: At that point did, were United States Army tanks capable of carrying tactical
10 battlefield nuclear weapons?

11 CS: Tanks? No.

12 LC: Okay. What was going to be the primary delivery system for the kinds of
13 weapons that we're talking about?

14 CS: Basically you're talking about tube and missile artillery. Of course aircraft,
15 but—we did have one weapon in Korea that's called the Davy Crockett, which was
16 nuclear capable.

17 LC: And to your knowledge were there nuclear weapons stockpiled for American
18 forces in Korea while you were there?

19 CS: I knew that we had the Davy Crockett. Others I would presume probably but
20 I could not say.

21 LC: And was Davy Crockett a dual system so that it could manage conventional
22 shells as well as—?

23 CS: No. It's a weapon that didn't, had a short life in the inventory.

24 LC: Okay. Why was that?

25 CS: Well, it was not [very useful].

26 LC: It wasn't any good?

27 CS: Well, the employment of it would create a lot of problems, both if you were
28 using it or if you were using it against the enemy—just not a good weapon, not a good
29 concept.

30 LC: Okay. You said this course at Ft. Knox lasted ten months. So that would
31 take you into, perhaps, the middle of 1964, the summer of '64?

1 CS: Yeah. I think we left there in early June of '64.

2 LC: You mentioned earlier that you had applied to go to graduate school. Was
3 anything happening along that front at this time?

4 CS: Oh yeah. They sent me orders to Korea for me to go to—they had me
5 programmed to go to graduate school and then I got specific orders, I guess, sometime
6 while I was at the career course, and originally I was slated to go to Virginia Polytechnic
7 Institute in Blacksburg, Virginia. Matter of fact, I flew over there with a friend of mine
8 to visit with my sponsor and what have you and, then before too long, they changed my
9 orders and sent me to the University of Arizona at Tucson.

10 LC: Do you know what prompted that change?

11 CS: No. I have no idea except there were some—this is all speculation—I think it
12 may have had something to do with the integration but I wasn't, I don't know for certain.

13 LC: Okay. I see. And so you then took off for Tucson, I presume.

14 CS: Yes. I was delayed getting out of Ft. Knox because I had broken some
15 fingers on my hand playing softball. So, you know, I had to stay there until all that was
16 cleared up and I couldn't fly and what have you, and then we joined my compatriots at
17 the University of Arizona and missed the first summer session.

18 LC: So you started off in the fall or was it the second session?

19 CS: Second summer session.

20 LC: Okay. Where did you live while you were now a student again? Where did
21 you live?

22 CS: We rented a house.

23 LC: Were you living with other service personnel?

24 CS: No. It was, we were not in a ghetto, so to speak. You just went out and
25 found your own housing and live wherever that may be.

26 LC: Were you looking forward to becoming a student again?

27 CS: Yes, I was.

28 LC: And what was it that you were intending to study?

29 CS: Well, the good old Army told you. I majored in aerospace engineering.

30 LC: Okay. They pretty much selected that for you?

31 CS: Yes.

1 LC: Okay. Was that though something that you were finding enjoyable as the
2 course developed?

3 CS: Yes. That's primarily what I wanted to do.

4 LC: Okay. Did you have any specialization within aerospace engineering that
5 you'd want to tell us about?

6 CS: No, I'm not sure. First thing that we had to do was go back and get some of
7 the undergraduate prerequisite courses that, you know, at West Point you did not get. So
8 you were kind of in a probationary status the first semester until you verily had the
9 credentials to get to graduate school. Then they admitted you into graduate school and
10 went from there.

11 LC: Okay. How long did the course, did the actual degree requirements take you
12 to finish?

13 CS: It started in I said the summer of '64, graduated in June of '66. I think it was
14 a total of thirty-three hours.

15 LC: Okay. Was the material easy for you to get command of or did you have a
16 harder time?

17 CS: It all depended upon what the course was but basically not all that difficult.

18 LC: Okay. Did you take any nuclear engineering along with the aerospace, any
19 courses that dealt with—?

20 CS: No. They had a—there were about thirty of us—thirty Army students—
21 going to the University of Arizona at that time. There was a group of four or five of them
22 that were majoring in nuclear engineering.

23 LC: Oh okay. So they had a separate degree.

24 CS: Yeah. Well, our department was called the aeronautical and mechanical
25 engineering department, AME. And for a lot of parts the courses you took, you know,
26 very similar. Matter of fact they were the same in some cases.

27 LC: Right. And then a couple of specialization courses for each, for particular
28 areas?

29 CS: Um-hm.

30 LC: Okay. Were you doing any flying as well?

1 CS: Oh yes. Back in those days you had to maintain your flight training. You
2 had to—in other words, we would go to—one of us—would go over to Ft. Huachuca.
3 Normally we would pick up an L-20, fly it back to Tucson, a civilian airport there, and
4 then we would pair up, go out, you know, and get our hours in. Then one guy would fly
5 it back to Ft. Huachuca and drive back to Tucson.

6 LC: About how many hours did you have to do a month? Do you remember?

7 CS: You had a minimum of four hours a month but it was broken down into so
8 many hours of nighttime and daytime flying. You had to get more—and I can't
9 remember offhand how many hours in a year—but you had to fly more than just four
10 hours a month to stay current. It's probably about sixty or seventy hours a year that you
11 had to have total.

12 LC: And was it pretty easy for you to get your minimum numbers? In other
13 words, did you have access to the aircraft enough so that you could keep your minimum
14 hours with no problem?

15 CS: Yeah. The way we had it worked out it was kind of a pain but it was
16 possible. Matter of fact we still had to do that when I was assigned to the Pentagon.

17 LC: Had to keep your hours up? Did you observe while you were on the campus
18 there during the escalation of the U.S. involvement in Vietnam, did you observe a
19 growing sort of sense on the campus of political dissidence about the war?

20 CS: No. Remember I was there '64 to '66. At that point in time Vietnam was not
21 much of an issue. Matter of fact the first major deployment was the 1st Cav Division in
22 '65, so—at that time, well, I don't think many students paid a lot of attention to it.

23 LC: Were you paying a lot of attention to it? You yourself?

24 CS: Oh yeah. I knew I was probably going to Vietnam as an aviator.

25 LC: Yeah. Can you say why as an aviator particularly you thought that you were
26 probably going to be sent there and probably pretty early?

27 CS: Well, that's—if my training is, you know, aerospace engineering—matter of
28 fact we talked one of our instructors into giving a particular course on helicopter
29 dynamics, which is not part of their normal program instruction, and I figured that, you
30 know, having that background that going to Vietnam would probably be, you know, it
31 was a good thing.

1 LC: And were you also learning about what the Army was doing in terms of the
2 use of helicopters over there or troop insertion and—?

3 CS: Yeah. We had followed what was going on and watched—the 11th Air
4 Assault Division was the one that was doing all the experimentation at Ft. Benning. And
5 of course then they were converted from the 11th Air Assault into 1st Cav and deployed.

6 LC: Right. And that was to some extent an experimental development, would you
7 agree?

8 CS: Yeah. They were refining their tactics, techniques, and procedures.

9 LC: Right. Exactly. When did you graduate, sir, from University of Arizona?

10 CS: In June, but I just had them mail me my diploma because I had to go get my
11 family settled and report to Ft. Benning, Georgia to be transitioned into the UH1.

12 LC: Okay. How long did you stay at Ft. Benning then? When did you arrive and
13 how long were you there?

14 CS: Probably arrived there in June, early June, and stayed maybe a month—can't
15 remember precisely.

16 LC: The transition into the UH1 can you describe what you learned during that
17 very short course on adjusting to the UH1?

18 CS: Well, the basic things. Learned how to pre-flight it and something about its
19 maintenance and simply they take you out and teach you how to fly it.

20 LC: And how many hours do you think you had in the UH1 at Benning?

21 CS: Maybe ten to fifteen.

22 LC: Did that feel sufficient to you to get a feel for the machine?

23 CS: Yes.

24 LC: Okay. At what point sir did you get your orders that you were to be deployed
25 to Vietnam?

26 CS: Oh I got those before I left graduate school.

27 LC: Okay. You already knew then?

28 CS: Um-hm.

29 LC: Okay. And did you know what your date was for going over to Vietnam as
30 well as what unit you would be assigned to?

1 CS: Well, I think I left probably mid to late July of '66. I had asked to go to the
2 1st Cavalry Division and I further wanted to go to the 1st Squadron 9th Cavalry, which
3 being an armor officer, I think I told you, armor was the had prepotency for air cavalry
4 organizations. So that's where I asked to go and that's where I ended up.

5 LC: Right. When you said that you wanted to, or took a little time to get your
6 family situated, where were they going to stay? In Arizona?

7 CS: No, no. We rented a house in Taylor, Texas so the wife and kids could be
8 close to their grandparents.

9 LC: How were your family members with the news that you were going to, in
10 fact, be going to Vietnam? What was their reaction?

11 CS: Well, nobody was really happy about it but they knew it was going to happen.

12 LC: Okay. Sir, can you tell us about actually getting over to Vietnam? Where did
13 you depart from?

14 CS: Flew out of Travis Air Force Base on the west coast.

15 LC: When you were at, when you arrived at Travis, did you stay for a day or two
16 and have any administrative work done, completed, there before you went over?

17 CS: No. As I recall I got there and was on an aircraft pretty soon after.

18 LC: Was it a commercial flight that had been chartered that you were on or some
19 other way that you got over there?

20 CS: I think it was a commercial.

21 LC: Do you remember that flight?

22 CS: Not really.

23 LC: Not really? Okay. Where did you arrive in Vietnam?

24 CS: At Tan Son Nhut.

25 LC: And from there where did you go?

26 CS: They had an in processing, typical repot-depot type thing, and as I recall they
27 put me on a, probably either a C7 or a C130 and flew into Pleiku and literally dropped me
28 off.

29 LC: How do you mean that sir?

30 CS: Well, I was the only one that got off the airplane there. And there was this
31 little hut with a telephone in it and I couldn't see any other Americans around so I rang

1 the telephone and the Cav reception people were down at the end of the strip—as I recall
2 it was probably the north end—and so they sent a vehicle down to pick me and my
3 baggage up. Took me down there to start the in processing.

4 LC: Okay. And sir was your rank at the time you arrived still captain?

5 CS: Yes.

6 LC: Can you just tell me at what point did you make major?

7 CS: I made major in June, I think, of '67.

8 LC: Was Pleiku to become, basically, your home base of operations?

9 CS: No.

10 LC: Ok. How long were you at Pleiku?

11 CS: Just for a short period. The Cav Division, as you probably know, was based
12 in An Khe. They basically, you know, did their little processing and flew me over there
13 probably in a helicopter but I don't remember the details of it.

14 LC: And is that the point at which you first met up with the squadron and the
15 troops?

16 CS: Yes.

17 LC: And was this when you found out that you would be with C Troop or did you
18 know that already?

19 CS: No, that's when they assigned me to C Troop. At that point in time the Cav
20 had just finished a major operation. To the best of my knowledge the whole division was
21 together at An Khe. I think that's the last time they were ever, was the division at one
22 place at one time.

23 LC: Can you describe generally the setup at An Khe? How big was it and what
24 were your first impressions of it?

25 CS: First of all, you know you may have seen pictures or read about; they had
26 what they called the golf course, which is where they parked all their helicopters. And
27 then they had places, billets, around the area. Of course they had one large perimeter,
28 which they guarded, that enclosed the whole base and I was kind of hard pressed to find
29 some place to stay to, you know, to sleep and what have you because of the way things
30 were. And they had a—I guess I was assigned to C Troop right away because I reported
31 in and the C Troop had its own mess facility but didn't have enough utensils and what

1 have you so I managed to hit a guy who was going on R&R (rest and relaxation), gave
2 him some money, and said, “Buy some, buy forks and spoons so the mess hall would be
3 able to provide those.” Well, as it turns out we were never back in An Khe again so it
4 doesn’t make much difference.

5 LC: How long did you actually stay there before you started moving around?

6 CS: As I recall the troop and most of the division moved out after three days. I
7 had to go through what was known as a Cav flight orientation. Needed to learn how to
8 fly the nap of the Earth and that sort of thing, and some of their tactics. I might mention
9 that the transition we had was on the UH1D helicopter. Slick, in other words. I was
10 assigned as the commander of the aero-weapons platoon, C Troop—gun ships. I had
11 never seen a gun ship up close and personal though until I was assigned to the troop.

