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CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN

GENERAL EDMUND C. R. LASHER

by

LIEUTENANT COLONEL D. R. LASHER

CARLISLE BARRACKS, PA. 17013

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SECTION 1

(17)

16 May '75
(Date)

MEMORANDUM FOR: DIRECTOR, USAMHRC, CARLISLE BARRACKS, PA 17013

SUBJECT: Access to My Oral History Audio and Video Tapes and Their Transcripts

1. My initials in the paragraphs below indicate the degree of accessibility I desire to my Oral History audio and video tapes and their transcripts.

a. Audio Tapes. Access is granted to:

ECRL ✓ all who seek access.

_____ only those who are determined to be bonafide researchers and scholars by the Director, US Army Military History Research Collection.

_____ 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 Research Collection.

_____ only those who first secure my permission directly or through the Director, US Army Military History Research Collection.

_____ no one until such time as I direct otherwise or upon my death or incapacitation.

_____ (other, please write out) _____

_____

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b. Video Tapes. Access is granted to:

✓ ECRL all who seek access.

_____ only those who are determined to be bonafide researchers and scholars by the Director, US Army Military History Research Collection.

E. R. Lasher

_____ 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 Research Collection.

_____ only those who first secure my permission directly or through the Director, US Army Military History Research Collection.

_____ no one until such time as I direct otherwise or upon my death or incapacitation.

_____ (other, please write out) _____

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c. Audio and Video Tape Transcripts. Access is granted to:

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_____ only those who first secure my permission directly or through the Director, US Army Military History Research Collection.

_____ no one until such time as I direct otherwise or upon my death or incapacitation.

_____ (other, please write out) _____

_____

_____

2. My initials in the paragraphs below indicate the degree of accessibility of my Oral History materials that I desire upon my death or permanent incapacitation. Access to these materials will:

__✓__ be open to all.

_____ remain the same as indicated in paragraph 1 above.

_____ be as the Director, US Army Military History Research Collection 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:

_____ the United States Army.

ERL _____ (other, please write out) To my heirs and assigns. ERL

_____

_____.

_____
(Signature)

E.R. LASHER
_____
(Print Name)

22 August 1976
(Date)

ACCESS AGREEMENT

MEMORANDUM FOR: DIRECTOR, USAMHRC, CARLISLE BARRACKS, PA 17013

SUBJECT: Access to My Oral History Audio and Video Tapes and Their Transcripts--Office, CMH

I consent to have my Oral History Transcripts placed in the US Army Center of Military History, Washington, D. C., for use by members of the Army Staff and other official agencies in preparation of official papers.

I understand that my transcripts will not be otherwise disseminated or reproduced without the consent of the Commanding General, Center of Military History.

SIGNATURE

E. C. R. LASHER, U.S.A. (ret)
(Please Print)

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
US ARMY MILITARY HISTORY INSTITUTE
CARLISLE BARRACKS, PENNSYLVANIA 17013-5008

USAMHI

17 September 1984

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

SUBJECT: Status of Major General Edmund C. R. Lasher's Oral History Transcript

Based on Major General Edmund C. R. Lasher's access agreement which grants the Director, US Army Military History Institute, the authority to establish the degree of access to his oral history materials upon his death or permanent incapacitation, I have directed that a copy of General Lasher's oral history transcript be forwarded to the US Army Transportation and Aviation Logistics Schools as requested for use by bonafide researchers and scholars in the preparation of official studies and papers.

Rod Paschall
Colonel, Infantry
Director

INTERVIEW WITH GENERAL EDMUND C. R. LASHER

by

LIEUTENANT COLONEL D. R. LASHER

THIS IS SIDE ONE TAPE ONE OF THE ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH GENERAL EDMUND C.R. LASHER CONDUCTED BY LTC D.R. LASHER, ON 27 OCTOBER 1972 AT WEST POINT, NEW YORK.

COL LASHER: General Lasher, I'd like to begin the interview by going as far back in your memory as you wish, regarding your early years and the history and some of the genealogy of your family that might have influenced you in your later years that you feel pertinent to discuss at this time.

GEN LASHER: On the 26th of September, 1906, a male child was born to Lorinda Rockefeller and Henry Edward Lasher. The event took place in Germantown, New York (Columbia County). It was one of the small parcels of land which Queen Ann had given to this group of immigrants, and it was settled by them in the early part of the 18th Century. In fact, I am eighth generation on my father's side and fifth generation on my mother's side in the United States. . . or in America. The house in which I was born is still standing. It's an old farmhouse, which has over the years been modeled and remodeled. It had several barns and outhouses that actually belonged to my paternal grandfather. It contained an ice pond and an icehouse, and one of the activities on the farm was to cut and harvest ice and sell it to the community. In addition, it was a straight farm with horses, cows, apple orchards and some various other farming activities.

COL LASHER: And so farming was the livelihood, the primary livelihood?

GEN LASHER: Farming was the primary livelihood. The earliest remembrances that I have of that house in which I was born was a long narrow hall ending in a rather steep stairway to the second floor, and I was born in the southeast bedroom on the main floor of that house. Across the hall from that room was a livingroom with bay windows to the east, and it had a space stove in it (coal burning or wood burning), and I can remember cutting out paper dolls on the floor of that room. Some of these things which I say I remember, of course, can be from hearing others tell about it; but I do have a mental picture of that room, which incidentally, I lived in only until my fourth year.

COL LASHER: Oh really, but you remember that. Is this the house sort of on the corner that still exists as an ice pond?

GEN LASHER: Well, the ice pond is no longer there. The pond is there, but the icehouse is gone. The business is entirely gone. There is no more. As a matter of fact, all along the Hudson River there were icehouses every few miles and (this was the method of refrigeration) in fact, the harvesting of this ice in the winter was a major business all up and down the Hudson River.

COL LASHER: As I remember back in the early '30's myself, that that was still an operating icehouse to some extent.

GEN LASHER: And only about a hundred or two hundred yards -- maybe a quarter of a mile -- from that house was my mother's home. So there was a very close link between the two families, and a great deal of communication between my paternal grandparents and my maternal grandparents. At

that time, I have the feeling now that the closeness of this association was a normal thing in a small village of this kind. It was a lot of going back and forth, and I might run away from home and go to my other grandmother's if I got mad at anybody. We lived there until I was 4 years old at which time my father had an offer for a position in the western part of the state, and we then moved to Rochester, New York temporarily. During those first 4 years one of the things my father did was to make a trip to Ireland to buy potatoes because there was a potato shortage in the United States. And although he didn't know a great deal about potatoes, he did know something, and he was commissioned to go over there and buy potatoes in quantity.

COL LASHER: This was commissioned by . . .?

GEN LASHER: By a potato broker in New York, (this food broker or somebody), a man who dealt in quantity in potatoes. This was quite an event in our lives because very few people went overseas as they do now. He traveled very extensively in Ireland and bought a lot of potatoes and brought momentos of this trip. He brought a great deal of linen both bolt linen and other types of linen that he bought in Ireland. He bought it for all the females of the families on both sides, and some of that linen still exists. Of course, the women would take the bolt material and hem it up and sew it into table clothes and napkins and whatever -- which they did all the time. The women of the families in those days were very much occupied in sewing, mending and doing their own clothing a great many times. Although later on, we had an itinerant dressmaker who would come around; and she would stay and sleep and board for, let's

say a week in a home, and the ladies of the house would gather together the material and the findings, and the patterns that they wanted for a new dress or dresses. And she'd stay there for a week and board and live right in the house and do the fitting there and everything. This was quite a thing, too. So sewing was quite something and making lace and tatting and hem stitching and everything -- and the women did a lot of this. So this was quite an event; this trip my father took, and one of the things he brought back was some small glasses. (We would call them, I suppose, souvenir glasses, now). We referred to them all the time as the "Bobby Burn's glasses", and they had Bobby Burn's picture etched on the side of the glass -- a rather nice souvenir. I inherited them, I guess you could call it, and still have them. They are rather attractive -- very nice little glasses, and about the size of a small orange juice glass.

Both of my paternal grandparents were dead at the time of my birth, so I never knew them.

COL LASHER: You never knew either of your grandparents?

GEN LASHER: Paternal. Both of my maternal grandparents were alive. So I saw some of them and remembered both of them. That was Edmund Rockefeller and his wife Lorinda. I was named for him, and my mother's name was Lorinda and that has been carried down into our family by quite a number of the children and grandchildren.

COL LASHER: Mainly on your sister's side.

GEN LASHER: Yes, on my sister's side. I had no daughters. So, I had no opportunity to use the name Lorinda; and on collateral sides, too, I

have a cousin by the name of Lorinda.

In 1910, about my fourth year, as I say, my father got a new job, and we moved to Rochester, New York temporarily.

COL LASHER: What was your father's profession before that? Was he a farmer?

GEN LASHER: No. He was a haberdasher. He went into the haberdashery business as a partner in a clothing store in Hudson, New York -- which failed.

COL LASHER: That was quite some distance from Germantown, where you lived at the time.

GEN LASHER: No, 8 miles, which isn't much now, but it was quite a distance in those days. My father and mother lived there before I was born, but then the business failed, and my father came back to his father's place where I was born and in the course of looking for a job found this potato job in Ireland. Then upon his return from there, he followed through on this type of business and that's one reason we went to Rochester. It was with a company there that had to do with all sorts of fruit and produce. The objective was that he would manage a factory near Rochester for the production of excelsior pads for the protection, in shipment, of fresh fruits and vegetables. We stayed in Rochester at the Whitcomb House, an old hotel whose most fascinating aspect was a poolroom where I held forth as much as possible at the tender age of four. And if my folks didn't know where I was they could always find me down in the poolroom watching them shoot pool. It was during that year in Rochester that my grandfather died -- my mother's father -- who was in Germantown. I

remember going back for the funeral and he was laid out in a coffin stand in the parlor of his house. I can remember my father lifting me up for some unknown reason so I could see the corpse. Now, why the hell I had to see the corpse, I don't know. But anyway, I remember this, I am positive I remember this.

COL LASHER: Well, those things will stick with you.

GEN LASHER: Yes. But I don't remember the trip going back to Germantown or the trip back to Rochester. Anyway, we apparently got back to Rochester, and during the year in Rochester, I went to kindergarten. I don't remember much about this, but I was in a formalized type of schooling and I suppose did nothing much more than sandbox stuff and finger painting and things like that. Anyway, I was in school at the age of four. We lived on Pearl Street in Rochester in a two-family house. We lived in the upper floor and another family by the name of Beck lived on the lower floor. They were very dismayed when they found that two small children, my sister and I, would move in on top of them; and they were sure they were going to have a lot of disturbance. However, it turned out that we became very good friends; so, apparently whatever I did didn't bother them too much. As I say, we lived there about a year when the situation for my father crystallized; and we then moved to Albion, New York, in Orleans County. This was about 30 miles west of Rochester where the plant was located which he (my father) was to manage. We rented a house at the beginning at least in Albion.

COL LASHER: How big a town was Albion?

GEN LASHER: About 5,000 souls with a heavy Italian and a heavy

Polish population in that 5,000 -- very few colored, two or three families all together. Strangely enough (or naturally enough, probably) the Italians were pretty well segregated, lived to themselves in one area and the Polish did the same thing. . .

COL LASHER: By choice. . .?

GEN LASHER: By their choice? Oh, yeah, there was no question of segregation or anything like that, they just naturally. . .

COL LASHER: Flocked together.

GEN LASHER: Oh yeah! Both of them were very industrious and during the time we lived in Albion, we usually had a maid (we called it a girl) and she would take care of the house, do the cooking, wash the dishes, help with the laundry and that sort of thing. Usually the Polish girls were the ones who did this best, and for years we had one whose name was Sophie. My mother swore by her, because Sophie was apparently a great gal and a bear for work and could cook well although Mother did a lot of the cooking, too. We always had somebody in the house and, of course, this made it very nice for her. My father took over the management of this plant, and we were in fairly good circumstances on account of it. We lived at 3½ East Academy Street. Why they had to have a 3½, I don't know. There were only five or six houses on the block and all on one side of the street because right across the street from us, the block across the street from us, was a high school and grammar school. They were in one big large building of grey sandstone with four floors, large grounds, and at one end there were tennis courts and on the other end of the building was an old baseball diamond.

COL LASHER: That's why they called it Academy Street, I suppose.

GEN LASHER: Yes, because the school was there. I went through all the primary grades from kindergarten to graduation in that school. In the meantime, we had moved to a nicer house as my father's situation improved.

COL LASHER: I was wondering where in the economic-social structure you would have put yourself in those days. I suppose, in the top strata of Albion or the middle, upper middle?

GEN LASHER: Well, I don't know. I suppose the upper middle. But, then when we moved from 3½ East Academy Street, we moved into an area of homes which was an improvement; and one lady who lived near us, a near neighbor, was kind of witty, and she chided us for moving into Ruffle Shirt Hill, as she called it. So we apparently did improve our economic position. My mother was rather gregarious and she made the normal contacts. Socially, she was very active in the church affairs and so forth. I have down here (looking at notes) approximately when we moved. Before we get to that, I would like to mention that where we lived in Germantown we had nothing but oil lamps for illumination.

COL LASHER: Oil?

GEN LASHER: Yes, kerosine lamps. When we moved to Albion, it was gas, and this was quite an advance for us. We had gas in Rochester, of course, in the city, but Albion also had gas; and this was much better although we still had in the livingroom, a table in the center of the room. This was a living room table, and in the middle of this was a great big oil lamp. At night, my father and mother used to sit around that table and he'd read, or they'd read, or she would sew by the light of that oil lamp; so,

we kept an oil lamp quite awhile. When we later moved to 4 East Avenue, we, in Albion, we had electricity.

COL LASHER: What year would that be?

GEN LASHER: That will come later. I've got it down. I'll bring up the move to 4 East Avenue chronologically. In Germantown, I might add that I can remember that one of my tasks every morning was to gather all the kerosine lamps which people had taken up to go to bed (one for each room, at least), and they all had to be brought down and the chimneys taken off and cleaned because the soot had gotten on them. The wicks had to be trimmed, and the containers for the kerosine had to be filled and then they would all be lined up on a shelf in the kitchen so that when we went to bed the next night everybody picked up their lamp and it was all ready for them to go. This is quite a job. It took quite a while for a large family; so, it was a burden which was lifted when this other illumination came in. So you see, I go back that far, at least, to remember this as well as horses and buggies and when the main transportation was horse.

COL LASHER: In Albion, for instance, you owned horses? Your father had a horse?

GEN LASHER: No, not in Albion.

COL LASHER: How did he get back and forth?

GEN LASHER: Automobile, by that time.

COL LASHER: Oh, he had an automobile.

GEN LASHER: When we went to Albion, he got an automobile. We owned several different kinds and several different types. He was a little buggy on automobiles. He liked a nice automobile, too, and so, if he saw a new one

that he liked, why, he would trade. But in Germantown, it was more rural and I rode behind a horse many many times in a surrey (and it actually had a fringe on top) and in a fancy buggy as well as in farm wagons and vehicles of that type. Also, in Albion, we had street illumination which was a carbon arc lamp. These also had to be cleaned and trimmed every-day by city people. They usually hung down in the middle of an intersection of two streets.

COL LASHER: They were gas?

GEN LASHER: Well, yes, and they were suspended out over the middle of the street and dropped down. Then the fellow who came along to clean them had to go up the telephone pole, or pole on the corner, and lower that light which was on a rope, so that it got down to street level where he could take the globe off and clean it and sharpen up the carbon points, then close it and hook it back up.

COL LASHER: Everyday?

GEN LASHER: Everyday. That was quite a thing! Well, it was at 3½ East Academy Street where I started out for school. And it was there that I first learned how to ride a bicycle. My sister was 6 years older than I and she had a girl's bicycle. And it was on that bicycle that I learned how to ride. The Erie Canal was only about a half a block away. And when barges were going along there, it was quite a sight. They were still being towed by horses, incidentally, on a tow path. And while the canal wasn't very deep, it seemed to me as a little boy, as though it was.

COL LASHER: How close was the Erie Canal to where you lived?

GEN LASHER: At 3½ East Academy Street, I'd say less than a hundred yards.

COL LASHER: Oh, really! So it went by your house there?

GEN LASHER: Well, there were two houses, then a street, then another row of houses and in back of those houses was the canal.

COL LASHER: That must have been exciting for a young boy.

GEN LASHER: Oh, yes, and, of course, it was deep enough so that it was verboten for me to get there. In the winter, they drained it, virtually drained the whole canal, but there was a residue of water in the bottom; so, we'd go down there and skate in the winter time. Later on, the canal was widened and deepened as they got newer boats and tug boats and so forth, then they built lift bridges for these bigger boats and barges to get under, and they were quite an innovation, too. (The lift bridge over this canal).

So that was where I started in primary school. My first teacher was. . . I don't remember all of my teachers' names, but she was Miss Sanford. I went through everyone of the grades with varying success, I might add. I am sure that I was not the most brilliant, nor was I the most minable (?) student that went through, but I guess I was about average in both mentality and activity. As I got older and recognized that there was some differences between the male and the female, I, at times, became accused of harassing some of the prettier teachers, particularly a biology teacher. Another boy and I really knew a little something about the birds and the bees, and, of course, that's what biology was all about. And I know I was once accused of embarrassing her because of certain questions I asked in class. The superintendent of our school district was a man by the name of Carmer. He had two children, a boy and a girl, who were considerably older than I and older than my sister as a matter of fact. The boy was

Carl Carmer. Carl Carmer became a historian and writer and his first national success was the book entitled, Stars Fell on Alabama. He later on became very interested in the history of New York State and New York staters, as he called them. He wrote many, many books about New York which were very interesting. He is also very interested in the Hudson Valley and what it is, what it has been and what it stands for. He lives down near Tarrytown in an actagon house overlooking the river. That's just below Lindhurst, just below the Tappan Zee Bridge. Well, Carl Carmer lives down there now, and he's well in his eighties, but still active in historic preservation. He's been active in the scenic Hudson. For instance, against the attempt of Con Edison to put a new station up there at Storm King.

COL LASHER: Nuclear . . . ?

GEN LASHER: Yes, and he's been against this, and in the forefront of the fight with Cornelia Otis Skinner and others. I have continued to contribute my little bit every so often to help to pay the legal fees to fight this thing through because there are other ways of doing what Con-Ed wants to do. I think that this particular stretch of the Hudson River from Cornwall Bay down to Peekskill Bay (which is called the Highlands) is one of the most scenic areas in the world, and it should be maintained in its original pristine beauty if it possibly can be. And all encroachments like this should be resisted. Now, back to grammar school. One of the things I particularly remember which rather reflects, I think, my father's position, was that he planned a special Fourth of July celebration one year, went to Rochester and came home with baskets full of Fourth of July nightworks,

such as, skyrockets, pinwheels, and roman candles. We lived right across from the school which had a good big yard, and you could tack these pinwheels up on the trees. So, we invited all the kids in the neighborhood and had a great big Fourth of July fest, which was a lot of fun and of course, everybody came. I remember that very vividly.

COL LASHER: Approximately how old were you then?

GEN LASHER: Oh, I was probably eight, nine or ten.

COL LASHER: Still in grammar school?

GEN LASHER: Oh, yes. My third grade teacher's name was Miss Reynolds and I happen to remember her. I don't remember my first and second, but my third grade teacher was Miss Reynolds. About 1917, when I was eleven, we moved from there near the school to 4 East Avenue, Albion which, as I said previously, was quite an improvement in our status. It was a much larger house in a better neighborhood, with much larger grounds, a big barn with two stalls in it and a hayloft. (Although we didn't have horses or hay, but lots of room in it). It had space for three automobiles in there. There was also a large garden. My father's particular bent in that regard was asparagus. He had one of the finest asparagus beds in the whole county, I suppose. We loved asparagus, and we had so much that we could give some to the neighbors. My father took great care of it and kept it over the winter, you know -- piled it up so the roots wouldn't freeze. It was quite a deal and we were quite proud of it. Another thing we were proud of was the sweetpeas that we raised. They were raised on vines, and the vines were trained on to wire netting which was vertical. We always had beautiful sweetpeas. So, my father had quite a green thumb actually,

and the time to do it since he was manager of this plant and doing pretty well. As I say, when we moved there about 1917, it improved our economic position. My father did quite a bit of work to the house. He put new hardwood floors in the rooms that didn't have them and renovated the electrical system. (It was electricity in the house). That was an improvement, you see, over the gas. It had three livingrooms and a big diningroom, a large old-fashioned type kitchen.

COL LASHER: Wood burning stove?

GEN LASHER: Yes, wood or coal. Everytime we had steak, my father would insist on cooking it. He'd bring in some apple tree wood and put it on top of the coals until he had a bed of apple tree embers on which to broil the steak which, he claimed, improved the flavor of the steak. He was quite a hand in the kitchen, too, and didn't mind fussing around in the kitchen.

COL LASHER: Kind of like you.

GEN LASHER: Yes, and so I better go back a little bit to 4 East Avenue again when we got our first automobile. Now the very first automobile we had was called a Jackson. Even then we had slogans and then the slogan for the Jackson car was "No hill too steep, no sand too deep for the good old Jackson car", then later, we had the Cole, the Cole Eight. This was a roadster and a snappy roadster it was, too and a real jazzy car. After that, we had a Case car.

COL LASHER: Now what did these cost, do you remember?

GEN LASHER: No, I don't remember.

COL LASHER: What year are you talking about when you got the first car?

GEN LASHER: Well, the Jackson was just about right away after we got to Albion which would be 1911, and then the Cole came along maybe a couple years later, and then the Case came along about 1916, '17. This was built by the J. I. Case Company which was essentially a farm machinery manufacturer which is still in existence. They still make farm machinery, but they took a flyer in automobiles for awhile and didn't do too well. It was one of the first two-door jobs. You had to get in the front door, then you moved over to an aisle between the two seats in the front to get in the back. It only had two doors on it. (They called it clover leaf in those days, that was a clover leaf design). Now, going back even before this, back to Germantown, I can remember one of my uncles had an old Ford with a right hand drive, shift gears on the outside . . over here . . to the right, not on the floor board, but outside. . there was no door there, the dash was straight up with a windshield, big brass rods supporting the windshield running diagonally down toward the front axle. It had big brass headlights which did nothing more than flicker, and it had a crystal light tank on the side, and you put water in it and I guess, it was some sort of, I don't know what was in that tank, but you put water in it and it produced gas, and through rubber tubes was taken to the headlamps. Before that, it was kerosine. There were also kerosine sidelights on the car. But presto-light was pretty good. They really illuminated the road for -- 2 feet. I traveled a lot of those. Then the Model T came out and this was quite an innovation with the pedals on the floor, you know. You didn't have any gearshift or anything, you just had a brake lever there. I might say here, that after we moved to Albion, because of the strong family ties

we had, my mother would take my sister and me to Germantown every summer after school was out, and we'd come back before school started. At first, we went by train and later on by automobile.

COL LASHER: Which is about how far from Germantown, by the way?

GEN LASHER: About 300 miles -- bad roads, terrible, long trip. We had to get up in the dark.

COL LASHER: And a long train ride, too, in those days?

GEN LASHER: And a long train ride, yes. The train we took was called the Empire State Express which was about the fastest train in the New York Central at the time. We took it at Rochester. We couldn't catch it at Albion. We'd take a local into Rochester, the Niagara Falls branch of the New York Central which ran through Albion, go into Rochester, catch the Empire State Express in Rochester to Albany, and then a local down from Albany. The Empire State Express was a very fancy train, sooty, dirty, probably very slow. Later on, we drove it. My father would take us down and he'd stay a few days. When we were to come home, come back to Albion, why, he would come down after us and, again, stay a few days. This indicates a family tie, a familial association, which was rather prevalent, I think, everywhere in those days. Much more so than now, because of the high mobility of families. There are no more roots down like there used to be. And when we went to Germantown, my father and mother were going home. We kept this up for many years into probably 1920, '21, and this was quite an event -- it was quite a trip. And when we drove it, we piled things into the car and had no place for the kids. We had running boards in those days, and there were little gadgets that you'd fasten on the

running board and then slide like a telescopic gate, you know that opens up. Well, then you'd clamp that, open it up and clamp it on the running board and then between the running board and the body of the car, you could put bundles or suitcases. Well, of course, you couldn't get out of the door, you couldn't get in or out on that side. So, it was quite a caravan type of movement, but it was a lot of fun for my sister and me, and we always looked forward to it. Mother would fix up a big lunch and we would stop by the side of the road, and always argue where we were going to stop or when we were going to stop, but we'd stop and have coffee and sandwiches and get on with it, with probably fifteen or twenty blow-outs on the way.

COL LASHER: Really?

GEN LASHER: Oh, yeah. A lot of tire trouble. The roads were terrible.

COL LASHER: Were they paved roads?

GEN LASHER: Some. By then, we had some tar roads.

COL LASHER: Did you make the trip in one day?

GEN LASHER: Yes.

COL LASHER: Three hundred miles?

GEN LASHER: Yes.

COL LASHER: Under those condition?

GEN LASHER: Oh, yes, but we started out about five o'clock in the morning, and by the time we got to Rochester, the sun was coming up, and then by the time we got to Germantown, it was well after dark.

COL LASHER: And your father was tired, tired as hell!

GEN LASHER: Oh boy, and he had to do all of the driving, of course. But,

we all had fun, and like everything, the difficulties of those trips with the heat and cross children and everything were forgotten. In later years, we would reflect on what a lot of fun we had. We forgot about all these other things. My sister and I, of course, still talk about some of them every once in a while. It was during this period that we did that every summer, so I didn't actually stay in Albion much, and there wasn't much for me to do in Germantown although this visit occupied two or three months of each of my years. At this time, one of my uncles, Frederick, (my mother's brother) was a contractor for digging wells. Of course, this is where most of the water came from in those days. People had their own wells. He had quite a job. He had several rigs--I guess that's what they call them, just as they do the oil rigs. They were mobile and would be taken around from site to site as he got new jobs. He had several crews working all around the whole area and I used to travel around with him in his old Ford (without any front doors) when he went out to inspect what this rig or that team was doing. He would go around from one site after another, and every once in awhile, I would get to go with him, which was quite a thrill to see the guys as they came out oily, grimy, and sweaty and explained to my uncle what they were doing, and how they were getting along--whether they had found water or not, you know. This was all very exciting to me, and it was on both sides of the river, so I went back into the Catskills every once in a while on these trips.

COL LASHER: How old were you then?

GEN LASHER: Oh, this was over a period of years from the time I was about five or six to about fifteen.

COL LASHER: Did you work with him at all?

GEN LASHER: No, I wasn't but five, six or seven. I didn't work.

COL LASHER: Well, I meant when you said that you were up towards maybe fifteen that you might have actually worked.

GEN LASHER: No, I was. . . No, I didn't, of course, I was too young, particularly in their opinion. Incidentally my mother's sister also married a Lasher, His name was Stanley, Stanley Lasher, but he was no kin of Henry Lasher, except way, way back. My aunt and uncle had no children, but that uncle of mine owned a telephone company, and this was a very exciting thing, too, you know. He'd have to go out and inspect a lot of things, so I rode around with him quite a bit. He was always putting in new (he had several men working for him) phones and then had to run lines from the road down to where the house was. The poles had to go up and the men wearing spikes climbed the poles. He drove what we call a pickup truck no, which was an old touring car with everything off but the back seat, and then they put a box on it, behind the back seat like a wagon box, and that's where they carried their tools and gear and so forth. As I said, I rode around with him a lot, too. This was also a big thrill. But those are the only things I had to do because I was with mostly adults. I had two friends. One very good friend and one rather casual. The very good friend was a son of the minister, his name was Kenneth White and we were of an age and we played a lot together those summers when I went down there. The other is a fellow by the name of Miller, Walter Miller, who is a little bit older than I, but came from a very nice family and he had a lot of books which I borrowed. I read a lot -- boy's adventure books

and things like that. Walter Miller is now the historian for Columbia County. He is, as I say, a couple years older than I; and he is very knowledgeable in the history and genealogy of the families of Columbia County. You remember the four documents that I had done for the church?

COL LASHER: Yes.

GEN LASHER: In memory of my mother?

COL LASHER: Yes.

GEN LASHER: A lot of the background I went to Walter Miller for. These documents went back to about 1640-1645. He had some old maps that we used to try to trace some of the boundaries of these documents and try to locate them on the present day maps, which we did for some of them. It was a very interesting project, and Walter was very helpful, but I have hardly seen him in the intervening years. But he would loan me a lot of books (he was old enough so that he didn't play with me when I would go down to Germantown in the summer), but they were books he had read and set away, so I would go over there and I would rummage through them and carry back five or six of them and read them and then go back and get another load. That was the extent of my activities in that period, although they were interspersed with. . . here and there. . . an excursion. By excursion I mean, the same as we have now, except most of it was usually on the river with boats, to various points of interest over across the river. . . to Catskills and then up into the mountains. . . or we'd take the dayliner, as they called them, and travel down to Bear Mountain and back, or up to Albany. There were several of those and we'd have family picnics (this was another thing) and church picnics during the summer. In a small town

like Germantown these were the social activities, and this was all there was to do. You had to do it yourself.

COL LASHER: Well, I remember the church picnic as being one of the big events of the summer.

GEN LASHER: My father had an old boyhood friend by the name of Rockefeller, John Brodhgad Rockefeller, and they were apparently the cut-ups when they were in their teens or maybe in the early twenties. Brod (as they called him) and my father, a couple of times, happened to be in Germantown at the same time when there was a church social; and they were still cutting up. They were very good friends, very close. I called on Brod once a few years ago; he lived outside of Hartford, Connecticut. Your mother and I (I think probably you remember) took a trip down through Ohio to New York and then we rented a car in New York and drove to Montreal in the fall. (This was after we had moved to Chicago). We also intentionally hit Connecticut and New England during the fall brilliance of the landscape. Well, I planned and we stayed at Hartfort, Connecticut one night, and that next morning I got up; and your mother stayed in the hotel, and I went out to see Brod. He had lost a leg, and it was pretty tough for him to get around. I hadn't seen him for years, nor he me, and we had quite a reunion. He could drive a car but didn't very much. He was very comfortable since he had made a pretty good success of himself. At his place there, he had a housekeeper who would drive him and really acted as chauffeur, too, even though he could drive. It really does your heart good to stop and pay a little attention to these people who are elder citizens, sitting almost friendless day after day with nothing much to do.

Here I come as a little boy to him, and talking about the old times. You could sit for hours and hours and hours and just gossip about this, you know. I've done this with several people and I feel refreshed after I've done it. I'll tell you later on in my story of another such having to do with West Point -- a very interesting thing which occurred about six or seven years ago. Well, anyway, I am getting off the point. Those years were quite delightful. We were well off and we had automobiles. . .

COL LASHER: More than one at anytime?

GEN LASHER: No, no. Well, yes; at one time we had two cars in that barn. My father liked automobiles enough to cement a washstand in the barn and run water to the barn so that he could wash the cars. So, we would get two cars when. . . as a matter of fact, we got three cars when we had visitors. Anyway, seldom was there a period when we had two cars; mother didn't drive and I didn't drive. There was really no need for it. In those days, not many people had cars at all, you know!

COL LASHER: So you really were in more or less the upper strata . . .

GEN LASHER: There were few people in Albion, of which there were maybe eight or ten families I might include in that category who were wealthy because of early investment in Eastman Kodak stock, around the turn of the century, when George Eastman was first making his successes in Rochester. Apparently that stock has been split several times, paid good dividends, and probably because of splits, they had been able to sell off and make other investments. This was the primary reason for the wealth they had, and it was not inconsiderable for the times.

COL LASHER: Did your father have any stock, or stock options, or buy any

stock in the company in which he worked?

GEN LASHER: No.

COL LASHER: He was strictly a salaried manager.

GEN LASHER: That's right.

COL LASHER: Do you have any idea of what his salary was?

GEN LASHER: Oh, I don't, I really don't. I know this -- that after he left this particular job, we were quite excited later on when he was getting a hundred dollars a week, which was five thousand dollars a year. Now that's a lot of money in those days. So that was, Oh, I would say that was in perhaps the early twenties and it was quite an exciting thing.

COL LASHER: You've skipped World War I, at which time you were about twelve, I guess.

GEN LASHER: Twelve or thirteen.

COL LASHER: What do you remember of that. . . of the war and the effect it had?

GEN LASHER: I remember wanting to go to the Navy.

COL LASHER: At age twelve?

GEN LASHER: Or thirteen -- somewhere along there.

COL LASHER: Really?

GEN LASHER: Well, you see the war started in 1914, World War I, at which time I was eight years old. Born 1906, the war started in 1914 and we got in it in 1917 or 1918, you know, and so I wasn't very old. But I remember reading a thing in one of the magazines we had which showed a battleship from the front and there was a picture of the crew on this battleship

with the big guns pointing toward the camera, and the crew were all over it and there was a lot of blurb about it, and I thought gee. This was the hero thing from way back. So I got the yen and wanted to do my bit with the Navy. Otherwise, I remember little. It had little effect on us, really. There were some shortages, sugar was one thing, but that really didn't bother us. My father was not subject to the draft, he was not only over the age, but he had two dependent children, and in those days, this exempted him. But he belonged to what we called the Home Guard and he was issued a uniform of sort, a rifle, and a campaign hat. I remember it had -- I believe it had -- a red, white and blue hat band with acorns -- you remember? I think it was red, white and blue. And once a week, he would go out to the fair grounds with everybody else and they would drill.

COL LASHER: This was your first exposure to the military, so to speak?

GEN LASHER: Yes, that was my very first.

COL LASHER: Were you intrigued with it particularly?

GEN LASHER: Oh, no.

COL LASHER: So it had no real lasting affect?

GEN LASHER: Although I was kind of proud of my father because he. . . if they wouldn't let him go to war, why, at least, he was doing what he could do. This house, this new house we moved into at 4 East Avenue in Albion, New York, was much larger -- about a couple of acres. It had five bedrooms in it, and, as I told you, a large hall and three livingrooms, plus a separate lavatory downstairs, which was quite something.

COL LASHER: Flush toilet?

GEN LASHER: No. It had a flush toilet upstairs, but downstairs was just a sink and basin where you could wash your hands before you went into dinner or something. But that was unusual. Also, there was a big kitchen. It was a very nice house with very nice grounds. I always had a dog of one kind or another. One of them was run over by an automobile and we buried him there. I remember that, and I was very distraught at the time. Later on, we got interested in Irish Setters and we had a female Irish Setter, and we bred her two or three times -- beautiful dogs they are, you know. My father got very interested in this, too. I used one of the old stalls in the barn for the mother when she had her puppies. Mother and Father would go out and make sure the puppies all got fed because they were very prolific, and often times, an Irish Setter (as well as some other breeds) will have more puppies than they have teats for them to feed on. Then you've got to work on this, or you lose.

COL LASHER: The weakest ones aren't going to get much.

GEN LASHER: Get pushed to one side. And that was, made quite an impression. But I liked the dog as a dog, and I would go out with the dog. . . Out in the area back of the house was all farmland and woods. I enjoyed going out with the dog and just messing around, walking and tramping around and discovering new things. I am sure that I didn't get more than two miles from the house, but it was very interesting. Another thing I went in for a couple of years with another kid in school, was trapping. We had a lot of muskrats around and a lot of skunks under our barn. I just put a trap in a hole under the barn and I would catch skunks, even though nobody liked me doing it.

COL LASHER: They would smell the barn up, wouldn't they?

GEN LASHER: Well, they'd start coming out of the hole out from under the barn, and a leg would get caught in the trap and they would try to get out, and then they would go back in the hole with the trap and all. Theyowould go to the end of the chain and there they'd stay and there they'd stink! I tried to get them out, trying to pull them back -- pull them back where you could kill them. I had to use a rake to -- get the teeth of the rake in the chain and I was far enough away so that I could pull them out through the hole and then either shoot them or club them to death. But, of course, the value of the skunk pelt varied inversely to the amount of white -- the lesser white, the more valuabe the skin was.

COL LASHER: The less white?

GEN LASHER: The less white, the more value of the skin.

COL LASHER: And these were for coats or what?

GEN LASHER: Yes. That's what they eventually went to. At one time, skunk fur coats were quite stylish. Muskrats, I don't know if you know of the muskrat or not, but he lives somewhat as the beaver does, only on a less grand scale. And his fur is quite good, also.

COL LASHER: Very beautiful.

GEN LASHER: Yes. So, for this we had to buy the traps, you know, this other boy and I. . .we'd invest in them and then we would go out and set a string of them in a circle and then go out early in the morning (about five o'clock in the morning) and move around each one of these traps and see if we had a muskrat in them. Sometimes you did, and sometimes you had a leg only, sometimes you had a sprung trap, and nothing. But we'd pick

up one or two every morning and sell them.

COL LASHER: That leg only means that he bit his own leg off, didn't it?

GEN LASHER: Or the strength of the spring of the trap broke it and snapped it. Well, that was one of the factors and during this time, also, I joined the Boy Scouts which I enjoyed. The scoutmaster lived out in the country about four or five miles. His house was kind of a headquarters. He was quite an Indian buff, and down southwest of Albion, there was a large Indian Reservation, Tonawanda Indian Reservation. Once a year we'd go down there and participate in some of their councils in a big long house. It was quite an experience.

COL LASHER: How far was that?

GEN LASHER: Well, he lived on a farm about four or five miles from town.

COL LASHER: No, I meant the Indian Reservation.

GEN LASHER: Oh, that was another thirty miles down to the southwest. It's still there, the Tonawanda Indian Reservation. This experience with Indians as a Boy Scout was quite exciting, of course, but I never did get to where I thought the Indian was a great man as many people have, particularly in recent years. As a matter of fact, as time has gone on, I have been out of sympathy with the cause of the Indian in the United States, simply because I don't think he has done for himself what he could have done, or should have done. Had we not come to America when we did, the Indians would still be sleeping in teepees with their fires in the center of it.

COL LASHER: I am sure of it, but on the other hand, we, ourselves have taken advantage of them.

GEN LASHER: No question about that, but we have taken advantage of them primarily because they have allowed it and where we have helped them, they have been very wasteful and profligate with what we have given them and allowed them.

COL LASHER: Except a few of the smarter ones. There are some who raised themselves up quite well.

GEN LASHER: That's right, but only with our help. So I am not in sympathy with this particular minority in our community. I think they've got a long way to go before they can claim for themselves full participation as they are trying to do in little groups here and there such as at Alcatraz, and so forth.

COL LASHER: You mentioned that this little reservation is still in existence out there.

GEN LASHER: Oh yes, it's one of the reservations.

COL LASHER: And there are still Indians?

GEN LASHER: I suppose so. I haven't been there for forty or fifty years, but I suppose they are still there, alive and kicking and bitching and making more Indians. Of course that was a relatively brief span in my life, but I did like the Boy Scout part because we went on hikes, which I liked. We slept out overnight, which was exciting and fun, and we'd hunt for stone implements since there were lot of them around there. This was in the Western part of the fingerlake region, and there were many small tribes of Indians all through there. So there was a lot of Indian lore, and there were several Indian mounds in the area. I did enjoy it very much and I particularly enjoyed the scouting part of it. That was my

first interest in scouting, and I got to be a first class scout and made a few merit badges. I think my age overtook my interest in it, for I never became an Eagle scout. I never got that many merit badges, but I got a lot of them anyway even though that faded as I grew older and my interests went elsewhere.

COL LASHER: How old were you when you more or less gave up?

GEN LASHER: Probably thirteen or fourteen. This period lasted maybe four years from age eleven to maybe age fifteen or something like that. I would like to go back for a minute. I'd like to relate some of these early days to some of the things which have to do with the pursuits I've followed in later life. Transportation being one, for instance, and I go back to my time in Germantown where of course most of the transportation when I was very, very young was by water. Although the railroad was running of course, it was called the New York Central and Hudson River Railroad, which later became part of the New York Central system, which ran down the river there. The West Shore Railroad on the other side of the river was an entirely different firm, entirely different company at that time. However, much cheaper than the railroad were the riverboats.

