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Institute*



**SENIOR OFFICERS DEBRIEFING PROGRAM**



**CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN**

GENERAL THEODORE J. CONWAY

AND

COLONEL ROBERT F. ENSSLIN

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INTERVIEW WITH GENERAL T. J. CONWAY

by

COLONEL ROBERT F. ENSSLIN, JR.

I AM COLONEL BOB ENSSLIN AND I AM INTERVIEWING GENERAL THEODORE J. CONWAY. THIS TAPE #1, SIDE 1, AND THE DATE IS 29 SEPTEMBER 1977.

INTERVIEWER: I would like to begin with a discussion, General, of your assignment to General Truscott and your journey to England. I think a good beginning point would be how General Truscott assembled his staff and what the mission was.

GEN CONWAY: Okay. The time was April 1942, the 23rd of April, and General Truscott had been given classified orders to assemble the group and go to England (by General Marshall personally as I understood it) for the purpose of studying the British Commandos, their organization, type of operation, leadership and the like, with the view to establishing similar units in the American Army. I won't go into the militarily controversial aspects of this so called "Elite Corps" which have arisen from time to time. We see it today in the Rangers, the Airborne, and so on. But at any rate, even Marshall had seen some advantage to having some units like this and so directed General Truscott to assemble a group of basically combat arms officers who would go to England with General Truscott, study the British Commandos and come up with recommendations for a similar type American unit. So we left Washington in April of '42, arrived in London and reported to General Eisenhower at 18 Grosvenor Square, which was the American Headquarters of the day and proceeded with this assignment.

INTERVIEWER: Was it this assignment and this project that led to the development of the Rangers?

GEN CONWAY: Oh, yes. This, in fact, was the mission and in due course we arrived at a Table of Organization, a concept of operations and the like. If you are interested, I can tell you a bit about the formation of the Rangers, most of which has not, strangely enough, been written down, or at least certainly not in this way. General Truscott was assigned to the -- then Colonel Truscott I should have said -- was then assigned to the G-3 section of the U. S. European Command, General Eisenhower. But at the same time we were assigned also to the British Combined Operations Headquarters, Lord Louis Mountbatten, as an adjunct group, an American group. I wound up in the G-3 Plans Section of COHQ. (Combined Operations Headquarters)

INTERVIEWER: And what was your rank at this time?

GEN CONWAY: Good question. I was a Major and the other members of our group were Haskell Cleaves, Lieutenant Colonel, Signal Corps, Lauren Hillsinger, Colonel, Air Force, Guy Embree, Major of Artillery and myself.

INTERVIEWER: How long had you been a major at this particular point?

GEN CONWAY: Not very long. You know promotion was fast in those days. I started the war as a captain and we had already -- had just been promoted captain before Pearl Harbor so that following spring was promoted to major, so I had been a major a month or so.

INTERVIEWER: Then your tenure as a captain then was less than a year?

GEN CONWAY: Oh, about 18 months. That's the way things were in those days.

INTERVIEWER: Things were moving along. One thing that I was thinking about as I read the book<sup>1</sup> and I read about all these officers coming along and progressing very rapidly. What became of the generals who were generals when the war started?

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<sup>1</sup>Command Missions, General L. K. Truscott, Jr.

GEN CONWAY: Yes, good question. You have to read Pogue<sup>2</sup> and his story about Marshall to get the full impact of this but very briefly General Marshall had fought, you know, in World War I and he had seen the problems Pershing had in dealing with older officers who were sent over to him, willy-nilly, by General March<sup>3</sup>, the Chief of Staff. He hadn't asked for them but he got them and there was a very delicate procedure that had to be followed to get rid of them. And, of course, Pershing was totally ruthless in this regard and Marshall I think learned that lesson from Pershing so that this question never arose, really, in World War II because Marshall headed them all off at the pass. He had issued orders throughout the Army and the older officers were simply retired. This was, of course, a matter of great distress; men who had served their lives in the Army and a war came along, they had trained for and were ready for and wanted to be in it, that if they were over say 60, they just -- Marshall just told them to forget it and he retired them all. So my general observation is that there were few older officers. I can think of "Paddy" Flint<sup>4</sup>. He and General Patton might qualify if we stretch a point or two in this regard, but most of the older officers simply never appeared overseas because of Marshall's policy.

INTERVIEWER: Except for MacArthur?<sup>6</sup>

GEN CONWAY: Yes, that's a good point isn't it? One over which Marshall had no control.

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<sup>2</sup>George C. Marshall, Forrest C. Pogue.

<sup>3</sup>Peyton C. March.

<sup>4</sup>Harry Albert Flint, USMA, 1912.

<sup>5</sup>George Smith Patton, Jr., USMA, 1909.

<sup>6</sup>Douglas MacArthur, USMA, 1903.

INTERVIEWER: Yes. And there's no question, obviously, that the leaders of combat are younger people.

GEN CONWAY: This was the exact point and Marshall had it right.

INTERVIEWER: Even in Vietnam, I noticed that most of the battalion commanders were in their mid thirties and they weren't assigning very many 40-year old lieutenant colonels to command battalions in Vietnam. At least they weren't assigned to combat arms.

GEN CONWAY: Same reason.

INTERVIEWER: Excuse me, I didn't mean to digress there but I wanted to take advantage . . .

GEN CONWAY: Well, we need to point out these parallels and similarities and differences among our wars.

INTERVIEWER: How long was it before they really came to develop an organizational plan for the Ranger unit and organize it? How long did you observe the British efforts and did you observe them first hand by going on raids such as the Dieppe thing. I know you were on the Dieppe Raid, but was that one of the series or was that just different?

GEN CONWAY: Yes. I think all along General Truscott, as soon as he found out what he was supposed to do, had the plan in mind. Briefly it was this. I was sent to North England and Scotland, where the Rangers generally were. They were in those areas which afforded better training and fewer people -- you probably know this -- in Scotland, and there's a lot of open ground, rivers, and mountains and the like, and the Rangers generally were stationed in Scotland. General Truscott sent me up there on a month's expedition to visit as many of the Commandos, (which were British battalions) as I could. And I met Brigadier Robert Laycock who was the Commander of the whole Commando operation and went many days to many units out in the field, in their training,

in the office, watching the discipline; all the aspects of the Commandos who were totally new to Americans. Just to mention briefly, for example, you know, what did they do and so on. Well, almost everything they did was unique. For example, we talk today about adventure training today. I was amazed to find that the British would send a squad or a patrol out, they would give them a destination of a couple of hundred miles away and give them some missions en route and that was it; no food, no money. They were supposed to get there from here and you see they learned the business of living off the land. They were training them how to operate in a foreign environment, not get captured or picked up by the police, no papers, nothing. The very basic, practical aspects which would have escaped our attention, I believe, had we not found them doing this. So at any rate, they did rappelling and rock climbing and amphibious landings and all that, very rigorously; the Commando had a very demanding day. I might mention just in passing that the disciplinary actions I observed were equally rigorous and if you've never seen a British Private brought up before the captain for some kind of misdemeanor or other, however trivial it might seem to us, you just haven't lived. It is a totally shocking experience. They are marched in and out by the sergeant major who is about six inches from this guy's ear barking out orders which can be heard all over Yankee Stadium and the guy is standing there white and, you know, even his pants are shaking. You know it's a totally unprecedented thing from our point of view of military justice when you think about Article 15 that you know about and so on. At any rate, not digressing, but the point is the Commandos, every aspect of their training and administration, discipline and the like was rigorous and purposely so. So it was a totally volunteer thing and anybody that didn't like it, they wanted him to leave immediately. On the other side of

the coin, it was the most sought after kind of job in the British Army. They all wanted to be Commandos but they couldn't take them all.

INTERVIEWER: Did they have some exclusive insignia or uniform to add to that elite quality?

GEN CONWAY: Yes, they did. Originally they had the insignia of the various units. Now you understand when the Commandos operated nobody wore any insignia, but they had the beret which is common -- they adopted that as you know . . .

INTERVIEWER: Right.

GEN CONWAY: . . . right into the green beanies, the present day thing that came from there. They had the beret and eventually they wound up with this combined operations insignia which I am sure you have seen: the anchor and the eagle and the crossed weapons representing the three branches of the service because basically the thought we had to bear in mind, and this too is unique, we didn't have such outfits you see that we didn't even have the concept of a trans-service organization. Special Service Force came along with General Frederick<sup>7</sup> later -- the American-Canadian thing. That was a similar concept. But for the British COHQ - Combined Arms Headquarters - represented this inter-service thing; a combination of the Army, Navy, Air Force; a tightly knit, highly trained, highly specialized force.

INTERVIEWER: Let me just ask one question while we are talking about the Commando. Now, what about their equipment? Did they have a table of organization and equipment?

GEN CONWAY: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: . . . or was this just tailored to the mission?

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<sup>7</sup>Robert Tryon Frederick, USMA, 1928.

GEN CONWAY: No, they had -- they had a basic unit we would call a battalion -- they called it a Commando, in which they had the British basic rifle and so on but many things were invented for them like the dagger, the brass knuckles -- all kinds of little gadgets. They had compasses and steel files sewn into their uniform in various places for escape and evasion - these kinds of notions, yes. There was an entire side of that -- Zuckerman<sup>8</sup>, the scientist, has written a book on the innovative aspects of the war which we won't go into here because they are too numerous but he has a tremendous R&D effort in the direction of the Commandos scaling ladders, grappling hooks, mortars that fired them and we see them later in Cap du Hoc in Normandy and their operations -- all of these were a big part of COHQ was an R&D outfit. Professor Slizzard and others from Oxford and Cambridge, were just put in a box and they came up with all these ideas I guess. Their weapons and all eventually became highly specialized. But it was a unit with a standard organization and equipment and this was basically what I brought back then to General Truscott, which he approved in London and sent to Washington. The only change -- the major change he made was not the numbers or the designations, although we had to use American terms, but the name which I think I mentioned -- historically is worth noting that as a young, naive, uninformed major, I had put down American Commandos and I noticed General Truscott picked up his pencil and drew a line through "Commando", and said, "this has got to be an American unit; we have to go back to American tradition." So, he renamed it for Rogers Rangers -- he put down "Rangers" and that's the way the recommendation went in, it was approved; that's why we have the name today.

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<sup>8</sup>Dr. Solly Zuckerman, British Scientist.

INTERVIEWER: Sir, who was the first Ranger Unit Commander?

GEN CONWAY: Okay. General Truscott, mentioned in his book<sup>9</sup> how the first commander was selected. He told me later in a post script that he had two people in mind -- Bill Darby and myself. We were both classmates, one infantry and one artillery. I was General Truscott's assistant as you know at this time and Darby was an aide to General "Scrappy" Hartle<sup>10</sup> who commanded the American V Corps in England, which consisted of the 1st Armored Division and the 34th Infantry Division. General Truscott went over, as he mentioned in his book, saw Bill Darby, was impressed, and came back and told me that he had selected Darby and that Darby was to proceed to Carrickfergus, in Northern Ireland and that General Truscott had notified the two divisions concerned that they had to furnish men. You've been in the Army yourself so you know this was distasteful to them but they did it anyway. And I might add as a further post script that the commanders, as they have done throughout history, they sent the people that they most wanted to get rid of which is neither here nor there and certainly doesn't cast any aspersions on the Rangers but it's the normal way the Army would operate to get volunteers for anything.

INTERVIEWER: It sure is. Any time there is a levy to get somebody -- I've had the experience. There was no feeling ever along the line that General Truscott would himself command the operation?

GEN CONWAY: Oh, no, not to my knowledge. There was never any notion -- this was going to be a battalion in the first place -- the mission -- one ranger battalion. And, of course, at home others would be formed and there would be continuity and we had a situation, we can talk about it later if we get

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<sup>9</sup>Command Missions.

<sup>10</sup>Major General Russell P. Hartle.

to Anzio where in fact Bill Darby commanded several Ranger Battalions.

You see they started to increase in number by that time but Bob Frederick, Brigadier General with the Special Service Forces, that was a composite, but it had never been intended, to my knowledge, to make a composite Ranger unit. It did occur, as I say, at Anzio but that was a very special case. I don't believe that that was in the plan at all.

INTERVIEWER: What about the role of the 1st Special Service Forces as opposed to the Ranger Battalion. Were these groups being developed simultaneously?

GEN CONWAY: Yes, they paralleled -- in a parallel fashion, yes, but for different purposes. Another expert, not an expert -- person -- better qualified than I can talk about this business of the Special Service Forces, but yes, they were conceived to be mountaineers, ski trained, parachutists also and, as I say, it was an American-Canadian -- there was Churchill; this I understand was Churchill's idea. But, you see, the Rangers for example were not airborne nor intended to be - a big difference right away and then again the 1st Special Service Forces was a brigade type operation. We are talking about an individual battalion type organization.

INTERVIEWER: Well, was part of the mission, in addition to this, to gain experience in amphibious operations?

GEN CONWAY: Yes, of course. I should have mentioned that earlier. That was the big point. That is to say, we knew any re-entry into the continent would have to be preceded by an amphibious operation. Yes, the reason again the Commandos were up in Northern England or Southern Scotland was to operate on the rivers and lakes and the amphibious work was their big thing, yes, amphibious raids. You mentioned there were amphibious raids because some had already had them by the time we got there and because we were pulled out

to go to North Africa later. We didn't go on all of these raids but it was in the intention and the plan, yes, that we would have learned through those. But yes, totally amphibious oriented. I should have brought that out.

INTERVIEWER: How much notice did you have that you were going to get to accompany the DIEPPE operation?

GEN CONWAY: Well, General Truscott mentions this in his book and he knew more about it obviously than we did so he knew there was going to be such a thing but the actual raid planners -- I had been in the so called planning syndicate which planned DIEPPE for COHQ, that is to say, a small group of four officers -- three British, and I was the only American; Army, Navy and Air representatives again: John Homer, (RAF), de Costabadie (RN), and Robert Henriquez (Army), three British types representing the Army, Navy, Air, and myself planned the DIEPPE Raid. The nucleus plan, of course, elaborated upon in single annexes and all the rest added later. But although I had been on the planning for this, it was never mentioned that we would have anything to do with the operation so I would say to answer your question specifically I knew like the night or the day before that I personally would be involved.

INTERVIEWER: And about 40 American Rangers?

GEN CONWAY: Yes, I noted with interest that that's the figure quoted by the general and I assume it's correct. I thought it was 40 or 50. I had assumed all along it was a platoon and four or five officers. I find though in later readings that these individuals were gathered up indiscriminately and scattered out throughout the Commandos and were actually assigned to different units and did not fight as a platoon. And I'm not sure, from a recent article I read

how many actually landed.<sup>11</sup> It would be interesting to note. But at any rate, there were the Americans -- the only ones on the DIEPPE operation.

INTERVIEWER: Which destroyer were you on?

GEN CONWAY: It was the Alderney. I was reading General Truscott, you know, and I know perfectly the one he was on now and the one Hillsinger was on, which was hit, but it had to be a famous British Hunt because all of the destroyers were named after famous British Hunts (they were called "Hunt" class destroyers).

INTERVIEWER: But you were not on the destroyer with General Truscott or the . . .

GEN CONWAY: No.

INTERVIEWER: The Berkeley was the one that went down. And I take it that eventually it was given the coup de grace by the other British destroyers? Which were alongside?

GEN CONWAY: Yes. There were five of us as I recall by number, I may be wrong, but there were also five destroyers and generally speaking, aside from the command ship, which the general mentions, which Quentin Reynolds was on and General Truscott wasn't (The Calpe), their general mission was escort and shore bombardment so we were busily engaged in firing and being fired upon and lying a couple of hundred yards off of DIEPPE and this exchange generally in a line but we would steam in column, sometime we laid smoke and got the hell out of there until we got enough holes or were shipping water and so on and then they would stuff mattresses and the like in the holes and we'd come on back.

INTERVIEWER: Did you find the British Navy pretty cool about the whole position?

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<sup>11</sup>Dress Rehearsal, Quentin Reynolds.

GEN CONWAY: Yes, you know we'd always -- I had thought of myself as an Army officer and it was very upsetting to me, the first combat operation to be in a totally strange environment, at a total loss as to what to do and how to do it -- to be on a ship -- I'd never anticipated that and one of the first lessons is that you can't dig a foxhole in a steel deck because there is no shovel made to do that. There are some things on deck that you could stand behind but they are not very thick. We were getting, receiving, you know big holes a foot in diameter through the smoke stack -- you'd look up and there would be a hole and a shell just going through. It was very disconcerting experience but I take it now in retrospect - I must have been the only guy scared on the whole boat because all the British seamen, they were just doing what -- they were standing by their weapons firing, loading, all the things they were supposed to be doing. I did notice, which would be strange to an American unit, that at a point and time of day a fellow came along with a bucket and a ladle and then I first noticed that each seaman had a cup hooked up under the back of his belt and this guy came by, in the middle of the battle, a fellow filled up his cup. He got a ladle of tea -- I don't know what else was in it and he drank his tea and pulled the lanyard with one hand and drinking his tea with the other you know. So cool -- it's hard for an American it seems to me to describe the British because "cool" is totally inadequate for their pattern of battle.

INTERVIEWER: Was there a command and control center on the destroyer where you could keep in touch with what was going on?

GEN CONWAY: No. There were two of the destroyers fitted out for command and control. We were simply an escort so with a loud hailer we would get instructions and orders from time to time of what we were doing but we had -- I had no notion of the battle except visual and there you could see the battle was

going very badly because of the number of small boats which had sunk or were sinking and the number of bodies in the water and the like lead you to believe that a very unhappy situation had evolved somewhere along the line.

INTERVIEWER: Well, it must have been a little bit frustrating not to be able to feel like you could do something beyond observe.

GEN CONWAY: Yes, total helplessness as you can imagine. Couldn't participate; couldn't fire your 45 or anything -- just duck occasionally.

INTERVIEWER: What could you see? How much could you see?

GEN CONWAY: Well, we could see pretty well. As the books have described this -- Reynolds and others -- it was a clear day and, of course, the action started before dawn so all we could see was tracers . . . and the collision which you read about, the size of the smoke and so on, and the battle which is considerable and the fact that the destroyers made smoke from time to time and you just escaped being hit. You could see very well, especially with glasses. You could see the beach and the action but you couldn't isolate units and that kind of thing or individuals even. You could just get a general appreciation of what's going on and again only the beach which we were in front of; bear in mind that this was rather extensive landing and, therefore, there were areas we couldn't see at all.

INTERVIEWER: So you had to find out in detail what happened later?

GEN CONWAY: Much later.

INTERVIEWER: Was there much analysis of the operation right after it happened?

GEN CONWAY: Oh, yes; yes, you can imagine. We haven't gone into the why's and wherefore's and so on but generally speaking General Truscott does a good job of this, but after the battle this was a test case, a big test case; it wasn't just a raid in the sense of the commando raids - a few men - this was

a kind of division effort as you know and the Canadians suffered tremendous losses so yes it was a very deep and penetrating study and went on for some time. I wasn't even there when the studies were completed; we'd gone; but we had a feel for the operation. Of course, to keep spirits up and all, the same old thing, BBC came out with a lot of press releases and all indicated we had given the Germans a bloody nose. We de-emphasized the fact that we had suffered tremendous losses. I would say in retrospect the biggest reaction came from Canada, Ottawa, and the provinces when they heard about the extent of the disaster and, as usual in these cases, you get throwing blame around, leaders and plans and so on, but there was an evaluation. But we knew immediately, coming back -- Truscott mentioned this in his book too -- it was a very unhappy passage. If you contrast going out, the very big danger, going through the mine fields and all, you know, really, literally scared to death but a certain exhilaration or anticipation. Contrast that with coming back where we knew we'd take -- and you could still see those bodies lying out there and people out on the beach would hold up their hands and the Germans coming and the tanks and the little boats -- the blood in the water -- and Hillsinger's destroyer getting hit and being sunk by us along with the others; (we fired our torpedos into The Berkeley) throwing people overboard, probably still -- wounded and all very terrifying. So it was a very dismal thing -- the trip during the darkness coming back.

INTERVIEWER: When did you find out about Hillsinger's injuries?

GEN CONWAY: Well, you see, we knew immediately. We were steaming in column when this German air attack hit us. I noticed that General Truscott said that a JU88 had jettisoned its bombs. I'm not at all sure but what it wasn't premeditated, but at any rate we were steaming in column and you could see the dots in the sky first of all which were ultimately the bombs coming and,

you know, you just hoped they weren't going to hit us, zigging and zagging, and when they did hit the water it was a tremendous splash. But we saw the bomb actually hit the Berkeley which was in front of us. We knew it was the Berkeley because it had come from the Mediterranean and its camouflage was light blue and white which, you know, we don't think of camouflage that way . . .

INTERVIEWER: Right . . .

GEN CONWAY: . . . but in the sunlit Mediterranean it would have been ideal. Up here it wasn't all that good -- it stood out -- so at any rate, the bombs, everybody has written since, hit about the bridge and we have reason to speculate that's about where "Poo-Poo" (Hillsinger) would be in with the others, the observer types, and it sort of broke its back. The front, the bow and the stern were at different angles to mid ship as a result of this. I think, I think I mentioned to you in talking informally that when you speak of the scuppers running red with blood, this was what was on the sides of that white destroyer - red coming off the decks, and people were all over in the water and we put our small boats down and rescued them. Others did the same. Fire was going on all the time. This was under fire and so it was a very hairy episode. Then we stood off and on command with our own torpedos sank the Berkeley.

INTERVIEWER: I'm sure that that was a long trip back. I gather from General Truscott's book that he felt the operation to be a necessity; that it was a lesson that had to be learned?

GEN CONWAY: Yes, I'm glad you put it this way. Churchill and Alanbrooke<sup>12</sup> and, of course, you mentioned General Truscott all agree on this point: that we had to learn something about the strength and nature of the German defenses, their alert system, the capability of their aircraft, how many could they put

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<sup>12</sup>Field Marshal Lord Alanbrooke, Chief of the Imperial General Staff

up and in what kind of time, how the radars worked and so on. If we were ever going to land on that defended coast, we had to learn how to undertake an operation against defenses. You know, many of the amphibious operations - Vera Cruz occurs to me, Scott's landing (goes back a while doesn't it) since the Mexican War were unopposed. We talk about that as the largest amphibious operation ever conducted of that type (up to that time). Quite true; but they don't say or don't tell you, perhaps you don't realize it, it was unopposed. This Dieppe landing was an entirely new ballgame. This was hard ball and we knew the defenses. We suspected they weren't impenetrable but we knew we would have to take losses so the object of every military operation was to keep losses down and the success up, so how do you do this when you have to do it by trial and error and that's what this was. So all of us connected with this operation; General Truscott correctly summarizes the operation as far as we the planners were concerned. Again not for the Canadians and for many others, but it was quote "a success," in the sense that we learned many things we couldn't otherwise have learned. There was no other way to do this and we demonstrated we felt that a successful landing would be possible and put enough into it and went about it in the right way. We learned some of the right ways and some of the wrong ways and that we could do it. This I think was a great inspiration -- the planning which followed. There were, of course, the detractors who said, "Well, we lost too many -- the loss was very high, not from the landing but from the retrograde movement. You see, that's the part in any battle where, if you are going to do that kind of thing, that's where your losses occur - is when your defenses are down it's a very awkward transition. So we felt that really had nothing to do with landing as such, but it did have a lot to do with the Dieppe losses.

INTERVIEWER: Let me ask you, later, as we go along, we have problems in coordinating the close air support. How was the British close air support on the Dieppe Raid as opposed to maybe some of our close air support later in Africa and Sicily and Southern Italy?

GEN CONWAY: Alright. This is not an easy question to answer and you know certainly from my point of view I would have had to have been on the ground to say and those troopers who were there are Canadians who could say better than I, but we really didn't have exactly a close air support situation, which might surprise you and I'll explain why. In the first place, I thought the British combined arms was terrific. Again this has to be seen against my own background. In my time, the infantry wouldn't deign to talk to the artillery; they were enemies. But you see here was the Air Force talking to the Army. The British Air Force had been a separate unit since World War I. In fact, the cross-over was overlooked by some Americans. So they were used to operating together. My point of view again - tremendous. But you see, the real battle was the air battle. As General Truscott mentioned, we were in effect - part of the Dieppe raid concept - bait for the German Air Force, which hopefully would rise to the bait, take the bait and strike. Then our own air power, fighter forces, would engage them and knock them out of the sky, which they did. So the air support generally speaking, from the point of view you are talking about, pre-invasion bombardment. After that, the close air support virtually was not on call. They were busy fighting the air battle that ensued.

INTERVIEWER: So, then as we think of close air support today, there wasn't any?

GEN CONWAY: I wouldn't say there wasn't any. But the nature -- it wasn't an attack against forces with a preconceived air support plan and the like.

One of the biggest problems, which again you tend to lose sight of this when you are talking about an environment which is new and unusual, which Dieppe was, we were operating at extreme ranges for the Spitfires and the new Lightnings (P38's) which appeared and you see "loiter time", which is the time an airplane can spend over the battle to be able to direct to give direct support was very short, about ten minutes. Meanwhile the air battle is going on so I would say that the close support aspect necessarily had been de-emphasized during most of the battle. That's what I'm referring to; not that there wasn't any but it was relative and not in a conventional sense we were talking about as it later developed in a fixed battle on land with an air support plan and the like.

INTERVIEWER: Well, do you know if the Naval gunfire support was basically on call from the people on shore or whether they were just bombarding pre-arranged targets?

GEN CONWAY: Both - on the landing, pre-landing, it was the bombardment of known targets, batteries, radar sites, communications, headquarters and the like; pillboxes and so on. It was on call but if you read any of the books, Truscott and Leason (Green Beach),<sup>13</sup> you realize that one of the big failures of the landing, which was later a lesson learned that we had to improve on, was that communications broke down in so many ways, so the fire in many cases was available but not obtainable.

INTERVIEWER: Yes. What did you -- how did you feel about the intelligence when you got to the beach? Looking back on it, did you feel like you had pretty good intelligence about what was going to be found on the beach?

GEN CONWAY: Yes. You know, many of these -- hindsight is very good so we get big criticisms about our numbers . . . Sicily and other places. At Anzio,

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<sup>13</sup>Green Beach, James Leason

or Salerno we didn't know the Germans were there. Well, from my point of view which obviously is prejudiced -- I was a planner and the intelligence was all available to us. We had minute photographic coverage of the German installations; but there was the individual movement of troop units, you know, companies or units that come in or go out - and they were using the west of France for a rest area because it was a "quiet" area - these are usually not photographed.

INTERVIEWER: Right.

GEN CONWAY: Well, there might have been a few more Germans there that day than we might have said there were supposed to be, but in general, yes, from our sources, including spies and other agents and the like we knew how many were there. I think myself that the coverage, photo included especially, was tremendous -- better, much better, than we would have in an average days battle in an average campaign because you're moving and all this was a fixed situation. You would have months to study this and we did.

INTERVIEWER: Were you aware at all of the radar man going ashore and his mission and that.

GEN CONWAY: I'll have to tell you that I wasn't. That wasn't my bag. We knew that the Battle of Britain and all had been fought on the basis and won by the radar - those daring RAF guys - but in our part of the plan this was a side issue not known to us planners.

INTERVIEWER: Yes. Just a little special project by that guy that was in connection with the raid?

GEN CONWAY: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: How did we take advantage of the information that you and the other members of the staff gained through this amphibious experience? How was it translated back to the American forces?

GEN CONWAY: Okay. In every operation in the early part of the war -- this again was at General Marshall's insistence -- there were long lists of lessons learned, written in the field, screened by the commanders. In this case, General Eisenhower sent back to General Marshall for dissemination to training units and so on and this is the principal way. Of course, if you look back at Dieppe, like Gettysburg and other battles, it's controversial. So you have to remember that and some people learn the wrong lesson and some don't accept the lessons learned and they think they are different lessons they learned and the like so I would say that there was a school of thought that immediately said, "Well, this proves we can land on the continent against a defended shore." And there was another equal school of thought that "Aw, this shows we can't do it - just look at the losses, you know, they are prohibitive." Well, I think the main lessons came in the area of types of equipment, what do we need to do to waterproof tanks and the like, communications - things I've been talking about. I have a feeling the air ground part was well done, but we learned again we could do it. In short, we learned what we could do and essentially how we could do it and as Churchill later remarked, I mentioned, Alanbrooke again said, "Had it not been for Dieppe, we wouldn't have known."

INTERVIEWER: Well, also, you know that had Dieppe been a landing to establish a foothold on the continent, some of those losses you wouldn't have incurred. You would have had more and more people in behind and you would have maintained the offensive and you wouldn't have given the Germans an opportunity to really have a harvest there, as it were when we were leaving. So that probably was overlooked when people were reading the casualty list.

GEN CONWAY: Oh, yes, I think people tend to generalize, globalize, and totalize. And they just added it all up since .. and called it a failure.

INTERVIEWER: Well, I gather that the Germans learned some lessons at Dieppe too. I think that General Truscott mentions that.

GEN CONWAY: Yes, that's right. You know, every battle is a plus and minus, so among the minuses here we have to remember the fact that they captured prisoners who had certain information that they got. They captured a lot of material, a new Churchill tank and all, and, of course, in the tank war the Germans actually led the whole war in tank development so I am not sure they learned a great deal. But, at Dieppe the matter of capture - personnel and equipment and operational techniques - intercept - we have to remember and so on. Yes, they learned probably more about us than we learned about them but what we learned about them was what we needed to know and enough. I mean this is all relative.

INTERVIEWER: Do you have any knowledge of what happened to these units, to these Canadian units, later in the war. Were they reconstituted? I think what I'm getting at is, what was the impact on these units that suffered these terrific casualties?

GEN CONWAY: I wouldn't be the person to ask. I'd just comment on the fact, as you probably know, that all the Canadians overseas were volunteers. By Canadian law they wouldn't be drafted and sent overseas and so this was a big difference between them and us.

INTERVIEWER: Right.

GEN CONWAY: So I'm not sure what the situation was. I've been led to believe that it was difficult but I believe on the other hand they were reconstituted but we need to look to a more authoritative source on that question.