12 LC: And you were assigned to command?

13 CS: Um-hm. So I did a lot of OJT (on-the-job), had to transition into the B-
14 model, and then I also had C-models. About five B-models and five C-models in the
15 platoon. They were equipped with various weapons systems.

16 LC: Okay. Can you describe some of those weapons systems just briefly?

17 CS: Well, the standard one was you had two pylons, you know, one pylon on
18 either side of the aircraft and on those pylons you have two M-60 C-model machine guns
19 mounted on them. Then you had rocket pods that were slung under the pylons. And you
20 did have some flexibility in elevation of the machine guns but nothing in the deflection.
21 And also you had an M-5, which is a forty mm grenade launcher, mounted on the nose of
22 the helicopter and it was [to] rotate and you could also, you know, [change its] elevation.
23 So that was my favorite. That’s what I normally used.

24 LC: That grenade launcher, how many rounds, I guess—for lack of a better
25 word—did you have on board typically?

26 CS: Well, you could have about, I think a box containing a hundred and fifty
27 rounds and we would fill that up. You had a long chute that ran back in the cargo
28 compartment up to the nose and into the gun, and I’d carry a couple of extra boxes of
29 ammunition so that the crew chief or door gunner back there would watch before we ran
30 the shells up out of [the ammo bay so that we could reload]. So that once you let it get
31 too far up into the chute why you’d have to land some place and reload it.

1 LC: Okay. So that was the responsibility of one of the men in the back to keep an
2 eye on that. And your orientation to the gun ships was just a couple of days? Well, I
3 know it went on longer after that, but you kind of had to do it on the fly as it were.

4 CS: Yes.

5 LC: Okay. Where did you move out to? You said you left An Khe, where did
6 you go?

7 CS: Well, the troop left after about three days and went to a landing zone called
8 the Oasis, which was out close to or north and little east of the Ia Drang Valley. And I
9 rejoined the troop, you know, after a couple or three days when I went through the
10 orientation bit of it and went out and took over the command of the platoon.

11 LC: Now, as platoon commander you were reporting to the commanding officer
12 of the troop, correct?

13 CS: Um-hm.

14 LC: And who was that at that time?

15 CS: Tell you that he was a new major, just came in, I think, the day or so before I
16 arrived at the troop. I can't remember his name, and the reason being he was killed
17 shortly after that. He had just, I think, completed Command and General Staff College.

18 LC: And he was killed very soon after you arrived?

19 CS: Yeah. He had gone to a meeting at squadron [headquarters] and when he was
20 coming back he ran into some fog, and he and I guess the pilot who was flying him got
21 vertigo and crashed. Killed everybody.

22 LC: Oh boy. Was that a night flight then or do you know?

23 CS: Yes, [at night].

24 LC: Who replaced him, sir?

25 CS: Well, the XO (commanding officer) was Ted Ritchie, and he took over the
26 command of the troop.

27 LC: And did he stay in that position or was he replaced?

28 CS: No. He stayed in that position until about December.

29 LC: Okay. Did the loss of the commanding major of C Troop have a—did that
30 have an effect on you? What was the impact of that on you, if any?

1 CS: Not much if any because he—since I was there and new with him, you know,
2 he wanted to go through and change a whole bunch of things, even after the troop had
3 worked out their TTPs (tactics, techniques, and procedures) and they worked, you know,
4 and he wanted to go and make changes that I didn't think were necessarily wise. And it's
5 a shame that, you know, not only killed him but the young pilot that was with him and the
6 two people in the back. Matter of fact we lost another bird to weather out there looking
7 for him, fire fly bird, you know that crashed also out there flying around in the night
8 trying to find them. See, the XO of the—the operations officer—that was flying with
9 him, an older major, had more experience. When he ran into all that [fog] he just came to
10 hover, did a turn, and then flew right back out of the stuff. You know, it gets back to,
11 you know, nothing beats experience.

12 LC: Right. And his awareness of the potential dangers associated with the fog.

13 CS: That's correct. Turned out the other guy, the lieutenant who was flying the
14 major had not been checked out on the C-model. There was not that much difference
15 between them there is enough to where you—

16 LC: You need to know.

17 CS: Yeah. And you know the C-model has basically the same rotor system used
18 on the Cobra.

19 LC: Well, sir, you arrived at LZ Oasis. Can you describe that LZ for us? Do you
20 remember much about it?

21 CS: Well, it had—there was a command tent, a mess hall, such as it was, set up
22 and then everybody lived in, hex tents. And we operated in and out of there. Basically
23 we would fly missions down looking for the enemy, to see if any of them had infiltrated
24 back into the Ia Drang River. See the big battle they had there was [about a year before]
25 November of '65. But we spent a lot of time down in that area looking for the enemy and
26 basically didn't see any of them. Of course at that point in time it takes you a while to
27 learn how to do reconnaissance from the air and how to spot things. And I was, at that
28 point in time, was pretty much a newbie.

29 LC: Who did you kind of rely on to clue you in to what it was you could find out
30 in your air reconnaissance mission? How you could see things that weren't immediately
31 apparent?

1 CS: Basically self-taught. You know, one day you can't see much of anything
2 and the next day all of a sudden you can see trails, trenches, bunkers, and all that sort of
3 stuff.

4 LC: Do you recall your first enemy contact? Was it in that area of the Ia Drang
5 Valley?

6 CS: No.

7 LC: Okay. Do you know where it was?

8 CS: Let me tell you what happened. We did not spend a lot of time in the Oasis.
9 We got orders that we would be attached to a task force, the unit being the 1st of the 7th
10 Cavalry, and we were to move to Phan Thiet the next day. We were given those orders
11 about six o'clock in the evening of the day before we were to move, so we went back to
12 An Khe, picked up maps of the area, and then we flew down the coast to Phan Thiet and
13 set up at the airfield there and sent birds out to fly the last light [mission]. You know, we
14 were there operational [in less than twenty-four hours]. I think it took two C130s to fly
15 the rest of the stuff that we couldn't fly inside of our aircraft and included, you know
16 some ammunition and [maintenance gear]. So you were pretty mobile, but that first, last
17 light that went out we were shot at so that's the first real enemy contact that we were
18 aware of.

19 LC: And did those guys return fire? Do you know?

20 CS: Oh yeah.

21 LC: Do you know what the result of that exchange—not a probably extended
22 one—but do you know?

23 CS: No, couldn't really tell.

24 LC: Okay. Now at Phan Thiet, how long were you there?

25 CS: We were there, the whole troop, maybe a month or a little over. I might go
26 back and say that after the third day we were there the NVA (North Vietnamese Army)
27 launched a ground attack on the airfield probably around eleven o'clock, twelve o'clock
28 at night.

29 LC: Could you describe that attack as much as you remember of it?

30 CS: Well, it came in on the west side of the airfield. Three of us went in the air—
31 the troop commander, one of my section leaders, and myself. We went over and

1 supported trying to, you know, repulse the people and I don't think they ever got inside
2 the wire.

3 LC: And what were you using? What were you firing?

4 CS: Oh, I had an M5 system, never fired a round. The other two had rockets and
5 machine guns.

6 LC: Okay. And did you—can you describe how you felt? Was this your first,
7 you know, sort of primary engagement in the UH1?

8 CS: Well, the first one I was ever in a, what one might call, a fire fight.

9 LC: Yes, sir. Can you describe how you felt? What was going through your
10 head?

11 CS: It was frustrating because I didn't get to shoot anything.

12 LC: Why didn't you get to shoot? Did you have a target or were your orders such
13 that you were supposed to be doing something other than shooting?

14 CS: Well, the troop commander and my section leader and Bob Hardin, you
15 know, they were the ones that were doing the firing. You got to be very [careful] at
16 nighttime, you got to be very careful about not shooting a friendly so you just don't go
17 out and do the things willy-nilly. So this time we were out of fuel and out of ammo and
18 what have you, you know, it was over and done with.

19 LC: I see. And what kind of weaponry was the enemy using that night?

20 CS: They were using small arms and some mortars.

21 LC: Were the mortars locatable? Could you tell where they were?

22 CS: No. They did set fire to one of the fuel pods there.

23 LC: And was that fire contained pretty quickly?

24 CS: Yeah, pretty much so.

25 LC: Okay. And would this have been yet in August of 1966?

26 CS: Um-hm. Yes.

27 LC: Okay. What happened next? Do you remember any incidents from the
28 following few weeks while you were still at Phan Thiet?

29 CS: Well, that attack triggered—see the task force that was sent down there—the
30 infantry had a battery of ARA (aerial rocket artillery) and our troop, of course, some
31 support elements. They were sent down there to pacify that area because they were going

1 to conduct national elections and I think around the first of November. So, commander
2 of that—and of course the 11th Group people had their lift ships—they performed what
3 was basically a show of force a little around the area of the [air field,] showed them that
4 we were there and we were going to stay and go ahead and do it. You know, fighting
5 took place around that area, you know, throughout that whole period of time.

6 LC: Did you find out whether those were primarily NVA or VC (Viet Cong) units
7 that were active in the Phan Thiet area?

8 CS: From my point of view most of those people were NVA.

9 LC: Okay. Why do you say that?

10 CS: Because of the uniforms and stuff that they wore.

11 LC: What about weaponry? Was that any kind of a tell-tale sign as to who it was
12 that you were confronting?

13 CS: Mostly they had either SKSs or AK-47s.

14 LC: Now, after the elections were completed what was—did the task force have a
15 new assignment or were you—?

16 CS: We left. They—sometime in probably August or something like that the
17 NVA hit LZ Hammond, which is where the good part of the division was at LZ
18 Hammond—I don't know how familiar you are with it, it's north of Phu Cat—and they
19 had destroyed several of the squadron's [helicopters] and I guess left us some casualties.
20 So we were told to leave the scout platoon down at Phan Thiet to work with that task
21 force and the rest of the troop went back north to LZ Hammond to operate out of there.
22 We were supposed to go back down there but we figured once we left there we would
23 never go back and we didn't.

24 LC: Okay. Were you part of the section of C Troop that went up to LZ
25 Hammond?

26 CS: Yes. The only thing we left behind at Phan Thiet was a scout platoon, the
27 OH13Ss.

28 LC: Okay. But your platoon went back up to Phu Cat?

29 CS: Everything other than the scout platoon went up there.

30 LC: Okay. And what did you observe when you got up there? What did you find
31 out had happened in the NVA attack?

1 CS: Well, they had, basically as I recall, they didn't penetrate the thing. They just
2 fired mortars and rockets in.

3 LC: And those had done the damage to the aircrafts?

4 CS: Um-hm.

5 LC: Okay. Do you know how many aircrafts were down as a result of that
6 attack—I mean, not flyable?

7 CS: No. Probably maybe ten or fifteen but I'm guessing.

8 LC: So how long did you stay around the Hammond LZ?

9 CS: We stayed there until probably [early of] February '67.

10 LC: And during that time period did you have, did your platoon have contact with
11 the enemy?

12 CS: Yeah.

13 LC: Do you recall any particular incidents?

14 CS: Well, I'll tell you about—we had contact, not on a daily basis necessarily, but
15 frequent. There were two—one major engagement on one December 1966. We had had
16 contact two or three days before then and we had killed and captured some NVA and
17 there was a village in the bend of the An Lo River [where it] comes down and what have
18 you and we'd put our infantry platoon on the ground to start sweeping up towards the
19 village.

