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**The Vietnam Archive
Oral History Project
Interview with Gen. Lloyd B. Ramsey
Conducted by Richard B. Verrone, Ph.D.
March 15, 21, 2006
Transcribed by Mindy Moser**

1 Richard Verrone: This is Dr. Richard Verrone. I'm conducting an oral history
2 interview with Lloyd B. Ramsey. Today is March 15th, 2006. I am at Texas Tech
3 University in Lubbock, Texas. It is approximately 2:27PM Central Standard Time.
4 General Ramsey is in Salem, Virginia. Sir, before we begin I would like to make sure
5 that we proceed with an understanding that you read and signed the interview agreement
6 and also that you understand by conducting this interview you are going to be donating
7 this interview to us and that you're also doing this of your free will, to talk to us about
8 your career. Do you understand that and would you like to proceed forward?

9 Lloyd Ramsey: I'd like to proceed. Yes, I understand that.

10 RV: Okay. Very good, sir. Well, let's start with some biographical information
11 on yourself. I'd like to know where you were born and when you were born and
12 beginning with your childhood and what you remember.

13 LR: I was born in Somerset, Kentucky. S-O-M-E-R-S-E-T, Kentucky, on 29 May
14 1918.

15 RV: Okay. Tell me about Somerset. Is that where you were raised and grew up?

16 LR: I was raised, I went through grade school and high school there. I ended up
17 captain of the football team, president of the junior class and senior class and I thought I
18 did real well. I played football and basketball both and was captain, as I said, of the
19 football team, but I hurt my leg and had to lay out my senior year of basketball because
20 of an injury I had done in football. I had a good education at Somerset High School.
21 From there I went to the University of Kentucky.

1 RV: Okay. Tell me a little bit about your mother and father.

2 LR: My father was born in 1890 and he was known as Bill Ramsey. W.H. is his
3 name, but everybody called him Bill. Even the young kids called him Bill. My father
4 went through the ninth grade, but he was a self-educated man. He had a good business
5 and he had a produce business for a while and then he went into the Gulf Oil Refining
6 Business, which now I think is—I forget who took it over, the British Petroleum, I think.

7 RV: That's correct.

8 LR: Yeah. He did real well. He died at age seventy. He had macular
9 degeneration—I mean he had Alzheimer's disease but in those days people thought he
10 had the hardening of the arteries. They didn't know what it was, but I know it was
11 Alzheimer's disease. My mother was born in 1892 and she was a Sunday school teacher,
12 I guess, for some eighty-something years. She was a real sweet mother and she let Dad
13 run everything. In fact, when Dad died she didn't even know how to write a check.

14 RV: Wow. Tell me a little bit about the kind of person, the kind of father Bill
15 was. I'll call him Bill.

16 LR: He was an outstanding father. He was always interested in athletics. He
17 followed everything. When I was playing football and basketball he'd follow me
18 everywhere I went. I remember he'd do such things as on a Friday he'd watch a
19 Somerset High School game. On a Saturday he'd go to Lexington, Kentucky, which is
20 seventy-five miles north, and watch a Kentucky football game. On Sunday morning he'd
21 drive to Chicago to watch the Chicago Bears. That happened quite a number of times.

22 RV: So you grew up, I guess, kind of brainwashed to the University of Kentucky
23 and the Chicago Bears fan.

24 LR: Well, not really.

25 RV: Oh, yeah?

26 LR: No, those were the closest teams and that's where he went.

27 RV: Okay. So he was very sports-oriented.

28 LR: Very, very sports-oriented. In fact, one time during the war I think he
29 coached the Somerset High School team a year during the war because they couldn't find
30 anybody else. He was always the timekeeper of every game. He kept the time.

31 RV: Okay. Tell me about your mother. What kind of lady was she?

1 LR: She was a very lovely lady. As I say, she taught Sunday school for years and
2 years and years. She let Dad run everything. As I say, when he passed away she didn't
3 even know how to write a check. She loved fishing. Somebody would call her and her
4 name was Mary Ella. "Mary Ella, you want to go fishing?" She said, "Yes. By the way,
5 who is this?"

6 RV: So she was inclined to the outdoors?

7 LR: Yes. We had a houseboat down on the Cumberland River, which was one of
8 the few houseboats, in fact, the only houseboat on the Cumberland River in those days in
9 that area. We spent the summer down there on that houseboat. I used to carry our ice
10 down and used kerosene lanterns. It had an inboard motorboat and it had an outboard
11 motorboat. I used to go over the aquaplane that I made. It was the first aquaplane that
12 was on the Cumberland River.

13 RV: So you all would spend your summers there?

14 LR: Yeah. A lot of time down there, yes.

15 RV: Did you have brothers and sisters?

16 LR: I had two older brothers.

17 RV: Okay. Tell me about them.

18 LR: My older brother was born in 1913 and he followed my father in the Gulf Oil
19 refining business. He never went into the Army during World War II. Then my middle
20 brother was James Ramsey. He was born in '15, 1915. He did get in the Army for a
21 short while during World War II, but he never went overseas. They were both wonderful
22 brothers. Although I seemed to be the pride of the family it didn't bother them. They
23 were never jealous of me. I was real proud of my brothers because I would do things and
24 they would be just as proud of me as I was and as Dad and Mother was of me.

25 RV: Okay. Well, it sounds like you all had a very close family.

26 LR: It was a very close family, yes.

27 RV: Where was your family from? Were they—?

28 LR: Oh, they came from Kentucky and that general area of Somerset, Kentucky.

29 RV: Did your parents or grandparents or great-grandparents emigrate from
30 Europe?

1 LR: Yes. I don't know much background of how and when and who they came
2 over with.

3 RV: Okay, so you're Kentuckian, basically.

4 LR: That's right.

5 RV: Okay. Very good. Well, describe the young Lloyd Ramsey. What was he
6 like?

7 LR: Well, the good Lord brought me up on the right side and gave me lots of
8 ability to do lots of different things. As I say, I played football and was captain of the
9 team. I was president of my junior class and I was president of my senior class. I was
10 not a very good student but I participated in just about everything you could participate
11 in. I played in the band. I played the sousaphone and the bass horn, the tuba. When they
12 needed a drum major I was the drum major and I could twirl the baton pretty well. I
13 learned to do that. I just was lucky to get along and do things. The good Lord was with
14 me.

15 RV: What were your favorite subjects going through school from grammar and
16 middle school to high school? What did you enjoy?

17 LR: I enjoyed history and math.

18 RV: Why was that?

19 LR: I don't know. Math just seemed to come natural to me. History just seemed
20 to be a thing that we ought to know about. I loved history.

21 RV: Did you enjoy reading?

22 LR: Yes, but I never had enough time to read because I was in too many
23 activities.

24 RV: When you did read, what did you enjoy reading?

25 LR: Most of the things I would read would be magazines and newspapers. Every
26 now and then I would read a book, but not too often did I read books. I just didn't have
27 enough time to read books.

28 RV: Well, you said you were not a great student. Was that true up until high
29 school? Did you do well going forward before you got into high school?

30 LR: Well, I say I wasn't a great student. I made Cs and Bs. That was what I did.
31 In college I averaged—at the University of Kentucky they had a three-point system

1 instead of a four-point system. To get into the different activities that you needed to get
2 into you had to have a 1.8 standing which was almost a B. I managed to keep a little
3 better than a 1.8, not quite an average B but better than a 1.8. That way I got into a lot of
4 different activities. At the university I became the cadet colonel of the ROTC (Reserve
5 Officer Training Corps) and got a regular Army commission right from there. When I
6 first arrived at the University of Kentucky, I have an interesting story. I wanted to play
7 football and I weigh 143 pounds. I went in to see the freshman coach, who was Frank
8 Mosbey, who had been All-American at Alabama. He said, "You're too little to play." I
9 said, "Sir, I think you were about a hundred and fifty-something pounds when you made
10 All-American." He said, "Well, that's different." "What do I have to do to try?" He
11 liked my attitude and he said, "If you make the first or second team I'll give you a
12 scholarship." Well, I not only made the first team, I became captain of the team.

13 RV: Wow. So you are telling me that you were really a natural leader, that you
14 had the trust of your schoolmates, your friends, and your coach, basically, and your
15 fellow players. How did you get into feeling like a leader and seeing that you could do
16 that?

17 LR: I don't know. I guess it was my bringing up of my mother and father and my
18 good schoolteachers and my Sunday school teachers. Everybody just took good care of
19 me. I tried to take advantage of what they taught me and I think I used it to the best of
20 my advantage.

21 RV: Okay. Well, I'd like to know a little bit about—you're very sports oriented.
22 What got you into sports in the beginning? Was this your father's love of sports or was
23 this something that came to you?

24 LR: No, I always loved sports. From the time that I could pick up a ball and then
25 throw it, either a baseball, or a football, or basketball, I loved sports. We had to listen in
26 those days to the radio. We didn't have TV back in those days. We listened to games
27 and I just loved sports. I loved football especially. I liked to play baseball, but I'm not a
28 baseball fan because I think the game is too slow. I loved to play baseball. But off in
29 college I was coach and captain of the swimming team. So that was another activity I got
30 involved in. I could just go on and on and think about things I was involved in in college.

1 RV: Tell me about you socially. Did you have a wide circle of friends going
2 through middle school and into high school or were you more of a loner?

3 LR: Oh, no, I had lots of friends, lots and lots of friends. Those were the people
4 who made me get to where I am today. Those friends stuck by me and believed in me
5 and helped me. They guided me.

6 RV: Do you remember anybody specifically that was really a big influence on
7 you?

8 LR: I think one of the biggest influences is when I went to college. I wanted to
9 be a football coach. I took physical education. The physical education director took a
10 liking to me. I think he started me on the right path of everything. He wrote a letter
11 finally about me getting the Regular Army. “One thing that Lloyd Ramsey did,
12 everything he was in, he was always a leader in his area.” I was captain of the Scabbard
13 and Blade in the ROTC, vice-president of my fraternity, Sigma Chi. I was captain and
14 coach for three years of the swimming team—captain or coach, not both. So my mother
15 and father and my friends and teachers started me on the right path and I just kept going.

16 RV: Tell me about growing up in the 1920s and '30s. What do you remember
17 about those time periods?

18 LR: 1920s were pretty nice. Late into the '20s when we had the—what am I
19 thinking about?

20 RV: The 1920s?

21 LR: We went down in—I can't think of the name I'm trying to say.

22 RV: Well, don't worry about the name. Tell me the story.

23 LR: We lost bank accounts and everything.

24 RV: Oh, the Great Depression.

25 LR: Depression, that's what I'm trying to say. Depression. Up to that time the
26 '20s were fine to live in, but when the Depression came along, I can remember my father,
27 he was running a produce house then. I can remember him getting up in the morning,
28 taking a piece of cardboard and putting it in his shoe so that his foot wouldn't touch the
29 ground and there was a hole in his shoe. But he still had enough money to raise us and
30 do the things we needed to do but he was very careful with every dollar that he earned in

1 those days so that he'd be sure to have something to live on. So we did all right during
2 the Depression, but he had a rough time.

3 RV: So he was able to provide for you. Were you aware that times were that
4 tough?

5 LR: Yes.

6 RV: I imagine if your father was putting cardboard in his shoe you did know.

7 LR: I was very much aware, yes.

8 RV: Okay. What do you remember about the leadership of the country in the
9 1930s, I guess especially when Franklin Roosevelt took over? What do you remember
10 about FDR?

11 LR: Well, I remember when Hoover was elected. Hoover didn't do a very good
12 job. When Roosevelt was elected everybody was happy and he started moving things
13 right fast. I was real, real proud of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. He was doing an
14 outstanding job in my opinion.

15 RV: Was your family politically oriented? Did you all discuss politics and get
16 into that side of things or did you not do that?

17 LR: Not really very politically oriented. My father was a Republican. In fact, in
18 the Pulaski County, Kentucky, where Somerset was located, you had to be a Republican
19 if you wanted to vote because everything in the county was Republican. If you lived in
20 the city of Somerset you better be a Democrat if you wanted to vote because the city was
21 Democrat. We lived in the county so I registered as a Republican. Now in Virginia you
22 don't have to register as Republican or Democrat or Independent.

23 RV: Right. So what else do you remember about the country in the 1920s and
24 '30s? How did you see the United States?

25 LR: Well, see, I was still pretty young in the late '20s, early '30s when the
26 Depression came along, but it bothered me as to whether we would be able to pull out of
27 this and continue on as a great nation. Even at a young age I was very concerned. But
28 my father, his optimism was great. So he kept us going and we were optimistic the whole
29 way.

30 RV: Now, your father did not serve in World War I, is that correct?

31 LR: No, he did not.

1 RV: Okay. Tell me about military service in your family in general, besides
2 yourself. Did you have any kind of military tradition?

3 LR: I had an uncle that was a half-brother to my grandfather that was in the—his
4 name was Charlie Ramsey. He was a sergeant in the military and I don't know how
5 much service he had. But he was the only other military man I know other than my
6 brother next to me who served a short time during World War II.

7 RV: Okay. What made you want to go the military route?

8 LR: That's a good question. I went to the University of Kentucky to be a football
9 coach. I always wanted a reserve commission just in case something would happen.

10 RV: What do you mean? Something with the coaching deal or with the country?

11 LR: Something in the world would happen.

12 RV: Okay, okay.

13 LR: So you had to take the first two years of ROTC in a land grant college and
14 then the next two years, your junior and senior year it was volunteer if you wanted to do
15 the ROTC. So I signed up. I liked it very much. My senior year I thought, "Well, cadet
16 colonel always comes from the Pershing Rifles. That was the drill team. I'm not a
17 Pershing Rifleman because I was an athlete and couldn't be. I have no chance to be a
18 cadet colonel. Maybe I might make a major if I'm lucky." Well, when the list came out,
19 here I was the cadet colonel of the corps. Nobody was as surprised in my life. So I
20 enjoyed the position and finally the PMS (professor of military science) called me in and
21 called us all in and said they were going to interview people who wanted to join the
22 Regular Army. So there was quite a few people who were very interested in getting the
23 Regular Army.