INTERVIEWER: Do you know if some of our specific landings by some of our Marine divisions incurred the same kind of casualties?

GEN CONWAY: Oh, yes. If you think of Tarawa and Guadalcanal you could name a long list of which I am not again the expert at all but sure I would say it is characteristic of military operations. They relearned the lessons. We could have told them a lot of these things but that's not the way it works. They had to relearn their own lessons, you know.

INTERVIEWER: At what point did you all begin to plan this North African landing? How much subsequent to this . . . would you review the time frame?

GEN CONWAY: Yes, briefly. My recollection is 19 August was Dieppe and as everybody knows, we went into North Africa the 8th of November 1942, but in September General Patton came to London, made a visit along with General Doolittle and, specifically, one of the purposes was, he got with General Truscott whom he informed he had been designated commander and had been ordered to make this plan for a landing in North Africa. General Truscott then turned to our planning syndicate and said, "Well, I've got the boys here that know how to do it," and I must say this put quite a strain on the troops, because after about three nights, all night, he had time deadlines on this thing, and the syndicate wasn't even speaking to each other. You had to cross these nationalistic and professional lines, and so on, and it was a very tense time but we did produce and outline a plan which, as I mentioned I think once before, we then carried back in late September, early October, to the States in a couple of big mail bags - they were about fifty pounds each - I remember because I carried one of them and we left these with General Patton in the Munitions Building in Washington -- General Truscott's contribution to the North African invasion. And the invasion had to have -- when Quentin Reynolds points out that no doubt he surmised, Truscott's experience in Dieppe had had a great deal of influence on the North African landings and I believe it's no stretch of the imagination to say that they did.

INTERVIEWER: What was the experience of our Army in Amphibious operations prior to North Africa?

GEN CONWAY: I would like to say none but that would strictly be my own notion. But to review just briefly, and the Army history is now bringing this out, the Marines had long led the Army in doctrine and training. We had a surge of activity on the West Coast, largely the 3rd Infantry Division. They were landing around Monterey Bay and so on. We had a surge on amphibious exercises there and we had created, at Camp Edwards, Massachusetts, an amphibious training center. You see, there was the usual argument between the Army and Navy about who is going to do it, who is in charge, who is going to furnish the resources and command them and so on and control them. So all of these were big power plays and the result was that amphibious warfare was falling between the cracks. So to put it in perspective there was a Fleet Operations Manual and there was an Army manual, both on amphibious operations saying different things. So this all had to be ironed out. This was the institutional side of amphibious warfare. But then on the ground level and grass roots there is only one you are interested in. If you take the Army between WW I and WW II, very little attention was paid to amphibious warfare.

INTERVIEWER: What was your personal experience with amphibious operations and planning before getting to England?

GEN CONWAY: That's the worst question you've asked me all day. Absolutely none. I even had to take dramamine to survive at sea.

INTERVIEWER: So in your -- between the war's time in the Army you didn't have any experience with any amphibious problems?

GEN CONWAY: I didn't, personally. I think some units might have had some but again because of the institutional obstacles we never got going on the lower level to do it. The doctrine and all was missing.

INTERVIEWER: So how, at a working level as a planner, did you sort out the differences in doctrine between the Navy and the Army and in working on that planning?

GEN CONWAY: Of course I didn't do it myself but again it came about because of the COHQ example and precedent and all and from our side, the Army side, it was where we got the main information. However, in all fairness, and again you should look at the proper accurate historical sources, there was a great movement afoot in the Marine Corps, pre-war, to iron this doctrinal matter out and indeed the Marines had written the book for the Department of the Navy which became Fleet Operations and was used as our joint doctrine. To put it a different way, the Army accepted the Navy-Marine notions. General Truscott was on a board, you know, after the war to try to iron this out and put it back together but the Board didn't succeed for the same reason it didn't before the war, the institutional threat -- power play and all that -- but at any rate there was the American Navy, Marines, pioneers, came up with this. In those days it was thought that amphibious operations were totally Marine province, but as General Truscott pointed out in several articles after the war, there were more Army outfits in these operations, than there were Marines so we have to accept the fact that the Army, by force of circumstances, became amphibious. This was one of the great technological developments of World War II as opposed to World War I or any other war you might think of.

INTERVIEWER: Were any Marines involved in your planning group at all?

GEN CONWAY: No, but you see this again was jurisdictional and by agreement, starting with the Combined Chiefs, then the Washington Joint Chiefs, the Pacific was the American Navy lake and Europe was an Army show, Air Force-Army show. Now I understand some Marines were, for example in Normandy and other

operations. I never saw them; they were not involved in our part of Europe that we are talking about how, at all and later probably not many. Navy ships were at Normandy but not Marine units.

INTERVIEWER: Let me back up a little bit and ask a couple more questions and maybe we can knock off for this go-round. I don't want to wear you out on the first sitting. Did you come in contact much with General Eisenhower during this period of time?

GEN CONWAY: No, sir.

INTERVIEWER: Was he closely interested in what you all were doing or was he busy on other matters at this time?

GEN CONWAY: Of course, I would have no way to know what General Truscott's personal relationship was with General Eisenhower at this time, although I know he saw him frequently. I believe General Truscott, (Colonel) operated mostly through General Bolte who was the G-3 for General Eisenhower and with whom we did have direct relationships like drafting the Table of Organization for the Rangers and so on and for amphibious planning and the like. But you must realize, of course, that General Eisenhower was a spur of the moment assignment. The problems were enormous don't you see: logistics, training, planning, and so I would guess, and it's only a guess, that maybe only a small part of the time, by force of circumstances, ever went to this aspect we've been talking about. I did see though -- we'll talk about it maybe later -- Eisenhower many times in North Africa but at 18 Grosvenor Square, very seldom.

INTERVIEWER: Well, did you see General Patton when he came in to begin this planning for . . . .?

GEN CONWAY: Oh yes, but I personally briefed General Patton at General Truscott's direction, all about our plans for North Africa and also answered

questions about Dieppe and the like in which he was very interested. You see, General Patton again you have to remember that he is the quote "armored" expert, the man of land force maneuvers and the like, mobility and amphibious warfare, to him as to us, and even though he owned a yacht, was not all that familiar and so we were the fellows with knowledge and power. We had all the answers; we thought we did anyway; you know how young fellows are, but we did answer all the questions and he had a lot of questions.

INTERVIEWER: Had you met him at all before that?

GEN CONWAY: No, I met him later in Washington and obviously thereafter many times, but this was our first meeting.

INTERVIEWER: Well, how about if we wrap it up for today and I'll turn it off for now.

INTERVIEWER: That's all on this particular tape. This tape was recorded on Thursday, 29 September 1977, in General Conway's office at the University of Tampa. The basic subjects discussed were the formation of the United States Rangers and the British/Canadian raid on Dieppe. The next tape recording session is scheduled for a week from today which will be Thursday, the 6th of October at the same time. That's all on this tape.

END OF TAPE #1, SIDE 1.

SECTION II

C-111

INTERVIEW WITH GENERAL THEODORE J. CONWAY

by

COLONEL R. F. ENSSLIN

THIS IS COLONEL BOB ENSSLIN INTERVIEWING GENERAL THEODORE J. CONWAY. THIS IS TAPE 2, SIDE 1 AND WE ARE GOING TO DISCUSS SOME OF THE PLANNING FOR THE NORTH AFRICAN LANDINGS ON THIS TAPE AND GENERAL CONWAY'S EXPERIENCES IN NORTH AFRICA.

INTERVIEWER: General, the last time we talked we left the conversation where the initial planning was beginning in London and General Patton had come to London to initiate some discussions and to initiate some planning. I wonder if you could tell us a little bit about your role in the planning phases for our landings in North Africa?

GEN CONWAY: Okay, Bob, fine. I indicated, which is wrong, that the initial planning was done by our raid planners in London because I since learned -- that's what I thought about it at the time -- that the idea was not new back in the states. There is this famous line in Stilwell's book, The Stilwell Papers,<sup>14</sup> that General Stilwell was very upset because he was called by Franklin Roosevelt to the White House and directed to make a plan for the invasion of North Africa. And you know all about Stilwell so we won't go into that, but anyway, his reaction was, it's just not possible. It can't be done, you can't get there from here and so on. And he records that in his dairy. Well, among other things, General Stilwell's age is showing because later on there were all kinds of young people who took this up. I had some friends, they could make a plan for Africa tonight, if you ask them.

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<sup>14</sup>The Stilwell Papers by Joseph W. Stilwell.

It didn't bother them that it wasn't possible. So, there was some thinking and planning but the general notion back in the states, as I understood it then and still do, was that the War Department took the view that a landing on the west Atlantic coast of Africa was impossible. This has to do with matters we discussed before. The meteorological phenomenon, that is to say, a series of about nine waves which pound on that coast, night and day, which rise to considerable height during storms and other periods, (and perhaps that's where our Florida hurricane weather starts,) is over there on that coast. So, they had taken a brief and cursory look at this and decided, well, it wasn't possible. This is weather-wise. However, getting back to London -- when General Patton and Jimmie Doolittle came on their famous visit, they weren't, as I understood it, as much looking at our planning or our ability to plan as they were looking at what the lessons learned were. Dieppe would be an example and others and in the whole amphibious context, they presumably felt they could make the plans. But even to the end, as we read in Patton's letters that are now being exposed, you know, in the Blumenson series,<sup>15</sup> we see that he had great reservations about this whole thing. And he even said if my memory serves me correctly, that well, we were quote "lucky," unquote. Of course, war is nine-tenths luck anyway, but it shows that they weren't thinking that. I'll try to get to your answer now, and that is that we did make the outline plan, as Quentin Reynolds had sort of indicated he thought we might have, based on the lessons learned at Dieppe and the amphibious experiences of Combined Operations Headquarters.

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<sup>15</sup>The Patton Papers by Martin Blumenson.

And we did turn these over to General Patton for his use later.

INTERVIEWER: What was your role at the time of the landings, what were you doing at that particular point?

GEN CONWAY: General Truscott, as a result of this meeting with General Patton, had been put on General Patton's list and called back to take a part in the raid, the actual landing and he was kind enough to bring me back as his S-3, planner/operations person. We went then to Fort Bragg, North Carolina where we became part of the Western Task Force. In this case, Truscott's sub-task force was called "Goal Post" from the polo business and at that time, I was a raid planner or a G-3 planner. And there in the pine forest at Fort Bragg, (I don't even know which one by the way -- we weren't allowed to know where we were) we wrote the plan for our part of the invasion of North Africa, which was at Port Lyautey.

INTERVIEWER: Where did you all embark from to get over?

GEN CONWAY: We sailed from Norfolk, Virginia. My memory is the 26th of October, which could be wrong. But at any rate, we had some amphibious trials in the Chesapeake along with all the rest of the people involved -- 9th Division now -- our sub task force is a regiment, the 60th Infantry of the 9th Division, plus a light armored battalion -- Harry Semmes, 2nd Squadron, I believe of the 1st Armored Division -- light tanks. And this was the Task Force. So we did some amphibious trials, rehearsals, which would literally curl your hair because the General found out, among other things, that some of the ships had never lowered their small boats, ever. They were newly commissioned, new crews, and these rehearsals for the first time and you can imagine anything like that for the first time, what it

would be like. It scared the hell out of all of us. But it was just part of the beginning part of the war and in all fairness, I imagine, certainly in ours, you know, we were doing everything, literally for the first time.

INTERVIEWER: Were -- how much confidence did you have by the time you got to North Africa that the people would be able to get the job done? Were you still a little bit shaky about the whole thing at that time?

GEN CONWAY: Yes. I was, maybe more shaky than the rest, of course. But, the General did make a concerted effort to correct major deficiencies. We sailed for some time, you see. 26 October - 8 November out there and one of the reasons for our approach, an indirect approach to the coast of North Africa was the German U-boats, the "Wolf Pack" and so we sailed first in the direction of Gibraltar. And we only late in the game, turned south towards North Africa. This was to throw the U-boats off the track. But during various periods out there, if we had a calm day and the fleet wasn't making much headway anyway, the General would have a small boat lowered and he would go around to the various other boats and -- I should call them all ships, shouldn't I? (Laughter)

INTERVIEWER: Yes. (Laughter)

GEN CONWAY: . . .In spite of the fact that I called them ships all through World War II, here I am. Well, the U-boat got me into that. At any rate, he would go around and he would check the training and he would talk with the troops and I'm sure because he knew we hadn't been in World War I but he knew a lot about soldiering, that his confidence was undoubtedly high. Certainly if it was low, he would never have shown it anyway. But, our confidence was shaken in several respects. For example, we had this experience. The General late in our trip saw the commander of the shore

battalion. These were engineers and they came -- I think I mentioned this to you -- from the northwest region of the United States, Oregon or Washington. And they were Chinese-Americans. And this old engineer lieutenant colonel who commanded them was a real tough sort and the troops threatened to mutiny. They said that they weren't going to serve under him and the first 24 hours after they landed somebody was going to shoot him. This information was transmitted to the general. I'm sure it must have had some impact. Colonel Marvin wasn't shot, to relieve your mind. But at any rate, this is the kind of thing we experienced. Another example; we had been issued a strange kind of munition which we were supposed to take ashore. There was no <sup>a</sup>manuel on this. We opened one of the boxes and there were some instruction sheets there, you know, like if you get a thing from Sears. A do-it-yourself, put it together. And this was something they called a bazooka. They claimed it was very effective as a sort of an anti-tank weapon, we gathered. And unlike a rifle, you weren't supposed to stand behind it or put your shoulder to it, because the area in the rear was equally lethal as the area in the front.

INTERVIEWER: I trust they did have that in the instruction sheet?

GEN CONWAY: They definitely did. We couldn't believe it by the way. A gun that would shoot out of both ends, you know. Jules Verne and all of us to the contrary, we didn't believe it. But at any rate, I told you the story that the General had the troops get out on the fantail of the various ships and fire this thing just to see what it did. And we were totally amazed. But we had no tanks, we couldn't know and we didn't find out until later what they really did, their effectiveness. But, there again, you see an

experience. None of the coxswains had ever taken a landing craft ashore in any kind of wave or formation or against an enemy. None of the soldiers had ever fought including me, so you know it was beginner's luck.

INTERVIEWER: How was the weather on the crossing? Did you have good weather?

GEN CONWAY: Yes. Fortunately. Again, I note parallely that I'm so much into General Marshall<sup>16</sup> and reading about his own first trip across the Atlantic and we had similar, real beautiful weather. No storms, which would have scattered us and all, and the like, in fact, again, the three days which the plans said you had to have continuous good weather in order to succeed in the landing, actually occurred. The fourth day we had a violent storm which would have stopped all the landing progress and would have destroyed us in battle, I believe. But the weather held.

INTERVIEWER: And it was predicted that way?

GEN CONWAY: It was predicted to hold. But we didn't believe the predictions.

INTERVIEWER: Well, here we are quite a few years later and I still have a lot of reservations about the predicting process and the weather.

GEN CONWAY: Yes. Well, Patton later said, you know -- he'd been told before the landing that it was impossible and he wrote after it -- "It was." The only thing is, we were lucky.

INTERVIEWER: How about the efforts to get the French just to capitulate and not oppose the landing and join with us? Were you privy to any of that negotiation or those efforts to make that happen?

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<sup>16</sup>Memoirs of My Services in the World War, 1917-1918, by George C. Marshall.

GEN CONWAY: I was on the margin of this effort. The big lesson here to me is our total lack of and appreciation for cultural differences. We had thought and the General had the great notion -- we were all imbued with the spirit of Lafayette, our first great allies were the French. We had never fought them as a matter of fact. We fought the British on at least two occasions but we never fought against the French, and they were from the Revolution on, our great number one ally. So we were disturbed about the prospect of having to face them on landing. And we knew about the 1940 capitulation and the terms of this and all, the major term of which was, every French officer had undertaken under oath to defend his part of France, be it the Metropolitan, North African and so on against armed attack by anyone. So if you know the French, which we didn't, our knowledge was superficial, you realized the importance of this oath. French honor you know runs very deep, especially in the career officers. So, I think we didn't appreciate this. So the general had the notion, I don't even know who invented it, but Pete Hamilton,<sup>17</sup> (Pierpont Morgan Hamilton) had served in World War I was certainly one of the initiators. I was only the implement because as I told you, I was French language qualified. I taught at West Point. And the general picked on me to write the translation of his proclamation in French, which essentially is on record by the way. We don't have the original but we know what it said. Essentially it evoked all of this, the history, that we have spoken of and therefore, concluded that the French shouldn't fight us, who really came as friends and not as enemies. You know the response was bullets, but anyway it was a nice idea. So, I

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<sup>17</sup> LTC Pierpont M. Hamilton, U.S. Army, CMH.

drafted this into French. A very famous draftsman that went all through the war named Sgt. Stacyshun drew beautiful Gothic letters -- I don't know how the French looked at French in Gothic English but he wrote in Gothic English print so I don't know whether they could read it or not, but it was beautiful and it was made as a Roman Scroll, you know that wound up at one end and unwound at the other. And this was the famous document then that was sent to Pete Hamilton and Nick Craw,<sup>18</sup> Medal of Honor, in a jeep at 4:30 in the morning of the 8th of November, under a white flag, fired on in the dark and and Hamilton was captured along with the driver. Nick Uraw was killed. But Colonel Petit, the local French commander does get the message. However, as I mentioned, the reaction is to fight fiercely.

INTERVIEWER: How long were you in France to study? You studied French in France, right?

GEN CONWAY: Yes. The language training pattern, pre-war, continues today, the people up there at West Point who instruct in a language have a year's residence in a foreign country. So that's what I spent.

INTERVIEWER: And did that give you maybe a little bit more insight into what the French reaction would be than your fellow officers involved in it?

GEN CONWAY: I'd like to say it did but I'm afraid it didn't. However, you know you can't study just the French language, even today. If you go to France, you study French culture and I was thoroughly and deeply imbued with the French culture and the glory of France so it didn't come as any great surprise that the French fought back. I was probably less surprised than most of my colleagues but I couldn't predict either.

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<sup>18</sup>Colonel Demas T. Craw, USAF, CMH

INTERVIEWER: And the French fought fiercely. They weren't just fighting for, you know, as a show for their honor. . . ?

GEN CONWAY: No, it wasn't superficial, it was real. And if you read the history books you'll see that Port Lyautey where we landed, was the most fiercely contested of the three landings. Algiers, Oran, Safi, Casablanca, Fedala were less so. We had three days of very serious fighting with heavy casualties. So, of course, we were fighting African-Moroccan troops, the "Goums" as the Americans called them. And they wouldn't have known about the ideological thing but they were strongly disciplined and they were career soldiers so they did fight well.

INTERVIEWER: Led by French officers?

INTERVIEW: Led by thoroughly fanatical French officers.

INTERVIEWER: Could you tell me a little bit about the progress of the landings, how the landings went? I recall General Truscott talking about passing French boats going out and so forth. Could you give us from your point of view -- where were you physically at this particular point and what were your observations of the landing and how did you get ashore and so forth?

GEN CONWAY: Okay. We went into the transport area where we lowered the small boats, somewhere before midnight, D-1-D-Day and everybody was up all that night. This is an aspect of amphibious operations and you might not be familiar with it or maybe you know all about it. But you didn't get to bed that night because there was so much to be done. With a 4:30 A.M. touch-down, we had to get in the area early. And I told you the famous story about the admiral, Admiral Gray not being able to find North Africa because it had moved. In other words, our charts were 50 years out of date

and the continents as everybody now knows, (but we didn't,) we thought continents were fixed. They are moving. So, at any rate, we eventually found North Africa, and lowered the small boats and were up all that night, everybody making his gear ready including us, talking about it, in total blackout. We found the coast by radar and we just hoped that the French weren't finding us by radar. We think later they did. Our notion was that we were achieving total surprise, that is, until as I mentioned we heard President Roosevelt explaining to the French in an international broadcast, which we picked up short wave, that the Americans were landing at Algiers, Oran, and on the West Coast of North Africa and he named the places. The time zone thing got us into big trouble. The others had landed but we hadn't. So the French later, as I mentioned, said well, thank you very much, you Americans are very polite and friendly to tell us that you were coming. At any rate, our notion up to that point had been total surprise. Later, as I mentioned, what we knew. . .

INTERVIEWER: What time did you hear the broadcast?

GEN CONWAY: This was something like 9, 10, 11 o'clock at night, the night before.

INTERVIEWER: That must shake you up a great deal?

GEN CONWAY: This shook up the whole outfit because there was just a few of us knew this and they didn't dare put this out on a loud hailer or anything like that. So, I was on one of the ships with the general, the command ship (Henry T. Allen) and we lowered the boats as everybody else did. There were 10 or 12 of these in our flotilla, the sub task force. The landing craft personnel, landing craft vehicles (LCVs), the landing craft mechanized,

LCM's and each one of which carried a tank plus 50 persons. That kind of thing, down the nets and into the small boats and land. Pete Hamilton and Nick Crow had gotten ashore in an amphibious jeep which had a low free-board. Under normal conditions an amphibious jeep couldn't survive that surf. It just happened to be, as I mentioned, luckily smooth. So they landed and went ashore. The French troops firing then alerted everybody. This was now about 4:00 A.M. or something. Also, we had a small party of engineers, mentioned in General Truscott's book, which was to go ashore and cut the net. There was a net, a cable, in front of the mouth of the Wadi Sabon River, which led up nine miles inland to Port Lyautey, to keep destroyers and other hostile craft out of the river. The engineer group was supposed to go ashore and by demolitions, cut this. They were taken under fire also. There was a message "Steve Brodie" was the code name they were supposed to send when they had cut the net. We all leaned into the earphones all night. We never received the message. The fact was, they never cut the net. But, at any rate, the net was forced by our destroyer by the way. It was later when it went in. But anyhow, the landing at 4:30 which you asked about, the plan called for one battalion, the 3rd Battalion of the 60th, north of the river you may recall, two battalions south of the river. If I'd ask now who thought up a dumb thing like that, I'd have to say, well, maybe I had helped because you know, never, never separate or divide your forces in the face of the enemy. That's somewhere in there. Well, we did. And you could argue this from here on out about whether it was a mistake or not and I'll tell you later if we want to get into what happened. General Truscott covers it though. At any rate, the troops then

landed from 4:30 A.M. on and our little outfit (HQ) from our ship Henry T. Allen, went ashore about 10:00 or 10:30 A.M., a bright sunlight day, fairly cool, it's November, and touched down on one of the southern beaches. I forget -- Green, or White, Red -- the color now. But in the battalion which had landed on the southern most beach. And there is a 100-foot high sand dune which we hadn't totally appreciated from aerial photography and the like there, staring us in the face. So, the engineers had to put down netting and vehicles had to be sort of hand-hoisted over this thing, man-handled to even to get into the war. Fortunately, the landing was opposed in the sense that there was desultory artillery and other firing on the transports which kept well out for that reason but not contested on the shore line by rifle or machine gun fire. We had in other words, enveloped the defending forces which were largely at the mouth of the river. But we came ashore about 10:00 o'clock or 10:30 that day.

INTERVIEWER: So really they -- but they did engage your amphibious, your party in the amphibious jeep as you pointed out and despite the white flag which they may or may not have seen. Was it a dark night or. . . ?

GEN CONWAY: Yes. Could not have seen.

INTERVIEWER: And what -- you talked apparently later to the colonel about the proclamation. Did he describe at all his reaction to the proclamation or anything. . . ?

GEN CONWAY: Oh, yes, of course. This was a much discussed document. Colonel Jean Petit. He was a great career officer. His first reaction to the proclamation, which he told me in the presence of the general which made me very unhappy. He pointed out several mistakes in French. In a gentle way, but you could see they upset him just the same and then of course, we

are friends now, you know, three days later we are friends and we got to know each other and appreciate each other and they wanted to fight the Germans, too. That wasn't any problem for them at all. So, we became friends as I say, but yes, he pointed out that he was the local commander, that the headquarters was back in Fez and he had nothing to do with surrendering and all. He had communicated the substance of the message to his commander but it wasn't -- he couldn't elect to do anything about it at all.

INTERVIEWER: So what were the circumstances of the capitulation after three days of pretty serious fighting?

GEN CONWAY: It wasn't local as you know. General Truscott again, explains this. Rather it was the fact that General Eisenhower was in contact with Admiral Darlan in Algiers and Darlan for personal and political reasons had seen the handwriting on the wall and had surrendered. There is a great political triumvirate involved here; namely, Darlan who represents the Vichy French; General Girand of the Army who is sworn to resist invasion but who is not so closely wedded to the Vichy regime. He is thinking different thoughts and DeGaulle was not with us but is the free French sworn to fight the Germans. But these three, the interplay, of course, is a complicated, not worth discussing herein any substantive sense but only to point out to you that, to answer your question, the arrangements were made between General Eisenhower and Admiral Darlan, who was the nominal head of the French government in North Africa, representing Vichy France, for which he was assassinated on Christmas Eve of the same year. Then Girand comes stronger into play. We read about him later in Tunisia and so on. And DeGaulle is still not there -- we won't let DeGaulle in North Africa because of possibly upsetting the delicate situation.

INTERVIEWER: So when -- Colonel Petit got orders to surrender and surrendered to the American forces and you then became friendly pretty quickly?

GEN CONWAY: Yes. You see we are on the beach with nowhere to go. The town is the only place there is on the map, so the soldiers, I guess, you'd have to say would be the first that got acquainted with the town, very well acquainted. And the commanders subsequently because we had to deal with Colonel Petit in such matters as military government and the like; running the police, the fire department, the whole bit became immediately in a problem in occupation. So, our authority as you know, from reading Patton<sup>19</sup> was substituted for theirs and. . .but we had to work through them because none of us could speak the language. We had no credibility and we were just conquerors. We worked through the French leaders. And the political side was by and large taken over by the French military but we operated through them.

INTERVIEWER: How big a town was Port Lyautey?

GEN CONWAY: Oh, my you'd have to look it up you know, but I would say off that about 5 or 10 thousand. It's bigger than that now. But it was a relatively small town.

INTERVIEWER: Not really much urban development, then?

GEN CONWAY: Oh, no. It is agricultural area, sheep, donkeys, cows and cactus and the big center is Casablanca, as you know, the big port and Rabat, north of us was the religious capitol. Had you not heard of it now, you would never have found out about Port Lyautey otherwise.

INTERVIEWER: What about organizing to continue the war with the French as allies? How did you all go about that?

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<sup>19</sup>War As I Knew It by George S. Patton, Jr.

GEN CONWAY: Okay. We had no substantive role in this matter at all. But by way of background, after we landed the situation, of course stabilized and became a military government problem. General Truscott was recalled to Algiers by General Eisenhower. The task force folds up. The units revert to their parent units. General Eddy<sup>20</sup> comes over and takes command of those three regiments of the 9th Division, which had all landed at different places and put the division back together. General Truscott is called to Algiers and arrives the night Admiral Darlan is assassinated. From then on out, the next two months we were privileged to see, but we played no part in, the terribly complex political maneuvering to get General Girand accepted as the military leader, to get the French into the war, to give them a sector, to get their dignity and self esteem reestablished because not only had they been beaten by the Germans but also we had more or less mauled them and all this was a very delicate thing which I don't think it would be wise to go into here. Frankly, we were not involved.

INTERVIEWER: We were more or less observers, I take it from reading the book.

GEN CONWAY: That's right. General Truscott was not made part of the permanent staff. He was involved in several staff studies. He used us, his staff as the people to do these. One involved for example, the big question and remained the big question of the war, really, how big a headquarters should you have. In this case it was Algiers, Allied Forces Headquarters, AFHQ, which the troops called 4-F because the A and the F looked kind of like 4F. You know, soldier humor. So, at any rate, General Truscott came in with an earth shaking recommendation which of course we

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<sup>20</sup>Major General Manton S. Eddy

had worked up and said, well, the headquarters ought to be between 400 and 500 and it was then 600 as I recall and he recommended reduction. I'm sure it will come as no surprise to you to leap forward a year or two when the AFHQ goes into Italy and becomes Allied Armies, Italy (AAI), to know that it was at that point they had to get several ships that it was then around 15,000.

INTERVIEWER: Boy! Good night!

GEN CONWAY: Blumenson takes off on this among others and Matloff<sup>21</sup> in his book, U.S. Military History of American Military History of World War II, saying that big headquarters became one of the diseases of the war. And of course, it's true.

INTERVIEWER: It's true. And where you got a lot of resources, I think there is probably a big temptation to accumulate an oversized headquarters, isn't there?

GEN CONWAY: The oversized headquarters which bothered everybody that I knew about and the pipelines in other words, were the two biggest disasters that kept men from the front in World War II.

INTERVIEWER: You mean the people that clogged the pipeline that just. . .

GEN CONWAY: Yes, General McNair<sup>22</sup> called this "the hundreds of thousands of people going nowhere."

INTERVIEWER: They are in the pipeline.

GEN CONWAY: They are in the pipeline.

INTERVIEWER: Boy, this. . .I had my experience in the pipeline as a casual officer replacement and there is certainly a lot of things that are not good

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<sup>21</sup>American Military History by Maurice Matloff, Ed.

<sup>22</sup>LTG Lesley J. McNair

about the pipeline. And I saw the pipeline at Pork Chop Hill during the battle, I saw fellows coming out of the end of the pipeline and being assigned as replacements in the middle of a big battle like that which is a heck of an introduction -- excuse me, I didn't mean. . .

GEN CONWAY: No, that's a good observation, Bob.

INTERVIEWER: . . .to digress.

GEN CONWAY: Big problem but neither you nor I, individually or collectively are wise enough to solve this one and hopefully somebody has a handle on it but it was one of the problems of the war. No question.

INTERVIEWER: No question. Well, was it at this point that you were selected to go over to Sir Harold Alexander's headquarters and serve as a liaison officer to his headquarters?