20 LC: That would be your Blues?

21 CS: Yes. Probably been told this but at least in that area almost all the villages
22 were fortified. In other words, they had trench lines and bunkers and spider holes and
23 what have you all around them. And the Blues were approaching the village. You know,
24 the NVA did their typical tactics. They would wait until friendly guys would get close
25 enough before they started opening fire. They would do that because then that would
26 negate the artillery and air strikes, you know, from us because then you have a possibility
27 of killing your own people. But anyway they opened fire and for all practical purposes
28 wiped out the 4th Squad of the Blues. The platoon leader went over to see what was
29 going on and he was killed, and so that started an engagement that started around noon
30 and went into the night. Right at nighttime, you know, the Cav reinforced with a couple
31 of battalions, and then we pulled our platoon out. We were supporting the other infantry

1 guys who were down on the ground and with the M5 system, you know, with this you
2 could be pretty accurate with it. I would tell the tale that I got to the point to where I
3 could hit a guy running within three rounds of firing the thing in the distance. So you'd
4 go in and you'd almost have to hover over the trench line and what have you but you
5 couldn't fire down into the trenches, you know, to kill the NVA and what have you that
6 was in there. And so we continued supporting them and also screened the river on the
7 north side of the village so that nobody could escape, you know, to the north. During that
8 engagement my aircraft took a few rounds. I had to land the thing because it lost one of
9 the hydraulic systems, but then I commandeered another aircraft and went back [to the
10 fray]. We ended up taking several bullet holes in it.

11 LC: Sir, can you describe the network of communications such that while you're
12 flying your helicopter you're also in command of your platoon?

13 CS: Well, we were all on the same UHF (ultra high frequency) frequency and you
14 can—to talk to the people on the ground you'd have to be on the FM (frequency
15 modulation) frequency to talk with them. And of course the other aircraft, if you were
16 out there, to also monitor that frequency so that, you know, they could understand—keep
17 track of what was going on.

18 LC: Would you say that you were in the air—aside from your forced landing
19 there—most of the time during that battle?

20 CS: Yes. One of those twelve hour days.

21 LC: What were the losses for the Blues on the ground? Do you remember?

22 CS: They probably lost between ten and fifteen people. Matter of fact we asked
23 for volunteers to go out, you know, and replace some of their people. I had a door gunner
24 in the platoon that was about to go home and the platoon sergeant told him, "Okay." He
25 let him go ahead and go out and resupply the people with ammunition and what have
26 you. They told the guy not to stay on the ground. Well, the kid did and ended up getting
27 killed, unfortunately.

28 LC: Do you remember his name, sir?

29 CS: No.

30 LC: Okay. Have you got an estimate of how many enemy you were in contact
31 with that day?

1 CS: Probably around a 150.

2 LC: Okay. So, a company?

3 CS: Um-hm. Reinforced company probably.

4 LC: Okay. And you said that the Cav sent in reinforcements and the Blues pulled
5 back and then out. About how many men were brought in by 1st Cav?

6 CS: Probably at least a battalion worth of people. And that's typical of the way
7 we operated.

8 LC: Meaning that the Cav—

9 CS: We would find the enemy and fix them, and then depending on the size and
10 what have you then we would be, you know, they'd bring in the infantry and then we
11 would pull back and out. We'd done our job.

12 LC: Yes, sir. Was your platoon able to block any digressed path by the—I'm
13 assuming they're NVA?

14 CS: While we were out patrolling, yes.

15 LC: Okay. Did you actually come across combatants who you think were trying
16 to get out of the area?

17 CS: No. The only thing I will tell you that—we found out that—this was not our
18 unit; it belongs to one of the other cav units. I want to say it's probably part of the 12th
19 Cav but I wouldn't swear to it. But anyway they sat there and they watched a hundred
20 NVA exfiltrate up along the river and they asked the sergeant, you know, "Why did you
21 do that?" And he said, "Well, there were more of them than there were of us." He
22 should have known that if he had fired and what have you those people would have
23 turned around and gone back into the village in all likelihood, but—

24 LC: So they just kind of let them go by?

25 CS: Yeah. At least he counted them.

26 LC: Yeah. What was your opinion of that at the time? How did that sit with you?

27 CS: Not very well.

28 LC: I suspected as much.

29 CS: We were able to follow them up in the north, northeast and went up into a
30 bunker complex, which then we attacked with artillery and air.

31 LC: And was that in the next day or so?

1 CS: No. That's the morning after all of that.

2 LC: Okay. So you deployed in strength against this complex?

3 CS: We didn't. You know, we left it to other people. Might mention in that battle
4 occurred on one December. SLA Marshall and I came up and, you know, did some
5 interviews. Sergeant Smith—he was the blue platoon sergeant—and one of the squad
6 leaders, Sergeant Kaneshiro, were put in for the Congressional Medal of Honor and that
7 was downgraded to a Distinguished Service Cross.

8 LC: And Kaneshiro was interviewed that day?

9 CS: Well, I don't know who all were interviewed but the only thing I know is
10 SLA Marshall was in the area.

11 LC: Ok. But Sergeant Kaneshiro's actions that day came to the notice of the
12 command, higher?

13 CS: Yes. Um-hm. He was one of the squad leaders.

14 LC: Okay. And I know that his—did you have a relationship with him? Did you
15 know him at all?

16 CS: Not well.

17 LC: Not well, but you knew who he was?

18 CS: Yeah. I knew Sergeant Smith a lot better and Captain Jones was the
19 captain—both Jones and Smith were black soldiers. And like I said, Jones was killed
20 very quickly when he went over to see what was going on, what would be the [south]
21 bank.

22 LC: He was killed that day?

23 CS: Yes.

24 LC: Do you know what particular actions, for example, Kaneshiro was lauded for
25 on first of December? What had he specifically done?

26 CS: He was probably responsible [for killing several NVA]. I don't know all the
27 particulars. He may have rescued [soldiers and inflicted casualties on the enemy]. By
28 the way, Kaneshiro was killed on the sixth of March '67.

29 LC: Yes, sir. And I want to ask you about that battle too. That was at Hoi Thanh,
30 yes?

31 CS: Yes.

1 LC: And let's talk about that in just a minute. That's why I was asking you if you
2 knew about Kaneshiro's actions on the first of December because I know he's a very
3 important figure and very brave man. Were there any other actions that were, that
4 approached the degree of seriousness while you were stationed at LZ Hammond? That
5 approached the degree that you encountered on the first of December?

6 CS: No. We would—while we were out patrolling we would run across, for
7 instance—I'm trying to remember—probably to the north and west of that particular
8 village, you know, we spotted several NVA—it's hard to describe. You just get a feeling
9 while you're flying around that you could tell, okay, there's been activity in a village, you
10 know, recent activity. And as we were circling around we could see one of the NVA
11 would pop his head out of the door of a hut, you know, and he would draw himself back
12 into the hut. So, we came around, you know, told my door gunner, I said, "Ok, throw a
13 WP (white phosphorous) grenade down in there." Which he did, and it was the perfect
14 shot. [The grenade] bounced right at the threshold of the door and inside the hut. Well,
15 there were three of them that made their own exits out of the back of the hut and we
16 killed just two of them, maybe picked up another one when the infantry put the infantry
17 platoon down on the ground and they took a prisoner. And he was telling us that back up
18 on the hill to the west of there, you know, there was about another company sized unit.
19 But you know that was kind of typical actions [that] would have, almost [occur] on a
20 daily basis.

21 LC: Were you at any point required to sort of call in and get approval before you
22 would make the kind of engagement you've just described or were you at liberty to
23 follow your instincts and information that you had and handle it when you saw it?

24 CS: It all depended. A lot of times in the areas we were operating in were free
25 fire zones.

26 LC: For someone who doesn't understand that reference could you just clarify
27 what that would mean?

28 CS: The free fire zones [are where] all the civilians people were evacuated out of
29 the area. So, if you saw anyone in there, you know, unless they were U.S. forces you
30 always knew where they were then they were considered to be enemy so you, of course,
31 when you see them with rifles and uniforms on then they're fair game.

1 LC: There's no doubt. Right. Did you have any relationships with ARVN troops
2 at all during your first tour and particular the first half of your first tour?

3 CS: No.

4 LC: Okay. You were just operating within the 1st Cav and you didn't have any
5 kind of relationship with, say, any other allied forces?

6 CS: No. Once in awhile we would get clearance from one of the ROK (Republic
7 of Korea) divisions. They had an area that abutted onto ours and we would go in and
8 they would give us the chunk of terrain and we went and operated in, you know. But
9 other than that face-to-face and what have you, no.

10 LC: Okay. You left, I take it, LZ Hammond in about February 1967?

11 CS: Yeah. Matter of fact I was on R&R when they moved out of LZ Hammond
12 up to LZ Two Bits and up on the Bong Son Plain.

13 LC: Ok. Let me ask you first about your R&R. Where did you go and how long
14 were you away?

15 CS: I went to Hawaii and met the wife.

16 LC: Okay. And how long did you get to stay?

17 CS: I think it was about six days.

18 LC: Okay. Was it something that you really looked forward to once you found
19 out you were actually going to get it?

20 CS: Yes.

21 LC: I'm sure it was. And can you tell me how you felt having to go back to
22 Vietnam?

23 CS: Well, of course you don't want to go back but, you know, you do what you
24 got to do.

25 LC: Yes, sir. How was your wife with all that?

26 CS: I—you know, she understood.

27 LC: She sounds like a very smart woman. When you arrived back you were
28 going to a different LZ and you said Two Bits. Could you describe that LZ for us?

29 CS: Well, it's like any other. It was actually in a Vietnamese graveyard [area];
30 they had a graveyard around there. Normally, you know, you had your aircraft and you
31 had your tent set up and that was about it. You know, going back to LZ Hammond, you

1 know, we dug our own—not foxholes—but bunkers and reinforced them and what have
2 you, you know. We would also sand bag the side of our tents and what have you for, you
3 know, self-protection and what have you. So those were typical things that you would do
4 to protect yourself, but basically you lived in tents and out in the open. You maintained
5 your aircraft out in the open.

6 LC: Was most of C Troop relocated along with your platoon?

7 CS: Yes. The scout platoon came up and joined us sometime probably in April.

8 LC: Okay. Before I ask you about the combat that I gather very quickly you
9 became engaged in there in early March; I just want to ask you about your command and
10 how you were coping with the demands of being a platoon commander. Did you feel that
11 the preparation that you had had both at West Point and in the subsequent courses, did
12 they had prepped you adequately for what it was you were confronting?

13 CS: I'm not sure what [you mean,] what caused you to ask that. As a professional
14 officer, you know, you prepare yourself, you know, to lead men and to operate the
15 equipment, and that's what you do. You know and I think that the relationship I had with
16 enlisted and officers were pretty good.

17 LC: Okay. Did you have a different commander of the troop by this point?

18 CS: Yeah. Major Bagnal took over the troop in December of '66.

19 LC: Okay. And was this, was this his first tour in Vietnam or had he already had
20 experience?

21 CS: No, it was his first. He [had been] the XO of the troop.

22 LC: Okay. And in early March 1967 did you, again, have fairly heavy contact
23 with NVA?

24 CS: Other than the battle on the sixth of March it was sporadic. You know, some
25 days you'd go out and maybe not find anyone and then the next day you go out and you
26 find, you know, a squad or so of the NVA and you'd get in some sort of fire fight but—

27 LC: But it was not consistent?

28 CS: No.

29 LC: Can you describe what happened on the sixth of March?

1 CS: Well, it's kind of humorous in some respects. I'd gotten a new pilot and he
2 was assigned to go out on first light. Do you understand what first light and last light
3 missions are?