24 RV: What year was this, sir? Do you remember?

25 LR: This would be 1939.

26 RV: Okay. What were the years you were at Kentucky?

27 LR: 1936 to 1940.

28 RV: Okay. I'm sorry. Go ahead then with your story.

29 LR: So in '39 I came around and started to—they sent out information that was
30 coming around. So I didn't put in my application because I was going to be a football
31 coach. PMS called me in and said, "I do not have your application to be for the Regular

1 Army.” He says, “Where is it?” I said, “Sir, I went to school to be a football coach. I
2 want to be a football coach.” He said, “Well, since I made you the cadet colonel would
3 you do me a favor and just apply just to see if they might consider you in any way?” I
4 said, “Sir, I’m not very well attuned to the Army, but I’d be glad to apply for your
5 benefit, but I don’t think it’ll do me any good.” So the first interview they had with me,
6 they said, “What was the headlines of the paper this morning?” I said, “I don’t know. I
7 didn’t have time to see the paper.” “Don’t you read the paper?” I said, “I read it every
8 chance I get.” “Why don’t you?” Then I started to give them the activities I was
9 involved in. Then they said, “Now we understand why you don’t.” The VI Corps area
10 was what the University of Kentucky had. I think there was five states in the VI Corps
11 area. When the list came out for Regular Army appointments I thought, “Well, I don’t
12 have a chance since I couldn’t answer the question, ‘What’s the headlines in the
13 newspaper?’” I was number one on the list. My surprise. Then I told the PMS, “I’m not
14 going to accept the commission,” and he says, “Why don’t you just try it for a year?”
15 Sergeant Perkins had taught me an awful lot in ROTC and then the major there had
16 helped me in doing everything. They got on me and said, “Well, why don’t you try it for
17 a year and if you don’t like it you can get out after a year and go back and start
18 coaching?” So I tried it for a year and decided after thirty-four years I didn’t like it, but I
19 didn’t go back to coaching.

20 RV: What happened in that first year that made it stick?

21 LR: War.

22 RV: That’s what I was thinking. Yeah, some stuff happened there very shortly.

23 LR: In Germany it was getting pretty bad so I thought I’d better stick it out a
24 while longer.

25 RV: Right. Did you kind of engage in a real strong sense of patriotism and
26 service to country? If I’m hearing you right, this is what your backup plan to the football
27 coach was to make sure that you were ready to do something like that.

28 LR: Yes, that’s what I wanted to be. I wanted to be ready just in case anything
29 happened. That’s why I wanted the reserve commission. I got a Regular Army
30 commission.

1 RV: Well, can you tell me a little bit about your first few months in the Army and
2 going through the training?

3 LR: When I first got into the Army—well, let me back up just a minute.

4 RV: Okay, go ahead.

5 LR: When you're in the advanced ROTC you have to take a summer camp
6 between your junior and senior year. We went down to Ft. Knox, Kentucky. They had
7 outstanding instructors down there. I learned more about military in that four to six
8 weeks we were there—I don't remember how long we were there now—than I did in all
9 ROTC classes. But when I got into the Army I remembered what I learned at Ft. Knox,
10 Kentucky, and fortunately—I'm going to tell you something that you won't believe.
11 Have you heard of West Point Protective Association?

12 RV: Yes, sir.

13 LR: Well, there is a West Point Protective Association. My first company
14 commander was a West Pointer and he saw that I had ability to do something. He
15 protected me in every way he could. He taught me everything he possibly could. The
16 West Point Protective Association protects the good officers, not the West Pointers. So
17 that's why I call it the West Point Protective Association. It's a good thing because they
18 protect good officers. All during my career I'd get under a West Point officer. Ben Nair,
19 who ended up as a four-star general, took me under his wing and he's probably why I
20 made general officer.

21 RV: So the protection was really looking out for good people who could be good
22 officers.

23 LR: That's right. Not looking out for West Pointers, they were looking out for
24 good people.

25 RV: Well, you joined in 1940, is that correct?

26 LR: Yeah.

27 RV: Okay. If I remember it was July of 1940.

28 LR: Yeah.

29 RV: Tell me about that summer and getting into your Army training. What did
30 you do?

1 LR: Well, I went to Ft. Mitchell. No, that's not the name of it. Right outside
2 Cincinnati, Ohio. I got there and got a nice set of quarters and was starting to fix them up
3 and the colonel called me in and said, "Don't fix it up. You're going down to Ft. Knox."
4 I had to train the ROTC people down there like I was when I was a cadet. So I went
5 down there. The company commander gave me an assignment to put out a defensive
6 position. I said, "Sir, I haven't been here and I don't know that I understand about it very
7 much." He said, "Well, go out there and talk to Sergeant so-and-so. He'll show you
8 exactly what to do." So I went out and talked to the sergeant. He was very respectful
9 and wanted to know how they could help me. He really just took over. He said, "If the
10 lieutenant will"—always in those days talked in the third person. He didn't say, "If you
11 will," he said, "If the lieutenant will sit down over there I'll put the defensive positions up
12 and then you can come and inspect them." Well, I did. They were great. After the
13 demonstration was over the officer in charge of demonstrations came up and said,
14 "Lieutenant, I'd like to congratulate you on your defensive positions. That's some of the
15 best ones I've ever seen." I tried to explain to him who did it, but I couldn't. The
16 sergeant did it all. But you listened to your good officers and your good non-
17 commissioned officers and you could learn a lot in the Army right fast.

18 RV: So right off the bat you'd made a good impression and I assume you felt
19 very comfortable in what you were doing. What else did you do that summer and going
20 into the fall?

21 LR: Well, as soon as I got back to my home station I got orders to go to Ft.
22 Bragg, North Carolina. The 9th Infantry Division was going to be formed at Ft. Bragg,
23 North Carolina, and we had to build a tent camp. When I got to Ft. Bragg, North
24 Carolina, there was a lieutenant colonel and three lieutenants. No, I'm sorry, there was
25 nine lieutenants. So they assigned three lieutenants to each regiment. One was
26 regimental commander and the other two were—one was a regimental commander and
27 battalion commander and the other two were battalion commanders as a 2nd lieutenant.
28 So the cadre started coming in. We had to be set up so we could be organized. Then they
29 had to build a tent camp. The lieutenant colonel called me in and said, "You're going to
30 be the"—in those days instead of the engineers it was the quartermaster construction
31 officer. "You're going to build the tent camps." Well, I didn't know anything about

1 building tent camps, but I had some good NCOs again and we started building the
2 platform for the tent camps and put up these structures so that they could stand up in the
3 wind a little better than just a pole in the center. So I did that until the division, they
4 started to get it organized. In fact, one day I think I was relieved by three lieutenant
5 colonels and the real cadre started coming in. Then from there I went to a
6 communications course down at Ft. Benning for six weeks. That was a fine course. That
7 was one of the best courses an infantry officer could ever take because as a battalion
8 commander in combat I had communications many times with the other battalions. They
9 could talk to me, but they couldn't talk to regiment. So that was the best course, I think, I
10 ever took, a communications course.

11 RV: Can you describe what they were teaching you?

12 LR: How to use radios and how far they would go and what hills you had to
13 worry about and how you could use them and how you couldn't depend on them for
14 certain things under certain conditions. Once you learned how to use them they were
15 pretty good, but they didn't have much distance on them in those days.

16 RV: Was this in 1941?

17 LR: Yes. No, this would be in late 1940.

18 RV: Okay, late '40. So these were a very quick succession of schools you were
19 going to. Okay, after Ft. Benning, then, where did you go?

20 LR: Well, that was at Ft. Bragg and then I went to Ft. Benning to school and then
21 I came back to Ft. Bragg. Then in September of—well, let me back up just a minute
22 there. In September of '41, yeah, September of '41 I got promoted to first lieutenant.
23 Amazingly, a Regular Army officer cannot draw the pay except for his permanent rank so
24 I was a first lieutenant drawing second lieutenant's pay. All the Reserve officers that
25 came in with me were envious of my being Regular Army but they were drawing first
26 lieutenant's pay. On December the seventh I started drawing pay then, when the war
27 broke out.

28 RV: Right. What do you remember about that day, December 7th, 1941?

29 LR: My company commander, the West Point man who had taken me under his
30 wing—by this time I was commanding the anti-tank company. I saw him one day and he
31 said he was having some friends coming in and they would like to play golf. He said,

1 “Do you know of a babysitter?” He’d been trying to find one. I went to the wife and I
2 said, “Glenda, let’s you and I sit for the children. We know them very well.” So we
3 were babysitting his children and he was on the golf course when we heard about Pearl
4 Harbor. Of course, he was called off the course right quick and came and got his kids
5 and we were mobilizing that night.

6 RV: So what do you remember feeling and thinking about that, that the Japanese
7 had attacked?

8 LR: Well, you wondered if the war is coming to the United States or what’s
9 going to happen. We were sent up to Salisbury, North Carolina, to protect the railroads
10 and bridges up there. We stayed about ten days and we went back to Ft. Bragg and got
11 ready to go overseas.

12 RV: Where were they going to send you?

13 LR: We didn’t know. By this time I became S-3 of the regiment and, let’s see.
14 That’s December. I got promoted to captain. Let’s see.

15 RV: Was this in the spring of 1942 when you got promoted to captain or did that
16 happen before you were deployed?

17 LR: Yeah, in February of ’42 I got promoted to captain. Then in September of
18 ’42—oh, I’m sorry. It was May of ’42 I got promoted to captain, but my date of rank was
19 February of ’42, backdated it. Why, I don’t know. Very few people were backdated.
20 Then in September, if you’d been in rank six months you could be promoted. So I was
21 promoted to major in September of ’42. Then I got orders. The regimental commander
22 called me in and said, “We’re going to have to go overseas. We have to have our civilian
23 clothes,” and I’d already sent my civilian clothes home so I went home and told my wife.
24 I said, “I’m going to have to have some civilian clothes, but I can’t tell you where I’m
25 going.” So we got the civilian clothes and she was very accommodating and not asking
26 questions and so forth. One day we took off. We had already sent our household goods
27 home and so forth. She started driving herself home and I started overseas. We landed in
28 the Free State of Ireland. That’s why we had to have civilian clothes, on an amphibian.

29 RV: How did you get overseas?

30 LR: We went to Washington first and they sent us to New York. They sent us on
31 an amphibian to the Free State of Ireland.

1 RV: Okay, so you took a ship over.

2 LR: No, an airplane, an amphibian.

3 RV: Oh, okay, you flew over.

4 LR: Yeah, we landed in the waters of the Free State of Ireland. Then that's when

5 we found out that we were going to land in North Africa. So the next few weeks we

6 started working on the plans to land in North Africa and the troops were loading in the

7 United States and coming over. Once they got there we had some practice landings in

8 Great Britain before we went to North Africa.

9 RV: What do you remember about Ireland when you were there those few

10 weeks?

11 LR: We just landed in Ireland and got out. We went on into London.

12 RV: Okay. Tell me about Great Britain then, and the English.

13 LR: In London we were working constantly so we didn't have a chance to do

14 anything. At night everything was completely blacked out. So I didn't really see

15 anything in London at all. I was working day and night.

16 RV: Tell me about making plans for invading North Africa. What do you

17 remember about how that was happening and what your thoughts were about the plan in

18 general?

19 LR: Well, we landed in the Algiers area. The group that landed there was called

20 the political division. It was the 34th Infantry Division Headquarters with one regiment of

21 the 34th Division, one regiment of the 9th Infantry Regiment of the 39th Infantry and one

22 regiment of one brigade of the British. It was like it wasn't going to be too tough landing

23 in there. The only thing we had to do was get to the airport. I can't think of the airport

24 now. In French, it's "white." When we got ready to land and the regimental commander

25 called me in he said, "I'm going to put you as executive officer of the 3rd Battalion." I

26 said, "Why is this? Am I not doing a good job as S-3?" He said, "No, the 3rd Battalion

27 commander has let me down two or three times and I need somebody to be sure we're

28 going to get to the airport because the airplane is taking off from Gibraltar and they don't

29 have enough fuel to get back and they have to land." I said, "Why don't you just give me

30 the battalion?" He said, "I can't do that because I have no place to put the lieutenant

31 colonel." I said, "Well, you're going to ruin my reputation and my efficiency report."

1 He said, "I'll take care of your efficiency report." Well, he was right. If I hadn't have
2 been there we'd have never gotten to the airport soon enough because he was just a slow
3 mover. He didn't want to move. Afraid of everything, down the road he might need
4 something, so he say, "Let's don't move." So I kept pushing and pushing and pushing
5 until we finally got to the airport. Then I stayed as his exec. We went up to
6 (unintelligible) on supply line duty and was trying to get more training done, but I
7 couldn't get him to follow a schedule so the troops were pretty bored at times. I managed
8 to get in some training and then we were called in to Kasserine Pass. He told me, "I've
9 got word," it was late in the afternoon and "we've got to leave first thing the next
10 morning. You get the transportation and get ready to leave the next morning." I could
11 never find out anything about the situation or ask where we were going. I didn't know
12 anything. So I got all the transportation. We got moving and he said, "Now, you pull up
13 the rear and I don't want to lose any trucks or any troops. You be sure everybody gets
14 here." I was trying again to get information on the enemy, but he couldn't tell me about
15 it. Well, it was getting dark and they called the stops and somebody came back and said
16 that the battalion commander wants to see you. So I went up to see the battalion
17 commander and he said, "I've been ordered to corps headquarters. You take the troops
18 right on into the"—where did I say we were going?

19 RV: Well, to the Kasserine Pass?

20 LR: The Kasserine Pass. "You take the troops on into Kasserine." I said,
21 "Where is the enemy?" He said, "They'll be waiting for you up there. You just go on
22 into Kasserine."

23 RV: That's nice.

24 LR: Well, he took off and I asked if we had any security out. We had no security
25 out. So I put security out and got them some radios. We went about two miles when
26 security ran into an officer waiting on the road that was looking for us from the 1st
27 Infantry Division. They said that they wanted to see me so I went up and they took me to
28 the regimental commander and he said, "Where's the battalion commander?" I said,
29 "Well, he was called to Corps Headquarters." He said, "He was supposed to report to
30 me. He wasn't supposed to report to Corps Headquarters." So I had a real leader on my
31 hands. So he said, "Well, you bed down here tonight and study the maps and get ready to

1 deploy in the morning and this is where I want you to deploy.” So I studied the maps all
2 night and had my company commanders and we deployed the next morning. Everything
3 was fine except finally the battalion commander after we got deployed came up and
4 didn’t like anything we had done, but he didn’t change a thing.

5 RV: So he actually did like it somewhat.

6 LR: I think he did. He wanted it known that he didn’t like it.

7 RV: Right. So what was Kasserine and the Kasserine Pass like? How would you
8 describe it?

9 LR: Kasserine was a terrible battle. We were on the defensive all the time and
10 we were there about three or four days and it was hell. All of a sudden the Germans
11 counterattacked us and I looked for the battalion commander and I couldn’t find him. So
12 I called the regimental commander and said, “I’d like to withdraw to the next hill back
13 because we’re getting annihilated here. I think I can withdraw and not lose as many
14 troops.” So he gave me permission. He said, “Where’s the battalion commander?” I
15 said, “I don’t know where he is.” But when we got to the next hill and got all settled
16 down the battalion commander showed up. I said, “Where’ve you been?” He said,
17 “Well, I went out to see one of the companies and I was captured. I’ve just now been
18 able to escape.” It was amazing how he was always at the right place at the right time,
19 wasn’t it? Then about that time I was called and told to report to the Corps Headquarters.
20 I found out I had been selected as aid to General Alexander, the British general, and
21 that’s another—

22 RV: What did you think about that assignment?

23 LR: I thought it was a great honor and I said, “Well, if I leave right now you’re
24 going to lose the battalion,” and they said, “Well, we’ll see what we can do.” So they
25 came back and said, “Well, can you wait another day or so? Would you stay another day
26 or so and help run that battalion?” I said, “Yes.” In another day Rommel pulled back
27 and things settled down so they called me again and said, “Report to Allied Headquarters
28 immediately and be an aide to General Alexander.” I’ll never know what happened to
29 that battalion commander.