COL LASHER: And the barges on the Erie Canal, too, I suppose.

GEN LASHER: And the barges on the Erie Canal, too. The road on which my grandmother lived, where we went every summer, went directly west down to the river and there was a dock and the boats would stop there and pick up produce at night, and deliver it in New York in the morning. These boats would ply all along the river on both sides, picking up whatever

fruits or vegetables that were produced in the area and take them down to New York and arrive at the auction market in the morning.

COL LASHER: Germantown, if I am not mistaken, was an area where a lot of apples, pears and cherries were grown.

GEN LASHER: Cherries and a lot of berries of all kinds starting with strawberries and currants, blackberries and gooseberries.

COL LASHER: As opposed to grain . . . ?

GEN LASHER: As opposed to grain, there was very little of that except for local usage, I suppose, but very little grain. Buckwheat; there was a lot of buckwheat grown around there and a lot of oats, but that was for local consumption, for their own feed for their own animals. These big wagons would come down maybe about four or four-thirty in the afternoon, drawn by horses, full of packed cherries or apples or whatever, and they would go down to the dock. My grandmother's place was perhaps a mile and a half from the river. They would come from their farms farther east and they would knock off work say two or three o'clock in the afternoon in order to get the things packed and on the wagons and then the horses would go down, and they dropped them at the dock and get their receipts for them. Most of them had a broker in New York to whom they consigned their fruit, and he would get the best price at the auction. But the boats would come down and pick these up at night, depending on what line or what boat you shipped on. They'd pick up around ten, eleven, or twelve o'clock, and get to New York in the morning.

COL LASHER: They would get it down to . . . all the way down to New York?

GEN LASHER: Of course it was down hill -- down stream. Although the Hudson River is a strange river you know, it was referred to by the Indians as

the river which flowed in both directions.

COL LASHER: Because of the tide?

GEN LASHER: Yes, and it's one of the longest tidal rivers in the world, incidentally. Did you know that? The Hudson River is often referred to as an estuary rather than a river because of its tidal length. The water is saline to some extent as far north as Poughkeepsie, and the tide runs more or less to some extent beyond Albany, which is about a hundred and fifty miles north of the sea. So this is one of the longest tidal rivers in the world and therefore becomes more an estuary than a river as far as that part's concerned. This is one of the difficult things, as far as the disposition of waste matter which we are now so interested in. One of the difficulties there is because when you get up to around Albany and Troy you get an ebb tide which flows south. And that stuff (waste) maybe doesn't make it to Newburgh before the ". . . tide comes up. This is one natural phenomena of which the Hudson River is one of the outstanding examples and one of the few in the country. The river, of course, formed a commercial highway for the produce of these farmers all along the river on both sides. Now on the west side of the river down around Highland in that area across from Poughkeepsie, a great many grapes are gown; it's a great grape and wine country, and, of course, that stuff was all shipped the same way. Now, going back a minute, one of the reasons for the ice-houses was because of the perishables. Those icehouses were always near the docks, and over the summer if they needed ice to preserve these things as they went down to New York they had ice available right nearby.

COL LASHER: Well, you emphasized the boat--shipping by boat as opposed

to railroads which did run. I presume that they could make it a good deal faster, but you kind of indicated that the prime means was by boat and I wondered. . .

GEN LASHER: Well, this was in my earlier life, but as the railroad became more efficient and they got cars that could handle them, (perishables) and the prices went down and they began to compete, the steamboat, the side wheeler which they phased out and the railroad phased in. Then the same parade of horses and wagons were coming down, but instead of loading on the boats they were loading into refer cars, (refrigerator cars) which had been spotted there for this purpose. The railroad knew about how many carloads would come down to Germantown dock, of an afternoon. They would spot those cars there in the morning and then they'd load, and they would be picked up by a train which was going south. But these docks were very close together on both sides of the river simply because you had to get a decent days work on the farm for harvesting the crop, whatever it was, and get down there so you could get home with the horse and wagon in time for supper. Sometimes supper wouldn't be until eight or nine o'clock. So, you had to have the docks close together, or else if they were much farther apart you wouldn't have been able to have much of a harvest each day because you would be in transportation so long with a horse and wagon. Well, that evolution which pushed out the boat because of time brought in the railroad car. Then as we got motor transportation you could afford to have your docks two or three or four times as far apart, because in the same period of time that it took them to drive a horse and wagon from the field to the dock you could drive a truck much farther. But gee,

before this these farmers would come in and of course that wagon was slow and the horses wouldn't run, they just walked. So you had a radius there of only about eight or ten miles at best from the water's edge.

I watched this evolution occur although I didn't realize it until well later on and then in retrospect as a comparison of what was going on. Progress is a quite interesting thing.

COL LASHER: Oh sure I would imagine that a ten mile trip on one of those slow carts took a long time.

GEN LASHER: I tell you! Well, back then we had horses and cows and everything. I've milked cows and it was only one of the things I did at grandmother's. I remember also. . . Out in the back lot I had a hut. This friend of mine Kenneth White, that I mentioned before, we had lot of adventures out there. Another thing I remember. . . the ladies, the women folk, after they got their household duties done in the morning, the afternoon was spent on the front porch doing their sewing and knitting or tatting or lacing or whatever they did. Embroidery -- I remember they had these old rings, embroidery rings, that they used. And chat. . .

COL LASHER: And chat yes, that was the quilting. . .

GEN LASHER: And they were quilting too, but they'd chat about the same things, you know.

COL LASHER: Day in and day out.

GEN LASHER: This was no good for a little boy...which I was then. All in all, a rather boring summer for me, and I had to make what fun I could and I couldn't make very much because there wasn't much to do. These are just highlights I am repeating now. Then of course, there were the day liners we called them, "Hudson River day liners" which were the

passenger ships. There were some night boats, and we called them night boats. But the night boats were primarily freight. The day liners would come up from New York to Albany and back, and it was a day's trip one way. And the night boats would be an overnight trip. They would take passengers, however; and one of the features of the trip down from Albany, at night was the search lights on the boats. They would pick out points of interest on the shore, and using these very strong search lights, they would illuminate them for the passengers as they went down. It was always a thrill if you were watching for one of the night boats (you would know about when they came because they ran on schedule) -- they squirted the search lights and you got in the glare of the search light and were able to wave -- this was a real big deal. Those boats were pretty big, the biggest one...the day line is extinct now, although they have just built a new one, a new boat, just within this last year it was commissioned. It was the first one that's been built in many, many years. In the old fleet, the biggest one was called the Washington Irving. It was one of the grandest riverboats that was ever on the river. It had a tremendous speed for that time -- so much so that they never could open it up because of the swells it made along the shore; and the small boats along the shore would be in danger of being capsized. If we were in swimming in the river when the day boat went by, we always got out because the waves were so high when they came into shore.

COL LASHER: Is that right?

GEN LASHER: Yes, from the wake of the boat. During that time, one of our favorite trips from Germantown was to go down to West Point and picnic

and come back in a day.

COL LASHER: On a day liner or . . . ?

GEN LASHER: One of the smaller boats of the day line, yes; not one of the through boats from Albany, however.

COL LASHER: Now that is very interesting because when you were young in Germantown, you went to West Point picnicking. . .

GEN LASHER: No, I never did, but my mother did a couple or three times. However, to do it once or twice as a child was a big deal and quite an excursion, you know. But she did and this affected her as far as my going to West Point is concerned, which I will bring out a little bit later. Now, back to Albion in my grammar school years. I had three or four very good friends, particular friends, one whose name was Mack, Judson Mack. Pete Mack, we called him. He wound up as a senior vice-president of the largest banks in Rochester. He went to Wharton School in Philadelphia and became a very successful guy. Another one was a chap by the name of Stanley Landauer, who is Jewish. Stanley and I were very good friends and later on we both decided to go to Cornell together. We lived together at Cornell -- he was my roommate. We lived off campus. I was very fond of him and he, too, of me. His father owned the local department store in town and was very successful. Mr. Landauer also dealt in unset diamonds being quite a connoisseur of diamonds, and I suppose he made some money out of that. But Mr. Landauer's father, that is Stanley's grandfather, started out peddling from a cart. The whole family (there were some Strauses there who were also Jewish and did the same thing) were very successful and they became quite well-to-do. Stanley went to Cornell,

graduated, married and continued in his father's business and continued to be successful when he retired, had a couple of sons who carried that on. So it is still Landauer's store in Albion, not much of a store in our sense of the word these days, but nevertheless, fine for Albion, which has not grown at all. Another one of my friends was a little Italian boy, Nick Passerelli, who was about four feet ten inches tall, had a hunch back and came from a poor family. He was a good friend of mine. We went through all the grades together. He had a couple of sisters, one by the name of Clara was a nurse. All the kids were working and Nick got a job with a fellow who owned a shoe store there. He'd work after school and Saturdays and all...and darn if he didn't inherit the place. The old man that owned it had no kin and left it to him, and he, too, became very successful. Nick came to my graduation at West Point -- that's how close we were, this being quite a trip for him. But he came down and I have a picture that somebody took of him and me with my diploma in my hand. Then he got married later on, married a gal that was a nurse. And then Nick died...

COL LASHER: Fairly young?

GEN LASHER: Yes. But he was a good friend of mine, and we got to know each other very well. Moving up to high school a little bit, I went out for the football team but didn't do very well. Didn't enjoy it very much. I was not athletically inclined.

COL LASHER: You were big enough though.

GEN LASHER: I was big enough, but I wasn't ugly enough, I guess, or something. But I did go out for football even though I didn't like it. I

didn't like the facilities we had. It was a small high school, of course, and the dressing rooms for the athletic teams left a lot to be desired. It was in the boiler room of the high school and off to one side. It was dusty and the ash dust from the furnaces in the furnace room was there. A couple of spigots coming out of the walls for showers. Dirty and smelly, I didn't like that. So, I never did go in for sports to any big extent and never did later on. But I did pretty well in high school. I don't know exactly what year this was, but I mentioned Professor Carmer the superintendent of the school. And he was... Yes, I do remember as a matter of fact, in the eighth grade my teacher was a woman by the name of Carey Pratt, and she was a widow, a very pretty woman and I liked her very much. The September before I went into the eighth grade, my mother had been elected to the board of education. She was the first female to be elected to an office in New York State.

COL LASHER: In New York State?

GEN LASHER: See, this was 1919 or '20...

COL LASHER: Did she run for. . . how did she. . . ?

GEN LASHER: Well, she just stood for office and was elected by vote.

COL LASHER: Just like that?

GEN LASHER: Yes, and it was in all of the papers that this was a first for women's suffrage. You know, the women's right to vote had just been given a few years before that.

COL LASHER: Just a very few.

GEN LASHER: Yes. Well, this was quite a thing in our life when Mother was put on the board of education. Then I guess, the board had something

to do with hiring teachers. There weren't many teachers so the board interviewed them, and Carey Pratt came in for an interview. And she tells me now, Carey does, how with fear and trembling she'd talked to my mother, when my mother said, yes, she had some interest in the eighth grade, because she had a son who was going into the eighth grade next year. Carey said she was shaking. And so, I went in the eighth grade and then I moved into high school and I made high school in three years.

COL LASHER: Oh, you did? How, skip a grade or . . . ?

GEN LASHER: Well, I got. . . I did enough in three years to give me credit for four, that's all there was to it. So, I graduated with the class earlier than the one I had entered with. And as a result, I matriculated in Cornell before I was seventeen, before I reached my seventeenth birthday. Of course, my birthday came on the 26th of September, don't forget -- (bragging a little bit). I was sixteen when I entered Cornell.

COL LASHER: Did you have any trouble getting into Cornell? Did you have to take examinations or . . . ?

GEN LASHER: No, they accepted a high school diploma.

COL LASHER: Period.

GEN LASHER: Yes. Now my senior year in high school....

COL LASHER: Which is no longer true, of course, to go to Cornell today.

GEN LASHER: Oh yes; a whole different ballgame. I've got to follow my script here a little bit, so excuse me. During this growing up period in Albion, one of the things which I wanted to talk about was the lack of, or my failure to remember anything about a so-called generation-gap.

I'd like to say a few things about the type of home we had and the type of parents I had. My father and mother were very religious, and they ran the home the way I think a home should be run. Mother took care of her part and my father took care of his part and he was the one that made the decisions and we understood the rules, my sister and I. And we observed them with no sweat; there was no reason why we shouldn't. This was the right way to do it. Sundays we could do nothing but go to church, eat, go for a walk, take a nap, read the Bible -- that's about all, and then go to church again at night.

COL LASHER: Couldn't play cards?

GEN LASHER: No, no.

COL LASHER: Play games of any kind?

GEN LASHER: Didn't believe in baseball on Sunday which was not very prevalent at all in those days or any such things as that. As I say, I understood, I am sure I understood the way the things should run, and the way my father and mother wanted it to run and that's the way we let it go. Although my father was always boss, I can recall many instances when Mother's influence was brought to bear, but always through my father. One night I remember I went out for something and (I don't know how old I was -- not very old) I was going to be in quite early. While I was out, there was a fire and I chased the fire with a bunch of other kids. I walked home with a girl that night and I got home pretty late. My father and mother knew that there had been a fire and they knew probably that I had chased it, but I didn't get home...and I didn't get home. So I got a pretty good talking to that night. My father didn't want to do it,

I knew that. He had been sleeping and Mother woke him up and kept nudging him; so he put it on the basis that she worried about me, she was really worried, and that I should have either come home or called them or something and let them know that everything was alright and that I would be home a little bit later. I'll never forget that particular instance. Also, another particular instance of lack of obedience in the area there around Orleans County, there's a lot of good building sandstone and there are big quarries there, or had been for years. As the quarries were worked out and then abandoned, they usually filled with water over the years. And they were very, very deep and very dangerour for children. I had always managed to stay away from quarries. That fall, for my birthday, which, of course, is in September, I had received a full cowboy outfit -- Wooley chaps, and the whole bit, you know -- boots, and big hat and bandanna, belt and pistols. This was a great thing and I was very proud of it. However, within two or three weeks after I got it, two boys had drowned in the local quarry. The news soon spread all over town, and we got word somewhere that they were grappling for the body with grappling hooks. So I had to go to the quarry and watch the procedure. There is no danger there; so I hung around and was late for supper that night...and when I told her where I was, well, I didn't wear that cowboy suit for about two months. They just took it away from me for going down to the quarry without permission. So I knew what they wanted. And if I didn't do it, I suffered the consequences.-- never any physical beating....I don't remember getting spanked by either my father or my mother.

COL LASHER: I remember getting spanked by your mother.

GEN LASHER: Yes. By my mother?

COL LASHER: Sure, for a similar incidence.

GEN LASHER: You see there was authority there and it was recognized and understood and I think my sister and I had a fine family life. I think we were brought up well; and we certainly knew the difference between right and wrong, whether it was moral right or whether it was other types of right and wrong; we did know the difference. We knew that there was some punishment involved if we didn't stay in the groove. Now this type of home life and the discipline involved was very, very strict compared to today's standards. There is no question in my mind about that as I see it from my position now; but as I said, you knew what was right and you knew what was wrong and you knew that you better do the way you were supposed to. There was just no question in your mind. So obedience to the rules and obedience to the moral laws, and so forth, almost became second nature.

COL LASHER: They didn't question why, too much?

GEN LASHER: No. And at that age, as I see it now, I didn't know enough to question why. If the thing was hot and my mother said keep your hand off of it, it's hot and I tried it to see if it was -- "boom", it was hot, you know. So, I believed in and trusted my father and mother. And what they said was right and wrong, just had to be as they said.

COL LASHER: And generally was.

GEN LASHER: Sure, sure it was, and it always turned out that way in retrospect you knew that that was right and this was wrong. It became second

nature.

Now, during my school there were three or four people involved that I want to mention here. My third grade teacher was Miss Reynolds, and my eighth grade teacher, as I said, was a Mrs. Carey Pratt. Mrs. Pratt continued to teach for a long time until she retired. Her daughter married an Albion boy who became a very successful dentist. When I came down here last June, I drove down and I stopped by to see Mrs. Pratt, who is well in her eighties. Here was another instance of....Well; I just can't tell you how glad she was to see me and visit with me for a while. Her mind wanders a little bit and she repeats herself. This visit that I had made to Mrs. Pratt, incidentally, was sort of a culmination of a correspondence we had kept up mostly on my side because she was interested in what I was doing and what I had done in the Army and what I had done in business. So, I would write her once maybe every six months, a long letter explaining things and if anything of interest came up, I would send her clippings, or once in awhile a picture of this, that or the other thing. Things I was interested in. I sent her a brochure on antiques once and told her about my collection activities and so forth. Which was of interest because she didn't have much to do, you know. She stayed very alert, and I think this kind of helped a little bit. The math teacher I had in high school was a woman by the name of Sadie Britain. She had been there for years and was there for years after I left. She was a strict disciplinarian and knew her business, and I really got a good grounding in mathematics because of her. She taught primarily geometry, plain and solid geometry, to all of the classes. And though my grounding

there was very good, as it turned out the course in geometry that she taught didn't encompass everything required to get into West Point. Therefore, I failed my first test...my first entrance exam because the course had just not covered some of the questions that West Point had. But she was a very good teacher. The reasoning process one goes through in geometry was well embedded in my mind because of her. Another of my instructors that I remembered quite vividly was a young man who graduated from Cornell, by the name of Henry Andrews. He was our English teacher. And, a good looking young man, even though he seemed quite old to us. Among other duties he coached all of the plays we had in the high school. I remember one night (we had a Ford Coupe at the time) and we were some distance from the high school, where we had our class play rehearsals and so I would drive down and then after it was over with, three or four of us guys would get together and we'd go to the local greasy spoon for a hamburger and a cup of coffee or a piece of pie (you know) and chew the fat. It was mostly talk, not much eating. Four or five of us would pile in the Ford Coupe and Hank Andrews was nice enough to join with us in such things, so he'd come along. And one night while we were driving to the greasy spoon (and I will never forget him), he said to me, "You mark my words, when you get older and you look back on these days," he said, "you'll find that they are some of the greatest days of your life. You have no responsibilities. You have an automobile almost anytime you want it. You have money in your pocket. You are learning a lot of new things all the time, some of which intrigues you and leads you in other paths and some of which are bores, I know." "But," he said,

"you'll realize this is one of the finest times of your life." He was a young guy who had just gotten out of college, and it was a rather preceptive statement, which turned out to be entirely true, entirely true. I would visit him later after I'd gotten out of school and he was still teaching school down in Newark, New York somewhere, and he had gotten married and had all the cares that he had anticipated, you know for me at that time. Although I never became much of a linguist in our native tongue, nevertheless, I was impressed by the instructor I had (Hank Andrews). Another instructor which I thought was very good was our French instructor, a young girl. Because of the way she taught French, I was able to really excel in French later on at West Point. I stood very high in French and I think if I wanted to come back here as a French instructor, I could have done it. So, I took quite a bit of French and then after I got to West Point, the approach to pronounciation using phonetics, I thought was great. It helped a whole lot in my being able to properly pronounce. My success was all based on her because she also taught phonetics which was brand-new at that time. I don't know where she went to school but she was very good and quite attractive, too, I might add.

COL LASHER: Which might have had something to do with how well you did.

GEN LASHER: That's right, yes. Mrs. Pipkins was the biology teacher and she is the one I referred to before, who a couple of us embarrassed a little but by some of the questions we asked her. There were two other things which maybe were omens of what was to come. Like all high schools do, I suppose, we had three or four things for which prizes were given, primarily to seniors, but sometimes to juniors. One was an essay, which

was an assignment in English. You wrote an essay and then there was a prize given for the best one. I won that prize my senior year and the subject oddly enough was "Prohibition" which was a hot subject at the time. You see, the 18th Amendment had just been passed and it was a hot subject. And there were a lot of things to be researched about it, but I didn't know much about research. However, I read a lot, you know, and then I wrote this essay.

COL LASHER: I bet you had help from your mother?

GEN LASHER: Oh, from the day I was born.

COL LASHER: She was very much W.C.T.U.

GEN LASHER: Oh, yes. So I won that prize that year as well as another one which was called the Signor prize. It was a prize of five dollars. Judge Signor was a lawyer and a judge in the county. He would put up the dough for the five dollar prize, and there was quite a foado and all of the families would come to the auditorium to listen to about a half a dozen students who were picked to give their oration. Of course, we were coached in gestures and all that jazz, you know. We wrote our own speeches, however, and mine was on John Brown and Pottawatomie and so forth. I mean the slaves that he was helping, trying to help so much. And I made the speech and won that prize, too, in my senior year. Of course, that made my parents very proud . . . more so than it did me, I guess.

Now--in the early '20's, 1921 or 1922, I went to CMTC, Citizens Military Training Camp. This was my first real brush with the military, it was not ROTC, it was CMTC, Citizens Military Training Camp and I went to Plattsburg Barracks of all places . . .

COL LASHER: Which is where, by the way?

GEN LASHER: Up on Lake Champlain, Plattsburg, New York. I guess I was there for about a month. We lived in a tent camp set up there, and we had Regular Army enlisted men to teach us the rudiments of drill and handling rifles and cleaning of equipment and all the very basic things a soldier should know. I suppose they were overseen by officers, but I never saw an officer. And the 1st Sergeant there in our company who lived at the head of the company street, was a guy by the name of Greene. I will never forget him. He was the first top kick I ever came in contact with, and he was a real tough s.o.b., too. As you know, we were just kids, so I am sure that a lot of his hostility was put on just for our benefit; but he kept us in line while we learned how to shine our shoes and keep our clothes properly, etc. We would go out on hikes and it was a pretty good summer. It was preparatory to getting young people to become interested in the military and hopefully go on to ROTC or go into the Army later on.

COL LASHER: How did you get involved in this?

GEN LASHER: I don't remember. We had a friend in Albion, a friend of my father's, a guy by the name of Spaulding who had been a colonel in World War I, and I think it was by virtue of my father talking to him one time. He thought this would be a good thing for me to do one summer. He was kind of a military type guy, and as a matter of fact, later on he helped get my appointment to West Point.

COL LASHER: Now were you paid for this -- any kind of salary?

GEN LASHER: I don't remember; I really don't remember.

COL LASHER: What sort of duties did you have; what work did you do?

GEN LASHER: Well, as I said, we drilled, and learned how to keep our equipment and do chores--the normal camp routine chores--we did KP, took our turns in KP . . . .

COL LASHER: Just kind of a training, military training . . .

GEN LASHER: That's right; basic training, of course, that's what it was. Of course, we got up at the crack of dawn every morning.

Also, during this period they were "running" whiskey. You see, Plattsburg was only about 20 miles from the border, and when we'd march to breakfast in the morning, we would see these big automobiles barreling down the main highway which was right outside the camp. Of course, we all knew that these must be bootleggers. Another thing I was introduced to there was saltpeter. And, of course, here I was at a very impressionable age, and I had never heard of saltpeter before--I think there was a barrel in every mess hall with a little cover on it labeled saltpeter. I am sure they didn't use it, but had it just to keep the story going about putting saltpeter in soldier's food so they didn't get too obstreperous, you know. That was my first introduction to saltpeter, but that was a summer thing and regardless, I enjoyed it. I thought it was fine. They had a lovely camp there. They had private little tents with floors; and I suppose there were six of us to a tent. And it was in a long leaf pine woods, which was on the sand; but there were six inches of these long pine needles, the kind we saw yesterday . . . lovely! It was in clean air and we got up really at dawn and the nicest part of the day. I probably didn't like it then as much as I look back and think I liked it; but

anyway, in my memory it was a good experience. So it certainly didn't alienate me toward the military -- I'll put it that way.

Now then, I came to my senior year in high school; and what was I going to do? You know, like everybody at that age, your parents want the best for you. We had talked West Point, but it was kind of a mysterious thing and my mother had gone to Vassar, as you know, and lived in Germantown which is only about forty miles north of West Point, although on the other side of the river. While she was at Vassar, she went to West Point to hops where she probably saw cadets who went...came up to Vassar for weekends, or something. Besides that, the general proximity to West Point had given it quite a mystique as far as the people around Germantown were concerned, they looked up to it. It was a height that not many had scaled, and their lack of precise information about West Point made it even more mysterious, you know, and greater than it really was. They built it up in their minds, you know. So, it was. . . Also, it . . . offered an education which didn't cost anything. At that time I think my parents could have afforded it otherwise, but nevertheless, cost was probably a factor as well.

COL LASHER: And what was your father doing at this time? Still with the plant at Albion?

GEN LASHER: No, at this time, my father had moved to a company by the name of L. E. Sands and Company, run by a man by that name, who had a couple of boys my age. This company bought beans, dried beans, pea beans, navy beans and the like from all the surrounding growers and farmers, -- bought them by contract. He would contract for ten acres of beans for

the next season and so forth. Then when he would get them in, they'd shuck them (get them out of the shells) and process them. Part of the processing was to pick out the bad beans, which was done by hand mostly by girls. The beans were run along a little narrow conveyor for the girls, and they would pick out the bad beans. Then the good beans, the perfect beans, would go on and be bagged and graded and sold. The company was very, very successful and expanded very rapidly. Mr. Sands made my father a good offer, a better one than he had, with a pretty good future; so my father moved over and became a vice-president of that company.

COL LASHER: Oh he did?

GEN LASHER: Yes.

COL LASHER: But this was in Albion also?

GEN LASHER: This was in Albion also, yes. So it wasn't unnatural that I was pointed toward West Point or that I did point toward West Point. I don't know which it was actually. I am sure it was a lot of parental influence in my pointing toward West Point, but it was also part of the fact that the prestige of the military was high at that time, there is no question about it.

COL LASHER: The Officer Corps of the military was, as opposed to the military in general?

GEN LASHER: Yes, I suppose so. Of course, it was strictly a volunteer Army and it was between the wars. World War I had just closed. I think it was their (my parents') admiration for West Point as an institution more than anything else..

COL LASHER: Your mother's more than anything . . . ?

GEN LASHER: My father's too. Of course, she looked at it from a female point of view, a little differently than my father would look at it.

COL LASHER: Did your father go to college?

GEN LASHER: No, he did not.

COL LASHER: So he would have had a great respect for it, too!

GEN LASHER: Yes, an even greater one because it had a reputation for being the toughest school academically in the country, really; and anybody who could get into West Point or graduate from West Point must be a genius. Well, I didn't find it so...as I will explain later on, but nevertheless, as I say, a lack of precise information probably built the whole thing up far more than it deserved. But, anyway, we decided and I agreed. I didn't make the decision, I am sure of that, but I agreed with them. I wasn't forced, it just seemed the very logical thing to do. So. . . My father talked to Colonel Spaulding and between them they went to our congressman, who lived in another village in the county. He didn't have any West Point Appointments open for entrance in July of '23, however, a congressman friend of his from the state of Washington did have some, but he was short of appointments for the Naval Academy.. Apparently, in Washington everyone wanted to go to the Naval Academy. But here they wanted to go to West Point. It was natural being ocean country (shipping country) out in the state of Washington, what with the Navy yard there and all that boys edged toward the Navy out there. Saunders was our congressman and he never had enough Army appointments, but he always had a lot of Navy, so we switched. We had friends who lived in Spokane, and I took that as an address (used it as my address),

so I am shown as being appointed from the state of Washington, and the congressman from out there got a naval appointment from our congressman.

This was my senior year in high school. I went to Fort Erie in Buffalo in March and took the examinations, and failed it. I failed in mathematics, precisely in geometry, for the reason I mentioned before, Ignorant as we were about how the thing worked, we hadn't known how, or maybe it wasn't available as to what these examinations covered. But, anyway, two of the theorems that I failed on just weren't taught at Albion High School. I am not making that as an excuse for failing the entrance examination, I am just citing it as there probably were a lot of other high schools around the country who also weren't up to standard. So when we heard about this, probably a month or two later, my folks thought, well, we'll send him to a civilian college for a year and take the examination from there and with his marks and everything, and he might be able to get in. Well, we did that and I went to Cornell. My mother said that all I learned at Cornell was how to smoke, since I failed the exams again.

COL LASHER: Why now, the second time?

GEN LASHER: Well, I didn't make any marks of repute in Cornell. My marks were lousy, and I just managed to get by.

COL LASHER: Just learned to smoke?

GEN LASHER: Yeah, that's all. Well, as I told you before, when we decided to do this, Stanley Landauer, one of my best friends, was going to go to Cornell, and so we decided to go together and live together. We arranged for a room right off campus. We were both rushed by the same fraternities.

This one fraternity I remember very clearly. We were invited to dinner to be looked over as possible brothers. I was invited back two or three times. He was never invited back again.

COL LASHER: Because he was Jewish?

GEN LASHER: Because he was Jewish, yes.

COL LASHER: Too bad.

GEN LASHER: Yeah, I don't know how this affected him, if at all, but there were very different lines in Cornell in those days.

COL LASHER: Not just Cornell.

GEN LASHER: I am sure, I am sure, but that was my first brush with it. I couldn't understand it. I really couldn't understand it. I had to ask why they didn't invite him back. When they told me, I still couldn't understand it. Then subsequent to this, I've had a lot of Jewish friends that I've liked. Of course, I have opinions of them as a group, but it certainly doesn't affect my opinion of individuals. You know, Gellman, Hurow -- I could name many -- vice-presidents of my company, Bob Oppenheimer -- real great guy with a lovely wife and a fine family -- people I admire and respect and look up to, in some cases. But, this was my first brush with it and it made a lasting impression on me, there is no question about that. But, as I say, that didn't work so I came home in the middle of my second semester from Cornell after I knew that my grades weren't good enough, I found this out. They took me out of there and said, "Well, we are going to do it right this time. We are going to send him to a preparatory school for West Point." So, I went home and I got a job, worked in the A&P store as a clerk, and then a friend of ours just

north of town, had gotten married and his father owned a big farm and it had a house on it that he and his bride were fixing up to live in. One of the things they needed was a septic tank and I dug the ditch for them. I worked for them as a half man, half boy. I dug the ditch and I dug the hole for the septic tank and did all sorts of odd jobs on the farm. . . split wood, stacked it, a lot of little things. I worked right up through until. . . I don't remember exactly how long, but that fall of 1924, I went to Braden's National Preparatory School at Cornwall on the Hudson. It was run by two brothers by the name of Braden, some called it Braden Hall but their official name was the National Preparatory School. Here we had been very efficient, and we had researched how to do this thing and out of it came the fact that this was almost a practical guarantee if you had an appointment. (And each time old Saunders was getting me this appointment -- each year for three years). So, I had an appointment -- a principal appointment. All I had to do was pass the examination. It was pretty rigorous. They really crammed it, but they knew exactly what to teach you. They knew what was asked on every examination, every theorem that had been asked for the last fifty years. So these were the things they taught you. It was a boarding house, boarding school, that's what it was. You lived right there, right on the banks of the river in a big old house, somewhat like the Bailey place that we saw. That type of house, only a lot bigger and it had been remodeled for, I don't know how many boys. It was a pretty good size class -- maybe forty-five, fifty. The house had been remodeled for a school and had several classrooms. However, they were only teaching one class at a time since everybody took the

same course. They also had compulsory recreation. The main thing we did was play volleyball to work off our steam. The two Van Slikes who ran the place, Lenny and Van, we called them, they played volleyball along with us. Then there was this big lawn. We skied out there in the winter. It was altogether quite nice. The food left something to be desired, as I remember. We worked very hard on the examinations right up until the time we went to New York to take them. And following the taking of the examinations, the balance of the time, we did the whole plebe year of mathematics.

COL LASHER: Right there.

GEN LASHER: Right there. The school went to June like most schools do. But then, we crammed that in. Now, this was the third time I had gone over all this material. Then, I went over it again my plebe year. So, I was pretty smart my plebe year.

COL LASHER: Stood pretty high?

GEN LASHER: Yes, because I had been over all of the mathematics part of it. And they did a really good job on all of us. Only one or two flunked and it was their own fault for one reason or another. So, I passed those examinations. Now this was the first time I had ever been to New York, and we had a lot of fun. The school did it all. They got a block of rooms in a hotel in Midtown and we went down by subway to the Army building on White Hall Street to take the examinations. Naturally, we got lost in the subway -- there is always one guy, you know, who's been there before, and he knew all about the subway. He was probably from Iowa -- I don't know. But anyway, we got on the Sea-Beach Express once and never

did get to the right place. But anyway it was a lot of fun and it lasted the better part of a week. Then I went back and, as I said, we got the whole plebe year thrown down our throats again, which was really good, there is no question about it! So I am really very high on that school, which no longer exists now, as a matter of fact. That old house is for sale; it's a beautiful old house. However, for many years it was torn up by successive groups of youngsters, who probably did it no good. They didn't pay anything for maintenance, that is, anymore than they could get away with. I don't know what that cost my father -- it was not a cheap school, but nevertheless, it succeeded. You know -- you did the right thing, you did a little research and you found out where to go and what to do about it; and you did it and you succeeded. So I came home and didn't do much of anything. When my father heard that I had passed the examinations, he wept and my mother wept. So, that following July I went down to New York and came up on the train to Garrison and entered on the 1st of July.

COL LASHER: Bet that was a shock.

GEN LASHER: Hot; I've never been in such a hot spot in my life! After climbing up the hill, you know, and just like it says in song and story, it's a long, long climb. (Maybe we ought to stop about there?)

Incidentally, I'd like to go back a little bit to Cornell. At the time I was in Cornell, my sister was in Elmira College which wasn't far from Cornell. One of the things that distracted me was Elmira. Cornell was co-educational, but Cornell men, of course, wouldn't spit on the coeds; they had to go somewhere else to find girls, you know, Wells College in one direction, Elmira in another. Well, my direction was Elmira, and I went over

there more weekends than I should and more weekends than I could afford. We'd go four or five of us at a time, and get one room. One guy would register and we all would sneak up there, and stay together. Of course, with Edith there, I got to know a lot of the girls pretty well. Of course, some of the ones she knew were older but there were also the younger classes. I liked two or three of them pretty well, as a matter of fact. There was one French girl there whose name was Comille-Marie Josephine Denee, and she was a cute little button and I remember her by name. . . Elmira was the oldest college for women in the United States, was the first one that gave a degree to women. They called it Elmira Female College for Women.

COL LASHER: A little redundancy there.

GEN LASHER: So that was a distraction in addition to tobacco, in my career as an undergraduate of the education institution (of Cornell).

COL LASHER: I was going to say before we get into the West Point years, I thought you might want to mention something about your mother and father's lineage, or do you?

GEN LASHER: Yes, I find that I've been more interested in ancestry as I've grown older. I found out as I've grown older that I was more interested than I realized when I was younger. This was a great thing with my mother and father, however, and particularly my mother who had the time to mess around with it, you know. She was a wealth of information herself as to our forebearers and, of course, was quite proud of her family. As a matter of fact, her father was president of the Rockefeller Association for a number of years. His picture appears in the Rockefeller genealogy as such. The Rockefeller family is probably the best researched of any

in the country, because "The Rockefeller" -- John D. He just hired some professionals who went back to Germany right down to where the first Rockefeller, or whatever his name was, was born. They went to the church and everything -- researched all the old German records and translated them. So, it's one of the outstanding genealogies in the country, and, of course, Mother was proud of that. But on the other hand, she married a man whose forebearers came here about 1725. The Rockefellers came later on. And I have both genealogies, both the Rockefeller and the Lasher; and I can trace the American Lashers back to 1725.

COL LASHER: There might have been some question as to whether it came from Loescher or Lesieur then?

GEN LASHER: Well, there are a lot of names -- a lot of spellings. There are also some questions. There was this Colonel John Lasher, as I told you before. I have several pictures of him. I say several -- I've seen several. I have two or three myself, one of which shows him in uniform with four or five others, including General Washington, before the works at the battle of Long Island. Presumably Washington is conferring with some of his staff members as to certain points of strategy or the tactics of the battle. And what I have is a photostat of an engraving. The officers in the picture are named and Lasher is there. Then I have several old histories which mentioned him in various roles doing various things and getting a commendation -- he is mentioned in orders several times.

COL LASHER: Did you know about this when you were younger?

GEN LASHER: No, no, not until long after I had graduated from the Military Academy. Well, one thing happened -- the only Lasher genealogy we owned

was owned by my father's brother, Uncle Will, and my mother talked him into giving it to me. She wanted me to have it, and so I guess that was probably when an awakening came to me, because she twisted his arm and got him to autograph it, which he did. Well, I have since had that rebound in leather and it's a very nice looking volume. It does not include me in it. I am written in, in pencil, by my mother. But my sister is in it and it was published about the year I was born, 1906 or '07. It has never been brought up to date; and that is one of my future projects.

COL LASHER: That you hope to continue with?

GEN LASHER: You have heard me talk of McLean Lasher, haven't you?

COL LASHER: No.

GEN LASHER: Well, he lives over in Danburry, Conn., and he was going to do this and do that; and so, we started out but he just pooped out and we can't get any response from him. He has got a lot of information. And I would put a lot of money in this if I could only get the information to carry it on. Willis Lasher, Colonel Willis Lasher, he is very interested in this and we are all very disgusted with McLean Lasher. Anyway, I guess it was her insistence that pointed the fact that she was very interested in this and I finally by osmosis or otherwise, got very interested in it myself. And the Rockefeller Association as they call it, has remained viable and they bring the genealogy up to date every so often.

COL LASHER: Now didn't your side of the Rockefeller family stem from one of the two ... there were two brothers ... ?

GEN LASHER: Well, they are not sure whether they are brothers or a man and his nephew. But anyway they came over . . .

COL LASHER: And one settled in New Amsterdam, and one came up river a little bit and settled, right?

GEN LASHER: Well, they came to New Jersey . . .

COL LASHER: New Jersey?

GEN LASHER: Well, they came into New York harbor, I suppose, and this was later on in the 18th Century. And one of them came up the river and settled and one of them went out to Ohio and settled. He became a farmer, the other became an oilman after three or four generations. But, all from the same stem and, of course, when you go back onto the continent, it's the same family. And the Lashers, they came up and they settled in what was called East Camp, now known as Germantown. My mother was always very proud of the fact. This was an enclave sort of, this piece of land which was given to this group at East Camp by Queen Anne, in fee. Surrounding it was the Livingston manor. This goes back into Dutch History. Livingston was a big guy there, and he collected his rent in chickens, eggs and pigs, etc., and not much money, though he did live on the fat of the land. My ancestors were all in bondage and worked for him on his manor which was several thousand acres.

COL LASHER: General Livingston?

GEN LASHER: No, Chancellor. He was Chancellor Robert R. Livingston and he was Secretary of State under Jefferson--the one who dickered with France to buy Louisiana. Jefferson, of course, made the decision that we should buy it, but the negotiations were all done by one of the Livingstons and there are Livingstons all around Germantown and Columbia county still. My mother always made a point of the fact that the inhabitants

of East Camp, Lashers were . . . were not bonded to the Lord of the Manor. Those that were had to fight his wars for him against the Indians, protect him against the Indian--they had to do everything for him. I've got a very nice old map showing the outlines of the Livingston Manor, from stone to stone to white tree to the spring here--but that's a whole new story. As I say, my mother was very interested in all of these things. Well, so this East Camp became known as Germantown because the people were mostly German in origin. At first, the Lashers were very prominent, then a lot of Rockefellers moved in (this guy that came up from New Jersey) and they intermarried like nobody's business. It was a very strange thing that there weren't more imbeciles born out of some of those marriages which were very close as far as blood lines were concerned.

COL LASHER: First cousins . . .

GEN LASHER: Yeah, and I suppose some of them were pretty stupid. By the way, I think the place where John D. Rockefeller's grandfather was married is still standing east of Germantown.

COL LASHER: Is that right? That's interesting.

GEN LASHER: And the picture of that house is in the genealogy. Maybe we better knock it off there.

COL LASHER: No, no. Go on to West Point.

GEN LASHER: O.K. So that was imbedded in my mind, whether I realized it or not, a feeling for family and a feeling for heritage and so forth--an interest which has increased very rapidly in the past 15 or 20 years.