GEN CONWAY: Somewhat later. The situation in January (1943) was that we were there at AFHQ. In mid-January, General Truscott was sent out to Constantine which is on the border between Algeria and Tunisia, provinces of France in North Africa. So, he goes out and sets up this advance command post for, as he mentioned in his book, for General Eisenhower and it is there General Eisenhower repairs on occasion, sometimes on weekends, sometimes occasionally, to get out of the political morass of Algiers and somewhere near the front. But we are still 200 miles or so from the front. Nevertheless, it is much closer than Algiers was.

INTERVIEWER: Right and I guess he could feel more of a finger on the pulse of things there than he could in Algiers.

GEN CONWAY: Yes, although he was criticized by Patton, you know in Patton's letters<sup>23</sup>, for never having gone to the front. In fact, Eisenhower made

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<sup>23</sup>The Patton Papers, Vol. II. Martin Blumenson.

this one famous trip we've talked about and did visit the front just before Kasserine.

INTERVIEWER: However, you know, was it really his role to be at the front?

GEN CONWAY: Good question. It could be debated. Not necessarily -- as Patton would have looked at the job, it was; but as Eisenhower looked at the job, probably it wasn't.

INTERVIEWER: Well, I guess everybody has his own style and he certainly wasn't going to go up there and fight the war for the people which would have been a mistake. It would of just been. . .

GEN CONWAY: Or get killed.

INTERVIEWER: . . .It would of just been a morale situation for the people up there. He did visit Korea when I was in Korea, you know when. . .

GEN CONWAY: Of course. He promised to do that in his campaign.

INTERVIEWER: He promised to do that in the campaign. He did make a visit over there and that really slowed the war down considerably.

GEN CONWAY: I can imagine.

INTERVIEWER: I think there was an awful lot of effort and planning went into his visit that may have been diverted from some other objectives that we had.

GEN CONWAY: Exactly.

INTERVIEWER: I was going to ask you about Kasserine and obviously Kasserine is before you went over to Sir Harold (Alexander) there. Tell me from your vantage point where were you at that time and what was your involvement and what were your observations about the battle.

GEN CONWAY: Okay. Constantine was the advance, the so called advanced CP

for AFHQ, manned as I said, by General Truscott, his Chief of Staff, Colonel Carleton<sup>24</sup>; Jimmy Curtis<sup>25</sup>, who was the intelligence officer. I was the G-3 and so on. A handful or a dozen people. Among our other jobs we had the job of liaison with the front lines because of the distances and because of the fluidity and extent of the North African battlefield, which is largely desert, largely nothing, with troops just here and there, we had great trouble with communications. So, General Truscott's idea again, this comes from I'm sure the cavalry notion, to send communications unit out there and communicate directly back. So we had an SCR399 which essentially was a radio van and a five kilowatt power plant attached to it, trailer type and one alternate jeep. We rotated on this job and we went out to the units. So at the time of Kasserine, specifically, I was there at Thala. It is on your map just a few miles behind Kasserine Pass out on the main road to Tebessa, Thala, Le Kef: the main north-south road which was our main supply line back of the front line, with this jeep and I was there during the period that the Germans actually came through and were stopped at Kasserine.

INTERVIEWER: And you were reporting to General Truscott on the progress of the situation based on the reports that you had and your observations?

GEN CONWAY: Periodic reports based on observation and going to the various command posts and looking over the shoulder of the G-3's and S-3's who a lot of times were reluctant to have anybody look at their map or to have anybody talk about it. Well, we were kind of in their hair, we were another outside source looking over the shoulder. Not an enviable role but the

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<sup>24</sup>Colonel Don E. Carleton.

<sup>25</sup>LTC James O. Curtis, Jr., USMA 1930

General insisted that he see reports. This is the age old problem in the military, reports and intelligence reports, operation reports will go through a filter. It is a long chain of command by the time these reports would get to Algiers, the war in that sector would be over. It was a fast moving situation. And so the radio van had a place even though it wasn't accepted generally. I went to General Stark's command post, Alec Stark, who was in Kasserine first, with the 6th Armored Infantry of the 1st Armored Division, and the other tank destroyer and the other small attachments that were around and talked to the people. And see how they were getting along and so on. I mentioned to you it was the night that I saw the American troops at last collapse, that's the word I use, it was a very bad night for me because I hadn't been mentally conditioned through Benning (it was the only school that I had gone to) or through my reading to think of Americans in terms of this kind of retreat. But that night, rain, cold and all, they just streamed back along the road there in the dark and I talked to several and asked them, "What's going on?" And they didn't know where they were going, they knew that -- to the rear. They "lightened their loads" is what they called it, -- they got rid of them. You know, we've talked about this. We've called it "skidaddin" in the Civil War and so on, "but out" later on in your war but at any rate, I'm not sure what we were calling it then but I knew what it was. I could recognize it although I hadn't read much about it. And I certainly didn't know what to do about it. I've since read about the great commanders -- Washington was among them, you know, riding on his horse at the battle of Long Island with the flat of his sword, banging these guys, trying to make them turn around and go back. By the way, it didn't succeed, he didn't either. So, If I had gotten

down there and laid in the road or something, I don't think I would have stopped anybody.

INTERVIEWER: No, I don't think that you would have.

GEN CONWAY: But I didn't, anyway.

INTERVIEWER: And particularly, you know, they will respond to somebody in their chain of command or somebody they know. This extra major or colonel out there trying to turn them around isn't going to do a thing.

GEN CONWAY: I'm sure we had a straggler line but I was in front of it, I would assume. It was probably back in Thala or something like that. You know these have been used in war and I'm sure there was one but nobody was going to stop these fellows, I thought, that time of night under those conditions.

INTERVIEWER: No, dark night, wet night, raining. Guys become -- they lost their personality, they become anonymous in that kind of situation, don't they?

GEN CONWAY: I think so. It's the herd or mob psychology that takes effect, prevails. I want to mention in passing that you know, we people tend to think of Africa, it seems to me as the jungle, the safari and the desert, hot and all but Africa, if you look closely at the pictures, El Alamein is a perfect example, there are pictures that show this. It's cold at night. The men have on long overcoats. The ground freezes and so on. This is a sight you know, for those thinking about the impact of environment on war. It's very serious. And here environment certainly had a big part to play in Kasserine and our defeat there.

INTERVIEWER: And extremes of temperature, right?

GEN CONWAY: Exactly. Hot in the day and cold at night.

INTERVIEWER: We had some tank destroyer units that were pretty well eaten up there, didn't we?

GEN CONWAY: Yes. You raise a very good point and I think we are not among the first to discover this certainly, but you remember the whole story of the tank destroyer psychology, the reason behind the formation of the groups. Tanks had become big and how to deal with them was the problem so there go the tank destroyers. However, Kasserine may have proved that it wouldn't work, you can't get there from here because if you picked up the basic field manual in those days for the tank destroyer unit, you would have found written there on page 1, "Seek, destroy." That's their mission. Okay. But here they are with a smaller gun, no armor on the top side, open deck there and they are trying to defeat the German tank and the 88 anti-tank gun and so on and the answer is they are not going to do it and Kasserine is one of the places we found that out.

INTERVIEWER: You really had a self propelled artillery piece engaging a tank.

GEN CONWAY: Exactly. And it is the kind of unequal contest, we found that out.

INTERVIEWER: Did that change the thinking about tank destroyers?

GEN CONWAY: Oh, yes.

INTERVIEWER: From that point forward.

GEN CONWAY: Yes. If you notice, you see now it is a big leap to Normandy. We see in the hedgerows and all the tank destroyers are not there -- you don't read about them.

INTERVIEWER: Right.

GEN CONWAY: They had been washed out in a sense.

INTERVIEWER: Did they get a chance to employ those bazookas?

GEN CONWAY: Okay. (Laughter) Thank you. From Port Lyautey, you see this is where military and historical **analyses, I think, have a great place.** We were fighting light tanks, the Mark V, I believe, what was the name of ours -- was the Honey with 37 millimeter gun on it. **The French had a similar type.** They also had a 37 millimeter gun on it. **Even then the bazookas, you know, you can read their after action report if you can find it, were not and did not come down hard and definitively on the impact effect of this particular weapon.** One of the problems was, you had to hit the tank. There was no method of sitting or predicting and so on. And second, when you hit it, you had to hit it in a vulnerable spot. In other words, the 2.62 inch I believe it was, . . .

INTERVIEWER: 2.36 inch?

GEN CONWAY: 2.36 inch. So, come Korea we have to invent the 3.5 you see, that's really what I'm trying to get to, to do it. So the answer is no, not for us. In the meantime, the **Germans having invented the Tiger and the Leopard and all, they are going for the "Panzerfaust" files and we are going to find that is about four inches or so.** In other words, for bigger tanks you need bigger ammunition. Very logical as we sit here and discuss it but it didn't develop in that way on the battlefield.

INTERVIEWER: Right. How about the senior officers at Kasserine? I'm talking about the officers in the chain of command. What were they trying to do to hold things together? Do you know, or were you able to. . . ?

GEN CONWAY: I know, I have an idea most of my ideas have been developed

since through reading and the like. I will say I made many visits to Tebessa, General Fredendall's <sup>26</sup> Corps Headquarters and I had reached the same conclusion, whether on my own or listening to General Truscott, criticizing this. I'm not sure now but all of us, all of us, young and old felt that General Fredendall had this defense complex for which he has been criticized from digging in on the side of the mountain. The security was all-essential and he, like others, was not a front line visitor. So he got the war second, third hand through this filter that we have been talking about and therefore, couldn't react quickly for one thing.

INTERVIEWER: So General Truscott indeed, may have been closer to what was going on on the battlefield, quicker than the commanders?

GEN CONWAY: Oh, yes, we thought -- I went down there and talked, I had a classmate there in the G-3, and it gave me an in which others didn't have and I knew from looking at his map and from what I'd seen and heard that we knew more about the war, in fact, again Patton and others criticized Fredendall for being out of touch. I think this was a fair criticism. Remember now, this is a new staff and all and like all the rest of us, they are just coming in the war and they are learning. And learning takes time and then you make mistakes learning.

INTERVIEWER: Young people learn quicker than older people.

GEN CONWAY: I guess you'd have to say that. Now, that's a kind of an offensive remark but I'm afraid it's true. (Laughter) That's what I thought then. So, they are more ready to make mistakes, to recognize mistakes and try to correct them and when they are older they are set in their ways and so on. We know. This was Marshall's reason for not letting the old-timers

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<sup>26</sup> Maj. Gen. Lloyd R. Fredendall.

come into World War II because he had seen this happen in World War I.

INTERVIEWER: Well, in your comment about General Stilwell, too, is kind of the same thing.

GEN CONWAY: Yes, similar.

INTERVIEWER: You all hadn't been around long enough to know what you couldn't do, so you. . .

GEN CONWAY: We hardly knew right from wrong and we couldn't separate the possible from the impossible. Now the division commanders General Ward, Pink Ward, Orlando P. Ward, you know, is heavily criticized both from the British and the American stories later for not having been up on the command and so on. And I have no observation to make about this. I never saw him that much personally. I did see General Fredendall occasionally at Tebessa in the command post. On the actual field of battle there though in Kasserine, I find it a hard time now and it was harder then, to answer the question, "Who is in charge?" Somewhere I had the impression that Colonel Alec Stark was the major unit commander (1st Armored Division) on the spot. If you talked to troops or looked at them and all, it seemed as though nobody was in command. As a matter of fact, I think if we find and we certainly ought to look at this and Kasserine should, in my opinion, be much better analyzed than it has been to date, the initial defenses, that is to say, on the shoulders of the pass seem to have been under one command, (Col Arnold), an engineer command by the way, and the defenses behind that in the valley are under another, namely Alec Stark. Now my conception of this may be totally wrong but you are asking me, how did I see it and this is how I saw it then and I think I am not likely to see this differently but it ought to be

INTERVIEWER: I rather gathered that had it not been for the British pressure on the Germans that we might have been in a lot more trouble than we wound up being in as a result of Kasserine.

GEN CONWAY: This is what I think. Most of our history deals with the success and attributes our stopping the Germans to the 9th Infantry Division artillery which was brought up and certainly had something to do with it. But from where I sat on the ground, watching this situation develop the Americans struggled to the rear while a British battalion coming in (who by the way were named in General Anderson's reports) and started digging in. I talked to some of the Britishers, you know, just digging there, the shells are flying and all that, and all they are doing is spitting on their hands and using a pick and shovel. The whole damn battalion just digging in. The Americans hadn't thought of that, I guess, or at least they didn't demonstrate they had. That was what, to me, stopped the war. Then I mentioned this momentous night, it was the next night, when the German tanks came forward and harbored in order to draw gas and ammunition. They formed a circle (laughter) there in the dark and somebody, a British 6-pounder, hit the gas truck and with that the flames burst up and the whole battalion erupted, tanks, guns and all and you could see were those burnt tank carcasses there for several months, until after the end of the war, right in that one point which I choose to call the high point of Rommel's invasion. It's like Gettysburg there at "The Angle", this was "The Angle" of Kasserine. This was where the action was. This, in my way of thinking, is where it stopped. We know now in retrospect, reading the "Ultra Secrets"<sup>27</sup> and so on, that that night Rommel had sent his famous message back to von Arnim saying that he had used

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<sup>27</sup>The Ultra Secret by F. W. Winterbotham.

up his allotment of tanks and von Arnim sent word back to withdraw.

INTERVIEWER: And that might have been timely from our point of view had he had more resources, had he not been pressed from the other side as hard as he was being pressed.

GEN CONWAY: In the "what if" school of history, there is no question about it. Had the German offensive penetrated to the Tebessa-Thala line, had they captured, for example, our big supply depot at Tebessa, that war would have taken quite a different turn. The end result would have been inevitably the same, it's just that it would have taken longer.

INTERVIEWER: Alright. What about lessons learned at Kasserine? This bloody nose was kind of apparent to everybody and I'm sure that -- well, we had other bloody noses but to get one like that, kind of early on may have served us well later. Do you think that we learned some very valuable lessons that -- maybe I'm trying to look for the bright side but obviously you learn from all the problems that you had. What were some of the lessons that we learned?

GEN CONWAY: Okay. You know General Marshall was very high on instant history and particularly since we were training divisions -- this is early in the war now and if you'll remember it took something like 18 months, that's what we took to train a division. General Marshall was high on getting these lessons back soon. One of the reasons after General Kedendall was relieved you know, was to send him back because of his expertise to help in the training and mobilization of more divisions. So, at any rate, yes, everybody as in every battle of every war has different notions of lessons learned. General (Field Marshal) Sir Harold Alexander, then General, explained it to

me that the lesson learned at Kasserine was that you cannot defend a pass in the valley between the mountains. You have to organize and hold the two shoulders of the pass. That seemed reasonable to me.

INTERVIEWER: It seems like a lesson that might have been learned sooner than that?

GEN CONWAY: Yes. I think actually, we knew that. But a part of the "lessons learned" on the battlefield is trying to draw a line between what we knew and what we did. Was the concept imperfect of the implementation?

It strikes me, knowing a little about it, that the engineers who defended the shoulders did just that. They knew the concept and every engineer there knew how to organize the defense of the pass. But the resources provided were inadequate, so that although we might have known the lesson all along, we just didn't do it right. Passing to Patton, which everybody should when they are talking about this stage of the war, Patton's lessons learned as I understand them through his letters and Blumenson's development of his papers, was that nothing replaces command presence on the battlefield. In other words, Patton is getting at the very serious command deficiencies which according to him, and most authorities agree, were mostly Fredendall's. He cites Robinett's<sup>28</sup> free-wheeling in the Dusseltia Valley, on his own and so on. In short, there was no "chain of command." It's not a fair criticism but at any rate, it has come down to this. If you want to simplify, and sometimes lessons are over-simplified, that was one, from Patton's point of view. And the third one I would put in was again the question of greenness of the troops, the inexperience, plus morale. We'd been -- this is the old Willy and Joe thing now from Italy. Tunisia was a bad place to be in the war.

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<sup>28</sup>Brig Gen P. M. Robinette, CCB.

It was not a victorious front and certainly not at this point in time. And our troops had not been "blooded." We had just had Fair Pass before Kasserine. From Diebel Lessouda, we had withdrawn also from Gafsa, Feriana, Thelepte back, we were withdrawing and Willy said to Joe, "Retreating blisters hurt more than advancing blisters." The troops in a sense, you see were demoralized but they were demoralized because they were inexperienced. Like me, at the time, I didn't know very much about retrograde movements and all because at Benning we're emphasizing the attack. We want to win the war and this business of long drawn out retreats, as Napoleon and others have found out, is a serious business not to be undertaken by novices. These are our first troops overseas and they are green and inexperienced. Not only is it complicated by weaknesses in the chain of command, you didn't have strong leadership, and you also had inexperienced troops.

INTERVIEWER: And doesn't that take more leadership in a retrograde movement to. . . ?

GEN CONWAY: Of course and better troops.

INTERVIEWER: Better trained troops.

GEN CONWAY: Which we didn't have. I might -- the fourth point of this if there is one and I don't think we are just reaching for these; I think they exist, was the old business -- the Germans tried it during World War I and always hit at a boundary line of the enemy. Well, Rommel was right on the British 1st Army -- U.S. II Corps boundary. And this as the operations show was a good place because we were not totally coordinated there as we should have been. Again, this goes back to cultural differences, Fredendall isn't speaking to Anderson and vice versa. And there are just enormous personality

problems. We shouldn't even use that word, we shouldn't allow it on the battlefield, but anybody that's read history realizes that it is there all the time.

INTERVIEWER: It's there.

GEN CONWAY: It's the secret enemy.

INTERVIEWER: I wonder if we could take a short break here?

GEN CONWAY: Right.

INTERVIEWER: Well, it was after the battle of Kasserine, General, that you -- that General Eisenhower requested you to be assigned as liaison to Sir Harold Alexander, is that right?

GEN CONWAY: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Could you tell us a little bit about the circumstances of being selected and how you felt about being selected and what it was like when you got there?

GEN CONWAY: I can't tell you much about the circumstances because I don't know but I can tell you what I felt about it and what happened. It was one of those nights at Constantine and General Eisenhower was there for the weekend as a guest, after Kasserine as you mentioned. And from the low level point of view, we briefed General Eisenhower and he'd repaired to his villa, and fairly late in the evening I was summoned by General Truscott to his office, and there was this awesome group consisting of General Eisenhower; General Sir Harold Alexander, British; Lowell Rooks the G-3 of AFHQ and General Truscott. And as I saluted and reported General Truscott said to me, "Major Conway, I'd like you to meet your new boss, General Alexander." So this is the first I knew and still don't know the circumstances of my selection.

But at that point in time, I became one of General Alexander's five aides, he had one of each nationality.

INTERVIEWER: Had you had any clues? Did you have any hints?

GEN CONWAY: None. Never been discussed.

INTERVIEWER: Just out of the blue?

GEN CONWAY: Totally. General Truscott was sort of like that if you have read his book and I know you have. So, it was out of the blue and I think now, I know now that the basic reason was that for the first time American forces, namely American II Corps were to pass under British command. In other words, the 18th Army Group was being formed now. One of the armies was the British First Army, (General Anderson) and the other Eighth was also British (Montgomery). The U.S. II Corps, which was a separate command. The 18th Army Group had its headquarters at Ain Beida, not far east from Constantine. And so I think the nation was, you mentioned this word liaison, I really wasn't a liaison officer but I was an American and the only one in the headquarters.

INTERVIEWER: So were your duties really an aide's duties or were they more liaison? Obviously with five aides the general should be well taken care of.

GEN CONWAY: I think he was. We all hoped he was. I was not liaison. I didn't have an office and I didn't have to report to any headquarters. I was strictly an aide. And he used the aides about one a day for five days a week. We always went out with him and took turns. It depended upon where he was going, you know. If he were visiting a British unit, he took Price from the Irish Guards. If he were visiting American units, generally

he would take me. If he was going to see Montgomery he would take a British aide and so on. He had a New Zealander, a Frenchman, a Belgium and an Australian, British and myself.

INTERVIEWER: Well, it sounds like perhaps you weren't overworked and. . .

GEN CONWAY: No, you couldn't really say that. Right. Some aides are but I have to say I wasn't.

INTERVIEWER: And you performed a regular aides responsibilities then in assisting the general?

GEN CONWAY: Yes. Not all of them equally well. As I mentioned to you, I got his flag on upside down one day which caused no end of consternation but Sergeant Wells, his British-American driver and I, we got straightened out in a hurry.

INTERVIEWER: Did the General notice that or did. . . ?

GEN CONWAY: The General noticed that when he opened his van door and started to step out. He was a very acute observer. I would have to say -- you didn't ask me but among the attributes of great leaders in my opinion, is the ability to observe, discern and understand what you see very quickly. I've never seen a general that wasn't observant. And now we go back to Napoleon and his so-called "coup d'oeil", that is to say the ability to take in everything in a glance. Napoleon, we are led to believe, had this capability. He could look at a battlefield and see what had to be done. Now this must be some kind of inbred characteristic most of us don't have. But observation, you see people who are oblivious to those around them and the like. My feeling is that a great general is very quick to see discern and to act. And certainly Alexander was all of those.

INTERVIEWER: The quality of perception?

GEN CONWAY: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: How old a man was Sir Harold at this particular time?

GEN CONWAY: He was in his 50's at this time. He died in his late 60's as you know, after the war. (Note: June 1969)

INTERVIEWER: What were some of his other personality traits that impressed themselves on you?

GEN CONWAY: I'd have to put at the top of the list along with a lot of other people have since, this business of modesty. Now we are led, whenever we discuss personalities, to make comparisons, some of them odious. But his charm, self-effacement, and modesty have been listed more by more people than any of his characteristics I know of. I have to say that in my belief and personal observations that these of course, are viewed by everyone as a positive characteristic but not necessarily absolutely required by generals. Some are quite the opposite, we know, obnoxious, and some even say repulsive and so on. But at any rate, he was a low-keyed personality. Now, however, you could be entirely wrong on this, your conclusion, because if anything he was not mouse-like. If you read any of the stories, Lewin<sup>29a</sup>, Nicolson<sup>29b</sup> and others, Alex was what you would call the guy voted in any school that he ever went to, "most likely to succeed." He was well liked, outgoing, cheerful; a great mixer. Now, he is not an extrovert in the sense that he stood on the platform and said I am your leader. Just the reverse. It was the grass roots opinion and all that made him a leader. He was elected by his peers, if you will. He wasn't selected as others seem to have been. But, you see this mouse-like appearance could be very deceptive as Patton

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<sup>29a</sup>Montgomery as a Military Commander by R. Lewin.

<sup>29b</sup>Alex by Nigel Nicolson.

and others found out. He was a man of very strong will and this is another characteristic, again my opinion, demonstrated many times. We go back now to Churchill's famous dictum when he appointed Montgomery and Alexander as commanders in Egypt. He appointed Montgomery "to get the job done" and he appointed Alex "to watch out for Montgomery." In other words, guard his rear and so on, which Alex could do, diplomatic, persuasive. There is another characteristic. He could talk better to generals than anyone I ever saw. I never was privileged to hear him with General Eisenhower. But he was much like Eisenhower in this respect. We can't downgrade that. What's the job of a general of this echelon these days, you know? Largely diplomatic, largely persuasive. How do you for example, order, in a mixed inter-allied group, certain other nationalities to do things. We had a terrible example of Pershing, you know. After every order that Foch gave Pershing, Pershing sent a message home asking should he do it or not. And most of the times they said, "Hell no, we wouldn't do it." He tells us of a famous incident and we have a film on this also, where he is standing there after a meeting with Foch, when the French are desperate for troops and the commentator says, "Pershing refuses to furnish any American replacements." And he had this directive from Secretary Baker not to serve under Allied command -- to stand on his national prerogatives. Well, in an Allied War you can't do that. And so Alex knew how to talk to them all, the Pattons, and the Bradleys and all of the star performers and so on equally well, which I thought was maybe one of his greatest attributes.

INTERVIEWER: And very much needed in that war? Just imperative to have those kinds of people.

GEN CONWAY: Yes, how could you harness up Montgomery and Patton and Bradley and Anderson on the same team? The answer was that you had to be an Alexander to be able to do it and make it work.

INTERVIEWER: What seemed to you to be his perception to the American troops? Did you -- do you recall having any impression of how he felt about his American Allies?

GEN CONWAY: Yes. He never personally, in my presence, ever criticized American troops. He had a lot of room to maneuver if you look at Kasserine. He personally gave me, I told you this, a tactical battlefield reconnaissance as we walked over the Kasserine battlefield one afternoon and he explained how the battle went and how he thought it should have gone. But even in that explanation, he never criticized any individual or the troops in general. Certainly not General Fredendall. Certainly not the greenness or the inexperience of the troops or anything. I think in this he was overly generous, but he was a gentle person and he wouldn't have been blatantly critical of anybody, I think, about anything. Not that he couldn't deal, if he had to, with problems or disasters even as he showed all through his service. But it wasn't his method. There were other ways.

INTERVIEWER: And you had this assignment for a few months?

GEN CONWAY: Yes. Barely two months if we look at the record, from February to March, through the end of March, early April of 1943.

INTERVIEWER: Tell us about your next assignment and getting into that assignment and how that came to pass?

GEN CONWAY: Alright. I next became Executive Officer, 60th Infantry, 9th Division which was in the American II Corps. And it came about essentially by virtue of the fact that in the action around Gafsa we had lost, in the

9th Division, we lost 5 out of 9 infantry battalion commanders. When I saw this message go through our command post, I went in and asked General Alexander if I couldn't apply for one of those jobs. They had sent a requisition in for battalion commanders. And of course, I explained to him that I was a career officer and I felt that I should be at the front. It was the role for which I had been trained and that the job of aide could be done by "anybody." I was acting strictly against orders I had personally received from General Bedell Smith, Eisenhower's Chief of Staff, in doing this, but I've told you before I felt it was what I should do. Very interestingly, General Alexander, agreed completely and said so and sent a message in saying that it was his request that I be offered one of these jobs. And so I was and so I left and went to the 60th Infantry.

INTERVIEWER: Did they ask you what you had done to make General Alexander want to get rid of you?

GEN CONWAY: That never came up and he was kind enough never to say.

INTERVIEWER: Well, he must have worded it that he thought that would be invaluable experience for you to have or something like that.

GEN CONWAY: Yes. In the best interest of all concerned. There are a lot. . . There are a lot of words and I'm sure he used the best ones. Again, I wasn't privy to his message.

INTERVIEWER: Were you expecting to be a battalion commander when you were sent over?

GEN CONWAY: Yes, and I have to tell you -- I don't think this tape should be the place for true confessions -- but I have to tell you I wasn't selected to be a battalion commander after all this effort, because when

I reported to General Manton Eddy, who had the division -- while he was a great commander, -- again my view -- he had the notion that regimental commanders should see who they were getting and not grab people out of the repple-depot (replacement depot) and say "you are my battalion commander." So, I had the unfortunate, very disconcerting experience to have each one of these regimental commanders come up to the CP and have lunch or dinner with General Eddy and look me over and then tell him privately that I wouldn't do. I was turned down by all three regimental commanders for this job.

INTERVIEWER: It must have been a very uncomfortable kind of luncheon or dinner?

GEN CONWAY: Yes, I brooded a lot about this, at the time but not since. Now, I'm able to laugh about this but at the time, I cried.

INTERVIEWER: I'll bet.

GEN CONWAY: I'll have to explain this. You know we've discussed this but the problem in the battlefield promotions in that time -- that's early in the war again, was this; that all units wanted to promote their own people. They didn't want people brought in and superimposed on them. So that I would have been the senior immediately, I was already a Lieutenant Colonel. Now, I would have been the senior battalion commander and I would have been senior to some of the regimental exec's; I would be in line to become regimental commander and no commander is going to take a person with these qualifications. You know, I was over qualified. And I had, in their view, no battlefield leadership experience. I had a lot of battles but I hadn't commanded anything.

INTERVIEWER: Well, you know, there wasn't a lot to be had at this point though, really, was there?

GEN CONWAY: Well, they had their own people that they were bringing along.

INTERVIEWER: Well, you can certainly -- you know people are loyal to their own people. There is merit in that and there is merit in having people you worked with and you feel you understand improves communication, I'm sure. But I would think that your breadth of experience would have been welcome there. You had different experience from some. . .

GEN CONWAY: The wrong kind in their view. I have to tell you that at the end, you know how this comes out, that I finally went with the 60th Infantry which was the last regiment I would have thought would have taken me because I had been in the higher headquarters with the 60th at Fort Lyautey and elsewhere and if you want to make friends and influence people, don't serve in their higher headquarters. This is not the way to achieve fame. But, as I mentioned to you, a situation developed, an unfortunate situation, in the 60th in which the regimental executive was being relieved, so eventually I was sent down willy-nilly, I think in this case -- the regimental commander wasn't even consulted by General Eddy, -- to be regimental exec and that's where I wound up.

INTERVIEWER: And how did you find it there?

GEN CONWAY: Well, there was a very bad situation, I've described this. You know, one of the matters seems to me not really discussed as we read about histories, unit histories or the history of war, is again the question of personality. I really don't want to make a big thing of this but I think it's a core element which again, is largely neglected. So, in the 60th Infantry in which there were three regular army officers, we had a situation where the regiment was divided right down the middle. Those who liked the

regimental exec, who was a full colonel, old soldier and in that same group, those who disliked the commander, and then those who thought the colonel was doing what he should. I can tell you after if we ever get to that and maybe we shouldn't but there were reasons for both points of view. However, what was totally inexcusable was that one group had written a petition and signed it and sent it to the division commander for the relief of the regimental commander. Now this was -- I mention this and the internal politics, -- we like to think of the chain of command as strong and everything goes right in the war but the fact of the matter is that human beings are there, all up and down the chain of command. And they all have individual interests and notions and aspirations and ambitions and I don't want to get to the extreme you know, and say that people are no damn good, but it amounts to the fact that interspersed amongst people are many people all bearing different kinds of interests.

INTERVIEWER: And the ability to bring all those interests together is one key leadership talent, I guess, to be developed.