4 LC: Yes, sir, but it might be good if you just described it for other people who
5 might not know.

6 CS: The first light you would go out and fly around the area of operations and you
7 have a particular area of interest to focus on, but, you know, might catch the NVA or the
8 VC trying to get back to wherever they were while it was still, you know, just getting
9 light. And that's first light. Last light, same type of thing. You go out and check your
10 area of operations. Usually have some specific area that you want to focus on and the
11 same thing. You'd see the—funny—they were just emerging from wherever they were
12 hiding or going back into their hide positions. [It was a] standard operating procedure.
13 You always conducted first and last light. Well, this new individual was out flying.
14 Since we did not have the scout platoon with us my platoon did all the scouting and fire
15 support of the troop. So, this guy was flying low level and the other aircraft would fly
16 cover from him—keep an eye on him and what have you so if he's running into any
17 problem it would be in position to, you know, go down and support him. So we had—
18 and of course matter of course—if we saw military age males and what have you out
19 walking around in the villages or along the dikes and what have you we would go in and
20 pick them up as detainees and take them back for interrogation because, normally
21 speaking, military age males were scarce in the area. So he went in and landed next to a
22 rice paddy dike and he sent his door gunner out to get a guy. What we had not told him
23 or what he should have known [but] didn't but he wanted—a guy this particular
24 individual sent his door gunner out for [the person who] was down in the spider hole and
25 had a weapon. So, you know, normally you would not want to fool with him because you
26 know that you'll probably be taken under fire and what have you, which is what
27 happened. Fortunately the door gunner hit the ground. And there's also not only the guy
28 who was out and shooting but there was another machine gun in the area that shot the
29 helicopter and some rounds went into the transmission. Well, he was able to get off the
30 ground and flew maybe three or four hundred meters over and landed [next to] this
31 village right along the coast, landed on the beach. Well, the guy who was an experienced

1 aviator saw what was going on and called out mayday and immediately that scrambled
2 the people back to Two Bits [LZ], which was not too far away from where all of this was
3 transpiring. So we went out and we had to secure the helicopter down on the beach—
4 they couldn't fly—and get those people in. [We used the Blue Platoon to secure the area
5 while the maintenance team rigged the helicopter for lifting. A Chinook would lift the
6 helicopter out for maintenance.] Somebody's at the door so—

7 LC: Okay. I'll just stop for a moment.

8 LC: Okay. Go ahead. You were describing the response to the helicopter having
9 left the door gunner out and then had difficulty flying away but had managed to—
10 someone called for mayday.

11 CS: Yep. And then put the infantry platoon down on the ground and they rescued
12 the poor door gunner that was left down there.

13 LC: Right. He had been alone for a while.

14 CS: Yeah. So then they started developing the situation and it became pretty
15 apparent that there was, you know, a fairly sizeable force in the area as they started
16 working their way up through, like I said, it was a typical village out there with bunkers
17 and trench lines and what have you. And, matter of fact, they're working their way up—
18 you know, the Blues took some more casualties. During that time period Kaneshiro was
19 trying to go up and rescue some of the people that [were wounded and] he was killed.

20 LC: Okay. Do you know the circumstances in which he found himself during the
21 battle and how he was killed?

22 CS: No. He was killed by small arms fire. He just was trying to go out across
23 [the area], basically, clear the area to them to bring a wounded guy back. While that was
24 going on, see, we—thinking back on what have you—twenty-twenty hindsight—as that
25 battle developed, it should have been clearer to us that we were dealing with a fairly
26 sizeable unit. We were at that time supporting the 3rd Brigade of the 25th Division, which
27 had been attached as op con (operational control) to the 1st Cav Division out in that what
28 they called the crescent area. And they sent a unit, mechanized unit, over to patrolling in
29 the battle. They were off some distance so it took them awhile to get over there. Of
30 course we continued the recon area and, like I said, you could tell from the air that there
31 were quite a few of bad guys down in there. [We would end up] hovering over the trench

1 lines and you could use your door gunners. I did not have my M5 system at that time so,
2 and as the good guys got over in the area you couldn't use your rockets because they're
3 not the most accurate things in the world.

4 LC: So there was a risk with that.

5 CS: Yeah. But you could hover over the trench lines and shoot down into them.
6 Of course when you did that you're at treetop level and they shoot back and you get shot
7 down [you go down on top of them]. Having to go down in there your chances of
8 survival is not too good but you do what you got to do.

9 LC: Now, did your platoon have additional duties in terms of blocking any retreat
10 for the enemy?

11 CS: We would screen around the [village] but for the most part we were
12 functioning in support of the people on the ground. We also medevaced some of their
13 wounded and it turned out the one I took out for them was dead, but—

14 LC: So, you actually had to get down on the ground?

15 CS: Yeah, you landed.

16 LC: And how far from the principal area of combat were you when you went in to
17 get some people who were, as you thought, wounded out of there?

18 CS: Well, the [NVA] had captured some [M-73] ammunition and that was
19 exploding next to where we were so it was pretty close.

20 LC: Pretty close. How much fire did you take when you were coming in and
21 going out for that particular maneuver when you were medevacing someone?

22 CS: I didn't take a round at all, not in the airplane.

23 LC: Really? Wow. Were any of the men in your ship hurt on this day?

24 CS: No.

25 LC: That's amazing. What about your platoon? How did your other pilots fair?

26 CS: Other than the one that got shot down, had, you know, forced landing what
27 have you. [Other than the one, no one else had any bullet holes or casualties. Only the
28 Blue Platoon had KIAs (killed in action) as well as the mech pit].

29 LC: Wow. What about the pilot of the first aircraft who had let his door gunner
30 and then he had, took a couple of rounds, I guess, in the transmission? What happened to
31 him? Do you remember?

1 CS: No. Other than being extracted nothing.

2 LC: Okay. He was far enough away that he was able to get out. That heavy
3 contact, did it continue for most of the day?

4 CS: It continued all day [and into the night and the next day]. I was out at dusk
5 [registering artillery to support the Blue Platoon and the mechanics company]. We'd
6 extracted out infantry platoon and then we put them back in on a ridge line, north of the
7 village, in blocking position and there were some other infantry up there too. And we
8 were firing artillery down, you know, registering the things and what have you so that the
9 infantry platoon up there would, you know, have something to fire in case somebody
10 tried to exfiltrate through there. And like I said it was dark by the time we finished all
11 that and went back [to the FARP (forward area refueling point) to] refuel and re-arm.

12 LC: And the following day did you have any continuing contact or did the NVA
13 redeploy somehow or do you know?

14 CS: No. They—the other infantry out of the 25th went through the village and
15 swept it and they policed up a few stragglers and wounded and what have you but the rest
16 of them, you know, exfiltrated. This thing was right at the base of the Cay Giep
17 Mountain. And you could tell that Cay Giep, you know, was probably honeycombed
18 with tunnels and what have you, but anyway it—they were fighting—I think the 9th
19 Battalion of the 22nd NVA Regiment, was in there. And the battalion headquarters [was]
20 probably in about the center of the village and all its companies were, you know,
21 providing security to it. That's what we ran into. And I think during the—like I say,
22 twenty-twenty hindsight—if we had realized what was going on we probably could have
23 pretty well exterminated them but, you know, we didn't realize what it was. And there
24 was still also—you had to be careful, there were some villagers wandering around in the
25 area. [Normally when the NVA moved into the villages the civilians would evacuate out
26 of the area.]

27 LC: And was the presence of civilians kind of a, was that a constant concern to
28 you and the other commanders to limit casualties with the civilians?

29 CS: Yeah. There weren't very many of them. Of course from the air you could
30 see a lot more so you never fired at them. But down on the ground [it is harder]. I think

1 it was a woman that was killed. But you know, she was in the middle of an area she
2 shouldn't have been so it's one of those unfortunate incidents.

3 LC: Yes, sir. After this particular battle did you continue to be based at Two
4 Bits?

5 CS: Yeah. That's where I left from. I left on emergency leave. My father had
6 had a second heart attack in May of '67. He had had one previous and said I better come
7 back for the second one because of it and he died at the end of May.

8 LC: Okay. And did you return to Vietnam right away?

9 CS: No. I was close to my ETS (expiration term of service) so they just
10 reassigned me in the States and I went back to—I went to Ft. Knox, Kentucky.

11 LC: Okay. What did you do at Ft. Knox?

12 CS: I was assigned to the material division of the Combat Developments
13 Command Armor Agency.

14 LC: What was your job there?

15 CS: Well, my main job was I was the project officer on the armored
16 reconnaissance scout vehicle.

17 LC: Okay. Can you describe that vehicle?

18 CS: Well, it's a small tracked vehicle. Had I think about a twenty-eight or
19 twenty-five millimeter gun on it, plus it had sensors and equipment on it. It's about the
20 size of an M113 if you know what those are except it had a turret on it and a gun and
21 what have you so it was capable of fighting for information if necessary but it's primary
22 role is reconnaissance.

23 LC: As project officer what kinds of things were you supposed to be doing and
24 what did you do to move that vehicle along in terms of design, production, tactics?

25 CS: Well, it was in the early stages of defining what the requirements ought to be
26 and what have you. So, I used to go up to Chicago—Booze Allen and Hamilton was
27 doing a study to determine all that and I was on the study advisory group. Also, at that
28 point in time I also handled the Cheyenne helicopter.

29 LC: In the same kind of way also as a project officer?

30 CS: Yes.

1 LC: Okay. Being away from combat and from Vietnam can you talk about your
2 adjustment coming back to Ft. Knox? Did you continue to keep up with what C Troop
3 was doing?

4 CS: Yes. We—trying to remember—I think we had a reunion at Knox, either
5 then or some later time when I was back at Knox. I remember the One/Nine Cav and—
6 so we—matter of fact, over the years we've always been, you know, kind of a close
7 group. Matter of fact if anybody in the 1st of the 9th was kind of, you know, close knit.

8 LC: Yes, sir. And you felt that continuing sort of connection with C Troop even
9 though you were back in the States?

10 CS: Oh yeah. By the way, you know, they formed two additional air cavalry
11 squadrons at Ft. Knox. Were you aware of that?

12 LC: Yes, sir. And that would have been on the basis of the success of the
13 One/Nine?

14 CS: That's correct. And they deployed out of there.

15 LC: Can you give the names, the numbers of those two units if you know them?

16 CS: One of them was the 3rd of the 17th Cav and I think the other one may have
17 been the 7th of the 1st. One of them became the air cav squadron of the 101st Air Assault
18 Division and the other one went down into, worked in the Delta area. They [supported]
19 maybe primarily the 9th Division.

20 LC: When you were at Ft. Knox were you ever interviewed or debriefed about the
21 air assault tactics and the air mobility successes of the 1st and the 9th? Did anyone talk to
22 you about what your experience had been there such that they could use that information
23 in developing, broadening the use of the tactics?

24 CS: No. The only thing I did was, I guess, touring one of the armor conferences I
25 gave them. Short presentation on air cav operations and Vietnam, but there were no
26 formal debriefs that I recall.

27 LC: Okay. That in a way sort of surprises me because I know the 1st of the 9th
28 really was the exemplar of the new helicopter tactics. So maybe they should have asked
29 you. They should have taken more cognizance of the experience you've had, but in any
30 even were you in any way anxious to get back to your squadron and the 9th Cav?

1 CS: Well, that—let me tell you a story and then you can draw your own
2 conclusion. In about August, I guess, in 1968 I got a call from armor branch and wanted
3 to know if I would volunteer to go back to Vietnam because apparently they had some
4 unprogrammed losses. In other words, somebody had either been killed or wounded or
5 injured otherwise. And I asked the wife and she said kind of not only no but hell no.
6 You know, because I was not—did not want to be put in a position of volunteering to go
7 back over there. So I told them that, you know, send me orders and I'll go do what I'm
8 told to do but don't ask me to volunteer. Told them I wasn't interested in going, you
9 know, [and it was not] necessary because they also wanted to transition me into the Cobra
10 and what have you so I said, "Okay we'll see you next spring." Well, I got orders and I
11 went back to Vietnam in January of 1969. I did not go to Cobra transition or anything
12 else.

13 LC: Just straight from Ft. Knox then?

14 CS: Yeah. This time I went through McChord Air Force base in Washington.

15 LC: Okay. But you had not yet been in a Cobra at this point for any amount of
16 time?

17 CS: I don't think I'd flown one. I was well aware that they had fielded the Cobra
18 in about August, September of '67 in Vietnam.

19 LC: But you hadn't really spent any time with that ship yet?

20 CS: No.

21 LC: Okay. And what were your orders? You by this time had been promoted to
22 major, were your orders to take command?

23 CS: No, no. They don't do that. They send you over and I think I was assigned to
24 the 1st Cavalry Division but once you get over there then they put you where they think
25 you're needed the most and what have you.

26 LC: Okay. And where was that? Where did that turn out to be?

27 CS: Well, I was sent back to the 1st of the 9th and it turned out the squadron CO
28 (commanding officer) was looking, he needed an executive officer and I just figured I
29 would get there and fool around on the staff for a while and finally get command. Well, I
30 showed up and took command within about a week, the same troop.