COL LASHER: I am sure it does.

GEN LASHER: This also explains in part my propensity for the history of the revolution and the collection of books of that period, you know. Before I leave...before I go on to West Point and before I leave Braden Hall at Cornwall, one of the things I remember is every few years there's a real cold winter and the whole river freezes over, and out on the east side of Cornwall Bay there is an island and the basic name of the island is Polopel. It is mentioned several times in Revolutionary War History. A New Yorker by the name of Bannerman bought that island. He dealt in arms and ammunitions, and he bought and sold arms to anybody who wanted a revolution or what have you. And he was quite a dealer, not only in this country, but internationally. Later on, he erected this castle like structure on the island. It was called Bannerman's Island Arsenal. By the time I got down there to Cornwall and the National Preparatory School it had been abandoned. There was just a caretaker there, and he had a lot of dogs so you couldn't get on the island; they were loose and they were rather ferocious or they seemed to be. We don't know...I don't know whether that was really a story or whether there had been dogs. But anyway one winter we decided to go over there.

COL LASHER: Across the frozen ice?

GEN LASHER: Yes, and an icebreaker came through. We had to go up to Beacon and take the ferry to get home. That was quite an experience. Colder than hell! Just as cold as this place can get in the winter.

COL LASHER: Oh yeah, well how long it must have taken you . . .

GEN LASHER: Oh hours, yes,... Oh yeah! And I might say too, that on our plebe hike, which was of course in the summer of 1925 and about a hundred

miles long. Our first stop after leaving West Point was at Camp Smith at Peekskill--you know, the National Guard camp there. Well, anyway, it's right over there by Peekskill, and we had to go across Bear Mountain Bridge. Bear Mountain Bridge had just been opened. Now, when I was a boy, there were only two bridges across the Hudson River, and they were both railroad bridges. One was at Poughkeepsie, which connected New England with the south as far as the railnet, south and west was concerned. And the other one was at Albany, over which the New York Central and Hudson River Railroad ran west to Buffalo. So the Bear Mountain Bridge was quite a bridge at that time, because you could drive across it with your horse or with your automobile. By this time, there were automobiles, of course. The ferries then started to die out. There were ferries everywhere up and down the river. There still are vestiges of old slips. I came across from Garrison to enter West Point on the Garrison Ferry and you saw the slip yesterday. Now that slip which had been painted up for "Hello Dolly" (there is still some piling there into which the ferry came)--was the site of the ferry. But Bear Mountain Bridge was only the first one. Now you start with the Verrazano Narrows Bridge, then you get to George Washington Bridge, then to the Tappen Zee Bridge, then the Bear Mountain Bridge, then the bridge at Beacon . . . Newburgh Beacon, then you get the Poughkeepsie Bridge, then the Kingston Bridge . . . .

COL LASHER: And then the Hudson . . .

GEN LASHER: No, Kingston is next and then the Hudson Bridge, Mid-Hudson they called that one, I think, that was one of the early ones, too. Then . . . and then there is one above that and then there is one at Albany. So as

each bridge was built, more and more ferries couldn't make money and finally they disappeared entirely. They were a great thing, of course. You stood in line and you waited until the ferry came over. And the busy ones always had two ferries or more and when one was going east, the other was going west. So you had pretty good service and there were enough people crossing the river to make money until the briges came along. Well, let's see if there is anything else. Before we get into the West Point phase, there was something I would like to mention about my early up bringing which was to the fact that I can not recall ever feeling any antagonism toward my parents. So there was no such thing as a generation gap. I believed in them; there was no question that they knew what was yes and what was no. I was learning from them. My confidence in them was such that I built whatever I built on what they had told me was good and what they had told me was bad. And later on as I...well, as I've said and probably as you've gathered we were fairly well off all the time until after I'd entered West Point and the depression set in. The company my father was with went bust and one of the employees absconded with a lot of money and they were trying to recover and they were pressing too hard, and shipping inferior stuff and pretty soon they weren't getting any orders, and then there was no company. This happened just as the depression was coming on and there was nobody taking on people, and my parents felt it very strongly. What assets they had saved, went down the drain. I, in the meantime, was at West Point and didn't know much about it. This was the latter part of my time in West Point, really. And then when I got out and went to my first station, the big crash actually came that October of

1929. I was at that time, with a group of people who were very close to it. As I come to that first station and tell you about Plattsburg Barracks, I will explain who these people were and what happened to them (bankers and brokers). This also has to do with the status of the officer in the United States Army at this time. I was a bachelor, of course. I had a livingroom, bedroom and bath as officer's quarters -- adequate -- very fine quarters. We had a fine mess and I was welcomed in the best circles in Plattsburg and I happened to make a couple of very good friends -- older men. One in particular I liked very much (he and I had empathy) and I visited at his house a lot and often went for dinner. Through these friends I got to know several outstanding people. A couple were brothers who owned one of the banks in town. Another fellow ran the local stockbrokers office and ran the tape pools, (papered tape at that time), and they had the usual rows of chairs and everybody gathered there in the morning. I'd go in every once in awhile, had no money to buy stock with, but everybody was expansive, things were going so great and the stock markets was hitting new highs everyday and the volume was going up. And then all of a sudden, of course, the bust came and that's all a matter of history, but the fellow that ran this brokerage house, I don't know whether he had a seat on the stock exchange himself or was just the manager of the Plattsburg branch of some large house in New York -- he finally got a job as manager of a cemetery on Long Island. One of the bankers wound up as a short order cook in a dining car. The other banker went to jail -- and so it was! This was my first touch but it was all very impersonal even though they were friends. My father felt it in his way, too, but never let on to me. They

didn't either let on to me at all.

COL LASHER: So you really didn't know?

GEN LASHER: So I really didn't know. And being my first station and with my second station being in Chicago, I was very busy learning things about the Army, you know, and I was all wrapped up in doing that. I was a busy guy, interested in what I was doing as well as trying to be a hero or whatever you want to call it, but learning the Army. So it never did touch me personally until two or three years later when I got to Hawaii and President Roosevelt reduced everybody's pay ten percent.

COL LASHER: Maybe we should cut back to West Point before we go on to that.

GEN LASHER: Alright. As I said, I came across the Garrison Ferry with a whole lot of other guys and walked up the hill and got the first shock "drop it, pick it up, drop it, yes sir, no sir, and so forth." Well, it was all sort of a haze, you know. There were so many things to do; we signed up in the south area, and we were assigned to a company by height in those days, you know. I got in the first company of new cadets,which later split up into A company and B company. I was thrown in a room with a chap by the name of Wilson. His first name was Woodrow. He was my first roommate and, of course, we had lots of things to learn. First of all, we had to draw all of our equipment. We double timed -- carried the mattress across that lousy area on my head -- double timing up the stairs. And the big thing I remember from this was not so much the hazing, although I kind of took that for granted, I suppose, but the main thing I remember from it was the enormous amount of exercise I was doing -- physical exercise,

physical work, and how hot it was here! I don't know if it was any hotter that summer than any other summer, but it seemed so because we were constantly doing something, you know...

COL LASHER: And always at a double time...

GEN LASHER: And always at a double time; but we learned all of the rudiments pretty well, and of course, the shining of brass, and the maintenance of the rifle, and your uniform and how to take care of it, and how to fix your locker, and how to line up your handkerchiefs and your underwear...

COL LASHER: And everything just so.

GEN LASHER: All that stuff. But I do also remember how proud the class was when we first went to parade with the Corps. Our Corps returned in September and we became integrated into it. Instead of being 1st Company of new cadets, we were Company A, Company B, Company C, and marched in our first parade with old vets, so to speak.

COL LASHER: Who immediately informed you of how badly you marched.

GEN LASHER: Oh yes. Not only informed, but constantly reminded you of the matter. There were two or three interesting things in that particular plebe year. Incidentally, I lived in the first division of south barracks all four years. After academics started, I was roomed with Wilson and Wynn, and we lived together for four years. And, of course, that's the only old division of barracks which is preserved . . . .

COL LASHER: The only one of the originals.

GEN LASHER: And that dates back to about 1850, that building, I think. Where was I there?

COL LASHER: Your roommates.

GEN LASHER: I was going beyond plebe year a little bit, but I lost that train of thought. But we were immediately immersed in academics, of course, at the end of the summer, and it was a very, very full schedule. This was another big impression I got. There was just no time to do anything but what you had to do. If you had any extra time, you devoted it to the classes in which you were least efficient. And I rather liked the system, I like the small classes. I wouldn't deviate from that because I compared them with Cornell. For instance, in the chemistry I took in Cornell -- it was a lecture course. We'd sit in a great big auditorium and you'd almost have to have binoculars on to see the guy doing the experiment down on the table in the front, and you had to take notes, and you had to understand them. There was no personal contact. You didn't know who the guy was. He was almost so far away you wouldn't recognize him if you met him on the street. Here (West Point) you sat eyeball to eyeball with your instructor.

COL LASHER: Between ten and fifteen in the class?

GEN LASHER: Yes. Section they were called. We marched to them. They don't march any longer. You were graded every week and you recited everyday, usually everday except maybe once in the week. You got your marks -- they were posted -- and you knew where you stood all the time. So you knew what to concentrate on and what you could let slide if your time didn't allow but for only so much. I rather liked that. Of course, I've talked to many educators since and they all invariably say that it was too strict a regimen. I have a friend that I have quite a lot of contact with now, who was a professor emeritus of Contemporary English Literature at

Dartmouth. His name is Herbert Falkner West, Herb West. He is retired and he sells books and writes. And, of course, Thayer established the school of engineering at Dartmouth after he left West Point and there is still the Thayer School of Engineering at Dartmouth. Herb West has no patience with the way West Point teaches.

COL LASHER: For what reason?

GEN LASHER: Well, not enough electives, at least in his day.

COL LASHER: Too structured and too spoon fed, is that his point?

GEN LASHER: Yes, and too regimented and not enough time to think...

COL LASHER: To a certain degree he's got a point there.

GEN LASHER: Yes. I never had an indepth discussion with him on the matter because he is not as up to date on what West Point is as I am today; I mean the curriculum and the amount of electives they have (which are many, many now) -- and the changes that have taken place. He is not up to date on them. He goes back maybe twenty years as far as what he knew with any intimacy at all. But he is typical of a lot of educators, particularly the older educators who haven't kept up with West Point, who feel that it is too structured and too regimented. But I go back and I say I didn't mind that...

COL LASHER: And neither did I.

GEN LASHER: The Uniform flag was flown and you wore rubbers if it said rubbers. That didn't bother me, not a bit; it didn't worry me to put on a pair rubbers. And I was probably more comfortable over all if I had them on in the slop. I had to wear something, so I might as well wear what the Uniform flag said as anything else. This really didn't bug me

at all and I had confidence in the officers, great confidence. It was a wide gap between the officer and the cadet. There was not much socializing, unless some cadet's father was an instructor or TAC or something. Then you'd get invited...and I didn't mind that either; I didn't have anything in common with those officers. I'd rather have some friends in for the weekend, female or otherwise, you know, then to hob knob down with these people. So I didn't mind that chasm; but when you had something to do with the officer, there was no sweat. I felt no restraints talking man to man with an officer on an official matter. That didn't bother me, but when you get beyond that... I don't know, I think I enjoyed the fact that there was this difference.

END OF TAPE.

SECTION 2

INTERVIEW WITH MAJOR GENERAL EDMOND C. R. LASHER

by

Lieutenant Colonel Donald R. Lasher

THIS IS SIDE ONE OF THE SECOND TAPE OF THE ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH MAJOR GENERAL E. C. R. LASHER.

LTC LASHER: General Lasher, when we ended the last tape, we were discussing West Point. You had mentioned your experiences in Beast Barracks and the academic atmosphere to some degree, and I wonder if there are some thoughts that you would like to make on these particular subjects before we move on?

GEN LASHER: Yes, there are a few things which are in retrospect and a few which stood out very strongly in my memory and still do and I believe all is well. Of course, I mentioned before that I kind of sidled into being a cadet and going to West Point--trying it three times before I finally made it. But I want to make this point; I graduated from high school at the age of 16, entered Cornell before my 17th birthday, and I had no idea at that time of what I wanted to be in the classical sense of the word. Although I knew my parents wanted me to go to West Point, I had already tried the examinations and I knew that my grades at Cornell would be taken in the hopes that they would be good enough for me to get in on a dog ticket or certificate, but they weren't. I connect that now, at this time and place, with the 18-year-olds having to vote--recently getting the vote. The fact that I draw on my own experience, of course, probably put some bias in these comments, but nevertheless I wonder if the 18-year-old actually does have the wisdom and intelligence albeit he may have the knowledge, but does he have the wisdom and intelligence to meet and face and decide or try to decide or help decide some of the issues which face

the nation at any time in its course? It's a very grave question in my mind on this problem. And I, at the time the issue was up, was against giving the 18-year-old the vote, and it still is. Now another point I would like to make before we leave the plebe year at West Point was the hazing, the reason therefore, and its effect on me, if any. First of all the reason therefore, I think--the reason, I won't say therefore . . . but the reason for the hazing in my opinion then and now is the requirement that a soldier has to be instantaneously obedient and must not question the orders of his superior. Now if this is taken in too narrow a context, it certainly is restrictive, I grant you that, however, if taken and weighed with all the other factors involved in a decision, the instantaneous reaction to an order becomes second nature. And it never bothered me in the least to say, "Yes, sir," to an individual that I utterly disliked, and do what he said because that's the way it had to be.

LTC LASHER: Were you fully aware of that at that time?

GEN LASHER: No, I don't know if I was fully aware of it at the time, but I knew that one of the things that we had to do was obey and I knew the reason why we had to obey. So I rationalized it sufficiently at that time, so that it did not bother me, and it had no ill effect on me mentally, sociologically, physically or any other way.

LTC LASHER: Do you think that many of today's teen-agers--18, 19-year-olds--are able to appreciate that same sense of value regarding something like that?

GEN LASHER: It's very difficult for me to answer that question, because I am not close to teen-agers today. But I have seen the permissiveness that pervades our entire environment today, and an offhand answer to your

question is no. I don't think they would appreciate it because they think they know more than far more knowledgeable people about what should be done and what shouldn't be done. And this whole theory now has been, to my way of thinking, has been negated by the resounding rejection of Senator McGovern and what popular image he placed before the American people in the last election. And I think he was way behind his times and I think that the teen-ager and . . . well, let's go up to the age 30, has come around to realize that that's old stuff now, this permissiveness and this abject freedom--this unbridled, unrestrained activity is just not the way to live. I think they've come to realize that. And now maybe the teen-ager has reversed and would be able to, but I would say five or ten years ago the teen-ager would not. This would be my offhand answer.

LTC LASHER: So you would then agree that allowing the youth of today to establish their own value judgement by presenting two sides equally to a case is not a successful approach as somebody who has gone through it and adds his own--maybe by bias--but his own knowledge when presenting the sides of the case?

GEN LASHER: Not only that. Yes, I agree with that, but I think the individual has to live a little before he can really place judgement on an issue or a person . . . the youngster would say, "Geez, I hate that s.o.b." and he really means he does. But if he was ten years older he would know that there are a lot of such guys around and they weren't so bad after all. He just doesn't think about it, he makes a snap judgement and . . .

LTC LASHER: Without the experience, of course.

GEN LASHER: Without the experience, without the wisdom of experience that

experience brings. There is another thing that I would like to bring out about my plebe year, and it was very heartening to me and probably had a more profound influence on the rest of my life than I even now realize. Of course, the Navy game is a real big thing and here we had only been at West Point a few months and there was no question we had to beat Navy. Well, Navy weekend was a big thing. I had a date and we went to New York. We went to a cabaret. Incidentally, the cabaret was called Paradise something or other, with about four couples. And we had to be at Wehawkan, 42nd Street ferry at 12 o'clock, so you didn't have a hell of a lot of time to get in trouble and the trains were waiting for us over there at Wehawkan and off we went, and we were inspected as we got on the train; an upperclassman inspected the plebes and officers apparently inspected the upperclassmen, and I was a plebe. Well, the next morning I got gigged for being drunk at the Army-Navy Game, by a second classman at the time by the name of Peery, and this meant a minimum of six months slug and probably six months on the area and a hell of a lot of demerits and a very bad impression on me, but I was all right--I got skinned. And in due course I appeared before the bat board. I don't know if you had a bat board when you were there. It was a battalion board with three battalion commanders, majors comprised the bat board on serious offenses or appeals . . . those three majors sat on the hearing . . . and I was hailed up before them. I walked in, came to--clicked my heels and saluted, stated that I was there as ordered--I had been ordered, an order came out on it. And one of them said, "Mr. Lasher, did you have anything to drink in New York during the Army-Navy Game weekend?" And I said, "No, sir," I looked at each one of them. And they looked at each other and they said,

"Very well, you are dismissed." I saluted and left. Never heard another thing about it.

LTC LASHER: Is that right?

GEN LASHER: Now that, to me, was great, you know.

LTC LASHER: You were honest.

GEN LASHER: They didn't ask any . . . no equivocation whatsoever on either side; they didn't ask for details or where did you go, what you were doing at a quarter after 11 . . .

LTC LASHER: . . . did you have anything to drink period.

GEN LASHER: Yes. And I hadn't had a drop.

LTC LASHER: Presumably if you had said yes, they might have asked more questions.

GEN LASHER: Well, this prohibition, booze was expensive and we didn't have any money. I am not saying that I am a great guy, you know, but I didn't have anything to drink. I was perhaps a little exuberant, maybe we . . . I don't know whether we won that game or not, but anyway it was a weekend out. It was the first time we had been off the post, except for the plebe hike. So this guy may have mistaken exuberance for inebriation but it certainly . . . he should have gone further than just a write-up of a skin sheet and put it in. But the fact that when I said, "No, I had not had anything to drink," they said, "Very well, you are dismissed," and that's all there was to it. I thought West Point was a pretty good place and I thought officers were pretty sharp fellows, you know, that they'd believe you when you said . . . when you had told the truth. Well, this was very important to me and as I say I don't know that I have fully grasped the

effect of that little incident on my life. Another thing I'd like to put in here about this first year and the impressions I received was that of our tactical officer in A Company. His name was Clare Armstrong. He was a captain of Coast Artillery. He was a very spoony officer, set a very fine example; of course, we all thought he had ice water in his veins. But there was an incident in his past which indicated that he did have somewhat of a sense of humor . . . a recent detail of his was at Panama. He, of course, had target practice; all of the other coast artillerymen down there did and he had the sobriquet of Panama Joe, simply because as the story went he had placed a 14-inch shell in a 12-inch stack on a target ship and was noted for his expert artilleryship. A classmate of mine who was in our first company as plebes and wound up in B Company, was Frank Merrill, whom you know as having gained some fame or other with Stilwell in India and China as the head of a group which was called Merrill's Marauders. Frank Merrill came from a rural area, and if there was one guy in our class who could not keep step it was Frank Merrill. And strangely enough he turned out to be the guy who walked more than all the rest of us put together after the thing was over. But academics in general, throughout the four years, didn't bother me too very much really. I am sure I absorbed a whole lot without realizing it, a whole lot more than I thought I did at the time. My danger point was in my second . . . the last half of my second year and I was nearly turned out in math. I wonder where I managed to escape that, and had I been turned out I don't know whether I could have ever passed the turn-out exams or not. However, I got over it and went on. Of course, had furlough that year which we had all looked forward to. It turned out

that I was probably pretty good in French and pretty good in drawing, in the upper part of the class in both of these. But in the middle of the class as we went along in the rest of the subjects. My roommates, it turned out for all four years were . . .

LTC LASHER: You had the same roommates all four years?

GEN LASHER: . . . had the same roommates all four years, and we lived in the first divisions of barracks all four years . . . the one that's preserved now, the old south barracks. And one of my roommates was W. K. Wilson, Jr. who wound up as a lieutenant general and chief of engineers. He stood very high in the class and did so with considerably less study than I had to apply and could do so with a phonograph going all the time. I could never understand that. I couldn't stand that damn phonograph in the room, and I couldn't study with it, but he had to have it almost. The other, and he, incidentally, Weary Wilson, his father was eventually, probably what is . . . amounted to . . . was Assistant Superintendent when W. R. Smith came in as Superintendent at the very end of our four years. W. K. Wilson, Sr., as I say, Weary, ended up his career as chief of engineers. And the other roommate I had was Jim Winn, James J. Winn III actually. And his claim to fame was the fact that he married the daughter of the Chief of Staff of the Army, who was George Marshall. But those two guys I have kept pretty close contact with over the years and I see them from time to time even now, been in correspondence with them and call them sporadically. Both are hale and hearty, as I am, and we like to get together and tell lies to each other. But to go on, as far as my academics were concerned and those four years at West Point, there are a few things that stand out

in my mind. I was not particularly athletically inclined. I tried out for football, cause I had played football in high school, but again harkened back to the academic side. The high school to which I went in Albon just was not that kind of a high school. It was not a competitive high school--it was a small town. And so I was ill prepared for some of the competition that occurred on the athletic field and particularly in football. And I found out right away that, although I was over six foot and weighed 195 pounds, that I just was not prepared to play football, so I was more of a spectator in sports generally, although, of course, I did participate in all of the intramural activities and things like that, but was never a true athlete at heart . . . didn't really enjoy it as a matter of fact.

LTC LASHER: Did you have any other extracurricular activities? Any particular clubs or choir or anything like that that you joined?

GEN LASHER: I tried the choir and couldn't carry a tune, so I got thrown out of that.

LTC LASHER: It runs in the family.

GEN LASHER: And . . . no, I just didn't distinguish myself in any way, shape, or manner. In those days, second classmen, juniors were made corporals. Well, I didn't make corporal, and when first class year came along I did, somewhere along the line, become a sergeant. And because of my height, I guess, as much as anything, I carried the colors--I was in the color guard until I got slugged for something or other, I don't even remember, but I got busted and ended up a first class buck private and relieved from the color guard and so forth. I have no idea what this was for, but anyway I . . .

LTC LASHER: You don't remember why you got busted?

GEN LASHER: No, hell, I was getting demerits like crazy, you know.

LTC LASHER: I thought it had something to do with being late to . . . something to do with a girl that you were involved with . . .

GEN LASHER: Probably was . . .

LTC LASHER: . . . and not making it back on time or something like that.

GEN LASHER: You mentioned the female of the species there. Of course, you have the opportunity to get out of West Point so seldom that your only connection with the outside were the weekends when the people from outside came to West Point. And therefore we desired the pleasures of entertaining the girls . . . you did get some contact with the outside on weekends and I enjoyed those contacts whether they were with male or female, but I otherwise did not distinguish myself in any way, shape or form. I was very much a middle-of-the-roader, I graduated 133 out of a class of 299. We went in with 402 counted as cadets and came out with, we graduated 299.

LTC LASHER: You lost 25 percent there.

GEN LASHER: And I was 130, right in the middle again, you see.

LTC LASHER: In the top half.

GEN LASHER: Well, if you stretch it a little bit, yes. But one thing that got me up there that high was the fact that in the first class engineering course there was requirement for a monograph to be written and of a wide list of subjects. And the writing and research involved covered something like eight or ten to twelve weeks of classroom work. And, of course, you did your research in the library or whatever the source you had available. And I chose the Gettysburg Campaign, and applied myself to it, I suppose.

I must have. But the mark you got in the monograph was as though you had gotten that mark everyone of the days of the eight, or ten to twelve weeks. And somehow or other I maxed it and I got a 3.0. And engineering being very important anyway at that time at West Point, this lifted my average tremendously and, of course, that's in my . . .

LTC LASHER: Do you remember what that was on? It was on the battle of Gettysburg, but what about it?

GEN LASHER: The Campaign of Gettysburg and the analysis of the actions which took place, and the commanders and their decisions--what was good and what you had to be critical of. And apparently I sat and made all the right answers. Of course, that battle of Gettysburg, I think . . . well it's a very famous battle in world battles, but as far as the United States Army was concerned it was top in every one of the schools.

LTC LASHER: Surely.

GEN LASHER: And it had been searched and searched and researched until it was worn out almost, but I didn't know too much about it until I had read up on it. So this was a very outstanding thing as far as I was concerned academically, and as I say I stood right about the middle of the class. Another big event in the four years was the Army-Navy Game in Chicago, where the entire corps of cadets and brigade of midshipmen went for the dedication of Soldiers Field in Chicago. And we went over Thanksgiving weekend, went by train, three to a section, two in the lower and one in the upper. And . . .

LTC LASHER: Must have been cozy?

GEN LASHER: Several hotels were turned over to us, and I happened to

stay at the LaSalle Hotel. We marched onto Soldiers Field on a very raw, snowy, sleety day, and Charles Gates Dawes made the dedicatory speech. And Charles Dawes was Calvin Coolidge's vice president. He was from Chicago--and a very big man out in Chicago. And he made a dedicatory speech . . . and the football field was very, very poor, was wet all the time--and as it turned out it was a 21-21 tie, that game and everybody was happy I suppose, except the cadets and the general. That was a very, very big weekend; they turned out a lot of girls and had all sorts of parties.

LTC LASHER: Was this your plebe year?

GEN LASHER: This was '26, 1926 . . . the Army-Navy Game of 1926.

LTC LASHER: Why did you choose the Quartermaster's Corps, and did you go directly into the QM or did you have to be detailed into one of the combat arms?

GEN LASHER: Well, very frankly, the reason I went into the Quartermaster Corps, chose the Quartermaster Corps, was I felt that one of the technical services . . . a technical service was probably the best training for something later on in life when I'd retired from the Army. As a matter of fact, almost immediately I tried to get into Harvard after I had graduated and had one or two details--I kept putting in for Harvard on these questionnaires they sent around, you know . . . but I never made it, but I put it in religiously every time, every year. But it was with that in mind that I took the Quartermaster Corps. And my original commission reads; commissioned a 2nd lieutenant of the Quartermaster Corps, not the US Army. I don't know if that's strange or not, but it does.

LTC LASHER: Oh, yes, because mine does.

GEN LASHER: What does yours say?

LTC LASHER: In the United States Army, and I don't believe it has any reference to the Signal Corps . . . maybe I am wrong in that; I would have to get it out and check.

GEN LASHER: Yes, but mine I know does. And I am sure that, although I can't correctly relate my early activities in the Quartermaster Corps with the job I had after I retired, but I am sure a lot of basic principles of business came through me by osmosis if no other way. Even when I was an assistant quartermaster, 2nd lieutenant on a small post. At this point as I am graduating from West Point I would like to make a couple of points which I think might fit in here, although much of the comment is in retrospect, nevertheless I would like to say that my confidence in the staff and faculty at West Point I was certainly, fully and completely indoctrinated in the supremacy of the civil over the military in our form of government.

LTC LASHER: Even at West Point that was well brought out?

GEN LASHER: Yes. It was presented in such a way that I agreed with it and believed in it. And it was very routine, very routinely established and there was just no question, you found it as a routine thing. So when people start talking now, these days, about the horrible military industrial complex and all that sort of derogatory comment, I hark back to this. I don't think that any Regular Army officer has any idea that the military would ever have a cabal or any other plot to assume control of the government. This is very important because the majority of civilians in our

country don't necessarily appreciate that. The other thing that I would like to bring out right here is that while West Point graduates are very close as an alumni body, nevertheless I, through the years, I have seen no evidence of a so-called West Point clique.

LTC LASHER: WPPA . . . West Point Protective Association? I have never found it either, never, not a single bit.

GEN LASHER: I can point here, and I will lateron, to my own experience which struck me personally in which time I worked for a civilian for quite a number of . . . for three or four years during the war and I ought to point that out later. But nowhere did I see preference or precedence given to the Military Academy graduates.

LTC LASHER: With one exception however, it appears that when you go to the selection board of general officers there appears to be some halo effect or some effect that carries though pretty much in the selection of general officers for some reason. Very few, I think, percentage wise are not West Pointers . . . who make general officers . . .

GEN LASHER: In selecting a man to be president of an industrial corporation, where do you think MIT, Carnegie Tech, Harvard Business School compare with Dickinson College right here?

LTC LASHER: Twenty-five percent of the Harvard Business School graduates we heard just the other day . . . twenty-five percent are corporation presidents within a very short time.

GEN LASHER: Exactly, not because they are MIT or Harvard, but because they have had that training. That's the thing, the name doesn't mean anything. And I think that's the same way here, because you can see some of our most

outstanding generals, your Commandant here for instance, the Chief of Staff during the war, General Marshall. There are many.

LTC LASHER: I am not saying that they . . .

GEN LASHER: I know, I know.

LTC LASHER: . . . that there is a prejudice in that direction.

GEN LASHER: I don't think that it's a prejudice. I think it's a natural outfall from the type of training that the individuals had over the years starting with West Point.

LTC LASHER: Starting with West Point, so he had a leg up is what you mean.

GEN LASHER: Right away, over the ROTC graduates, for instance.

LTC LASHER: No question in my mind.

GEN LASHER: Now I am at graduation. My father and mother came down. My mother had broken her hip in November the previous year, and was just getting over a broken hip and she was on crutches, but they made it and, of course, very proud. This will always stick out in my memory as far as the graduation was concerned. The graduation was a foregone conclusion at the Point, but nevertheless there wasn't and they appreciated it. Of course, I went to the usual weddings, three or four immediately following graduation--my classmates . . . and I was in them. And we had bachelor dinners in New York and all the jazz that went along. Three of us bought a car . . .

LTC LASHER: Three of you?

GEN LASHER: Three of us bought a car after graduation, and two of us, Dexter Lowery and I, took off and went to Montreal and Quebec for a trip and then drove down to his home in Tallahassee, where he left me. I

returned via Clayton, Alabama, and visited Jim Winn, and ended up in Newark, New Jersey, delivering the car to the third owner, Weary Wilson.

LTC LASHER: What finally happened to the car?

GEN LASHER: He was the one who eventually wound up as the owner.

LTC LASHER: He bought the other two out?

GEN LASHER: He bought the rest of us out. We had . . . we didn't have much money, you know.

LTC LASHER: So when did you get a car of your own the first time?

GEN LASHER: I got a car that summer, a two-door Model A Ford, secondhand that summer, and went to my new post in it, to Plattsburg Barracks. And, of course, I suppose my orders came out . . . I don't know if they came out before graduation or not, but it runs in my mind that I received them after I got home that I would be assigned to Plattsburg Barracks, New York. I reported for duty there . . .

LTC LASHER: Pardon me. Did you have any . . . were you given any preference sheet and was Plattsburg something that you might have been interested in?

GEN LASHER: No. I don't recall having a preference, although probably we were given an opportunity to state some preferences, but one of the reasons was that my home was in New York state and Plattsburg Barracks was in New York state and it was cheaper to move me there than anywhere else to start with. So I reported for duty there in September of '29 and the actual reporting for duty will always remain with me. The Post Adjutant was a Lieutenant Brady, Jack Brady, and the Post Commander was a Colonel Madden, John F. Madden. Madden was an infantryman, but nevertheless, always wore boots and wore them under slacks. And he was sort of, in many ways, rather

different. Colder than hell when I moved in--he didn't even get up. He was writing something on his desk and he had a little pair of glasses down on the end of his nose, and he was working there, white haired old guy, and he looked up and said, "Good afternoon, mister." Didn't even mention my name. It was the first time I had ever been called . . . I thought I'd be called lieutenant, you know. But anyway he was a widower and had some unfortunate experiences as far as the marital side of his life was concerned. And his pronounced ambition was to take a regiment and march it across the country--all bachelors.

LTC LASHER: All bachelors, why?

GEN LASHER: Well, of course, they were going to leave little soldiers all along the route to grow into battalions. And another thing that he did, of course, in those days we had what was called a service company and this was the supply train, you know, and it was animal drawn, mules with escort wagons. And he was a spit-and-polish guy, so he contracted with the local laundry, a dry cleaning outfit there in Plattsburg, to bleach these mules and then dye them all the same color, and he did.

LTC LASHER: Bleach the mules?

GEN LASHER: That's right, and he had a rich conglomeration of colors after he got through. He actually went through with this, he was trying to get it . . . this is how spit-and-polish he was--he wanted the mules all the same color.

LTC LASHER: Isn't that ridiculous?

GEN LASHER: And . . .

LTC LASHER: What was his rank?

GEN LASHER: He was a full colonel.

LTC LASHER: And he was in charge, he was the post commander?

GEN LASHER: He was the post commander.

LTC LASHER: What was Plattsburg Barracks itself; what was its raison d'etre at that time?

GEN LASHER: It was the home of the 26th Infantry.

LTC LASHER: Regiment?

GEN LASHER: Yes, regimental post and he was the commander of the regiment and the post commander and senior officer.

LTC LASHER: About how large would you say the whole post complement was?

GEN LASHER: Oh, I haven't any idea. I can't tell you.

LTC LASHER: It's no longer in existence, is it?

GEN LASHER: Well, Plattsburg Barracks at the beginning of the war was turned over to the Air Force . . . well, the Navy first, and then the Air Force took it over and now I think it's abandoned, or else turned over to some civilian agency. But we did our exercises and training over in what was then called Pine Camp over toward Watertown to the west and which was eventually renamed Camp Drum.

LTC LASHER: Yes.

GEN LASHER: And we'd go over there lock, stock and barrel and do our maneuvers and so forth. I was only there a year, but it was quite an indoctrination. I was assistant to the post quartermaster, was a subsistence officer actually, and I had a fine sergeant there who had been there for a long time and learned a great deal from him. Another thing there that . . . now this really goes back.

LTC LASHER: Plattsburg was a very small town, or was it?

GEN LASHER: I wouldn't say very small. It was a town, not a city, not even a small city. We had a red light district, primarily through the post--the post doctors inspected it periodically. It was accepted by everybody in the town as well as the post.

LTC LASHER: As a necessity, so to speak.

GEN LASHER: Yes. And at certain times the officer of the day was instructed to make his own inspection. And it was tightly controlled, but understood and apparently accepted.

LTC LASHER: What was it referred to in the officer's instructions?

GEN LASHER: I've forgotten its nickname.

LTC LASHER: I am sure they didn't say the Red Light District, or did they?

GEN LASHER: No. I am sure no one had named it Mary's Den, you know. But this is in 1929, mind you, the fall of 1929. And in October of that year great things happened in the United States. Now almost immediately I started to make friends in the community, outside, and one particular one--and I don't know just how we got together, but anyway he was . . . his name was Douglas, Jack Douglas, and he was quite a guy. He was married and had a couple of children. And I got to know them socially very well. And during these first couple of months I would sneak off and go to the local brokerage office and watch the tape and chew the fat with these guys. And two brothers, I think it was two . . . No. The two brothers owned the bank there and this fellow that ran the brokerage office, I don't know with what company he might have been connected with at the time, but they were all very upstanding citizens and leaders in the community--the bankers

and the broker, and Douglas and that group. And I went to parties and we . . . I was in the bootleg ring at the time too. Well I'll digress to that for the moment. Of course, it was prohibition, you know, and down in Poughkeepsie the Fleischmanns had a big plant and . . .

LTC LASHER: Fleischmanns?

GEN LASHER: Fleischmann's Yeast . . . and among other things they made alcohol. And this was run up north . . . well it was bought and run up north in five gallons tins, great big five gallon tins.

LTC LASHER: When you say up north you mean to Canada?

GEN LASHER: Well up toward Canada, but it stopped at Plattsburg and from the north, from Montreal, whiskey was run down and the trade was made between this pure alcohol which is very bad and the whiskey. My job in this whole thing . . . did I ever tell you this. . . my job in this whole thing was to test the alcohol and make sure it was okay, because somebody would take a bottle and an eyedropper and take a sample out of each one of the five gallon cans and put it in the bottle, it was all mixed up see . . . maybe there'd be twenty five-gallon cans, a hundred gallons of alcohol. And I'd have a sample bottle with some of each, I'd take it over to the post hospital and have them analyze it. And if it turned out that there was something wrong with it, then we would have to do it can by can, but it never did. It was always good pure alcohol and the trade was made. So we got gin whiskey and scotch . . .

LTC LASHER: You say we . . . You mean Pete and Tommy?

GEN LASHER: Yes.

LTC LASHER: Well it's digressing, but how did Fleischmann's make this

legally? They must have had some . . .

GEN LASHER: Well it was part of their yeast, I always supposed, part of the manufacture of yeast. It was maybe an offshoot and probably they were in the thing too. They had this excess and they didn't care who bought it. I suppose they could buy it legitimately for various purposes, industrial purposes. As I stated before, I think I learned far more that short year at Plattsburg Barracks than I had any idea for. Everything is so new and so many new things get thrown at you in your early life that you don't realize how much of it you are absorbing at the time until after the experience has unraveled itself and applied elsewhere later on. But my education in the Quartermaster Corps, if you can call it that, was all primarily due to the sergeant. And I remember talking to him one time and asking him how he, with all this knowledge, felt about a young squirt coming in and becoming his boss, not knowing anything at all about what the score was. And his answer was quite profound--"Well," he said, "I know some of these details, I've done them, but," he said, "people like you come in, you have a fine education and you're much broader in your outlook on everything that's going on. It makes no never mind I just take joy in imparting to you everything I know."

LTC LASHER: Help them along.

GEN LASHER: And his name was Hope, Sergeant Hope. He was born in England as a matter of fact--and when he came over here he joined the Army and probably had 25 or 30 years service at that time.

LTC LASHER: Well it's not uncommon that you find sergeants like that. In my first assignment if I hadn't had a couple of very good sergeants I may

never have made it past that point.

GEN LASHER: That's right. In the summer of 1930 at Plattsburg I received my orders for attendance to the Subsistence School, Quartermaster Corps Subsistence School in Chicago. This was a well known and highly regarded school. So I sold my Ford and bought myself a snazzy red Desoto roadster with artillery wheels and canvas top and drove to Chicago. This is my . . . of course, I stopped on the way, I stopped at home and probably took some few days leave. I got to Chicago and attended the Subsistence School--learned how to bake bread and how to tell one kind coffee from another and how to inspect beef . . . meats. And a great deal of the time was spent right in the stockyards of Chicago at Swift and Armour slaughtering plants. And we actually cut up quarters of beef.

LTC LASHER: You did?

GEN LASHER: We actually did that, as well as learning the fine points of procurement of foodstuffs and how to inspect them--how to put out bids for meat, for instance, and asking for grades and then inspecting the meat when it comes in to see that it met the standards that . . .

LTC LASHER: Do they still have that school today?

GEN LASHER: I don't think so, I think they have a . . . well I think later on it left Chicago and went to Camp Lee, Fort Lee, Virginia, whatever there is. Then I think later than that it went to Boston. They had a big subsistence center up there, and now, later than that, they established an Office of Subsistence back in Chicago, but it was more office than it was a school.

LTC LASHER: I see.

GEN LASHER: Whether they now have a school or not I don't know. But anyway I learned quite a bit about that, but I never had another job in which I really applied what I knew. Certainly I didn't bake any bread after that or inspect coffee, but anyway I graduated with as many honors as you get at such schools which was a certificate of completion. And toward the end of that year, maybe April or May, I received orders for foreign duty in Hawaii. I left for Hawaii the following summer in 1931 on the Transport Chateau-Thierry, USAT Chateau-Thierry, just an old World War I Army troopship, and it took just a hell of a long time to get to San Francisco.

LTC LASHER: San Francisco?

GEN LASHER: Well we went through the Canal.

LTC LASHER: Oh, you went to New York and took the Chateau-Thierry through the Canal all the way to Hawaii again . . . boy.

GEN LASHER: And I was in . . .

LTC LASHER: That must have been six weeks.