GEN CONWAY: Yes, to carry this story to its long but ignoble conclusion. I think I told you that near the end of the war, the 60th Infantry wrote its unit history of the war. And I don't know if there are any others, my research is shallow on this, but I have to tell you that in this book the colonel's name does not appear. It was deliberately ignored, eliminated, not shown. This was the state of mind of the people in the regiment.

INTERVIEWER: The regimental commander or the exec?

GEN CONWAY: The regimental commander in the end. His name is not mentioned.

INTERVIEWER: And what became of the exec you were sent down to replace?

GEN CONWAY: Okay. He went home and became part of the training establishment, he joined General Fredendall and others and never came back.

INTERVIEWER: So what was your assessment of the regimental commander when you reported to him and you weren't even sure that he knew you were coming or had any say in it?

GEN CONWAY: Well, it was an uneasy or unhappy arrangement; however, we knew each other. We'd been at Fort Bragg, we'd made the invasion and I knew him and he knew me. We had an age differential which is a problem but we were both regular army, however, from different sources which was an impediment to our relationship. And our philosophies of life and war were totally different. However, I had then and still have the notion, that you have got to make it work. So my job then and now is not to criticize the regimental commander. It was to get the job done. So, I filled in where he wanted me to be and did what he wanted me to do.

INTERVIEWER: And how did the non-regular officers respond to you when you got in there because. . .

GEN CONWAY: I was an outsider. I'm not in the book either.

INTERVIEWER: Who was the other regular who was there? What position did he have?

GEN CONWAY: Lieutenant Colonel McCarley, McCarley who was the battalion commander, Pete McCarley later killed in Europe.

INTERVIEWER: And what -- where were most of the other officers from, what were their backgrounds and where did they get. . .

GEN CONWAY: Generally speaking reserve but some guard. You know, we started out the war with the notion of, as we had in World War I, totally

guard divisions, totally reserves but by the cadre and all business which had to go on they would take a division, in training, that had been in training maybe six months, they would take some officers and siphon them off and put them in a newer division and so on. Through this system of re-assignment, it would be hard to tell and I never knew and I never asked, by the way, in my entire career, where these guys came from. It might have developed later he came from Harvard or Yale or nowhere. That wasn't why we were there and what we were trying to do but as you know from long experience, these differences do arise and they are deplorable but they do happen. So, to answer your question, the regulars were looked on as kind of, you know, funny people from some other world. (Laughter) I notice you are laughing.

INTERVIEWER: And you were always ring knockers. Well, my experience is people have pre-conceived notions and those pre-conceived notions become broken down sometimes.

GEN CONWAY: Right.

INTERVIEWER: I was drafted and put into a reserve company that had been mobilized to take basic training. They moved in a national guard company right next to us and I really just looked down my nose completely at that national guard outfit. Now, being a National Guard officer of some 20 years experience, you know, I'm turning around and I look down my nose at the reserve units today because I think we are just a step ahead of them. But at that time, you know, I had the opposite view and you know, the one Army concept today is so much more advanced than it was at that period of time.

GEN CONWAY: I think so.

INTERVIEWER: We have affiliations with active army units, we have associations, we have the Steadfast Program of assistance from the active army and it breaks down, it goes a long way towards breaking down this.

GEN CONWAY: Okay, we are talking about in a sense, ancient history because if you drew a graph, you could see a line of improvement here between the three pillars that undergird our defense notion of the total army and so on.

INTERVIEWER: I'm just wondering if, let's say by 1944 or so, if there wasn't a tremendous erasure of some of those feelings?

GEN CONWAY: Yes, I would say so.

INTERVIEWER: We think, you know, you go in and you fight with somebody for a period of time and he's going to become . . . to you and not really where he came from or what he was before, you know.

GEN CONWAY: Exactly, as a matter of fact, right in the regimental CP this notion of the one that we are talking about did not persist. I raised it but it wasn't fundamental. The relationship -- it's like Captain Blye, <sup>Bright</sup> to coin a term, I don't want to be unfair to the colonel but the colonel was a part, a side; I was the wet nurse for the staff. Whenever they were disgruntled, disrupted or disagreed and so on, I am the guy that rationalized things. I was the intermediary. It didn't matter where we came from at that point in time, we were just trying to get the job done under what were difficult circumstances. So, we did become one, we were a team. We'd laugh and joke and kid around and nobody said, you know, where are you from or anything like that.

INTERVIEWER: Other than a little joshing now and then I'm sure.

GEN CONWAY: Sometimes but it wasn't pertinent, it wasn't overwhelming. It was rarely if ever, brought up.

INTERVIEWER: Where was the regiment when you joined the regiment?

GEN CONWAY: Okay, we fought, history tells us and I remember very well, the Sedjenane Valley campaign. In other words, we were on the north flank with the northern most regiment of the American forces in II Corps, (US Corps). II Corps had been in the south, Gafsa and that area. Under Bradley it shifted north. Bradley becomes the commander and we fought the northern part. Next to us, between us and the coast is the Corps Franc, the French troops, but we are the main valley, the Sedjenane Valley leads on to the plain around Mateur which leads on to Bizerte. We were not in the main, central thrust of II Corps which was the 1st Division, 34th Division and the 1st Armored and so on, making that the tougher part. Our area was tough because of the terrain, not as much because of the enemy.

INTERVIEWER: And you had to make your liaison with the French?

GEN CONWAY: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: And your regiment was on the boundary?

GEN CONWAY: Yes, with the French. So we had a very good relationship.

INTERVIEWER: You were speaking French again?

GEN CONWAY: Again. I was the main interpreter.

INTERVIEWER: And how long were you all involved in that campaign?

GEN CONWAY: Okay. This is April to May of 1943. Bizerte falls about a week before Tunis. The war in North Africa is over. Von Arnim, you've seen these pictures, 192,000 Germans out there in that great big plain, they march in all organized disciplined units, all in step, drive their

vehicles in, in perfect condition, report, line up their tents -- they do the whole thing. Our little old regiment, we are made the guard of this entire enclosure, 190,000 prisoners until they can get them out of there. But nobody is going to escape, it's all desert and they want to eat and so on. And they are disciplined anyway. And I mention the fact that we were the subway soldiers in New York City, they were all about my size (5'6"), and when the master race came in, you know, about 6'3" and up, and bronze in the sun, you know it was a great contrast. Mauldin should have been there -- it would have made a great cartoon, "Who won the war?"

INTERVIEWER: That must have impressed the 60th Infantry to see all that array?

GEN CONWAY: Well, it scared the hell out of us and I imagine it was very repulsive to the Germans.

INTERVIEWER: And how long did it take you to get those people evacuated and so forth?

GEN CONWAY: Okay, about six weeks they were all shipped out. A lot of them came to the States, you know and so on. But they got them out of Africa.

INTERVIEWER: And then from there you went into preparations, I guess for Sicily?

GEN CONWAY: Alright. We went to the vicinity of Sidibel Abbes which Percy C. Wren's novels on the French Foreign Legion<sup>30</sup> made famous. We trained in the so-called desert there for the next operation which was going to be Sicily. We knew this because General Patton came down and gave us one of his unforgettable talks about invading Sicily.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me a little bit about that, about what he said and what

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<sup>30</sup> Beau Geste by Percy C. Wren.

his demeanor was between what we've read and the movie and so forth. People -- everybody has some picture of General Patton.

GEN CONWAY: Okay, we could really bog down on this but I'm going to try not to. I'm speaking now again as a young lieutenant colonel and also from the fact that I had met Patton before and most of the troops had never met him, really. I told you about this in London and in North America before we sailed. After we sailed, several times he was a frequent visitor to General Truscott's headquarters. They were good friends, played polo and all that. So, I knew him in a different way you see and not through the speeches, primarily but because I had seen him and listened to him, and so on. So that my impressions would be very different from those say, of the movie or the movie goer. I never considered for example, General Patton arrogant, although this word is applied to him all the time. I considered him highly effective. Some people would say he hadn't read a book or he took five years to graduate from West Point, which he did. But at any rate, I look on Patton, certainly as a showman beyond any question and that business with the pistols and all. But on the other hand as a consummate leader, in a different way for the leader. You couldn't compare, and we wouldn't want to, Alex and Patton because dissimilar objects cannot be compared. We know this from science, you shouldn't try. People do it all the time. But I still have a very profound respect for Patton in spite of the fact that he couldn't spell but that didn't have anything to do with it, see. It's irrelevant.

INTERVIEWER: That was not his job.

GEN CONWAY: He didn't make a good talk to troops. In the movies George

Scott does but Patton didn't. Patton's talks either turned you on or turned you off. He turned me on personally because I knew what he was saying, what he was trying to achieve which is important. I heard many officers say they were revolting, you know, by what they called obscenities and so on. But Patton and his words which I'm not going to put on the tape, didn't revolt me, I knew that was the way he talked. He didn't know they were swear words, to put it a different way. It was natural for him to use these words. I had service as a stable officer and all that and I'd heard them all, in the cavalry and that's the way people spoke in the old army. So, what's new. Sorry it revolted some people, but it's only because it was new and different for them. Strange! Well, at any rate, a consummate leader, I thought. I'm not alone in my judgment, and it doesn't count anyway, but yes, I was impressed with Patton.

INTERVIEWER: And how did you feel that the troops responded? You said that he either turned them on or off.

GEN CONWAY: Oh, I think the troops responded in the way he thought they would. I think he had a feel for the troops and that's why he talked that way. My regiment, again, were subway soldiers, citizen soldiers. They wouldn't be like the careerists and boy, after he finished they are all on their feet, cheering and throwing their helmets in the air and all, you know. But he didn't tell them to go out there and die, that's what is misunderstood. He said go out there and kill this other, you know, blip-blip on the tape, don't go out there and die. That's not what being a hero for your country is all about. It is to kill the other guy, make him be a hero.

INTERVIEWER: Right. This was immediately before Sicily. Well, I'll tell you what -- we are getting down toward the end of the tape here. You've noticed me glancing over there. I didn't want to have the thing run out. And this might be a good point to adjourn today and say that that's all on this tape.

END OF TAPE 2, SIDE 1.

SECTION III

C 112

INTERVIEW WITH GENERAL THEODORE J. CONWAY

by

Colonel Robert F. Ensslin

THIS IS COLONEL BOB ENSSLIN INTERVIEWING GENERAL THEODORE J. CONWAY. THIS IS INTERVIEW #3, REEL #3, ON DECEMBER 13th, 1977.

INTERVIEWER: General, let's . . . the last time we talked you had been assigned to the 60th Infantry and we talked about the preparations for the invasion of Sicily. We talked about General Patton's talk to your regiment . . . let's talk today a little bit about the role that the 9th Division and the 60th Infantry had.

GEN CONWAY: Well, as I mentioned to you it was a very minor role compared, for example, to the heroes of the 3rd Division and the like. But briefly we had been scheduled to be a follow-up division to the 3rd going into Sicily, but things went so well that Patton had captured Palermo by the time we were on the schedule to be shipped -- by the time shipping was available - and so instead of going in over the beaches and southern Sicily, we came around to the Port of Palermo, now in our hands, and we were gang plank invaders.

INTERVIEWER: You said you got a few cat calls from the 3rd Division.

GEN CONWAY: Yes, the fellows had fought all their way up to Palermo from Gela weren't very happy to see us coming down the gang plank, but that's the way Patton had decided.

INTERVIEWER: Then how were you employed after you debarked at Palermo?

GEN CONWAY: Okay. Generally speaking the 3rd Division had the north coastal road, Palermo to Messina, and we were on interior roads north of Mt. Etna from a place called Nicosia to Randazzo. We were on the right

flank, in other words, of the 3rd Division which was on the coast.

INTERVIEWER : At what point now did the famous slapping incident occur?  
Where did that occur?

GEN CONWAY: You are going to have to read Patton's book for this.<sup>31</sup> I would have to give you the 9th Division's perception of this. Our recollection was not of the event. We didn't even know about it. But there is a pretty good grapevine in the troops, so eventually the war was over -- we had only fought two weeks, you see.

INTERVIEWER: Right. . .

GEN CONWAY: . . . in August. We landed in late July and August 15th the war is over. The Germans had gone. Some had been captured, but we had mostly Italians. So we stopped in a place which was in the vicinity which I mentioned, around Randazzo. And there we learned through the troop grapevine that the slapping incident had occurred -- that Patton had been reprimanded by General Eisenhower and directed to apologize to all the combat units that participated in the campaign which was quite a few. So I am sure you remember the scene in the film of Patton, of Hollywood's view of what might have happened as interpreted by George C. Scott. However, our view was quite different and if you don't mind I will just recite it because the record ought to be kept straight here on this matter of the apology. Because it turns out that the rear echelon troops received his apology as they were supposed to do and Patton gave it and he had been ordered to do, but in the combat units, and the 60th was an example, I

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<sup>31</sup>The Patton Papers - Martin Blumenson

think it was common in the combat units. General Patton -- we were assembled in a large field, olive orchard, characteristic of Sicily, on the side of a hill. The war was still on across the Straits of Messina. We had our helmets and all, dispersed, and General Patton arrived in that famous command car of his with the two metal flags on either side -- three star and the "Pyramid of Power" -- the Seventh Army emblem - a long trailing cloud of dust, and MP's and so on -- we all stood at attention and put on our helmets and the bugler sounded attention and General Patton mounted this sort of PT platform in front of these 3,000 plus or minus troops assembled there. As I told you before, I think, General Patton had a rather high, squeaky voice, and as he started to address the regiment he said, "Take seats," so we sat down on our helmets -- it was a practice of those days, to keep us out of the mud or the dust as the case may be, and General Patton started to give what we knew was to be his apology. But he never got past his first word, which was "Men!" and at that point the whole regiment erupted. It sounded like a football game -- a touch-down had been scored because the helmets (steel pots) started flying through the air, coming down all over -- raining steel helmets and the men just shouted "Georgie, Georgie," - a name which he detested. He was saying, we think he was saying -- "at ease, take seats, " and so on. Then he had the bugler sound "attention" again, but nothing happened. Just all these cheers. So, finally General Patton was standing there and he was shaking his head and you could see big tears streaming down his face and he said, or words to this effect, "The hell with it," and he walked off the platform. At this point the bugler sounded "attention" and again everybody grabbed the

nearest available steel helmet, put it on, being sure to button the chin strap (which was a favorite Patton quirk) and as he stepped into his command car and again went down the side of the regiment, dust swirling, everybody stood at attention and saluted to the right and General Patton stood up in his command car and saluted, crying. So this was the famous Patton apology (as seen by the 60th Infantry). But I hope nobody ever tells General Eisenhower about this.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, so he was . . . it was apparent that the troops were cheering him . . .

GEN CONWAY: Yes, he was our hero. We were on his side. We knew the problem. We knew what he had done and why he had done it. A couple of points which the newspaper reporters and certain people in the medical corps ignored, in our opinion.

INTERVIEWER: Did you all make an attempt to make it possible for him to speak?

GEN CONWAY: He never came back. We assume his G-3 or G-1 or whatever checked our regiment off on this list. He had done his duty.

INTERVIEWER: And it was after that, shortly after that then that the 1st and the 9th were sent back to England.

GEN CONWAY: That's right. We settled in as we had done in Africa to another training situation. Went back to the basics: firing, map reading, the whole bit. We got fillers. We didn't know, you see, that we weren't going on to Italy. We assumed we were, but in point of fact, the 1st and the 9th had been earmarked to go with Bradley and of course, later Patton for the cross channel operation.

INTERVIEWER: How was your regiment getting along at this point in the leadership elements of it? Did you have the same regimental commander that was there when you reported in and were people getting along pretty well at that time? Had the relationships been sorted out?

GEN CONWAY: Yes. As you know, we were only in this part of the war two weeks. Our attrition rate was not very great. Now some of the divisions and I am sure you know this, the 3rd I believe I am correct in saying, they went through something like 10 divisions. But at this point, we had only fought two weeks, all the major commanders were there, the same regimental commander had taken them into North Africa, had fought in Tunisia, now had commanded them in Sicily and was to go on and do the cross channel bit - a follow-up division there. We had lost battalion commanders in North Africa and Tunisia, but not in this campaign. So, essentially, leadership-wise, this division was in great shape and the people there had already fought, you see, several campaigns and they looked down, I am sure that's the right word too, for instance on Bill Bauldin, and the 45th Division -- they were recruits in Sicily. Well, the old timers, the 3rd, the 9th, the 1st and all, - they were veterans. There is a difference between veterans and recruits, as perceived by the veterans.

INTERVIEWER: Were they pulling any cadres out of these . . .

GEN CONWAY: No . . .

INTERVIEWER: . . . divisions . . .

GEN CONWAY: No. Now some people did go home for various courses at Leavenworth and things like that. Some commanders from time to time were

"relieved" to go home, but we were not cadred at that time. The reason being it was known then that these divisions had another mission. Now I don't know -- I can't say what happened in England . . . it is possible, but not in Sicily.

INTERVIEWER: I didn't know whether any attempt was made to get any of the combat experience back to the states to use in the training base, back in the states where everything was expanding so rapidly or whether they were just going to put together completely new units as they went along.

GEN CONWAY: They did send people back. Not many, as I mentioned. Also, General Marshall had conceived this notion of the so-called War Department Observers. So, in all the operations that we went into, including Sicily, there was somebody around writing up lessons learned. This fellow went back immediately and this material was disgorged from, I guess, Army Ground Forces, come to think of it, to the various training posts, camps and stations, so this was a big thing and I am glad you mentioned it. In this war - I don't know about the others - the training aspects, what we learned and mind you the lessons learned, the lessons learned in Africa, the landing as contrasted with Tunisia, as contrasted with Sicily were all a little different. So it was a thing you had to update. You needed a loose leaf notebook because some of the lessons would be wrong, see. Both armies were learning each other and in this learning process why, it advances, progresses. But I am sure, (I wasn't back in the states, again I can't comment) but I am sure that not only people but a lot of material went back.

INTERVIEWER: I know back stateside as they were building divisions up at various points in their training cycle they were cadreing the stateside divisions to help form additional divisions.

GEN CONWAY: That's right.

INTERVIEWER: And I think there were some people got caught in that cycle and perhaps never made it overseas to combat.

GEN CONWAY: As I understand it some would go to three or four divisions in turn and as you say never get there.

INTERVIEWER: Well, you were then pulled out of the 9th when it went back to England and you were sent to Algiers?

GEN CONWAY : Yes. Certain officers in the 1st, 3rd, 9th were pulled out by General Eisenhower's headquarters, Allied Force Mediterranean and sent back to Algiers. The notion there was again to grind into the planning the combat experiences these individuals had had first hand and not make planning an ivory tower thing . . . get some fellow from the states to make the next plan for the next invasion, but rather get people who had been in one to do the next one. So, Jimmy Curtis of the 1st Division, myself from the 9th, and several others arrived back then in October in '43 in Algiers. We were very disgruntled but never-the-less, we reported in as ordered.

INTERVIEWER: And was that to General Eisenhower's headquarters?

GEN CONWAY: Yes, we went to the G-3 Plans Sections, General Reuben Jenkins.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Brigadier General Reuben E. Jenkins, U.S. Army

INTERVIEWER: So how long were you there with that? We'll go from there.

GEN CONWAY: October '43 till February '44, largely engaged in the planning for further progress in Italy and also looking towards southern France.

We wrote draft outline plans, and the like. Did a lot on the intelligence. The geography, the tides, all the amphibious plans. Everybody there had a lot of amphibious know-how by this time and so it was easy and necessary.

INTERVIEWER: Did this include Anzio?

GEN CONWAY: No, it did not. Anzio as you learned from General Truscott's book was done by General Lucas's VI Corps under Fifth Army direction in Italy.

INTERVIEWER: What was . . . Okay you were in doing this planning for this point and at what point did you leave that assignment?

GEN CONWAY: I left in the winter of '44 as you remember the story. The lines in Italy were held up at the Volturno, the mud, you've seen all the pictures and it was the story of the war in Italy. In other words, the two winters -- there were the winter lines; the Gustav Line, the Hitler Line, the Gothic Line, and the war bogged down, much as it had in olden times, when they just knocked it off in the winter. Now this time they were going to "fight" quote - unquote, but the weather and conditions and the German tenacity made it such that they fought alright, but this was reduced to patrol activity in the line. Further, as almost every book has mentioned, but I think I should repeat, Italy was a "second front," a secondary theater of operations, so we had for example, ammunition quotas, limitations, so much of 4.2, so much of 105, so much of 155 per day. Now if you shot your ration everyday you didn't have any left. So

what we did obviously in the winter was to conserve ammunition because we had to have the spring breakouts and all and the only way we could do it within the prescribed limitations was to save it in the winter. So this was another reason that the war bogged down in the winter and started up again in the spring. So I joined Fifth Army just north of Caserta in February, in a field or "forward CP," so called. The big headquarters was in the castle at Caserta -- an enormous place that was supposed to be a rival to Versailles, in fact it is much bigger and equally ornate, but at any rate we were in a field CP -- General Clark is the commander, General Gruenther is the Chief of Staff and General Brann<sup>33</sup> is the G-3 and I am in the G-3 Plans Section. I stayed there from February to June. However, in March or April I went up to Anzio and became part of the advanced CP. General Clark had divided his headquarters into an echelon to be in the beachhead and the main one which I just left. General Clark personally then came to the forward CP. This was that famous tunnel that had been drilled by the Canadian miners -- three tunnels under the Borgese Palace, in the basement, underneath and General Clark comes up there - we broke out in May the 23rd I believe it was, came up two weeks in advance of the breakout.

INTERVIEWER: What kind of individual was General Clark to work for?

GEN CONWAY: I saw General Clark in my entire part of my Fifth Army service very infrequently at the main CP, but in the tunnel I saw him every day because he had to walk through our section to get to his office, which was

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<sup>33</sup> Brigadier General Donald W. Brann

at the end of the tunnel. And I would say he was a very fine person to work for. Not demanding, cool, level, taciturn, but he had none of these eccentricities which we know of many commanders. More like a General Bradley type.

INTERVIEWER: And who did you immediately work for -- did you work for the G-3?

GEN CONWAY: Alright G-3 was General Brann. His executive was Bob Wood<sup>34</sup> and I worked for Lazy Lazar<sup>35</sup> the famous all-American football player, in the class ahead of me in the G-3 plans part.

INTERVIEWER: How did this football experience tie in with plans there?

GEN CONWAY: Well, I think it made him a great planner because he had big hands and he could hold a lot of paper.

INTERVIEWER : They had all the wine removed from the wine cellars by this time, did they, or were they . . .

GEN CONWAY: I have to straighten you out on this. We were not in a wine cellar. These tunnels had been built by Canadian miners, tunnelers, tunnel companies, but the VI Corps was down the road from Anzio at Nettuno. Nettuno is where the big American cemetery is now and those were the actual wine cellars. They were there already. They were used by the VI Corps Headquarters.

INTERVIEWER : Well, did you get a chance to visit over there?

GEN CONWAY : Many times . . .

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<sup>34</sup>Colonel Robert J. Wood, USMA 1930  
<sup>35</sup>Colonel Aaron M. Lazar, USMA 1932

INTERVIEWER : . . . renew your acquaintances. I am sure you knew many of the people over there.

GEN CONWAY: Yes, of course. Colonel Ben Harrell<sup>36</sup> was the G-3. I had a classmate, Dick Meyer<sup>37</sup> who was the Signal Officer, all the famous people (who later became famous), Bill Rosson<sup>38</sup> and many others, Bert Connor,<sup>39</sup> Dutch Kerwin<sup>40</sup> and so on were formerly the 3rd Division. You see the VI Corps staff at this time was a mixture of General Lucas's original staff, who had no combat experience before this operation, and General Truscott's 3rd Division. He brought his 3rd Division whiz kids up one by one. His Chief of Staff, General Carleton<sup>41</sup> for example, Ben Harrell, his G-3, (he inherited his Signal Officer Dick Meyer) but he brought up essentially his 3rd Division staff. General O'Daniel<sup>42</sup> succeeded to the command of the 3rd Division.

INTERVIEWER: So, he, General Truscott, made the transition there on the beachhead to the corps command and that was yet another step for General Truscott and his staff . . .

GEN CONWAY : Yes, this is another rung up the ladder and an important one.

INTERVIEWER: Did you anticipate that you would work for him again -- that he was going to call you back on his staff at some point all along . . .

GEN CONWAY : Well, I kept hoping, but we didn't communicate on this subject.

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<sup>36</sup>Colonel Ben Harrell, USMA 1933

<sup>37</sup>Colonel Richard J. Meyer, USMA 1933

<sup>38</sup>Colonel William B. Rosson

<sup>39</sup>Colonel Albert O. Connor, USMA 1937

<sup>40</sup>Colonel Walter T. Kerwin, Jr., USMA 1939

<sup>41</sup>Brigadier General Don E. Carleton

<sup>42</sup>Major General John W. O'Daniel

He knew where I was.

INTERVIEWER: What was . . . well, you spent your time mostly in the planning operations?

GEN CONWAY: Yes. Specifically at Anzio what we did, we had the job in G-3, Plans, Fifth Army, of reviewing lower unit plans and making recommendations to General Clark. Each of the divisions and the corps. So we went through those with a fine tooth comb and made our observations. But you have to remember that those plans were made by experts. Those fellows had all been there and we weren't about to change them or recommend major changes of any kind.

INTERVIEWER: Did you need to be on the beachhead to do that?

GEN CONWAY: We needed to be on the beachhead . . . General Clark's view . . . no, not for the planning except for access. You have to put yourself in your place. You see we were cut off entirely from Fifth Army Headquarters. No roads . . . now you would think of air, but the airfields had been denied. In other words the fighters and all were up there initially, but the enemy artillery had swept them out so they weren't there. So we were using L-4's, L-5's (cubs) two-passenger seats; the pilot and the passenger, that's our main line of communications except for boats, ships and the like . . . so, yes, in a sense to have any kind of communications we had to be there. I hadn't thought of it before, but this was a key factor.

INTERVIEWER: And then the breakout . . .

GEN CONWAY: The breakout has been written up and I don't think we need to go into it here but remember the role of the 1st Armored and the 36th Division particularly the Colli Laziali which was the dominating terrain

where the Pope's summer home is and the alternative route through Valmontone became very controversial. Both General Truscott, General Clark and many others have covered this point, which I don't think we need here, but at any rate we did capture Rome as we talked about the other day, on the 4th of June, on the eve so to speak of the Normandy landing - for which reason it never made any headlines, but to us it was a big event.

INTERVIEWER: What was it like when you went in?

GEN CONWAY : Total chaos. It has never been filmed and I hope it never is because the whole war stopped. You know there are the usual street scenes of liberating troops, everybody is out there throwing flowers and that sort of thing. Well, you would see tanks stopped right in the middle of the street. The occupants were gone and wouldn't be back for awhile, maybe a day or so and so the Fifth Army, in a sense, real sense, just bogged down totally in Rome -- it wasn't the traffic, it was the people. Troops out on the beachhead hadn't seen anything like this you know . . . a hot bath and all that for some time - six months. So you know they weren't going to just whiz through town.

INTERVIEWER: They weren't going to breeze through it and out the other side.

GEN CONWAY: I think that was the plan but it didn't happen that way.

INTERVIEWER: I can see some company commanders and 1st sergeants with real problems on their hands and that . . .

GEN CONWAY: No way in a city of that size could you find your people. Fortunately the Germans had just left. You see Rome had been an open city. There wasn't any street fighting and that kind of thing at all.

The Germans had cleared out and we came in. It was an orderly transition. They were even kind enough to leave a large stock of brandy, liquors and the wine and all that. They carted off all that they could, but there was enough left.

INTERVIEWER: There was more there than they could haul.

GEN CONWAY: And so you will find some books criticizing this phase just as in past wars commanders have been criticized for not conducting an active pursuit. My view is that even had it been ordered, it could never have been done because the troops weren't doing it.

INTERVIEWER : The troops said it was time to take ten . . .

GEN CONWAY: They took a break.

INTERVIEWER : And then eventually it sorted out . . . and the guys did come back to their tanks and there were some who just didn't come back. Probably were some.

GEN CONWAY: I would imagine. I haven't the slightest idea of the figures on all of this, but most people I have talked to agree that the Army was bogged down for two or three days. We came in, you might be interested to know, HQ Fifth Army, we had been in this tunnel in Anzio and all and our new home was the Albergo Excelsior. Don't go there today because you can't afford it, but we just walked in. The night before the Germans had been there. They go out; the staff greets us -- the next day they are all there in their starched white uniforms, black ties and all the whole bit, just like it was a normal day in their lives, and the new fellows come in, so we had our map in one room and we slept in another, suites here and there, you know . . .

INTERVIEWER: They probably knew how you would like it organized. They probably said, "Now the Germans had their War Room in here, would you like to use it for your War Room?"

GEN CONWAY: . . . and the night club ran that night with the music playing and the wine flowed and you know, far, far from war.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, boy; oh, boy.

GEN CONWAY: See what you young fellows missed.

INTERVIEWER: Just like an R&R.

GEN CONWAY: Yes, in a Palace.

INTERVIEWER : In a Palace. Oh, boy!

GEN CONWAY: You know we have heard about troops taking Paris, Well, I wasn't there but I had an idea since I know about Rome, it had to be similar.

INTERVIEWER : I'm sure, I'm sure. And then what was next?

GEN CONWAY: Alright, from there as you know, winter came again after we got farther north of the Arno. In that area we bogged down again north of Florence and we started into the last mountains which blocked our way into the Po Valley. The spine of the Apennines generally, of course, runs north and south, but you would be very surprised to see how many of those ridge lines go right down to the sea east and west. Now this is the problem. There is Korea and these places all over again. It is just one ridge line after another. So as soon as the Germans fell back and got reorganized, regrouped their troops on the main front, plus those from Anzio which had "been allowed to escape" this again is the big historic dilemma, "Why didn't we cut them off?" Then they regrouped with the tremendous facility they had -- the battle groups digging in and all they

were veterans, too -- more than we -- and so we got another winter line through the pass 6000 feet -- (Futa Pass). This is December -- we are in the snow and we are looking down on Bologna, but that's it. Now, I guess we ought to say that after we took Rome, VI Corps pulled out, you see, to do the Southern France planning. So I was released from Fifth Army, (June, 1944) to go to VI Corps to become part of the G-2 Plans Section. Colonel Langevin<sup>43</sup> is my boss and we do the plans for Southern France, the coast on which we are going to land in August. I didn't have any part of this fighting then going up the boot, but we do Southern France. That is our next step.