31 LC: Right. C Troop. And who was the commander?

1 CS: Of the squadron?
2 LC: Yes, sir.
3 CS: Colonel Peterson.
4 LC: Okay. And you became the XO then for C Troop?
5 CS: Pardon?
6 LC: You were the XO for the squadron or for C Troop?
7 CS: No, I was the commander of C Troop.
8 LC: Okay. And C troop at that point had how many platoons?
9 CS: The TOE (troops, organization, and equipment) had not changed. It had a
10 scout platoon, there was a gun platoon, you had an infantry platoon, maintenance section,
11 and of course you had an infantry platoon and you had a lift section.
12 LC: About how much of your time did you spend working on XO matters for the
13 squadron and how much—?
14 CS: I was not the XO. John Toolson went over and became the XO.
15 LC: Okay. I'm sorry. And was he there throughout your stay there in 1969?
16 CS: Yeah. I got shot before he left the troop or the squadron.
17 LC: Okay. And where did you actually, where was the troop in January when you
18 got there?
19 CS: We were in Phuoc Vinh.
20 LC: Okay. And can you describe your set up at this time? Your billet Phuoc
21 Vinh there and where you were living?
22 CS: Well, compared to the first tour the living conditions were much better. I
23 lived in a, what used to be there was an old French caserne there so I had a roof over my
24 head and walls and what have you. As you went down the veranda type thing they had a
25 place where you could shave and to put water up in [a drum], let the sun heat it, and
26 you'd get a hot shower. You could do your laundry. You were issued two flight suits so
27 you had to wash those. And all the troops were in Southeast Asia huts. In other words,
28 there were wooden buildings and the roof with wire screen meshes and all that sort of
29 stuff so living conditions were much better than what I had been exposed to in '66, '67.
30 We had our own mess hall. I had a maintenance facility, which was enclosed in a
31 building.

1 LC: Did you observe any differences between your first tour and your second tour
2 in terms of the men who were in your unit? Any discipline issues that were pronounced
3 in the later tour or did it seem pretty much the same to you?

4 CS: Let me tell you this. I went over in '66. All the aviators, most of them, you
5 know, a lot of them were warrant officers and they went to warrant officer candidate
6 school but they were senior NCOs, non-commissioned officers [before]. So they had
7 been around the Army for a while and were experienced. Lieutenants, you know, they
8 were a little bit more seasoned and within the squadron, when I got there, the commander
9 of the squadron was a full colonel. He'd just been promoted. He went down and took
10 over a brigade, 1st Brigade of the Cav, about a month or so after I got there. In other
11 words, you had a very top heavy rank structure. There was a lot of flying and other
12 [knowledge] about how the Army operated and [functioned] what have you. You know,
13 one of the troops was commanded by—I think it was Alpha Troop—was commanded by
14 a lieutenant colonel. So, we had a full complement of majors. You had a major troop
15 commander, you had a major XO, you had a major operations officer. Okay? Sixty-nine,
16 when I took command of the troop, I was the only major. I had no executive officer. I
17 had a twenty-one or twenty-two year old captain who had extended, was the operations
18 officer. All the warrant officers had gone through warrant officer candidate school, you
19 know, and they were eighteen, nineteen, twenty year old young men. I did have a
20 captain, Earling Smith, who was the weapons platoon leader, and I had a W2 that
21 transferred in. He had extended in Vietnam, but all the rest of the people were either
22 young lieutenants or young W1 warrant officers. So basically the first sergeant and I did
23 all the administration of the troop.

24 LC: Okay. And these younger men had less experience, presumably?

25 CS: Yeah. They were basically new to the Army and did not have a lot of flight
26 hours.

27 LC: Okay. And did that show in what they were able to actually do in their jobs
28 or not?

29 CS: As far as flying, doing scouting and [maintenance] they could do that pretty
30 well. It was all the other things that one would expect, you know, which they really
31 didn't have the basis for the knowledge and they had not been exposed to it.

1 LC: I see. And that made your work a little more difficult, I suppose, as the
2 commanding officer.

3 CS: Not for day to day operations necessarily. The idiots—and I call them
4 idiots—had scheduled, you know, these MACV (Military Assistance Command
5 Vietnam) people and what have you, had scheduled an inspector general inspection of C
6 Troop at the end of April 1969. And in my way of thinking, you know, that's almost
7 insane. You can't, you know to prepare for that type of inspection with the amount of
8 troops you had and [and fight a war at the same time] is just insane.

9 LC: Because it was diverting your time and attention from the matters at hand?

10 CS: Yes. You need to fight the war or you get ready for an IG (inspector general)
11 is about what it boils down to.

12 LC: Yes, sir. And that put you as the commanding officer in a little bit of a bind?

13 CS: Well, I had made a resolution that beginning one April I'd spend more time
14 on the ground getting ready for the IG and not spend so much time out in the AO (area of
15 operations). Well, since I got shot at about 9:30 on the thirty-first of March I never was
16 able to implement that plan. By the way, [C Troop] flunked the IG.

17 LC: Did they?

18 CS: Yeah, which didn't surprise me. I would have flunked it too probably.

19 LC: But you had a plan in place at least to try to—

20 CS: Yeah. See I would spend—probably flew a little over a hundred hours a
21 month, which meant you spent a lot of time out in the air then in the operational area.

22 LC: During March of 1969 you mentioned in filling out the questionnaire that at
23 one point there was perhaps some suspected Chinese with the NVA. Can you give any
24 detail on that?

25 CS: We were given the mission to go down and support the people on; I guess –
26 trying to remember the—down to the east of Bien Hoa—and was [out of] our normal
27 assigned AO. And we went down there and we got a few fire fights and what have you
28 and talking to people [on the ground a person] was killed. And they, you know,
29 speculated because of the size, you know, and appearance that they may have been
30 Chinese.

31 LC: And he was KIA during an operation?

1 CS: Yeah.

2 LC: Okay. Can you tell us what happened on the thirty-first of March?

3 CS: Well, I left my CP (command post) at Phuoc Vinh and flew down [to Cu

4 Chi]. I had a liaison party assigned to the 2nd Brigade headquarters at Cu Chi. I flew

5 down there, you know, took the mail down to them and talked to them, coordinated

6 things and what have you, and then took off from there and went up to my area of

7 operations. And I was some ways north of the Michelin plantation when I came under

8 fire by two 12.7 mm machine guns. They were set up along the western side of an old

9 arc-light [B-52] strike. So that gave them a clear field of fire off to the east. And like an

10 idiot I was flying straight line at low level and the one round hit the airplane and me, and

11 I could see the muzzle flashes and returned fire [with an M16 borrowed from the crew

12 chief]. Then told—[There was a] small debate going on between the pilot—I was in an

13 OH6 Alpha [and the Cobra pilot]. Both of my B-models were in maintenance because of

14 combat damage so they were debating what to do with me and I told them take me to Dau

15 Tieng, where they had an [an aid] station there so that's what they did. Then I just got in

16 the medevac chain.

17 LC: Okay. So they were able to—was the aircraft damaged very substantially?

18 CS: No. Just one round.

19 LC: Okay. And you were taken to an aid station, would that be appropriate

20 terminology for where you first were flown to?

21 CS: Um-hm.

22 LC: Okay. And from there you went to a hospital, is that right?

23 CS: Yeah. They did their normal checked me out and what have you and, I guess,

24 started an IV and put me on a medevac bird, which then flew down to Cu Chi and

25 dropped me off at the hospital.

26 LC: Okay. Was that the 12th Evac?

27 CS: Yeah.

28 LC: And you were there for a couple of weeks, is that right?

29 CS: That's about right.

30 LC: Okay. And then I gather that you went to Japan?

1 CS: Yes. They flew me from Cu Chi down to an Air Force base that they
2 medevaced people out of and then flew from there to Kishine Barracks in Japan. I think
3 the 109th General Hospital.

4 LC: Okay. And how long were you there, sir?

5 CS: Another couple weeks. I had two operations in Vietnam and I had two
6 operations there in Japan.

7 LC: And so you were pretty much unable to keep track of what was happening
8 with your troop by this point, would that be accurate?

9 CS: Yeah. I'll backtrack a little bit. While I was in the hospital at Cu Chi the
10 person who took command of the troop, I knew him from my first tour—was Tom
11 Felton. Tom had been in the scout platoon, you know, in '66, '67 time frame. And he
12 had been trained, checked out in the Mohawk. So he thought that's where he would be
13 going but instead when I got wounded they diverted him into C Troop. We had mined
14 the road that the NVA was using to drive trucks down and out of Cambodia, to go down
15 to a [turn around and off load] point and then send [supplies] on south. Well, when we
16 went in and mined the road I thought well somebody must have seen us going in and out
17 of there because, you know, nothing had happened [for several days] but he brought some
18 pictures down to me and showed me that we had destroyed at least three of their trucks
19 that had gone over that area where we had mined [the road]. So that made my day.

20 LC: I bet that felt pretty good.

21 CS: Unfortunately [Tom] he was killed in a mid-air crash sometime in June of
22 '69. [They were in the process of doing a night extraction of a long range patrol.]

23 LC: Do you know who took over command after Major Felton was killed?

24 CS: I think Bob Tredway did.

25 LC: Okay. Your stay in Japan, you said you had to have two operations while
26 you were there. And then can you tell me what happened after when you left Japan?

27 CS: Well, they flew me back to Travis [AFB (Air Force Base)] and I was a happy
28 camper because they finally took the cast off my left arm and I was able to take a bath.

29 LC: After all this time?

30 CS: Yeah. Up to that point it was sponge baths and stuff.

31 LC: Yeah. And was that at Travis?

1 CS: Yes.

2 LC: Then you were relocated again, is that right?

3 CS: Yeah. Then they flew me into Brooke [Hospital].

4 LC: Okay. Here in Texas?

5 CS: Yeah.

6 LC: Okay. And sir, were you doing rehabilitation and that kind of work while

7 you were still, I guess, hospitalized at Brooke?

8 CS: Yeah. I [en route] had something that kept amazing me was for some reason

9 [the doctors] were very concerned about, you know, bullet shot off the tip of my left

10 elbow and it was in a cast. They would focus on that and they would forget about the fact

11 that I had a big open wound in my side. So I kept getting their attention, I said, "You

12 know, that's all well and good but what about this?" [And would point to my side.]

13 [When I flew out] out of Vietnam over to Japan instead of changing the bandages they

14 just kept putting new ones on top of them, you know, they would bleed through and so

15 my side got infected.

16 LC: So that prolonged your hospitalization, probably, greatly.

17 CS: No. They just gave me some antibiotics and did some more operations to

18 debride the area [the wound.] But anyway, you know, instead of doing a skin graft,

19 which is what they kept threatening to do for my side, they ended up just wiring the thing

20 together and letting it heal from the inside out.

21 LC: And that takes a lot of time.

22 CS: Yeah. The wife still had to irrigate it, you know, while I was at home on

23 convalescent leave.

24 LC: Okay. But I'm sure she was very happy to have you home. That was

25 probably not too much of an imposition would be my guess.

26 CS: No. We were happy to be there.

27 LC: I'm sure you were. Sir, thinking back on your tours and on what you know

28 or have thought about the war subsequently, do you have any general observations on the

29 tactics that you were using and whether they were appropriate to the situation or maybe

30 could have been changed to be more effective? Do you have any thoughts on that?

1 CS: No. I think by and large the tactics, techniques, and procedures that we used
2 were pretty appropriate. We, in the short period of time that I commanded the troop, I
3 think we accounted for something like two hundred and fifty enemy. Unfortunately I lost
4 five soldiers killed. So we were pretty effective at what we were doing.