30 RV: How would you describe the Germans?

31 LR: The Germans?

1 RV: Yes, sir.

2 LR: They were a real fighting force. It's hard to describe how well they were
3 organized. In those days we had seen little combat and it was very disorganized. In fact,
4 we were all mixed up with different troops and different organizations. That was the one
5 thing that I found out that General Alexander immediately got that whole thing
6 straightened out so everybody had their own area and had their own responsibilities so
7 that they could do their job the best they could.

8 RV: So after you go through Kasserine Pass and after you hook up with the
9 British general, what would you say are the differences between the American style of
10 leadership and conducting the military force and the British style of doing the same?

11 LR: Well, General Alexander was one of the most outstanding general officers of
12 World War II, as far as I'm concerned. When he first took over and he started getting the
13 troops straightened out so that everybody had their own area of responsibility the British
14 were with British and the Americans with Americans and Australians with the
15 Australians and everybody had their own area. They got the command straightened out.
16 Then he and a brigadier general by the name of Lyman Lemnitzer who later was the
17 chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff was the deputy chief of staff. He sat down in his
18 trailer one day and made out the plans to how they were going to finish the Tunisian
19 campaign. He put the times that he would be at certain areas and showed the places he
20 wanted to be at certain times. When he didn't put the time on the document he just put
21 the phase lines in so that General Eisenhower and Prime Minister Churchill would see
22 him. But on his own personal copy he wrote at each phase line when he expected to be
23 there. He was never off more than three days and he ended the campaign within one day
24 of his original estimate. That was quite a few weeks ahead of time. So he was an
25 outstanding individual.

26 RV: What else happened on that Africa campaign for you?

27 LR: What else happened?

28 RV: Yes, sir. Tell me about the rest of the Africa campaign if you would.

29 LR: I don't think I understand what you want.

30 RV: Oh, okay. Well, after you were assigned with General Alexander, what
31 happened with your career? Where did you go and what did you do?

1 LR: Oh, I stayed with him while we finished the Tunisian campaign. We would
2 go visit the troops in the field almost daily. He was very good at giving directions.
3 Montgomery was coming in from the Middle East and Patton was going—the corps, I
4 believe was Patton—had the corps and was going in. The only phase line he didn't meet,
5 Montgomery was slow and was supposed to come up to the Cap Bon Peninsula and he
6 didn't get there. Patton came on down and met Montgomery in part of the south end of
7 the phase line instead. That's the only phase line that they didn't work out the whole way
8 through the campaign.

9 RV: Well, tell me about Tunisia. What was that place like at that time?

10 LR: Well, it was both desert and populated areas. Basically it was a pretty nice
11 area. The people there were always in favor of the Americans. They were behind us all
12 the way. You never had to worry about the civilians, whether they're going to turn
13 against you or not.

14 RV: So they greeted you all as liberators and were happy to have you there.

15 LR: Oh, yes, they did. Very much so.

16 RV: Did you make the jump over to Sicily?

17 LR: We went back to Algiers and started making the plans to get into Sicily. At
18 the end of the Tunisian campaign Prime Minister Churchill came out, stayed for three
19 days. He visited all the American troops and British troops. There was only sixteen in
20 his party and I was the only American in the party. At the end of his visit there they
21 thought he needed to rest so they took him down to the villa of Hammamet on the
22 Mediterranean. Air Marshal Cunningham had this villa down there. He met the prime
23 minister and said, "Sir, this place is perfectly secure. There's no women around. Here's
24 a swimming pool right here in the villa or just a few hundred feet down there is the
25 Mediterranean. You can go in either one, you can go nude or you can go in the bathing
26 suit. If you want a bathing suit it's upstairs." So the prime minister went upstairs. In a
27 few minutes he came down. He had on his hat, his cigar and his shirt and he headed for
28 the beach. So we all had a good time swimming down on the beach.

29 RV: I bet so. Now, did you wear your bathing suit?

30 LR: Oh, I went naked, went in the nude. It was interesting. Somebody was
31 swimming out very far and I went out to check on him and it was the foreign—oh, gosh, I

1 can't think of his name—Anthony Eden, the foreign minister. I said, “Mr. Eden, I think
2 you're out a little far. We'd better go in close.” So we started to go back and just about
3 the time we got ready to go back everybody started going up back to lunch. Well, a
4 stupid major in the Army had forgotten about an incoming tide. I'd laid my clothes too
5 close to the incoming tide and they were floating all over everyplace. He said, “I say
6 Major, let's string out the duds, put them on a mesquite bush, let them dry and then we'll
7 take another dip and then we'll go eat.” Can you imagine me and the foreign minister of
8 England ringing out my duds, as he said, “duds”?

9 RV: Right. You're both standing there butt-naked.

10 LR: Yeah, that's right. We were both in the nude.

11 RV: Okay.

12 LR: Then we went back to Algiers. While we were there Prime Minister
13 Churchill sent a message to Alexander and said, “I'd like to come and visit you for a few
14 days.” Well, he thought the world of Alexander. What else could Alexander say but
15 yes? So he came and we met him at the airport, took him to our mess, which is about
16 fifteen people. General Alexander never let aides make any seating arrangements. If you
17 wanted anybody to sit anywhere, you told them. So there was only two Americans in that
18 mess and the other was a major general and he was off on a trip. So General Alexander
19 looks around and he said, “I say, Major, since you're the only American here. Why don't
20 you sit next to the prime minister.” I thought that was quite an honor. That was a great
21 evening.

22 RV: Can you tell me a little bit more about that and what he was like?

23 LR: Well, he carried the conversation completely. Nobody could say except—
24 I'll get into that later—where somebody else did. He knew everything about everything
25 and I'll tell you he was one of the smartest individuals. I don't care what subject you'd
26 bring up. He knew the answer to it all the way. Well, the next morning Commander
27 Butcher, General Eisenhower's aide, called me and said he'd like to have General
28 Alexander and the prime minister's aides to dinner. So I arranged it. That night there was
29 Prime Minister Churchill, General Alexander, General Eisenhower, General Patton,
30 General Bradley, and five aides at dinner. At that dinner Eisenhower would carry at least
31 fifty percent of the conversation, whereas all the other places we'd been Churchill

1 dominated the conversation completely, but not with Eisenhower. Eisenhower talked as
2 much as he did.

3 RV: Tell me about General Eisenhower. What was his personality like and what
4 did you witness?

5 LR: General Eisenhower was a great individual, I think. I don't think he was
6 quite the strategist and tactician that Alexander was, but he knew that he had his
7 limitations and he knew how to select the right people and he made decisions. So he
8 couldn't draw out the plans like Alexander did, but he could sure make the decisions and
9 he made the right decisions. He was well organized in a diplomatic area in addition to
10 the military area.

11 RV: So he was primed, really, then to become president because he could do
12 both.

13 LR: I think so, yeah.

14 RV: Okay. How would you describe Winston Churchill?

15 LR: I would describe Winston Churchill as one of the greatest men I've ever met.
16 Knowledgeable, gets along with everybody, likes to see things done properly, stays up
17 late at night and will sleep late in the morning.

18 RV: Tell me about his personality. Why did you think he was one of the best
19 individuals you had ever met?

20 LR: Because he had so much knowledge of everything. He leaned on people like
21 Alexander that he knew were real capable. He didn't think a whole lot of Montgomery,
22 but he did put up with him, but he didn't think a whole lot of Montgomery. Like when
23 we were visiting the troops there after the Tunisia Campaign, we were at Montgomery's
24 headquarters and they were going to troop the line. Of course, Monty was right beside
25 Churchill all the way and Alexander was still way back in the background. Finally when
26 they got ready to troop the line, Churchill stood up on the running board and looked way
27 back and said, "Oh, Alec, would you come and ride with me, please?" Of course, you
28 could see Montgomery just sort of slump down.

29 RV: What was General Montgomery like? How would you describe him?

30 LR: He's a hard man to describe. He had to have complete control of the
31 battlefield before he would move. It was terrible. I remember one time in Sicily, I'll give

1 you two occasions. One time Alexander told him to do something and he didn't do it.
2 He did something else. Well, General Alexander was not a man to raise hell or do
3 anything, but he went up, he saw what had happened, and he kept talking to
4 Montgomery. Finally Montgomery figured out and suggested, "General, I think we
5 ought to do this." Well, that's what General Alexander had told him to do in the first
6 place, but he did it through conversation and never raised his voice. Another time when
7 we were out in the field, General Alexander liked to talk about his trips out to the field.
8 So we went up on the—we landed on the southeast coast of Sicily. Montgomery went
9 north. Patton went west, north, and now he's going east. We went up to Augusta to see
10 Montgomery, got a nice briefing, but you could see he wasn't ready to move because he
11 didn't have complete control of the battlefield. We went over to see Patton. That night at
12 the mess General Alexander said, "Well, we had a nice visit today with Monty and then
13 we went over to see Georgie." He always called him Georgie. He said, "You know,
14 sometimes I wish Monty was not so conservative and would move out rapidly like
15 Georgie." I think that explains Montgomery pretty well.

16 RV: Yes, sir. Well, I definitely want you to talk about General Patton and your
17 impressions of him and any memorable incidents that you had with him or you witnessed.

18 LR: Well, when we were getting ready to go into Sicily, Montgomery was close
19 to the headquarters. He came in and had a briefing one day and went back. Patton was
20 far away and he had to spend the evening. So we always ate a late dinner with the
21 British. It was about ten o'clock, I guess, and everybody started going to their trailers. I
22 told General Patton, "Sir, I'll take you to your trailer." He said, "Major, I'd like to sit
23 here and talk just a few minutes." That was ten o'clock. At one o'clock we finally took
24 him to his trailer. He asked me everything he could possibly ask me about the British.
25 He drained me dry. Some things I wouldn't answer, but he was trying to learn as much
26 about the British as he possibly could. It didn't make any difference who it was, whether
27 it was a young major that knew nothing or who it was. He could gain information and he
28 was going to get it. I thought that was real—I was real proud of General Patton to think
29 that he could learn enough from me to help him. I think it did. It was very obvious that
30 he had no respect for Montgomery but he had real respect for General Alexander.

31 RV: Was Patton as boisterous as people report him to be?

1 LR: On a night like that, no. In front of troops, yes. Patton never used a curse
2 word that night. When he was in front of the troops every other word was a curse word.
3 He liked to put on a show in front of the troops that made him look like he was a real
4 giant, but he was a real nice individual at times.

5 RV: Was he the brilliant tactician and strategist that—?

6 LR: Yes.

7 RV: What made that stand out in your mind?

8 LR: Well, he studied history all of his life, military history. He knew what had
9 been done and he was willing to take a chance. If there was a chance of him making a
10 move for victory he would take the chance. He didn't have to have superiority of forces
11 like Montgomery before he'd move. He could see an opening and if he was sure he had a
12 chance he'd take it. He was a great soldier, no doubt about it.

13 RV: Did you like the man personally?

14 LR: Yes, very much, very much so. I liked him very much.

15 RV: Now, what I've read and what I've heard from others is that he was difficult
16 to be around a lot on a personal basis. Did you find that to be true?

17 LR: I didn't find that to be true at all. I've read that, too, but I didn't find that to
18 be true.

19 RV: Okay. Well, tell me about where you went. You're in Sicily and did you
20 make the jump to Italy?

21 LR: Yes.

22 RV: Okay, tell me about that. I really want to hear about the people in Sicily,
23 especially at Messina and how they greeted their liberation.

24 LR: Well, Montgomery was scheduled to take Messina. Patton kept moving. He
25 asked once when we were up visiting—Patton asked permission to take Messina. As I
26 recall he didn't give him permission to take Messina, but he didn't turn him down. So for
27 all practical purposes he gave him permission to go ahead when he didn't say "no," as far
28 as I'm concerned. But I wasn't at Messina when they took it so I don't know much more
29 about that.

30 RV: Okay. Can you describe, then, making the jump into Italy and drawing up
31 the plans for that?

1 LR: Well, we moved over to Bari, Italy, which is over on the west coast of Italy.
2 Not a whole lot I can talk about on that. One of the things that did happen there, General
3 Alexander wanted some small planes so he could get up into the front lines sometimes by
4 small aircraft instead of going by car which took so long. I worked with General Patton's
5 office and got two planes and one pilot. They said to see about the two C-47 pilots that
6 we had because one of them could probably just fly the other plane. So that's the way we
7 used them. We had a lot of extra time on our hands and the sergeant said, "Major, why
8 don't I teach you to fly?" I asked General Alexander if that would be all right when we
9 had a little spare time each day when we were in the office, and he said, "Sure." So the
10 sergeant taught me to fly. So I flew the airplane because we had to have the C-47 over
11 there. The sergeant took one airplane and that left the other airplane there. I flew it by
12 myself from Sicily over to the west coast of Italy. They told me where to stop and get
13 gasoline. Well, all those places had moved and I had to stop along the road and get a ten-
14 gallon can or a five-gallon can off a truck passing by and fill it up so I could move on.
15 While we were at Bari, two pilots on the C-47 were off on a trip. A major general, this
16 British major general and his aide came along and wanted to get up front and they needed
17 to go by air so they could get back. So the chief of staff called me in and said, "I want
18 you to fly the aide up to the line." I said, "Sir, look, I'm not a licensed pilot. I just fly on
19 my own. I don't think I should be flying anybody." He said, "Well, I understand you're
20 a good pilot." I said, "I think I do a pretty good job. The sergeant tells me I do." "Well,
21 you go ahead and do that." I said, "Sir, I'm objecting to it, but I'll do it if you say." We
22 got up to the front line and got out. He wanted me to go with the major general and his
23 aide and show them around. When we came back the pilot had moved the planes. He'd
24 sat in the front seat of one. When he hit a bump it tilted and broke the propeller so there
25 was only one plane left. The major general said, "Well, I'm going to fly back in that one
26 plane. The aide will have to get back the best way he can, but I'm not going to let that
27 pilot who broke the propeller fly me. You're going to fly me." I said, "Sir, I am not a
28 registered pilot." He said, "I don't care. I'm not going to trust him and I'll trust you."
29 So we flew back to headquarters. We had a headwind. By the time we got back it was
30 almost dark and I could barely see the ground. I made the finest, smoothest landing
31 you've ever seen.

1 RV: That's incredible that you were flying so quickly like that.

2 LR: The chief of staff called me in the next morning and says, "By the way,
3 thank you for what you did but you're not going to take passengers anymore."

4 RV: Wow. That's a very unique experience.

5 LR: Yeah.

6 RV: What else can you tell me about what happened in Italy?

7 LR: I don't remember anything specifically that happened there. After we got
8 into Bari I decided I'd better be a soldier and I talked to General Lemnitzer and he said,
9 "If General Alexander will release you I'll get a replacement and I'll get you to the
10 division you want to go to." So I talked to General Alexander and he said he hated to see
11 me go, but he thought it was best I go back to the troops. I asked General Lemnitzer to
12 get me the 3rd Infantry Division because it looked like it was the best division in the
13 Army. That's what he did.