INTERVIEWER: In incorporating your . . . in your planning did you work with the French in the planning?

GEN CONWAY: Yes, that is a good point. This sometimes isn't understood, but we were landing of course, in France and there was great reluctance on the higher level still, - as there had been for Normandy, you see, - they weren't going to tell General DeGaulle about Normandy -- they finally did, but he knew already, he had heard rumors and all, but the overall policy was not to share our secrets with France. France was not an ally -- France was a cobelligerent, as Italy had become. So there was no great sharing of plans. But in the ultimate it was wisely seen that we should if we're going to France -- number one, let the French know; number two, include some French forces because there was a matter of national pride, esteem and so on and so this was done. So we had General Sudre, who was a combat command commander,

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<sup>43</sup>Colonel Joseph L. Langevin, USMA 1920

French armor, (of the French 2nd Armored Division) as one of our subordinate commanders on the left flank. His mission being after we landed at Ste-Maxime-Frijus-St Raphael area was to go west and seize Toulon and Marseilles and they would then operate on our west (left) flank as we went up the Rhone - and this is what happened. He was followed by Army Group B, Marshal deLattre and of course our Army group came in, General Devers<sup>44</sup> and then we had Seventh Army, General Patch<sup>45</sup> and VI Corps, General Truscott.

INTERVIEWER: So in your planning you worked with the combat command. . .

GEN CONWAY: Yes, directly and I descended to my old role of interpreter and that was my principle function there at the time.

INTERVIEWER : How about with French Army B, did you make any contact with French Army B?

GEN CONWAY: No. They were with Seventh Army. That was their level.

INTERVIEWER: Well, they were coordinating there and you didn't . . .

GEN CONWAY: And this was later.

INTERVIEWER: Were . . . you know, you talk about the famous soft under belly of Europe and the Balkans. Who made the decision that this was to be the next step? Wasn't there considerable discussion about the appropriateness of this step?

GEN CONWAY: Yes. Matloff's "American Military History", that we have talked about sometimes has a great chapter on the strategy of World War II, but very briefly the decision was made at a higher level. You see, Marshal and the American staff had all along been advocates of the cross-channel

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<sup>44</sup>General Jacob L. Devers

<sup>45</sup>General Alexander M. Patch, USMA 1913

x Probably French 1<sup>st</sup> Armored Division 17

operation. Churchill and the British staff had long been advocates of the so called "<sup>ver</sup>peripheral" or "soft under belly." Although Churchill never used that word, I am told, but we think he did. But at any rate, the reason behind both strategies was apparent. We wanted the quickest way to end the war which is across the North German plain. You might say without too much regard to casualties because this was also going to be the most difficult way, (that is, most heavily defended). The British having suffered all these losses in '39, mind you, see they have been in the war a long time and are a much smaller country -- (the same thing happened to them in World War I) -- they are bled white, so they are reluctant to make this frontal attack against fixed positions. So they would like the indirect approach. However, as everybody knows, every military person knows, as Matloff explains in this chapter<sup>46</sup> there were some very fundamental disadvantages to the peripheral strategy. The major advantage was that it would have placed us in a position as far east in Europe as we could get, quicker, and therefore we would be able to dictate the peace terms presumably -- the questions that later came to rise to haunt us -- Poland and the rest -- the satellites. They "might" have not arisen, it is argued. On the other hand, if you look at the Balkans and we were looking at Italy, you know, there is nothing soft about this under belly and the question finally came down to 20 some odd German divisions and 20 some allied divisions in Italy. Who was pinning down whom? You might say it is a stand-off.

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<sup>46</sup>Ch 21, American Military History by Maurice Matloff, Ed.

INTERVIEWER: Right.

GEN CONWAY: But it is reasonable to assume that having gone some other place, the Germans, with their tremendous capability to regroup, improvise and the like, they would have gone there, too. So, the strategy at any rate, the great strategic moment of the war the decision was made at the Tehran Conference. It was called "the strategic turning point of the war" and in this, Roosevelt and Stalin ganged together against Churchill, according to the story, and the cross channel operation was on and the under belly was off. As part of the cross channel operation they agreed to withdraw some troops from Italy and supplement the cross channel by an invasion of some kind to draw off some of the troops. As it turned out they landed in June, (Normandy) -- we landed in August, (Southern France). So it wasn't coordinated from this standpoint. However, the troops in front of us, outside of the famous battle of Montelimar, fought hard, but they were totally outnumbered. They were rest groups, convalescents and so on, and they were not their first line units. Until we get up to the Vosges we don't start running into the 15th Panzer Grenadiers and all our buddies from Italy and Africa.

INTERVIEWER: Well, I think General Truscott in his book there, was just almost stunned by the havoc that we wrought on the Germans there.

GEN CONWAY: Yes, Montelimar was a "killing ground" -- it has not yet been written up in my opinion adequately . . . as an example, it is another Cannae, if you want to look at it this way. In other words, there was a plan that was preconceived -- it was the place -- the ground was chosen by General Truscott and we maneuvered by sending Task Force

Butler<sup>47</sup> (General Butler wrote this story in the Cavalry Journal after the war) -- at any rate the hammer and the anvil concept. Butler was the anvil and we pushed the 36th Division out and the 3rd. After the battle, you couldn't walk through Montélimar. You couldn't drive a vehicle down the road -- it was a total disaster and the Germans were trapped by our air and our maneuver. Although some escaped, the materiel that was destroyed was enormous. The story, my view again, it is a sort of a Falaise Gap and it was a decisive point in the Southern France campaign. After that there was no determined German resistance until we reached the Vosges, where, of course, now it is winter and the combination of weather, troops and a long extended line of communications contrived to bring this rapid advance - some 200 odd miles in 20 days to a halt. We moved VI Corps CP every day there for several weeks. This is something when you get a new hotel every night.

INTERVIEWER: . . . moving into a new CP every day.

GEN CONWAY: Yes. But we could do it. We had the practice and those fellows could knock it down just like Ringling Brothers and set it up again.

INTERVIEWER: Well, stepping back to the landing in France at this point we had to be pretty experienced in amphibious operations with all of the experience that we had, many, many combat landings, different situations' and so forth -- what were some of the major points that we had learned, some of the major things that we were doing differently by then to . . . that our experience had showed us?

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<sup>47</sup> Brigadier General Frederic B. Butler USMA 1918

GEN CONWAY: In my view there are two major advantages we had here -- we had learned to exploit. The first one was the tremendous coordination. You see if we go back to November '42 - the landings in North Africa, we were literally out of communications, (at Port Lyautey). There was no way to talk back and forth. I am not talking about just the Army to the Navy to the Air Force, that triangle, but just within the Army and so on. The equipment was better and more important, the training and the doctrine so the nets really worked, so we had this total control. The other thing is -- this will be argued from here on out, whether a night landing without<sup>†</sup> preparation or a daytime landing with preparation is better. On the one hand you have surprise. On the other hand you lose it, but you get the advantage of the preparation. General Truscott, I think, would have preferred the night. I think he mentions this, but he was persuaded by the Navy and Air Force, who wanted to contribute and could do the others. So I think there again the tremendous advantage was the coordination of naval gun fire support and air, close air support again. Now, we didn't have it in Africa, but we did have it here. We have to quickly add that the German defenses were light - this wasn't the West Wall -- it wasn't Normandy -- not pill boxes and so on and the enemy was not as numerous. So the third great reason, I guess, for the tremendous success was just the lack of enemy opposition. We walked ashore at 10:00 A.M. The Corps CP (and maybe I shouldn't mention it, but I think General Truscott does)- we had dinner that night in somebody's chateau with a white linen tablecloth and the corps' silverware and the crystal service and so on, you know, that we did this on D-Day -- on D-Day. It has to be some kind of a record.

INTERVIEWER: That's being extremely well organized.

GEN CONWAY: This was written up by some reporter who was with us. It made a great impression on him. For us it was just SOP.

INTERVIEWER: This is super organized. Was the air support mostly Army or Navy?

GEN CONWAY : By the Air Force -- Army Air.

INTERVIEWER: Army-Air. I didn't know whether . . . and where were they flying from?

GEN CONWAY: Well, we had, you see, the US Navy, take that first. They were Pacific oriented. So the amount of US Navy, at any one time, in any one operation outside of the western task force was a minimum, (in the Mediterranean). We had an airborne task force, you know, that went in -- parachutists and glider outfits which made the pre-dawn assault and did very well. I am trying to think of the closest air support point, but it had to have been from Italy.

INTERVIEWER: I didn't know whether there were any carriers involved and . . .

GEN CONWAY: I had the impression there weren't, but I could be wrong. No US carriers that I know of.

INTERVIEWER: That white tablecloth -- I liked that. Probably even had a bed with sheets on it to sleep on.

GEN CONWAY: Yes, this was the "Chinese laundry" that I told you about that we inherited at Port Lyautey. The General found them on the beach and this Foon and Hong and Wang and all are still with us. He brought them up to the Corps so they would have a lot of know how.

INTERVIEWER: I'll be darned. Well, you know I knew one General along the

line who said any damn fool can be uncomfortable (Patton). Takes a little initiative to make the most of your situation.

GEN CONWAY : This is a point I guess we should all talk about it because you frequently hear commanders and others criticized for the style of living, but if you recall the troops had been in foxholes, mudholes and so on for sometime and when we, for example, met the beachhead forces in Southern France, it was the XV Corps that was the right flank of the Normandy forces. When we first met them, they sent a liaison officer down to our headquarters. We happened again to be in another chateau and he looked around and you could see his eyes were glazed. He said, "We are out there knee deep in mud in some field in tents out where we are." We thought, "Well, when you fellows have been in the war two or three years you know, you will learn how to survive." So, I guess you could criticize commanders, but General Truscott was not a chateau commander. We moved and we weren't locked in and these were not necessities -- they were niceties. There is a difference.

INTERVIEWER: Well, you find the troops pretty ingenious about seeing that they are comfortable, too . . .

GEN CONWAY : Yes . . .

INTERVIEWER: . . . and they have got a real talent for that . . .

GEN CONWAY: They make do . . .

INTERVIEWER : . . . and the troops are going to make a lot out of very little to make themselves a bit more comfortable.

GEN CONWAY : I suppose this was the major cause if you want to look for causes, and there was some hostility between the Pacific veterans and the

European veterans because out there in the rice paddies and beneath the grass huts and all that, they couldn't do this. But I think they were considerably hurt when they found out what was going on in the other war. It was just a "fortunate" war. It wasn't our fault -- we didn't invent it -- it was just there.

INTERVIEWER: Absolutely. Well, now when French Army B did come ashore you eventually . . . I remember you telling me at one point you were serving as an interpreter for General Truscott in the middle of a confrontation . . .

GEN CONWAY: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: . . . could you give me a little background on that?

GEN CONWAY: Yes. You see we were on the east side of the Rhone coming up the Route Napoleon, it is called -- Napoleon's old route when he came in for the 100 days from Elba and the French were on the west side of the river. So we had some coordination to maintain. But there were no bridges. So frequently I would fly over in an L-4, L-5 and make contact and so on. So I was frequently in direct liaison. I would land in some pasture and hook a ride in a French jeep. General Montsabert (the Marquis Montsabert) a small but great commander. The Marshal's land forces, you see from Italy, they were combat veterans, too (Marshal Juin). They fought in North Africa so we are dealing with not the Army of '40, but the Army of '44 -- quite different. So we had constant contact, but the river was the problem that's why this necessity of flying back and forth. It was only when we reached the upper regions of the Rhone, near Dijon where we could get back and forth across -- there were some bridges. Then we finally

established contact there and then we had a close working relationship. The French relieved us at times. We relieved them at times and so on. Language for most Americans was a barrier but it wasn't in our case because we had the capability which the others didn't have and also the French knew General Truscott from North Africa, from Italy, and we had an entree that others didn't have.

INTERVIEWER: Were they using our equipment?

GEN CONWAY: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: We had equipped them?

GEN CONWAY: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: So that from our logistics point of view we were . . .

GEN CONWAY: . . . everything . . . M-1's, light aircraft, the tanks, M-48's, the whole thing was American. But in those days it was totally American.

INTERVIEWER: I think . . . wasn't the equipment that they had in North Africa a bit outdated . . .?

GEN CONWAY: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Just kind of second class . . .

GEN CONWAY: Yes, that is exactly right. All this was the colonial bit that they had left over from the war of '40 which wasn't up to date then, in '40, so it would be more out of date in '44. You know from a weapons standpoint the war moved very fast so some of our own stuff gets outmoded. But yes, this was the 2nd Armored Division which went in with us in Southern France.

INTERVIEWER: And how did they feel about us?

GEN CONWAY: Well, this was kind of a generalization. We were on the best

terms -- let's put it this way. The DeGaulle bit -- the post-war conflicts had not arisen -- this total friendship and coordination cooperation I would say.

INTERVIEWER : Okay. See if I can . . .

GEN CONWAY: We might kind of conclude this chapter if you would like to in this way. We are talking about . . . we landed in August, but after September, October, November -- we finally get up there. We are confronting the old Belfort Gap in the Vosges Mts. It is an area that the Americans fought in World War I, you see, and we bogged down with the Vosges in front of us. At this point General Truscott is relieved from VI Corps. It came as a great surprise to all of us and we had a great luncheon and a farewell and we had a three piece orchestra or something there, string music, they played the "Dog Faced Soldier," (his favorite) and when the General walked out, he went with tears streaming down his eyes, and that was it. We thought this long friendship had ended. He was to be assigned command of an Army nobody knew anything about, called the Fifteenth Army, and he went to Paris. But it wasn't long before we started getting these messages -- we were all being re-assigned one by one. General Brooks<sup>48</sup> had come in and taken VI Corps, but some of us stayed a week, two weeks and so on, but eventually we all regrouped in Paris and again General Truscott was going to take this Fifteenth Army but it wasn't there and the staff hadn't been formed and so on but it was contemplated, as we know now. However, at this time there was a series of events -- the head of the Permanent Standing Group in Washington had died, (Sir John Dill). This

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<sup>48</sup> Major General E. H. Brooks

led to General Maitland Wilson, SACMED, being sent to Washington as head of the Permanent Group. This led to Mark Ckark being pulled up to Allied Army, Italy, from Fifth Army and just at the time of the Bulge, General Turcott was relieved from assignment of the Fifteenth Army and assigned to the Fifth Army. We died when we got word that we were going back to Italy. We knew what Italy would be like in winter - like the Sierras, 6000 feet up through the passes, waist deep in snow. This kind of transition is hard on the morale, but we went. You know you asked several times, "What did you do when you got orders you didn't like," and the answer is you did what they said to do. Well, we went. We all went back to Italy and there was the winter campaign of '44 - '45 which we need not go into now, it is a repetition of all the winter campaigns before. We were bogged down not just because of the weather and the snow in the mountains, because we were actually over the pass looking down on the Po Valley, Bologna below us, but the ammunition part, the low priority which we "enjoyed" but we really didn't enjoy it.

INTERVIEWER: . . . and I am sure did you find that with each level further reduced the ammunition allocation to build up a little . . .

GEN CONWAY: Yes, everybody pack-rats . . . (the supply sergeant's syndrome) you were well acquainted with it obviously.

INTERVIEWER: What did the troops do down there . . . I know over in Korea we had some ammunition restrictions in Korea and only certain things were acceptable targets. I would sometimes count the same people two or three times so I could get permission to shoot at them and I just wondered if the troops over there were, you know, what it was like down at the operating

level when you had these ammunition restrictions?

GEN CONWAY : Well, the best word I can think of, it was miserable because it was cold and the tourists posters on "sunny Italy"; Mount Vesuvius, "sunny Naples" and so on, - Capri, - that's not the way it is up there on the top of the mountain. So it was miserable and neither the Germans, nor the Americans, nor the Italians, nor the French were really all that interested in shooting each other up. They were busy trying to keep warm. So if you read the communiques of this period you will see "light patrolling" or words to that effect. The answer is very little, almost no small arms, very little artillery because what were you going to shoot at, you know. Everybody is dug in. They are lying low. We moved at night. They would do the same. Big truck convoys came over through the pass. The resupply was done at night. They had a big hot coffee and doughnut station on top of the pass. This was a modern miracle of American logistics atop of that mountain pass. People had driven up from Florence up over the mountains to get to the pass. They had been on the road maybe four to six hours, bitter cold and they had this thing organized so there was another group waiting there all steamed up, heated up in the cabins there. One crew would be relieved, come in get warmed up, stay the night. The next crew take it forward. We had Italian labor battalions. If the tires needed chains, they put them on. If they had to take them off, they took them off. The drivers just were in there getting their warm up. It was fantastic from the standpoint of our organization. But it showed, again, (sometimes we joke about American ingenuity) but there was a great deal to see and to learn as to what the average GI that confronted the problems can do

about the problems and what they can do is a lot and they did. So it was a quiet war and quite a change. Maybe we should go on next time, or if you want we can continue. General Truscott inherited General Mark Clark's plans which were essentially to go down the main highway from Florence to Bologna -- the main road (Route 65). However, he directed us and we did . . . we wrote a plan to slip over one valley and go down the road between the coast and this Florence-Bologna road, which we did (Route 64). The breakout was going to take place in April, after we had conserved all this ammunition. Actually, when we jumped off, we side slipped the main organized positions on the road which we had battered at the fall and all winter and went down another road.

INTERVIEWER : What was the air war like there at that particular time?

Was there any activity to speak of?

GEN CONWAY: No. Not on the other side. There is practically no German air night or day. Our air is now on the attack, mostly close support. We had tremendous air support, but in the interim period there are fighter sweeps in the Po Valley keeping the enemy logistics and communications down. But as we later ascertained, you may have read about this, and I think it is in General Truscott's book also. The Germans had tremendous ingenuity also, so we know now - we didn't know then - that their truck convoys were moving at night, even though we had this great night air capability, we were only hitting them in the daylight and they are not moving at daylight it turns out. There are 72 tunnels down the road, one side of Lake Garda, we found out they had a system of flashing lights in there -- when they would get a signal that the air was coming the lights went on and everything

stopped. As soon as they had gone by they started again and so on. They had their whole rear area organized. It was instant control and they pulled off the road. We never saw the vehicles. In fact, when we captured Lake Garda on one side there was an entire airplane factory in the 72 tunnels. They had taken one side of the road, blocked half of it off and there was an assembly line going from one room to one room to one room and an airplane rolled off at the far end of the tunnel at Riva. We had no inkling of anything like this. So again, you know with a passive defense I think, overlooked today was big for them - it had to be for survival.

INTERVIEWER: Well, you know the ability of air to interdict, I just don't think that we have really seen it demonstrated anywhere . . .

GEN CONWAY: That's right, it is great but it is not totally effective.

INTERVIEWER: . . . in Vietnam, in Korea . . .

GEN CONWAY: No, Operation Strangle" in Korea which was supposed to cut the enemy's LOC. Now we would have to say in the end that it didn't succeed because . . . well, I think it would appear now from what we read infra-red and lasers may have become more refined, but we are looking back when implements were more primitive, so the means of avoiding air attack at night were considerable.

INTERVIEWER: I had occasion to fly an L-19 a little bit over across the MLR and just . . . you could see nothing. There was just nothing to be seen -- no people, no gear, no anything. They just hid it completely and you know of course, with air supremacy on our side you could tell immediately where you were. But the ingenuity of people overcome that. I think that light system there is something. Of course, the Germans had never stood

short I don't think on being able to figure out things.

GEN CONWAY: Well, they had a lot of practice in air defense by this time.

INTERVIEWER : Why don't we wrap it up for today and we can pick up with the Fifth Army . . . talk about Fifth Army next time and those experiences.

GEN CONWAY: Fine. There are really two histories, General Clark's and General Truscott's. We can go into this the next time.

INTERVIEWER: Well, thanks very much.

END OF INTERVIEW

**SECTION IV**

## INTERVIEW WITH GENERAL T. J. CONWAY

by

Colonel R. F. Ensslin

THIS IS COLONEL BOB ENSSLIN INTERVIEWING GENERAL T. J. CONWAY. THIS IS INTERVIEW NUMBER 4, REEL NUMBER 4, SIDE 1. WE ARE GOING TO TALK TODAY WITH GENERAL CONWAY ABOUT THE RAPIDO RIVER CROSSING. I'D LIKE TO ASK THE GENERAL TO GIVE US A LITTLE BIT ABOUT HIS ROLE THERE, HIS POSITION DURING THE OPERATION AND WHAT HIS VIEWPOINT OF IT WAS.

GEN CONWAY: Okay, Bob. Well, as you recall, I mentioned the fact that I had come to Fifth Army in Italy in early February of '44 from Allied Force Headquarters, (Algiers) and I was assigned by General Gruenther, Chief of Staff, to work in the G-3 Plans section. I didn't plan the Rapido Crossing. It had been done before I got there. I was assigned the job of writing after action reports and this gave rise to your suggesting that we talk about this point. And so I want to tell you I went back after our last meeting and looked some of this up to refresh my mind for one thing because it is, as everyone knows who is acquainted with the Rapido Crossing, a controversial matter and remains so. I was particularly struck in the first instance, you mentioned Martin Blumenson's "Rapido, The Bloody River" and I at once went to that and then I compared it with the Fifth Army's History and I told you that we wrote this section of the Rapido Crossing, this chapter in the Fifth Army's history and I was amazed to find there that the unit was more or less eulogized and if you compare page for page and sentence for sentence, Blumenson's reconstruction of the action and read what presumably I wrote, I don't now recognize these words and I'll tell you in a minute why, you will see there is a tremendous discrepancy. So, my first point, I think ought to come out of this, is what I would call the almost invalidity of unit histories and

if I seem to bear down hard on that, it's only because I am. You see, what had happened, we really wrote two things there in the Fifth Army G-3 Plans Section. One was the after action report-lessons learned - and I'll hit on that in a minute and on this Blumenson is very solid. I don't want to personally congratulate him, it's not necessary -- others have, but he must have researched this extensively. He grasped the essence of the operation, which was a series of mishaps. We talked about that. And unfortunately, in football on Monday morning when you have mishaps, they place blame. And this is inherent in a mishap, you see. But, the Fifth Army history was edited, obviously. And it wasn't in terms of lessons learned but a unit eulogy, you see, it's inspirational in nature. So, I warn all future students, researchers and the like, it's nice to read the unit history but you better look somewhere else for the truth because the unit history rarely tells it like it is. I wrote this in draft form originally, but I see now that it didn't come out that way. It doesn't bear down on the criticism and the lessons learned but rather on saying, which is true but leaves a great deal out. It's truth by omission, that the 36th Infantry Division fought a great battle and suffered many casualties and it's true. But it doesn't go into as Blumenson does, what really happened. And as far as I'm concerned, I believe that's what the military leader of today, the historian is interested in most. Let me give you a few quotable quotes which will show what I'm talking about. Blumenson, as we know, says, - and by the way I called up General Truscott's aide, Jimmy Wilson,<sup>49</sup> (now in the State Department in Washington) through this period to see what conversations, if any, were recorded in his diary about this particular period, - having led you up to this brilliant point,

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<sup>49</sup>Major James M. Wilson.

I now have to tell you that it is a blank. So, we go to the sources. Blumenson says, this interested me, one commander who thought for a time his division might be assigned the task of crossing the Rapido had serious doubts that the river could be crossed, (this was General Truscott) "Until the mountain passes opposite the junction of the Liri and Garigliano rivers, that is to say the hills around San Ambrosio west of the Liri Valley and the heights above Cassino were in friendly hands,". You see, initially, according to Truscott's story, it had been thought the 3rd Division would do this and Truscott had been asked for an opinion on his plans and he gave this to Clark. This is mentioned in Truscott's book, but nowhere mentioned in Clark's. Interesting point. Then later, it was decided that the 3rd should go to Anzio and the 36th was nominated to go across the Rapido. At that point, General Clark again asked, after he had gotten General Truscott's view that it really wasn't a good thing, "Well, suppose the heights are not in friendly hands, but the hills above them were dominated by friendly fire. Would this make any difference?" And Truscott replied, "Yes, but the attacks against those hills should be so powerful that every German gun would be required to oppose them, for only two or three concealed 88's would be able to destroy our bridges. I doubt our capability for making such attacks." Blumenson says, quoting Truscott, "General Clark agreed, and there our conversation ended. However, these conditions were not fulfilled when the 36th Infantry Division made the attempt to cross the Rapido a few weeks later and the attempt was a costly failure." End of Truscott. General Clark again does not mention this conversation, this final conversation. Truscott does. Alright, what do we draw from all of this? It seems to me what we draw from all of this is that there was a series of serious blunders, command failures, training techniques and the like. Now, again, General Clark writes in his book, "Of course, we don't

want to blame the 36th Infantry Division, for their failure",<sup>50</sup> but the lessons learned do. Whoever looks at this objectively, even though the 36th Infantry Division of the National Guard Association passed an ultimatum condemning General Clark, will see these errors. Also we see in Clark's book and in some others, notably the Dupuys<sup>51</sup> bear down heavily on this, in Military Heritage of America. Anzio and the Rapido were co-related and anyone who loses sight of this - the Texas Division criticism is based on the assumption, that General Clark ordered an absolutely impossible operation for no reason, but we see there were reasons. In order that Anzio be successful, it's the holding attack and the main effort situation again. Nobody wants to be in the holding attack. It's like the lineman in football, you know, down there and be buried under this pile. But somebody has to do it. So, we see Clark justifies it on that basis, Blumenson does, the Dupuys do. The critics argue, however, that the mistakes were on the concept side, not the execution. The mistakes were in not making Anzio heavier, withdrawing more forces from the main front. We won't go into why that wasn't done; we know it was the question of lift, sea-borne lift, LST's and the like, specifically. So, we do know the British X Corps attacked on the left, the 36th attacked in the center and we see the 34th Division, (nowhere mentioned in the Texas resolution) the 34th Division next to the 36th, suffered an equal number of casualties but they didn't make a Federal case out of this. Their terrain was equally difficult, if not more so. They were nearer to Cassino and the Germans were looking down on them, too. But, then the bottom line

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<sup>50</sup>Calculated Risk, General Mark W. Clark.

<sup>51</sup>Military Heritage of America, R. Ernest & Trevor N. Dupuy.

is this, the concept was not wrong. It was according to every Leavenworth manual we've ever read, you did need a holding attack and a main attack both. They are related. You couldn't do one and not the other. You shouldn't. The fact that the environmental conditions were tough, difficult, quote, "Impossible," is relatively true. It is relative. But, then now we get to execution and we see that it was terrible and the after action report says this. So does Blumenson. I won't read them all. I recommend strongly that anyone who wants to pursue this, read Bloody River, The Real Tragedy of the Rapido, by Martin Blumenson. And let's finish on this high note if we can here, just one moment, the real tragedy, the real tragedy of the Rapido, Martin Blumenson says, "What emerges inescapably from a broader and detached view of the operation is the strong inference that given more determination and push," (this is leadership he is talking about) "the crossings could well have succeeded. This is the real tragedy of the Rapido."

INTERVIEWER: Well, that - did he specifically tag people with that leadership lack?

GEN CONWAY: Yes. His study is a trilogy, Clark,<sup>52</sup> the Army Commander; Keyes,<sup>53</sup> the Corps Commander; and Walker,<sup>54</sup> the Division Commander and he sees personality defects, if you will, which I won't elaborate upon, - it's not my business, in each. And the inter-relation, according to him, caused the tragedy. Had one been stronger in one department and some others in others, then this wouldn't have happened. It was a cumulative effect of certain personality traits.

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<sup>52</sup>General Mark W. Clark.

<sup>53</sup>Major General Geoffrey Keyes.

<sup>54</sup>Major General Fred Walker.

INTERVIEWER: It was the inter-play of those personalities together.

GEN CONWAY: Exactly. I don't necessarily subscribe 100% but I agree, certainly there was this inter-relationship. Were I looking at it, you know, in the after action report of lessons learned, certainly leadership is big, but you see the failure, the technical failure on technical levels, is not ascribable, in my view, to leadership, totally. These failures were those of the troops. You see, you may want to escape this, some people do. It is an ostrich kind of thing but the 36th Infantry Division, whatever we may say, whatever our sentimental and emotional feelings may be, had been from the start, (one of the engineers in Blumenson's book, speaks about this) a poorly trained division. The 36th was ~~in~~ inept, you see. But, the fact of the matter is, that from Salerno on, this colonel<sup>55</sup> again says, (the engineer colonel in Blumenson's book) that they were an outfit that was doomed never to succeed. The commanding officer<sup>56</sup> of the regiment to make the main attack says, "We knew it wouldn't work. We had a feeling it wouldn't work before the battle." Well, the 36th in the troop's language, were dubbed "the hard luck division." And in Salerno everybody said, "Oh, my God," when they heard they were in trouble, they said, "Well, it's the 36th, it has to be." As for the Rapido, they said, "any other division could have done it." This may not be true. But, these were the rumors, - it's the troop grapevine. I mentioned when they went into Southern France, maybe this will come up later, but their first boat wave turned around and went back (at Frejus). Nobody had ever heard of anybody doing that. So, whether you agree or not and I don't necessarily, but I'm pointing out that the series of misfortunes followed the footsteps of

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<sup>55</sup>LTC Oran Stovall

<sup>56</sup>Colonel William H. Martin.

the 36th Infantry Division in Italy. So, there are a lot of reasons, leadership that Blumenson brings in this operation certainly was one. We can't fault General Walker as we go through this and we won't. But there were leadership problems.

INTERVIEWER: What? At lower levels, regiment, battalion . . . ?