GEN LASHER: Well it was probably at least 12 days to Panama and we had a day or two there, a day transit thru the Canal and then up the West Coast, which was even longer than from New York. We put in at somewhere and dropped off a marine sergeant and his family--they sent out a boat for them--stinking hot, six of us in a small cabin, just room for three cots high on each side . . . three layers. And one of them was a Catholic priest, a chaplain going over for duty in Hawaii. Another was a 2nd Lieutenant by the name of Munson, Freddie Munson, from an old Army family. And when we got to San Francisco he and I took a room together at the Clift Hotel for the period of time that the ship laid there to take off for . . ., of

course, other people on the ship were stationed on the West Coast. Some were going through, as I, to Hawaii and whatever space that was left there was West Coast people going to Hawaii, so they picked up people as well as drop them off. I remember I was officer of the deck or something similar to that the night we got into the San Francisco Harbor and dropped anchor. And in inspecting the guard . . . we had a regular guard . . .in inspecting the guard these soldat . . . of course, this was a volunteer Army and I want to make some comments right here. When I mentioned volunteer Army, at the time I was commissioned there were about a 100,000 enlisted men in the Army, and about 12,000 officers total. And, of course, it was entirely volunteer Army, the pay for a buck private was $21.00 a month, and he didn't have that, he didn't get that, it had all been spent beforehand on laundry and all the other things, you know, at the PX and everything else, so he didn't have much cash in his pocket. And what he did have was gone by six o'clock on pay day every month. And if you wanted a soldier for duty the next day or two you had to go down to the local jail and get him out, but they were good soldiers, there was no question. I mentioned this Sergeant Hope at Plattsburg Barracks, an excellent man, and the combat sergeants in the various companies in the regiment were similar. Now sure they organized their own crap games and they took a cut out of every pot that was on the table, but boy they ran the Army. And we had a fine 100,000 man Army in those days. For instance, this one sentry I inspected during that evening, I asked him the usual question--where he was from, he was from Brooklyn, and what his name was and all this jazz. And then I said, "Where are we?" And here we were

at anchor. We had been on the ocean for three weeks out of New York, out of Brooklyn, see? And there were lights all around the harbor, you know. It was very obviously quite a place we were in. And I asked him where he thought we were, and he didn't know; he just didn't know--he made a couple of wild guesses like Baltimore or something like that, but he had no idea. Now here's a Volunteer Army, but that soldier probably by the time he got through in Hawaii, if he was going to Hawaii, was a lot smarter soldier, a lot smarter man, a better citizen and everything else than he was when he enlisted in the Army. He got schooling; he got everything else and if he had any native ability at all he could become a sergeant. And I think the Volunteer Army is fine; my reservation today with the Volunteer Army is, "How are we going to pay for it?" If they carry through with salaries and wages to attract men in competition with industry, generally speaking with broader spectrum, the United States of American just can not afford it. We had something like between 12 and 14 million men and women in uniform in World War II. Now that's a tremendous multiplier when you come every 30 days to meet a payroll. And with all the other expenses of war we just wouldn't have enough resources to maintain it. And I have made up my mind--there was a guy, a Professor Milton Friedman, Dr. Milton Friedman is a professor at the University of Chicago. He is an economist and is a very hard-nosed guy, a hard dollar guy and a pay-as-you-go chap. I subscribed to his tapes for a number of years, which he made up on the economic situation, weekly tapes, that sort of things. And he lives in Chicago and is highly regarded, and he was one of the members of the panel that studied the Volunteer Army. And being an

economist he would be one that I would want to ask, and I am going to do this next year--ask what his rationale was on the economics of the Volunteer Army.

LTC LASHER: You are suggesting then that we might be able to afford a peacetime Army and keep up the pay at an equivalency to the civilian comparative job, but in a mobilization we could not afford to carry it at that same pay rate?

GEN LASHER: That's what I think. I don't see how we can.

LTC LASHER: I don't either.

GEN LASHER: And we certainly can't . . . say the Volunteer Army is maintained at 500,000, say, peacetime.

LTC LASHER: A little less than we are now. It's about 300,000 less than we are now.

GEN LASHER: It's about 800,000 now?

LTC LASHER: About 800,000.

GEN LASHER: All right, we are still scaling back, aren't we?

LTC LASHER: Yes, I don't think we are going to cut back that far . . .

GEN LASHER: So let's say 500,000 and we can afford this let's say. You are going to cut them back? You can't pay them more, that 500,000, than you can the 8,000,000 that you have to bring in on a draft. You can't have two pay scales. I don't see how you can.

LTC LASHER: I don't either. And I guess the assumption may be that we are never going to have to have that sort of mobilization again, but if we have that all-out effort, it will be a nuclear one.

GEN LASHER: Our government has got to sell universal military training

and make it palatable to the citizenry of the United States. When a boy gets out of high school, he should have to go two years, let's say. I don't care whether it's 24 months or what, but a couple of years of training, and then he has a six-year obligation, and he can be drafted up to the six years after this. This is the best place to interrupt his life. When he gets out of high school to the time he wants to go to college, if he can and does or to a technical school or whatever.

LTC LASHER: Many of them will never go because they will learn a trade.

GEN LASHER: . . . they'll learn a trade--that's all right, too. The best place to learn a trade is right in the Army . . . interrupt him right there. The boy who is going to go to college is going to know more of what kind of a future he wants after those two years than he could ever possibly know when he gets out of high school. He hasn't any idea when he gets out of high school of the whole thing. He thinks he knows, but he really doesn't know. He hasn't found himself yet. And the boys who go to college . . .

LTC LASHER: Let's put it this way. It's the unusual one who has.

GEN LASHER: That's right, and they are very few and far between. So I have no quarrel with the Volunteer Army as such. They've made such a fuss over it. I don't know why because we have had a Volunteer Army for many, many years. But I think the whole citizenry has to be involved. And I don't think we can afford a volunteer military group which pays salaries comparable to those of the civilian community, just no way.

LTC LASHER: Even in peacetime?

GEN LASHER: Well, all right, let's take the Chief of Staff . . . don't take the Chief of Staff, take an Army commander and compare his salary to a man who

has a modestly large corporation. He is drawing a hundred to a hundred and twenty or a hundred and fifty thousand dollars a year, and he doesn't . . .

LTC LASHER: The corporation president?

GEN LASHER: The corporation president, and the three star general or the four star general who is running an Army group has far more responsibilities, far more responsibilities. And they are different types of responsibilities, and they are broader in scope. He has the life, the welfare, the soul of the men under him; he has to commit them to the battle; this is a responsibility for which he is prepared. This far transcends the corporation president, who really couldn't care less about that individual bookkeeper down there as long as he keeps his numbers straight.

LTC LASHER: And basically only has an interest between eight and five in that man, too, as opposed to the Army man who has a 24-hour interest.

GEN LASHER: So this Volunteer Army thing--and here's this boy, who probably didn't get through the fourth or fifth grade. I remember at Fort Eustis, we had a lot of truck battalions there training in motor vehicles and we found a great many Negroes coming into these truck battalions. Now these boys who came there got an excellent grounding, whether it was in operations or maintenance or whatnot, but they had a wonderful education. Most of them hardly could read . . . not most of them, but many of them couldn't read or write. And we set up a fourth grade school at Fort Eustis to bring them along, so that they could read orders and regulations and so forth. Now this is what the Army does for the man--and this boy on the deck of the Chateau-Thierry, when he got back from Schofield Barracks or wherever he went in Hawaii, he would be twice the person he was, if he stayed in or if he got out.

LTC LASHER: On the other hand, you can't make an entire Army of that sort of a man that you have to take in on a low level. This is one of the fears of the people who are worried about the Volunteer Army, that the whole quality of the input is going to be lowered--not to say that they don't make good soldiers, but you are going to have to train the hell out of them.

GEN LASHER: Not only that, but you originally paid them a comparable salary, see, but yet you have to train that man up to the level of the salary, whereas the salary you pay over here in the civilian community, that man has already provided himself with this knowledge through his education.

LTC LASHER: To a degree, that's correct.

GEN LASHER: Well, again, I say I have no fear of the Volunteer Army. I think a Volunteer Army is fine.

LTC LASHER: If we can afford it.

GEN LASHER: But I don't think we can. I doubt that we can afford it. I don't know, but the situation is so fluid and so changeable. Well, I stayed there three or four days, Freddie Munson and I. Of course we ordered up some whiskey. It was still prohibition. The amusing thing was when it was delivered by a bellboy, the label on it was a Gordon Gin. I remember it just as well as night. And we unwrapped it and the label was still--you could move the label around on the bottle; it had just been put on. Well, we got over to Hawaii and I was just so struck by Hawaii. This was now, mind you, 1931. And part of the old Army--gloriously met, there was a captain assigned to meet me, just for instance, see, I was a bachelor.

LTC LASHER: 2nd lieutenant?

GEN LASHER: 2nd lieutenant. Captain was pretty high ranking, but a captain was assigned to meet me. He came with an armful of leis and put them on me, briefed me right there as to what we were going to do that day. And he had a suggestion and a reservation for me of a place to stay. My assignment was to be at Fort Armstrong, which was right there in the middle of town, and I had to live on commutation. But before I'd look for something I would have a place to stay that night, you know, and there was no guest house or anything at Fort Armstrong. There was only about a half dozen sets of quarters there. So he had a place set up where I could stay for the few days it would take me to locate a more permanent place, and drove me around town. And I said, "If you say that's a good place, that's where I'll stay, if I can afford it." He said, "You can afford it, it's alright." So we found out and it was that kind of a place. It was a lovely little hotel, and I stayed there a few days and looked around. I was given time to get settled and I found a place down on the beach--a little apartment--sitting room, bedroom and bath, and eventually moved in down there in a furnished place.

LTC LASHER: On the beach?

GEN LASHER: Yes, right next to the Royal Hawaiian Hotel, backed right up to the Royal Hawaiian Hotel.

LTC LASHER: How much did it cost you, do you remember?

GEN LASHER: About a hundred and twenty-five plus commutation of quarters and rations. Rations, I think, was $18.00, and I think commutation of quarters was forty.

LTC LASHER: So you were making less than two hundred a month?

GEN LASHER: Yes. And so I established myself and went to work. And I

was assigned as warehouse officer at the Hawaiian Quartermaster Depot. And we had several big warehouses and much of the supplies for the Hawaiian Department came through there one way or another. And some didn't stop. They went on or were transshipped immediately to Schofield or wherever they were going. We kept the big warehouse of general supply, subsistence and everything but signal. There was a separate signal depot, there was a separate ordnance depot on the island, but these were all the general supplies and I was the warehouse officer and I had some enlisted and some civilian people running these things, mostly well, there were again, these good old sergeants, you know, who really ran the places. And again, I learned a lot there, but I also drew . . . in the subsistence depot for instance, I drew upon my school . . . my tour at Chicago, and although I had none of the procurement, I didn't have any of the buying, but various other things, and I learned a lot about general supplies. For instance there was . . . I don't know if you know what an escort wagon was?

LTC LASHER: Escort wagon?

GEN LASHER: Yes. Well, it was a wagon that we carried supplies in in the train . . .

LTC LASHER: Oh, service company.

GEN LASHER: And they were big old boxes and they were wagons, drawn by mules usually, and they had a canvas over the top of them with hoops and everything. We had acres of knocked down escort wagons there. When I say knocked down, the wheels were off, the bed of the wagon was one thing with the axles on and the wheels were separate and the sides, which were maybe a couple feet high, were another piece of the knocked down escort wagon. The seat probably was

another piece. Well, those sides and floors, for instance, had to be painted. You see, this was an island in a salt water area and you had problems and they painted them once a year--one side they'd paint one year, the next side they'd turned them over and paint the next year. They decided to paint one side a year. I don't know how long we kept those damn escort wagons, but there they were and they had to be DID and we painted the O.D.

LTC LASHER: So one side always looked new.

GEN LASHER: Yes. The side you could see. Well, it was a preservative there, is no question about that.

LTC LASHER: Oh, yes. I understand, but . . .

GEN LASHER: But who knew when we were going to use the escort wagons next--well, we never used those escort wagons. Whatever the hell happened to them, I have no idea. My commanding officer there was a guy by the name of Ursa M. Diller, Quartermaster Lieutenant Colonel, probably in his late fifties--and he was the commanding officer and was quite a guy. Ursa Diller was in the class of '04; see this was '30, he was in the class of '04, this was '31 . . .

LTC LASHER: So he had been 27 years in the service at that point.

GEN LASHER: Yes. Well, of course, when I graduated from West Point we all felt that if we ever got to be full colonels we were all doing pretty good. So here is Ursa Diller, had grandchildren and was a lieutenant colonel, and he had a nickname of Bear--he looked like a bear, too, but he had a heart of gold. He was a very fine commander, and he ran a good show there. Mrs. Diller was very lovely. Although the post was a small post as far as the people who lived on it was concerned, the officer's quarters. There was a small post exchange and open air theater and right on the ocean. It was a very beautiful spot, one of the prized locations around Honolulu actually.

LTC LASHER: Was De Russy there at that time?

GEN LASHER: And Ruger was a coast artillery post on Diamond Head.

LTC LASHER: That still exists, but not as an active camp, I don't believe.

GEN LASHER: De Russy was, as now, was sort of a staging area.

LTC LASHER: De Russy is still there, but Armstrong apparently is not . . .

GEN LASHER: No. It's been turned over to the public health people, and Schofield is still there and I don't know, there was another, Fort Kamehameha over toward Barbers Point on around which is a coast artillery post.

LTC LASHER: Shafter, was Fort Shafter there?

GEN LASHER: Oh yes. That was the department headquarters, still is. And that's where, I guess, USARPAC Headquarters is,isn't it? And that was a nice post. So my tour of duty there was a very pleasant one in many ways topped by marriage. While we were there, of course, eventually the depression caught up with the government as well as with individuals. Now my family had its trouble, my father had his troubles, and I don't yet know the whole details to this. Of course, they were saving me, you know, from all these problems they were having and just wouldn't write it. Everything was hunky-dory | in my letters. And I am sure that I was not keeping up my side of the correspondence at this point. I had so many other new things to do, but eventually we took a ten percent cut in pay. And this was, as we've mentioned before, they dubbed these things payless pay day, but actually we just took a ten percent cut in pay and worked the same hours and thought nothing about it. At the same time another economic move was to extend for one year all foreign service tours. My tour in Hawaii was to have been two years, and I had orders when the cut was made and it was extended to three years--I had

my assignment to return home. And I was held over for a third year, which must have saved quite a bit of money, you know . . . the household goods . . ., but anyway this was part of the economic move. How long the ten percent cut in pay remained, I don't remember, but I don't either remember that it hurt me too much, really.

LTC LASHER: Other people were taking a whole lot more than ten percent.

GEN LASHER: I probably had a lot of things I could give up without worrying too much about it. Do you have another question?

LTC LASHER: I was going to ask you when you met mother over there.

GEN LASHER: One of my good friends, I've mentioned him before as the one who accompanied me to Canada after graduation--Dexter Lowery, who was a very harum-scarum cadet--nobody, none of the tactical officers wanted him in his company at West Point. And when he came over from M Company to A Company, Clair Armstrong soon got his belly full of Dexter, and he made the remark--Armstrong made the remark, "I don't give a damn what they do. I don't care if they give him a pup tent out in the middle of the Plains. I want him out of West Point." But he stayed and distinguished himself in World War II . . . he was Infantry and retired, disability, and wounded three or four times in some attack--turned out to be quite a soldier. Well, Dexter came over shortly after I did on a tour of duty to Hawaii, about a year after I got there, and of course we got together right away. One of the subjects, besides religion and politics, was girls. And he told me about a girl that was living downtown and came over on the boat with him, and he had played bridge with her. So over a few drinks one day, he called her up on the phone--she was at the hotel--and introduced me to her, her to me on the

telephone, and I took over the phone and made a date with her--and that turned out to be your mother. And one thing led to another, and, of course, her father was in the Dental Corps and . . .

LTC LASHER: At the time what was his rank?

GEN LASHER: Full colonel. He had come into the service as a contract dentist in the early 1900s and had a tour of duty in the Philippines. Your mother went to the Philippines as a baby. And he was what was . . . he was the Chief of Dental Service in Washington, then was ordered to . . . and he was just a colonel. There were not stars in that job. He took a tour of duty in Hawaii and on the way her mother got sick. She was put in the hospital in California and he took leave and they stayed in California until her mother got well. She had to be operated on and she died of peritonitis there in San Francisco. And, of course, they had all of that to do and he probably had to extend his leave to take care of all the details, but eventually they came over and happened to be on the same transport that Lowery was on and that's how he got to know her. So, of course, for the first week or so they stayed in the hotel before they found a house where they could settle and which they did up Manoa Valley, and I met her while they were still at the hotel. And we dated a little bit, more and more as time went on, and the thing bloomed and blossomed and in February of '34, February the 13th we got married, in a Congregational Church which was there in Honolulu, which was called the Church of the Gardens, which was a very beautiful church. It was a military wedding and we had all the classmates I could get. Previously as a bachelor, I had gotten to know a civilian there by the name of Piersig, Helmuth Johannes Goffrey Piersig, and he was the son of a German minister. And like so many

Germans and the German policy, he had left home to seek his fortune in the world. This was a big policy of the Germans for businessmen to go away and spread the German word wherever they went. Many went to the East Indies, you know, and all over--and he came there and got a job with a big company there called Von Hom Young. And in due course I met him and he was kind of disgusted with the guy he was living with and we kind of struck it off and decided we'd get together. So we rented a house, a two-bedroom house with a living room, dining room, kitchen and two bedrooms, and we hired a Japanese gal and she kept house for us. This did not include the cooking. And he was sort of a traveling salesman in his job and traveled all of the other islands. He was gone about three weeks of every month. So for me that was a pretty good arrangement because we split the thing 50-50. And he was my best man--that's how I got back to Helmuth--he was my best man and the others were all in uniform . . . white uniform, everybody. Then we had a reception up at your mother's house and that was a big go-round. Of course, we had okaulehau by the keg, five gallon kegs. That's the way you bought it.

LTC LASHER: What's okaulehau?

GEN LASHER: Okaulehau, that was the drink there. It was still prohibition.

LTC LASHER: What was okaulehau?

GEN LASHER: Well, it's a distillation of taro roots . . . very good. You call up for a gallon or whatnot and we would tell the bootlegger to drive around the block a couple times to age it before he brought it in. And it was white unless you put charcoal in it and have it aged, you know. And this gal we used, Helmuth and I used, she dressed as a nurse and had a black bag that

held a gallon jug. And then one of the ways of aging it was to, if you had enough money to get a gallon ahead, you put it on the rocking chair, tied it under the rocker chair, and everybody who sat on the chair would keep the thing moving and it would age it faster.

LTC LASHER: How do you spell it?

GEN LASHER: Okaulehau, o-k-a-u-l-e-h-a-u, I think is the way it's spelled, okaulehau. But if it was properly done and aged properly, it wasn't a bad drink . . . but, of course, it's all gone now, but that wasn't too bad. And Helmuth and I use to make beer, too, but we didn't have too much success with that. And at the reception we had OK, as they call it, OK and there was a lot of sore heads the next morning. It was quite a thing. And your mother and I, of course, in preparation for the whole thing wondered where we were going for our honeymoon, if anywhere, and we decided that we'd save our money and spend it in getting things for our house when we got back to the States. I had moved in with them the last few weeks of my tour. So we had gotten some money as gifts and instead of going away, we were thinking of going to Japan on an Army Transport . . . China then . . . of course, he had to leave but it would have cost some money, so we decided not to and we saved our money and spent it mostly in Panama on the way home and in New York on the way home. We bought some . . . lots of dishes in Panama and foodstuff like that, you know. It was very inexpensive. So that's where I got married and in . . . well, not long after marrying I got my orders, my new orders for Fort Ontario, New York. And we left about June, I think, by Army transport and the slow, tedious trip back through the . . . via San Francisco and the Panama Canal. And it's a very tiresome trip and the speed of those old tubs . . . but we made

out. We had a lot of fun as we look back on it. And it didn't make any difference, obviously the time of the individual, which is now considered so valuable, you fly them in a few hours to wherever you want him to be in the United States--time then didn't make any difference. You not only had the time in transit, but you usually took a month's leave in connection with the change of station and maybe more sometimes. You see, that trip from Hawaii back to New York was at least three weeks, and if you took a leave of four weeks there is seven weeks out of that year that you weren't producing anything. And . . .

LTC LASHER: I thought that trip back was about a 30-day trip; it seems to me that it was.

GEN LASHER: All right, 21 to 30 days, somewhere along in there, so there is almost two months out of your year where you weren't producing. We were met in Brooklyn and soon as the . . . oh, yes . . . I had sold my fancy Desoto roadster to a Chinaman in Hawaii, who peeled off whatever the price was right off a wad in his pocket, and I turned the title over to him.

LTC LASHER: That's not the one that burned up, is it?

GEN LASHER: Yes. That's the one that burned. Your mother had it; she was going for a fitting for her wedding dress and it caught on fire, but it didn't do any serious damage. During my tour there in Hawaii I got to know two or three people very well. My immediate superior was a fellow by the name of Bill Kasten, he was a Major K-a-s-t-e-n. And he was my immediate boss, and he was the commander of the provisional battalion we had at Fort Armstrong--provisional battalion. It was just a rag-tag bobtail of enlisted men assigned to the depot. But they had to drill and they had to be drilled by the

officers assigned to the depot. Well, most of them were officers who had been commissioned as a result of World War I. Now don't forget we were only ten or twelve years away from World War I, and these had been enlisted mostly, who had reserve commissions and had picked them up during World War I and then stayed in. They had not much experience and all of a sudden I found myself the adjutant in this provisional battalion, and giving knife and ball drill to these officers, captains and high-ranking lieutenants, as to how to handle a saber and how to give orders, and the cadence and everything. In other words, I was instructing here. You know what knife and ball drill is, don't you?

LTC LASHER: I'm not sure; no.

GEN LASHER: Well, you know the guy with the biggest lungs has the best balls. Did you ever hear that?

LTC LASHER: Oh, yes. I didn't know what knife . . .

GEN LASHER: It was the saber. And when we had summer camp at West Point, you know, summer camp was over where the lacrosse field is--you know, how far that is--way across the plain to the Supt's quarter. Well, whenever you saw a general officer, you had to turn the guard out, and the trick was that if you wanted to take a chance and you were on post number 1, you would turn the guard out. And if the Superintendent walked out on his front porch and you turned the guard out and he didn't salute and say, "Never mind the guard"--here's a guard coming out, tumbling out, you know, getting his brass out and everything and if you couldn't make the Superintendent hear you, you wouldn't get "Never mind the guard" from him.

LTC LASHER: Oh, I see. He couldn't hear you from way across there.

GEN LASHER: Yes. And so the guys who could make themselves heard that far were pretty good. I could do it, but not everybody could do it. Well, that was a . . . and the Comm was right next door; either one of them could walk out, see? And they were both general officers. Well, the Commandant wasn't, but we had to turn out for the Commandant, too. So that was a little sidelight . . . and this quite intrigued me, you know, being able to know something that my seniors didn't know and being able to be of some assistance and impart some help to the . . . to the outfit there. Another guy . . . well, Kasten became the Chief of Finance of the Army later on.

LTC LASHER: Did he?

GEN LASHER: Yes. And retired as Chief of Finance. And another one who made quite an impression on me was--I don't remember what his job was at the depot--but his name was Hockwald, Henry Hockwald, and neither one of these guys are graduates either. And Hockwald later on became Chief of Personnel in the Office of the Quartermaster General. I'll pick this up later on. And we knew the Hockwalds--they were very nice people. We socialized with them and liked them very much . . . and then we left. I went to Fort Ontario and I was assistant post quartermaster there, still as a 2nd lieutenant of course, and I had two pretty screwy bosses there. One was a captain and one was a 1st lieutenant, senior 1st lieutenant, and they were very peculiar. The captain, for instance, his name was Huber, a big, heavyset guy, and I might say a typical ex-sergeant.

LTC LASHER: Ex-sergeant?

GEN LASHER: Yes, a commissioned sergeant, and with very little formal education I am sure. You see, we weren't far from Binghamton, New York, you know, and he'd refer to that . . . when we got into the CCC Program there Binghamton

was in our area, and he always called it "Binmaton," and he always referred to three star Henderson . . .

LTC LASHER: Instead of three star Hennessey.

GEN LASHER: Malaprops, you know. And he and his wife used them lavishly. They had big old brick quarters there. They used to get in terrible fights and throw things, and the neighbors would be telling all these stories about the things they heard. The other guy was named Wick. He was a lieutenant; he was another one of my bosses there as post quartermaster, and one of his idiosyncrasies was that they always carted around their own toilet seats. They never liked the toilet seats where they got quarters. So they had a toilet seat that they liked, and they talked about it--they had a toilet seat that they liked so they just took it off and moved and put it in. And all the things that happened--this involved a major, that was pretty high ranking, you know . . . by the name of Nealon. And he was one of the battalion commanders . . . he was a battalion commander. We had an officer's call at 11:30 every morning. Everybody would go there, and the post adjutant would give us whatever instructions there were for the day, or special information, or a message from the colonel, or the post commander, or maybe the post commander would have something he wanted to talk to the officers about. So we all had to gather there and we would get there, of course, about 20 after, 25 after. And I was there one morning and Nealon barges in, madder than hell, and called me over in a loud voice--this wasn't a very big room--

and in a loud voice told me that this morning when he went to the bathroom he nearly boiled his balls off. I've told you this before?

LTC LASHER: No.

GEN LASHER: Well he, like many people, had his time for the bathroom when he got up after he had had his breakfast. And the heating apparatus in the quarters, his old quarters, was a coal furnace and it was stoked by prisoners, we had a guardhouse there, by prisoners . . . all along the line they go from quarters to quarters and stoke them up for the day and tend the furnaces. And the hot water heater was one of those classic uprights. So this one morning he was sitting there and they stoked up the fire pretty good about five o'clock, and he was sitting there doing his business and he reached around and flushes the toilet and this scalding hot water comes down through . . . he blamed me for it. I was the quartermaster, that's all. He cursed and swore and everybody laughed at him, see. He just didn't get to first base as far as sympathy was concerned.

LTC LASHER: I can imagine.

GEN LASHER: This tour there was pretty routine. It was . . . also there was a brigade headquarters. And this was the 28th Infantry at Fort Ontario.

LTC LASHER: 28th Infantry.

GEN LASHER: Part of the 28th Infantry at Fort Ontario. And also, I think, there was a 2nd Brigade Headquarters there. And the commander of that . . . who came there as commander was a brigadier general by the name of Walter Short, Walter C. Short, who will come forth in my narrative later on.

LTC LASHER: Later on Hawaii and Pearl Harbor?

GEN LASHER: Yes. And we got to know the Shorts very well, and they were bridge hounds and we were too, so we played a lot of bridge with the Shorts. And his adjutant was a guy by the name of Bill Collier, and they both appear later on. Neither of these guys are graduates. Walter Short wasn't a graduate

and neither was Bill Collier, but we got to know the Shorts very well and we liked them. And later on we socialized after we got away from Fort Ontario, but otherwise the tour was pretty routine, except for the advent of the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps).

LTC LASHER: Which was about '34 or '35.

GEN LASHER: No. Our tour there was '34 to '37, see, I was '31 to '34 in Hawaii, came back in '34 and was three years in Ontario. And the CCC had just started and we were the district headquarters for CCC. And there was two doctors assigned to CCC; they were reserve officers. They were medical officers and they were on CCC duty there. One of them was Baird, Joe Baird, and the other one was named Bohannon. Bohannon eventually . . . they both went to the Air Force, transferred to the Air Corps or Air Force; both took training in . . . to become air surgeons.

LTC LASHER: Flight surgeons.

GEN LASHER: Flight surgeons, yes. And Bohannon eventually became Surgeon General of the Air Force, retired as a three star general. But they were lieutenants just as we were, and we were very close to them and had a great deal of socializing as well as official work because we had all the quartermaster procurement for this CCC district which was the main thing. You had to feed them, you had to clothe them and house them--this was all practically quartermaster responsibility. And I was right in the middle of it and there were a great many camps in this particular CCC area.

LTC LASHER: You couldn't guesstimate how many bodies you were responsible for, would you?

GEN LASHER: Well, there was probably about 15 camps in this jurisdiction,

this particular one. And I would say there were a couple hundred boys, plus the complement of officers who ran them . . . two or three hundred, maybe more, maybe three or four hundred. I just don't remember that. But it was a program which was apparently quite worthwhile, quite worthwhile. These boys were picked up right out of the streets of the cities. They had nowhere to go, they were just causing trouble, and it worked out very well. Although my contact with them was strictly on a staff level, I had nothing to do with the individual camp or the training or anything, but we did furnish them all the stuff. We made all the procurement and subsistence and here is where all my training in Chicago stood me in good stead. I had this to do while the post quartermaster, my boss, whoever he happened to be at the time . . . he had general jurisdiction. I was assigned to the CCC staff. I did a lot of traveling, and an official car, and went around to these individual camps from time to time. And that was quite an experience in handling large bodies of people and doing the necessary to keep the thing going.

SIDE TWO OF THE SECOND TAPE

LTC LASHER: We were just finishing up your tour at Fort Ontario, I believe, in Oswego, New York. Do you wish to add a few more comments on Fort Ontario?

GEN LASHER: Well, just a couple of things. I mentioned one of my bosses in Post Quartermaster at Fort Ontario was a Lieutenant Wick and I want to point out that, at this time, the early '30s, many lieutenants in the Army had children in college . . .

LTC LASHER: Lieutenants?

GEN LASHER: And . . . yes.

LTC LASHER: First lieutenants?

GEN LASHER: Oh, yes. First lieutenants, but they were still lieutenants putting their children through college. This shows you how slow the promotions were. It was at the time, what we called the hump, and this was in the majors, these were the people who had reached captain, the majority in World War II. . .

LTC LASHER: World War I.

GEN LASHER: World War I and there were so many of them that nobody got promoted--they were just hanging on so that the prospect of getting beyond a 1st lieutenant or captain was very remote and some years off it seemed at the time.

LTC LASHER: Well, many of these lieutenants must have been enlisted though at one time to have had children in college.

GEN LASHER: Well not necessarily. They may have been, but not necessarily. Of course, most of the input of the Army started, besides from West Point, started in 1912 or '14. I suppose there were a lot of non-graduates who were commissioned officers when World War I started. But it was a conglomeration of all sorts of inputs. But I cited this just to show the stagnation of the promotion system. But, of course, later on, a couple of years later on, this was corrected. So that as it turned out I was promoted to 1st lieutenant, myself in 1936 and then by action of law with ten years of service, I was automatically promoted to captain in 1939.

LTC LASHER: Ten years after . . .

GEN LASHER: Ten years of service, but that was in the law in order to overcome some of this and to allow for a little more incentive for people to com

into the Army. And I wouldn't have mentioned that before I left Fort Ontario. Another point that I wanted to mention there, we, at that time, still had the corps areas, the nine corps areas. New York State was in the 2nd Corps area. The Corps area headquarters was in Governor Island, and the Corps area quartermaster at the time that I was at Ontario was a lieutenant colonel by the name of Edmond B. Gregory who later became Quartermaster General.

LTC LASHER: General Gregory.

GEN LASHER: Yes . . . retired as a lieutenant general. He was a quartermaster stationed, of course, in headquarters at Governor Island. Fort Ontario, incidentally, was one of those posts that just had no place to go. It was a strategic point in the French and Indian Wars, at the mouth of the Oswego River and filled the same role as Madison Barracks did, which was a field artillery post, and as Fort Niagara did over the Niagara Frontier. Actually Fort Ontario had been under five different flags.

LTC LASHER: Five?

GEN LASHER: Altogether, yes. And there is a national cemetery at Fort Ontario which isn't very big . . . maybe a hundred feet by a hundred feet, but it has British, French, some Dutch and Americans buried there and some of the markers are slabs of stones from the beach of the lake with names scratched on them. It's very interesting and it's still maintained--that was one of the jobs of the quartermaster corps, to maintain that little so-called "cemetery," and it was a national cemetery. But anyway it served its purpose in the early days, but as time wore on it ceased to do so. The troops that were at Fort Ontario, they always had to go around the end of Lake Ontario to another piece of property owned by the government called Stony Point on Lake Ontario for

their target practice. This was very unhandy. It was some 45 miles away and the transportation wasn't what it is today. And it was a regular maneuver to get over there and do your target practice and do your range work and get back. Then there were no facilities there. Sometimes they kept a permanent party there and then rotated companies in for their training on a daily basis. So in order to conserve time they wanted to have a tent camp there and keep a company there all through this period rather than just a few hours a day for a much longer time. One of the problems was messing facilities, kitchens and mess halls. The commander of the post put in for money, and he didn't get enough, and he griped to Corps area headquarters that this wasn't enough to put up four mess halls. And the quartermaster wrote me a letter . . . He said there was so much available, what could I do about it? So I got together--the only guy I had there was the post carpenter, utility guy you know, we took the basic design of a mess, the typical mess hall, and just scaled it down. The guy didn't have quite as many inches out on the bench for each place. In other words, the aisles for the mess tables weren't quite as wide as in the typical mess hall, but we . . . with the money we had, built one ourselves. And we conserved here and there and hired labor to do it. We put up four mess halls with the requisite number of places in it, with the money allowed by Corps area headquarters. Well, then I got an official letter from Colonel Gregory complimenting me and he said, "Making do with what we had" . . . he said, "Too often people say it can't be done with this and just let it go." So I thought no more about it after that, but eventually Gregory became Quartermaster General and that's another story in itself. So I was quite pleased at the fact that I had done this . . . had been noticed

and made of record. Of course, here again I learned, as all young officers do of many other things besides just simple quartermaster corps responsibilities, that the CCC opened this up and the association with the . . . working around, so to speak, all aided in my education. We lived on commutation in two houses. We rented an apartment in one house and moved to another house which we occupied alone. But I might add here that this seemed to be our plight in life, living on commutation rather than living in Government quarters. The only time we did in our whole career in the Army was when we were assigned to Fort Eustis--all the other times we were on commutation.

LTC LASHER: Of your 22 years of service.

GEN LASHER: Yes. Let's see, Eustis in '51. Yes, after 22 years . . . four years, and then back on commutation again. My second child was born while we were at Fort Ontario. And he was born on the 25th of July '36. And this Dr. Bohannon, Lieutenant Bohannon, this Lieutenant Bohannon delivered him and Lieutenant Baird was the assistant in the operation. We also met there a couple who had just been married before we arrived. He was a major; his name was Omohundro and he married a local girl there in Oswego. He had just been made major and we became great friends there. We saw a lot of them through our careers. Also we made arrangements there at the local bank, a small bank independent of itself in Oswego. I think it was the First National Bank of Oswego, and we banked with that bank from then, 1934 or '35 through 1957, made contact with them. Meantime we had this local friend there in Oswego, I just don't remember his name, he was the cashier at the bank . . . he practically ran it. And either your mother or I could get a loan there by a mere phone call or telegram . . . money placed to our credit. So we had a pretty good set-up

and we maintained it. In the meantime the bank had been taken over by the Marine Midland chain in New York State. Finally when we went to Chicago, because of my business and the fact that we were so remote, I finally closed out the account in Oswego, but not until we had been in Chicago a year or two. But we had very good banking relations.

LTC LASHER: Those pay off, too?

GEN LASHER: Oh, yes. In 1937, I think I was in Germantown visiting, all of us were visiting my father and mother, and I got a letter from the Office of the Quartermaster General. It was a rather long letter and contained some historical background which indicated that in a certain area of transportation for which the Quartermaster General was responsible, little attention had been paid to training young officers in this area. And the Quartermaster General was setting up a training course, which involved, among other things, training with industry. It was one of the early training with industry ideas actually, I believe, and it outlined what this course of instruction would be and the logistic responsibilities of the Quartermaster General. This letter from the Quartermaster General's office outlined the problem as far as transportation was concerned and had to do with not only his operating transportation responsibilities, with motor vehicles, but also the traffic responsibilities--that is the management of the commercial traffic activities of the Army, which was his responsibility, but also the water transportation at which time he had the responsibility for the Army transport service. And the course that was to be pursued by certain chosen officers would be service at a port of embarkation, service in the Quartermaster General's office, service at a major depot, and service with an industrial organization having to do with transportation. Not necessarily in that order, so that the

trainee would get an overall picture of the coordination necessary in a good logistics operation of all the modes of transportation.

LTC LASHER: All the modes, huh?

GEN LASHER: Yes, all the modes of transportation--water, air, highway and to whatever extent at that time that we used air, also rail. So, this said that my name was on the list and the offer was made to me as to whether I would like to pursue this part of the Transportation Corps responsibility.

LTC LASHER: Transportation Corps?

GEN LASHER: Yes. Well, they had other responsibilities. They had construction . . . and your mother and I talked it over and I guess probably I did with my father and mother--we happened to be down there at the time. And we decided we'd accept and I would say yes, I would take this, whenever my time came to do something, I would take this direction in my Quartermaster Corps business. Well, it turned out that I was the first one. Now I relate this back to Henry Hockwald, who I had served with in Hawaii and who at the time this letter arrived was the head of the personnel division of the Quartermaster General.

LTC LASHER: Yes, okay.

GEN LASHER: And here, again, one can say that it isn't what you know, it's who you know, yet when a list of names comes out and something is to be done with one, two or three of that list, it's only natural that the man making the decision will make it in favor of those he knows, or by having experience with, all else being equal, than he would with someone he doesn't know anything about. So I think the fact that I had served with Hockwald was one of the reasons that I was picked. I don't think I was picked as an outstanding

officer, but I think I was picked because I had done a good job so far. Also the Quartermaster General was Gregory and he may have remembered the mess halls at Stony Point in New York that I built and the letter he wrote. So anyway, I was the first one and there were three others that followed me. But none got very far because the war came along and upset the whole idea. But I more or less completed this tour. So as soon as I had told them, "Yes, I'd do this," shortly thereafter I was told that I was going to be the first one. I got orders to start at the Washington Quartermaster Depot.

LTC LASHER: This was in '37?

GEN LASHER: '37, '38. I got down there and for some reason or other I was not . . . I did not get on the job at the Washington Quartermaster Depot, but General Jordan, the Assistant Quartermaster General for Transportation, for some reason or another wanted an assistant. And so he preempted my service and brought me into his office. It was at this time that I began working on several phases of planning and worked closely with the Planning Division of the Quartermaster General . . . Ike Evans, for one person, who was Chief of the Planning Division at the time, we worked pretty closely on the war plans in general and it was at this time that I was privy to some of the defects in the whole logistics system of World War I. And I was busy doing research and writing memorandums to General Jordan on this whole thing when I guess the pressure became too great on him and they decided they would send me to my training in the industry phase right then.

LTC LASHER: Can I interrupt?

GEN LASHER: Yes.

LTC LASHER: You mentioned you were privy to some of the World War I plans

and problems. What did you perceive was the attitude and the perception of the Army staff at that time, 1937, as to how inevitable our entrance into any--how inevitable war would be and if it was inevitable, would we get in it?

GEN LASHER: Frankly, I think, as I look back upon it, I think the reason that I never did any duty at the Washington Quartermaster Depot was because the Quartermaster General had been told to bring his planning up to date.

LTC LASHER: For just such a contingency.

GEN LASHER: Bring his planning up to date, period. Now whether a contingency, a possible contingency was envisioned or not is hard to say, but the chances are it was envisioned and that planning should be updated, and, of course, General Jordan, in his position as Assistant for Transportation, had his own area. And that's probably why I was brought in there instead of in the Quartermaster Depot in Washington, in order to work with the Planning Division of the Quartermaster General's office and do the transportation side. And here in my research and reading and talking to people in transportation industry outside, I found out that we just had a terrific problem and not only were . . . could we lose a lot of actual dollars in material that was stranded and lost, but we failed in our logistic responsibilities in World War I of getting material to the troops. So I think this . . . these few months here we got . . . we arrived in Washington about November, I guess, spent Christmas and by June I had orders to go to Chicago to train with industry. But in that interim period, that short period of two months, it was entirely as assistant to the Assistant for Transportation in commencing to bring his planning up to date. It was soon decided that I was to take my year of training with industry, commencing the fall of '38 and as I recall it, the planning problem

of the Quartermaster General and the Assistant for Transportation was pretty well completed. But before I went to Chicago for this year with industry I had an assignment at Gettysburg to assist in coordinating the transportation of the veterans to the 75th reunion of the Battle of Gettysburg. This was a very short two-weeks' sojourn up in Gettysburg but a very important one in that both the Confederate and Union veterans were guests of the government and were brought into Gettysburg for the 75th reunion on special trains from all over the country. Their transportation and housing while they were there and all their expenses, plus the expenses of one other person, was allowed by the government.