14 RV: Why did you want the 3rd Infantry? What made them the best?

15 LR: Oh, I'd been watching their activities all along and they just were—I don't
16 know why I'd call them better, but their actions seemed to be more direct and get things
17 done quicker than anybody else.

18 RV: Okay. Well, we're now going to switch to what's going to happen in the
19 northern part of Europe and liberating France. Can you tell me about your involvement
20 with that part of the war?

21 LR: Well, we're going to skip Anzio, are we?

22 RV: Well, no. We don't have to. I didn't know if you wanted to talk any more
23 about the Italy campaign. But please go ahead. Tell me about that.

24 LR: Well, in Anzio, when I went to the 3rd Infantry Division and I was assigned
25 as assistant G-3. There was already more than one assistant G-3 so I was just extra.
26 When they started the campaign 1st Battalion commander was wounded and his executive
27 officer was wounded. I'd gotten to know the division commander very well and he called
28 the regimental commander. When the regimental commander called him and told him he
29 was wounded he said, "Well, I've got a major here I think would make you a good
30 battalion commander." So he sent me up to command the 1st Battalion. Well, before I
31 got there the regimental commander had moved in his S-4 as a major and he was senior

1 to me to be the battalion commander. So I had to be the exec. It was very obvious that
2 the S-4 was an S-4. He didn't know a thing about commanding troops. So for all
3 practical purposes I had to command the troops, but we let it be known that he was the
4 commander. I was there about a month. Then the man who was wounded recovered and
5 came back. It was obvious then that the regimental commander knew how things
6 happened because the 3rd Battalion became available and he sent me to the 3rd Battalion
7 as the commander. The S-4 who had been the commander stayed there as executive
8 officer. So I think that shows that I was the one that really was commanding the
9 battalion.

10 RV: Yes, sir. What else about Anzio?

11 LR: Anzio was one of the toughest battles I think I could ever be in. It was
12 always right on and they could see anything you did. If you moved around in the daytime
13 in most places they were shooting at you because they could see where you were. On the
14 outbreak of Anzio I got wounded so I didn't get into Rome. I got wounded in the leg.

15 RV: You were shot?

16 LR: It was an airburst above us. We were in a trench and the artillery officer—he
17 and I were laying almost head-to-head and it just destroyed his back. Fortunately the
18 medical officer was pretty close and he said, "Well, we'll cover it up, but I don't think
19 he's going to live. But we've got to cover it up because you can't leave a wound in a
20 chest open." Then we turned him over after we covered him up and his leg at the knee
21 down didn't turn. It was practically shot off. So we put a tourniquet on that and cleaned
22 that up. Fortunately, the man lived and came out with a pretty good life.

23 RV: Wow. How badly were you wounded?

24 LR: Well, I didn't think I was wounded very bad. It went into my left leg just
25 under the thigh. I could feel the piece of shrapnel in my leg, but the doctor said he
26 couldn't remove it. He said I had to go to the hospital. Well, they kept me in the hospital
27 a month. So I guess he was right. Then when I got back to the troops again I reported to
28 the 3rd Division. The 7th Infantry commander said, "Well, you're going to get the 3rd
29 Battalion again as a major." So I'd been out training about three days and one day they
30 sent a messenger out and said, "The regimental commander wants to see you." I said,
31 "Oh, oh." The lieutenant colonel's going to come in and take over again. So I reported

1 to the regimental commander and he says, “There’s one thing I will not put up with
2 around here and that’s an officer to be out of uniform.” Well, I started to look around and
3 see what’s wrong and he said, “You’re at attention. Stand at attention when you’re
4 talking to me.” He says, “I do not like officers to be out of uniform.” I tried to look
5 again and this went on about two or three minutes. He turned to the aide and he says,
6 “Major, will you help me get this man in uniform?” So he pulled out golden leaves.

7 RV: Oh, wow.

8 LR: He says, “You’ve been out of uniform for three days.”

9 RV: That’s nice. Tell me about, then, your duties there. What changed?

10 LR: What changed what?

11 RV: What changed with your duties now that you had been promoted? Did you
12 stay with the 3rd Battalion?

13 LR: Oh, I stayed with the 3rd Battalion. I commanded it for about—well, I
14 commanded it really as a major before. So total time I commanded that battalion was
15 about ten months. We landed in southern France and we had a hard time getting up
16 through southern France. There were lots of enemy in lots of different places, but we
17 made our headway.

18 RV: Can we back up a bit and could you tell me about how you trained and
19 planned for the invasion of Normandy?

20 LR: We were in southern France. We were not in Normandy.

21 RV: What was it after D-Day? D-Day plus how many days?

22 LR: We landed there on August the fifteenth, I believe it was, in ’44.

23 RV: Okay. Tell me about what you all did there and the operations and what you
24 did as a commander.

25 LR: Well, we had time to train before we went into southern France. We were
26 given our sector and we had to—the first day of landing wasn’t too difficult, but the
27 second day the enemy counterattacked and really made it difficult. So we had quite a
28 fight on our hands there. We were going up through southern France as fast as we could.
29 We were always having to run into fights here and there, running out of food because
30 we’re moving fast. We never ran out of ammunition, thank goodness.

31 RV: What was your objective?

1 LR: Our objective was—I guess it was Salzburg, Austria, was our total objective,
2 although we took Berchtesgaden. We were not supposed to take it, but the 101st Airborne
3 and the 2nd French Armor Division was supposed to take Berchtesgaden, but we were
4 very close to it. We had taken Salzburg and Berchtesgaden was just down the road.
5 When we got to Salzburg Colonel Hankus, then the regimental commander, called
6 Colonel Duncan told him, said, “Look, there’s a bridge that shows it goes across the river
7 there. It’s a railroad bridge. We know the road bridge is blown, but there’s a railroad
8 bridge down there. You send out a patrol and see what it’s like.” Well, the patrol was
9 gone quite a while and they came back and said, “We can’t find the bridge.” So Hankus
10 sent me down to see Duncan and see if we couldn’t do something. So I told Jack
11 Duncan, I said, “Jack, when a patrol goes out at night they go ten yards and they think
12 they’ve been a hundred yards. Let’s you and I take a patrol and see if we can’t find this
13 bridge. It’s bound to be there.” He didn’t want to but I said, “The enemy is getting pretty
14 scarce around here anyway. Let’s get this thing done.” So we went out and we found the
15 bridge pretty soon. The enemy had put an engine out on the bridge, spread the rails
16 across so the wheels were on the crossties. I called Hankus and he called the
17 commanding general who got the engineers out there and got the engine off of there
18 pretty quickly towards the bridge and we were crossing and getting ready to go to
19 Berchtesgaden. Although we weren’t supposed to be there he said, “I’m going to take
20 Berchtesgaden.” He put me on the bridge and said, “If anybody goes across this bridge
21 besides a 3rd Division man you’re going to hang by the balls.” So everything was going
22 fine until the 2nd Armored Division came down. They came down with tanks. I saw
23 them coming in tanks. I put a two-and-half ton truck across the front of the bridge so
24 they’d have to at least go crush it. But they stopped and finally General Leclerc came up
25 and he spoke pretty good English. He said, “I’ve seen General O’Daniel who is the
26 division commander. He has authorized me to cross this bridge.” I said, “Sir, I’m sorry,
27 but General O’Daniel told me he must tell me personally who can cross this bridge other
28 than the 3rd Division.” He said, “Well, he gave me permission.” I said, “Well, I can’t let
29 you go because he told me he had to give it to me personally.” So he went off looking
30 for General O’Daniel. In a few minutes General O’Daniel came up and I said, “Did you
31 give permission for General Leclerc to cross this bridge?” He said, “Yes, I did. Did you

1 let him across?" I said, "No, sir. You told me the only ones to let across was who you
2 personally told me." He said, "It's a goddamn good thing you didn't let him across."

3 RV: Tell me what else you remember about that campaign across France. How
4 long did it take you to move?

5 LR: How long?

6 RV: Yes, sir. How long did that campaign last for your unit?

7 LR: Well, we landed on the fifteenth, sixteenth of September in '44 and we
8 moved into Berchtesgaden on the fifth of May of '45, a lot of fighting in there.

9 RV: Yeah, I can imagine. Do you want to talk about any of that, any of the
10 battles and the nature of the fighting?

11 LR: Well, I got mixed up in one in Besançon. I told you in my memoirs there
12 you might want to read that very carefully because we were in Besançon. The enemy got
13 past our troops. They were within about ten or fifteen yards of this house where we were
14 in. We were out on the little porch and little deck by the fence above it. They were
15 shooting at us with everything. One of my communications people goes—I was always
16 carrying communication people with me because I needed communicators to be sure I
17 could communicate. Roland D. Maxwell was a man that was getting shot at. He'd shoot
18 back and finally I said, "Well, we're going to have to evacuate," and I gave the order to
19 evacuate. Just before we started to move one German threw a hand grenade over the
20 wall. It landed right in the midst of all of us. Maxwell had his blanket. He grabbed his
21 blanket and jumped on the hand grenade and took the full force of the blast. Fortunately
22 he lived and saved our lives. With the communications I was able to maneuver my
23 companies around and get him back to the aid station. Fortunately he lived a decent life.
24 He'd taken a hell of a blast. In the Colmar Pocket I got mixed up in another very bad
25 situation. Garlin Conner was a sergeant and I made him a lieutenant. He had about I
26 don't know how many Silver Stars and Purple Hearts and everything. I thought, well, it's
27 time for him to go home. So I brought him back to be my S-2. He wasn't intelligent
28 enough to be an S-3. He really wasn't intelligent enough to be an S-2, but I wanted to try
29 to take care of him. The enemy was counterattacking in the Colmar Pocket. I couldn't
30 see where in the heck they were going or what they were doing. I said, "I've got to get a
31 patrol and go out and do something here. Can the staff officer tell me where we can get a

1 patrol?" Conner says, "Sir, I'll be glad to go out with a radio and a telephone and see if I
2 can't bring artillery on those people." He took two men with him and he was out there
3 for hours. I think he knocked out five tanks and killed something like a 150 soldiers,
4 Germans—I mean they finally captured. We were in battle and he was going home. I
5 wanted him to get the best award he could so I called the awards officer and said, "Look,
6 here's the things he has done. Give him the best award you can because he's going
7 home." Well, he got him a DSC (Distinguished Service Cross), but it should've been a
8 Medal of Honor. We've been trying to raise it to Medal of Honor ever since but haven't
9 had any luck. He was one of the most outstanding soldiers. Very little education but he
10 was a real soldier. Then right after the next day after we got that situation pretty well
11 straightened out. I had help getting my forward command post. We got shelled. I got hit
12 pretty badly. So I worked my way to the aide station. The company commander of the
13 Company K—the Company K aide was there and he saw a man trudging in. I went in
14 and he recognized me because I'd known me for a long time. As he said in his book, *The*
15 *Combat Medic*, he held a gasoline lantern and took off my shredded jacket while the 6'
16 battalion commander surgeon, as he called him, took out about twelve or fourteen slivers
17 of shrapnel out of my back without any anesthesia. He said all I did was groan a little bit,
18 but I went back to my same unit the way I came in. So that was a pretty tough few days
19 there.

20 RV: It sounds like it. So did this put you out of commission for a long time or
21 were you able to move back into service—the wounding?

22 LR: People ask me, "Why did you go back to your unit?" Well, when you're
23 commanding a battalion of nine hundred people and they believe in what you're doing,
24 the worst thing you can do is change commanders. If at all possible you can keep going
25 you've got to keep going. It was tough with all those wounds and my back was hurting
26 like hell, but I had enough stamina and enough intelligence to know what I was doing to
27 keep going, so I kept going.

28 RV: Has that been your philosophy the whole time basically?

29 LR: Well, yes. You've got to take care of your troops. If you take care of your
30 troops then they'll take care of you. If they believe in you, boy, you've got to keep
31 going. You've got to keep with them.

1 RV: So when you went back to the line tell me about what happened after that
2 and moving forward.

3 LR: I didn't understand

4 RV: After you get back to the line where does your unit go? What else
5 happened?

6 LR: You mean after I was wounded?

7 RV: Yes, sir.

8 LR: Oh. Well, it was one of the toughest battles other than Anzio and the Colmar
9 Pocket. But through the maneuvering of our companies and the division commander
10 knew what he was doing we were able get across rivers and get back into the swing of
11 things and be on the offensive again. So we had a good fight in that area, but we
12 managed to pull out and do it right.

13 RV: Did you notice a difference in the German troops during this part of the war
14 versus the North Africa campaign and the Sicily and Italy campaign?

15 LR: Oh, I didn't. The Germans were always outstanding soldiers, always. It was
16 very seldom you would find Germans that wanted to give up. When they reached this
17 point and they knew they couldn't do any better they'd give up. You have to be pretty
18 well surrounding them before they'd give up.

19 RV: Tell me about the French people as you moved through their country. What
20 were they like?

21 LR: French people varied. Most of them were for you, but they were still
22 rather—you couldn't get close to them like you could in Italy and places like that, Sicily
23 and Tunisia. I don't know. The French were just a different breed of people.

24 RV: In a good way or bad way?

25 LR: Oh, I wouldn't call it either good or bad, just different.

26 RV: Were they seeing you all as true liberators or something else?

27 LR: Oh, I think most of them looked at us as liberators, but they didn't appreciate
28 it as much as they did back in Tunisia and places like that.

29 RV: Who do you think perceived you most, or in a better way, the folks in Africa
30 or Italy or France?

31 LR: I'm sorry. I didn't get the question.

1 RV: What population—who treated you the best? Who do you think was more
2 welcoming, the Italians, the Tunisians, the Moroccans, the Germans for that matter?
3 Who did you feel like was really seeing you all as true liberators and welcomed you with
4 open arms?

5 LR: I think the Germans were the best.

6 RV: Really? Tell me why.

7 LR: Well, they had been under Hitler for so long that they knew they were finally
8 getting freed, I think. They showed great respect for us for what we did for them, I think.

9 RV: Did you actually—were you able to talk to some of the German population
10 about their time under the Nazi regime?

11 LR: No, I didn't, but my regimental commander was German-oriented and he
12 spoke German and he spoke French. He did a very fine job of talking with them and
13 getting information from them.

14 RV: What was he able to learn, do you think, that was most useful for you?

15 LR: He learned locations of where the civilians thought the enemy were located
16 where our troops couldn't talk to too many people and find that out. He could find it out
17 faster because he could talk to them and find it out.

18 RV: Right. Well, getting into May, 1945, tell me about your last few weeks there
19 before the end of the war.

20 LR: Well, that was it, going into Berchtesgaden. That was the biggest thing of
21 all, finding that bridge over the river and getting the bridge covered with planks so we
22 could take tanks and vehicles down there and then getting into Berchtesgaden and seeing
23 all the things there that had been left. It was a beautiful place to see although it was
24 devastated mostly.