GEN CONWAY: Yes, specifically. Alright, let's mention that once, just one more time. According to Blumenson, Marshall<sup>57</sup> sent Walker, regular Army officer, in to this Guard Division to "Clean it out, clean out the deadwood." This was supposed to have been done in training. Blumenson's objection to Walker, his leadership defect if you will, was that he was too sympathetic. He didn't do this, so he arrives at the critical juncture on the battlefield with these same guys and the result, Blumenson said, is the real tragedy. Okay, that's one person. But, again, there's "common knowledge." What is "common knowledge?" The engineer colonel again said it was common knowledge that they didn't have any confidence in themselves. It was. Whatever that is, it was.

INTERVIEWER: I know it's going back a long way to when you sat down and wrote the after action report, but can you recall any of your feelings that time, personally? Did you have any feeling that perhaps the 3rd Division could have made it . . . ?

GEN CONWAY: I knew the 3rd Division could have done it. But under Truscott's conditions, which as he points out, weren't fulfilled, the 3rd would not have had these failures of execution in my opinion. The terrain would have remained the same and the enemy would have been as equally strong. Now whether this was the deciding factor, we don't know. We have to put it altogether. We

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<sup>57</sup>General George C. Marshall.

mentioned planning, leadership, execution, all inter-related factors which were overwhelming.

INTERVIEWER: Do you recall or would you have been in a position to know if there were any options or alternatives in a holding attack at the river crossing?

GEN CONWAY: Of course. Of course you could have a holding attack by fire which would "Pin down reserves." But again, Blumenson's very instructive on this point. He cites the German reports and the Germans just considered this a little kind of a skirmish. The 36th thought they were making an all-out effort, but the German report, the 15th Panzer Grenadiers (our old buddies from North Africa) were still there and the Herman Goering Division. It was just kind of a normal exercise for them - field training using live ammunition.

INTERVIEWER: So, they didn't see it as a major attack. They recognized . .

GEN CONWAY: They weren't upset. They didn't move any reserves. They didn't react as we hoped they would.

INTERVIEWER: Well, then they were probably feeling very secure in their position?

GEN CONWAY: Very.

INTERVIEWER: They felt that a major attack across there wouldn't succeed?

GEN CONWAY: They had proof of it. We mentioned this up above by Cassino, still along the Rapido, something like 9 attacks had gone in. All of them failed. They just dealt with them. It didn't bother them a bit. Not a bit worried.

INTERVIEWER: Do you suppose that your draft of after action report would still be anywhere?

GEN CONWAY: Oh, sure. I think this was again General Marshall's influence. In the many things we say in praise of his ideas, he learned so much from World War I, and he was putting these in effect, so after action reports were big. I imagine we wrote one at Port Lyautey, and one for the Sedjenane also. The same for the Rapido. We wrote these up and sent them in. The purpose was to send them back to Army Ground Forces and to get this material into the hands of the people training the troops so these errors wouldn't be repetitive. Several factors, we don't want to mention them all, would come out. One was the failure of the engineers and the infantry to get together, rehearse, talk out, coordinate, walk through. The plans provide for this. The infantry brushed off the engineers, according to the engineers testimony. According to the infantry, the engineers weren't there when they wanted them. Well, alright, however it worked, there was a failure to communicate which is absolutely deadly in this matter. Fatal.

INTERVIEWER: And by this time, with the places that the 36th had been, they certainly should have been ready for this kind of exercise if . . .

GEN CONWAY: Yes, they had been out of action and they were "Ready." That's quite true. And General Walker, in my view a fine Commander, wanted to have this division, you know, in combat and participate in the battle. But, this was too much for them, apparently.

INTERVIEWER: Did you, in your after action report, discuss the concept?

GEN CONWAY: No, and there is a good point. Our lessons learned were on techniques, not leadership. It wasn't our job down there in little old G-3 section to write the names of principal commanders and to have a kind of leadership forum on this. This was for others and it's been done since. It wasn't done at the time in this way.

INTERVIEWER: But your point about unit histories is certainly an excellent point there and I think, at what point - do you recall at what point General Marshall got into his technique of the immediate interviews after the action?

GEN CONWAY: I don't have a date. We could find it but I'm sure it was in 1942, as early as that.

INTERVIEWER: What's your assessment of that technique as a good way of getting more viewpoints of what actually happened?

GEN CONWAY: Absolutely invaluable, of course; this had been the missing link. Unit records do not relate the whole story. One of the main reasons being everything that takes place is not written down for many reasons we know about, like shells flying around and things like that. It doesn't get recorded. Many historians lean totally on our Office of Chief of Military History which I respect and revere. They think of this as great. Incidentally, another book has just come out - "Cassino to the Alps," by Dr. Fisher. The author does not deal with Rapido in any except a superficial way as in my view the Fifth Army history also does. It kind of restates that version. But we should not fault the book because the book is concerned with Cassino to the Alps, so they are only starting there. Really they start from where we are talking about the Rapido, so it's quite natural that it wouldn't say very much about that. But, the Army history again, would more or less repeat and reflect the Fifth Army history. And again the documents. This led Liddell-Hart after World War I to say that "pure documentary history seems to me akin to mythology."<sup>58</sup> This is the other point of view, you see. While we know it's a mixture between the individual, who is not objective, and the written records which presumably are (but they are not). They are also written

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<sup>58</sup>Why Don't We Learn From History?, B. H. Liddell-Hart.

by people, who have some motive or idea or leaning or bias and for my money sitting down there writing and it unit pride being one of the first and foremost.

INTERVIEWER: How did you feel? You know, the battlefield has so much confusion. There is . . .

GEN CONWAY: Yes, that's the understatement of the year.

INTERVIEWER: . . . and in this confusion which makes it very difficult for anybody, I think, to have a good handle on what's going on as it progresses. I think you got to examine it after to really figure out what happened. And how is the viewpoint from a higher staff level, when you are operating at the division staff and corps staff or an Army staff, how close are you to what's actually happening as the battle is developing?

GEN CONWAY: Alright. This is a very good point. We go back, you know, to ULTRA and the "phantom" system I mentioned to you, you know, the British notion of having these little liaison outfits at each level of command. General Truscott had one in Africa. This was done because it was thought that unit reporting is in fact, too slow (and perhaps inaccurate). Now, from my point of view, as a younger officer in World War II, great emphasis was placed on reporting, and I sat up many nights, with the unit clerk at various levels in various outfits when a message came in and watched him typing them out for the unit journal. My observation leads me to believe that in the crunch, the critical Rapido would be one, Anzio would be one, and so on - at those moments commanders got on the phone and we have no record by and large of what they said to each other at those times. We have a lot of personal contact. So, I'd say the reporting, routine reporting generally tended to be slow. There was a "flash" precedence message procedure alright, but it brings up the point that there is really too much information.

And this is where the computer has to determine how much do you filter out. I tend to question in the modern context, what a computer will do with all of this because in my view, the personal command filter is still enormously important. That's why generals talk to generals - because they know that the information is coming through the G-2, the G-3 and the like, but what does it all mean? You know, who interprets it? Well, the old-fashioned idea that the fellow nearest the point of contact has the best point of view is still valid. I believe we need to filter and therefore, the business of throwing it all into some central theater or national or whatever computer and then sending it back out to units is not really what it takes. It's a neat trick and they can do it, but is it worth doing?

INTERVIEWER: One other thing - well let's proceed along this direction, probably into the final campaign in Italy, the Planning Board and the execution of it and your role and where you were at that particular junction?

GEN CONWAY: Okay. You recall General Truscott was ordered back from France to Italy, this was December '44 now . . .

INTERVIEWER: And you gave up your nice accommodations at Paris . . .

GEN CONWAY: Our fur lined foxhole at the St. George hotel, right. But we were eating C-rations. We were suffering along with the troops, right?

INTERVIEWER: Right. C-rations and wine, I gather.

GEN CONWAY: Yes, and French wine. A great mixture. This was the low point of our three year war careers - we were ordered back to Italy and we'd rather forget Italy, you know. There was a sunny Italy in the song, ("Return to Sorento") and all, but this was not uppermost in our minds. We were on top of Futa Pass, 6,000 feet plus or minus, up to here in snow. You chipped the ice off of the box out there in the morning when you went out after breakfast for your morning's morning and that kind of thing. We were unhappy troops.

But it meant a promotion for the boss. You know, in those days the Army commanders were three star generals, (I'm sure you know it was only after the war that they were given four star rank). But, at any rate, it was obviously a promotion and also, however, you know every responsibility has a challenge and carries assets and liabilities. But the Fifth Army was stuck, not just in the snow but also in the mountains. And we had come over Futa Pass and down, we were on the forward slope of the ridges there, looking down at Bologna and the great Po Valley and all, but we couldn't get there from here. The reason being, the same old thing, Italy was a secondary theater and the resources were neatly balanced so we could hold on by our fingernails but no more. It wasn't intended that we succeed too much. So, the offensive, the winter offensive of General Clark's Fifth Army, had bogged down for these reasons. Given more resources, they would have been at the Alps but they weren't. The other war was going on, too, and the terrible moment of the Bulge, you know, which was going to come up meant that Italy would have even fewer resources, because they were hanging on there, too, in the Ardennes, as you know. Alright, very simply then, the G-3 Plans Section which I was in now again, drew up a plan not to attack frontally - this was a repetition of the old Rapido situation. Remember, there were two roads, one going past Cassino up the Liri Valley, route 6, and another, route 7, which was west of there, which went around the point at Gaeta and then up to Anzio and Nettuno and then into Rome. So the two attacks involved similar concepts, - quit beating your head against the wall, side-slip and exploit the terrain. This was more difficult at Cassino, but French Corps (Marshal Juin) beat their path to Rome by going through the mountains which are tough. There are some tremendous pictures of these mountains in Blumen-son's book by the way, and in the Fifth Army history also. They show you

at a glance, the Rapido and the mountains and all. Alright, the same thing held for this attack in April 1945. General Truscott side-slipped the main Florence to Bologna road, (Route 65) one road over to another, (Route 64) on a different axis. We chose that and we made our breakout in that way. And when this fell apart, this is May of '45, the whole thing collapsed. For the Germans, too, Italy had had become a secondary theater. We wound up out in front of Verona. And we, (namely General Gruenther) were negotiating with the Germans in Switzerland and not telling the Russians, separate <sup>piece</sup> piece of Italy, which you know, was not one of those things the Russians had agreed on. So, we ended the war in Italy a week before it was ended, in the rest of Europe on the 2nd of May. A little known historical footnote for the reason that we'd already prepared the way into Germany, there was nothing for them to lose, you know south of the Alps. The homeland was their big consideration. So, at any rate, the Tenth Mountain Division, the Brazilian Expeditionary Force, General Mascarenas performed beautifully and we cracked through and as I say, from then on out, it fell apart rapidly. The whole Po Valley fell. The only fighting then that was going to take place is over on the northeast, in the province of Venezia Giulia at Trieste, which became a diplomatic impasse after the war.

INTERVIEWER: Did the Germans still have any Italians with them at this point?

GEN CONWAY: Oh, no. We did but they didn't.

INTERVIEWER: What Italian resources did we have?

GEN CONWAY: Oh, we eventually had a Corps under Fifth Army and gradually, little by little, re-equipped them with American weapons. This is another one of these ethnic cultural gaps that we suffer from. If you take the average, I'm talking about the average as being us, maybe we are not average,

but anyhow, the man on the street in America, for generations thought the Italians couldn't fight. (They ignored the Romans and Julius Caesar and people like that) Historically, the Italians have been great fighters but they had their moments and this is the "Decline and Fall of Rome" we know so much about. However, you read again the Fifth Army history now about the Italians and you'll see that they took tremendous casualties when they came back on our side and they were fighting for their honor. They didn't deliberately go out to die but they took on terrible odds and suffered heavy casualties. "Impossible" Mt. Troccio, Longo and a lot of other mountains on the way, all had to be overcome and the Italians took their share and more of casualties in these operations. But, again they had great personal bravery, elan, somewhat like the French, you know. And they fought well.

INTERVIEWER: Sir, in your planning you had confidence in your ability to use them?

GEN CONWAY: Oh, yes. And the Brazilians again made a tremendous contribution. The Brazilian Expeditionary Force, also fought well.

INTERVIEWER: Let's - getting back to - you say you had enough resources to kind of hang on by your fingernails over there. Where were you most limited and what resources in terms of manpower or in terms of ammunition or was it up and down the line? Were the troops well equipped? Where were we - when we made compromises, where did we compromise?

GEN CONWAY: Alright, this did go in cycles in some ways and to get right to the point, I would say we compromised across the board. But, let me give you some specifics. We had on the one hand the tired old divisions we mentioned because the 1st, 3rd and 9th, had left. But, the 34th and then the 36th, the 34th had been in North Africa and the 36th joined us in Italy but, you know,

at the end of three years of attrition, you got lots of attrition. So, we were getting recruits, from the repple-depples. There was a flow, we weren't shorted in that regard, but we didn't get more divisions. So, after the breakout from Rome, we got the 85th, and the 88th Divisions and they were great. They liked us and we certainly liked them. And we moved on apace with them but you see there is just a certain amount of impetus two divisions can give you and then they got bogged down, the mountains got higher as we got nearer the Alps, and then it broke down to the same thing as before. So, I would say, manpower, from the standpoint of the number of forces because if you look at the totals, which vary in some of the texts but have a great similarity in other respects, we were about even with the Germans. If you take winter and the mountains you are uneven, you know, because the environment unbalances this otherwise perfect balance. Also resources-wise, ammunition, to get another big point which you'll appreciate, I told you the day of fire was cut down somewhere, you didn't fire. "I have a target." "Forget it." You know, they are not going to shoot now - when it's got to be important. Are you being attacked? Well, no, it's just, you know, a target of opportunity. We don't shoot. And so to make the final spring campaign, we had to quit firing all winter for example, to get enough ammunition to make the attack. There was no special allowance for the attack. We made our own. So, mainly artillery ammunition, I can't recall that we ran out of small arms ammunition, but again on the manpower, it just occurs to me and you've read about this, what we did, we had a do it yourself program. We just disbanded the ack-ack, the anti-aircraft battalions. Especially the automatic weapons units and made infantry regiments out of them. And they were in the final attack. All of this again because German air disappeared, virtually, so that was no problem, but it illustrates the detail in which we had to go, the resources that had to be

found somewhere and how it was done. So, I would say, across the board we always had enough ammunition, but not enough shipping. It wasn't only a question that strategy demanded this (and here again is the holding attack and the main effort, Italy is the holding attack and Europe is the main effort) but shipping allocation of shipping. We read about Anzio, and at first thought we couldn't do it. General Clark, in his book, and Truscott mention this conversation that Clark proposed to Truscott that they go to Anzio with one division. And on this, Truscott is adamant and he said, "General Clark, we'll go, but you can write off the 3rd Division. Now, if that's your object let's go." So, they are not going to do that. Nobody thought that one division could do the job, but it was the question of the available LST's. The theater had to go back and get some more. See, you don't just put a division in. It requires 450 tons or so a day, and you have to re-supply it, thereafter. And it can only be done by sea and lift was the problem there. Overall, across the board, we had a 100 division concept in the United States. Well, as you know, we ended the war and we had only generated 89 divisions. Why? Because we didn't need them? No, at the Battle of the Bulge, you know, we ran out of divisions. No, because we had the priority manpower problem at home. Do you put them in a uniform or do they go to the factory? And so we had to decide and this is the way we decided. We cut the uniformed forces down. If we were going to shift, we would have had to shift naturally the forces from Europe to Japan to win that war had it come to that. But there were no more divisions going to be coming from the States.

INTERVIEWER: My recollection of Italy and sitting at home and reading the newspapers and seeing Bill Mauldin's cartoons and reading Ernie Pyle and so forth, I, you know, I think of the physical demands on the individuals over

there, like the winter the mud and the mountains and how well did we equip our people to deal with that in order to take care of their, you know, their personal ability to survive in that kind of climate situation?

GEN CONWAY: I'm sorry you asked that question because I'd rather not answer it but I think I should. This was, if you want to get emotional, a tragedy. Now, I recently re-read about the 27th Infantry going to Vladivostok, Siberia in World War I.<sup>59</sup> They were shipped out of Manila in their cotton uniforms, believe it or not, in November. But, anyway, we went to North Africa, we spent three winters in all in the war as you may know. We had a little blanket lined jacket, field jacket, and it's been tremendously revised and improved since then but anyway, that was it. No hood or anything. We had a steel helmet which dripped water down your neck when it rained and you froze to death inside when it was cold. And that was about it. Believe it or not, there is one of the "Green Book"<sup>60</sup> series on the Medical History of the War and it tells you better than I can, from their point of view, I'm just taking it at troop level. We had overshoes, but nobody put them on. So, we had trenchfoot in North Africa believe it or not. So, one of the lessons learned went back the same Ground Forces - I mentioned. Hopefully somebody is going to do something about it. What do you suppose happened the second winter now that we are in Italy? Trenchfoot. All the troops had been told about it but these guys, they throw them away. You know, they are too heavy to carry them and they are in the B bag which never caught up with the A bag and so on. So, then we are in the Bulge now and we are in the third winter of the war. So guess what? Trenchfoot. You know, take them

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<sup>59</sup>History of the 27th Infantry Regiment, G. A. Hunt.

<sup>60</sup>The History of the U. S. Army, WW II, OCMH.

off, change your socks, rub your feet. Units varied in this matter of incidence, just as they did in combat fatigue and some other leadership things. But, all I'm saying is you can tell them, but sometimes you can't make them do it. You can lead your horse to water, everybody knew, it was all written out. Every division. Why is this? Every division that came into the theater as a new division had to re-learn. Other fellows had been there for three years and they told them. Said the word over and over but they had to learn it themselves in order to understand it and do it. I'm sorry you asked the question but the uniforms and equipment have both improved dramatically since then. And I wouldn't fault the quartermaster for a minute, they were on top. It was the troops and the junior leaders that weren't and the net result was predictable.

INTERVIEWER: Well, a little bit later in 1950, the first winter in Korea we ran into more of the same kinds of problems. We had people over there who weren't equipped for the winter when it hit.

GEN CONWAY: We had trenchfoot, again. They didn't wear the proper equipment when they had it, you know. Supervision. It's like taking malaria pills or anything else. You know, half of the guys, if the first sergeant didn't throw them down their throat, they are going to spit them out or throw them on the ground.

INTERVIEWER: That's right. That's right. Okay, well - at this point, just for the record you went from there you were going over to fight the other war after Italy, is that right?

GEN CONWAY: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me just a little about what you did there?

GEN CONWAY: I'll make it very short because it's all been written up in our little hegira or whatever it was that we were doing, from Italy, from Lake

Garda, Italy to Kunming, China and back need be no more than a foot note even in this kind of long winded recital. But very briefly, we know the story again now, we didn't then. But, Wedemeyer<sup>61</sup> and Truscott were chosen by General Marshall to divide up China and to command each respectively an Army which would divide China geographically under the Generalissimo and they would drive the Japanese out of China. And as soon as the war ended with this in mind, (it had to have been in May) we were busy rotating the troops, some went direct to the Far East through the Suez, some went home. There was this matter of "rotation points", who had been there the longest and all that and some got out. But, we were busy doing that when in the midst of everything else, General Truscott gets orders for Kunming and is allowed to take his staff. So he loaded us up in a beat up old C-47, that's the only thing we had available, flew to Cairo and there among other things, we find out the war had ended. So, General Truscott queried the War Department but they said, "Continue." So, we fly the Hump and so on, not in a C-47, by the way, and we land in Kunming and of course, they say there, "Well, what are you guys doing here. Haven't you heard the war is over?" And we said, "We heard but we are just carrying out orders." So, to make a long story short, we all piled back in this airplane (I imagine it was a C-46) to fly the Hump and we re-traced our steps. And we went back to Italy and then rotated the last of the units and of course, we were then closed down ourselves and pulled up our tents, you know, and silently stole away from Italy in September 1945.

INTERVIEWER: Well, it's just a few months in there really, from May to August or September but were there, did leadership problems develop along with peace there?

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<sup>61</sup>General Albert C. Wedemeyer.

GEN CONWAY: No. You might be interested in this, you know, because I'm sure you are thinking of certain parallels and I am too, in history. We did not have a troop morale or leadership problems in Italy. I couldn't say none but none came to our attention, nor were they of the nature and scope of other wars. You recall there were these riots in the Pacific and the Pacific Stars and Stripes and the troops "Demonstrated". We didn't have any of that. Everybody in Italy wanted to go home. And you know, we had a song, "Please Mr. Truman won't you send us home. Let the boys at home see Rome." (It's sung to the tune of Lili Marlene) There is more but we are not going to bore the recorder with that. No, the thing was, we were under a certain impetus to get these people out, and out in a hurry, and we did. And the main reason again, was not so much they were going home, which a lot of them hoped and expected the most, but they were going to be sent to the Pacific. And many were. But we did not have any kind of morale or discipline problems of any nature.

INTERVIEWER: Well, did they feel at that point that perhaps, you know, the war isn't over, you know, the war is not yet over because we . . .

GEN CONWAY: We didn't have a good grasp of this initially, at all. When we started out for China we thought as Marshall did, you remember reading his - (Pogue's account) that, we were going to take a million or a million and a half casualties. We didn't know how long. We knew the Japanese weren't in the habit of surrendering. Are we going to have to maybe kill them all and there are three million or so still under arms. So, nobody thought in May the war was over. Of course, in August we knew, so August and September we were re-deploying months, but everybody was happy. They are going home now, definitely. And points and so on didn't count, because you see, Italy - I should mention this aspect, it might not occur to you - was not going to be

an occupied territory. There were no occupation troops. The problems arose later in Germany, but not in Italy. Only General Clark and his headquarters, you know, went to Vienna and became part of the occupying powers. Again, no troops were involved, just some staff people. So this made little impact on us. We had a happy situation, fortunately.

INTERVIEWER: A little bit from a tangent here, let me ask you - you seem - you were surprised as you said, that the war did end as quickly as it did. What had you known about the development of the bomb?

GEN CONWAY: Nothing.

INTERVIEWER: From your point of view . . .

GEN CONWAY: That's a simple answer.

INTERVIEWER: When it was first used, you really didn't have any concept of the magnitude of it?

GEN CONWAY: Of course not. You remember the classic talk that I mentioned to you before but we'll say it again for the record. General Marshall came over - the war is over in Europe and he is there at Berchtesgaden and he has General Ridgway and General Taylor closeted with him. And he is divulging this top secret information about the atomic bomb. He said something about a gigantic explosion but, we couldn't relate to it. It was outside of our experience. Certainly outside our soldiering experience and none of us had enough laboratory or scientific knowledge to build on. So, it was beyond comprehension you'd have to say. So, Marshall briefed Taylor and Ridgway and he's a man of high integrity, but when he left they got together and one said, "What in the hell do you think he's talking about?" And the other said, "Well, whatever it was, I don't believe it." (Laughter)

INTERVIEWER: I know when it was first used, the papers at home said it was a secret weapon, that we had unleashed. But I don't think anybody had any

concept of its power. Well, obviously, a few people who were in the know had some concept of it but I was just curious as to whether or not General Truscott and you all and the staff and all were really privy to the fact that that was coming up or not?

GEN CONWAY: He could have been but we weren't.

INTERVIEWER: Well, we were talking a little earlier before we turned the recorder on about General MacArthur and his personality and his presence and his leadership and all and I think we really should get into the tape, your experience in meeting General MacArthur and a discussion, too, of the Far East defense plan that I understand you discussed with General MacArthur.

GEN CONWAY: Alright. Any comment that I make on General MacArthur has to be qualified as gratuitous, you know. Everything has been said and there is nothing that I can add to his fame and fortune or detract from them either. But I talked about this to you so perhaps it is worth noting because Korea, and the Truman-MacArthur controversy, the questions as to why we were caught, "Unprepared," and so on in the Far East in 1950 have arisen since, so it is a controversial area and I have only one small contribution to make. But it was this, I came back from Italy in 1945 and was assigned to OPD in the Pentagon. The Marshall skeleton staff was still there and I was assigned to Plans and Strategy. And one of our jobs was to draft various letters to the theater commanders, General Clay in Europe; General MacArthur in Asia and so on and which General Eisenhower would dispatch after he edited them. And he called all the theater commanders by their first names except General MacArthur, whom he addressed as "General MacArthur," appropriately. At any rate, in the course of time, MacArthur's Far East Defense Plan came in and I was the action officer to prepare the Chief of Staff's comments on this and send it back with his comments. I was then detailed after they had been

prepared and edited by General Eisenhower, detailed to take them back personally to General MacArthur and if necessary, provide answers to any questions he might have as to how these judgments were arrived at in the War Department, you know, 14,000 miles away. It was an unenviable mission to begin with and I viewed it with adequate trepidation you can be sure. But, at any rate, this was the long haul by propeller airplane, so 48 hours after leaving San Francisco I arrived at Tokyo in the middle of the night. To my chagrin, I had this top secret document, which was handcuffed to my wrist with the chain and all and I was really anxious to get rid of this thing - so I deposited it in the SGS where I had three classmates. They all said, "Well, you can't see General MacArthur, you're only a Lieutenant Colonel and nobody on the staff can see him. You can name on the fingers of one hand the people that have access to General MacArthur, the Chief of Staff and General Russell his G-3 and General Willoughby his G-2 certainly; but he doesn't see people on the staff, except these people." "Well," I said, "I have these explicit instructions so I'm not going to leave without seeing him." Well, they said, "We hope you have a nice stay here in Tokyo and they don't need you back home." To make a long story short, one week later I was still sitting in this outer office every day from 8 to 5, (these were not General MacArthur's hours, but they were the staff's). Then I'd go home and come in the next morning. No news. Finally, after one week, General Mueller,<sup>62</sup> who had been in the infantry school when I was a second lieutenant, (he had been a major), sent for me through the staff and I went in there and his first words were, "Well, Colonel Conway, how did you get to be a Colonel?" So, we discussed that. I said, "It was the war." And then he said the same thing as the others, "Well, I don't

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<sup>62</sup>Major General Paul J. Mueller.

understand your mission at all." so I explained my mission to him very carefully. I really did have personal instructions to see General MacArthur and I had to go back and report that or else request permission to send a message back saying I was not permitted to see him. So, he shook his head and went in. And I sat there, he came out and said, "The General will see you." This led to a big moment in a little life. The door opened and General MacArthur was seated at the end of a long room filled with Oriental bric-a-bac and I marched smartly across many rugs to get there. When I was about half way there, he got up from behind his desk, came around this desk and I stopped and saluted. He put his arm around me and shook my hand and said, "Colonel Conway, how delighted I am to see you." I didn't tell him I had been waiting a week or anything, and he said, "Please sit down." And we sat down on the sofa and he said, "Now, what brings you to Tokyo?" So, to make a long story short, I told him about the purpose of the visit and the plan. He understood comments which were made on his plan. Since they came from General Eisenhower, he accepted them. But, the point of telling you this story is that nowhere in the plan was Korea mentioned. In other words, the Far East Defense Plan in those days was the defense of Japan. As a matter of fact, not even the troops, who were there were involved. It wasn't considered that the troops in Japan would be utilized - this is 1947 and we already knew we were going to withdraw those troops in Korea some time. In 1949 we did, so they were not relevant. They didn't matter. The divisions in Japan reduced strengths divisions. So, there were budget problems. The plan only confirmed the view of the Joint Chiefs, who had already ruled that, "Korea was not vital to American security."<sup>63</sup> And so it was no accident that Secretary Acheson gets up

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<sup>63</sup>Korea: Cold War and Limited War, Allen Guttman.

before the National Press Club in Washington, D. C. in January, 1950 and drew this so-called Acheson Line. And so what I'm telling you is this little incident is only confirmation of the fact that the line had been drawn by the military and did exist, which explains then to some extent the fact that we were, "surprised," "not ready," "unprepared," and so on, to fight a war in Korea. Of course, we had no plans to do so.

INTERVIEWER: There was nothing in General MacArthur's manner or attitude then that indicated in any way that he felt that he had been maybe, put down by having a Lieutenant Colonel sent out from . . .

GEN CONWAY: No, if he felt it - that's right - if he felt it, which I'm sure he did, he didn't show it. He was too much of a gentleman.

INTERVIEWER: How long was your visit and discussion of the plan with him?

GEN CONWAY: Very short. A half hour maximum, fifteen minutes maybe. I don't know. No substantive matters, really, were discussed. He just asked "How are things in Washington?" and generally, speaking of the plan, "Can I count on these resources?" "Is the plan correlated with others?" and of course, again the big problems were Europe, this was the Cold War and focus of attention and money went to Europe.

INTERVIEWER: Well, you must have been gaining a reputation by this time, of being one of the Army's premier planners because you have been a planner at high levels here through major operations and when the war ends, you're again assigned in the planning area. How did you feel about that kind of assignment at that point?

GEN CONWAY: Terrible. These are very complimentary remarks that you just made, but the average planner and I'd been thrown into planning by force of circumstances, I didn't have that kind of MOS. I wouldn't have known how to describe this before the war and I'm not sure I can now. But we thought of

ourselves as messenger boys or errand boys, you know. We were bottom rung on the staff totem pole. We didn't think in terms of grandeur or something like that. It's still true today, the guy that drafts the speeches and all, somebody in the back room is still totally anonymous. There is no particular expertise involved. It's a mechanical thing. I'll give you an example. The amphibious things we talked about so much, they were mechanical in the sense that it had all been worked out on tables and all such as: How many vehicles? One for every four men? I'm talking about jeeps and the like, see. How many weapons and so on? The lift determined this. So, you just took your lift over here and your men over there and used your computer or calculator and you knew. The planning, you know, whether we land in southern France or across the channel and all, those kind of decisions, we didn't participate in them. We were only kind of - executors. Southern France is a good example. We picked coasts, places on the coast; someone else had already said we were going there. And that's where we'd land. And we picked them because they had a good beach - the gradient was suitable - the accesses, road nets, etc. These were all the day to day statistics with which we worked. We were adept at that aspect, but it wasn't grand strategy and we had no illusions about our contributions to the war.

INTERVIEWER: How did you feel about your career at that particular point in your career? The war is over and you've got to think that you are beginning to get some kind of planning specialty coming along here. Were you disappointed at this and what were you looking for at that time?