LTC LASHER: To accompany them.

GEN LASHER: To accompany them because some of them were quite elderly and unable to take care of themselves completely. So we had these two people and particularly those who were from the greater distances all seemed to have a friend in Maine and New Hampshire that they wanted to visit--and why couldn't they do it on the government, you know. Well, I was in charge of this thing, but most of the people who were working with us were from the railroads, the expert passenger people were from the railroads, and we were trying to route these people back home via the place where they wanted to stop and visit Aunt Nellie. They wanted to take advantage of this just as much as possible. And while they came in special trains primarily, they went home every which way. It was quite a brew all the time, and I hardly got out of the Gettysburg College building where I had an office. I did get out for the dedication of the Eternal Flame of Peace, when the President came out, but got to see none of the festivities and so forth of the actual celebration

of the 75th. And here we are now about to celebrate the bicentennial of the country, and I suppose there will be a great deal of activity on the part of the Army in connection with this. But we had quite a lot to do with the 75th reunion of the Battle of Gettysburg. It was quite a celebration. And probably signaled the start of the great attraction that Gettysburg now holds for all the people of the United States because I understand that the tourist travel there is just tremendous, particularly since President Eisenhower established his base, so to speak, there. And Gettysburg is probably not the sleepy city that I knew of in 1938.

LTC LASHER: No, it isn't.

GEN LASHER: So we now come to my commencement with this training of industry. As I said before, I think, it was one of the early ones that was attempted, I am not sure about this, but surely it was one of the early ones. And I was assigned to an organization which was officially called the Inter-Territorial Transportation Committee, which was a committee composed of all the railroads, and had to do only with passenger transportation. It was headed up by Mr. H. W. Siddall, who was the director and he had assistants in . . .

LTC LASHER: Siddall?

GEN LASHER: Siddall. Hugh Siddall, and he was a real terrific guy, a doer in every sense of the word. And he had his assistants, he had one in Boston for the New England area, he had one in New York, out of New York, he had one from Atlanta, the Southwest, Pacific Coast, Pacific Northwest and they each had territories of their own and he was the coordinator of all these, that's why they were called interterritorial. These territories were broken down as railroad areas were broken down into tariffs. I won't go into the

explanation of it. But anyway following railroad territorial lines, and he knew more about the territories than the guy assigned in the territory. He was a very sharp individual and ran a meeting of competing railroad officials with a very iron hand, never letting it get out. I learned a lot from him in how to organize and operate a meeting, because he had very diverse interests, to cope with as such a chairman. Well, CCC was going pretty well then, but new camps were still being put up. And I learned the geography of the United States as I had never learned it before. And I assisted in almost every part of his office, which included the making of rates which was one of his responsibilities, in other words how much did it cost to go from New York to San Francisco, let's say, when you travel over three or four different railroads and which railroad gets how much of the through . . . the passenger buys the ticket for $200.00 and he goes over four railroads. Well, not all of them take them the same number of miles. So they have what they call divisions, and these divisions are made under certain pre-established bases . . . sometimes it's a mileage prorate, sometimes it's a rate prorate, and it's a very technical thing and this all centered in his office. And this was more or less the financial side of the business. I worked through that. I worked through the routing and the assignment of government business. This was one of the difficulties that I never allowed the Army to get into because of the competitive nature of the division of the business. We had all these railroads and many, many competing directly with each other, like the New York Central and Pennsylvania competing between New York and Chicago. And we wanted and insisted that each railroad get its fair share, but we left the actual routing and who got it when to these passenger people in the railroads . . .

LTC LASHER: Let them figure it out.

GEN LASHER: Let them figure it out. Well, I got experience in that area and the movement of trains and some of the rules and regulations of railroad operation and some of the strengths and weaknesses of the railroad transportation situation as well as getting to know on a first-name basis all of these passenger people and this was strictly passenger, all of their passenger people, who primarily were vice presidents. So . . .

LTC LASHER: Stood you in good stead later on.

GEN LASHER: Oh, yes, continuing. I could call them up and call them by their first name after I got back to Washington, you know, after I got in the job and they'd turn a handspring to cooperate. So this year was a very, very enlightening year, except for the fact that it was broken into in October when my father died. I had to go back where they were living then, which was Germantown, New York--I didn't get there in time to see my father before he died.

LTC LASHER: He was sick and dying and you were called . . . what did he have, a heart attack?

GEN LASHER: Yes. I got the message about ten o'clock one night, had to go by train and arrangements were made to meet me, but it took until the next evening, you see, and I got in Germantown after dark the next night. And by the time I got up to the house . . . well, he had died the evening before as a matter of fact. I also found that my mother was quite sick at that time and in bed, upstairs in her bedroom. And my sister was there, and she had her responsibility with children at home. Fortunately, my family was safely in San Francisco, which I have neglected to mention but will bring

in later. So I was free to take care of her then. Mother didn't even come downstairs for the funeral; she just wasn't able to.

LTC LASHER: What was her illness?

GEN LASHER: I've forgotten what exactly, but she pulled out of it, of course. She took his death very calmly. I took 30 days leave. I was granted 30 days leave, and this was why they let me have this. So I had to do the best . . . It wasn't much of an estate, so I didn't have too much problem with that, but I had to collect some money due them and pay some bills he owed and all those little things besides which I had to watch the doctor and we hired a nurse to take care of mother. So by the end of the 30 days leave mother was up and around. I had taken care of about everything that was necessary and was able to go back to Chicago. But first I moved her in with her sister, who lived in the same town, both widows, so they, from then on, lived together. I went back to Chicago and completed this tour of this year with industry. Now . . .

LTC LASHER: How old was your father when he died?

GEN LASHER: My father was 63 and this was '38. I meant to say that our plan wasn't Chicago. We drove to Chicago from Washington with both boys and Alice was pregnant with Julian at the time. And we made arrangements for her to go on to San Francisco, where her father was stationed at Letterman and live with him. He had a set of quarters all to himself, and help. So this was the logical place for her to have the baby and a place to stay rather than some catch-all in Chicago that couldn't be at all satisfactory. Anyway, I was very, very busy. So I put her and the two children on the train and her father met her in San Francisco and she moved in with him. In the meantime

I took a small furnished apartment in the near north side of Chicago and lived there while I was with Hugh Sidall in his office.

LTC LASHER: The government stored your household goods all that time?

GEN LASHER: The household goods . . . I don't recall where we stored them . . . to take a guess, they stored them.

LTC LASHER: They stored them for you.

GEN LASHER: And it was somewhere at the end of this, along about May I suppose, I was waiting for my orders, I knew I was going to leave. And I was anxious . . . oh, I guess I told you . . . been on the tape about missing Julian's birth. That didn't get on the tape, the CCC side and the troop movement side of this assignment in Chicago. I felt that in order to get out West to see the coming of the third child I'd get a free trip out there . . . there and back with a side trip to San Francisco. So I tried to pick a train from Chicago to Seattle, which would allow me to get to San Francisco about the time Julian was due to be born. Well, the best laid plans of mice and men often go astray and this did too, for I arrived in San Francisco and Julian had not been born. I arrived in San Francisco and he wasn't there yet and I stayed two or three days and I stayed an extra day and he still didn't arrive. I had to take a train and get back to work. I got back and a telegram was awaiting me . . . father and mother and child were doing well. So I missed that by the skin of my teeth. And then awaiting my orders, my orders didn't come for me. I was to be ordered to the Brooklyn Army base here to assume a training course in the coordination of land and water transport, the Brooklyn Army base being our biggest port of embarkation. And I knew where I was going, everybody else knew where I was going, it was

just a question of getting my orders--they didn't come and didn't come, and I called ~~Wilbert~~ Wilber Elliot on the phone and he said he would look into it. Pretty soon, a day later, I got a wire from them to say, "Proceed orders will follow." So on the basis of that I proceeded and drove to San Francisco. We booked on a following transport out of there and we all took off from San Francisco for Brooklyn. When I got to Brooklyn and started to process my . . . when I got to Brooklyn there were my orders, this was it, see? And you know, I didn't get anything for that PCS transportation, because I was at my new duty station when I received my orders. I was due about ten cents a mile from Chicago to Brooklyn, which in those days was something like 80 or $90.00, see, it was 900 miles.

LTC LASHER: I don't understand why you were allowed then to travel on an Army troopship because did we not take a ship around through the Canal?

GEN LASHER: I had enough clout to get on the transport; there were no questions about that.

LTC LASHER: From San Francisco to New York?

GEN LASHER: And the Quartermaster Corps ran the transports and everybody knew who I was and they put me on. They didn't have any orders, but they allowed me to go on. I booked them in advance, probably through the Quartermaster General's office, as a matter of fact. This was all later on and I knew exactly what I was going to do and how we were going to do it, but I didn't have those printed orders in my hand.

LTC LASHER: And you never got paid for your travel from Chicago to Brooklyn?

GEN LASHER: Simply because I received my orders at my new duty station.

LTC LASHER: I bet you could go back and make a claim on the government right now today and get it.

GEN LASHER: I bet I couldn't. But anyhow this is how chintzy they were. This is one of the things that surprised me, here was a very logical thing. Of course, I had a nice ocean voyage, there is no question about that, so to say, yet I felt I was due at least the mileage involved from Chicago to New York--never did get it, tried and tried, made copies of that telegram from Wilbert Elliot, you know--"Proceed orders will follow." I suppose that was something which helped me get on the transport, too. But anyhow I never did get the money. So we got to Brooklyn, rented a house, on Shore Court, dead-end street, lovely little duplex house and a nice location for the children and not far from New York Bay, the narrows at New York Bay, not far actually from Fort Hamilton, which, as you know, is now the eastern end of the Verranzo Bridge. I was assistant to the Post Quartermaster, that was the . . . if I had a title. I was provided a desk in his office, but I did not confine myself solely to his duties, because he was sort of the Post Quartermaster, he didn't have much to do with the actual train shipment of goods. That was more in the port area. I followed various officers and various civilian employees of port around and was assigned to one or another to see just how these things were done and how bills of lading were processed and how the train shipment was physically made out of the . . . we don't have the Brooklyn Port anymore, but there were two great big warehouses that were built for World War I. They weren't completed though until after World War I was over. But they were the epitome of fast handling of transportation. When I got there, just preceding World War II, I found some of the slowest elevators in the world in these four-, five-, six-story buildings, and it was just not a rapid handling proposition. It was a very poor one as a matter of fact. Technology had

overcome the planning of World War I period, but, of course, they did as best they could with it and they used it all through the war. There was very little outdoor storage actually and the port was very hemmed in. Much had to go inside and be handled two or three times, which could well be lifted off a flatcar and put on the ground and reversed the process when they wanted to put it on the ship. So I learned some of the good things about transshipment and some of the things which should be avoided and methods which had been designed for this particular operation, which also I might add, later on helped in the designing of the holding and reconsignment points we had to put up to avoid congesting the ports when the war material really started to flow.

LTC LASHER: So after your tour in Brooklyn then, which is just a few months as I remember, you then went back to Washington, D.C. This time in the Office of the Quartermaster General. Is that correct?

GEN LASHER: Yes, that's correct. As a matter of fact my projected period of training at the New York Port of Embarkation was cut somewhat shorter than it was intended to because the chief of the commercial traffic branch of the Quartermaster General's Office became ill and it didn't look as though he would be back to duty and they needed two officers there. A Major Ellit took over the job of Major Middleton and I was ordered in there as his assistant, cutting short my tour of duty in Brooklyn at the Army base. I would like to point out here that after these two tours, that is the one in Chicago, the movement of troops and the transshipment of materiel, brief as it was at Brooklyn, I came to realize the full impact of the importance of logistics, which I had sensed up to that time but which I really didn't get

a good grasp of until these two tours were completed and I had viewed them from a little bit different point.

LTC LASHER: In what way?

GEN LASHER: Well, I think that if you go back into history of wars and battles you will find that logistics played, the broad aspect of logistics played more important part than it has ever gotten credit for. I now feel and have for many years, dating back to World War II, that victory in battle has a great deal to do with the disposition of the armament and personnel available to the various commanders. And logistics really could be defined as the movement and distribution of troops so as to make the enemy's position untenable and his withdrawal inevitable, in other words, there are cases where there is practically no bloodshed, no shots fired, and withdrawal was made by the theater commander, to protect himself. This was merely the logistics of the buildup of the attacking party. And I still think this is . . . partly you could lay this to MacArthur's travel up from Austria in the southwest Pacific. The bloodshed there, the casualties were minor compared to the territory acquired by the attacking force.

LTC LASHER: With a couple of exceptions.

GEN LASHER: Yes. He didn't confront the enemy eyeball to eyeball, but he enveloped them.

LTC LASHER: There you are.

GEN LASHER: It was a logistic movement, and it was all movement and disposition of troops. So this whole concept was beginning to dawn on me in my consciousness and I think the efficacy of the programs that the Quartermaster General had laid out for me was beginning to pay off. I can't help from believing this.

So here again, I cut part of it short simply because of the circumstances surrounding the situation and shortly after I got there as assistant to Wilbert Elliot, he was transferred elsewhere and I took over his job as Chief of the Commercial Traffic Branch. Well by this time . . .

LTC LASHER: That would be about 1940.

GEN LASHER: That would be about 1940. And I don't know exactly when he took over the command of the Hampton Roads Port of Embarkation. But he went down there from the Quartermaster General's Office to set this up. The form of a port was really not formulated immediately but he set the framework up well before Pearl Harbor. So that when we actually got in the war there was a going port there. Of course, you know a lot of the staging was done there for the North African invasion.

LTC LASHER: Through Hampton Roads?

GEN LASHER: Yes. So I was . . . here I was in this and I had done this bit of planning research for General Jordan previously and the lend-lease with the Russians started to pick up and we saw it coming in larger and larger proportions. I had made considerable study of the movements of troops and materiel in World War I and in my discussions with the commercial operating transportation industry, I found out that the railroads were blaming the Army for the great snafu they had in World War I, backed up behind the Port of New York as far back as Cincinnati. They didn't know what was in the cars; they couldn't find things; they just took a car into an interchange yard and just dropped it and somebody was suppose to pick it up and take it on to New York, but nobody could find it. And they had to send people out into railroad yards and break into these cars to find out what was in them. As a

result things didn't get shipped. They got lost, money was lost, time was lost; it was just terrible. Besides this the big lesson out of this if you want to boil it down to simplicity, was that these railroad cars which should be used for transporting things were being used for warehouses. And they only had so many cars and they weren't being utilized for what they were built, and besides that they were cluttering up the yards and the tracks and never being unloaded.

LTC LASHER: Making it difficult for traffic to move, even for that which was moving.

GEN LASHER: It was terrible and the railroads were hurt by it and, of course, the military effort was almost bogged down in some cases by it. So we wanted to avoid this, and I talked to a lot of railroad people, both passenger and freight, but I listed mostly, primarily, freight. And the railroads had and do still have their organization in Washington called the "Association of American Railroads," which I'll call the AAR hereafter. I had a lot of discussion with them on this and they pointed out some of the things they thought they had done wrong and that the Army had done wrong in World War I. It was about this time, too, that the President set up an advisory commission for the emergency, whatever the emergency was. This was before the war, this was before Pearl Harbor considerable . . . maybe a year or a year and a half.

LTC LASHER: Year and a half at this point. And you said, "The emergency." I hark back to a previous question as to the perception that there was going to be a conflict but at our area and in Europe . . . well at this point there already was a conflict in Europe and the perception . . .

GEN LASHER: And we were in it.

LTC LASHER: Like it or not, we were in it . . . part of it even though. . .

GEN LASHER: We were supporting one side and I am sure that . . . and this is a very personal observation I assure you, but I felt all the time that the President, Roosevelt, knew we were going to enter the war. I am sure he knew it was inevitable and whether he verbalized this in oral discussion or not I don't know, but I am sure he obliquely got people going on these things, setting up this commission. He had several people on it, industrial leaders from all over the country, and they all had their own areas and they each shared their responsibilities to the President for advising them in that particular area, communication, transportation, supplies of all sorts. I am sure he wanted the best advice he could get, and this is the way he did it. I am sure he felt that sooner or later we would be drawn into the war one way or the other.

LTC LASHER: Do you feel that he felt that we would be fighting the Japanese as well?

GEN LASHER: Yes. I think he was, I think he was quite a smart man. Of course there is a lot of politics in the things, if that's the right word, I don't know that it is, but there was a lot of politics involved. But when you look back at whoever was responsible for the lack of communication surrounding the Pearl Harbor incident, nevertheless we were attacked, but no such thing was built up, I use the term built up, for the Vietnam War to get the country to the point where they felt we had to go . . . they wondered why didn't we declare war on these Germans, and of course that never came up because we did. But it didn't come up in this Southeast Asia thing . . . the protecting country was not properly prepared. Now how deliberate this preparation

was for World War II is a question for historians and I don't think it will ever really be decided, although a good friend of mine, General Short was one of the people who was hurt by this buildup because I don't think either he or Admiral Kimmel were as much to blame as probably history will show them to be. They were used as the responsible ones as probably history will show them to be. They were used as the fall guys and to me this is perfectly alright, because the President of the United States had to be protected. He could not be blamed for it, although many historians have already tried to blame him for withholding information that he had or some of his advisors had, you know, to accomplish this buildup, the preparation. So I feel this was done deliberately and it just so happens that the two commanders in Hawaii were these two individuals.

LTC LASHER: You feel . . . unless you want to come back to this, it will be a good point to bring out. Do you feel that information was purposely withheld from the Hawaiian Theater from either one or the other or both of their commanders, or was it more or less accidental?

GEN LASHER: You use the word "feel" that it was deliberately done. Yes, that's our business of feeling on my part. A feeling without basis or a feeling that it was either withheld or delayed and . . . but as I say some people are trying to prove this. Historians of one kind or another and others are trying to prove that Kimmel and Short were derelict in their duties. This I know is not true, because I talked to General Short many times afterward and he was, of course, very bitter. He later on became Traffic Manager for Ford Motor Company in Dallas, Texas. That's where he retired to and lived until he died. And I went to Washington . . . he was buried in Arlington and I went

to Washington for the funeral. Mrs. Short wanted us to come down and we did. And I knew General Short well enough to know that he wasn't derelict in his duties. The big flaw is probably in actions of any commander, but by and large there was no dereliction, although this is practically what he was charged with, as was Kimmel. But as much as I liked General Short, as much as I admired him and looked up to him, despite this and despite my sympathy with his position, it certainly couldn't be the President of the United States who took the blame, somebody had to be sacrificed for higher-ups.

LTC LASHER: And that's what you think really did happen? That they were, as you say, a fall guy or possible scapegoats.

GEN LASHER: I do. This was all in the way toward preparing the country, the United States, for war, the following war, both the East and the West. I got off the track there a little bit and onto this part of it, but the President asked for this . . . set up this commission for himself. As an advisor to him in the transportation area a member of this commission was a man by the name of Budd, Ralph Budd. At the time he was the president in Chicago Burlington and Quincy Railroad, with its headquarters in Chicago and a man highly regarded in Chicago as a civic-minded individual as well as a philanthropist and a great railroad president. He came down to Washington with one assistant, sort of an office manager that he had had with him for many years by the name of Fisher. And they set up office over across from the Munition Building and the Federal Reserve Building. He had a nice office there. The first thing he wanted to know and I guess he went to John Pelley who was president of the AAR to find out . . .

LTC LASHER: Pelley?

GEN LASHER: Pelley. He was president then of the AAR . . . how to set up communication with the transportation . . . and was introduced around and finally with direct communication we set up, he and I, Budd and I. And I saw a great deal of him and it was kind of a learning tour for him and much more than it was . . . I had had some degree of association with the railroads, transportation, but he had had none with the military. And so we struck up quite a friendship and I worked with him quite a lot and we talked over plans, and here was another person who'd held responsible positions and he was a veteran of the World War I era, who knew of the troubles that the railroads had with the Army, with the military, and the movement of materiel to support our troops in France and I got all the errors reversed from him. And, of course, this all forced me into doing something about it and we talked this over in many ways and I started writing up drafts of some sort of an arrangement of cooperation between railroads, whom we knew would do most of the work, and the War Department, mainly the Quartermaster General. And this was the genesis of a plan that we later drew up, signed and put into operation. But Mr. Budd was quite a guy and just being with him was an experience and I might say here too. . . and I can't help but bring people into this and I think people are the most important things anyway. But as Henry Hockwald was chief of personnel and got me into this program and because he had known me at least in Hawaii before, here I was with Ralph Budd in 1939 or '40. Now in 1957 he was a director of a company who needed a new president and one of the men to whom my name was submitted as an applicant, not as an applicant, but as a possibility for this job as president of a company, called North American Car Corporation, he was director, "No sweat . . . he's the guy

we want." Now this was 20 years later, you must understand, 18 years later and he was the director and so was Robert Wood, Robert E. Wood. Robert E. Wood, you know, honorary chairman of Sears, he'd hire almost anybody who had gone to West Point. He thought it was a great place, he never . . . and I'll go into this even more later . . . he never lost an opportunity to give credit to West Point for everything he accomplished in life. And he accomplished a lot. Well to go back to Budd and that office . . . and when . . . I don't know just the chronology but in due course when it was clear that we were going to be actively engaged in the war whether it was before or after Pearl Harbor this commission was disbanded. Some of them went back home to their jobs, others were perhaps drafted by the president to sit on some of the commissions that were set up which were necessary, some of the controls, price wage control, some of the priority commissions, there were just all sorts of things that had to be done when we got into the war situation. So . . . and these were men who could serve if they would, and would if they could, and some were kept and some didn't. Budd went back to Chicago to run his railroad. It turned out he was one of the ones in 1944, I believe it was, when the strike came and the government, namely the War Department, took over the railroads. He was one of the colonels that was sworn in one night at the Pentagon and was made a colonel and ran one of the districts of the railroads while operated by the Federal government. So he went back, but I pursued the same job as traffic manager, really, of the War Department. At the same time we all had, as you do now, we all had planning responsibilities and I set to work to figure out how with the AAR, we could take certain actions which would prevent some of the horrible things that had happened in World War I. And knowing the major

problem, which was that people were ordering three or four times what they needed in the first place and it was all being shipped to a port, or the nearest port and nobody knew when it was sent, when it was getting there and we knew that there wasn't enough shipping. We were still in a shipbuilding program then. So the thing was that the port area is the focal point and all the railroads leading into a given port just bring a lot of cars in there and just leave them. Now if they were not promptly unloaded cars . . . . So we decided to have a traffic control, actual traffic control. And how are we going to set it up and who was going to run it and so forth. We drafted this up and I think I can take credit for the idea and most of the details of the original draft of how we were going to do it, which was just simply this; we would not ship a car loaded with freight from a point in the interior United States for overseas destination until we were as sure as we could be that there was a ship to carry it away . . . ship to take it away from the port. So we set up . . . this was the basic proposition of this plan, and it was the control of the movement of the freight. Everybody agreed to this and as a result of this the Association of American Railroads put up an office in the . . . when it started it was in the Munition Building . . . working with the Commercial Traffic Branch. And everything we wanted the railroad to do was followed through this office and his word was law of the railroads, this was the way it was set up. The man who came in to do this, his name was Arthur Gass, Arthur H. Gass, and he became a little martinet--he was just telling the railroads what to do and what not to do. And all in our behalf and if we wanted a train stopped we could stop trains, anything we wanted to do . . . and this brings up another thing, but anyway anything we wanted to do, Gass had the

authority to do it. And if he got in trouble with the railroad first . . . if he got in trouble with the president of any given railroad he could always go to the Association of Railroads itself and Pelley or one of the vice presidents would back him up and make it stick. That's just all there was to it. And when we finally came to formulating this general agreement between the railroads and the Army, I set up a meeting formalizing the signing by the Quartermaster General and the president of the AAR . . . all the assistant quartermaster generals, and several colonels and here I was a captain, I guess, and running the show and they didn't know what it was all about. The only ones that did was the railroad people and me, you know, but we went through the little ceremony and the signing was all done and everybody shook hands and they all went back to their offices. And the comment there afterwards was that what an array of talent I had brought to the Quartermaster General's Office that day to substantiate this, but substantiate it we did. And we then took this general agreement and set up a system, and as I say, Mr. Arthur Gass was assigned and with him we set up a system of releases and nothing could be shipped out of an origin point in the United States without a release number on it. And that release number was centrally controlled and the release number was not given to the shipment until we had assurance from outside that there was tonnage available at the port to take it away . . .

LTC LASHER: Or would be available.

GEN LASHER: Or would be available. Well the point was that we had and this is, of course, getting a little ahead chronologically, but to explain how this thing worked, there were convoys coming back pretty well decimated by

submarines and we never knew how many empty ships would arrive back from Europe because of the radio silence that was imposed. We wouldn't know until they got off Sandy Hook, for instance, in New York as to just how many ships was in that convoy. We knew how many left England, for instance, or France, but we didn't know how many would arrive, so we had a pretty tough time. If the convoy had lost many ships we had more than enough tonnage for those ships, so some of it had to be kept back.

LTC LASHER: Did you put it in the transshipment area or breakdown area or . . . outside of the port?

GEN LASHER: We would just stop the train and then hold them back of the port, two or three, four, five, six hundred miles until we had a place for them. And this, as it grew we realized that we needed something more than the just the holding out a train or delaying a train or something, and we started planning for the H&R points, the Holding and Reconsignment points, where these trains would have to go through. They were sort of key points in the railroad system around the country where we went to locate them and build them. I designed the first one and it was set up at Guilderland Center, New York which is . . .

LTC LASHER: Where?

GEN LASHER: Guilderland . . . and that's . . . if you take the New York Central between Schenectady and Albany, you take the midpoint of that stretch of railroad and go south, you find Guilderland Center. It was connected by rail and had connections not only with New York but it also had connections with Boston. And actually we could have shipped through Philadelphia from there. It secured us but if both New York and Boston were out for one reason

or another we could move through Philadelphia and Baltimore from there . . . we had the rail connections. And so we picked these H&R points all the way around the country. So these trains, they were coming toward the port constantly all the time, when we were short of shipping we would route these trains through the H&R points and allow forward movement from the H&R point only when shipping was available and if the car was going to be held, I forget how many days for bottoms, other ships, other empty tonnage, we'd unload the cars and move the cars back for transportation purposes and then when we were ready to pick that up off the ground or out of the warehouse we'd get other cars. But in the meantime the railroad cars in very short supply also were available for use which was one of the things that I pointed out before as being the simple explanation of why they had trouble in World War I. They used the car for storage instead of for transportation.

LTC LASHER: Did the holding and reconsignment centers . . . were they ever used to drop off some cars and continue with others that were of a higher priority?

GEN LASHER: Yes. That's right. And they knew what was there and when it was there and if there was any high priority they could put their hand on it. The warehousing system was set up this way.

LTC LASHER: Yes, I would imagine that would be known, but I was thinking of an incoming train with . . . well not enough bodies to take care of it, but ten of the fifty cars are fairly high priority . . .

GEN LASHER: They would go on.

LTC LASHER: They would go on and the others would be dropped off.

GEN LASHER: The H&R point would be given these instructions and as a result we had no congestion of the ports in World War II. And this was a big proble[illegible] in

World War I which we avoided by this Control System. As the commercial traffic bran of the transportation division of the Quartermaster General's Office grew and as we, as the Movements Control Division of the Office of the Chief of Transportation. So you see it was a major part of the responsibility, because here's your control right here in this one name. However the division . . . there were many other things done besides this. This division was called, I think we called it the control division of the movements control.

LTC LASHER: Now, did you have in this movements control division the traffic division of the movements control, I mean the traffic branch of the movements control division, did you have also air traffic control and sea shipment?

GEN LASHER: We controlled the ships up to a point, but that got much bigger than the Army transports service, oh, I'd say we got a hold of few Army transports, you know, that the Quartermaster General held or had . . .

LTC LASHER: No. I meant controlled the movements or the use of it.

GEN LASHER: No. No, we did not control the use. There would be a gross amount of tonnage available to us in a convoy and that was all we could use, there were probably other things that went in. Now, of course, a lot of civilian things were shipped to hard-pressed parts of Europe. We shipped a lot of food to . . .

LTC LASHER: You just had some other office allocating gross tonnage to you.

GEN LASHER: That's right, yes.

LTC LASHER: And as far as the internal air freight, you didn't have anything to do with that either?

GEN LASHER: Well . . .

LTC LASHER: Which was small, I am sure.

GEN LASHER: No, only very, very small, but most of the tonnage that was shipped by air was for air support of overseas fields. They used up all they had themselves. Of course, we were caught up very quickly with the lend-lease program. We had much to do with the Russians. We had difficulty with them and they had a lot of people here and they'd get in the hair of the port commanders, Philadelphia and New York and Boston, and Washington especially.

LTC LASHER: Oh, really?

GEN LASHER: And trying to get higher priority than they were allotted for their own stuff. And I remember once in Boston . . . in Seattle we had a large shipment of oleomargarine going to Russia via the Pacific, and the minute they found out that we were shipping oleo they squawked, they wanted butter, and they got butter.

LTC LASHER: Really?

GEN LASHER: Yes. All they had to do was tell the White House what they wanted and they got it. This was true all the way through.

LTC LASHER: Now this was before we got into the war?

GEN LASHER: Priority? Yes, essentially before we got through before Pearl Harbor, essentially before Pearl Harbor. Well all of this was going on, everything was expanding at a very rapid rate, of course, including my office. I started out in the old Munition Building which was a temporary World War I building, but has now, at long last, three or four years ago, been demolished, but nevertheless it served the War Department very well.

LTC LASHER: I don't think it was that long ago.

GEN LASHER: I moved to another temporary building called Temporary II and then I moved from there to the District Municipal Building, which was a brand

new building built for the police department of the District of Columbia . . .

LTC LASHER: I remember that.

GEN LASHER: But turned over to the War Department in its expansion, and then I moved there to the Railroad Retirement Building, and from the Railroad Retirement Building, I moved into the Pentagon. This was a matter of two or three years in the Pentagon. The Pentagon had only two sides built when I moved into it.

LTC LASHER: And they were already moving people into it, when only two of the five sides were built.

GEN LASHER: That's right. We had to enter over . . . well when the weather was bad we had to have a plank sidewalk to get over the mud and plastering and everything else was going on. Your office would be full of dust and dirt and everything else every morning when you got in there. But this was necessary, that's all there was to it. And disruptive as these moves all were, we worked it out alright. One instance that occurred . . . well several instances that occurred during our tenure of the Municipal Building--one morning the Quartermaster General, who had his office in yet another building, came over to look around at the several divisions he had over in the Municipal Building, and I suppose he looked for me, but didn't find me. It so happened that time I was downstairs in the cafeteria having a cup of coffee. The first thing I knew he sat down alongside me with a cup of coffee and asked me if I minded if he joined me. I, of course, said, "No, sir," and we chatted around on what was going on, what was happening and how was I getting along and was everything alright, did I have any problems he could help me with, the usual sort of chitchat that you have with a senior officer . . . he was a great guy

really. So I said, "No, we were getting along pretty good." I said, "We are not having any troubles and I wouldn't hesitate to go for help if I needed it." I said, "We were getting along with the railroad and they were carrying the bulk of the load." It appeared to me that he said, "You do most of your work with presidents and vice presidents of these railroads." And he said, "Do you feel that you have any difficulty being only a captain?" I thought awhile and I finally said, "No, I don't think so." I said, "They are pretty square-shooters and we play fair with them and we don't ask them for the impossible. And so far they have done everything that we wanted them to do and the way we wanted them to do it, because we are not trying to be overbearing or ask the impossible from them." And I said, "I think we get along alright." Well, the next day I was promoted to major, practically. Here again, my belief in the Army system was reinforced once more, because your superiors watched out for you, you know, and if you did your job, why you are alright, you are getting along alright. And, of course, I was a major only six weeks when I got promoted to lieutenant colonel, this was in the fall of '41, October and November. And . . .

LTC LASHER: You were promoted to lieutenant colonel before Pearl Harbor then?

GEN LASHER: Yes, I was a lieutenant colonel before Pearl Harbor. And actually I was in Chicago on business that Sunday, as a matter of fact I had been there two or three days, and I was planning to come back Sunday night on the train, staying at the old Morrison Hotel and I had slept late--my train didn't leave until three or four o'clock. I came down to check out and I heard about Pearl Harbor, the first I heard about it, see, and this was several hours

after the fact. Of course everything was buzzing and I got all the information that had been put out over the radio at the time and everybody was talking about it. Having been in Hawaii for three years I knew exactly where all these things were taking place and just about how it was happening and so forth. So I was back in a lounge car and had a whole group around and we were all talking about it and, of course, I was somewhat the center of popularity because I was . . . I had been in Hawaii and I was a Regular Army officer. I got back, I was in civilian clothes . . . we all were working in civilian clothes--I got back that morning and found out that everybody had been ordered, Sunday night, had been ordered into uniform. And . . .

LTC LASHER: You were working in . . . ?

GEN LASHER: Up to that time . . . up to Pearl Harbor.

LTC LASHER: Seldom you ever wore a uniform in other words?

GEN LASHER: Seldom. Well now in that period, say in the '30s they didn't want to flaunt the uniform in front of people in Washington, particularly Congress, or all these dead-heads were living it up in Washington, you know, the military, so they just didn't want to make the . . . they wanted a low profile for the military in uniform. But we went into uniform right then; incidentally at that time there was a classmate of General Gregory's, who was a Quartermaster Corps general, brought in. He was a classmate who went through World War I and resigned and General Gregory called him back in. He was an engineer type and he became my boss. He was brigadier general . . . and he became my boss for a time there while we were in the Municipal Building. I remember the uniform he came in was a World War I uniform and the little hat . . . the officer's cap with everything . . . he really looked

strange. But he didn't have much effect; he didn't know much about transportation. That was only one of the responsibilities that he had, but I reported to him at that particular time. He was in uniform, and, of course, I was the only one around there that wasn't that morning, but by the 3rd, the fur sure flew for the next several days, and as a whole we really got the thing organized. And as I say, I was promoted then to lieutenant colonel prior to Pearl Harbor and within seven months there was an order put out that you had to stay in grade at least six months before you could be promoted. 'Long about the following June I was . . . at this time the transportation service had been organized. I will get into that later. But it had been and I was over there one evening for a conference or something and we had gone down to get something to eat in the cafeteria and one of my bosses--apparently up at the front of the line they were talking about the grades and promotions--one of them turned to me and said, "Is your six months up yet?" I said, "Yes, it was up two weeks ago," or something like that. Well, the next morning I was told to see the chief clerk of the Chief of Transportation Services and a bit later on I had been promoted that day to full colonel. And there I stayed as you know, I stayed 12 years, 12 long years. Of course, that's better than staying a second lieutenant for 12 long years!

LTC LASHER: That's for sure.

GEN LASHER: That's another story. But I don't know exactly when the transportation service was decided upon, but there was no Congressional authority for another technical service. So administratively the transportation service was created and was carved out of, primarily out of the Quartermaster Corps and the Engineer Corps. Now the Quartermaster Corps

had responsibility for motor vehicle and for Army transport service or for the commercial traffic, that it was the purchaser of commercial transportation and the Engineer Corps had responsibility for the railroad side, the operation and maintenance of railroads. . .

LTC LASHER: That's organic? Anything that would be organic to the service, the operation and maintenance of it?

GEN LASHER: Yes. That is where we had to set up a railroad or take over and run a railroad in a foreign country or what, no . . . had nothing to do with domestic railroads. And so those . . . that part of the Office of the Chief of Engineers had been in existence for many, many years, before World War I, as a matter of fact, and before. And in the interim period between World War I and World War II these reserve battalions were set up. Some of them were operating battalions and some of them were maintenance battalions, and these were Reserve Engineer Corps units, D-Day plans, and everything else. And so they were put in the transportation service, and, of course, the Chief of the Transportation Service was taken from the Engineer Corps, too. As usual Quartermaster was kind of behind the eight ball and the choice of jobs went elsewhere unfortunately, but that didn't bother me too much. But we had the transportation service no longer under the Office of the Quartermaster General. This was while we were still in the Municipal Building and Summerville was head of the Army Service Forces as it was set up and for the Army Transportation Service. Charles P. Gross was put at the head of this and set up an office . . . I don't know where it was. Maybe it was in the Municipal Building . . . set up an office there and we stayed right where we were. And everybody was doing everything that seemed to be necessary

and one of the things that Summerville felt was that we should take advantage of the know-how that industry had in all areas. And that so much was Army Service Force responsibility like transportation, procurement, subsistence, manufacturing everything, the ordnance, the signal and everything that . . . and procurement was a great big thing in the manufacturing ability of the country. Second, all these areas were strained, not only strained beyond capacity, but new capacity had to be built. So he thought that the best way to accomplish this was to call on industry to furnish the expertise.

LTC LASHER: As opposed to trying to build your own?

GEN LASHER: This was funneled down. I think one of the things was when one of the things went wrong, why at least we tried to get the best talent in to help us. In my particular area in traffic procurement, I was instructed to find somebody to act as my immediate assistant and apply the best principles of commercial practices. So I sent out probably 25 telegrams to 25 individuals in industry, the larger corporations, to see if that man would be "available." This went over a period of time, of course. I had sort of a roster that I took . . .

LTC LASHER: Oh, I see.

GEN LASHER: And the upshot of this was that of all these requests that I put out, nobody was "available"--they were all so busily engaged in defense work anyway, they couldn't spare these people. The only one that could be spared was the man in this particular type of job at Sears Roebuck and his name was Williamson, W. J. Williamson, and he was the traffic manager, he wasn't a vice president but not many traffic managers were vice presidents in those days. And Sears Roebuck was . . . waved the flag a little bit and by

straining they were able to spring Mr. Williamson loose for duty for the duration. He came to Washington and he was my civilian assistant, primary assistant.

LTC LASHER: Now do you suppose that this was because of Wood?

GEN LASHER: Might have been, might have been. Woods would do anything for the Army and I don't know whether it got to his attention or not, but Williamson came. Well, Williamson was a typical politically actuated guy. He was bucking for the vice presidency and he couldn't get in and he thought if he came here he could . . . with the military when he got back he would have medals all over his chest and he would be the big hero for Sears and be promoted. I think that was part of it. But his method of operation was pretty politically oriented and he wasn't much help to me to tell you the honest truth. The first thing I know he was made a colonel. He had been angling for this and he got it. But it irked him that I was still senior to him. The next thing I knew he was a brigadier general and was my boss.

LTC LASHER: Oh, really. He obviously did this thru politics.

GEN LASHER: Oh, sure.

LTC LASHER: That's an awkward position to be in, isn't it?

GEN LASHER: I was at a pretty low ebb at that time.

LTC LASHER: Be a man's boss and have him promoted over you and be his. It's not usually done anywhere.

GEN LASHER: No. But he got it. So here I was in a very onerous position. The only time I ever volunteered for anything was because of this. And shortly after this happened a transportation job in the China, Burma, India theater, CBI . . .

LTC LASHER: China, Burma, India theater.

GEN LASHER: China, Burma, India theater, CBI, became open and they were looking for somebody to take this over. Well, here I was with eyes towards the long range future and it seemed to me that China would emerge as one of the great powers and trade and economy would be the great bond between the United States and China and that there would be a future for me if I was somewhat familiar with Oriental, India, and Chinese methods of doing business and operating and so forth. But this thing that happened with Williamson just teed me off so I volunteered and got turned down.

LTC LASHER: Why did you get turned down?