25 RV: What do you remember about the end of the war and when victory was
26 finally declared? How did you feel?

27 LR: It was the greatest feeling of my life when I heard that the war had ended
28 because I thought, well, I've been wounded five times now and now I won't hear another
29 shot fired in anger unless I have to go to the Far East. I hope I don't have to go there. It
30 was a great relief. It was wonderful.

31 RV: Was there a real possibility for you all going to the Far East now?

1 LR: We didn't know really. We did not know, but we knew the war was
2 continuing over there. The complete war wasn't over so we thought we might have to go.
3 We didn't know what was going to happen. But then after the war we had a problem. I
4 became the G-3 of the division then. I was exec of the regiment when we took
5 Berchtesgaden. Our supplies would come into Bremerhaven and that was a British zone
6 and would go through the British zone into the American zone. Before they get to a
7 railroad where they could unload they had to go through about three thousand meters of
8 railroad that was in the Russian zone. The Russians would stop our trains. They
9 wouldn't take anything, but they'd hold them up and inspect them and claim that they
10 were just checking things out. It was very worrisome. So we were given the mission of
11 treading that land so that we could get that three thousand meters of railroad as our land.
12 I was the G-3 of the division and had to make the plans to do that. We found out that the
13 Germans wanted some of the area that we were occupying because there was some
14 electrical equipment in our area that was used in the lighting of the Russians' area. So I
15 think that's what gave us the key to get the land into our area. It's in the memoir there.
16 I'm one of the witnesses of the agreement where we signed with the Russians. One of the
17 men from the State Department told me that's the only agreement in World War II that
18 was kept in effect.

19 RV: Tell me about what you thought about and experienced with the Russians.

20 LR: I didn't trust them.

21 RV: Why not?

22 LR: That's a good question. I don't know why, but I just didn't trust the
23 Russians. Even though when we made all the agreements and everything I was
24 wondering all the time, "Are they going to back out?" Well, they did try to back out after
25 we got the troops moved, but Bill Rossen, who was the regimental commander, moved it
26 so good that they'd have to go into a fight to get the land back. They didn't want to start
27 another fight.

28 RV: Was there a real threat, do you think, or a belief that there could be a fight
29 between the United States and Russia right there at that time?

1 LR: Oh, no, I don't think so, unh-unh, no. As I say, they wanted to get the land
2 back after they found out they'd given up this land. They wanted to move in and the only
3 way they could do it was a fight and they didn't want to start a fight.

4 RV: Can you describe what you heard about how the Russians occupied their
5 side of Germany, how they treated the people, what they did?

6 LR: I don't know a thing about that other than what I read.

7 RV: Okay. How difficult was it to be there with the German people after the war
8 and helping them recover from what had happened to them?

9 LR: Oh, the German people were always very nice. It was very easy to work
10 with the Germans. It was very easy.

11 RV: How traumatized were they?

12 LR: They weren't too traumatized. They were glad to be free.

13 RV: Did you run into remnants of German individuals who still sympathized
14 with the Nazis?

15 LR: No, I never did. Maybe some people did, but I never did.

16 RV: Well, tell me what you did there after the war. How long did you stay in
17 Germany?

18 LR: I came home on another thirty-day leave in February of '46. The division
19 commander had gone to Ft. Benning, Georgia, and had asked for me to come be relieved
20 and to come to Ft. Benning, Georgia, to teach leadership. It never got through. So I
21 asked the general who was a good friend of mine and he said, "It's time you get another
22 thirty-day leave. I think while you get that thirty-day leave we can probably get you
23 transferred to Ft. Benning, Georgia." Well, I got my thirty-day leave and got home and
24 the first thing I did was call Ft. Benning, Georgia, and the chief of staff who had been the
25 chief of staff of the 3rd Division. He said, "Well, you write a letter to the ground forces.
26 We'll call them and see if we can't get this straightened out." So that was late February.
27 In early April I got my orders to Ft. Benning, Georgia. So for all practical purposes I
28 came home in April because I was still overseas on paper until April of '46. So
29 September of '42 to April of '46.

30 RV: What did you do at Ft. Benning?

1 LR: Taught leadership. They sent six officers to Yale for about—I think we were
2 there three weeks. Two infantry, two artillery, and two armor and we tried to come up
3 with an outline for leadership, sat down with six psychologists who had been studying
4 leadership with their rats and different things. We made some progress but very little.
5 It's a hard subject to outline to teach. Some of us came up with a definition of leadership
6 and never sold it to anybody. Those of us that came up with it—let's see, "the ability to
7 influence others to achieve a common goal." That's the best I could come up with was
8 some other people I worked with, but it never sold.

9 RV: Why not?

10 LR: People just didn't like the definition. I think it's a good one. "Ability to
11 influence others to achieve a common goal." I think that explains it pretty well of
12 leadership.

13 RV: So what did you end up teaching?

14 LR: I ended up teaching leadership.

15 RV: Well, what was the definition that you ended up endorsing?

16 LR: I used that definition, but I was only one of about four who were teaching
17 different parts of leadership and I used it. But even the people I used it to didn't think a
18 whole lot of it. (Doorbell rings) Somebody's at the front door.

19 RV: Okay.

20 LR: That's two o'clock my time.

21 RV: Yes, sir.

22 LR: Yeah.

23 RV: Well, thank you very much for your time today. I really appreciate it.

24 LR: Good talking with you, Richard, and I hope I did you a good job.

Interview with Lloyd Ramsey

Session [2] of [2]

Date: March 21, 2006

1 Richard Verrone: This is Richard Verrone. I'm continuing my oral history
2 interview with Gen. Lloyd Ramsey. Today is March 21st, 2006. I am in Lubbock, Texas,
3 again, on the campus of Texas Tech University in the Vietnam Archive's interview room.
4 This interview is part of the Vietnam Archive Oral History Project. General Ramsey is in
5 Salem, Virginia, and it's approximately 2:07PM, Central Standard Time. General
6 Ramsey, before we began the session today you mentioned you wanted to talk a little bit
7 more about your college days, and I welcome those comments.

8 Lloyd Ramsey: Well, I was very honored in a lot of areas in college and did a lot
9 of things, but there are two especially I'm very proud of. One is I made Who's Who
10 Among College Students in American Universities and Colleges. There was only about
11 fifteen people from the University of Kentucky who made it that year. The other one I'm
12 very proud of is the men's leadership fraternity called Omicron Delta Kappa. My point
13 being, like I was captain of the freshman football team. I was coach and captain of the
14 swimming team. I was cadet colonel. All those things give you points. You have to
15 build up so many points and you have to make certain grades to get into that. Those were
16 the two things that I wanted to mention because I'm very proud of those two that I made
17 while I was in college.

18 RV: Yes, sir. I can understand why. It is very clear that you were born and
19 raised and evolved into a natural leader. I know I've asked this question before, but I
20 wonder if you could make some more comments on it, especially in light of the fact that
21 when we left off in our last session you were discussing your time at Ft. Benning and
22 leadership school. Can you tell me again what you think makes a good leader and what
23 was it in you that gave you I guess the inclination toward that, to being a good leader?

24 LR: Richard, I think you've asked the \$64 question. I don't think I have an
25 answer to that. I think the good Lord gives you the will to do it and you do it. Some
26 people, like one of my sergeants in the Army was not educated at all, Garlin Connor. He
27 became an outstanding leader because he just had it in him. He was not afraid of
28 anything, he was wounded about seven times, and I think he had about five Silver Stars.

1 He got a Distinguished Service Cross, but I think he should have had a Medal of Honor.
2 But what made him a leader one never knows. You develop it sometimes by accident
3 like he did and sometimes you just come up and I think I showed pretty much leadership
4 all through my lifetime. I was very fortunate to have these wonderful positions.

5 RV: So it's more of intangible thing than it is something you can kind of put your
6 finger on?

7 LR: I think so, yes.

8 RV: Okay. Well, when you're in leadership school at Ft. Benning, I know you
9 talked about kind of what your mantra was, that leadership is the ability to influence
10 others to kind of get them to go in your direction or get them to go in a certain direction.

11 LR: To achieve a common goal is the way I put it.

12 RV: Right. How did you teach that? Do you remember what you did in the
13 classroom?

14 LR: Well, in the classroom we used many examples of what happened in combat
15 in leadership situations and showed where a man who wasn't a leader stepped forward
16 and became a leader all of a sudden and how he could become a leader if he just exerted
17 himself. We used those examples quite often in our leadership course. Of course, we
18 taught a lot of theory about how to become a leader, but I don't know if that helped much
19 or not, as much as the examples in combat helped.

20 RV: Right. Do you remember the really great leaders that you were privy to be
21 around during your career? Who would you say were the top one, two, or three leaders
22 that you had the opportunity to be around?

23 LR: Well, we haven't gotten that far along as to who all I know. I would say that
24 Prime Minister Churchill, whom I was with on two different times for about four days
25 each, was probably the most outstanding leader in our history. Dwight Eisenhower,
26 which I got to know him very well because I was aide to General Alexander and he was
27 deputy to General Eisenhower and commanded the forces in the field. General
28 Eisenhower was an outstanding leader from every respect. He had the diplomacy to deal
29 with other nations and other people. He had the know-how to move troops to do the right
30 thing. He could say the right words and take the right actions all the time. General
31 Alexander, the British general, was an outstanding leader, but he didn't want any

1 publicity and nobody ever hardly heard of him because he just wanted to get the job done
2 and that's all he wanted to do. He did get the job done.

3 RV: Well, as we move forward through your career I'd like you to keep in mind
4 people like that who influenced you and you got to witness. I think that's obviously a
5 consistency in your life that you were exposed to these kinds of people and with your
6 own characteristics it's probably one of the reasons for your great success in your career.
7 So as we're moving forward here, after you finished at Ft. Benning, where did you go?

8 LR: From Ft. Benning I went overseas. Oh, wait a minute. You mean—

9 RV: When you finished the leadership school, and this is in 1946, I believe.

10 LR: In '46 I went to Command and General Staff College.

11 RV: Okay. Can you describe what that was like?

12 LR: Command and General Staff College is in Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas, and that
13 teaches you tactics and strategy. It's a ten-month course. You learn about tactics and
14 strategy and you get lots of outstanding lectures from lots of top leaders. It's an
15 outstanding course. You really have to study and you really have to work at it. I think I
16 ended up in the top quarter of my class.

17 RV: How old were you at this point? Is this still 1946 or is it '47?

18 LR: I went to Command and General Staff College in '47 and '48. No, '46. I
19 don't remember which year it was. It was '46-'47 or '47-'48.

20 RV: So you were right around twenty-nine, thirty, thirty-one years old.

21 LR: I was born in '18.

22 RV: Yes, sir. Well, I guess this takes a year at the Command and General Staff
23 College at that point?

24 LR: I'm sorry?

25 RV: Was it a yearlong course?

26 LR: Ten months.

27 RV: Okay, ten months. When you emerged from that were you then prepared to
28 go into a higher rank, a higher leadership position?

29 LR: Let me back up just a minute.

30 RV: Okay.

1 LR: I know now I went to Leavenworth in '49-'50 because that's when the
2 Korean War broke out. My classmates were getting orders to go to Korea. My orders
3 were to go to G-2 in the Pentagon and I stayed with my orders. So I went to the Pentagon
4 after that. Now you asked about—what was your question about the leadership?

5 RV: Well, that's what I was going to ask. What happened when you finished
6 that? Did you feel like that course had prepared you for a higher leadership position, a
7 higher rank, more responsibility?

8 LR: I'd say that course prepares you for anything a lieutenant colonel on up can
9 do. It's one of the finest courses in the Army that I've ever heard of and ever gone to.
10 The Command and General Staff College is by far—at the time in your career that you
11 need that information and you get what you need and you study hard and work at it.

12 RV: Let me ask you a question, and you don't have to answer this, sir, if you
13 don't want to, but was your wife in the picture at this point? Had you all met and were
14 you married?

15 LR: We were married before I went overseas.

16 RV: To Korea or World War II?

17 LR: World War II.

18 RV: Okay. Tell me about how you all met and a little bit about the relationship
19 you guys had with you going to war and now you're going to be going to war three times.
20 Tell me a little bit about her.

21 LR: She and I were born in the same little town and she was a year older than I
22 was. So she was a senior when I was a junior. We went to the same parties together, but
23 I never dated her in high school. She went to a smaller college, Georgetown College. I
24 went to the University of Kentucky. After I'd been at the University of Kentucky for a
25 year and she'd been at Georgetown for two years she decided to come to the University
26 of Kentucky. Well, since she was from my hometown and a nice-looking lady I thought I
27 would try to be nice to her and show her around and help her and introduce her to some
28 of my boy friends and so forth. Well, this kept getting sort of interesting. The first thing
29 I knew I was interested in her. So it was through that situation that we finally got married
30 on February 22nd, 1941, after I graduated from college in 1940 and she graduated in 1939.

31 RV: Okay. You all stayed married throughout your whole career, is that correct?

1 LR: Yes. We had a baby almost nine months after I left to go overseas. She had
2 to raise the child. I saw the baby for the first time at eighteen months old for thirty days
3 and then went back and didn't get back until she was almost three years of age. She had
4 to go through a lot of the hard drudgery.

5 RV: Right. Well, getting back to your assignment at the Pentagon, can you tell
6 me what you were doing?

7 LR: I was assigned to G-2 and I was assigned to the executive office of G-2 in
8 what was called Planning and Coordination. Each one of us had certain activities of
9 intelligence that we were responsible for. I was responsible for counterintelligence
10 information and I was responsible for national security information. You kept a liaison
11 with those two activities all the time and kept up to date so you could tell the
12 commanding, the G-2 what was going on in that area of the field.

13 RV: Can you give me some examples of some of the things that you did?

14 LR: Well, I was very pleased with what I did in the CIC (Counterintelligence
15 Corps). When I joined the G-2, when you want to get somebody cleared for a top-secret
16 or any security clearance you had to find out every place he'd been stationed and go to
17 those places he'd been stationed to see if they had any files on him that was good or bad
18 against him. They attempted to consolidate those files, but they were never able to do it.
19 The Counterintelligence Corps then was at Holabird, Maryland. I went up there and I
20 started talking to this one major up there. He had made some pretty good plans, but he
21 couldn't get anybody to listen to him. I said, "I'll listen to you." So I took those plans
22 back to the G-2 and said, "I think I've got a plan and the man that put all these things
23 together and can throw all these files together." The G-2 had gotten to know me very
24 well and he said, "Lloyd, we've tried this two or three times and it won't work." I said,
25 "Will you give me one more chance?" He said, "Yes, and if doesn't work I'm going to
26 hang you by the balls." I don't guess you want to put that in there.

27 RV: Oh, we'll keep it. That's just fine, sir.

28 LR: Well, we started working on it and in about six months we had provost
29 marshal general. Criminal investigation was taken away from the provost marshal at that
30 particular time, but they took over the files. So they used it for intelligence and criminal
31 investigation.