5 LC: Yes, sir. And that would have been just in the few weeks there at the
6 beginning of 1969?

7 CS: That's correct. We had contact with the enemy on a daily basis.

8 LC: And as you said earlier that varied in degree day to day.

9 CS: Yeah. Although—and I'm going to make this comment—in '69 [the NVA]
10 were a lot better armed, you know, [with small arms, rockets, heavy machine guns,
11 mortars, and recoilless rifles]. Back in '66, '67 a lot of times you would find them where
12 maybe only one out of three people would actually have a weapon. The rest of them
13 would have, you know, grenades and that sort of stuff but they would not have a rifle of
14 any sort. You know, the other guy got killed and they'd pick up the weapon. In '69 they
15 had new AK-47s. We captured some fifty caliber machine guns that [Chinese]
16 manufactured. On two occasions I caught [a platoon sized unit with recoilless rifle slung
17 under a pole and carried by two men. Other men would carry the ammunition.] What
18 they would use to replace artillery they would have one, you know, of those recoilless
19 rifles. And you would catch them, you know, along a trail and they would carry the rifle
20 slung underneath a bamboo pole between two people. And then the other people around
21 there would have the rounds strapped around their body and what have you. And there
22 would be about fifteen, twenty people in this unit. So twice we caught those type units
23 and shot them up. They ran bicycle convoys down [the trail inside War Zone D]. Like I
24 said, they used trucks, came out of Cambodia just west of the Fishhook area. Like I said
25 they were much better equipped in that time period than before. And I might mention
26 that one day we inadvertently were out checking out an area and they were just [along the
27 border] I saw from one of their OH6, flipped across the border and ended up into
28 Cambodia. And you could look down through the canopy and the soil underneath there is
29 just beaten down flat because of all the usage. You could see the openings of bunkers
30 down underneath the canopy. It even had picnic like tables out underneath there. So, I
31 had put my map down because we were looking for the other thing and I got the map

1 back out and get them located and what have you and they got a little more altitude.
2 When I did that the OH6, the way it was wired and what have you, if you got painted
3 with the radar gun then it would, you get a buzzing sound in your headset. Well, I got a
4 buzzing sound in the headset and I could see where we were. We were over on the
5 Cambodian side of the border so I told the other OH6 with me to hit the deck and get east
6 to get out of the area because we were being painted by 23 mm radar guided guns. And
7 that area, you know, we were going to call in air strikes and artillery until we found out
8 where it was. That happened to be the area, I think, when [the 1st Cav Division] went
9 there they had found—COSVN had a lot of equipment, people, and what have you in that
10 area. And that was probably just to the west of that is where they were running their
11 trucks out of there. [As it turned out, that was the COSVN (Central Office for South
12 Vietnam) headquarters.]

13 LC: About how far over the border would you estimate that you were when you
14 kind of got the map back in front of you and figured out where you were?

15 CS: Oh, no more than a couple hundred meters.

16 LC: Really?

17 CS: Matter of fact there was a little stream that ran along there and it was just
18 well, very close to that stream line.

19 LC: And sir was this during your first tour?

20 CS: No, this was the second tour.

21 LC: Okay. Can you comment on a broader level about U.S. strategic thinking
22 with regard to the war, either during the mid-1960s or later on? Do you have any
23 observations to make about the strategic plan that the United States—?

24 CS: There was none.

25 LC: Okay. Can you talk a little bit about that and how you came to that
26 conclusion?

27 CS: You know, as I think people learned, you know, if you're going to get in to a
28 shooting war then you go in to win it and you cannot have, you know, one or two arms
29 tied behind you when you're going in. That's what Johnson and McNamara and the rest
30 of them did, you know. And I get very agitated thinking about it. The soldiers, sailors,
31 airmen never lost a battle but, you know, people keep saying well you lost the war. Well,

1 that was entirely a political decision. If they had turned us loose, you know, we could
2 have won the war and you wouldn't have had, as what occurred, you know, you did have
3 the Domino Effect because once we pulled out and the North Vietnamese came in, took
4 Saigon, and you had problems in Cambodia and Laos and all those people, in fact you did
5 have the Domino Effect. So, I think Colin Powell and some of the others, you know,
6 learned their lesson out of that little go around that if you're going to do it then go in to
7 win, don't mess around.

8 LC: Can you say which mission constraints that were politically informed were
9 the most problematical in your judgment?

10 CS: Oh, allowing them to have the bases in Cambodia and Laos and the Ho Chi
11 Minh Trail [and not bombing North Vietnam]. You know, we should have gone in to
12 North Vietnam. You know, my brother-in-law was a prolific letter writer. He thought go
13 in and mine the harbors up there and they go in—matter of fact—you probably are aware
14 of it but maybe you're not—Admiral Stockdale was the superintendent of the Naval War
15 College when I was there and chatting with him. When they came over with the B-52s,
16 you know—and I'm not sure of the time either 1970 or ['71] what have you when Nixon
17 was president—if they had kept that up probably the North Vietnamese would have sued
18 for peace. But you know they stopped because the political environment within this
19 country, you know, were against it. But you probably never seen a B-52 strike but it's
20 pretty awesome. If they kept that up then things probably would have been a lot
21 different, but anyway you have to have the will of the people—that's kind of what's
22 troublesome about Iraq. You know, Bush is correct. As long as he holds the course—
23 you got to go after them and you can't back down.

24 LC: So once committed then commit all the way.

25 CS: That's correct.

26 LC: It won't surprise you to learn that that's a very common position that
27 Vietnam veterans take. Do you have any—did you have any reaction to the decision to
28 negotiate with the North Vietnamese that President Nixon took during his first term?

29 CS: Well, thinking back to what I think, it became obvious with the internal
30 situation, political situation, in the U.S., you know, he was trying to do the best he could

1 to disengage over there with some sense of honor but in the process, you know, when
2 they basically just pulled the rug out from underneath the South Vietnamese.

3 LC: Did you have a particular take on the South Vietnamese government? Did
4 you form an opinion about the health and stability of that government?

5 CS: Well, I know basically what I've read in the papers and what have you. It
6 was unfortunately fairly corrupt, and the quality of the ARVNs I think was somewhat
7 checkered. Some of them were good and some of them weren't so good.

8 LC: Sir, do you recall 1975 and the take over of the South?

9 CS: Yeah, I remember some of it.

10 LC: Do you remember having a particular reaction to that conclusion to the war?

11 CS: Well, I regretted it but the way we went about our business I think it was
12 inevitable, and it's, you know, kind of sorry because sure the Communists went in and
13 disposed of a lot of the people of, you know, were leaders in South Vietnam. Of course
14 we know about the people who got out of there when they could.

15 LC: Did you feel that that conclusion to the war was more or less inevitable given
16 the series of decisions that had preceded it? There were some in Congress, for example,
17 who at the eleventh hour there thought the United States should do something to prevent
18 the fall of Saigon particularly.

19 CS: Well, unless you put troops and aid in there, you know, that was what was
20 going to happen. I don't think anybody in the U.S. was willing to do that again.

21 LC: Right. Sir, is there anything additional that you would like to add that I
22 perhaps haven't asked you about, either about your experiences in Vietnam or as a
23 veteran afterward?

24 CS: Well, I think you've probably [covered most of it, but I have] a couple of my
25 hot buttons are one, the fact that I think a lot of the Vietnam veterans have gotten a bad
26 rep. You know, they're not all a bunch of bums and homeless people and what have you.
27 I think a lot of people have stolen [their reputation from] them. I think that the soldiers
28 by and large that I was associated with were good soldiers, did their job, you know, and
29 they were not a bunch of drug heads and what have you. I think my first tour over
30 there—you didn't have any drug problems. You know none of that disciplinary stuff or
31 what have you. In my second tour I had one case that—well, I had a disciplinary thing

1 that a couple guys went down into a local village and gotten some trouble. Then there
2 was the rumor one guy who was, you know, smoking marijuana but that was simply a
3 rumor. I had no proof. And that's really part of the thing, you know, that cases have
4 been disciplined and drug use—first of all, in a unit like 1st of the 9th you don't have
5 much time to get involved in that sort of stuff to begin with. But the first tour, you know,
6 no Vietnamese, the indigenous people, military they commanded but by and large no
7 Vietnamese were allowed, you know, inside the bases of the Cav. And you were limited
8 with your contact. The infantry platoon would go out and they would, of course, in a lot
9 of cases may have, make contact with the civilians out there but that was it. When I went
10 back in '69, different situation. You know, they—where my headquarters was—I was
11 co-located with the squadron headquarters—down the street was the division
12 headquarters and across the street was an ARVN headquarters and of course there was an
13 air strip there, which we had a small stash of ammunition and that's where we had all of
14 our revetments to park our aircraft. Might mention that, you know, it was unusual not to
15 get rocketed particularly between midnight and one or two o'clock in the morning when
16 every once in a while they would fire rockets and at any time of the day. So, whether
17 they were shooting at division headquarters or squadron [or the ARVN headquarters] and
18 what have you, and unfortunately my troop area was in the middle of all that. We got a
19 fair amount of overflow from those sorts of attacks. So, it—that's one of the things going
20 back to the patrols we were to make, you know, at last light. We would always go over
21 and take a close look at War Zone D butted up against Phuoc Vinh so before we came in
22 and landed we'd always go over there, take a close a look at that because they were going
23 in there and set up their rockets, put them on timers and shoot them into our area.

24 LC: Sir, you mentioned the stereotypes that have been attached to Vietnam
25 Veterans and I wonder if you have any observations to make about the films and to a
26 lesser extent really the books, but particularly the movies and films that have created
27 those stereotypes or at least perpetuated them.

28 CS: I don't have much use for them.

29 LC: Okay.

1 CS: Probably the most realistic thing that I saw was some of the clips out of
2 *Forrest Gump*, but you know the *Platoon* and some of the other stuff, you know, I think
3 they do a disservice to soldiers that served over there.

4 LC: And in the same vein would you have any observations about the federal
5 government's allocation of resources to care for veterans and meet their different needs—
6 medical needs and others—how would you appraise the Veterans Administration's
7 performance with regard to caring for veterans who served in the Vietnam era?

8 CS: They—my impression is that by and large they do a pretty good job given the
9 facilities they have and what have you. And like last six years I've gone up to the
10 Temple VA (Department of Veteran Affairs)—Temple, Texas—and they process, you
11 know, a lot of veterans through there. You know, a lot of them World War II, Korean
12 War, Vietnam War, and by and large I think they do a pretty decent job although one
13 thing that has really rankled me is the—I had not given any thought to it but, or hadn't
14 paid any attention to it—but the fact it gets back to the CRSC (combat related special
15 compensation) thing. When I found out, you know, if you are a federal employee that
16 you will not only draw your full retirement but you also get your disability. There's no
17 offset. In the military, you know, all these years, you know, I have a fairly substantial
18 disability so the VA pays me this disability but my retired pay is decremented at an equal
19 amount, it's an offset.

20 LC: Is it really?

21 CS: Yes.

22 LC: Oh I had no idea. I did not know that.

23 CS: Well, I hadn't—like I said I had not paid any attention to it though started
24 doing some reading and what [I found out] infuriated me about how [they treat veterans
25 with disabilities] pardon?

26 LC: I said I bet it did.

27 CS: Now they passed a law to [even things with federal employees]. I should
28 start getting my full retirement plus the VA disability.

29 LC: Do you know when that law was passed?

30 CS: It was passed last May, I think, and is effective one June of 2003. So they
31 keep telling me I'll get a check in the mail and I haven't gotten that yet but now they've

1 finally gone through to where they're going to phase in, you know, to where now if you
2 have a disability you'll get your full retirement plus the disability but it's going to be
3 phased in over a ten year period. The only benefit I was, you know, your VA was non-
4 taxable.

5 LC: But still.

6 CS: Yeah. It didn't bother me until I found out that, you know, they weren't
7 treating the veterans the same as people who've never heard a shot fired in anger.

8 LC: Right, the federal employees. Does the new law make you feel better about
9 the situation or do you think it should have gone farther? For example, you should have
10 retroactive to the time you began to collect disability some kind of compensation.

11 CS: Well, I think that's [going too far].

12 LC: Asking too much?

13 CS: Yeah, because you see you get back in the budget battles.

14 LC: I know. I just wondered if as a matter of honor and as a matter of justice—

15 CS: What other infuriated me to no end, see, while all this was going on—matter
16 of fact I wrote President Bush a letter about it which I have never received an answer
17 back from him. I don't know whether he knows what's going on in the Department of
18 Defense because Dr. Chu, who was in the personnel business under Secretary
19 Rumsfeld—Rumsfeld said he threatened, you know, to recommend to Bush that they veto
20 the thing. Well, that's another thing that infuriated me because, you know, they need to
21 treat everybody equally. If they did that then I—you know, I can understand but they're
22 not doing it. Same thing on medical care. You know, we finally got Tricare for life but
23 they don't—the best medical care you find, you know, the federal employees and
24 members of Congress so that gets kind of aggravating.