GEN LASHER: Because they wouldn't let me go.

LTC LASHER: They wouldn't let you go.

GEN LASHER: I was in Washington and they had what they called a Manchu Law, see, which was a maximum of four years, five years and then you couldn't stay any longer, you couldn't be left there any longer and this was to prevent homesteaders and so forth. Later on after I had been turned down, another year or so went by and my time ran out and I talked to General Gross about this. I don't know that he'd remember it or not, but he said that he was getting orders for me to go to New York, his own transportation officer in New York. He said, "You will only be up there a year and you will come back." I kind of looked at him and he said, "Yes. I've got to have you down here." He said, "Somebody has got to be here that I can trust."

LTC LASHER: That's a slap at someone else.

GEN LASHER: And he said, "That's the reason you didn't go to the CBI." So, in other words to keep the place on an even keel. Morris was the only other

Regular Army officer in the whole outfit, you know, and he or I were there all the time. And so . . . but in the long run this thing of having Williamson there and getting what I thought was the shaft at the time redounded to my benefit because he did such horrible things. He liked to go on trips, so he would set up an itinerary and around the horn from Chicago, the Twin Cities, and he'd go to Seattle, San Francisco, Los Angeles. And he'd set up luncheons all the way and make a speech, and the local people . . . he would put the arm on the local people and local railroad people had to set the luncheon up . . . somebody had to pay for it. And here he was the big brigadier general waving a flag. It was the most disgusting display . . . I can't tell you how much I . . .

LTC LASHER: Avoided them.

GEN LASHER: Yes, but as I say, because of the way he acted my stature in the transportation rose.

SECTION 3

THIS IS SIDE ONE OF TAPE NUMBER THREE OF THE ORAL HISTORY OF MAJOR GENERAL EDMOND C. R. LASHER.

COL LASHER: General Lasher, the last time you were discussing your tour in the Pentagon during World War II and specifically had just mentioned General Williamson and your remembrances of him.

MG LASHER: I'll carry on from there and take the problem of the expansion of the Army, which was a problem for everybody concerned --likewise was for the small area of which I had management. Most of our officers came from young ROTC graduates, Reserve officers who were called to active duty. We attempted in every case to get those, who even though they've been out of college only 1, 2, 3 or 4 years, tried to get those who had at least been in the transportation area of industry and who were quite successful. It turned out that then I was fortunately enough to head up the freight side of our picture with a man by the name of Richard M. Boyd, B-O-Y-D. He was a graduate of the University of Kentucky and was a Reserve second lieutenant and worked for the Illinois Central Railroad. We called him to active duty, and he ended up the war as a lieutenant colonel, had gone to Europe and then over to the Philippines after he left me. Upon his return went back to the Illinois Central Railroad, stayed there only a couple of years when he was hired by the Pittsburgh Plate Glass Company in Pittsburgh as traffic manager and became vice-president of PPG Industries. So, not only were we fortunate in getting him in the first place, but he, in turn, was fortunate in getting this concentrated experience the 3 or 4 years he was in the Army which fitted him for a fine position later on. But, by and large, both in the area of uniformed personnel as well as civilian personnel,

it was a constant battle to get enough good people. This I suppose is always the case. I found it so later on in industry that the key to success was actually having the right people in the right job. The management of people therefore, I think, is one of the major problems for an executive, for a chief executive; and one upon which he has to put a lot of time and great deal of patience as well as insight into the requirements of a position and the abilities of an individual. Actually, once you make the decision to hire this person, a person, you really, despite his credentials, high as they may be, don't know that man and how he will fit in until he's been with you 6 months or a year. It's more of a gamble than most people will think. It's easy to hire people. Oh, yes. It's easy to hire people but it's not always easy to hire the right one. So, I consider that, both in military and civilian life, one of the very, very major responsibilities of the head of an organization. Wrapped up in this work, I had was the site selections of ports of embarkations, holding and reconsignment points, new camps, ammunition loading points, arsenals --that is ammunition storage points.

COL LASHER: You were responsible for selecting sites, did you say?

MG LASHER: Well, I was one of the ones who had a certain set of criteria that had to be satisfied before we chose the sites. There are many, many factors involved. Such as labor, just that one thing for instance, you couldn't . . .

COL LASHER: The availability of labor.

MG LASHER: The availability of labor in a particular area and then there was the question of availability of land itself, water supply--all the various things. I had the transportation factor. If four sites

were selected--my okay had to be on it. My approval had to be on it. So, from the point of view of transportation--for instance, any large installation at all, one of my criteria was that we had to have two or more railroads serve this point.

COL LASHER: Two or more?

MG LASHER: Yeah, otherwise you're at the mercy of a single provider. So, this entailed a lot travel constantly because on the ground reconnaissance is about the best way of doing it. Oh, for instance, one I remember there was a camp that we put in the Midwest and criteria had all been set up a location had been found in Iowa. A very good place but all of a sudden it was decided to put it in Missouri. This was because of the influence of the senior senator, I always believed, his name was Harry S. Truman. It turned out that that was Leonard Wood, one of the most inaccessible locations of World War II.

COL LASHER: Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri? Camp Leonard Wood at the time I guess.

MG LASHER: Yes, Camp Leonard Wood. Because about 12 miles of railroad had to built into that camp over the most difficult terrain you could imagine in the Ozarks. I had to go out there after--the military had no control over it. It was just decided--Boom--that this was where it was going to be.

COL LASHER: Well, I was going to ask you if you ran into much of this. We do today in closing bases and opening them.

MG LASHER: Oh, sure.

COL LASHER: Tremendous influence of the Congress as to whether we will or won't do it, or move one or consolidate two or which one. You found

that in those days to be quite a factor in where you were going to put all these . . .

MG LASHER: Oh, sure. And the railroads fought for them, too.

COL LASHER: Well, naturally the railroads. . .

MG LASHER: . . . So you had all these people. There again the people problem. All these people to contend with.

COL LASHER: Aren't there a lot of places that would be ineligible because they'd only served by one railroad? Aren't there many places in the United States, particularly in the Midwest, that only one railroad services?

MG LASHER: Oh, yes. This was--Fort Leonard Wood was the example. It was served only by the Frisco railroad and then we had to take off from the Frisco--the mainline had to be first constructed and then the railroad down into the camp itself. There was no other railroad there. There was no other railroad that could get there without tremendous expense. We didn't--some cases--depending upon the situation, some cases the government paid for that railroad spur and sometimes not. It was dependent upon a lot of factors as to what the railroad had in it. It was the future for the railroad in building it. Why usually they'd be able to pay for it, but they couldn't see a future in a camp, a conglomerate, which Leonard Wood started out to be. That, as soon as the emergency was over, it would fold up. There was nothing down there in those hills for the Frisco Railroad to make any money with. But that's one example and another example was down in Florida where we had one railroad serving--I don't remember that camp, but it was on the west side of Florida and was served by the Atlantic Coastline at that time, and there was nobody else within quite a few miles. I got the Southern Railroad which owned --I think it was called the Georgia Southern

and Florida, which was a little branch line owned by the Southern, and I persuaded them to build into it. They did at their own expense.

COL LASHER: It couldn't have been too far then? I mean it wasn't a 100 miles or so, was it?

MG LASHER: No, but it was probably 20, 25. That's an expensive piece of railroad. But they got half the traffic, not just the people going in and out, but the supplies and everything else, the lumber, the construction work and everything. That's quite a lot of business, but this was typical all over the country. And as I say we had to study these factors accessibility and the transportation factors, involved in getting to and from these new locations. In the case of the ammunition points, loading points and storage points, particularly on the east coast--In World War I there was a big explosion near Paula's Hook called the Black Town.

COL LASHER: Paula's Hook is where?

MG LASHER: Well, Paula's Hook in on the Hudson River just below Weekawken a little ways. Perhaps right across the tip of Manhatten, lower to Manhatten on the Jersey shore. A little peninsula, it's very minor. But there was a big explosion there during World War I, killed a lot of people, blew out windows as far as Jersey City and Newark. So, the people around there were very careful about this, and we too were very sensitive to this. So, the location of ammunition points was done with extreme care. It ended up eventually in New York, for instance, that we built a long, long finger pier out into the upper bay so that the actual handling of the ammunition was pretty well isolated.

COL LASHER: Way out in the water.

MG LASHER: Way out in the water, limited, of course, the amount of damage

that could be done except to the very installation itself. But we never did have any trouble with it.

COL LASHER: Well, where did you store it or did it come directly from the plants right out to the pier?

MG LASHER: It came directly right on, yes.

COL LASHER: So, you'd have ship there to be sure that you had no problem storing in the immediate harbor area.

MG LASHER: Yes, we couldn't store there. We'd store way back. Of course, this had priority over the facility of transportation itself. The over-riding thing was protection of the population in the question of ammunition and not some of these--in fact cost had nothing to do with location of an ammunition point. No matter what it cost we took the safest locations. Then another thing which came out early in the game when lend-lease was going heavy, we were using Philadelphia as a port. The labor situations in Philadelphia, as well as the actual facilities, the piers and so forth, just became horrendously difficult. Labor in Philadelphia was a bit in the transient status and the facilities weren't adequate there. So we decided to move to Boston and it was really out of the frying pan into the fire. The labor situation in Boston was even worse.

COL LASHER: Well, then why did you move there?

MG LASHER: Well, we apparently didn't research it well enough and/or had a lot of pressure from Boston and the Massachusetts people to put it there because it meant jobs and everything and made all sorts of promises. But Boston has never come into its own as a port economically or anything else because of this labor situation, and we found this to be true. We stayed in Boston only a few months before we had to move back to New York.

We were trying to avoid New York because it was otherwise engaged. It was a very busy port all by itself.

COL LASHER: It became a very critical target . . .

MG LASHER: Yes, so we had not only the people problem but the labor problem involved in many of these cases and it came to--In Boston, for instance, there was one Catholic priest who seemed to be the key man and even he couldn't control the unions there. It was pretty bad but the government never had to move in on them in a militant way. We just tried to avoid confrontation, and New York turned out to be the best port. Of course, it's probably one of the best ports in the world, certainly one of the biggest.

COL LASHER: Well, there were no actual stoppages. Were there any strikes of any consequence?

MG LASHER: No, not that I recall. Not any that really made any difference. Another point I'd like to make, you'd commented somewhat about the political influence which might have affected the performance of the Army. And while what I'm about to say is not necessarily political; yet poltical influence, political intervention is in a large degree a reflection of the feeling of the public at large through its elected representatives in Congress. You just have to live with it and accommodate it. For instance, at the height of World War II, we had some 12 million people in uniform in all the armed services. Each one of those people had about seven moves before they went overseas.

COL LASHER: How many?

MG LASHER: Seven. This was due to this type of influence because they had to have a leave, a pre-embarkation leave to be able to go home, they

had to have leaves in between times, then we had to move parents to near by places, staging areas. But we, each man we figured--each uniformed person had seven moves before embarkation.

COL LASHER: That's not a move to the kind we think about. When a man goes to leave, you didn't have to move him. He had to make his own arrangements right? No matter . . .

MG LASHER: Well, it depended on what kind of a move it was. For instance, they went from home to a training area, that was a supervised move and then while they were at the training area, they had to--certain leaves.

COL LASHER: But that's not a move out . . .

MG LASHER: No, I didn't count that. I don't count that. Officially about seven moves which included the port of embarkation. They had two or three training areas, for instances, and part of it was our fault. But part of it was due to the fact that we had to give them certain--we had to give certain amount of recognition to the requirements of their people, the people of the United States who wanted to see their boys one last time at least, and had to give them sufficient leave and time off to do this. We figured it out that we moved each person about seven times by the time they got on the boat. Well, you see this placed a tremendous burden on the public transportation system. While we had quite a lot of buses and used them, nevertheless we--but had no really scheduled air service as we know now. The planes were small. The DC-3 was pretty good then. So, we had to depend primarily on the railroads, and this meant that there was a 100 million, 150 million man moves we had to make. The better we could organize it . . .

COL LASHER: You had a nation in motion almost.

MG LASHER: This was just the uniformed personnel to say nothing of the civilian people who were involved in the war effort who were traveling considerably more than they otherwise would. And we had slogans and everything else. "Is your trip necessary?" You must remember that. And this was the reason. People were advised to stay put if they possibly could unless they actually had to move from one place to another. It was the same way with freight trains--movement of material. It just was unbelievably huge, on top of normal movement of commerce, to serve the population of the country. Superimposed right on top of that, and of course, there was already a building program for cars. But it just couldn't keep up with the rapid expansion that the military placed upon it. To have done other than depend upon the commercial transportation companies for the movement of troops and first-hand material was unthinkable. We had to depend on them. There was some pressure for our moving into the scene ourselves and perhaps having our own equipment, particularly highway equipment, which was more easily procurable and the highways themselves were open to everybody to use, whereas the railroads' privately owned thoroughfares. There was some pressure that we would have to take over the transportation facilities of the country, but this was just out of the question. The point was . . .

COL LASHER: You mean nationalizing them, sort of to speak, for the duration. It was considered out of the question?

MG LASHER: Yes.

COL LASHER: Why? When I say why they would still operate presumably but you would more or less dictate as opposed to cooperate with them. Why was it considered . . .

MG LASHER: Because the cooperation was doing so well through this system that we arranged with all the railroads. The Association of--that movements control that I talked about earlier was just one phase of the whole operation. As I told you, this office, in I'll say the Pentagon, it moved from building to building to building as we moved. But this office--this railroad office we had, as I told you passenger representatives as well as freight representatives in there. We would place a requirement on them for a movement of 500 men, 6000 men. This would be all coordinated by them, and in a matter of hours, we would get the information that the train would be set up at the time we requested and so forth from let's say Chicago to Los Angeles. That was all done by them and with no sweat on our part.

COL LASHER: Two things then came out of this. That you all assessed the fact they were doing as well as could be done, I assume, and secondly any other approach would lead to empire building almost certainly on the military or on the government part if you decided to . . .

MG LASHER: Well, it became then, an authoritarian state if you go into and start taking over and running the various industries that are necessary to back a war up.

COL LASHER: Even temporarily.

MG LASHER: Even temporarily and so often, you know, these temporary things become permanent. They last too long, but there was still a lot of pressure for us to move a lot of freight and people by highway. And I fought it continously.

COL LASHER: Was there much chance that you could compete for the--I'll call them trucks--motor vehicles for use in CONUS when so much was being built

and immediately shipped overseas where it was needed or going to be needed in the European continent and they knew this.

MG LASHER: But, of course, the commercial truck lines in the United States needed additional equipment too and they got it. Now we could have taken that additional equipment and done ourselves.

COL LASHER: But they only needed it to keep the nation going though, basically.

MG LASHER: Yes, now if we superimposed our own procurement of motor vehicles and set up companies, truck companies, why we would have added yet another dimension to our war effort, our uniform was effort. We wouldn't know how to do it. We'd had to probably draft people from industries to put them in uniform to run it. This was ridiculous. Of course, there were many people who have said that this would be a lot cheaper. It wouldn't cost so much. It probably wouldn't, but in the long run--that is in dollars and cents--but it would have been horrible for the transportation industry of the country if we even attempted it. It would have ruined it, and besides that, they were set up, and they knew how to do it, and they could do it better than anybody else could. I ran into this same thing in Korea later on. I got over to Korea there in 1950, and I found a Reserve officer, a colonel, from the New Haven Railroad as the transportation officer of the Eighth Army--the railroad man, he wasn't the transportation officer of the Eighth Army. He had the railroad job. Well, the Korean National Railroad was a pretty good, physically speaking, a fairly good railroad. And the Japanese had been running it for 50 years and this guy was trying to impose--he came from the New Haven Railroad--and he was trying to impose American methods, US methods, on these Koreans. They couldn't understand the wording. They couldn't even understand the words he used. And I had to relieve him, send him back.

COL LASHER: I'd like to hear more about that when we talk about the Korean War.

MG LASHER: He got sick and we put him on S.S. Hope down in Pusan Harbor, gave him the Legion of Merit, and sent him home disabled. But he was just raising hell with these people. Then I got a guy . . .

COL LASHER: Simply because the American way was the best way to do it.

MG LASHER: Oh, yes. That's all he knew. It just didn't work. I had a lieutenant colonel in the outfit that came off the Coastline Railroad and he'd been in Korea earlier, worked with railroads for half a dozen years or so, maybe more, and all he needed was a few American officers and he just ran--he ran it like the chairman of the--the transportation minister, minister of transportation. Kim, his name was. And Kim ran it and as long as they did what we wanted, we didn't care how they operated what kind of singles. The only trouble was that they would hold up the--they would get out in the country, in a little town, stop the train, go have a few beers, and pick up a couple of girls. We had a lot of that trouble, but the railroad--I'll go into that a little later on. But anyway the supposition, the tendency is to do it yourself and you can get it done, you can do it better, you have complete control. But when you get into the technical areas such as transportation or industry or anything else, the people who know how to do it are the ones who should be allowed to do it, rather than try to set up some jerry-built thing under the pressure of war requirements. You'd just never get anywhere. So, as a result, we utilized and made rich--there's no question about this. A lot of commercial transportation companies, truck companies, railroads had a great big thing . . . made a lot of money during World War II. All the transportation people

did, shipping companies-- nevertheless so did industry. So did everybody else who had anything to do with it. But the size of this, just in the way of personnel, is indicated by the fact as I said before we figured that every man that got into uniform--every person that got into uniform was moved seven times before he got--and that's a tremendous load superimposed over the already expanded and inflated civilian requirements.

COL LASHER: Well, now in order to do this, I assume that, starting with the war or shortly before, the railroad industry as well as the trucking industry must have had rapid expansion or as rapid as they could possibly do in their capital goods, railcars, trucks, trailers, and what not to accommodate an ever increasing need during the war years. After the war, did they experience, particularly the railroads, they did find that they were loaded down with equipment they didn't need and it became dreg on the market so to speak.

MG LASHER: I think, only to a minor extent really. Of course, a lot of the equipment that they were using--of course, they continued to build more new equipment, build it faster, but here again they couldn't build it as fast as they wanted to. I was always fighting for steel priorities for the railroads. I say, fighting for them, testimony they might use for the allocations. Our requirements and why they--I can always substantiate their needs. So, I know they didn't get all they wanted; but in addition to that, the older stuff which maybe they would have retired by the time was "coopered" up and kept on. So, by the time the war was over, that was probably retired right away and the newer equipment was kept up. And then you must remember that the thing didn't just drop off at the end of the war. It tapered

off, and as the war effort tapered off, of course, more and more money went into the economy of the country, refurbishing factories to go into civilian production and that sort of thing and the increase in population. That took up most of the slack.

COL LASHER: So, the railroads didn't particularly notice any sudden drop off in any major problem in this accumulated capital-equipment that they had in the overall environment that they had been working with. They didn't have a big turn around and a large problem in adjusting to the end of the war, to peace.

MG LASHER: That's correct.

COL LASHER: They did not.

MG LASHER: They did not have that problem. However, they had another problem, and that is that air technology had increased so tremendously during the 6 or 8 years involved in the build up of the war and the war itself. Planes became tremendously larger, and the DC-3 was already obsolete. We got into larger airplanes, and almost immediately after the war, I'd say within 3 or 4 years, the railroads felt the passenger competition from the airlines.

COL LASHER: That soon they felt the . . .

MG LASHER: Oh, yes. Of course, these airplanes are built for a life of around 14 years. I think that is variable. I say a life of 14 years, a depreciable life of 14 years. Some are kept longer, but most were not kept 14 years. Technology went so rapidly that by the time a new airplane was well broken in 4, 5, 6 years, a better airplane was produced. And the first airplane was probably sold out of the country

second-hand because we were the only manufacturer of aircraft of any account in the world at that time. Boeing and Douglas, two of the major manufacturers, had three of four, one more advanced than the other on the drawing board when they brought out their new airplanes. It just flooded the whole world with better airplanes right away and the railroads felt this very strongly. Of course, the utilization of the passenger transportation of the railroads declined steadily to where it is now, which is almost zero. And it is being paid for out of tax money. That's what it is.

COL LASHER: Have you any feel for the percent of the industry, of the transportation industry, particularly the rail and trucking industry, that the war effort--I don't want to use the word 'usurp'--took--what percent of the total capability was devoted in your estimate to the war on the average?

MG LASHER: I don't know. The difficulty in doing this is that you have you start with the products of the field, the forests, and the mines. You got to start with the raw material.

COL LASHER: Moving those as well as . . .

MG LASHER: Yes, semi-finished and finished and then it goes to storage. But I know that probably 95 percent of the movement of people in the Army.

COL LASHER: That's something to do with government and business . . .

MG LASHER: On railroads.

COL LASHER: Oh, it was on railroads.

MG LASHER: And I think that this was probably--well, let me say this, even then the movement of people in the United States, 1940-1941, only

10 percent went commercially, 90 percent went by automobile, private carriage. You don't realize that. So, that public, the buses, the railroads, and the airplanes were vying for 10 percent. I would guess that it's no less than that now. Our people are tremendously mobile.

COL LASHER: But it changed very rapidly during the war when the gas rationing came into . . .

MG LASHER: That's right. But that's why I said 1940, in particularly, because everything was distorted in the next 5 years. All sorts of statistics were distorted for all sorts of reasons, but that obtained in the '30s was about 90 percent. So, in the beginning of the '30s, of that 10 percent, the railroads were getting 9 percent, 8 or 9 percent; but by 1950, 20 years later, the late '40s, probably the railroads were only getting 4 percent. The airlines came in very rapidly and so did the bus lines expand. I don't know whether it's still 90 percent people going in their own vehicles for that, but I would guess it's just pretty close to it. But when you go into an airport today, like O'Hare, La Guardia, or Kennedy, you wonder where all these people come from. Just tremendous. And I went to--couple of weeks ago I had to go to New York; and I hadn't ridden a railroad in a long time so we decided to take the Broadway Limited, see how it was. It wasn't patronized at all. It was very expensive as a matter of fact. I was horribly surprised and disappointed that this Amtrak outfit that they had set up were not making more of an effort to compete, price-wise. They can't compete with speed, very difficult to compete in comfort, because if you're uncomfortable in an airplane to New York you're uncomfortable for a couple of hours. Whereas in a railroad, you're uncomfortable for 12 or 14 hours. Let

me see,--this was one way, my ticket was about 80 bucks I guess, by air, and one way by rail was about 50-60. If they're ever going to compete, they've got to compete in the price of the ticket. That's all there is to it.

COL LASHER: Unless you just like to ride trains there's no sense in going.

MG LASHER: That's right. But to get back, this was a tremendous load and I like to think anyway that a broad attitude on the part of the railroads and on the part of the military --and I had something to do with the latter--the attitude toward the transportation requirements which were very, very great caused no more difficulty than it did simply because the people who went into it went into it sanely and with fore-knowledge of the troubles that could occur and that successful attempt to prevent those things from happening. Like this control system, we could have been in all sorts of trouble, lack of cars for one, just as long as we left cargo on the cars, it was stored and cars were misused and in short supply. But these terrible things did not happen. We had. . .

COL LASHER: For which you and that particular office take a great deal of credit.

MG LASHER: I like to think so. We had-compared to the tonnage of ammunition that was shipped throughout the United States and through our ports, we had relatively no major explosions. Once in a while a couple of trucks blew up. We had no big raliroad difficulties. So, later on the General Accounting Office and some of the Congress and Department of Justice thought the railroads had over charged the government for the movement of ammunition which, because of the risk involved, took

a very high rate. But they didn't get to first base on it, and I found myself in defense--against the government actually.

COL LASHER: Was this after the war or during the?

MG LASHER: Well toward the end, of course the war kind of petered out with two victory days, VE and VJ. I don't recall exactly when it came but we had a lot of hearings on it and went before the ICC. In that regard, we had these two vice-presidents of the Associations of American Railroads--this is Mr. Gass, who was in my office, reported to one by the name of Buford, Charles Buford, who came to the AAR from the Milwaukee Railroad. Right after the war was over he went back to Milwaukee as president. He was vice-president of operations of the Association of American Railroads and a fellow by the name of Gus Cleveland was vice-president of traffic, and he was the key man in this area of rates and charges. This fellow from the Justice Department,--this lawyer came over to see me one day to get me to testify on this case. And he said there was no question in his mind that there was a conspiracy that the railroads maintained higher rates than necessary and they said, "We're going to try to recover some of this billions of dollars . . ."

COL LASHER: Conspiracy? You mean more or less price fixing?

MG LASHER: Conspiracy to keep the prices up. And you see we had the right to--or the act to regulate commerce. Inter-state Commerce Act, says in part. There's a section there called Section 22 which says that public carriers for hire can transport for the government at free or reduced rates. In other words a lower rate--whatever the savings is redounded to the sovereign--going back to common law--and the sovereign in the United States is the people. So, if we got lower rate than was

normally used commercially it would mean less tax money would be used and everybody would benefit. We used that just as much as we could, but we stuck pretty much to tariff rates that were published and were used by the public and so forth. So, this guy comes over, he turned out--he became president of a little railroad out in the Midwest. I knew him very well. I joked about it a lot, but he put on this song and dance in my office and wanted me to testify. I said,--when he got all through, I said, "Well, you talk about Mr. Cleveland for instance and others conspiring." I said, "I'm no lawyer and I don't know what your definition of conspiring is, but in my book it's four, five guys under a hanging lamp in a smoke filled back-room plotting." And I said, "Mr. Cleveland had two boys in uniform all through this war. One of them is a doctor and the other an officer also and if I were questioned as to whether McCleveland conspired, my answer would be unequivocally, no!" Mr. Cleveland was a tremendous man. All you had to do was talk to him a few minutes, and you'd find out that Mr. Cleveland--he'd dotted every "i" and crossed every "t" and was just about as honest as you could--as they come. And I told this lawyer that I just wouldn't--I would say "no" if you asked me. "So, I won't make a very good witness for you." As a matter of fact, these two men, Buford and Cleveland,--I had lunch with them pretty near every Saturday noon at the Mayflower. We'd get together and go over the week before and the week following. Buford came up from--he was a switchman to start with and he knew how to use switchmen's language. Cleveland on the other hand was the more sedate type, and everytime Charlie Buford would cuss you could see Cleveland wince. Buford was a real tough son-of-a-gun,

I'll tell you that. Although he was only a vice-president in the railroad industry, vice-president of the AAR, we had this thing tacked down so that I heard him call up the Pennsylvania Railroad one time when we had some Snafu up in Cinncinati. Pennsylvania had an operating vice-president by the name of Deascy, D-E-A-S-C-Y. Deascy was noted for his love of liquor, but he was rough, tough, nasty--everybody feared him almost. He had a big birthmark on one side of his face, and he still wore these big mutton-chop sideburns primarily to hide that birthmark, partly hide it. Well, he called up and Deascy wanted to know how he was going to get up--he was in Philadelphia--how he was going to get out to Cinncinati. Buford said, "Goddamn it, get an airplane and go out if you have to," and he hung up right in his face. Well, this was the power we, the government, had clothed the AAR with. The AAR ordinarily is kind of weak because its board of directors is composed of some 20 railroad presidents and none of them agree on anything. But when the war effort came on, they were just solid and Deascy had nothing to say. He just had to go personally and take care of this. That's the way Buford was. On the other hand, Cleveland was a much more, as I say sedate and composed person, and he didn't get excited. Yet, he never would have conspired against the government. Well, things like that happened a great deal. Going back a little bit to this site selection thing, the Transportation Corps and its various departments did have responsibility in clearing particular sites. There was only one exception and this came up, when all of a sudden we were asked to concur or establish some rates into a place called Oakridge, Tennessee. And we never heard of it before. We didn't know where it was. Yet, you had to

find it on the map. I inquired, or we inquired, what facility was going up there. Nobody knew. It was going to be big but they didn't know what, and of course, in order to find the cost and everything you had to know what's going in and what's going out. Couldn't find out. So, I went up to General Gross and raised hell. I said, "These people aren't site selecting the way they should." He'd never heard of Oakridge.

COL LASHER: Gross had never heard either? This is when? Do you remember?

MG LASHER: No. It was early, and we were having trouble because there were a lot of people, like always, bypassing you to get things done. "Oh, hell, this is a good place. There's a railroad 40 miles away. We could use that." All this jazz. They didn't know how much more it would cost to locate it on the north or south. . .

COL LASHER: Well, General Gross picked that site himself though?

MG LASHER: Wait a minute. To go back to the OQMG, the Quartermaster General in 1940 had another division called the construction division that had all the responsibility for construction. There was a guy when I--the latter years in the Quartermaster General's Office, the guy came over. His name was Leslie Groves and he was chief of the Construction Division for the OQMG.

COL LASHER: I didn't know that. I thought the engineers had that.

MG LASHER: He was an engineer. The engineers have it now.

COL LASHER: But they didn't have it then.

MG LASHER: The Quartermaster General had it then. And the utilities and so forth. So, Leslie Groves left the Quartermaster General's Office, and I don't guess many people knew where Leslie Groves went. But anyway Leslie

Groves is an engineer, Gross is an engineer. They were good friends, and Gross was--when I told him about this--he was hotter than a fox. So, we went up to the Secretary's office, Somervell's office probably, and he started pounding on the desk. He got nowhere. He just wasn't going to know. That was that. We went right ahead and had to go through with it. The site had been selected a long time ago.

COL LASHER: General Gross was not killed . . .

MG LASHER: General Gross, G-R-O-S-S, was Chief of Transportation.

COL LASHER: Yes, Chief of Transportation under General . . .

MG LASHER: Somervell. He reported to Somervell.

COL LASHER: I lost track then. Who was . . .

MG LASHER: Gregory?

COL LASHER: Gregory.

MG LASHER: He was Quartermaster General. You see when they set up--this is on the tape. Gregory was the Quartermaster General and he had motor vehicles; he had traffic; he had water transportation; he had several elements of transportations. Two elements were over in the engineers. These railway battalions and maintenance battalions, those were all put together in a transportation service and Gross, an engineer was made the Chief of the Transportation Service. Later on by Congressional action the Transportation Service became the Transportation Corps by law.

COL LASHER: And Somervell was. . .

MG LASHER: Somervell was the commanding general of the Army Service Forces, ASF, super--well, even more than the AMC has been in the later years. He had all the technical services, and all the supply activities under him.

COL LASHER: But not the Army Transportation Service as such.

MG LASHER: Was under Somervell, so was the Quartermaster Corps, so was the Signal Corps.

COL LASHER: Oh, the Quartermaster Corps was under, as opposed to being a staff. I get confused because I thought you were basically staff of the OQMC or Transportation service.

MG LASHER: I was.

COL LASHER: And, yet, if you were staff, why did the commanding general-- Oh, that's right, they were two hatted then. The chief signal officer was also the commander of all signal troops basically.

MG LASHER: Well, I suppose Quartermaster General was too. He had bakery companies, truck companies.

COL LASHER: Yes, I forgot about this technical service chief was really the commander of the technical service at that time too which he is no longer.

MG LASHER: Yes. He has no command.

COL LASHER: That's why I was getting confused on Gregory, Somervell, and Gross.

MG LASHER: So, it ended up that Somervell had all these technical services and the chiefs of the services reported to him. Gregory was one, and Gross was another. Then you had the signal, whoever was the chief signal officer at the time. I don't think medical did maybe, but anyway he had a very, very, big empire. Who was, I think, quite a guy.

COL LASHER: Somervell? Did you know him?

MG LASHER: Not very well. No, no. I didn't have very much contact with him. He was beyond me in the chain of commands always.

COL LASHER: I take it you were favorably impressed, though, with what you

did know of him.

MG LASHER: Except I didn't like his decision, at least I was told it was his decision, to get any civilians to help us. Williamson was the example. Of course, this was just one little incident in the whole scheme of things, but they brought in a lot of civilians. My experience with the civilians was that they didn't know nearly as much about what we had to do or how to do it as we knew.

COL LASHER: But you didn't have that many people to fill the slots in one of the departments, right?

MG LASHER: Well, I'm talking about topside. My topside.

COL LASHER: You wanted workers not decisionmakers.

MG LASHER: Well, for instance this fellow Williamson, who was only one of these 25 companies I inquired, and the only one that could be "released." The inference I got later on Williamson was that they wanted to get rid of him. I'll finish up that story just for a moment, a little out of context. But after the war was over and he went back to Sears, as I said he was very hopeful of coming back a hero and getting his job back and being made a vice-president. Well, not only did he not become a vice-president, but he was told that his job had been taken over by somebody else and they weren't going to replace him. They weren't going to put him back where he was, and he pulled the GI Bill of Rights on this thing. So, Sears gave him a check for whatever his salary was for a year and that was that, retired, and the guy who took his place almost very shortly thereafter did become a vice-president. So, you can draw your own conclusions on this, but unfortunately, this was a big company and they did a lot of transportation. But primarily--and the thing that

Williamson had most to do with, was parcel post, the catalog business. Very, very big. He was the biggest customer of the Post Office Department. So, he was going around to post offices and working on a scale that was minuscule compared to the scale that we had to work with. We shipped stuff by train loads and heavy material and not packages. Well, ordering--hundred of thousands of orders everyday and process them and pick them, process them and ship them, and they go parcel post. So, this was an entirely different type transportation than the one we had to do with and as far as personnel were concerned, in moving people, he'd had no experience. Well, that's enough of Williamson. I'm not going to belabor that point anymore. But this Manhattan Project I came in to contact with several times. I'd like to give you two instances. Beside Oakridge, Tennessee we had--there was an installation out in Washington, the state of Washington, and another one in New Mexico.

COL LASHER: At the university?

MG LASHER: No, this was--I can't think of any place out there. Well anyway still . . . and we had Los Alamos in New Mexico. There was some atomic material they had to move from around those three points, and without saying anything to us, they made a study out by themselves of the safest way to transport it. Now, if it had been air, they would have bought their own airplanes, fitted them properly, or highway or water or whatever it was; but they decided that rail was the best thing. So, I was designated to negotiate the rates for this material. I didn't know what it was, but the head of the Bureau of Explosives and the Association of American Railroads went with me to protect the interest of the railroads in this thing. He had some idea of what it was all about.

COL LASHER: He did?

MG LASHER: Yeah, and--well, I too. We knew these installations were there and we knew this was hot material. We knew we'd had to build special cars for them or fit up cars especially for the material. It turned out that the trains had to be guarded, had guards on, lead-lined and a whole lot of stuff. But the big thing was not just the transportation but the liability involved should anything occur to the train particularly going through towns. In general, of course, if there was a wreck of any kind, the railroads are responsible. The claim the government put in for the loss sustained in a railroad wreck, but here the loss sustained was not just the cost of the material but the liability--the third party liability involved.

COL LASHER: It might be far, far greater than anything . . .

MG LASHER: Yes, I went up to Chicago with the authority to waive that liability except on the part of the government. So, we got a couple of guys from Oakridge, came up to Chicago, couple of our fellows and then this guy from the Bureau of Explosives and the freight traffic people of the railroads. We had a big meeting and discussed this, and we finally arrived at a rate. And as I said I have the authority to waive that liability and accept it on the part of the government, which we did, and it worked very well. We moved an awful lot of that stuff I'll tell you.

COL LASHER: Well, that must have lowered the rate too. The tarrif itself by waiving it.

MG LASHER: There's no tarrif on it. No tarrif. Nobody ever had it before.

COL LASHER: No, I mean what you might have had established might have been a great deal higher had they had to bear a liability.

MG LASHER: Oh, yes. I don't know--Yes, I don't know if they would have excepted it.

COL LASHER: At all.

MG LASHER: Yeah, and I think it was stuck because the liability was unknown almost. Thousands of people who could be killed and the railroad would have been bankrupt out of one accident perhaps. Then another incident having to do with this was, we had a requirement from a steel corporation for some large heavy flat cars. I don't just remember how many there were--six or eight that we needed, long extra heavy. All we knew about it was the dimensions of the load, the height, the length, the width, the weight. We went all over. We couldn't find any, no cars that would hold this, except United States Steel Corporation which had some on its privately owned railroad. So, we went to the steel corporation. "Oh, no. We're using those . . . with the war effort. No, we can't let them go." Well, we cajoled and everything else, and we just couldn't spring them. So, we had . . .

COL LASHER: Build your own?

MG LASHER: No, we just had to admit we couldn't find the cars and didn't know how we could move these items. About 24-hours later, the steel corporation called up and said, "Cars will be made available to you."

COL LASHER: You don't know who got them.

MG LASHER: Yes, I do. Leslie Groves.

COL LASHER: Not himself.

MG LASHER: He must have had--well, maybe even Roosevelt for all you know.

MG LASHER: Well, he didn't have to go that high. But once it was known--the Manhattan Project didn't know--what it turned out to be where sections of the tower to Los Alamos for the first shot, pre-fab sections.

COL LASHER: That's interesting.

MG LASHER: Yes. Oh, there were a lot of such things, that as I think back on some of these things, many are just interesting, some are comical, some are rather sad. So, there were all sorts of special situations arising, and I suppose this is not uncommon in a war. But this is what made that job so interesting. Unfortunately, in many ways unfortunately, I was never able to get out of Washington. I just couldn't get out of Washington. Once I got there in '38-'39, I was hardly out of Washington except for the year I went up to New York. This was just to purge me--clear me of the Manchu Law and Gross brought me back right away. Then I stayed there again--I stayed there til 1950 when I went Korea.

COL LASHER: That's right. Do you perceive--do you have any real feel for what this did to your career both good or bad? The fact that you were not able to get out of the country, so to speak, into any of the war zones or get out of even Washington except a mandatory tour out of there?

MG LASHER: No, I don't know. There was this, which exist today that the rapid promotions were going to the people who were in combat, the command positions. I was a staff position.

COL LASHER: But you didn't do so badly up to colonel anyway . . . as hard as you could.

MG LASHER: Up to colonel, but there I was if this thing hadn't happened with Williamson, I'd probably have gotten a star then.

COL LASHER: You think that . . . Those people in you'd probably gotten that or one like that.

MG LASHER: The job was big enough to warrant a one star, and I didn't get it. I was the one at the right place, the right time, but not in the right situation somehow. I was a colonel in 1941. I was made a colonel in June of '41 and wasn't a brigadier general til 12-13 years later.

COL LASHER: '54, about 12½ years.

MG LASHER: Twelve and half years later. Otherwise now, from a point of view outside the industry, as I said before I did not suffer in comparison with this guy Williamson and everybody knew the situation. Nobody liked Williamson anyway, nobody and everybody had some sympathy for my position. That's outside, and I'm sure inside too.

COL LASHER: So, in essence, with respect to your civilian career and the fact that you were known--I mean the fact that you were known, worked so closely with so many of the civilians must have had a great bearing on your esteem later on when you went with North American and the jobs that you had offered at about the time you were ready to retire which you might not have gotten had you gotten out of the . . . got to CBI or someplace like that.

MG LASHER: Going to CBI . . . lost.

COL LASHER: So, it's hard to assess whether it hurt or helped. It did hurt, as I understood, your making general thereafter because--didn't you go to Korea on the specific recommendation of the career people that if you ever wanted to make a star you had to get out of there . . .

MG LASHER: . . . but I felt it. I felt that it was necessary . . .

COL LASHER: You must have felt it for some reason though.

MG LASHER: For instance, when I got to Japan and reported in, I reported to MacArthur. He made me feel that he'd been waiting for me to come here

to win the war. He was that kind of a guy, and I was briefly in his office, 3 minutes maybe. He got up from his desk and came around, you know how he shook hands. He took your elbow of your right hand and shook you with both hands, looked you right in the eye. He was sure glad to see me. Well, I was the senior transportation officer in the whole outfit over there. Whatever the command was at that time. I suppose the UN Command which he had. The next senior guy was the transportation officer of the United Nations Command, and he'd been there for 2 or 3 years in Japan, loved it, had a lovely house, his wife was there. They were real plush and he didn't want to go to Korea. He was a lot older than I was and he was so afraid that I was going to pull my rank on him. I didn't let on until I was given the choice.

COL LASHER: Of staying there or going Korea?