1 RV: Okay. What other things did you do? What kind of intelligence were you
2 taking a look at?

3 LR: There's not much you can talk about what you looked at. It was who was
4 involved in security activities. I had more sentences than I knew what to do with at that
5 particular time so I was getting involved in just about everything, but most of them I
6 can't talk about.

7 RV: Okay. I was pretty sure that that stuff is all declassified from the Korean
8 War, but could you speak in general terms? Was this intelligence on China or the North
9 Koreans or was it other places in the world?

10 LR: Worldwide.

11 RV: It was worldwide, okay. What were the major intelligence sources at the
12 time? What countries were you all focusing in on the most would you say?

13 LR: Let's stay away from that.

14 RV: I'm sorry?

15 LR: I'd rather stay away from that.

16 RV: Okay. No problem at all. How long did this assignment last? Were you
17 there just for a year and then went over to Korea?

18 LR: I was there for three years.

19 RV: Three years, throughout the whole war.

20 LR: The Korean War, yes.

21 RV: Okay.

22 LR: I ended up as the assistant executive officer of G-2 instead of getting
23 promoted.

24 RV: Well, after this assignment where did you go from there?

25 LR: I went to the Army War College.

26 RV: So back to another school to continue your training. Tell me about the
27 Army War College.

28 LR: The War College was at Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania. That's another
29 ten-month school. There you have lectures and you study hard, but you didn't have
30 examinations like you did at the Command and General Staff College. You learned a lot
31 and you got some of the most outstanding lectures you ever heard of from the top people

1 in the whole United States and some from abroad. It was an outstanding course. That
2 teaches you more about the general staff and top strategy and tactics where the Command
3 and General Staff College taught you more about division and regimental staff and so
4 forth and corps. But the Army War College took you all the way up through the
5 Pentagon and what they did there.

6 RV: Could you tell me a little bit about your impressions of the Cold War?
7 These are the very early years of the Cold War. How did you all see it back then?

8 LR: I was quite concerned as many others were that war was going to break out
9 at most any time because things didn't look good from time to time in the Cold War. We
10 didn't know exactly what the Russians might do, especially when they brought their
11 missiles into Cuba. That really stirred us up.

12 RV: During the Korean War, was there a great fear of what the Chinese might or
13 might not do to the United States or did you think it was going to be contained right there
14 in Asia?

15 LR: Again, you're getting into areas where I'd rather not talk about.

16 RV: Okay. Well, after the Army War College then where did you proceed?

17 LR: From the Army War College I was on orders to go to Korea. We stopped in
18 Japan and was assigned to the G-1 Departmental Headquarters, Far Eastern Command of
19 the United Nations Command. I did that only a few months as I became the Deputy
20 Secretary of the Joint Staff of the United Nations Far East Command. Later I became the
21 Secretary of the United Nations Far East Command, Secretary of the Joint Staff.

22 RV: How were you selected for that position?

23 LR: A friend of mine was the Secretary of the Joint Staff at the time. He selected
24 me to be his deputy. Then when he left, the commanding general thought I was doing a
25 pretty good job. The commanding general, the commander-in-chief, he thought I was
26 doing a pretty good job, I guess and he just said, "You're going to be the Secretary of the
27 Joint Staff," so I took it over.

28 RV: What were your duties?

29 LR: I'd get to the office about seven o'clock in the morning and I'd read about
30 three hundred cables before the commander-in-chief came in and tried to reduce it down
31 to about twenty-five cables that he should see. Then I would go to a morning briefing.

1 The rest of the day I would be handling paperwork from the staff and scouting the
2 paperwork from one staff to the other staff and directing it where it could go and when it
3 should be submitted to the commander-in-chief. The chief of staff and I had the
4 assistance of—I had them set up so that they could study the paper and brief the chief of
5 staff and commander-in-chief on the paper so they wouldn't have to read the whole thing
6 unless they wanted to. I didn't leave the office until about on average seven o'clock at
7 night. That means I was there about twelve hours a day. In that position I was invited to
8 all the high-ranking activities because of my position and the commander-in-chief was so
9 he would bring his blues to the office and change in the office about 6:30 or 7:00. I
10 would do the same thing. He would go to the party and I would call my wife and I had a
11 driver and he'd come by and pick me up and we'd go to the party. I'd get home about
12 nine o'clock and my children were in bed. Sometimes I'd go from Sunday to Sunday
13 without seeing my children.

14 RV: Wow.

15 LR: Saturday was an easier day. I didn't get to work until about eight o'clock
16 and I got home about six. Sunday was a real easy day. I didn't go to work until about
17 eight and I got home about twelve. That was the most hours I've ever spent in the Army
18 in that position.

19 RV: Was this in Japan or was this in Korea?

20 LR: In Japan.

21 RV: Okay. In Tokyo?

22 LR: Yeah.

23 RV: Can you describe Japan for me? What was it like?

24 LR: At that time Japan was very interesting. It was reasonable to go out to dinner
25 and do different things. The Japanese appreciated the Americans at that time very much.
26 I had three children that grew up there at a young age and they enjoyed it very much. But
27 Japan is quite a small area and after three years I'd had enough of it and so had my entire
28 family.

29 RV: Now what year was this when you did leave Japan?

30 LR: I went over there in '54 and left in '57.

31 RV: Okay. In '57 where did you go?

1 LR: At that time I went back to Ft. Benning, Georgia, to command troops at Ft.
2 Benning.

3 RV: Okay. What was your position there?

4 LR: The 29th Infantry was the school troop command. At that time they divided
5 the regiment into battle groups. They had two battle groups so I took one battle group
6 and somebody else took another battle group and we had a headquarters over the two of
7 us. The man that ran the headquarters over the two of us had been the staff officer. I
8 forget what staff officer he had been. He did not know much about command and it was
9 very obvious. He became the commanding general and in about, I guess, four weeks
10 after I got there he moved him out of there and moved me in to take over both battle
11 groups. So that was infantry school troops that put on all the demonstrations for the
12 Benning instructors. I was in that office about a year.

13 RV: You had that job for about a year?

14 LR: Yeah.

15 RV: When you finished at Benning, I guess you recognized your career was
16 really going up and up. Was this something that you really were striving for or did these
17 things happen because of the fact that you were working hard, that people recognized
18 your potential and moved you forward or was this something you were really gunning
19 for?

20 LR: It depends on whether your career is going up or not because you see some
21 of you efficiency reports like General Lemnitzer who was my last commander-in-chief
22 when I was Secretary of the Joint Staff, he was a hard taskmaster on making out
23 efficiency reports. By the numbers he made the worst efficiency report I've ever had, but
24 for the comments that he made about me he made the best comments. He said, "This
25 man should be promoted to general officer." He gave me low ratings. Well, you wonder
26 what's going to happen with those things. Well, evidently those low ratings didn't hurt
27 me and what he said about me helped me quite a bit. But you never know. Sometimes
28 you don't see those efficiency reports and sometimes you do. It was a long time after he
29 made that report that I saw it.

30 RV: What did the report say?

1 LR: Oh, he said, "He is one of the most outstanding officers that ever worked for
2 me and he should be promoted to general officer when the time comes." Something like
3 that.

4 RV: What rank were you at this point?

5 LR: Colonel at that time.

6 RV: Okay. So after this very good efficiency report where did you move?

7 LR: I went from there back to Benning and then I commanded that school troops
8 command for a year. Moved up be the G-1 of the infantry school for the infantry center
9 for a year, or two years.

10 RV: Then after that? We're approaching 1960, is that correct?

11 LR: '59, '60, yeah, that'd be right.

12 RV: Okay. Give me your impressions of John Kennedy. He's getting ready to
13 come into office in '61. What did you think of this man?

14 LR: See, in 1960 I became the senior liaison officer to Congress, to the Senate in
15 the fall of '60, I guess it was. Of course he was running for president, but many times I'd
16 get a call from his office that said, "The senator wants to see you," and he'd want to talk
17 about certain military affairs. Sometimes there'd be a case that somebody was involved
18 in, wanting in and out of the military and he'd want to talk to me about it. He was a very
19 pleasant individual to work with and I always enjoyed going to his office.

20 RV: What about him when he was president? Did you see him change a lot or
21 was he still kind of that same person?

22 LR: Oh, I think he stayed just the same as president. He was, in my opinion, an
23 outstanding president. He'd have been a fine one if he hadn't gotten assassinated, I think.

24 RV: Well, I take it you probably then approved of the way he handled the Cuban
25 Missile Crisis.

26 LR: Oh, yes, by all means.

27 RV: Where were you? How long did you stay there with Congress?

28 LR: I stayed with Congress from '60 to '63.

29 RV: Okay. So you were right there in Washington at the epicenter of what
30 happened in October of '62.

31 LR: Yeah.

1 RV: Can you tell me a little bit about that time period, what you remember?

2 LR: What happened in the missile crisis?

3 RV: Yes, sir.

4 LR: The whole Congress was quite concerned. They were all behind the

5 president, very much behind him. I don't think he had any opposition on what he was

6 doing. It appeared that we were all quite concerned as to what's going to happen.

7 RV: What did you do during the crisis? Did you stay in Washington or did you

8 evacuate?

9 LR: Oh, I stayed right there. Nobody was evacuated, no.

10 RV: Okay. Things are starting to happen in Southeast Asia about this time. Was

11 Southeast Asia on your radar screen at that point or would this come later?

12 LR: You mean going there?

13 RV: No, sir, just discussions about activities with South Vietnam.

14 LR: At that particular time not much discussion was going on, no.

15 RV: Okay. When did that start to happen for you? When did you have to start

16 concerning yourself with Vietnam?

17 LR: Well, I say not much discussion but it was going on because we started

18 going in there in, I think, 1953 or '54. We started in as an advisory group. One of my

19 good friends that was at the Army War College, Gen. Bill Rossen, he was a colonel then,

20 and General O'Daniel was the chief advisor. They reduced him from a lieutenant general

21 to a major general to take over the advisory of the Vietnamese. He asked Bill Rossen to

22 come over to be on of his staff officers because he'd be a staff officer under him in World

23 War II. So it was being discussed, but nobody didn't seem to worry too much about it at

24 that particular time.

25 RV: Okay. What did you do after you finished your stint there with Congress in

26 1963?

27 LR: I went to the Pentagon for a year in what was called Force Development. It

28 was part of the G-3 that had been divided into Operations and Force Development. Now

29 I was the executive officer of that for a year.

30 RV: Okay. Were you still a colonel?

1 LR: I was a colonel. That's when I got promoted to a BG (brigadier general)
2 while I was in that particular job.

3 RV: What did that mean to you when you were promoted to general officer?

4 LR: It was one of the finest things that could happen to a man in the Army, as far
5 as I'm concerned, because there's few and far between that are selected. Less than fifty
6 percent of the people I think make colonel. I don't know what the percentage is that
7 make general, but it would be very, very small. So I was very honored to be selected to
8 brigadier general.

9 RV: When you finish your year there in the Pentagon with Force Development
10 where did you go?

11 LR: They had me working on a study to try to get more men in the Army called
12 the STEP. I can't remember what it stood for. Anyway, it was trying to get people that
13 did not have a college education that could get their GED (general equivalency diploma)
14 in six weeks and the people who were not physically qualified that could be physically
15 qualified in six weeks. I presented that to both houses of Congress and the Armed
16 Services Committee, but the House and Armed Services Committee turned us down and
17 that finished that problem. We were going to do it at Ft. Leonard Wood, Missouri, and
18 the deputy commanding general of Ft. Leonard Wood, Missouri, came open at that time
19 so they went ahead and sent me out to Ft. Leonard Wood, Missouri, as the deputy
20 commanding general of Ft. Leonard Wood at the engineer center.

21 RV: Okay. Can you tell me a little bit about that?

22 LR: Well, it was called an engineer center, but it was really just an Army training
23 center. We had basic training. We had advanced individual training, but most of the
24 advanced individual training was for engineers. The commanding general put me in
25 charge of supervising all the training activities. That was a real job because we had to
26 keep moving these people and get them qualified to be sure that the training was proper
27 and it was very interesting and I enjoyed every minute of it.

28 RV: What kind of activities did you do? Can you tell me a little bit about what
29 you did specifically?

30 LR: I spent most of the day in the field to see what was going on to be sure that
31 they were doing what we told them to do. I would say that I'd spend four-fifths of my

1 time in the field going around visiting various activities to be sure that they were
2 following the guidelines that we had set out for them.

3 RV: How did you see the U.S. Army at this point? Was it high quality or was it
4 still in development?

5 LR: Oh, it was high quality at that time. It's always been high quality, very little
6 time that I've seen it at low quality.

7 RV: Okay. So when you finish the engineering school and being out in the field,
8 something you said was very difficult, where did you go as brigadier general?

9 LR: I went back to the Pentagon and became the assistant to the Public Affairs,
10 called then Public Information, but now it's Public Affairs. I was the Deputy of the
11 Public Affairs Office of the Department of the Army.

12 RV: What kind of activity was that, the public affairs part?

13 LR: Well, we dealt with editors, correspondents, broadcasters, writing papers for
14 the staff to cover the things that we needed to cover and trying to make the Army look
15 good. Just about anything in public information that could be handled, we handled it.

16 RV: How long did you stay there?

17 LR: I was there about eighteen months?

18 RV: What's the timeframe here?

19 LR: It would be '67 and '68.

20 RV: What did you think about what was happening in Vietnam at this point? The
21 war is really heated up. Can you make some comments about the general nature of that
22 war and how you saw it at that time?

23 LR: Let me back up a minute.

24 RV: Okay.

25 LR: I was trying to figure out what I was as the Public Information—I went
26 overseas in '68 and that was from 3rd Army. So it must've been '66, '67 I was in—that's
27 what it was. '66 and '67 I was in Public Affairs. You asked about Vietnam?

28 RV: Yes, sir.

29 LR: We were quite concerned about Vietnam. It made work very difficult. I
30 knew that sometime or another I was going to go there and I did.

31 RV: What did you think of the war and how it was going in 1966, '67, into 1968?

1 LR: Oh, I was always concerned about we were fighting a war with our hands
2 tied. I'm always concerned with that. I don't think we want to go into a war unless
3 we're going into it with full force.

4 RV: Did you think President Johnson was kind of stepping things up piecemeal
5 and that a firmer decision should have been made for full force?

6 LR: I'd rather not comment on that.

7 RV: Okay. Well, what was the nature of that war? Did you see it as more of a
8 guerilla war or did you see it as something, a conventional war that we could use the U.S.
9 Army model to fight?

10 LR: It was a war where we were trying to hold the ground and get the enemy and
11 get the population that we were controlling free so that they could live properly. The
12 enemy was always bothering them and having great difficulty keeping the enemy out of
13 the area that they should be—where we wanted peace. It was a tough situation. You had
14 your hands tied and you couldn't do much. I had a good commander. I was under the
15 Marines there. He gave me full support of everything I wanted to do, but we still
16 couldn't do very much but try to control the area that we were in.