GEN CONWAY: Yes, in a way, disappointed is a good word. You see, we all knew that after World War I the Army went back to rigor mortis and we suspected that history would repeat itself. What happened, as we now know, was different. I guess you have to say in this sense, military people were grateful for the Cold

War - that's not really what I mean, - you couldn't be. But, at the same time, it saved, "our careers." Marshall had gone from Brigadier General nominee back to Major, I only had to go back to Lieutenant Colonel. As a matter of fact, if you were assigned to the Pentagon you couldn't have lived in Washington in those days on lower pay. So, everybody knew that and what I'm saying is that a new plateau in defense matters had been achieved. We did not revert to isolation as a matter of policy and therefore we did keep a "standing Army". That was all worked out. However, we did go back to regression in the budget. We talked about this, 1950 was the low point, thereafter we went back up but we weren't going to be able to know that before it happened. Kim Il Sung and Ho Chi Minh and these other fellows, are "heroes," or ought to be, because they invented wars which required Congress to appropriate money and therefore, have an Army, without which, there wouldn't have been any. You know, it was that simple. So, on the one hand we thought we were going to regress to the status quo ante but we didn't. On the other hand - I was very disappointed in the war in this sense. I never had a real command and I had, in fact, always been a staff officer from the day I went to London, and I was one at the end of the war. I wound up as G-2 of Fifth Army of all things. But, at any rate, yes, I was branded with this MOS, 2162 or whatever it was in those days, and I couldn't see any end of that. I went back to the Pentagon and it had to be the most depressing experience of my military career up till then. You ought to understand and I think most people do - you do- that war for all its terrible, agony, people are really killed with real bullets and all that. It nevertheless, has moments of exhilaration, you are living under forced draft. It's like you are on dope or something, you know. War has that fascination if that's the word. (Patton speaks of this constantly in his letters) It's what we've been trained for, we joined

the Army not only to see the world but if necessary, fight in a war, lead troops and so on. So, yes, I could see a long trail out there into the sunset just writing papers. I'll tell you later if you are at all interested, how I got out of that rut. But, at any rate, the average officer after the war, my generation, looked with foreboding on the oncoming period. We didn't know about Kim Il Sung and Vietnam and all those things. Maybe it would have been better if we didn't have them, but at any rate, we saw a repetition of the post World War I pattern.

INTERVIEWER: How did you break out?

GEN CONWAY: I volunteered for the Airborne, that's how. (Laughter) I went from the highest school in the nation, the National War College to the lowest, the Infantry Basic Airborne in one step.

INTERVIEWER: When were you selected for the National War College?

GEN CONWAY: I was an instructor at the Armed Forces Staff College in 1948. General Clyde Eddleman who was the Senior Army man there, the Deputy Commandant, called some of us in and said, "You know, the purpose of having this school is to select future leaders." Up to now the War College had been established I believe, in '46 and this was '48, "No graduate of the Armed Forces staff college has ever been selected for the National War College." So, he said, "I'm going to make a test case of this, I'm going to send in some names and I want to see what they do with them." He did and I think it was three of us, actually all instructors but we were also graduates, went. And that's how.

INTERVIEWER: And how about your decision to go airborne?

GEN CONWAY: It was easy. When the career management people come over and you have one of these planning sessions with them, that they do at all of the schools, well, they were telling us what assignments were open and so on and

so forth, and then as now, being a graduate of the National War College is an admirable thing to have on your ticket. Certain staffs have requirements for graduates, so you fill those slots. But they are all staff slots. So, I asked this fellow privately when it came my turn, what could I do to avoid being assigned back to the Pentagon. See, I had already served two and a half years there after the war. He said, "Nothing." "Oh," I said, "Come on, there's got to be some way." "Well," he looked and shuffled his papers and said, "Say, there is one thing you can do." He said, "If you volunteer for Airborne, you could possibly get an airborne assignment, at least you wouldn't have to go to the Pentagon." "Ah," I said, "Sign me up." I didn't know a thing about it. I had volunteered for the airborne in 1940 when I was instructor at the military academy, (also to get out of that). My application was returned to me by the Chief of Infantry, saying, "Not favorably considered, the above named officers considered to be over-age for airborne volunteers." (My age at the time was 30).

INTERVIEWER: Right. So, when you took your airborne training, were you at that time, a full colonel?

GEN CONWAY: No, I was still back to being a lieutenant colonel. One of my classmates was also there, senior to me, John Brinsley, and he was the company commander. I was 41 when I took the PT and everything else.

INTERVIEWER: Well, you took the full course, then?

GEN CONWAY: Yes, four weeks I believe it was then, four or five.

INTERVIEWER: All the PT and the standard thing.

GEN CONWAY: Yes, we had two weeks or so of ground school. Knot tying and all the rest.

INTERVIEWER: Not the gentleman's jump course?

GEN CONWAY: Nothing like that. Just a student company.

INTERVIEWER: I understand that they did have a special course for senior officers there, general officers who . . .

GEN CONWAY: Could be. Remember we were lieutenant colonels.

INTERVIEWER: I had heard, you know, that it was full colonels and if you were a full colonel or . . . However, I have one National Guard friend who went through as a full colonel, took the full course and all of the PT and stuff.

GEN CONWAY: I did 21 leaps off of the 34 foot tower, I remember that number very well. They straighten out your back. (Laughter)

INTERVIEWER: I'll bet. So, did you go from there to the 82nd?

GEN CONWAY: No, you see, because of Korea - of all things. I graduated from the War College in June. I went to the jump school at Benning in July and August and Korea had broken out. So, I was on leave, actually, from that, and I was recalled from leave and assigned to the 11th Airborne Division, Fort Campbell, Kentucky, where with a new command assignment, a new regiment was being activated (188th AIR). I was assigned as a Lieutenant Colonel to activate that regiment, which I did.

INTERVIEWER: And I guess you were figuring that you'd soon be in Korea at that point?

GEN CONWAY: No, this might surprise you. You see, the 187th Airborne Infantry Regiment, they called them PIR's by the way then, (Parachute Infantry Regiment) had been ordered as you know, to Korea. General Westmoreland, later, assumed command. And to replace that regiment, they activated a new regiment. However, the War Department in its infinite wisdom had put a block on the airborne. We were the Western Hemisphere Reserves. So, in fact, you couldn't get to Korea from the airborne, only one of two ways. You could goof up and be thrown out or you could sign a quit slip, but that's the height of dishonor in the airborne.

And so it became in some ways, a sanctuary for some who didn't want to go to Korea in the first place. I shouldn't say that should I? But it was. We had all our units over-strength.

INTERVIEWER: I had some, about this time, I had some friends who came out of the 11th to leaders course in OCS with me, some out of the 11th and as a matter of fact, one of my OCS classmates who went to the same battalion I did, came out of the 11th. Very gung-ho people, they were . . .

GEN CONWAY: Most were. I should tell you and I think it's worth noting because this situation certainly is going to rise again. We mentioned it casually and that is, both the Air Force and the Army had trouble with the "volunteers," when the war broke out because they were both short of airborne and pilots. So, you may remember it was a classical case, General LeMay was Chief of Staff of the Air Force and threatened to court-martial them, there was a dozen or so down there in Texas somewhere. These young fellows had been brave young pilots in the war (WW II) but they had gone home and got married and got more sense. And when they were called up, they said, "No, we don't volunteer, you have to be a volunteer to pilot and we don't volunteer." The same thing happened in the airborne. We had fellows that had married and settled down. The two services went about this in a different way. The Air Force started these trials and as I recall, they were never completed. I don't know what administrative or other action they took but I don't believe it came to this final crunch. In the Army, we just sent them to Korea. It was very simple.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, that was one of the motivators both in leaders course and in OCS, to complete the course because everybody who washed out, was just on the next boat with a light weapons infantryman MOS. I knew that if I didn't make it in the artillery OCS that I was going in the pipeline as a rifleman and that was an additional motivator to complete the course.

GEN CONWAY: It turns out that historically speaking, nobody really rushes -- is all that eager to go to war, but let me give you one more footnote which I've mentioned. Our regiment actually before being activated as such, we had cadre, which is as I recall, was about 17 men per company. We first had to train something like 6,000 reservists who had been called to active duty to go to Korea as replacements, and these fellows weren't all that eager, either, and I think I mentioned this many times - more than once in other words. We marched in the dark of the night, one particular group of trainees and they would be in lots of like 100, 200 or more, down to the train with a troop bodyguard and put them on the trains. And one of these contingents, I also mentioned this to you, rioted when the train stopped in St. Louis to make transfer from the north/south, to the east/west line and killed an MP there in the station. They had to be put down by force and then they went on to Korea. But, you know, it's like the draft riots and dissension in war and so on and this was in the early stages. Later, we know Korea has now gone down in history along with Vietnam as a, "First of the so-called unpopular wars." Well, we know that wars by and large are not popular in the first place. And these are only examples.

INTERVIEWER: No, that's right. And I think to play down the dissatisfaction at that time . . .

GEN CONWAY: Of course, and should.

INTERVIEWER: And should, you know, as opposed to what we got into in the most recent go around. I didn't feel that Korea was that unpopular.

GEN CONWAY: In the beginning it wasn't. In the end, I think it was. We didn't have the demonstrators out in front of the White House but in a sense, it could be said that President Truman lost the election because of the war, in a very real sense, you see. His competitor, pronounced these old campaign

promises, you know, "I will go to Korea" and the public interpreted that as saying, "I will end the war in Korea." So, at that point in time, of course, it was unpopular. And at that point in time, President Truman lost the election.

INTERVIEWER: You know the time that I spent over there, which went right up to the truce, I felt that considering the situation that we were in, that the morale basically was good, that the people did the job. I didn't come across any problems along the MLR. I'm trying to think of any difficulties that I might have had were back behind the MLR and not . . .

GEN CONWAY: Alright, let me clear what I'm saying. I think that the fighting troops, '51 to '53, the Army experience in general, was good if you consider the terrible conditions and situation, in other words, the troops were under pressure just even being there. I think they performed admirably. I'm talking about public opinion as a whole and I'm talking politics which I shouldn't, this isn't that kind of tape. But all of the writers of political science agreed that the war, the unpopularity of the war, was a major factor in Truman losing the election. Really, he had only scraped through with Dewey, you know, he had been on the fringe all along. And so, the straw that broke the camel's back, to put it another way, in perspective, was here at home. I'm not talking about troop riots or fragging, that kind of thing at all. But it was unpopular at home. And he had this terrible admixture which we talked about, he did mobilize the guard, he did call up the reserves and these were both terribly unpopular as you can imagine. See, when you are five years out only from a big war in which 12,000,000 had participated, who in the hell wants to receive a little greeting, saying, "Uncle Sam wants you?" Nobody.

INTERVIEWER: A lot of people who didn't give a lot of thought to that reserve committment, when they got out, signed on the line and had practically forgotten about it, the people who weren't active . . .

GEN CONWAY: Stuffed it in an old shoe box, somewhere.

INTERVIEWER: Of course, you have the other kind of problem in Vietnam, where you utilize the draft and you don't mobilize the reserve units that you've got which is worse.

GEN CONWAY: Now, we got a comparison. We know. Right.

INTERVIEWER: Of course, in Korea we did both. Well, while we are - I don't know whether to get out of order here or not, we talked about - let's go to this role of the advisor because you had experience in Korea later as an advisor and experience in Thailand as an advisor and not to suddenly shift gears on you but could you tell us a little about how you saw the role of advisor and what your responsibilities were in those two places?

GEN CONWAY: Yes. As you know, we talked about this. I was an advisor of the first ROK Army, the first Korean Army, Wonju, Camp Long, Korea 1959 to 1960 as a Brigadier General. This is the greatest army I've ever been associated with, 550,000 strong. We didn't have anything like this before or since. But, at any rate, that was one experience. For this, I went to the Military Assistance Institute which was in Washington, four weeks or something course. Got my credentials, graduated at the head of the class, (alphabetically that is) and was on my way. Well, the Military Assistance Institute placed great emphasis on country studies, cultural shock and these notions, which in my opinion are fundamental. Now, we skip to 1962, I'm now, I had been assistant division commander of the 82nd Airborne at Fort Bragg, I had become division commander and served my one year and I'm ordered to Joint U. S. Military Advisory Group, Thailand, which you know, for me was the end of the world after having commanded a division. Well, of course, I went. And there I served only from July '62 to February '63 as head of the JUSMAG but it was again an advisory role. And what I wanted to tell you about and just mention

it, another footnote of personal experience. (I also by the way, went to the MAG Institute again. I pointed this out to the War Department but they said everybody ordered would have to be on this list, so I went twice. Again, I graduated the head of the class, alphabetically). But it's this and you can say it in a sentence or a line. One reason, in my opinion we didn't do better in the wars in Korea and in Vietnam and may not do better in the future in coalition warfare, is the American inability to assimilate and appreciate cultural differences and deal with them in a realistic manner. Let me give you just one example, as you know there were a lot of names invented by the GI's in Vietnam for the natives. But, let's take "gook," which came out of Korea. Well, you see the GI didn't know it and some people still don't, but gook comes from "Han-guk" and "Mei-guk," "guk" means people. The "Mei-guks," that's us, you know and the "Han-guks" that's the Koreans. But you see, it's a good bona fide word but like a lot of words, all of a sudden it's a bad word when used by Americans referring to Koreans. So, this was our traditional way. The "slants" and the "slopes" and you name it. It's a kind of master race complex we have when dealing with little people or people of different color and the like. Now, if you are going to deal with allies and fight wars, we need to overcome this in some way. So, in my view, the MAG Institute was good. It didn't go far enough nor were all the people sent there. This was taken over now I understand at Fort Bragg but again, it's a drop in the bucket and we don't have the MAG system anyway. But, the concept was good. The school was abolished by some Admiral in the Pentagon on the Joint Staff who, never served on one so how would he know. But, again if we look at Vietnam closely, the fact that General Westmoreland did not command the Vietnamese troops but had to work out a relationship with them on an agreed basis, how well did we do this? How many advisors have you ever heard come back laudatory of the

Vietnamese? Not very many. And so why didn't the Vietnamese fight better, in the end and so on? Well, who was responsible for training them to fight? We were. So, where does the blame lie? On them or on us? Well, you know, we share this blame. We don't, we don't tend to, but we should. And so, I guess the moral of this story is, the distillation out of my MAG experience that there was a general lack of appreciating cultural differences and how to deal with them. We failed in this regard in my opinion.

INTERVIEWER: Well, that's a very provoking kind of a statement there. What is the answer there to building a greater appreciation in our people, you know, is it the American personality, per se, or is it the military personality that makes it difficult for us to do this or is it just something that we could address ourselves to and prepare ourselves for and should?

GEN CONWAY: Okay. I don't think it has anything to do with whether you are wearing a uniform or not. I notice my civilian contractor representatives and all, and they treated the natives the same deprecating way, so you know, it had nothing to do with the uniform. However, it's vital and again as I mentioned, in my view of the military role in winning the war. However, what could we do about it? One of the steps is very simple, you see, we have assumed the mantle reluctantly of world leaders, the role but we are unwilling to implement it in all its ramifications. Number one, you are going to hate me for this but I'm going into it anyway because it's an obsession, I may as well say, - language. You see, we sit here, masters of our own continent, the drive to the west and all and although there are millions of Chicanos in Texas, people don't even want to speak Spanish. Any little country in Europe is surrounded by other language and other cultures and they have to learn them to get along or even if they want to take a trip, they may have to pass through two or three countries. So they do, the average European speaks two or three

languages, not the British, but the French and the Poles and the Russians. It was years - I worked for years on trying to get Chinese introduced into the United States Military Academy in the language department. My best friend, life-long friend was head of it. Why? Because China and Russia are, you know, two very powerful enemies, so we need to know. Incidentally, the Russians aren't any better at this than we are. They were thrown out of Egypt, and many places in Africa, - considered total boors. They lived in their little community, "little Russia." See, what we do in Germany today and so on, because they wouldn't learn the language and so on. Lazy! Now these are national characteristics. National weaknesses. And to begin with, number one, it's all involved in education. You can't teach anybody empathy but you can teach language, customs, what to do and what not to do. You know, the GI - we went into Africa and then into Europe and then into France and we got a little soldier handbook. They came from World War I. Be nice to the natives. One of our books, in Africa said the Arabs are clean, dignified race. There the GI's looked around and took one sniff, and Korea is the same. You know, if they smell bad, they are bad, right? They are on a different level than us, lower level . . . Alright. Unless we can dispel somehow this terrible massive psychosis we have, we are never going to amount to a damn. We better, you know, because we need allies today. I'm making a big point of this because I think it's important.

INTERVIEWER: But, you know the first time the GI has a problem he is, any tolerance that he has is going to be gone, and you know . . .

GEN CONWAY: And they have nothing but problems overseas.

INTERVIEWER: My experience in landing at Pusan started off with the kid who carried my duffle bag off of the ship for me, stole my wrist watch . . .

GEN CONWAY: I know what you are going to say before you said it.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, you know . . .

GEN CONWAY: "Slicky"

INTERVIEWER: The slicky boys who ran the . . .

GEN CONWAY: Destroyed this for you, right?

INTERVIEWER: Just as soon as we had put ashore, so immediately everybody doesn't trust anybody.

GEN CONWAY: Well, my Korean aide came by Friday night, ex-Korean aide - he is in the United States now. And we talked about this specifically and he had been in Vietnam, also and he said, you know it's true, the slicky boy has destroyed faith, confidence, rapport and all, but he said the thing the Americans fail to realize is that if you turn around behind your backs and look at the ghettos and all, anywhere where there is great disparity between wealth, social station and the like, this matter of stealing, theft and all, is going to arise. So, you don't like it, I don't like it either but we have to face the fact that it's natural and normal - it doesn't just happen in Korea, it happens in our country. Look at the stevedores, why do you suppose we have gone to container shipping? We couldn't stand the pilferage. Stealing the eyes out of our own people. So, this is exactly the point. Americans, you and I and everybody else, we go to Korea and the first time a slicky boy hits us, we are outraged and we don't have any conception that that could happen right here in America under similar circumstances if we went down and lived in the ghetto.

INTERVIEWER: Well, just look at the black-outs in New York City, you look at the black-outs and all the looting that took place during the black-outs and you see the immediate . . .

GEN CONWAY: Now you see our cultural and national characteristics emerge. We don't like it but they are there. This is what I'm talking about. I think by education and redressment and so on, we could go a long way toward changing this. Incidentally, I'll hit this one more time, sorry - but you know it's not racial. I'm talking about Americans. The white American and the black American treat natives equally abysmally, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Right. That is right . . . Let's - let me ask you about something that we discussed a little bit. I'm going to take a giant step backwards here to southern France and to our relationships or General Truscott's relationships with the French commanders he worked with in the invasion of southern France and go back to the incident of the inspection that General Truscott was invited to make by General Sudre<sup>64</sup> of his combat command. If I'm correct on that, which led to towering rage by General De Lattre<sup>65</sup> in which you were in the middle of it all because you were translating for General Truscott.

GEN CONWAY: I was the "Polish interpreter." (Refers to President Carter's trip to Poland, 1978.)

INTERVIEWER: And you were the Polish interpreter, in the middle there, but since you were a first-hand participant in that and since that again reflects upon our need to understand the personalities, the traditions, the life-style of our allies, I'd like to ask you to recount that incident there from your point of view and tell us a little bit about how you felt being in the middle between these two generals who were extremely upset.

GEN CONWAY: Well, I could say one word, uncomfortable, which, you know, doesn't begin to describe it. Yes, the incident is recounted in General Truscott's

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<sup>64</sup> Brigadier General Sudre, Combat Command.

<sup>65</sup> General De Lattre de Tassigny, French Army "B".

book, and it was just prior to the invasion of southern France, and we had a great working relationship with General Sudre, who commanded Combat Command B of the French, 2d Armored Division which was placed under General Truscott's command for the landing, only. And then it was going to be released to French Army B, General De Lattre the overall commander. And General Truscott, at General Sudre's invitation made a routine, he thought, inspection of the French unit because we had all the amphibious and other expertise and they welcomed this, at least General Sudre did. But, as you recall, General De Lattre, the Army Commander, was aghast at this breach of international diplomacy, military protocol and the like which he explained in no uncertain terms to General Truscott in my presence at a luncheon. In fact, General De Lattre threatened to withdraw his forces from the invasion as a result of this incident. So, I've also told you that - a luncheon, a lot of wine, cognac, and champagne ameliorated the situation somewhat, this potential catastrophe, and we all settled this. But that's the very point that you mentioned, the interpreter in any situation including Poland is as you know, at a tremendous disadvantage. He doesn't know what each party is going to say. He doesn't dare to translate in the stark terms of which these ultimatums fly back and forth through the air. In a sense, you know, he shouldn't, but he becomes a diplomatic intermediary. He is trying to paper over the cracks and all and then he catches hell from both. So, it's an unenviable role and I mentioned I had it several times in the war. None of them very happy at all. Terrible. But, again that's the not important point. The important point is the failure to appreciate and understand cultural differences and these get us into all kinds of trouble.

INTERVIEWER: Of course in this particular incident, I got to feel sympathy for General Truscott.

GEN CONWAY: Of course.

INTERVIEWER: Through the, you know, apparently he had a good relationship with General Sudre who made the, extended the invitation and then . . .

GEN CONWAY: But didn't tell his boss.

INTERVIEWER: But didn't tell his boss, so there was a lack of communication there. And, apparently, I take it from General Truscott's book that the other French officers also felt embarrassed about the proposition at the luncheon. I rather gather that the luncheon seemed rather long because of the rather icy atmosphere.

GEN CONWAY: Frigid. Exactly. Yes, they all were partisans of General Truscott's. They were all in General Sudre's command. It was only his superior commander who stood on his perogatives. But most commanders do. Patton would not have tolerated it, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Right. Right . . . The last item that we had on our list here to discuss today at any rate and I think we got a couple of more minutes if you have. We do want to talk about STRIKE, MEAFSA later and a little bit more about Korea but this would be the opportunity that you had, post-Korean War to get a good look at both the Seventh Army in Europe and the Eighth Army in Korea, and you had responsible positions in both places and I wonder if you could give us a little insight from your point of view of a comparison of those two Armies; their training, their readiness and their ability to do what they were called upon to do.

GEN CONWAY: Yes, I should say by way of preface, that this comparison will not reflect favorably on the Seventh Army, Europe, which I don't consider to be my fault. The problem lies not in my answer but in the question. I've discussed this with you and you've served in Korea, so you realize that, first and foremost, in every battle, combat, or strategic consideration the factor

is geography. And I just give you the fact that in Korea for example, there is a 150-mile front and all dug-in, barbed wire, mine fields, concrete pill-boxes, all the fire tables, the gun positions, all surveyed in. They know where they go to war and they practice this. In Germany, you can't dig a post hole. When I first went in as the Seventh Army commander in February of '66, I started at the north (left) flank of the Army and I was going to see each battalion in its defensive position. I wanted to check out its defense plan and I was told by the Army G-3, to my amazement, that the troops didn't know what the defense plan was, where their positions were, because it was classified and they weren't allowed to go out there and dig holes anyway. Can you imagine at midnight, a Russian attack and all these battalions rushing out on all these autobahns, trying to get to a position they don't even know about? Well, I think we are getting near the end of the tape and maybe that's the place to end but this is only one of many vital, to me vital differences, all of which detract from the combat readiness of the Seventh Army, willy-nilly. This is no criticism of any commander living or dead, past or present, but it has everything to do with the situation and the circumstances of the two Armies. That's what I'm talking about.

INTERVIEWER: What about - how did you feel as the Seventh Army Commander recognizing what you might have to deal with, you know, in the face of an overwhelming attack. Maybe I better not let you answer that . . .

GEN CONWAY: The answer is - terrible.

INTERVIEWER: I'd like to discuss that a little bit more at a later time but we are kind of down to the end of the tape and we've had a very long interview so I think we'll just call it quits for today.

SECTION V

C-114

INTERVIEW WITH GENERAL THEODORE J. CONWAY, USA (RET.)

by

Colonel Robert F. Ensslin, Jr.

THIS IS COLONEL BOB ENSSLIN INTERVIEWING GENERAL T. J. CONWAY. THIS IS TAPE NO. 5, SIDE 1. WE ARE DISCUSSING TODAY COMPARISONS OF THE SEVENTH AND EIGHTH U. S. ARMY, THE STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE IN KOREA AND THE IMPACT OF THE LOSS OF THE MEAFSA MISSION FROM STRIKE COMMAND WHICH IS A BIG ORDER THERE GENERAL.

INTERVIEWER: We had already started talking about the Seventh Army versus the Eighth Army and I don't necessarily want to make you rehash the comments but the different roles and different challenges of the two armies were important, and we discussed them to some extent, and I think one of your notes referred to attitudes in the two armies. I wonder if you would maybe expand a little bit on attitudes and I didn't know whether you meant troop attitudes, troop morale, or leadership attitudes and perhaps you will elaborate on that a little.

GEN CONWAY: Yes. You know, we have discussed much of this before, but with respect to attitudes, specifically, I am not the first to bring this up. Napoleon, you know, placed great emphasis on the psychological and the physical, the ratio of importance; morale is much more important in other words. So in the case in point, if we look at Seventh Army versus Eighth Army in this context, this is again personal as all this tape is, my idea of the thing, and I point it out to you not to beat this to death, but I had an unusual opportunity to watch both armies. There is a vast difference again, a chasm here in my view, and it derives from the special environment of the two armies - their locations and their area. On the one hand, in Korea, Pyonyang is

three minutes by jet and from Seoul, and the DMZ is out in front of a lot of those soldiers there, so there is an imminence and awareness of this situation. On the other hand, you can flip this on the other side and look at the Seventh Army in Europe. Although recently the papers have come out showing the Hof gap and the Furth gap and big Russian arrows -- they do this every year at budget time to emphasize the danger. Even the President has taken cognizance of the fact that we need more people over there and so on, but the actual people there are not all aware of that enemy threat. Again, if you go down and talk to them, they don't reflect that. There is so much more going on in Europe. The families are there. So all I am saying is that on the psychological side, the awareness, you ask what levels, I say all levels. I think the high commands are equally aware on both sides, but when this gets down to the troop level, the one I think we need to talk about, the fellow that is going to go out there and do this, all the aspects I mentioned; training, the secrecy of plans, inability to develop and fortify a line which is already dug, it's made, it's there in place in Korea -- not there in Germany. They can't even go occupy it, can't exercise on it, and so on. So, to summarize this again, there is in my view a tremendous psychological chasm on the question of attitude, readiness, awareness between the Eighth Army in Korea and the Seventh Army in Germany. In my view at least, this awareness did not exist and I believe doesn't exist in the Seventh Army in Europe today.

INTERVIEWER: I wonder if the President's new interest in NATO, and I really see a concern about NATO being expressed to me more than it has

in some years, I wonder if that will have some positive effect on that attitude in Germany?

GEN CONWAY: My own view is that it won't. It will have a tremendous impact at home and I believe that is the reason for the move. I think it is totally political. The net military value, you know, a few hundred more men is not all that great. And by the time those fellows, whoever they are, get there none of this will, by osmosis or otherwise, they will just join the old troopers in the Gasthauses and that's the end of that. There's not going to be this wave of emotional concern about safety in Europe. It's budget time and on the Hill this is a good thing to bring up. It's quite true the trend is there, it's overwhelming, so what do we do about it. We send more men. But the attitude of these men, if and when they get there, is going to be the same as the old troopers who are there now. They will tell them all about this and that's what they will believe, not the threat.

INTERVIEWER: Well I think it's, from a morale point of view, become more and more difficult to maintain the morale of the troops in Europe with the economic situation getting to where it is. Our people can't live in Europe in the style they could live, well perhaps even a dozen years ago.

GEN CONWAY: You mention a good point again as a comparison. You see, there are no families in Korea. Now on the one hand, this is the thought of some, we have this "hardship tour" mentality but on the bottom line the fact that the families aren't there means that the troops' attention, for better or worse, is primarily focused on the

military aspect of their being there. But turn this around and you see at once that in Europe the primary focus of the married man, the soldier, is on his family, and with all the points you are raising, it is becoming increasingly difficult for them to live on any standard. They are living below German standards, you know, in a kind of knocked-down, battered old houses that the Germans are renting, which is a natural thing for them to do too, but this is another concern and that goes into attitudes. You strike at the man's family, you know, you hit a tender spot.

INTERVIEWER: Well with that gap in the dollar, I think it was once quite a tour to have your family over there and you could live very well, you could have help and live pretty comfortably, but the way it is today, I wonder if any consideration is being given to perhaps making that a hardship tour, not having the families in Europe and shortening the tour there. Maybe that would -- in your opinion, would that have any effect?

GEN CONWAY: Of course it would, and thought has been given to this for some time, but neither you nor I have the time and the tape -- it isn't long enough for us to solve this particular problem -- the rotational thing, the Gyro concept and so on, has been tried and found wanting. The basic reason is you can't insert these people in the midst of a highly developed civilization with all the attractions they have and expect them to live there any length of time without their families. We've been down that route. We can do it at a cost but again you see -- Korea -- the economics of the thing -- it's a bargain, so you save money, come home, they are happier, the families

aren't happier while they are away for a year but they survive. The bottom line in Europe was that it couldn't be done.

INTERVIEWER: Well the people I've talked to who have had Korean tours, I'm thinking about enlisted men and junior officers, their attitude coming back was really as if they had practically been on a combat tour. They felt, you know, we do sustain casualties over there and it is pretty tense up around the DMZ and I think that -- I got that attitude reflected to me very strongly from people who had been over there.

GEN CONWAY: And on the other hand, if you talk to the average fellow who comes back from Europe, he'll tell you about his travels, the Gasthauses, Garmisch-Partenkirchen and the ski season and these are uppermost in his mind. You made a very good point. It's to me so obvious -- what we are talking about. It's reflected in this very thing.