MG LASHER: Staying in Japan or going to Korea and I picked Eighth Army, Korea.

COL LASHER: Well, we're getting ahead of ourselves.

MG LASHER: But that just follows through that I did think that this was necessary. I thought that this was necessary, and I'm sure that it was although it hadn't been brought to me quite as bluntly as you said the career people said, "Well, you got to get over there if you ever want to be a general."

COL LASHER: Well, the implication was that there was a lot less chance of you ever making a star if you didn't take this opportunity.

MG LASHER: That's right. All right now, about May of 1945 I received orders to go to New York, become the 2d Zone/2d Defense Command transportation officer, wearing two hats up there. And therefore I'll leave the Washington

scene for the time being, but probably having only covered a very few of the highlights of the war years in Washington, I may from time to time drop in comments which refer back to it. So, you have to bear with me. I've been in Washington for so long that the so-called Manchu Law,--where that name came from I don't know--anyway it was a law that prevented people from staying in Washington more than, I think, 4 or 5 years. And of course, prevented"homesteading"as we called it by remaining in one station for the rest of his career. So, I had to be purged but I didn't know this at the time. I'd knew that I'd overstayed my time in Washington, and the pressure was on the Chief of Transportation to transfer me and that was about all I knew. I was . . . and I had to take a permanent change of station.

COL LASHER: You knew when you left that you were coming back though?

MG LASHER: No, not--I've never been told directly but things had occurred in the past from conversations with General Gross and others that with only two Regular Army officers in that division down there.--And it was quite an important one --he felt that he just couldn't let that continue to be completely dominated by the civilian people who had been brought in. Well, so we went to New York and I went up ahead of the family and finally located a place, one of the finest houses we ever had. I might add here, of course, that this problem of housing for the mobile military person is always a problem. It's a family problem. It does reflect upon the--I think--reflect upon the efficiency of the officer, and therefore I always felt that the government was quite paternal in taking care of so much of it although that too now has grown up in industry. Another example where industry was behind the government because we had all these

moves paid for and the time involved was allowed the individual to get settled so that he became a more efficient individual and worried less about the financial side of things. But here we had very fortunate thing and I must relate it because housing at that time was particularly difficult. We finally located a house. I traveled Long Island. I traveled--I went into Brooklyn where we lived before and Westchester and the Jersey side. To make this long story short, I found a house in a little city called Ridgewood, very fortunate to have it. It was owned by a church.

COL LASHER: The house was?

MG LASHER: The house was owned by a church, and I bought it for $14,000. It was the nicest house we'd ever lived in and large and commodious and with three children we needed plenty of space. Had a nice garage and corner lot, stone construction. It was very nice, and of course, and as soon as I found it and bought it, moved the family up. Our experience in this--originally we decided we weren't going to buy houses. We weren't going into the real estate business. And we rented up until the time the price freeze went on rents and housing and we found that there was no way of finding a house. The house we were renting, as soon as the lease ran out, the man occupied it himself because he was at that time paying more rent than he would if he moved into his own home. So, the only way we could do there, we moved in Washington two or three times; and we had to buy a house. So, here again we had to buy a house, but this house fortunately--incidently I only stayed about a year in New York--and this house was sold for $22,500. So, we made out pretty well. Here again the individual had a son in the Army, and he was coming back from the war.

They were living in a small apartment, and they wanted a nice house for him to come home to and they wanted that house.

COL LASHER: Wasn't this Mr. Philips?

MG LASHER: Philips, yeah. He was a big bulk oil dealer in New Jersey. So, he made a date with me and took me to lunch at his club down in Newark or Jersey City or wherever it was and made me the proposition. He wanted to know how much I wanted for it, and I told him $25,000. And he said, "You only paid 14." I was a little amazed, but he'd done his homework, his lawyers had. Well, this didn't startle him. I told my rationale was that it didn't depend on how much I'd paid for this house, but how much I would have had to pay for the house--I had by then my orders to go back to Washington--I told him for $25,000 I couldn't get a house anywhere near like this one in Washington. I said this is my problem. It's not trying to make a lot of money, but I said I just have to get that much money to get anything decent in Washington. So, we settled on $22,500 and I had to do nothing except signing paper and his legal department of his company did everything else. And I came out with a very nice profit, and we went down and still couldn't find anything for 22,500 in Washington that was worth anything. But anyway that's besides the point. I was--but again I must remark that the location and the establishment of families in new locations is a very important problem to the military man and the ease and facility in which this can be accomplish aided by the paternalist government has a great deal to do with the efficiency of the individual in my opinion. My job in New York was not very challenging actually. There was a zone of transportation officer. That's where I established

my office. That was on 25 Broad Street right down in the financial district. We had quite a big office there; and the responsibilities were primarily the responsibilities of the transportation corps in that area, overseeing the trans-shipping of goods from land or rail, making sure that the people and material got into the port, got on to the right ships, stevedore problems in a lot of areas.

COL LASHER: This included the Brooklyn Terminal I suppose.

MG LASHER: Yes, generally overseeing it, but, of course, it had its own commanding officer and its own staff and everything. I mean we did not operate it. We were strictly a staff organization, and of course, and extracurricular thing is the war was over about that time. Personnel coming back from overseas and one of the difficulties going and coming was hotel space because everybody wanted to come to see their boy off or come to meet him when he came back. I had quite a lot to do with the hotels. Most of the major hotels gave us a certain percentage of their rooms every night, not without some reluctance. I had to make a couple of speeches about this and I got the press on it. The Times reported it in depth, but we got it. We got assignment of rooms in several hotels.

COL LASHER: The Henry Hudson was one I bet.

MG LASHER: The Henry Hudson was one, the Taft, the Roosevelt --well, practically all the major hotels. Although we didn't run any roster on it, we had to keep their feet to the fire all the time. Two or three of them--the Henry Hudson that you mentioned--turned over its ball room, set up cots all through the ballroom and sold them for a dollar a night or something like that. It was generally good cooperation but you had to keep after them all the time because hotel space was in a very big premium.

COL LASHER: How big was your staff there?

MG LASHER: Oh, I'd say I had two or three hundred there. Then, of course, I was, I guess they called it the 2d Defense Command--2d Defense Command--headquartered at Governor's Island. I was Transportation Officer, 2d Defense Command as well. I had an office over there. It was a small one. It was just a post transportation office for the post on Governor's Island. And of course, I had to go back and forth by ferry, but I'd say 80 percent of my times was in Manhattan at 25 Broadway Street at the 2d Zone Transportation Office.

COL LASHER: Were most of the people there civilian or military at the office?

MG LASHER: Well, about the same percentage that we had in Washington. I'd say we had--well, a higher percentage of military during the war--probably we had 25 percent military and rest were clerical of one type or another. I had no responsibilities in New York were primarily staff, I found a good staff there. It had been well organized and with capable people and so it was no challenge. It was a lot of public relations like this hotel thing. I was on several city committees which had to do with, one way or another, with the soldier. I appeared at a lot of functions there. It was kind of a job. As I say transportation wise, it didn't present any problem or any challenge. While I was there, however--December of '45--then at that time I received orders to procede to Washington on temporary duty and found there that the inbound troops from the Japanese area, the whole Western Pacific, were starting to flood into the West Coast on all types of transportation that you could find. Any ship that would take an extra passenger or two, there was a soldier moving in, beside

all the laid down transportation. We'd gotten already to the point where there just was not adequate transportation on the West Coast to bring them East. So, I was ordered to Seattle which was one of the larger ports to help get equipment there to bring the East. I went out there about the middle of December and found that locally they made all the arrangements they could. There were several ships in the harbor at anchor with men still on them not taken off. They were planning for Christmas dinners on ship as well as many families inviting soldiers to have Christmas dinner at their homes in Seattle. Seattle was just tremendously overloaded. Well, it was a question of sufficient transportation to get East. We requisitioned passenger equipment for all from all over the country. As a matter of fact it was pretty stupidly handled too, as a matter of fact, because we got Florida East Coast RR coaches that didn't have any heat in them, just for instance. Here it was, we had to go across the northern states in the United States with these troops, and there were single pane windows and no heat in some of these cars which we couldn't use. We had to dead-head them back. It was the dead of winter when you got to Montana and North Dakota. But anyway some way we muddled through. I had a few suggestions to make which helped, but the fact that I had been sent there and that the authorities in Washington understood the problems and had done everything they could was really enough to elevate the crisis at the time and by the middle of January, latter part of January, I came back. The crisis was over and if you recall, General Eisenhower was at that time Chief of Staff. He was waited on by a bunch of women in the Pentagon, and he promised to bring the boys back as fast as he could. This was an open invitation to every body to come back. They just flowed in all ports,

Seattle, Portland, San Francisco and Los Angeles. There was quite a snafu for a while, but we got it on a regular basis and once you can program it and plan it, you can handle it with available transportation. So, I came on back and returned to my duty station which, of course, was New York and continued on the same type of work that I was--I had been doing there. I believe we were transferred back to Washington about June or July of 1946 and had the problem of relocating once again. I think I related earlier in this tape that the nice arrangement I had as far as the property was concerned in Ridgewood, disposing of it. When I got to Washington, the housing situation there was worse than it was when we left approximately a year later. The $22,500 I got for the place in Ridgewood wouldn't buy anything near half as nice as that. But we were, maybe, 60 days finding a house that we could buy, any house.

COL LASHER: That long? Oh, any house that was all suitable.

MG LASHER: Yes, at all suitable and your mother and I and Julian stayed in a furnished room on M Street while hunting for a place to live. We were in the stabeth for a few days, and we saw that we weren't going to move in a few days so we had to get something that was a little less expensive than a hotel.

COL LASHER: And I stayed up at Ridgewood.

MG LASHER: And you and Chauncy both stayed in Ridgewood. I think Chauncy went to Edith's, my sister's, for that period. Anyway it was just the three of us there. We finally found the Oliver Street house. I think your mother signed the necessary documents for purchase and it was so tight. There were two or three people looking at the house and the realtor took here out in the back and she signed the papers out of view of the others.

He came in and said the house is sold and everybody. . . leave. This is the way it was.

COL LASHER: Dog eat dog.

MG LASHER: Yes, very tight. But the house proved adequate in most ways. It wasn't nearly as nice as we had before, but it was all we could get. On that house, when we sold it eventually to a Navy file, I took a second mortgage on it. He felt that he was going to be on shore duty quite some time. He'd hadn't been in the house a year before he was ordered to Hawaii, I think, and he had to go and he had quarters. He had to give up commutation, and here he had this house. The mortgage company that held the first mortgage called me up on the phone. He became slow on his payments naturally. He was not getting any commutation, and he had no way of scraping up enough money to make both payments. I was a second mortgagee. I told them, I said, "Well, here's a commander in the Navy, Regular Navy." I said, "I don't think we have any difficulty except the time difficulty here. He's going to be good for this thing, but just when he gets around, I'd be against foreclosing at this point and giving him some more time," which turned out to be the right thing. As soon as he could straighten himself away, he got together enough money to pay off the mortgages and dispose of the house. Well, I was assigned then, this time, to the Office of the Chief of Transportation and as Assistant Transportation for Traffic and assumed essentially the same duties in broad perspective that I'd had previously, except with a slower tempo. The winding down was in some ways as frustrating and difficult as some of the ones we had in getting ready and prosecuting the war. Freight is not very vocal, but its when you come to taking care of people that you have great difficulty. We were bringing

people back. Some of these men had been overseas, officers or enlisted, for maybe 3 or 4 years; situation changed in that length of time. Much of the household goods of the married personnel had been stored while families lived with parents or in-laws and so forth. Things happened overseas we all know about, as well as the fact stateside, and we would get disposition of household goods from the wife and a different disposition of household goods from the husband. This was a tip off that we'd better not do anything for a while. There were some very difficult legal situations involved and one had become disenchanted with the other for one reason or another. They'd grown apart. We had a great deal of difficulty with personnel baggage and household goods as these people returned and resettled. The officers, 9 times out of 10, were assigned to a new station which was nowhere near their old station when they left the States. Their household goods were stored in the old location. We had to get them over to the new location, new station. Much was lost and much was missent. We had a very difficult time and once they got teed off they'd write to their Congressmen. Then we had just a tremendous flood of congressional letters. Chief of Transportation at this time was Ed Leavy. He was a major general.

COL LASHER: L-E-V-I?

MG LASHER: L-E-A-V-Y. He lived in Georgetown, had couple of children, and he was very alert to this problem and leaned over backwards to do everything possible for the individual who had difficulty. We put people, extra people, on to take care of this. Any congressional letter that came in, he insisted on signing himself. This made it terribly difficult because he was, in my opinion, a little bit too picky. All the letters

had to be in the first person singular to the congressmen. So, he had to have it his way, of course, since it was. The correspondence alone was a burden, let alone the straightening out of difficulties. I returned there in 1946, and '46 and '47 was taken up mostly with unwinding and getting rid of some of the excess posts, camps and stations, that we built up and contracting as much as we could. And straightening out the individuals who had their own personal difficulties.

COL LASHER: Did you get involved at this time with the retrograde of things as well as people from,-- particularly from the Asian theater. I don't guess our retrograde of things was as rapid as or as critical in Europe since we kept so many people there. But there was a wealth of stuff that finally, I guess, got dumped on some of the islands and just left to rot.

MG LASHER: I'm sure more was left behind than we brought back, but we brought back a lot of stuff, a great deal. There was not that much problem there. You could take your time with that. When you come to the people who had to come back and resettle, just once suitcase created more problem than a shipload of thanks, for instance if you were bringing it back. This is a great problem that stuck out in my mind for this year or so that I spent in the Office of the Chief of Transportation at this time. Of course, we were cutting back then and as far as our personnel were concerned, except in this one area of personnel baggage, household goods.

COL LASHER: During this year, didn't you start work on the establishment of a National Defense Transportation Association? Wasn't that in 1946-7?

MG LASHER: No, it was earlier than that. It was about '44. It was while

the war was on. You see one of the reasons for this was that we all thought--Oh, I had a great deal of allegiance to the Quartermaster Corps because I had been used so well by everybody from General Gregory on down that-didn't know what the transportation--whether it would be a corps or not, for instance, or disbanded after the war was over. It was simply an administrative act and could well be disbanded unless Congress would vote a new technical service and establish it. But after couple of years, 3 years of existence of the transportation service, I was pretty well hooked on the importance of transportation, and what know-how I had acquired over the years, including my training through the Quartermaster General Office. I became a staunch advocate of a new technical service transportation corps, and so we needed not only the act of Congress though, we needed all the trappings of a separate service. One of which, of course, was the association of that technical service. Just like the Infantry Association, all the rest of them. They each have--the Signal has it I'm sure. I don't know what you call it.

COL LASHER: AFCEA, Armed Froces Communications, Electronics Association, right now.

MG LASHER: Yeah. So, we had to have one, and we called it the Army Transportation Association. This guy Williamson, as I mentioned before, was the first president. I did most of the work about it. We had more to with it than any of the other parts of the Chief of Transportation Office. So, I think it was about '44-45 this started out, and he was mustered out even before the war was over I guess and I was then the next president. I was the one who started to have the first annual conference.

THIS IS SIDE TWO OF TAPE NUMBER THREE OF THE ORAL HISTORY OF MAJOR GENERAL EDMOND C. R. LASHER.

COL LASHER: General Lasher, we were discussing the Army Transportation Association as, I guess, the predecessor to the National Defense Transportation Association and your role in establishing and furthering this organization.

MG LASHER: Yes, the Army Transportation Association as such existed until the new defense act came into being in '46 or 47, I'm not sure just when and the Department of Defense was set-up at which time it was decided that we would change the name of the organization to the National Defense Transprotation--National Defense Transportation Association. As I stated I held the first annual forum, logistic type forum, and this was out at the Palmer House in Chicago. Secretary of War, Secretary of the Army Patterson was the speaker and I managed to get Red Skelton, an entertainer, to make a talk. I arranged for all the speakers. It was a hell of a job and I guess we had more speakers at that convention than we had audience. But nevertheless it was the genesis of the annual logistic forum as it exists today. I held the presidency for about a year and then another president was elected, but I continued to have quite a bit to do with it and was quite interested. And of course, by that time the Transportation Corps had been established by Congress, and we had all the trappings of a separate, individual technical service. Our insignia became official and all those things occurred so that we were pretty well settled by 1947-8. And it's grown considerably and it well supported by the transportation industry, the entire transprotation industry, and is a good meeting place for the transportation people and the services. And

the transportation industry, generally all modes in the United States, marine, air, rail, bus, truck, all modes of transportation, pipelines. As I say, it's a forum where they can get together, get to know each other because they do business with each other and exchange ideas and problems and so forth.

COL LASHER: Isn't it interesting that I noted that not too many years ago, 2 or 3 years ago, I ran into a regional convention of the NDTA down in . . . near Fort Hood, in the town there at Fort Hood. I forget the name of it at the moment. But apparently it's broken up into regions and there are chapters or something that hold their annual conventions; are pretty big, this was one.

MG LASHER: And it has these same regional meetings overseas as well. They've had them in Japan, they've had in Germany, they've had them in Copenhagen, they've had one in Holland, Germany. There's now the question as to whether we should go international with this. I'm not privy to the progress to this possibility, but it has some drawbacks as well as advantages because, I think, as soon as our presence, military presence in Europe, for instance, declines or ceases then the international aspect will also decline and cease. So, to take a premature action like that at this time would be unwise, but I'm not busying myself with this at all anymore. One of the other things I did in connection with this, while we're on this particular subject, is I felt that in connection with the annual forum, the annual convention of the association that we should have a transportation man of the year and a transportation award. So, I drew up all the plans for this and what criteria we would have and, of course, by that time I was in the Joint Chiefs of Staff; and we felt that a decision should be made. It was a quasi-military organization.

It would be well if the Joint Chiefs of Staff made the recommendation for the individuals and with all the back ups for all of those then let the Joint Chiefs of Staff decide who the award would go to for a particular year. Of course, at that time, there was a Joint Military Transportation Committee in the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and I was in there and that was where I was. I felt that that was a good place for them to--for the Joint Chiefs to have these nominations from the Association reviewed and make their recommendations to the Joint Chiefs which the Joint Chiefs would then follow and say that so and so would get for the year. Well, part of this job was--this worked out very fine. Another part of it was that it would be presented by the President or the Vice-President. Cause I called it the transportation award and it stuck. It got stuck. I didn't want it Army Transportation or anything--but as a national transportation award. So, . . . use as the significant emblem of the annual award. Well, I drew up a lot of designs and I went up to New York. I went to Tiffany. I'd decided that we'd have a silver bowl. So, I gave them three or four of my designs, and I asked them if they'd design a bowl somewhat along these lines. They did and submitted it, and I picked it and ordered. Two or three thousand dollars, I'd forgotten how much--and I thought we'd get the money somehow. We didn't have it, but I'd thought we'd get the money. Well, at that time I got my orders to Korea. Somebody else had to worry about the money, but they got it as I knew they would. It's a lovely big bowl and around the top is embossed all the modes of transprotation in a wide band. It's about the size of a medium-size punch bowl sitting on a wooden stand and the recipient gets an miniature of it for his personal possession--to keep

for his personal possession and his name is inscribed on the wooden base that the bowl is on.. That was the one thing I disliked about it was that the first time, when I was in Korea, the first time it was presented by Alvin Barkley, who was vice-president, and presented to the receipient in the White House, and then it went down and down and down, the lesser and lesser official made the presentation. Well, this bothered me. I came back and I finally got out of the Army and retired and I got--this was--it was kind of my baby. I was a little jealous of it anyway. So, I raised a lot of hell. I said, "We got enough club in Washington to get this down in the White House every year. What the hell." So, I busied around and the first thing I knew we did, and Mr. Agnew presented it and then the next year it just slopped over and somebody else did it. Some Under-Secretary of Defense for Logistics.

COL LASHER: Oh, not even the Secretary of Transportation?

MG LASHER: No.

COL LASHER: Bueapy. At least that would be second best to the White House.

MG LASHER: Well, I'm just not going to fuss with it anymore, but I just think the people don't--they think of all why's and wherefore's you can't do something instead of getting to work and doing it.

COL LASHER: Did you ever receive it yourself?

MG LASHER: No. I hoped I might. Been nominated a lot of times but it became just like all of them that became a fairly political thing. They gave it to people who were high in the transportation industry but not necessary what criteria. President of Boeing--that year that Agnew presented it, it was a very nice ceremony, a lot of people there.

The president of Boeing was the designee and Spiro made a real good talk as he always does. The president of Boeing made a good talk too on transportation; and of course, he has contributed a lot there's no question about that. But he's one of the more suitable one's I think. Of course, the difficulty with my having and the other ranking military figures has its drawbacks. If they let in these people, people intimately connected with the association then you can always talk about nepotism and self-serving activities. They give themselves the award and that's just not good. So, I don't feel as badly about it as I might although I have put a lot of time in for the National Defense Association. We spent quite a period of time there from the beginning of the Army Transportation Association to Spiro Agnew as Vice-president so I think I better go back and remark a little more about this rather brief--again rather brief tour of duty in the Office of the Chief of Transportation. General Gross had been transferred to Germany. Actually he retired there and was replaced in Washington by General Ed Leavy. Leavy spent a year or two as Chief of Transportation and then was assigned as Comptroller of the Army. He was replaced by General Heileman, who was Chief of Transportation for I think 3 or 4 years.

COL LASHER: How do you spell Heileman?

MG LASHER: H-E-I-L-E-M-A-N. During this period 1946-74, of course, the act establishing the Department of Defense was passed by Congress and a great deal of effort was placed in the planning for the organization, manning it, and deciding as to just what duties would be assigned to where. However my specific job in '66-67 . . .

COL LASHER: '46-47.

MG LASHER: '46-47 was essentially the same as I had done before and highlighted, of course, by the reduction of the whole effort of the military from the war effort. The reductions of force were almost as difficult to accomplish as was the build up. In the fall of 1947, I was--I might add here that while I was on this tour of duty with the Chief of Transportation I again, probably for the fourth or fifth time, put in for the business school at Harvard hoping that I might get it. But instead in the fall of '47 I was assigned to the Industrial College of the Armed Forces. Of course, this didn't necessitate a change of station. I started in my duties as a student there. I think it was very beneficial, particularly for those of us who were in technical services and did have more than the normal contact with the civilian side of our community. I was impressed very much by the character of the instruction there and particularly the outsiders who were brought in from various walks of life to comment on this, that or the other problems which faced him in his particular area. Of course, we heard also from emenient military figures as well, and, of course, as you know the Army War College at that time was located at Fort McNair.

COL LASHER: In what is now the National War College, right?

MG LASHER: That's the National War College now and we had many joint sessions with them when prominent speakers were brought in. But early in 1948 President Truman was becoming very much alarmed or had been alarmed and had crystalized in this period into a--as regards the protection of our country against atomic attack. This was talked about as civil defense and there was a civil defense division set up in the Department of Army. I suppose it was by that time. He ordered that a

study by made as to who best to combat this by civilian populations wherever they might be effective. He brought in a man by the name of Russell Hopley. Russ Hopley was the president of Northwest Bell Telephone at the time. I think he had his headquarters in Denver or somewhere out in that area. He was asked to come in, and did, and head up this study that the President wanted.

COL LASHER: On civil defense.

MG LASHER: On civil defense and he procedded to put together a staff many of whom were civilians, experts on various fields. First thing I knew they had asked for me to come over for the transportation chapter of the book on civil defense. Well, here I was, I was two-thirds of the way through the Industrial College; and I, of course, wanted my tour of duty at the Industrial College to show on my record. I wanted to show its completion. I was perfectly willing to do anything to accommodate myself to whatever the requirements were. Well, they asked the Secretary of Defense at this time. Mr. Forrestal asked the Army and the Industrial College to grant me the certificate at that time, along about March and April since I'd gone through two-thirds of it. They denied it. They wouldn't do it. If the Secretary of Defense wanted Colonel Lasher for some other job, why they would release him, but they wouldn't give him a certificate. So, they had quite a brawl with that, but we finally decided that I would spend Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday at the Industrial College and Friday, Saturday, and Sunday on this study for civil defense. That was a nice situation.

COL LASHER: Yes, when did you go home?

MG LASHER: That's the way it turned out and I proceeded to put together a staff. I called in a Reserve officer who had been with me in New York who was involved in the trucking industry and his name was John Stark, Jr., --Reserve major. I talked to him about it first to see if he'd like to come and then when he indicated he would, we approached his boss and asked him if he was willing. So, the outcome was that Jack Stark came and was my first assistant because he had a lot of know how in the highway area. I felt that I knew enough about the railroad part of this problem so that I didn't have to have anybody else. We put together a few clerical people and went to work.

COL LASHER: Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays.

MG LASHER: Then, of course, I finally graduated, then put full time on this for a little while. I don't recall just how long, but we wrote the transportation chapter of this booklet. It was quite an affair. It was a pretty extensive thing. I was--not only on this job but a little bit later, I had the opportunity to see many atomic shots out at Frenchmen's Flats in Nevada. I went out several times, and I saw pretty near all the shots there were. I saw the rifle, the gun, and I saw air drops. I saw tower explosions. I witnessed maybe six or eight various types of atomic explosions. This was all very interesting. It was a little tiring. You go out there and we were quartered in Las Vegas . . .

COL LASHER: That was what was tiring about it.

MG LASHER: Yes, you never got to bed there and then you had to get up at about 4:30 in the morning in order to take the bus to get out to Camp Mercury I guess it was. We had breakfast and the briefing, then you sat around and waited til the wind died down and maybe it wouldn't

die down, then they'd say, "No shot today. Come back tomorrow." It was a mess.

COL LASHER: Lose much money?

MG LASHER: Nay, I didn't have much to lose. But it was quite an experience to see all these things. That howitzer they had, I guess it was--not a howitzer, it was a mobile rifle, a big rifle.

COL LASHER: 280 mm gun, rifle type.

MG LASHER: Yeah. Some of these air drops they would fly a grid, these fast airplanes would come over and--maybe 10 of them would fly several hundred yards apart, form a grid and then the bomber with the missile would come by and fly that grid and at certain coordinates of that grid would drop the bomb.

COL LASHER: Oh, I see. The planes that came over before hand had left smoke trails of some kind of another.

MG LASHER: Right, and of course, ground zero designated and then they had all sorts of things planted in the desert. We had a railroad tank car, for instance, so many feet from ground zero. I could see the effects of that and tanks and various types of armor which were all placed at predesignated points from ground zero. Then on the tower shots they had houses, they had a two-story frame house. They had a brick house. They had a slab type house built up. Actually we saw the building--that particular house. The floor was a slab floor, concrete and only one room on it--had anything on the slab and that was the bathroom, They had the bathroom as a shelter in the little slab house then they built the rest of the house around it. It was protected. It had lead in it and heavy reinforced walls for the bathroom and for that size house it was a big

bathroom; but nevertheless it was the only thing standing after the shock. The rest of the house was just--oh, gone--and here this bathroom was sticking up out of the middle of the desert. I learned from this that if you're properly prepared, the effects of the atomic blast, unless you're close to ground zero, is not nearly as horrible as--you can be well protected from it if you take the proper precautions. This was in the book. It got printed, but it never got cirrculated because about this time Walter Winchell got after it. He was a columnist for one of the New York papers. The Mirror, I think, and he attacked Truman because apparently he got hold of a copy and in there there was a--I don't know what we called them, but block inspectors. So if there was an alert, this inspector, one of his duties was to see that everyone had their blackout curtain closed and that no light escaped from the homes.

COL LASHER: Like a warden.

MG LASHER: Yeah, block warden. And he attacked it that these were gestopo agents of Truman's. The President then had to decide that this was maybe premature and he sat on it and never did send the thing out. It should have been. Just no question in my mind. My particular part in this was how do you evacuate these places, after the effects or before, if you have sufficient warning. We had various ways of getting them outside the middle cities--center cities.

COL LASHER: That's assuming that there's much left to get them out with.

MG LASHER: After the fact.

COL LASHER: And with the panic and the riot...

MG LASHER: Well, you'd have to go elsewhere to bring the equipment in to get them and these would all be casualties probably. But then if you

did have any warning at all, how to quickly do this. Of course, it involved all sorts of things such as extra gasoline, keeping it in your car, your garage, all the time so you could move out. The envisioning of the horrible traffic tie ups that would occur was almost impossible for a solution. It's bad enough now when somebody gets a flat tire on a throughway and he ties up the whole thing for miles with just one car. You can imagine here and there you have a lot of such occurrences. Pretty soon you wouldn't move at all.

COL LASHER: So, the book was never published; the result of that study was never published.

MG LASHER: Yes.

COL LASHER: That's too bad. Was this at the same time--did you not also have a job as the assistant to the SECDEF at the same time.

MG LASHER: Well, that was it. That's what the military were. You see Hopley, Russ Hopley was a civilian and he was an assistant to the Secretary of Defense. That was my official designation. No, as a matter of fact we put in a lot of time. We worked hard on it, and within a year after Mr. Hopley went home and resumed his job and having found out that the President wasn't going to publish it, he had a heart attack and died. Whether there's any connection between the failure to publish this thing and his death or not I don't know. But he didn't live long after that. So, this was in 1948 you see, and I was doing that when I graduated from the Industrial College. As soon as that task was finished, and the book went to press, I was then assigned to the Joint Military Transportation Committee which was one of the organizational arms of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. It was composed of three

Army, three Air Force, three Navy files and secretariate with an Army file in it. That was Bill Henderson. Colonel Henderson was what you call the secretary of the committee I think. Well, I want to go back here just a moment and bring something else out. After I got settled in this last tour in the Chief's office that I mentioned, the Department of Defense had been set up. And of course, one of the things that had to be decided in all of this was the distribution of tasks amongst the three services. Who would do what, so forth. For instance, we had Army transport service and it was pretty well decided during this period actually, that the Navy should run the ocean vessels. It makes sense. Well, the area in which I was particularly interested in was the purchase of commercial transportation for the services or for the Army; however they wanted to set it up. I felt that a great deal could be done in this area. So, I negotiated with a captain in the Navy about this and his name was Mullany and we got along very well. We had several sessions and it was finally agreed that we would take over all this commercial transportation activity. I took it back to . . . pretty near in final form--to General Heileman, who was then Chief of Transportation. He said, "We don't want any part of that. We don't want any part of the Navy's--that's a lot of stuff." Well, I talked to him for 2 or 3 or 4 days to get him to change his mind. I think I failed. I certainly failed in changing his mind and I failed in presenting the case properly because it was a very important thing. He didn't understand. He was a field artillerymen and he just didn't understand it. That's all there was to it.

COL LASHER: Let me get this straight. This was for the procurement of

civilian contracted transportation of one kind or another, including ocean surface, air, and rail . . .

MG LASHER: Including surface, air, and rail and including filling the space of military owned ships and airplanes. In other words, you're ordered to go to Germany. Well, your orders are processed through us. We give you a routing and it may be routed commerically or it may be routed on an Air Force airplane or you might go on a Navy transport. Now, we didn't have enough of any of those things to take care of everybody, but we would use military owned--government owned transportation first and requirements beyond that. For instance, if you had to get to Europe by a certain time and we couldn't get commercial surface, you couldn't get Navy surface or Air Force air, we'd would ticket you on a commercial vessel or a commercial airline. It was the procurement of this space, not just commercial space, but all space and Heileman wouldn't just go along with me on this and I had it. I know Mullany was willing, the Navy was willing to do it. It had a great impact later on in some of the things I had to do which will come later. But I was very disappointed in this and it was probably--I've always felt that if an individual goes to his superior with a good idea and he doesn't sell it, 90 percent of the time it's his fault because here General Heileman was, as I say, an artillery man and had been all his life. He just didn't understand much about logistics except getting shells up to the guns from the reserve positions. He didn't know how the shells got to a half mile behind his guns. He didn't care how they did.

COL LASHER: How come he got in the position he was in as the Chief of Transportation.

MG LASHER: I don't know. I didn't put him in as Chief of Transportation. Period. Period. So, this brings us into, well into 1948, and my assignment to the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The way Mr. Forrestal had set this up; before he would review any papers that came up through the chain of the Joint Chiefs they had to be unanimously agreed to by the individual services. Well, this was a very difficult thing to do and every position paper, if they did not agree, each service had its own position paper as a back-up as to why it wanted what it wanted and why it should be their way instead of somebody else's way. There was a lot of give and take but nevertheless--by the time you got an unanimous paper, unanimously agreed to paper, it wasn't worth very much.

COL LASHER: It wasn't a problem any more either.

MG LASHER: That's right.

COL LASHER: May gone away. Yes, they've since changed that. They no longer have to have a unanimous paper. It's just that the Chief of the Joint Chiefs has his position and all the three services may file an objection or their own position if they wish, but the Chief speaks for them.

MG LASHER: When does he--he has all these secretariates make good research on the problem first, doesn't he?

COL LASHER: Certainly.

MG LASHER: Close up the same way.

COL LASHER: But the insistance on an unanimous paper, because of your experience in these things being so watered down or taking so long to get anything that everybody would agree on. It was realized that this was a mistake. So, they don't do it that way anymore.

MG LASHER: I had three Air Force fellows there in this thing. Two were lieutenant colonels and one was a major. So, the spokesmen for the Air Force was one of those lieutenant colonels, the senior lieutenant colonel, and he just wasn't worth six bits. I was so disgusted with him. He was an obstructionist and a theorist and worst of all an awful talker. He would always have to keep the floor and go into these long dissertations on something he didn't know anything about. I got to the point where I finally went up to see his boss. His name was Farthing, General Farthing, who had his hand on these three guys of the Joint Chiefs just as Heileman did in our area for the Army. General Farthing was a--he liked to act like a tough, rough old cog, you know. He was in many respects, but the other fellow his name was--the guy I wanted was a second ranking Air Force--lieutenant colonel also. He had come in from civilian life and had a very fine academic record and a master's degree at the University of Illinois. He was a very quiet person, talked only when he had something to say, said it in a few words and very forcefully. He could present the Air Force point of view far better than his senior. I explained all this to General Farthing and he listened and then he blew his top. He said, "Okay, okay. You can have him. I got a place just fit for him and the minute you designate him as the Air Force spokesman, I'll transfer him out." Of course, he knew that would clear him.

COL LASHER: So, he was fighting the problem. He didn't . . .

MG LASHER: Oh, he knew. He had the other kid--the other kid would eat whatever he was told to eat, you know. And had him completely dominated and--Hedland was the one I wanted now. Earl Hedland is presently the UN commander in Turkey, a three-star officer. And he deserves it. I tried to get him into North American Car Corp. at one time. (I was President.)

COL LASHER: Oh, really?

MG LASHER: Yeah, I had this much admiration for him. He was also chief for one of the big single manager jobs before he went to Turkey. It wasn't--yes, it was this subsistance job I think. I don't know what they call it--Joint Procurement. That's what it was. Of all things, everything medical supplies, subsistance, and clothing and--tremendous big thing--One of the single big managers. And then he went to Turkey. But that's another story.

COL LASHER: It wasn't DSA, Defense Supply Agency?

MG LASHER: Yeah, that's what it was. And he got his third star there. Defense Supply Agency, that's what it was. The whole smear. It was a tremendous job and I think he did very well with it. I guess this is his last job. I wasn't in a position to make any offer to him at that point in time, but he would have done well in civilian life. And he had about eight children. This was one of the levers I used to--I said, "Gee, you got to educate these kids. I don't know if you even on--you certainly can't on a one or two-star. Even on a three or four you're going to have a hard time." But he decided against it and he was looking for more stars when--he was a brigadier when I approached him.

COL LASHER: I see. Well, he got two more.

MG LASHER: But he told me, I went down for his--they threw a party for him for his--as he phased out of DSA. I went down to Washington special to attend this. I was invited. He apparently put me on the list. So, I went down. He admitted that he didn't know whether that was the right decision he made 8 years ago or not. But then there's no sense in looking it over your shoulder once you made a decision. What the hell. So, you

see the Air Force position was Farthing's position that's all there was to it. And Farthing's position might or might not have been Air Force position but he was crusty and awfully hard to get around anything that was at all controversial. --Very stubborn. He wanted his position--and the other guy's name was Hubbard. His boy was Hubbard. Hubbard would always be up there getting guidance from him. Instead of trying to take it on the factual--what was best for the Department of Defense. It was always what was best for the Air Force.

COL LASHER: Well, that's been one of the major objections to the Joint Chiefs even today was this parochialism that comes through so often.

MG LASHER: Yes, well so--of course, in the early times of the Joint Military Transportation Committee there was organizational problems as well as the problems that were thrown at us for solution or recommendation rather. It was time consuming as all new installations are. We soon were over taken by the crisis which seemed to be brewing in Korea. This was known and we were making plans like crazy there in Joint Military Transportation Committee on Korean activities.

COL LASHER: Now, when was this? Do you remember?

MG LASHER: This is in '49.

COL LASHER: Late '49?

MG LASHER: Late '49-50.

COL LASHER: And early '50, because when you mentioned this . . .

MG LASHER: Maybe more into '50, probably.

COL LASHER: Probably. You mentioned this--kind of surprises me that, with my knowledge of the Korean War, that you all knew and were planning for any kind of action or reaction or emergency of any kind having to do

with Korea. Because prior to the Korean War, to the North Koreans coming over into South Korea, both Secretary Marshall, Secretary of State, and General MacArthur in separate speeches to--and I don't recall at the moment . . . the organization at the moment but they were public, well known speeches,-- drew a line of American interest in the Western Pacific, and it did not include Korea. It went from the Alaskan chain to the Kuriles, to the Japanese Islands, down through Taiwan, Okinawa-Taiwan, and on down to the Philippines.

MG LASHER: It included Japan.

COL LASHER: It included Japan. It specifically excluded Korea and there is a great deal of speculation as to whether or not, because both people at different times, but within a few weeks of each other, had specifically drawn out a line of interest so to speak. Well they mentioned, "This is where we feel is our sphere of interest." And left it out. But this invited what later happened.

MG LASHER: Well, when was this? When did these speeches occur?

COL LASHER: Either late '49 or '50, I'm not sure of which--1949. Yes.

MG LASHER: Well, of course, you know, the 39th Parrallel there was drawn somewhere along there too. And the guy responsible for this was "Abe" Lincoln, Sr. He actually drew that line.

COL LASHER: Your classmate?

MG LASHER: Yeah.

COL LASHER: When?

MG LASHER: At least he's blamed on it. I don't know just when, but certainly it was before June of July of '50.

COL LASHER: Well. was it not when the Russians excepted the surrender of

the Japanese in the northern Korea and we accepted the surrender of the Japanese in southern Korea. I think it was drawn up right then or by communist insistence shortly after.

MG LASHER: Maybe so, but that shows that we had interest in the southern part of the Peninsula.

COL LASHER: Oh, yes at that time. You know there was no real reason for us not to accept surrender for the whole of Korea except a political affair, political deal made with Stalin.

MG LASHER: So, this indicated that, at that time at least . . .

COL LASHER: At that time we did.

MG LASHER: We did have interest in half of the peninsula at least.

COL LASHER: And the only thing that amazes me about your statement that you were actually working on--anticipating some trouble, let me put it that way I guess is a good a way to put it, surprises me.

MG LASHER: Well, the southern part was trying to be a democratic regime--republic--and the north was completely, of course, dominated by the communist.

COL LASHER: I understand that.

MG LASHER: And I suppose other--where there was such a sharp line, plans were being made otherwise as well. We make plans, you know, against the Red enemy. Who the Red enemy was--I found myself being sent to Korea and had some background because of these plans I'd done in the Joint Chiefs of Staff when I got over there.

COL LASHER: What sort of plans?

MG LASHER: Oh, I knew what the transportation network was like there, and I knew about what the situation was as far as transportation was concerned and some of the troubles that involved in this. This was a

Japanese railroad you know. And none of the high officials of the railroad were Korean. They were Japanese. When the war was over, of course, they all left. And all we had left were switchmen, firemen, and engineers, no management personnel on the railroad and from the time of the surrender to the time we got in there, which was only a matter of a few years, 5 years, Koreans were floundering around trying to operate this railroad properly. There were problems there.