25 LC: And you didn't receive a response to—?

26 CS: No.

27 LC: And does that kind of irritate you also that—?

28 CS: Well, I called a congressman and supposedly I'm going to get a response
29 sometime soon but soon has not occurred yet.

30 LC: And how long have you been waiting for soon?

1 CS: Well, I wrote the letter back on, first one on six June I think it was. Then I
2 wrote another one I think in October and haven't heard from either one.

3 LC: Do you think in general that the federal government ought to just allocate
4 more resources to the VA to begin with—and just setting aside for a moment the issue of
5 the federal budget and the politics behind putting a federal budget together—just as a
6 matter of justice for veterans that more resources actually ought to come in their direction
7 or do you think the resourcing is good at current levels, there are just problems of
8 allocation?

9 CS: Well, I think they need more resources. I think they have a fairly good
10 system. In other words, the amount of care you get from the VA is basically relates to
11 whether you're disability was service connected or not. And if that's the case then in my
12 case like, you know, CRSC thing you had to have a Purple Heart and then you had to
13 prove that, you know, that was your disabilities were a direct result of the fact of your
14 particular wounds and what have you. You know, it really irritated me. One, you had to
15 apply for the thing to begin with when they have all the records.

16 LC: Right. You had to prove what they already know in some ways.

17 CS: Well, they called me and they said, "You know, we need some more
18 documentation." I had to send them a citation, you know, that kind of indicated some of
19 the things that happened on thirty-one March, which was a citation for an award and then
20 I sent them my medical records that I happened to have that had kept, you know, yea
21 verily. I didn't have a nephrectomy and a splenectomy and I didn't lose my ribs in my
22 left elbow and what have you because it was surgery that I had elected to have done.
23 Very irritating. You know, plus I'd gotten shot the first time in Vietnam but that
24 amounted not to very much.

25 LC: During your first tour you mean?

26 CS: Yes.

27 LC: Okay. But that was more; I mean obviously comparatively it wasn't
28 incidental an incidental injury? It was not a serious injury obviously.

29 CS: Yeah, the terminology they used was low-velocity fragments. In other words
30 shrapnel.

1 LC: Okay. But you had—had you had much in the way of downtime medically
2 during your first tour as a result of that injury or those injuries?

3 CS: No. They put me on an airplane—matter of fact the CIA (Central
4 Intelligence Agency) airplane that was going up to Phan Rang [Hospital] I think it was –
5 and they X-rayed me, took pieces of shrapnel and what have you out of my arms and legs
6 and the real serious ones were one of the pieces that went into the corner of my right eye.
7 They checked me out and I jumped on a plane and went back, returned to duty the next
8 day.

9 LC: And I gather then that your vision wasn't permanently affected.

10 CS: No.

11 LC: Okay. But—

12 CS: But it did cause me to get a clear visor. The only visor I had was a green-
13 shaded one and you can't see all that well so I would not put the visor down but I
14 scrounged up a clear visor and put it on my helmet because that way it would give you
15 some protection from the pieces of shrapnel and stuff.

16 LC: Well, sir is there anything additional that you would like to add at this point?

17 CS: Yeah. There was something that I was thinking about but—I guess make a
18 comment on what's going on in Afghanistan. And I was somewhat appalled at the fact
19 that when they first went in there they seemed to have forgotten everything that they had
20 learned in Vietnam. You know some of the tactics, techniques, and procedures and even
21 now I see they lost another helicopter. Like I said, you know, they [seem to have] just
22 forgotten some of the things that they should have remembered.

23 LC: What kinds of things?

24 CS: Well, let's go back. You know, back when they went into Afghanistan, first
25 of all they sent the Chinooks in. To the best of my knowledge from reading about it and
26 looking at it they had not done any aerial reconnaissance. You know, in Vietnam before
27 you ever went in and put troops on the ground you would go in and do an aerial recon
28 and then even then if you didn't see anything, before you put in any other troops on the
29 ground you prepped the LZ area with fire. But they didn't do that. Apparently they went
30 in with Chinook and one guy fell out of the back may have seen some of it, you know.
31 But all appearance is that didn't happen. First of all, why in the world did they use the

1 Chinook instead of a Blackhawks? I have no idea. Apparently there are no gun ships in
2 the area and anyway, you know—the other thing, you know, they went in there. They did
3 not have any artillery. I know Rumsfeld and company are big on the high-tech stuff and
4 what have you but let me tell you, if you have cloud cover or smoke or what have you,
5 you can just forget about laser guided weapons. And if you use GPS (Global Positioning
6 System) weapons they're great against stationary targets where you know that they're not
7 going to move but if you have something moving you can forget about using them. So, if
8 you want all weather, full time fire support, artillery is about the only thing you can count
9 on. And back early on in Afghanistan I don't think they had any artillery.

10 LC: You have a theory as to why some apparently very basic lessons about
11 battlefield preparation and proper armaments were the kind of conflict they're engaged in
12 have gone by the wayside? Do you have any observations on that?

13 CS: Well, I'll tell you what I put in the letter to Bush. First of all I accused him,
14 say, you know, you cannot go in and fight a war cheap Charlie. You've got to give them
15 the tools and resources to do it well. See, primarily they did not have enough troops and I
16 don't think they went in there with enough troops and equipment and what have you to
17 get the job done. From my point of view they should have sealed the borders with
18 American troops and not rely on warlords who were notoriously unreliable. And then if
19 you wanted, if you had done that then you would have bottled up the Al-Qaeda and
20 Taliban couldn't have, you know, would have had a hard time getting out of there and
21 you probably would have increased your probability of getting Osama Bin Laden. They
22 didn't do that. You know, they were in too big a hurry I guess of doing it and didn't get
23 their planning and what have you. Plus, me speaking again, we have too few forces to do
24 what needed to be done. Period.

25 LC: And do you think the Rumsfeld strategy generally is to use more and more
26 high-tech equipment and hopefully fewer and fewer troops and that that's not necessarily
27 a recipe for success depending on the mission?

28 CS: That's correct. He does not understand ground combat. You can quote me
29 on that if anybody asks.

30 LC: I think that's fine.

1 CS: He was a Navy pilot. And the people he—and he's relying now on Air Force
2 people. I haven't other than maybe I think you probably talked to Ray Janes who was the
3 FAC (forward air control) bird and was attached to our squadron when I was over there
4 second tour, you know, he probably has some feel for what happens on the ground but the
5 rest of those people don't have a clue. It's different.

6 LC: The position on the ground, the men on the ground?

7 CS: Yes.

8 LC: Do you have similar observations about the operation in Iraq?

9 CS: Yeah, same thing. You know, they went in there with too few troops, they
10 weren't prepared for what's happened now, you see what the result is.

11 LC: And what is that result at this point in January?

12 CS: Well, now they're fighting a guerilla war.

13 LC: And an urban guerilla warfare. Do you see any good conclusion to this latest
14 American deployment overseas? Do you have an idea of how it might successfully
15 conclude?

16 CS: Which one are you referring to?

17 LC: Either one. Actually you could offer observations on either in Afghanistan or
18 Iraq.

19 CS: Well, I think eventually they're going to come to the conclusion that they've
20 gone in there with too few troops. Apparently the thing in Afghanistan may be going a
21 little better than Iraq, but you know we will eventually prevail but, you know, if you'd
22 done it right the first time you wouldn't have had the problems I don't think. In other
23 words they went through, did not have enough people to secure it, and they just let the
24 Iraqi Army melt, go away. And these are the same people that are coming back. They
25 did not seal the border so now you have the foreign infiltrators, the Jihadist, coming in
26 who's going to continue to pester them. You cannot replace boots on the ground with
27 high-tech stuff. It just, you know—technology is a great adjunct but you need the people
28 on the ground to do a lot of the missions.

29 LC: Would you advise at this point an increase call up and—?

30 CS: They need four more divisions as a minimum.

31 LC: Four more?

1 CS: Yes. Look at what all of the deployment we have around the world. You
2 know, Bush gets up there and he says yeah we got people in Indonesia, you got them in
3 Bali, you got them in Riyadh, you know, and you have them over in Europe, and [you
4 have radical Muslims] so what are you going to fight them with? You do not have
5 enough troops, you know. The worst thing that ever happened was when the Cold War
6 was over and everybody started screaming for the peace dividend, and they didn't look
7 around at the world. The world was and still is a very dangerous place.

8 LC: Would you say even that with the dissolution of the Soviet Union it's still
9 possibly more dangerous at this point than it was when we knew who exactly the enemy
10 was and what their capabilities were and so on or wouldn't you go that far?

11 CS: Oh, Russia is not the most stable government in the world and it's sitting on a
12 lot of nuclear weapons [and now it is starting to rearm and is centralizing power]. Not to
13 mention the fact that I have Indian, Pakistan and not quite sure what North Korea is doing
14 but that guy is irrational.

15 LC: Yes. And you mean there Kim Il-sung?

16 CS: Yeah.

17 LC: Right. Sir, do you have any other observations you'd like to make?

18 CS: No. Just a couple of things that—I don't know them, it's on the sheet. When
19 I was assigned to the Department of the Army Staff and the Office of Chief of Research
20 and Development I was the one who closed out the development of the Cheyenne
21 helicopter, the AH56A, and I was there when we started the Apache program.

22 LC: What year would this be?

23 CS: Nineteen seventy-two. Yep. I was there when we went through the defense
24 systematic review, acquisition review council, DSARC (Defense Systems Acquisition
25 Review Council) were the AAH—it's called the Advanced Attack helicopter then turned
26 into the Apache. So I was there and helped get that through the process. Then later I was
27 the TRADOC (Training & Doctrine Command) system manager for attack helicopters.
28 So I had the Cobra and the Apache [attack helicopter].

29 LC: Looking back on your career do you have as much—well, do you feel proud
30 of those accomplishments working within the Pentagon?

1 CS: Yes. Matter of fact, Secretary Brown if he had had his way he would have
2 killed the Apache.

3 LC: Now, that's Harold Brown?

4 CS: Yep. When he was sec def (secretary of defense). And fortunately we got
5 that squelched.

6 LC: Do you remember what the parameters of that discussion were? What was
7 his thinking about the Apache?

8 CS: Well, if you got the time I'll give you some background.

9 LC: Sure. Of course, please do.

10 CS: You know, Harold Brown was secretary of the Air Force and then he became
11 secretary of defense. The Air Force and the Army had been in the roles and mission
12 battle for years, dates back to the 1940s. And matter of fact the A-10 aircraft was
13 basically designed and what have you as a counter to the attack helicopter. And so
14 Brown had the issue that he programmed decision memorandum in December, I guess, of
15 '79 if I remember right. And what that did was provide enough money to kill the, close
16 out the AH-64 program and convert the Blackhawk [so it could also perform in the attack
17 role], you know, into dual mission and utility plus attack bird. What we did—General
18 Merryman was the commandant at the aviation school at the time. We put together a
19 three-pronged effort. One was to do a flight test, you know, of comparing the Blackhawk
20 in an attack profile role using the AH1G and we also did a computer simulation study,
21 you know, using the Apache and the Blackhawk. Back in those times it was Carmonet
22 was the model that we used. And then the development, Combat Developments Agency
23 there at Rucker did a paper study. Long story short I was very afraid of what was going
24 to happen because the AH1G comparatively speaking is underpowered compared to the
25 Blackhawk, but it turned out when you get down you fly typical gun ship profile the
26 Blackhawk you know has tandem—well not tandem—but side by side seating and of
27 course the gun ships that are tandem [seated one behind the other], when they flew those
28 the Blackhawk had—I forget how many—but several main rotor blade strikes and some
29 tail rotor strikes simply because they couldn't see. And they're offset, you know, and
30 they have trouble relating the position to the main rotor blade with respect to where the
31 pilot sits along the right side and what have you. In the Cobra, you know, the pilot sits up

1 close to where he knows where [the rotor system is and] the tips of his rotor blades are.
2 And then they, at that time we only had a prototype of the AH-64 but they did go out and
3 they took panoramic shots out of the cockpit to show, you know, the visibility between
4 that and visibility for the Blackhawk [pilots] and what have you. Also, come to find out
5 that the vision requirements for the Blackhawk had been scaled back. In other words, the
6 specification called for one thing but they reduced them, you know, for whatever or other
7 engineering factors. The Blackhawk is fine in the utility role; didn't need all of that. So
8 anyway, put a briefing together and went up, briefed the people from the OSD (Office of
9 the Secretary of Defense) and what have you, and when they saw all that, you know, the
10 threat went away. It was reinstated and the Apache continued on.