INTERVIEWER: Talking about Korea, let's move over to a discussion of the strategic importance of Korea. Earlier when we talked, you talked about the fact that Korea was outside of our defense plan, that the defense plan that you carried to General MacArthur just excluded Korea, that this probably was an invitation to what happened in 1950, that there might well have been an anticipation, that we would not get back into Korea; indeed we did. Now the concern comes again as President Carter announces our troop withdrawal from Korea. In your opinion, does this open the door to further calculation on the other side that that's outside of our defense perimeter?

GEN CONWAY: It would as far as I am concerned. And, of course, the announcement, the President's announcement first of all, the intended withdrawal, has raised a lot of comment and a spate of articles appeared again reconfirming the strategic importance of Korea, which we talked about before. It is very obvious with a map in front of us and the 750 mile radius from Seoul, which takes in all of the major capitols of Northeast Asia and this is why, of course, Korea is important. So you get authorities like General Richard Stilwell,<sup>66</sup> you know, just retired (CINCUNC, COMUSK) saying in so many words, "Of course Korea is strategically important, of course the withdrawal unsettles a very tenuous, fragile balance which existed but would no longer should we get out." I noticed General Weyand (Retired)<sup>67</sup> comes out now -- the other day -- and Weyand with a similar article saying "it's untimely," I think is the word he used, but at any rate the quick sum of your question -- two points, one would be by virtue of its location again, this wedge in between the major powers of the area, Korea has this geophysical, geopolitical, strategic significance which won't change. Go up or down, it's there. Second, however, are the -- any intimation that we have a lessened interest or lessened commitment is certain to be misread, in my view, by the people who are there and it would be in the direction you are saying. All, Kim Il Sung<sup>68</sup> has to

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<sup>66</sup> Gen. Richard G. Stilwell, CINCUNC, COMUSK, CG Eighth Army

<sup>67</sup> Gen. Fred C. Weyand, C/S U. S. Army

<sup>68</sup> KIM Il Sung, Communist dictator of North Korea

do now is wait 'till this magic year when the last fellow has disappeared which was the situation in 1950. They waited in the same way. This is what the people who read history know, but the problem is not too many do!

INTERVIEWER: You gave me AUSA position paper on Korea to read and we might mention that position paper called Korea in Context. It is an association of the U. S. Army publication I believe that was issued in July 1977 and that might be worth recommending to anybody who wanted to pursue it if they could obtain a copy of that.

GEN CONWAY: It certainly would and in the same context, Army Magazine came out you recall last fall and the cover was a picture of Korea<sup>69</sup> -- a similar article -- any student wanting to get into this point you are raising should read those two articles. The New York Times Magazine<sup>70</sup> section dealt with this last fall in a very well written article in a Sunday edition.

INTERVIEWER: That would be in the fall of '77?

GEN CONWAY: Fall of '77. And last but not least, this spring now Foreign Affairs<sup>71</sup> has come out with another article. These are civilian scientists looking at this from a geopolitical point of view -- political scientists. And they are all saying the same thing. They could all be wrong but it's not likely.

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69 "Yankee Don't Go Home" by W. V. Kennedy, Army, March 1977  
70 "Why We Still Can't Leave Korea" N. Y. Times, 2 Oct. 1977,  
D. S. Zagoria  
71 "The Ripple Effect in Korea by Frank Gibney, Foreign Affairs,  
Oct. 1977

INTERVIEWER: Well President Carter's rationale is some additional military support, arms support, to South Korea and to your knowledge has the South Korean Army kept pace in terms of hardware or are they still using some of the hardware that they were using 20 years ago? Do you know? What kind of shape were they in when you were there?

GEN CONWAY: You remember, it was the M-1 rifle and the 105 howitzer and so on; I think it was our World War II equipment. I think Vietnam helped them a lot in that we were forced, willy-nilly, at least to equip the divisions that fought down there. Unfortunately that's just a drop in the bucket, compared to the total number of divisions, about 20, and I think there were three or maybe four in Vietnam. At any rate, this is a minor percentage of the Army. But looking at that, the present problem is this, that the so-called "Koreagate" investigation, the allegations of corruption, is liable to spill over in my view in the Congress, and influence the voting on military aid, which has nothing to do with corruption and has everything to do with defense security and/or national interest. But when the emotional and the political get intertwined, the results have to be disastrous.

INTERVIEWER: Well there seems to be around the world a lot of different standards of conduct, that have been almost traditional standards of conduct in government, that, you know, we don't accept and certainly I am not suggesting that we should accept, but from your personal recollection and your dealings with the government and with the military, were you exposed to much of this? Did you have feelings about that while you were over there?

GEN CONWAY: There are two sorts of answers to this question. One is absolutely not. The military people in all the countries I've been in, and I guess I should say that really my MAAG service was limited to Thailand and Korea, but as the CINCPACAF, you know, I visited a lot of other countries too, and in no instances were there any, any references to anything like that with my military counterparts. Alright, now the second part of the answer, of course, is less clear. We, some of us, the people I call the realists who recognize that in any international relations there is no such thing as morality anymore than there is in the United States American government. This is a myth but if we say we are great moralists but really don't practice it and if we try to hold other countries to this great moral code, then I think we are in a disaster area again. I don't think it's workable for very positive, real, pragmatic reasons. In other words, there is no relationship between morality and international relations, nor should there be.

INTERVIEWER: We have already reached a double standard on our human rights efforts. We are not consistent in this policy in any way.

GEN CONWAY: We can't be.

INTERVIEWER: And that was the flaw in the program in the first place.

GEN CONWAY: It goes back doesn't it -- just consider for a minute your personal friends. You know, I'm not prying into your private life or mine but those friends are friends. Now they and I, we have some imperfections. We overlook their imperfections, if we want them to be friends, and that's the basis of our relationship. Now this

has to be extrapolated, it seems to me, to all relationships, see, international included. The Koreans are our friends, for example, and we have a long list of reasons why they are and ought to be -- then we have to abide -- we can try to influence them and say to our buddy, "Now you really shouldn't drink so much now, you are driving your car tonight," and things like that. But to talk to them about morality, you know, that's just another subject.

INTERVIEWER: That's right. And that's a good parallel. I really like that, because you really would try to discourage your friend from getting into his car when he has had too much to drink but on the other hand, if you felt that he was not being strict enough with his children, you would be a little reluctant to suggest to him that he wasn't really raising his children properly. Well, we seem -- still after 200 years, quite naive in our relations with other countries in a lot of ways.

GEN CONWAY: We are and for the reasons you just expressed. It is our naiveté and the older European countries don't operate in this way at all.

INTERVIEWER: Would you care to speculate about the end result of the "Koreagate" proposition at this point in February of '78 when it's still unfolding?

GEN CONWAY: I think it's better to let the student of history read what happened in this session of Congress than for me to say what I think is going to happen, which I don't know.

INTERVIEWER: Well we discussed earlier at one time, you know, the

slicky boy proposition and the fact that the poverty-stricken people of the country really look upon appropriating some of our gear as not really being stealing, when we have so much and they have none.

GEN CONWAY: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Now did you -- well you've already said really that in the military, in the officer corps, that you sensed a high standard of right and wrong and inappropriate . . .

GEN CONWAY: Yes, and their appreciation of the fact that we come to a standard and they wouldn't bring it up I'm sure for that reason. It didn't matter, you know, they had been raised in a different school but they were aware of the fact we weren't and acted accordingly.

INTERVIEWER: Let's discuss the MEAFSA<sup>72</sup> a little bit unless you have more to say on the Korean side of the proposition. Now you might define the MEAFSA role and the MEAFSA mission first that you had as CINCSTRIKE<sup>73</sup>.

GEN CONWAY: Alright, we go back to Secretary McNamara and General Adams, Paul D. Adams, who was the first Commander-in-Chief, United States Strike Command, one of the eight, joint, unified, specified commands. Secretary McNamara saw a necessity for expanding this STRIKE role which originally had to do with service roles and missions, getting the Army and Air Force together to be able to operate jointly, which they couldn't because the doctrines didn't mesh. STRIKE, you know, at the time conducted a number of tests on the Air Assault Division and

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<sup>72</sup> MEAFSA: Middle East, Africa South of the Sahara, South Asia  
<sup>73</sup> CINCSTRIKE: Commander-in-Chief, U. S. Strike Command

so on. We know, and the record is clear on this, and they did a good job in my view in bringing these together. But, thereafter, subsequent to this, this is '61, subsequent to this, Secretary McNamara also saw the necessity for closing a big hole, a gap, in the perimeter of the world from the United States' defense standpoint, and this was the area from the west coast of Africa to the eastern boundary of India, and there was no responsible commander in that area. Of course, we had very few, if no forces there either, but as our MAAG interests started developing, our world interest started to develop, Secretary McNamara added this title, Commander-in-Chief, Middle East, Africa South of the Sahara, to the United States STRIKE Commander's title and responsibilities so that his mission, in fact, became mobile and in a strict sense of the word he had two major missions with regard to the area outside of the United States. First, to re-enforce those existing theaters in case they needed forces from the United States that included training, planning, and the movement of those forces to that area. On arrival, they would be turned over to the appropriate commander. And, secondly, the mission was not only to provide, train and plan for, transport, but to actually operate the forces in the MEAFSA area should they by some stretch of the imagination be required. In my tenure, I being the second CINCMEEAFSA, we had occasion, two occasions, to intervene only in the way of extricating American citizens specifically from the Mid East and the '67 War. We did, we intervened, we got them out successfully. Our evacuation of Americans from Amman, Jordan, proved that we could do what we were supposed to do.

That was the limit, naturally about intervention. It wasn't any military intervention as such, but we demonstrated that we could do this alright, so the MEAFSA title rattled along. I hasten to say, and I think it should be made a matter of record, no one else has mentioned this, that there was always some internal tension in the Department of Defense on the one hand and between the Defense and State Departments on the other as to the proper role of the Commander-in-Chief, MEAFSA, because you see you could impinge in certain ways on the State Department's priority in foreign relations. For example, to be specific, even to visit a country in my area, I had to be cleared by the State Department well in advance of a trip.

INTERVIEWER: Which was not the case in the other commands.

GEN CONWAY: Oh no. They lived in their area.

INTERVIEWER: Lived and traveled within the area.

GEN CONWAY: Everywhere. And within the services there was a pulling and hauling. The Navy very frankly did not furnish forces. You remember this goes back to the original agreements on the STRIKE command side now.

INTERVIEWER: I was going to ask you about your relationship with the 6th Fleet in '67 in the extrication affair.

GEN CONWAY: Very easy. We went up through different chains of command and reported to different higher authority.

INTERVIEWER: Which was really what STRIKE command was set up to kind of avoid?

GEN CONWAY: Yes. But you see the Mediterranean, this is the point

isn't it? It's always been argued -- was in World War II where we had a separate Mediterranean theater of operations, which was separate from the European Command. It's being argued today. You went to Leavenworth I know so you realize that a river or a mountain mass or a sea or an ocean can be inclusive or exclusive as a boundary. Now it is being argued that the Mediterranean, with the 6th Fleet in there, is inclusive to the European Command. NATO's interest -- in my time it was a sort of boundary and divided by -- in effect ran down the middle. And you see I didn't have any of that anyhow. We are talking about Africa South of the Sahara -- that was my best -- and that's why it was Africa South of the Sahara -- that lower part of Africa considered to be outside the European domain.

INTERVIEWER: Now just one question about the operations of '67 in extricating our citizens. Where did you mount that operation? Where did that spring from, the forces that you used, where did they come from?

GEN CONWAY: They came from TAC<sup>74</sup> which was one of our two subordinate commands as you know (and MAC)<sup>75</sup>. The Army side, that's CONARC and the air side is TAC.

INTERVIEWER: So really you were using CONUS based forces . . .

GEN CONWAY: Aircraft.

INTERVIEWER: Or aircraft. I just didn't know whether you were able

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<sup>74</sup> TAC Tactical Air Command

<sup>75</sup> MAC Military Airlift Command

to borrow anything closer you know. You think of the carriers of the 6th Fleet being pretty close . . .

GEN CONWAY: Now I add when they got closer -- you remember the Liberty<sup>76</sup> so we won't go into that -- close to Tel Aviv or somewhere like that. They were in sensitive waters and you saw the results so there is -- roles and missions is still hot and heavily debated and, you know, there are places that airplanes can go that ships cannot and vice versa. So this is what the argument is all about.

INTERVIEWER: When we get through with the tape I want to tell you about the paper I just sent in to Leavenworth that I have been working on for a long time.

GEN CONWAY: Good.

INTERVIEWER: . . . which is in this area. Now what about the decision then to remove that role and what about the responsibility for that area today?

GEN CONWAY: The decision in one sense hit me as another total shock, but as I've already implied, it was a long time coming and so I shouldn't have been surprised. You might say, you might say it was going to be inevitable the minute you -- fortunately in my time we had a very strong Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Wheeler,<sup>77</sup> who believed in this and this is what it stems from exactly. If you don't have people up there at the top, military people who believe in it, it's going to go down the drain and it did and for that reason. The arguments for establishing it are still the same, the reasons for

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<sup>76</sup> U.S.S. Liberty, attacked by Israeli planes, 1967  
<sup>77</sup> Gen. Earle C. Wheeler, Chairman JCS

having it are still the same but the political picture changed and that's what brought it down. Now the impact. On the one hand the gap is still there. CINCUSAREUR cannot absorb Africa. CINCPAC cannot absorb the Indian Ocean. These are my views, my judgments; I've spent some time on this matter and they are left without a father and mother. They haven't been absorbed. The Joint Chiefs have taken over certain responsibilities. Well, you can see the Joint Chiefs and what they have to deal with on a day to day basis rather than some little war in Africa. You know, I'm not going to get out on a limb and say we've lost Angola because they have destroyed STRIKE/CINCMEAFSA, the MEAFSA part of CINCSTRIKE, but it did amount to the fact there was nobody to go to bat and, you know, the planning and possible implementation and so on. I don't want to be misunderstood. This was killed in Congress for reasons that are obvious to everybody -- political reasons -- but the fact there was no military headquarters charged with that responsibility at that time in my view led to our taking what I now call the wrong route. We made a mistake and I won't say we wouldn't have made one if CINCMEAFSA had been sitting there, but I say chances of making that mistake would have lessened, that's all. I can say so to answer that about the impact -- we still have a big hole out there in the world and we are not, you know, the responsibility has been divided three ways, CINCEUR, CINCPAC and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, whereas before you had this in one headquarters.

INTERVIEWER: That's right. Leaving STRIKE Command, now readiness commands, really with a CONUS operation, other than the responsibility being prepared to re-enforce around the world.

GEN CONWAY: That's right. They have that same part. In other words, they have roughly about half of the old mission. This includes training, operational readiness and planning, but all the forces moved would be turned over to an appropriate theater commander.

INTERVIEWER: Which then gives them a less nervous role really. It's a less tense mission now than it was when you had the responsibility of being an operator in the area.

GEN CONWAY: Oh, yes, the political connotations have disappeared. That's not a problem for them but the training and the operational readiness are -- the planning.

INTERVIEWER: You had an ambassador on your staff, you had a State Department representative, I don't know if it was Ambassador Bell at that time?

GEN CONWAY: Yes, it was.

INTERVIEWER: But did that help you in your relationships with the State Department?

GEN CONWAY: Oh enormously.

INTERVIEWER: He was able to get you permission to go to the countries you wanted to go to?

GEN CONWAY: Not only the trips and the clearances and all but -- and going to the countries, he knew the various ambassadors when we got there, they were more cordial because he was there. Also, in the State Department when we had things to do -- I tried as a matter of scheduling to hit Washington about once a month because you know "out of sight--out of mind." We were sitting down here (in Florida) but we

were really directly responsible to the Secretary of Defense and, as you know, we had these political responsibilities as well. So, in the course of these visits to DOD, I would also touch base at State and the Ambassador would come along and all his friends of a lifetime were there. So yes, this was a tremendous help.

INTERVIEWER: In your visits over there and in your work through the area, did you have the opportunity to become acquainted with some of the people who were the present leaders in the Middle East?

GEN CONWAY: Not too many. You know, time marches on and my old list of leaders like Haile Selassie and a few others -- those fellows have gone, unfortunately, now. Of course, there are still present Mobuto and King Hussein and a few others are still around -- the Shah of Iran, but you know Africa is in motion and many of the people -- Gowon disappeared in Nigeria and so on. Many have left the scene.

INTERVIEWER: So you really didn't get to the Mediterranean, littoral, until you got east of Suez, is that basically the geography?

GEN CONWAY: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: So you wouldn't have had any dealings with Colonel Quadaffi (Libya)<sup>78</sup> who was probably Lieutenant Quadaffi or Captain Quadaffi about that time.

GEN CONWAY: That's right. Although we did have Wheeler Field (Tunis) and I did visit there. It was one of our deployment airfields but we had no responsibility for the country. Nor did we for Egypt. We didn't have a MAAG assistance program for Egypt at that time but we had

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<sup>78</sup>

Col. Muammar el-Quadaffi, Dictator of Libya

a responsibility of planning for it and I did go to Cairo just before the '67 War as I mentioned and I saw their General Fawzi, Commander-in-Chief of the Egyptian Armed Forces, and we had quite a discussion on military matters. But MEAFSA did not include the northwest Africa littoral. We were responsible for the Horn where this big commotion is going on now (April 1978) you see and some students of political science and history would do well to ruminate on the fact that we have totally changed sides. In my time, we had an aid program to Ethiopia and we were very interested in them. I went and visited the Ogaden<sup>79</sup> and I watched these fellows fighting the Somali intruders, so-called, and guess who we are backing now?

INTERVIEWER: Somalia.

GEN CONWAY: Somalia versus the Ethiopian intruders.

INTERVIEWERS: The Somalis were really clients of the Soviet . . .

GEN CONWAY: Exactly.

INTERVIEWER: . . . at that particular point.

GEN CONWAY: Exactly. The Russians had a strong aid program in Somalia.

INTERVIEWER: Now the Somalias have asked us for help and I think it is rather apparent that we aren't going to give them help and, you know, to me, and this isn't for my opinion, but I would be interested in your opinion about what messages that might telegraph or what kind

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<sup>79</sup> Ogaden: border region between Ethiopia and Somalia

of situations on the heels of Angola where you felt that we made a mistake in Angola and it would appear that we are repeating the mistake in the Horn.

GEN CONWAY: All this says to me, added up, is the same point I made earlier - the impact point of eliminating MEAFSA. Nobody is in charge, you know. It would be my position that we had a better coordinated foreign policy-military policy for this whole area and Africa, specifically, we are talking about now, Angola, Mozambique, the Horn, we "might not have lost Ethiopia" but that's a "what if" hypothesis. We can't speculate on that. But, nevertheless, it goes back to specific points. There is no central headquarters charged with this job.

INTERVIEWER: How about the role of Cuba in Africa? Would you comment or give us some impressions about the role of Cuba in Africa?

GEN CONWAY: Not too many. But you see, our firm position has been all along, President Johnson reaffirmed this -- no foreign troops in Africa. No one had conceived, and it was our firm policy then, that no other forces, extraneous to Africa, should be introduced into the area. Of course, we were basically talking about the Russians and they violated this continuously in many countries. So did the Chinese, you know, by the way. And the Russians had, we don't know, maybe as many as 30,000 Russians in Egypt at one time. We never introduced forces, even at the time of the Schramme Revolt<sup>80</sup> in the Congo in 1967. We sent them (Congo) airplanes and in the U. N. intervention we also sent them airplanes, but no troops, and our policy has

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<sup>80</sup> Major Schramme, Belgian colonist who led revolt in Oriente Province, Congo (Zaire)

been firm in this regard. This goes back to G. Mennen Williams, "Soapy" Williams.<sup>81</sup> "Africa for the Africans" -- well, that's still our policy, but you see everybody doesn't pay attention to it. Some don't observe it, and I am really saying in the past I thought we had the means and the ability and telegraphed to a certain extent the intention about permitting this. But now you see when Congress decided, in their own wisdom, not to advance funds or intervene in Angola, we tipped our hand and said, showed, demonstrated, what we were not going to do. And, you know, again this is speculation, we are looking at some of the results.

INTERVIEWER: Would the Horn then be the responsibility of the Joint Chiefs at this particular point?

GEN CONWAY: I believe it is but I'm not current on this.

INTERVIEWER: Well there are some interesting years ahead.

GEN CONWAY: Of course. In all the talks, here's the point. The strategic significance of Africa and Korea doesn't change. I can pull out the talk that I gave in 1967,<sup>82</sup> it's been a while, (CINCMEAFSA) and it shows big arrows -- Russia coming into Africa, a two-pronged offensive you see right there just before your eyes, just developing. I used to go around and give that talk and people would shake their heads and say, "This is some kind of dream. You are dreaming or

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<sup>81</sup> Gov. G. Mennen Williams, Asst Secy of State for African Affairs  
<sup>82</sup> MEAFSA Talk given by Gen. T. J. Conway at the Army War College, 1967

something; it's never gonna happen." But you see, we go back to George Kennan (Mr. X)<sup>83</sup> and his analogy that Soviet Communism flows like water, seeks its own level, the easy way, wherever it's not obstructed, it will flow and this is what is happening in Africa and will happen all over the world. It's happened already in Southeast Asia.

INTERVIEWER: Is there anything further that we ought to discuss about that? Was there any immediate impact -- obviously there was an impact on your command when the mission was removed but did it have any immediate effects internationally that you noticed?

GEN CONWAY: Well, I've given you a summary. I don't know anything about the effects on the command since I wasn't there. You'd need to ask those who were but -- yes, I think it had an impact which I've explained on international relations. This is subtle and you won't read about it in Newsweek next week but, nevertheless, I'm very positive about this.

INTERVIEWER: When we began our discussions, we talked about talking to you about the things through your career, the points through your career, where you might shed some additional light on any subjects that you felt hadn't really been done very well. I mean subjects that hadn't been well covered in which you might have some insight. Are there any that we may have missed that have come to you in the interim period?

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<sup>83</sup> George C. Kennan, Mr. "X" article, Foreign Affairs, 1945

GEN CONWAY: We undoubtedly missed some, but the ones I wrote down were uppermost in my mind, the ones I thought I could contribute most and unless your curiosity might carry you into other avenues, I think we pretty well summed that up. Those places where I was and the times I was there where some kind of decision or action took place in which I had an interest or knowledge. We pretty well covered that I believe.

INTERVIEWER: Well, my curiosity does lead me in another area. There is something that I would like to discuss with you that's not specific or historic, but at one point in our conversations you talked about your reflections on a military career and that perhaps the young man starting out today in the military doesn't perhaps have as many things going for him as there were when you were starting your career. Now maybe I am misinterpreting that but I gather that there were some things about the military today that you felt were not as attractive as they were in the past.

GEN CONWAY: Yes, of course, I was going at really two things. One is the image of the military in our society and the other is the fulfillment-job-satisfaction aspect of service. I have to say that some of my earlier notions have been overturned in this regard. The military is not, you know, totally popular today. We had a low point certainly in post-Vietnam, but we recovered so it looks to me from where I sit now that the military image is better in our society today than it was the day I enlisted.<sup>84</sup> Well, it couldn't have been lower than that. So you see I really kind of refute my own hypothesis. The

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<sup>84</sup> 1 July 1928, Co. "I", 30th Infantry, Presidio of San Francisco

The attractiveness of a military career has something to do with the public image, indeed it does, but the bottom line on that is those who join up in spite of this image are going to succeed anyway and those who were deterred by this we probably don't want, so there's a nice, neat balance. Now the second part brings us up to date. I want to be candid, as I've tried to be all along. I don't know what the young officer of today thinks, and so all I am commenting on is my perception of the young officer's environment, not necessarily his thoughts. Just how it would seem to me that he would be looking at this, and I guess I am overly impressed, as most everybody must be, by the media and so on which tends to exaggerate, exacerbate the difficulties and the problems. If I pick up a paper, I didn't have the chance this morning, but I'm gonna read tonight that there were a number of shootings over here in Tampa last night. Now you are probably totally unaware of it (even though you live here) and I would be too if I didn't read about it in the paper. But, that's going to be my impression again of Tampa -- tonight -- that place where they are finding these bodies all the time. I think race relations, drugs, the aftermath of Vietnam -- and ticket punching concern us because communications media have reached an elevated platform which didn't exist in my time. Life was primitive, simple, fairly clearcut. Therefore, I would say that to me it looks like it might be more baffling for the young man today. Now, maybe all I'm saying is that it is more baffling for me as I see it, and it might not be nearly all that baffling to them. They might be taking all this in their stride.

INTERVIEWER: Well, you know, I think that perhaps that young lieutenant who comes on active duty today is dealing with a different troop than the troop you were dealing with, and I think that the individual's motivation, the individual's education, the job that the individual soldier has to do is quite different from what it was in the '30's, and as I look at our active Army today, the leadership from the field grade level on up has got to be as experienced and as well educated and as well schooled as anybody has ever had and that certainly applies. It's been weeded out and ripped to death to where you just have survivors left really out of all the people who have served.

GEN CONWAY: You make a good point. The volunteer army of today is not the volunteer army of the '20's and '30's. The dregs of society we have mentioned, of whom I was one, they are not the soldiers we see today. It is a totally different group. That's a very good point.

INTERVIEWER: And I think that the job they have to do is quite different also. Out of our very small standing Army, weren't the bulk of the people really riflemen and cannoners as opposed to being people dealing with missiles and . . .

GEN CONWAY: Yes. You didn't have to worry about computers or missiles or all of those things which we didn't have.

INTERVIEWER: I think really that the young man today has still got very exciting opportunities in the military for the right individual and I think the Army's educational system broadens people a great deal today. I think that having a worldwide Army has got to be -- I'm so

impressed with the people I've met up at the War College. That's what colors my thinking.

GEN CONWAY: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: I've met such impressive people there, but I'm afraid I'm using this tape to make my speech.

GEN CONWAY: No, I think this should be an interchange, and I agree with what you are saying, that the colonel today, as I'm looking back now, we have some really wonderful, highly qualified colonels today. But we are talking about the difference between an undergraduate and Ph.D's. The colonel today has got to be knowledgable, as you mentioned, in so many more fields and not just technical or professional, what we call military, but you know, political, economic, international relations. You name it, and he has to know something about it. And the whole thing of management which, you know, in some ways upsets me because the old managers managed without knowing what they were managing . . . why they did it, and they did it very well.

INTERVIEWER: They didn't know the rules?

GEN CONWAY: That's the only thing; they hadn't been written down yet. But now that they are written down, everybody has to learn them, you know, and try to apply them and this gives sort of, to me, a sense of artificiality, the management notion -- to me the leadership/manager thing is a phony in a sense. It's been invented, an academic distinction which in true life, in real life, doesn't exist. The leader has always been a manager and the manager has to be a leader, you know. What -- we are really seeing is how many angels can dance on the point of a pin. This is a kind of dialectic we can do without.

INTERVIEWER: Well, General, I want to express my appreciation and the appreciation on the department of military history for the time that you have devoted to this, and thought, and it certainly has been a personal pleasure for me and I think it will mean a lot to the people who review your comments in the future.

GEN CONWAY: Thank you. You are more optimistic than I am, but I do appreciate your participation. It's been a great relationship Bob. I want to thank you.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you, sir.

END OF SIDE 1, REEL NO. 5, INTERVIEW NO. 5.

6 November 1978

(Date)

MEMORANDUM FOR: DIRECTOR, USAMHI, CARLISLE BARRACKS, PA 17013

SUBJECT: Access to My Oral History Audio and Video Tapes and Their Transcripts

1. My initials have been placed adjacent to one of the possible access arrangements under subparagraphs a, b, and c below to indicate the degree of accessibility I desire.

a. To my audio tapes access is granted to:

\_\_\_\_\_ all who seek access.

*JK* ✓ \_\_\_\_\_ only those who are determined to be bonafide researchers and scholars by the Director, US Army Military History Institute.

\_\_\_\_\_ only active and retired uniformed members of the Armed Services and Department of Defense civilians who are determined to be bonafide researchers and scholars by the Director, US Army Military History Institute.

\_\_\_\_\_ only those who first secure my permission directly or through the Director, US Army Military History Institute.

\_\_\_\_\_ no one until such time as I direct otherwise or upon my death or incapacitation.

\_\_\_\_\_ (other, please write out) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

b. To my video tapes access is granted to:

\_\_\_\_\_ all who seek access.

\_\_\_\_\_ only those who are determined to be bonafide researchers and scholars by the Director, US Army Military History Institute.

\_\_\_\_\_ only active and retired uniformed members of the Armed Services and Department of Defense civilians who are determined to be bonafide researchers and scholars by the Director, US Army Military History Institute.

*General Theodore J. Conway*

\_\_\_\_\_ only those who first secure my permission directly or through the Director, US Army Military History Institute.

\_\_\_\_\_ no one until such time as I direct otherwise or upon my death or incapacitation.

\_\_\_\_\_ (other, please write out) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

c. To the transcriptions of audio and video tapes access is granted to:

\_\_\_\_\_ all who seek access.

XX only those who are determined to be bonafide researchers and scholars by the Director, US Army Military History Institute.

\_\_\_\_\_ only active and retired uniformed members of the Armed Services and Department of Defense civilians who are determined to be bonafide researchers and scholars by the Director, US Army Military History Institute.

\_\_\_\_\_ only those who first secure my permission directly or through the Director, US Army Military History Institute.

\_\_\_\_\_ no one until such time as I direct otherwise or upon my death or incapacitation.

\_\_\_\_\_ (other, please write out) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. My initials have been placed adjacent to one of the possible access arrangements below to indicate the degree of access that I desire upon my death or permanent incapacitation.

XX be open to all.

\_\_\_\_\_ remain the same as indicated in paragraph 1 above.

\_\_\_\_\_ be as the Director, US Army Military History Institute feels it will best serve the interests of the Armed Services.

3. My initials in the paragraph below indicate the disposition of the literary rights to my Oral History materials upon my death or permanent incapacitation. The literary rights to my Oral History materials become the property of:

TC the United States Army.

or

\_\_\_\_\_ (other, please write out) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.



(Signature)

Theodore J. Conway  
General, U.S. Army, Rtd.

(Print Name)