17 RV: Where did you go before you were sent over to Vietnam?

18 LR: I went to 3rd Army as chief of staff. After I left the public affairs I went to
19 the 3rd Army at Ft. McPherson, Georgia, as the 3rd Army chief of staff.

20 RV: Okay. How long were you there?

21 LR: Not quite two years.

22 RV: Are you preparing those forces there for deployment over to Vietnam?

23 LR: Well, the 3rd Army Commander was responsible for all the troops in that
24 area, yes, because the people that were going there, they had to be trained for Vietnam. It
25 wasn't any special training as we have now for Iraq. We have special training for people
26 going to Iraq, but it was just the normal training for war that we were going through then
27 that we had for World War II.

28 RV: Okay. From that point is that when you were promoted then to go over to
29 Vietnam and take over Americal?

30 LR: I was promoted to major general after I became chief of staff of the 3rd
31 Army. I was on the promotion list when I was selected to be chief of staff of the 3rd

1 Army. After I got down I went down there as a brigadier general, but I got my promotion
2 after I got to Ft. McPherson, Georgia.

3 RV: So you went to Ft. McPherson?

4 LR: Yeah.

5 RV: Okay. Let me ask you about the Tet Offensive in Vietnam. What were your
6 thoughts when that did happen?

7 LR: Well, it was very scary. You wondered what was going to happen with that
8 Tet Offensive. That was before I got there and it was very difficult. We wondered if we
9 were going to make it and we did.

10 RV: What was scary for you? What was the thing that you were most worried
11 about?

12 LR: Well, the enemy had a strong attack. They were attacking quite a few days
13 before we got things under control and before we were able to take the offensive and get
14 them out of the way again because they made a lot of inroads there for a few days as I
15 recall, very scary.

16 RV: Did it change the way that the Army prepared for Vietnam or for combat?

17 LR: Not that I know of, no.

18 RV: Okay. When were you then deployed over to Vietnam?

19 LR: I went to Vietnam in December of 1968.

20 RV: Okay. Tell me about going over and what your assignment was.

21 LR: Well, when I got to Vietnam I went in to see the commanding general, the
22 Army commander who I had been in X-4 with and I knew him very well. He was a
23 lieutenant general then and I was a major general. He said, "We don't have a real
24 position for you so we're going to assign you as the deputy commanding general of the
25 logistical command. They need somebody there that knows more about commanding
26 troops." I was the deputy commanding general of the 1st Logistical Command for about
27 six months. Then I took over—I was sent to take over the Americal Division.

28 RV: Had you been briefed or what did you know about the incident at My Lai?
29 Was that part of your preparation for taking over Americal?

30 LR: Oh, I had no preparation for taking over the division, none whatsoever
31 except while I was in the 1st Logistical Command I maneuvered all over the area and

1 watched the troops very carefully because I was hoping I was going to get a command of
2 the division sometime or other. So I prepared myself by asking questions on trips and
3 going different places other than just logistics. I'd ask other questions that would benefit
4 me for the future in case I did get a command.

5 RV: What did you think of what happened at My Lai?

6 LR: Well, the My Lai investigation was made when I was the commanding
7 general. The man who made the investigation, I know him very well and he stayed in my
8 quarters. I stayed out of the investigation completely because I'd either have to—because
9 the commander who was there when that happened was a good friend of mine. I didn't
10 want to either be for him or against him. So I stayed out of the investigation completely.
11 All I know about the investigation is what I read in the newspapers and books.

12 RV: Tell me how that affected your command.

13 LR: How it affected me?

14 RV: Yeah, how did it affect your command and I guess how did it affect you
15 personally?

16 LR: Well, as I say, I did not want to get involved in the investigation because I
17 didn't want to be for or against my previous commander who was a friend of mine. So I
18 just stayed out of the investigation completely although they had their meetings right
19 there in my quarters. I could've sat in on a lot of them that they invited me to, but I said,
20 "No, I don't want to get involved because I know this man who was commanding and I
21 don't want to take up for him and I don't want to be against him."

22 RV: What did you think of how the investigation turned out?

23 LR: I think the investigation was well handled. We did a fine job, I think,
24 because we cleared that area and only got one man injured during the whole time and
25 that's when a small-track vehicle set off and hurt him. He's the only man that got
26 injured. When they first got there I told the pilots, I said, "You never go under fifteen
27 hundred feet in this area because small-arms can hit you." I was in one aircraft and the
28 investigating officer and his crew was in another aircraft and we were over the area and
29 all of a sudden they went below fifteen hundred feet. I told my pilot, I said, "You tell that
30 pilot to get it back above fifteen hundred feet immediately. I don't care what orders he
31 had from who. He's taking orders from me and tell him to do it quickly." Boy, that

1 aircraft moved back quickly. When we got on the ground I went to the investigating
2 officer. I said, "Look, sir, you're a lieutenant general. I'm a major general. But when it
3 comes to security I'm in command. You will do what I say." He said, "I understand.
4 I'm sorry. I made a mistake and you're exactly correct." So we got along all right after
5 that.

6 RV: You straightened him out. Well, tell me a little bit about how you ran a
7 division. How did you do that?

8 LR: Well, to run a division you have to be in the field most of the time. I'd get
9 up, have an early breakfast and have a briefing as to what went on during the night. Of
10 course if anything happened during the night that was important I was awakened and that
11 would happen two or three times a week that I would be awakened during the middle of
12 the night. I would want to get a briefing as to what the situation was and where the
13 enemy was doing what. I would head to the field. I would leave not later than eight
14 o'clock at the most, sometimes it would be seven or seven-thirty and I'd spend the whole
15 day in the field, going from one firebase to another, from one headquarters of a brigade—
16 had three brigades. Many times I'd be down as far as battalion commanders. I'd get
17 back about five or six o'clock or something like that. I always wanted to get back before
18 dark especially. I didn't like to fly in the dark if I didn't have to. I'd brief the staff on
19 what I had seen and tell them what all I wanted to do to start the next day. They worked
20 that night if I gave them orders that we had to do something that night and they'd have to
21 work that night. Tough job.

22 RV: Yes, sir.

23 LV: Full-time job.

24 RV: I'm sorry? A fun job?

25 LF: Full time.

26 RV: Full time. Tell me about the staff you had.

27 LR: The staff?

28 RV: Yes, sir.

29 LR: I had a fine staff. I had one of my staff officers, you've probably never
30 heard of him. He was a major by the name of Colin Powell.

31 RV: I wanted to ask you about him.

1 LR: He was the G-1 when I took over the Americal Division. He didn't stay
2 much longer after I got there, though, but it was very obvious that Colin Powell had been
3 an outstanding officer. He'd been the G-3 for a while as a major. The lieutenant colonel
4 came in and took it over and he'd also commanded a battalion, I think, for a short while
5 as a major. He could do everything. He was always looking out for the troops. He
6 wasn't looking out for himself. Later I selected a lieutenant colonel to be a battalion
7 commander and he had been sent to the country to be a staff officer. He worked for a
8 major general back at Army Headquarters that was a Medal of Honor man, a good friend
9 of mine. Medal of Honored in World War II. I thought if he released him from staff to
10 combat he must be a pretty good officer. So I selected him to be a battalion commander.
11 His name was Norman Schwarzkopf.

12 RV: Tell me about Norman Schwarzkopf and his personality and his leadership
13 style.

14 LR: I was a little disappointed in Norman. He was a good battalion commander,
15 but he was too interested in helping out Norman Schwarzkopf than he was helping out
16 everybody else whereas Colin Powell was interested in everybody else but not himself. It
17 was very obvious that Norman Schwarzkopf was looking out for himself. I hate to say
18 that for publication, but that's the truth.

19 RV: Well, what kind of things did he do to make you think that?

20 LR: Well, I guess one of the things that made me think that is what he wrote in
21 his book. When he arrived there I gave him a nice set of quarters and took him to my
22 mess for dinner. He wrote in his book that my mess was—I don't know what the big
23 word was, but some big word like it shouldn't be in combat. He said that I was always
24 dressed up and cleaned and he liked the muddy-shoed soldier. He didn't like a man that
25 was cleaned up.

26 RV: Oh, really?

27 LR: Yeah. I thought that was a dirty comment and completely unnecessary. If
28 you don't clean up and look good for your troops what are you going to do? I'd like to
29 know how he looked when he was in Iraq. I bet you he cleaned up.

30 RV: So you thought it was very important to look the part for your troops?

1 LR: Yeah, they appreciated it. They appreciated me looking good and they
2 appreciated me being there.

3 RV: How would you interact with the men on the ground, the people who were
4 never going to be up at the officer level?

5 LR: Very well. I talked to soldiers and soldiers and soldiers every day. In fact,
6 on Christmas, I'd like to give you that story.

7 RV: Okay.

8 LR: That's a pretty good one. I had two assistant division commanders. I said,
9 "We're going to divide this division into three areas. We're going to leave here at
10 daylight on Christmas day and we're going to visit every soldier we possibly can. I've
11 already ordered that every soldier is going to get a hot meal on Christmas day. I don't
12 care where he is in the field. If the chopper has to take it to him he's going to take it to
13 him." They all got a hot meal. I was visiting my last firebase and the sergeant says,
14 "General, I think you've seen everybody." I said, "Isn't there some soldiers down here
15 on an outpost?" He said, "Sir, that's about a hundred feet almost straight down. You
16 don't want to climb down there." I said, "Let's go down." So we went down there and
17 there was two soldiers in a place down there. He called in and said, "The commanding
18 general's out here and wants to see you." Their answer was, "Tell him we're on the
19 phone with the President of the United States. Come back tomorrow." They knew that
20 no commanding general would be stupid enough to come down there and say hello. The
21 sergeant went in and got them and when they came out I tell you they were so surprised
22 to see me. We got a good laugh and I said, "I think your comment was very good." It
23 was a good comment and good friendly relation there for a few minutes and I wished
24 them a merry Christmas and they really enjoyed it.

25 RV: What other things do you remember about your tour there that come to
26 mind, besides the crash and the aircraft? What else do you remember?

27 LR: Well, I think the most thing that you remember is how well the soldiers
28 worked and how well they were trained and how they reacted. In fact, when I took over
29 the division our reenlistment rate was the lowest in Vietnam. It wasn't very long until the
30 sergeant major, who was a good sergeant major and he just passed away the other day, by
31 the way, and he and I got the division. We started to get to working on the officers and

1 enlisted, noncommissioned officers and so forth for reenlistments and we won the highest
2 trophy for the most enlistments in the United States Army in Vietnam.

3 RV: Wow.

4 LR: The soldiers were the things that you always remember. They were great,
5 always great. I'll tell you another little story. One day I went up to a firebase and a
6 soldier was eating ice cream and it was almost milk. He said, "Sir, I wish we could get
7 some decent ice cream." So the next time I went up to that firebase I went by the
8 quartermaster and I got some ice cream. I took it up there and gave it out and went
9 around to see the soldier and he was eating ice cream and I said, "How do you like the ice
10 cream?" He took his spoon and hit it and it was frozen solid and he said, "Sir, I wish
11 they'd give us ice cream we could eat." You can't win.

12 RV: Yeah. How would you characterize where the United States was when you
13 were there in Vietnam? A lot of people look at that time as the draw-down period and
14 nothing was really being accomplished on the ground. What would you respond to that?

15 LR: Well, we weren't doing much on the ground. Truthfully there wasn't much
16 we could do except try to hold areas we had and try to keep peace for the civilians so they
17 could raise their crops and get along. I was disappointed in the way we ran Vietnam. I
18 don't know whether we should've gone all the way north and it would've caused another
19 war completely or what, but it was a terrible case to fight a war like we did.

20 RV: Can you tell me—kind of expand on that?

21 LR: Can I what?

22 RV: Can you expand on that?

23 LR: Not really.

24 RV: Well, what did we do wrong, then? What kind of things did we do wrong in
25 Vietnam?

26 LR: Well, we should've had enough—we had enough troops that we could move
27 forward north and taken over North Vietnam, I think without any trouble. I think the
28 politicians were worried about would this bring on another war and would we get China
29 involved? So that gets more way over my head of things that I wasn't involved in. We
30 couldn't do hardly anything other than just protect our own area and try to clean up the

1 enemy when we found him coming in and make small attacks in areas we found out
2 where they were trying to infiltrate. It was a difficult kind of situation to work with.

3 RV: Do you think the United States learned lessons from its experience there or
4 is that something that we've been repeating?

5 LR: Yes, we learned a lot of lessons, but the people who should know the lessons
6 are not listening to them, such as the president. (Editor's note: This portion of the
7 interview has been redacted per interviewee's request.) They try to say there's no
8 comparison between Iraq and Vietnam and there's a lot of comparison between the two.

9 RV: What kind of similarities are there?

10 LR: You had guerilla warfare in both of them. They call them insurgents in Iraq.
11 They called them guerillas in North Vietnam and the North Vietnamese in Vietnam. So
12 it's basically the same thing that these people were attacking you when you were least
13 expecting it. It's not as ugly in Vietnam as it was in Iraq, though.

14 RV: What could've the United States done differently in Vietnam?

15 LR: I said that. The only thing they could do was to attack and try to take over
16 North Vietnam. That gets beyond my scope because what would happen to the world and
17 to China, I don't know. That gets into big decisions there.

18 RV: Well, can you tell me about Vietnam the country? What did you think of the
19 country and the civilians?

20 LR: Well, I found the civilians were very cooperative with us, especially the
21 military. I worked very closely with the commanding general of the division I worked
22 with. He wrote me a letter and said that because of my close working relationship with
23 him he was rated as the top division in the Vietnamese army. I hope he was right because
24 he was a good division and a good division commander. The civilians that I worked with
25 were very cooperative. They would do anything you wanted them to do and you just
26 asked them.

27 RV: Can you tell me a little bit about the leadership of the South Vietnamese,
28 their government leaders and how they handled themselves during the war, and especially
29 your interaction with them?

30 LR: Well, when I first got there I was a little bit disappointed in the way the
31 South Vietnamese were reacting. In fact, I don't think that my predecessors had given

1 them much support. I'd like to go back a little bit right here. I'd asked for helicopters to
2 support the Vietnamese. They said, "We don't have any." I said, "Well, how many
3 helicopters have we got?" and they'd tell me how many helicopters we got and how
4 many are available and it would be about half. I said, "Well, we should have eighty
5 percent running." "Well, we can't get parts." So I called in the Air Force liaison office
6 and he said, "Well, it will take about six months to build up a way to get dedicated air
7 space to get your parts up here." I said, "I can't wait six months. I need it in about six
8 hours. You get me the name of the commanding general that does this and I will go and
9 talk to him." He said, "Will you let me try first?" So he came back the next day and he
10 said, "I have gotten you so many tons of dedicated air space for your parts to be delivered
11 to your area. They'll increase that dedicated air space for the next six weeks if you can
12 show the need." Well, we increased it just about every week for six weeks until we got
13 what we needed. Pretty soon we had eighty percent of the aircraft flying instead of fifty
14 percent flying. We could give the Koreans the support that they needed. Many times
15 when I arrived there when we would have small operations the Americans would be
16 doing the small operations instead of the Vietnamese. They'd be sitting around watching
17 the Americans do it. I said, "Well, that's not the way to do it. We ought to let them do it
18 and we watch them." Once we got the aircraft and I got working with the commanding
19 general of that division he really took over and made a real fine division of it. He was
20 well pleased with my support and I was well pleased with his actions.