11 LC: Was it important to you professionally to be able to actually protect what you
12 thought might be a very valuable weapon system from, you know, the politics of weapons
13 system in Washington and what happens to them?

14 CS: Oh yeah. I'm firmly convinced that properly used, you know, the attack
15 helicopters will contribute quite a bit. Matter of fact I also commanded the brigade that
16 finished up the OT3 on the M1 tank.

17 LC: By OT3 you mean what?

18 CS: The Operational Test Three. We were getting ready to field it.

19 LC: On which tank, I'm sorry?

20 CS: The M1.

21 LC: Okay. And what time period was this sir?

22 CS: Nineteen eighty-one.

23 LC: Can you describe that, your command of that particular operation?

24 CS: Well, I had the first M1 tank battalion in the Army as my brigade. I had—at
25 that point in time I had two tank battalions and two mechanized infantry battalions and
26 one of those was an M1 battalion. So I went out and ran the scenarios and provided the
27 command and control stuff to implement, you know—they had a test plan events you had
28 to do and what have you. I basically commanded and controlled and made sure all those
29 things happened.

30 LC: Made sure that all the requirements were met and hurdles were handled?

1 CS: Yeah. Whatever mission profile that they needed to run through then we did
2 that.

3 LC: And this was previous to the general deployment of the M1. It was sort of
4 the last set of requirements that needed to be met, is that fair?

5 CS: Yeah. Let me tell you a little bit more. After the fieldwork they went
6 through and they did the test for the conduct of fire trainer. And once that was completed
7 then the M1 tank battalion was sent over to the 2nd Armored Division and I got an M60
8 battalion in place of the M1 battalion. And the reason why that happened was I was also
9 the first senior test officer planning the testing for the OT3 and was assigned to the
10 TCATA (TRADOC Combined Arms Test Activity) at Ft. Hood. And during the course
11 of that planning I discovered that they were planning for the OT3 to be conducted by the
12 2nd Armored Division. At the same time the 2nd Armored Division was scheduled to go
13 on a REFORGER (Return of Forces to Germany) exercise. Those two things are
14 mutually exclusive. So, I pointed that out to them. That's why they finally moved, you
15 know, the thing over to 1st Cav Division and why all that swapping because the 2nd AD
16 had a higher priority on the tip thittle than the Cav at that time.

17 LC: Can you tell me more about the M1 tank itself? What is your appraisal of
18 that? You're an extremely experienced armor officer. Did you feel that that was, at the
19 time it was brought out when you were senior test officer, the best weapon coming?

20 CS: It's a very fine tank. Probably at that point in time it was the best tank in the
21 world.

22 LC: And for how many years do you think that it rightfully held that title as the
23 best piece of armor available?

24 CS: Well, I think I would say since 1983 up to the current time.

25 LC: Okay. And you still believe that about the M1? I mean it obviously has gone
26 through numerous revisions and upgrades but at this point you still feel it's the best thing
27 there is?

28 CS: Yeah. I have some misgivings about all the electronic stuff they put on it.

29 LC: Okay. Why is that? I think that's interesting. Why?

30 CS: Well, there are several things. First of all, the space inside the M1-A2 now is
31 very cramped. And matter of fact, the internal temperature has gone up because of the

1 heat generated by all the electronics. And then some of the stuff—I've always been a big
2 believer that we should have put on all of our track vehicles a navigation system, an
3 inertial navigation system. The reason being for that is, you know, you can't, it's not
4 subject to be in jammed and all the rest of that. Now with all the other electronic stuff we
5 have, you know, some of that's susceptible to being jammed and some of it's not really
6 hardened the way it ought to be. [Also when you are buttoned up and in gas masks and at
7 night, it is hard to navigate using a map.]

8 LC: Do you think, in general, that there's too much electronic information coming
9 to the service personnel that have to operate this equipment? Maybe more than they
10 actually need such that it's almost an overload, they can't really think?

11 CS: We have run tests – I was also the president commander of the Armor
12 Engineer Board back in my days on active duty. We ran some tests that would indicate
13 that yea verily it's very easy to get information overload. Instead of commanding and
14 controlling whatever it is you're supposed to be doing you're in there playing traffic cop
15 or what have you.

16 LC: Right. What years were you commander of the board?

17 CS: Eighty-three to eighty-four.

18 LC: Do you think that that data that your people turned up during that period
19 about information overload has kind of gone by the board, people have sort of forgotten
20 about it?

21 CS: I'm guessing but probably so. People don't pay enough attention going back
22 into the archives and reading lessons learned.

23 LC: Well, we're going to try to correct some of that by getting some impressions
24 like the ones you're offering to be part of the record and hopefully they'll be consulted in
25 the future. Maybe with the experience in Iraq and Afghanistan there will be a greater
26 pressure to actually go back and look particularly at the Vietnam conflict and what was
27 learned there and how it might be applied.

28 CS: You see, I would have given my right arm if we had had the night vision
29 that's on the current, say, like on the Apache and also the missile system. You know, if
30 we'd had, I guess during later stages of the Vietnam War, you didn't have the tow
31 missile. But up to that time you had the SS10, which was very difficult to operate. You

1 had to fly this silly thing and it took a great amount of skill to do that. Other than that
2 you had rockets and with the accuracy that this new system had or what have you, you
3 could have done a much better job getting to the enemy than what we have now. The
4 infrared, I still don't understand you know why they can't use that to detect some of the
5 mines and [IEDs (improvised explosive device)] that you got going on in Iraq.

6 LC: But in some ways the technology improvements that have been introduced,
7 you can see how they would have decreased American losses for example in Vietnam.
8 I'm thinking about the commander who was lost in the fog that night and suffered
9 vertigo. You know, night vision equipment better, better on board instrumentation might
10 have, you know, changed that situation for example.

11 CS: Quite likely.

12 LC: Do things like that, do impressions or thoughts like that continue to come to
13 you now and do you think back about your time in Vietnam and things that might have
14 gone differently?

15 CS: Oh yeah. We could have inflicted a great deal more damage on a lot of them.
16 See at night time in Vietnam we did not have the night vision equipment to go out so
17 night time, you know, they were pretty well free to do whatever they wanted. If we'd had
18 night vision equipment we could have taken care of the trucks and stuff coming out of
19 Cambodia with very little trouble. We'd have put a stop to all that.

20 LC: Yeah. Would have been very different. Sir, is there anything additional that
21 you can think of that you would like to add?

22 CS: No. I've probably given you more than what you wanted.

23 LC: No, sir. There's no such thing. Very interested in your observations and the
24 things that you did at the Pentagon after your service in Vietnam.

25 CS: Well, see the Army has the tendency to go back and reinvent the wheel.
26 Some of what they're doing now in the transformation and what they're trying to do I
27 have—share it with you—I have very great misgivings because once you make these
28 transformations, whatever they end up being, then it takes a great deal of time to go back
29 and train and re-equip people in the way of—I'm getting to the fact that, you know, you
30 have Russia, you have China, you have North Korea, maybe Iran; all those countries that
31 I just mentioned have a fair amount, and even India if you want to, have a fair amount of

1 mechanized forces. And guess where they bought a lot of that equipment? To the best of
2 my knowledge Russia has not shut down any of its tank lines and they historically
3 operated two production facilities.

4 LC: Can you just remember offhand the locations of those two major facilities?

5 CS: No. One of them may have been in Ukraine and one other in Russia itself,
6 but see, if we get all bent around the axles the only thing we're going to do is fight
7 terrorist, you know, in the asymmetrical stuff then my concern is you're liable to run up
8 against a conventional, more of a conventional type army. And if you're not equipped to
9 fight those—it particularly bothers me when they talk about lightning things down, you
10 know, the armor. The LAVs (light armored vehicle) that they're using, the Striker
11 Brigade, the .50 caliber bullet that goes in one side and probably out the other.

12 LC: Because they've decreased the weight and armor on it.

13 CS: That's correct. So you know, if you put those up against a conventional
14 force, they may get there fast but they'll die fast.

15 LC: And your concern generally if I can paraphrase is that countries that have
16 been able to acquire or on their own produce armored vehicles and if they become
17 embroiled in a conventional war we may have, we may be at a severe disadvantage, the
18 United States, because—

19 CS: Yeah, outnumbered.

20 LC: Outnumbered. Okay.

21 CS: You know what Lenin said, "Quantity has a quality all of its own."

22 LC: Yes, sir. And then might the United States command be forced to consider
23 the use of other weapons that it might otherwise not have wanted to use?

24 CS: That's a possibility.

25 LC: I see. What would you, if you could do say one or two things to redress what
26 you're pointing to as an imbalance in American forces what would you recommend?

27 CS: Not quite sure I know what you're asking. I've already told you they need to
28 have at least four more divisions and of those I would make them mechanized divisions.
29 The other thing of it is, over the years historically the U.S. Army has been infantry poor.
30 In other words we have not had enough infantry. The trouble with light infantry is their
31 lack of mobility. In other words, they'll move at two and a half miles an hour. You

1 know, that's the speed of a soldier. And they have very little protection unless you have
2 engineers with them or what have you where they can dig fortifications for them and
3 what have you. So how you mix and match all that, and consider whatever enemy you're
4 going up against, you've got to do that in a very intelligent way.

5 LC: And can you elaborate a little bit more on what the most intelligent way to do
6 that would be?

7 CS: Well, first of all you should always—I'm a great believer in you have to have
8 a combined arms force. And that means, you know, whole aspects that would all support
9 troops and what have you. And if you're going up against the mechanized forces, you
10 know, light forces ain't going to hack it. They will die bravely but they will die. I don't
11 know if that answers your question but—

12 LC: Yes, sir, I think it does. You're talking about improving the balance in the
13 U.S. forces structure and I think that's a valuable observation.

14 CS: Well, and all those things are not cheap.

15 LC: When you were at the Pentagon were you continually having one eye to the
16 budgetary implications of the different systems that you were working with?

17 CS: The Pentagon runs on the budget cycle. It just, you know, I can't be anymore
18 plain about it. Particularly in the, now that's distraught of any way when you get in there,
19 you know, in the acquisition and what have you and you spend an inordinate amount of
20 time just fooling around with the budget cycle. Because you start preparing—it's
21 probably changed a little bit now—but in the August time frame you start putting
22 together the budget for the—budget submission occurs in January of this year, you know.
23 President will send the budget over but all that work begins back in the summer time
24 frame, late summer of the previous year. And you go through endless meetings with
25 OSD and OMB (Office of Management & Budget) and all the rest of that. Then you get
26 to go over and test the fire.

27 LC: Did you, sir, appear before committees with regard to different weapon
28 systems that you were working with?

29 CS: Not—the staffs in some cases. And I guess maybe I might have sat in on
30 some. Some of them were kind of humorous but anyway—

31 LC: Do you remember one in particular?

1 CS: Well, we were showing a movie and—well, Radcliff, my counterpart, down
2 in ACSF was running the machine and the fan went out on it so while he's running it he's
3 back there blowing on it trying to keep the damn thing cool. So he was having a hard
4 time.

5 LC: It takes a lot of air. Well, sir, I want to thank you very much for your time
6 and for the observations that you've made. I think they're extremely valuable.

7 CS: Well, I hope somebody takes it to heart because it, you know, I spent twenty-
8 nine and a half years [on active duty], I think I know a little bit about warfare and how
9 you maneuver units and [how to support and organize them] what have you. And just in
10 closing thing see, after Vietnam when I commanded the tank battalion in Germany and
11 the jobs I've had and what have you—one time I was chief of staff of the 3rd Armored
12 Division in Germany, you know. Plus, I have a fairly decent technical background that,
13 you know, I would hope somebody would pay attention.

14 LC: Well sir, thank you very much for the time you've invested and I believe it
15 will pay off sir.

16 CS: No problem. I enjoyed speaking with you.

17 LC: Thank you.