21 RV: Can you make some comments about Vietnamization, handing over the war
22 to the Vietnamese?

23 LR: I didn't hear you.

24 RV: Can you make some comments about Vietnamization and handing the war
25 over to the Vietnamese?

26 LR: We didn't really hand it over to them. They took it, if that's what you mean.
27 I'm not sure I understand what you mean.

28 RV: Well, when we transitioned out of Vietnam and we're basically handing the
29 war over, the responsibility of the war over to the Vietnamese. The term was
30 "Vietnamization."

1 LR: Well, we went out under duress. We were forced out, finally. We were
2 trying to make the Vietnamization, but it didn't work. As far as I'm concerned it didn't
3 work.

4 RV: Why do you think it didn't work?

5 LR: There wasn't enough good divisions that had been trained like the one I had
6 trained. They didn't know how to fight a war. They didn't know how to fight the North
7 Vietnamese or the Viet Cong.

8 RV: Okay. Well, tell me, Richard Nixon is in office and he has gotten the Paris
9 Peace Conference going. Can you tell me a little bit about the peace process and how
10 that affected you in Vietnam?

11 LR: As far as I'm concerned it had no effect on me.

12 RV: Okay. What did you think about the peace that was reached?

13 LR: I'd rather not comment on that. I'd just as soon let that slide by.

14 RV: Okay. All right, that's fine. Can you tell me the circumstances under which
15 you left Vietnam?

16 LR: Yes, that was very tragic.

17 RV: Yes, I know. This is a very incredible story. Could you tell us the story?

18 LR: Well, as I said, I spent the day in the field just about every day, including
19 Saturdays and Sundays. This one day I had been in the field until about—it was almost
20 four o'clock in the afternoon. I had to get back to the headquarters because we were
21 starting the new operation and I was having a briefing set up so we could be sure the
22 briefing and all the operations were set up to go. We stopped at a firebase not too far
23 from the headquarters and I told the pilot, "Do not refuel," because they always refueled
24 when I stopped if there was fuel available because they never knew where I was going
25 next because my area was about 125 miles long and 30 or 40 miles deep anywhere I
26 wanted to go. I said, "Don't refuel because I want to get back to the headquarters to get
27 the briefing." They did not refuel. We got in the aircraft and went up and then got into
28 all kinds of mist and rain and so forth and got in touch with a radar. They said, "Go up to
29 three thousand feet and I think you'll be above the bad weather." We went up to three
30 thousand feet and they said, "Turn ninety degrees so we'll know where you are." We
31 turned ninety degrees and they said, "We've got you to turn that head ninety degrees

1 which is east.” The pilot says, “I’m heading ninety degrees.” The pilot says, “I’ll take
2 you five miles over the ocean and let you down and you can come in your landing pad
3 which is right on the edge of the ocean.” In a few minutes he says, “Well, I’ve got you
4 your five miles out of the ocean. I’ll let you down.” For some reason or another, the
5 pilot had turned the opposite direction and the radar evidently had the wrong blip. So
6 when they let us down to fifteen hundred feet, which they said we’d come out of the
7 clouds, I saw trees. We were seven miles inland and the trees in the mountains were
8 exactly fifteen hundred feet high. When the pilot pulled to stop the descent the tail rotor
9 caught a tree and knocked it off and then we went tumbling. We landed upside down and
10 there we were.

11 RV: Were you injured?

12 LR: I was unconscious for the next—about the entire time we were there. The
13 thing that saved my life was when I first went there they brought a specialist that said,
14 “Your aircraft is getting shot at all the time and the previous division commander, we
15 wanted to put in an armored seat and he didn’t want it.” I said, “Well, I’ve seen an
16 armored seat back at the headquarters where it was just sitting there and if you had an
17 accident it would fly out like a rocket and I don’t want that.” He said, “Sir, I assure you
18 it will be just as safe as the pilot’s seat.” “Then put it in.” So he put it in. Well, what
19 happened was when we landed and the motor and the transmission came forward it
20 crushed the crew chief sitting behind me, hit my armored seat, bounced off. The radio
21 console was to my left front and it hit that radio console and pushed it over across the
22 lieutenant colonel sitting in front of me and killed him.

23 RV: Oh, gosh.

24 LR: Then we didn’t have any fuel in the aircraft so that’s probably why it didn’t
25 burn. The third thing that saved me was that man upstairs. The good Lord was looking
26 out for me.

27 RV: What happened when you woke up?

28 LR: We were missing eighteen hours. They tell me the story that while we were
29 missing a tiger came into the area. We had two machine guns, two rifles, and everybody
30 had their individual weapons. During the crash all of those splattered all over
31 everywhere and the only man that had a weapon was the captain that was on board and he

1 had his .45-caliber pistol. That's the only weapon we had. Well, they were afraid to
2 shoot at the tiger because they were afraid it might raise the enemy because they didn't
3 know where we were and bring down the enemy to capture us. The tiger kept getting
4 closer and they thought, "Well, if we don't shoot with all this blood around he's going to
5 come in eat us." They started shooting and it scared the tiger off and it didn't bring in the
6 enemy. We had an emergency radio and the radio had just ten hours of battery time. So
7 we got in touch with headquarters and they knew we were in that direction, but how far
8 they didn't have any idea. They tried to get an aircraft to us that afternoon. We crashed
9 about four o'clock. They tried to get an aircraft to us then, but the weather was so bad
10 they couldn't get there. They said, "Turn your radio off and leave it off until eight
11 o'clock in the morning or eight-thirty," whatever time it was, "Then we're going to try to
12 home in if the weather's good enough so we'll save battery time." So the next morning
13 they tried to home in and they did home in on the radio and got to us. When they finally
14 got to us the aircraft commander had picked up the battalion commander because they'd
15 sent a company on the ground to try to get to us on the ground in case they couldn't get to
16 us by air. Going through that triple canopy jungle was very, very slow. He thought he
17 might need to tell the company to do something. So he brought a doctor along with him.
18 When they found us they tied a rope around the inside and threw it out and they said,
19 "Doctor, we understand there's two dead and six still living. I want you to go in there
20 and see what you can do to help those people." The doctor looked at that side of the
21 chopper in that triple canopy jungle and he says, "Sir, I'm not going down there." The
22 colonel said, "Doctor, you're going down there. It would be a lot more help if you went
23 down by the rope." His name was Norman Schwarzkopf.

24 RV: Oh, really?

25 LR: Yeah.

26 RV: What happened from there?

27 LR: Oh, they brought in a C-53 from the Air Force and let baskets down. That's
28 the first time that I knew what was going on. I woke up and I wondered, "Why is rain in
29 my face?" It was still raining some and the vibration from the aircraft was blowing some
30 of the rain in my face. I went out again. The next time I woke up I was lying on a table
31 and they were cutting my clothes off and I wondered, "Why are they cutting my clothes

1 off?” Well, I was in the hospital and I didn’t know it. I went out again. I’m not sure
2 when I came back to again. So at least I was unconscious for eighteen hours because
3 that’s how long we were missing. I don’t know how long I was unconscious after I got in
4 the hospital.

5 RV: How much do you remember about all the circumstances and what
6 happened? I mean you were out for quite a while.

7 LR: All I remember is seeing that green and then those two things I told you,
8 when the aircraft was picking me up and I awakened and was wondering what’s
9 happening with the rain blowing in my face and then in the hospital when they was
10 cutting off my clothes. Those are the only three things I remember about the accident. I
11 can definitely remember seeing green and it didn’t look good to me.

12 RV: Right. Now you left Vietnam after this crash, is that correct?

13 LR: Pardon? It was what?

14 RV: You left Vietnam after this crash, is that correct?

15 LR: Oh, yes. I stayed there until—that was March seventeenth and I was
16 evacuated sometime in early April. I was evacuated to Walter Reed. Then when I got to
17 Walter Reed they sent a doctor along with me all the way. They had his report and x-rays
18 and I saw the surgeon, the surgeon there and he said, “Well, you can stay in the hospital
19 or you can go home if you want to. The only thing is if you go home you’ve got to sit
20 sitting up,” because my left arm was mangled so badly they didn’t know whether they
21 were going to save it or not. They wanted to amputate it in Vietnam. The hospital
22 commander who was a friend of mine and works at the VA (Veteran’s Administration)
23 here right now wouldn’t let them because he said, “I don’t think he understands what’s
24 going on. Let’s put it in traction and see what will happen.” So even after I got back to
25 Walter Reed they said, “We’re going to have to do a bone graft to save this arm.” Well,
26 I’ve still got my arm and they didn’t do a bone graft and it’s pretty good. It’s old, but it’s
27 all right. I can use it.

28 RV: How is your arm today?

29 LR: It has a little pain every now and then. It’s not very strong, but I can play
30 golf.

31 RV: Well, that’s good. That’s important.

1 LR: Important, yeah.

2 RV: Yes, sir.

3 LR: (Editor's note: This portion of the interview has been redacted per
4 interviewee's request.) have not learned the lessons from Vietnam.

5 RV: Some of the leaders haven't.

6 LR: Yeah, not use names.

7 RV: Right, I understand. You're not trying to pinpoint just them individually,
8 but in general.

9 LR: Right.

10 RV: Okay. Well, what kind of things do you feel like we need to learn from
11 Vietnam going forward in the 21st century?

12 LR: Well, we've already learned from Vietnam. The thing is we're not using it.
13 There's different cultures. There's different tribes in Vietnam as there were in—it's
14 considerably different than that in Iraq, but there are differences and the cultures are
15 different in different ways. You've got to learn from the experience of what we've gone
16 through in previous wars. Some of our leaders haven't learned that.

17 RV: Right. Have you been to the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington, D.C.?

18 LR: Yes. Yes, I have.

19 RV: What do you think of that?

20 LR: I think it's a beautiful memorial and well done.

21 RV: What was your experience like there?

22 LR: What was my experience there?

23 RV: Yes, sir.

24 LR: Well, I felt very sad. One of my good friend's son had been killed there and
25 I made a drawing on a piece of paper and used a pencil and I sent it to his wife. He had
26 passed away, by the way. I sent it to his wife and she was very glad to get that. It's a
27 very sad occasion to visit it because it brings back sad memories.

28 RV: Let me ask you this just about yourself, sir. What do you think you learned
29 about Lloyd Ramsey while you were in Vietnam?

1 LR: I learned that Lloyd Ramsey, hey, could do a lot better things than he had
2 done. I did my best, I thought, but I look back and there's a lot of things I could do
3 better.

4 RV: Such as?

5 LR: Well, I can't put my finger on any of them, but I just wonder sometimes if I
6 couldn't have done a better job than I did. You always wonder if you couldn't do better
7 than what you did. I tried to do my best and that's all I can do, I guess.

8 RV: Yes, sir. Have you ever been back to Vietnam or would you want to go
9 back?

10 LR: No, and I'm not interested in going back, really.

11 RV: Okay. Have you read books on the war or seen movies on the war?

12 LR: I've seen movies and read some books, not too many.

13 RV: What do you think of those?

14 LR: Some of them are very good. I didn't like some of them and I can't
15 remember the one I didn't like, but I didn't like one of them quite at all. It was very off
16 base, I thought. I forget the name of it. But some movies were very good. Now, going
17 back to World War II, like *Patton*, that's an outstanding movie.

18 RV: Well, I wanted to ask if you thought that was a good representation of him.

19 LR: Very good representation, yes.

20 RV: What else can you say about your experience in Vietnam, looking back
21 today on that, besides wishing you had maybe tried harder or done some things harder?
22 But in general, what do you think about your service there?

23 LR: I was proud of my service and I was proud of what the division, the ARVN
24 (Army of the Republic of Vietnam) division I was working with did. They were an
25 outstanding division and they did the job as they should do once I gave them the support
26 that they needed. I look back at that and think that's one of the best things I did while I
27 was in Vietnam.

28 RV: To support our allies?

29 LR: Yeah.

30 RV: What did you think of the anti-war movement?

31 LR: The what?

1 RV: The anti-war movement going on back in the United States.

2 LR: Oh, that was disgusting to me. I was amazed when I came back. I thought I
3 was going to be spit on or something, but I was treated pretty well. But I know a lot of
4 people that were treated terrible when they got back, soldiers were. I was handled pretty
5 well. I was amazed. The anti-war is not very good for the soldiers anyway. That's one
6 of the differences in Vietnam and Iraq. In Vietnam they didn't like the war and they
7 didn't like the soldiers. In Iraq now they don't like the war, but they're supporting the
8 soldier and thank God they support the soldier because he needs all the support he can
9 get.

10 RV: Right. Can you tell me what you thought of the media coverage of the
11 Vietnam War?

12 LR: I don't think the media coverage has been very equal. There's a lot of good
13 things that have happened that they don't report. They just report all the bad things. I
14 read an article the other day on how they improved on water and electricity and different
15 things and schools like that, but you never see that hardly in the paper. They just report
16 on the bad things. That's more news than good things.

17 RV: Well, let me ask you this, then. Looking back at 1974, you get out of the
18 Army after thirty-four years. Just the next year, 1975, South Vietnam falls as a country.
19 Do you remember what you felt during that time?

20 LR: When South Vietnam fell?

21 RV: Yes, sir.

22 LR: I felt terrible. With all the lives we had given up over to lose that territory
23 it's terrible to fight and lose fifty thousand men and not have a victory. Although we
24 weren't defeated as such we didn't have a victory.

25 RV: What about the end of your career in '74? When you came back from
26 Vietnam, tell me what you did and what happened. I guess you had to recover for quite a
27 while.

28 LR: Oh, I got back in April and I went back on active duty in July, but the doctor
29 told me that I was limited on what I can do because of my arm and my back. The back
30 kept giving me more and more troubles and finally he said, "You have to have your
31 annual physical," in 1974. He said, "I want to look at it very closely because I'm not sure

1 you're going to be able to stay on active duty." He looked at it and he said, "No, you're
2 not capable as a general officer to retain your status as a general officer on active duty."
3 That ended my career right there.

4 RV: How did you feel about that?

5 LR: Well, I fully expected it because that was a terrible crash I had in Vietnam. I
6 knew that I was badly injured and I was lucky to keep my left arm and I was lucky to be
7 able to even get out of it alive. Although there's a few pains here and there the good
8 Lord has taken good care of me and I can't complain. I was very happy with my career
9 and I always will be happy with it.

10 RV: Well, sir, is there anything else that you would like to comment upon that we
11 have not touched upon in this interview?

12 LR: Not that I know of, Richard. I think we've just about covered everything.

13 RV: Okay. Well, I want to thank you for your time doing the interview and
14 especially thank you for your service to our country.

15 LR: You're welcome. I guess this is going to finish it.