COL LASHER: Oh, I don't find it surprising that they were having trouble operating it correctly, maintaining it, probably also having a little trouble . . .

MG LASHER: Yes, quite a bit as a matter of fact.

COL LASHER: When you were talking about plans, you, I suppose, were trying to assess capability under a military situation, right? Did you envision any sort of a situation as it actually happened?

MG LASHER: No. Although strangely enough we were working til 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning on some of these things. Now why were we working on . . .

COL LASHER: Yes, why was it that urgent?

MG LASHER: Yes.

COL LASHER: That's very interesting. I wish we knew more.

MG LASHER: Yes, I probably worked more hours in those few months I was a JCS than I had most anywhere else except at the beginning of the war. And then, of course, that early summer I got orders for Korea.

COL LASHER: And the war started on the 27th of June and you were there what? The first week in August.

MG LASHER: September.

COL LASHER: Oh, I thought it was August.

MG LASHER: Latter part August. Of course, I went over. I went to Tokyo.

That's where I was ordered to, the UN command and was greeted by General MacArthur. I don't know why. Of course, as a possible transportation officer on his staff, I suppose it was proper that I was taken in and introduced to him. It was a very cordial introduction. I assure you he apparently was able to make everybody he met feel as though he had been waiting to meet them for years and welcomed me with open arms and so forth. It turned out that I was the senior transportation officer in the whole UN command. . . .

COL LASHER: I think you mentioned that before that the man who was there was older .

MG LASHER: Did I mention that?

COL LASHER: Yes.

MG LASHER: Oh, yes, when we were talking about promotion. And I opted to go to Korea instead of staying in the top command an I was assigned as transportation officer of the Eighth Army. Walton Walker was the commanding general at the time. I went over by water one night in a black out.

COL LASHER: From Sasebo?

MG LASHER: From Sasebo. And had quite a ride in the Yellow Sea or whatever sea that is between there at the other end world.

COL LASHER: I had a similar experience about 2 years later.

MG LASHER: Did you go across?

COL LASHER: Yes. Not just that way. Went through to Tokyo instead of boat and then went down by rail to Sasebo and by a boat from Sasebo to Pusan.

MG LASHER: Under the tunnel--the tunnel under the straits there?

COL LASHER: Yes.

MG LASHER: Well, of course, we were--Eighth Army by that time was pretty well back into the so-called "Pusan Perimeter" and things were going from bad to worse. Most of the Eighth Army staff was the staff that had been in the Eighth Army staff in Tokyo was now the staff of the Eighth Army in Korea. And they were all told to bring a minimum of uniform because they'd only be there a few days. So, most of them had just a hand satchel with toilet things and a change of uniform. Well, it wasn't that way, of course, and we--things got tighter and tighter. There was no question about this as time went along. I couldn't get very far out to look at anything in the way--I did it mostly by jeep. The perimeter was so small--the area we occupied so small, but we were--we had made plans for evacuation. They were all set.

COL LASHER: To evacuate entirely?

MG LASHER: Yes. It was quite an experience for me. We had a lot of . . . I had--for the railroad now, their roads were real poor. The road weren't very good and very few. The rail was good. The rail had been built by Japanese. It was a double track standard gauge railroad and was in quite good shape relatively, compared to what I thought it was going to be, because the Japanese had been gone for so long.

COL LASHER: Did it go right up the middle of the peninsula?

MG LASHER: Pretty much--not the middle. You see you went from Pusan to Taesan which is a little bit west and then you almost went directly north to Seoul, Yongdan-Po on the south side of the river.

COL LASHER: Were there any spurs?

MG LASHER: Oh, yes. There was one down in--yeah, there were several spurs.

COL LASHER: So, it was not just a single track like the one that goes across Siberia--use to go across Siberia.

MG LASHER: No.

COL LASHER: This was a little better--a net, a net. A real net I suppose.

MG LASHER: Yes, and as I say it was double track. As you know it's pretty mountainous there and pretty--and some of these river beds, river valleys are pretty deep. Sometimes they have no water in them at all and sometimes they have rushing torrents. But everywhere there was a bridge necessary, or everywhere there was a tunnel necessary, there were two. There were two bridges instead of one bridge carrying one, or two bores of a tunnel, each carrying only one track. And in the bushes or--the one end of the bridge there would be girders already cut, stashed away in case the bridge went out. It was entirely, therefore, a military railroad on the part of the Japanese and a very well built railroad. And this helped a great deal because I remember many instances; but one that North Koreans had used one of the--they didn't have any equipment any railroad equipment. They couldn't use the railroad to any extent. So, they used the . . .

COL LASHER: The North Koreans.

MG LASHER: The North Koreans. They used one of the bores of one of the tunnels as an ammo dump to stash ammo in. We knew this. Our intelligence brought it back and the Air Force was doing this skip bombing and they were doing it pretty well. They skipped one up one of these bores. Of course, all you had left of that bore was molten--hardened molten steels, and we had a hell of a time getting that thing open. But you can put a switch over at the other bore at each end, you slow down and still continuing to remain a double track line. And another thing I remember about that railroad was that after having been around this business for so long I finally discovered

how very important the water was to the steam locomotive. This is what they had over there. Because most of the water towers where they took on water had been bombed out by us or in some few instances destroyed by the North Koreans. So, we had to have pumps, put them on the tenders with hose enough to get down to the--so that they could stop at a bridge and get down to creek and pump water into the tenders, mostly dirt, of course. You'd go down right to the bottom and suck up sand and mud. We had trouble with those things, but they had to stop. It delayed the movement of these things tremendously--the trains tremendously. The coal was very poor. It was brown coal, local coal. We imported some from Japan, but that wasn't much better. We always had trouble, inefficiency of the locomotives. One of the very first things I did was to order some diesel locomotives which were fairly new in the United States, and I think we got eight or ten c[illegible] them in one shipment. We found out that that one locomotive--you see it took about a carload, this awful coal, to service a locomotive,-- a train load I mean. And a train was about 20 carloads long and that 20 cars of that brown coal was comparable to one carload of diesel fuel for a diesel locomotive as far as what it could pull at a given time,--the tonnage it could pull. So, you see we saved quite a bit by those diesels; and of course by the time I left, I knew very well we were going to leave those diesel locomotives over there--give them to the Koreans. I recommended against it, but we did just the same. I'm sure they're all gone to hell anyway because their maintance was very poor at that time anyway.

COL LASHER: No, I doubt that it is. The Korean army has done extremely well in maintaining the things that we left signal-wise for them. I think you would be surprised. . .

MG LASHER: Well, could be. That's not the way I looked at it in 1951.

COL LASHER: No, no. I either with respect to communications. I thought they'd, you know, they would never maintain them correctly.

MG LASHER: Of course, at that point in time, I think it was that point in time, General Walker had a conference on just what to do.

COL LASHER: This was early September?

MG LASHER: Well, probably in September, early October. There was a big conference one evening, and he asked for recommendations of his three corps commanders. We had a Marine division in one part of the line and the only reserves we had was transportation. We pulled men out of the line at one place to go to a more heavily threatened part of the line in another place. The only way we could transfer them was--they weren't actually reserves they were just--this was the only way we could boost up a danger point. We weren't lacking in supplies, but we weren't plush in supplies either. They were coming over too slowly, and we had no replacements at all. This was before any system of replacements was . . . had been set up and the morale was down. All three of the corps commanders recommended that we fight to the last ditch and assume the withdrawal position that had been designated and take a defensive posture. General Walker listened to all this. . .

COL LASHER: And withdraw from the peninsula though?

MG LASHER: Well, that was the inference that enventually, and I think psycsologically most everybody had one foot on the gangplank. So, General Walker thanked everybody and we went home I guess about 11 o'clock. The next morning the orders came out for attack, the plan of attack, and he had not accepted the recommendation of his corps commanders. We attacked and

the first thing you know we were half way to Seoul. This was--gee-whiz--and we're able to move our headquarters to Taejon about 50 miles further north. This was . . .

COL LASHER: Personal decision of his without. . .

MG LASHER: Well, I don't know whether all his, but of course, he had a few close advisors amongst his general staff; and they probably had a hand in it. One of his close advisors and who had been with him in the XX Corps in Europe was Bill Collier, who was then a brigadier general, and with whom I served in Fort Ontario many years ago. So, I could get the ear of the general through Collier whenever I wanted to. I had a rather stodgy G-4 to report to and I crossed him up two or three times.

COL LASHER: The G-4?

MG LASHER: Yeah, because he was a doughboy, see? And this is one of the paradoxes of our system that we get an artillerymen or a doughboy dictating to people who are at least half expert in the certain technical area. But they play by the book, and they play it too safe. That was the case here. So, I think that Walker primarily made the decision. The attack was set up for a certain day in the future and here was the disposition of the available troops, and we set out and broke through, pushed them back. You know we went up and down that peninsula like a yo-yo. Got all the way up to Pyongyang at one time and had our Eighth Army headquarters up there, Pyongyang?

COL LASHER: Pyongyang.

MG LASHER: Pyongyang, the capital of North Korea. I personally have gone up--I did a lot of reconnaissance work by air. You have to--if there was any trouble anywhere, you'd have to go there in either fixed wing or

helicopter. I used it quite a bit. I got as far north I think as Sinuiju which is almost to the Yalu River. I was in sight of the Yalu River. We didn't occupy that territory, but for planning purposes, if we could have gotten to the Yalu, we'd had to know something about it. We had a great deal of reconstruction work of facilities that we had bombed out ourselves. As we went south, we bombed it so they couldn't use it. Then when we went north again, we had to rebuild it. We had a strike on the part of the railroad employees at one point which I had to negotiate and we settled for an extra half pound of rice a day or something like that. But I got the petition of the railroad employees, the petition for increased pay in a note signed in blood.

COL LASHER: Oh, really?

MG LASHER: Did you ever see that? I have it framed hanging on a wall.

COL LASHER: You had it at home. No, I--yes, I guess I have seen it.

MG LASHER: One thing that was always bothersome in Korea too, were the roving bands of outlaws and bandits that were all over the place. Both North and South which had affiliations with neither and had nothing on their minds except raiding villages and outposts for whatever gain they could get. It was almost as bad keeping them down as it was keeping the North Koreans off our back. So, one of the things that was organized was a provincial police force to take care of this aside and apart from the army. . . I didn't have anything to do with that, but similarily we had very difficult positions through some of that mountainous region which we couldn't get to with anything but mountain goats really. Even mules. We tried to get mules over there, and there weren't enough mules in the United States . . . to that extent. But that was one of the partial solutions.

Another one which came up was using humans to carry supplies. We organized what we finally called the "A frame" brigade. Now you remember what an "A frame" was?

COL LASHER: Yes, I do.

MG LASHER: It was a pack frame to carry on the back, to carry supplies and we saw so many of them with wood, charcoal, stuff.

COL LASHER: But they carried almost anything.

MG LASHER: They carried almost anything, yes. So, we organized a brigade, a provincial brigade of sorts of Koreans and we brought them in under duress, of course, and I suppose we let them out of jail and everything else. We put them through a short course of sorts, had uniforms made for them, deloused them, cut their hair, and drilled them a little bit so that they'd have some semblance of cohesion and formation and would assign a company--by compaines. They had officers and so forth and we'd assigned companies into these difficult regions high in the mountains and so forth to carry supplies of all sorts.

COL LASHER: Were they self-sufficient with respect to cooks and things like that?

MG LASHER: Oh, yes. They all had to be set up.

COL LASHER: They weren't satellited on somebody else for . . .

MG LASHER: Oh, no. They carried their own and every company had so many pots for kim chee--that's about all they ate--rice. There was a colonel of infantry assigned to me to organize this because it was transportation. It worked out very well. I don't know how many 5-gallon cans of gasoline they could carry on one of those, but it was beyond belief how much one man could carry on one of those A-frames. They accepted the role, though perhaps

grudgingly, but their service was of considerable value. Another thing we had to set up was--well, one thing we got rather early--I had nothing to do with; but of course, it had been ordered long before--it had been requisitioned--long before I got there--was hospital cars. Boy, we certainly got some beautiful hosptial cars. Boy! Great big long windows in them so that the convalescents could look out the windows as the train went along and operating and all sorts of medical facilities on these trains. Air conditioned. The only air-conditioned stuff we had.

COL LASHER: From America?

MG LASHER: From the States. Oh, yes. Apparently they must have been built under high speed over-time work because we got them while I was there and they were beautiful cars. Well, they were big, heavy, great big Pullman cars. I think Pullman probably built them. I don't know . . remember about that. So, we had two hospital trains. We had one coming south with wounded in it and we had a couple of hospitals down in Pusan as well as the S.S. Hope, the steamship. That's a pretty good sized hospital in itself and then there are a couple other civilian hospitals that we used. The trains would come down three and discharge and go up empty. So, we'd have them empty going north and a full one coming south most of the time. But it couldn't get off the mainline. The branchlines just weren't heavy enough to carry this heavy equipment and . . .

COL LASHER: Maybe some of the turns might have been little too narrow too or a little too tight?

MG LASHER: Yes, for the big cars. These four wheel cars--most of these four wheel cars could turn on a dime. The tracks were built for that only. Well, then in order to get the wounded from where they were wounded and

evacuated over to a railhead where the hosptial train could pick them up and take them back with the seriously wounded, we had to do something. Well, we were doing it in these old ambulances we use to have, buses and everything else.

COL LASHER: How about helicopters? Did they use them?

MG LASHER: Well, not much. You see we only had those two seated helicopters.

COL LASHER: But didn't they have--Well, yes they did have some. I remember a place for a stretcher or two under neath, but not much.

MG LASHER: Not much, there weren't enough of them.

COL LASHER: . . . many in. It wasn't very satisfactory compared to the Vietnamese.

MG LASHER: Well, what I did was--I just happened to know the fact that there was a company in the United States that manufactured a gadget you could put on an automobile and drive the automobile on the rail. Flange wheel attachment called "Autorail." I think it was Evans Products that made it. So, I requisitioned them for buses and put them on buses and then we tore out the seats of buses and put litters in there. So, they could go not only on the light rail rail spurs, but could get off the rail spurs and go even further into the areas involved. They could go off rails, pick up the wounded, get over to the rail, get on the rail and go down to the rail head to meet the hospital barracks.

COL LASHER: How did they do that? Did they ride on the flanged wheels, the steel wheels?

MG LASHER: Yeah. Well, both. The traction was provided by the rubber tires, the movement traction. The guidance was by the flanged wheels. The propulsion and the braking both were rubber and guidance, steering--you can't steer. You don't have to steer.

COL LASHER: You do when you get off the track. That's what I was thinking about.

MG LASHER: Well, they lifted up. You cranked up the flanged wheels and just drove off the track. Of course, you had to have a space. You had to have a space which was filled in like a crossing, and you just went up on that, turned around and went length-wise, got on the track, let your flanged wheels down, and off you went. Real good. I thought that was real smart. I was real proud of myself for thinking about those things, but I'd seen them used--they still make them for big warehouse complexes where they have both rail and truck movement within these areas. So, they can get right off the rail and go be used for other things. So, that was a pretty good thing. We got the evacution of wounded down to a pretty good science by the time I left there. I had one other problem. That was there when I got there on the staff of the Eighth Army transportation group. A Reserve colonel by the name of Carr, C-A-R-R, who was from the New Haven Railroad. He was the officer in charge on helping the railroads, getting the railroads going. But unfortunately he did more harm than good because he tried to teach the Koreans American methods of running a railroad rather than trying to help the Koreans improve their methods which is the only one they knew. Of course, the first thing he had was the language barrier and the second was a built in reluctance to do much of anything any way that they'd always been doing all their lives. So, the type of service we got was not very good by the time I got there. But it was fortunate he got sick and we had to evacuate him to the hospital ship Hope. So, I suggested that we send him home and give him a Legion of Merit which we did. He was a little disappointed because he was bucking for a star and the minute I got

there and he knew I was going to be big time in transportation officer and he was going to be under me, he knew his chance for a star was no good. He'd just as soon go home anyway. So, it all worked out very, very well. So, then I had in the organization an older lieutenant colonel who had been in Korea right after the Japanese left, and he was an old Korean hand. He liked the Koreans, the Koreans liked him and trusted him. So, I made him--I put him in Carr's job. His name was McLellan, M-C-L-E-L-L-A-N, and he was from the Coastline Railroad. He just was flexible enough to allow the Koreans to do the way they--what they wanted the way they wanted--not what they wanted, but do things the way they wanted to do them. He just told them what he wanted to be done. He setup train schedule, for instance, and he told them he wanted them to maintain those schedules, to depart and arrive at the designated times. He saw to it that they did. Of course, we had to have, from time to time, if not all the time, we had to have soldiers riding shotgun on the cabs of locomotives, mostly because of these bandits I was talking about just a moment ago. Never knew what they'd do and the stealing was just out of this world. Mostly by this type of people and alot by the civilians themselves. They didn't have anything and we had so many PX supplies and not many places to put them and the places we had to put them were not too secure as building. We couldn't spare too many guards and if you put Korean guards on, they'll steal just as much as anybody else. That was a tremendous problem we had and in order to prevent a train from being hijacked we just had to put guards on them to protect them.

COL LASHER: Yes, we had the same problem and they even have it today. But I guess, if anything worse turned worse after you left rather than better

which you think would have been. More presence of Americans but it's still terrible.

MG LASHER: Of course, many people have tried to compare the Korean experience with the Vietnam experience and in my opinion there's one big, big difference. It could be the one major difference in my opinion and that is the political side of each action. We had Syngman Rhee in Korea and he was a father figure to everybody. They rallied around him. They believed in him and whatever he said was gospel, law and everything else.

COL LASHER: He was almost like Ho Chi Minh to the North Vietnamese.

MG LASHER: Yes, or Mao to the Chinese. So, there was no trouble there and he was approachable. He spoke English very well. He had an English speaking wife, and you could get the cooperation you needed from him. Because he had no fear of his prerogatives being usurped. He was the king over there. In Vietnam, you just had the opposite. There's been a continual political instability there that still continues. We had a lot to do with creating it. We didn't help it certainly. I think that had we had a more stable political situation in Vietnam this thing would have been solved a lot more easily and far more quickly, and it's even being carried now into the police action--The peace negotiations I mean--It looks now that there's going to be two separate truces made with North Vietname, one by the United States and one by Korea--by South Vietnam too. But it was quite a marked difference and I think it's one of the major differences in the two actions. Of course, General Walker as commanding general after we finally broke out and got up at Seoul and established our headquarters in Seoul. One Sunday morning he was going to church in his jeep, he drove his jeep about like Parnelli would, or urged

his driver to, and they had an accident and he was killed in that accident. He was succeeded by General Ridgway, Matthew B. Ridgway. I will never forget the morning General Ridgway reported for duty--not reported for duty but came into his first conference. We had a first morning briefing which we had every morning about 7:30 I guess it was in the theater. The procedure in such a briefing had been carried out as it had always been in previous mornings and General Ridgway very patiently listened to all the situations as they were reported by various sectors and battalions we had, what stages they were in for our next actions. Most of them were defensive. We'd been through quite a bit. So, he waited til everybody was through and said, "That's fine gentlemen. Now, I'd like to hear your plans for attack." There was a dead silence and it turned out that there were none. Just weren't any.

COL LASHER: None at all?

MG LASHER: No. Well, he said, "Very well, that will be all." We all worked all night that night and all day the next day and all the next day and all the next night to get something out. Of course, he briefed out the general outlines of what he felt was necessary and the staff was really busy believe me. One thing with which I was--well, two or three things that first time I saw Ridgway was as he strode down the aisle to come into the briefing at the beginning of the briefing. He's got a great big barreled chest anyway and he had on combat fatigues. All the complements of the hand grenades strung up and down his chest made his chest look even bigger and he takes great big long strides and he strode that--there was no question as to who the commander was in that room. Then as he sat through this, I use the word patiently, because I'm sure he had to control

himself to be patient as he sat through all this guff. A lot of it was statistics as to losses and gains, . . .

COL LASHER: Court-martial rates.

MG LASHER: Yeah, and then when we got all through and got no answer to his question about plans for attack, how calm he was. He just dismissed everybody. He said, "Very well, that'll be all." But there was just no question about how he felt. We knew that we were in for it.

COL LASHER: He may have had a word or two with the chief of staff afterwards.

MG LASHER: Oh, he certainly did, and everybody was told what they were supposed to do. Your office will stay open until you're released and we never were released. And directives came down for this, that and the other and we all went to work.

COL LASHER: Did you get a new G-3?

MG LASHER: No, I don't think so. We had a pretty good G-3, John somebody. I've forgotten. Classmate of mine was in G-3 all the time I was there, a fellow by the name of Bill Bullock, B-U-L-L-O-C-K. He was an artilleryman. G-2 was Tom Conley, C-O-N-L-E-Y. He was a classmate of mine. He was G-2 most of the time. The G-3 had a game leg. He had an automobile accident, and he went around with a cane. But he still stayed on duty.

COL LASHER: Before we go much further maybe now is a good time to ask you if you remember enough of General Walker to comment for prosperity on his personality, how he was to work with, any particular anecdote that you might have on him before leaving and moving on to your tour under Ridgway.

MG LASHER: Well, of course, here I was a technical staff officer in the office of the assistant chief of staff, G-4, and actually had little contact with General Walker. I was privileged at Taegon and at Seoul also and in Pyongyang to eat at the general's mess. This was very nice because they had planes set up to bring in fresh fruits and vegetables from Japan. They were most of this"hyper-botanic"stuff, so the grub was pretty good. Of course, I was pretty junior amongst all the staff, and so I spoke only when spoken to generally. So, I really didn't have much contact and not always was the commanding general at the mess. But I remember one thing--of course, there's lots ot stories about General Walker, in Japan before the outbreak of the Korean thing, and Mrs. Walker and the comparison between Mrs. Walker and Mrs. MacArthur. How they acted in the commissaries and the post exchanges.

COL LASHER: Oh, that's interesting.

MG LASHER: Oh, yes. Mrs. Walker always insisted on going to the front of the line the minute she got anywhere there was a line. In the commissary.

COL LASHER: Well, her husband's rank.

MG LASHER: Yes. Mrs. MacArthur was standing in line with her market basket over her elbow and chit-chat with all the Japanese women who were in the line with her or whoever was in the line, enlisted wives or what-not. Very much--I never saw this happen. Don't misunderstand me--Most of those guys on the Eighth Army staff were Eighth Army in Japan and they got this from their wives before the Korean thing ever started. Then over there-Of course, General Walker was an apostle of General Patton. General Patton was his idol, and it was quite strange that he also died in a jeep accident. The same way. And whether it was one of

the things that he ate because I understand that General Patton went around "hell bent for leather." He never went at a walk. It was a gallop whether it was afoot or on horse and if he was in a jeep it was with the accelerator on the floor board. This may be one of thing he got from General Patton, but anyway the story was that he was going very, very fast down the streets of Korea to get out of Seoul to go to church. That was that--had his accident. But oh, about . . . after we got up to Pyongyang and over took some of the apparatus of the North Koreans, one of the things that was left there was a Russian built automobile, big big black sedan. I think it was limosine as I remember, but it was a copy of one of our Cadillacs or Packards or something. I think it was a Packard. At whose instructions I don't know it was liberated none the less, and I had to set up a special train for it, special car and an escort to take it down to Pusan which we did, shipped it to Japan, and what happened to it over in Japan I don't know. Because shortly after that General Walker was killed and Mrs. Walker apparently had this car in her hand. They went to California I know that.

COL LASHER: Oh, it did?

MG LASHER: One thing about General Ridgway was that he seemed to be considerably more active than a General Walker. In other words, he had an entirely different modus operandi as commanding general of the Eighth Army and insisted on being always near the front lines. He was constantly checking on units all across the peninsula. We'd no more advance 4-5 miles then he wanted his headquarters moved to within a half mile of the front line whereas the headquarters of the Eighth Army was a far more static operation up to the time he got there than after he arrived because

it was moving all the time up and down, up and down. It kept the headquarters commandant pretty busy. He was a particular friend of mine. Gustaffson was the headquarters commandant and one of his officers was named Hurow, H-U-R-O-W, later became a brigadier general and is now retired. But Hurow was always griping because he said, "We're making plans to putting Army headquarters on wheels so that we can move it everytime General Ridgway wants it." But Ridgway was, for all his aggressive and rather stand-offish manner as a commanding general, in a case like this apparently kept track of what was going to because he recommended me for promotion to brigadier general and took the time to write a personal letter to General Collins thru C/S drawing his attention to his official recommendation and wrote a very complimentary letter to him. While it didn't get me a cup of coffee over in Korea while I was over there, I'm sure it didn't do any harm when my name came up a few years later. And then, of course, the difficulty that General MacArthur had with President Truman came upon us pretty quick. General MacArthur was relieved. Immediately General Ridgway went over to Tokyo.

COL LASHER: So, you didn't serve under . . .

MG LASHER: I didn't really see too much of him. It was too short a time and then Van Fleet came over. I saw much more of Van Fleet than I did of Ridgway.

COL LASHER: What are your impressions of Van Fleet?

MG LASHER: Oh, he was a doer too. Oh, yes. We built a bridge across the river between Yonyangpo and Seoul. We called it the "shoo-fly" because we bombed out the main bridge. When we opened it up, it was the first time a train had gone across there. General Van Fleet, the engineer officer,

and I were riding the cow-catcher. We had our picture taken with Syngman Rhee as we opened up that temporary bridge.

COL LASHER: Is that right?

MG LASHER: Yes, that was across the . . .

COL LASHER: The Han River?

MG LASHER: No,--yes, the Han, the Han. That's the river that runs through Seoul more or less. Yongdongpo is on the south bank and across from Seoul, and Seoul on the northside of the river. Of course, Inch-on is to the west where the Han flows into the sea. I remember in one instance, this was after the Inch-on landing and preparations were being made for the other pincer movement. We hadn't any transportation. We couldn't get all those troops from around the Seoul area to the east coast. Wonsan, wasn't it over there? But anyway we had a conference and my G-4, Stebans said, "It just can't be done. We don't have it." I had to brak in. I said, "We can. It can be done." I said, "We got some old tubs here. Some old LST's. Haven't any feeding facilities, haven't any toilet facilities. Haven't anything on them, but they can certainly carry a lot of troops. And it isn't a very long voyage. Supplement those with truck transportation and a little rail and we can move those people and a certain number of people in a certain number of days." Boy, Van Fleet said, "That's what I like to hear." He talked right at me. Well, we did use it that way. It was a successful movement. It was an unnecessary movement of course, but it was successful.

COL LASHER: Did you have much to do with the Inch-on landing itself?

MG LASHER: No, that was all that special force. It was planned in Tokyo.

COL LASHER: You were just really out of it.

MG LASHER: Yes. Well, as a matter of fact the Eighth Army was on its way north at the time. We had to stop; the Eighth Army had to stop before we got up there and allow room for the Inch-on landing. If we'd kept on going, we've have been beyond Seoul before they could have got in if we hadn't stopped.

COL LASHER: Well, that doesn't seem to make much sense having to stop in order to . . .

MG LASHER: Well, not too many people know this.

COL LASHER: Is that right?

MG LASHER: Sure. We had to hold up our advance.

COL LASHER: So that MacArthur could make a masterful strategic . . .

MG LASHER: Light his pipe and walk in on the mud flats.

COL LASHER: Really?

MG LASHER: Yeah. Believe me, everybody was mad as hell.

COL LASHER: Is that right?

MG LASHER: Sure, the Marines got the credit for this thing and there was no need for it. The North Koreans were on a run. We were moving them back just about as fast as we could pursue them. That's a matter of record.

COL LASHER: I didn't know that.

MG LASHER: It was a big double pincer movement I'll tell you. And we whooshed them around the other side, you know.

COL LASHER: Which is also unnecessary.

MG LASHER: There's a story about that. Well, the ROK, the Capital Division or the 1st Division, the ROK, I don't know which one it was-- Get the map out. I want to know what that town is where we went. It

was Wonsan where the pincer movement against the east coast where the landing was to be made. Well, the ROK, either the 1st Division or Capital Division, was already well north of Wonsan before this landing. I think even in the planning stages they were well north of it and had gone right up that coast. But the story goes--but I can't verify this--that when the troops moved on shore at Wonsan that Bob Hope was standing on the beach with a great big sign,"Welcome to Korea, courtesy of Bob Hope." I don't know if this is true, but it could be.

COL LASHER: It could be.

MG LASHER: Yeah. Somebody has to ask Bob Hope if that's the case. I'm sure he'd enjoy saying it was true if it was. But this just indicates that there really wasn't that necessity for this tremendous movement which has gotten all the big play so far as the Korean War is concern. Although I'm a great admirer of General MacArthur, and I go back to when I first met him there in his office in Tokyo. Why he made me feel as though he was just waiting to win the war until I got there, and I was all he needed. But one of the grave errors that was made was the lack of communication between the X Corps and the Eight Army. This was the X Corps, yes. We didn't communicate on our flanks. They had the sector toward the eastern part of the peninsula and we had larger sector to the west. X Corps? Wasn't it the X Corps?

COL LASHER: I believe so. That's the one that was mostly ROK.

MG LASHER: We did have that and this amounted to this. That the war in detail was being run from Tokyo by the UN commander rather than the senior officer in the field. So, it wouldn't have been half as bad if the liaison

had existed, but the proper liaison did not exist. Therefore, the X Corps commander was going off on his own and the Eighth Army commander was off on his own. Many times there were long wide gaps between the those two sectors, and you didn't know which one was where. So, how could you coordinate any concerted effort. And I lay this to General MacArthur. I think he--I'm sure he must have known this and yet he allowed it to go on.

COL LASHER: That's interesting.

MG LASHER: He should have forced it. He should have told those two commanders, "I'm going to run this war and here's the way you will co-ordinate." And whatever directions he gave to one, he gave to both. But this didn't happen and it never did while I was there. Trying to think of the name of that X Corps commander. Well, while we're waiting between tapes, you better look up the name of that X Corps commander and it'll come to me on my way home. But I think here we better knock it off for this time. I think maybe a couple of more tapes will finish this. Don't you?

COL LASHER: Yes, I think so.

MG LASHER: We'll try to make it in that. I think you better get some TDY and get out to Chicago and finish it out there.

SECTION 4

THIS IS TAPE NUMBER FOUR OF THE MILITARY HISTORY ORAL HISTORY OF MAJOR GENERAL E. C. R. LASHER.

COL LASHER: General Lasher, as we ended the last tape you were discussing your experiences in Korea and particularly the three commanding generals under which you served in Korea--Generals Walker, Ridgway, and Van Fleet--and also a mention of General MacArthur. Is there anything more that you would like to add to that at this time?

MG LASHER: Well, one or two general things I'd like to put in here so that I am completely understood. I believe all of them--MacArthur, Ridgway, Walker, and Van Fleet--all felt that their hands were tied. They could not do what they would have done had they been in complete command of the forces. They felt at various times North Korea could have been overrun and subjugated. I think this was true even after the Chinese got there. I know that Van Fleet, as I recorded before, had plans afoot to do just this and envelop the North Korean forces, but was withheld from doing so. I don't think it was Ridgway, who was then in Tokyo; I think it was Washington who said no.

COL LASHER: Do you believe that they all chafed as much under this political restriction as did MacArthur obviously?

MG LASHER: I think probably. There is no doubt degrees between the individuals concerned, but MacArthur, who was very senior, who held some very high posts in our whole military political life including command of the Philippines, Governor General of the Philippines and later on he was so successful in putting together a new government for Japan, that he felt more like an elder statesman than any of the other three younger men could have possibly have. Therefore, he felt that he was the one who must buck this thing in Washington. However, as it turned out Washington was basing

its decisions on, not necessarily things that MacArthur didn't know or didn't realize, but on matters far and away above the pure military. So I don't think that . . . certainly after MacArthur's difficulty, I don't think that either of the other three and, of course, Walker was dead, but the other two--it never entered their head to have tried to cross the President of the United States.

COL LASHER: Understandable.

MG LASHER: Now I would like to also mention that there were tactical as well as strategic restrictions. One of the very difficult ones, and I think a very important one, was the restriction of targets or bombing. Of course, the Yalu River separated the Korean Peninsula from the mainland, if you can state it that way, and Mukden was not far from the river on the far side and there were two or three very strategic places there. The Air Force was not allowed to bomb those bridges except vertical to them, at right angles to the bridge, making a very narrow and very transitory target as they flew over. Whereas had they been able to take their bombing with the bridge, they would have had a much better chance of success. However, this would have meant violating the air rights of Manchuria . . . of China, which was verboten, and this was a very difficult restriction. There is another thing that I would like to reiterate again, and incidentally, the commander of the X Corps was General Almond.

COL LASHER: Almond?

MG LASHER: Almond. And he reported directly to Tokyo, just as did the Eighth Army commander, but the interior flanks, that is the flanks in the middle of Korea, were always in the air and never in contact with each other.

This was a very grave, a very grave fault in my opinion.

COL LASHER: It seems to violate all that we were taught.

MG LASHER: All the basic principles of warfare, tactically and strategically.

COL LASHER: To what do you ascribe the fact that the two did not at least coordinate with their . . .

MG LASHER: I don't know; I can only guess. We'll go back to World War I, for instance, and what officer emerged from World War I as the top military man--it was Pershing. But he was subordinate to Peyton March, who was Chief of Staff. There was no love lost between those two men. Similar in World War II, the commander, the military man, the military name that will linger longer than any is probably Eisenhower and not Marshall, who in the US military side of things was Eisenhower's superior. And there is Mr. Pogue, who has just finished his third volume of Marshall's life, goes into this a little bit. And Marshall did not ask for him and he had Pogue disclose that . . .

COL LASHER: How do you spell Pogue?

MG LASHER: Pogue. He's written the first and second volumes of Marshall's memoirs, but he hasn't . . . he has come out with a third; I don't know whether there will be any more or not. But he brings this out very clearly that Marshall wanted very badly, he wanted to go to Europe, but that he wouldn't ask for it; that President Roosevelt had virtually named him in private conversation and, of course, he would command the troops. But then later on when push came to shove and the nomination had to be made, it was Eisenhower who got it. So it's Eisenhower's name rather than Marshall's, as far as the military side of things are concerned, which will last. So I can only conjecture so far as Korea is concerned that rather than the

local on the ground, commander of the troops being the big name that comes out, that the United Nations Supreme Commander wanted his name to be the big name in the Korean War. Not that he didn't have enough qualms to his credit, but he wanted, I think, he wanted to emerge as the name. He managed it two or three different ways, but he certainly held the commanding general of the Eighth Army and the commanding general of the X Corps completely subordinate.

COL LASHER: Well, that may not be nearly as unusual as it might sound. But what sounds unusual to me is the commanders, respectively, of the Eighth Army and the X Corps, even though they were reporting directly to the same man, wouldn't cause their flanks to coordinate with each other and maybe sure they were covered and protected . . . and some were coordinated; it just doesn't sound right.

MG LASHER: But this did not occur. And you would have to delve much deeper, much more deeply into the personalities of Almond on the one hand and Walker, Ridgway, and Van Fleet on the other to understand that. Men are ambitious; I don't want to go any farther. It was a really messed up situation. You would think, looking at it from here in Chicago, Illinois . . . Tokyo, that's close enough for the top commander to be to the battlefront, but it wasn't. Tokyo was just as remote from Korea as if it had been in Hawaii.

COL LASHER: Just about.

MG LASHER: Just about. And the staff people, I hate to say this, but the staff people over in Japan--UN staff, MacArthur's staff made few visits to the front . . .

COL LASHER: You are implying too few.

MG LASHER: I said, "They made few visits to the front." You interrupted me, except over a month's end. And all they had to do was to be there the 31st and the 1st to qualify for two months of active duty in a zone of combat to get an income tax relief.

COL LASHER: They were doing that?

MG LASHER: That's what they did.

COL LASHER: Well, interestingly enough a lot of that went on in Vietnam, too.

MG LASHER: Yes, but all of Vietnam was a combat area, wasn't it?

COL LASHER: Yes, but not all of Indochina. There were quite a few people that planned their visit there, even from Washington, to get there on the 28th or 29th of the month and leave on the 2nd or 3rd. And then people from Thailand and those places that would go on TDY would do it so they spent two months.

MG LASHER: If you took a charitable view and had to go . . . a person had to go over there and make a visit, I can't blame him too much for planning it to get there the end of one month and the beginning of the other. However, to the guy who is over there, you know, and has been there slogging through the mud himself, these guys are just a bunch of carpetbaggers. It's all in the point of view.

COL LASHER: It turns out that some of them were, and they corrected that, by the way, toward the end of the war in Vietnam.

MG LASHER: Did they?

COL LASHER: Well, they made it rather difficult to do; you had to be five days both ways, something like that, so you had to be in the country a couple of weeks, okay.

MG LASHER: Getting back to the main theme, there is another thing I want to point out here that our headquarters, the Eighth Army Headquarters, was in Seoul at the time of the Chinese breakthrough, Chinese crossing into North Korea. And the devastation that they wrought with our troops, and it was a long ways from Seoul to the main part of the fighting, but nevertheless, troops were coming back after this occurred and with great stories of difficulties they had had. They were no match for these hordes of Chinese that came through. So far as I knew, we didn't know they were coming, and so far as . . .

COL LASHER: You were surprised?

MG LASHER: We were surprised. So far as I knew, again this is my own personal knowledge, I didn't know. So far as I knew, the Chinese knew all about it and where we were and how to best trap us--and they led us right into the trap. They would have the high grounds along routes of march and so forth, and they would so position themselves and when our troops got in there, they would just open up on them with, not only small arms and machine gun fire, but with heavy artillery . . . with artillery. And a good friend of mine, who was a regimental commander by the name of Henry Fisher, he came back . . .

COL LASHER: You don't remember what regiment, do you?

MG LASHER: No. I don't remember the outfit he was with, but he was the commander . . . he was a full colonel and he was completely whipped, just completely whipped. He had to go to the hospital; he hadn't had sleep for four or five full days and nights. And he made one cogent remark which was to the effect that for this kind of warfare the regimental commander shouldn't

be over forty years old. He was probably a guy close to fifty. And he felt regimental commanders should be young, active, aggressive, and able to stay up four or five nights and days and fight a prolonged engagement. And I'm sure he felt strongly enough to make recommendations to this effect, but it was a very sad time and where the fall down in intelligence occurred, I don't know. I think there must have been.

COL LASHER: You say you were not surprised . . . I mean you were surprised by the Chinese entry. Was it such a total surprise that the possibility hadn't been discussed at all or . . .?

MG LASHER: Yes, I think the possibility had . . .

COL LASHER: Amongst you, amongst the staff?

MG LASHER: No, not that I know of.

COL LASHER: Okay. So if it was discussed, it wasn't planned for in any way?

MG LASHER: No, so far as I know.

COL LASHER: So far as you know. There may have been some top secret plan, but they certainly didn't permeate the staff who would have to implement that.

MG LASHER: That's right.

COL LASHER: And that's the key.

MG LASHER: And, as I say, I don't know where there was a break down in intelligence, if there was one. But certainly there was a lot of smoke gathered around this whole incident between MacArthur and the President of the United States and intelligence, as to who had the intelligence and who didn't as part of the difficulty between MacArthur and his Commander in Chief.

COL LASHER: Speaking of that, what is your opinion of . . . not in the manner

in which it was handled, but the act itself, the end, so to speak of the conflict?

MG LASHER: Well, I think that MacArthur as a field commander violated one of the basic principles of command, by going to the Congress directly, with personal letters, rather than taking his orders from the Commander in Chief as director through the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Now in thus being critical of a man like General MacArthur, one must remember that General MacArthur was a great American. And I, for one, would not question his motives. I think his motives were those of a patriotic American who felt that the honor and the best interest of the United States would have been served had they gone in the direction he wanted.

COL LASHER: I am sure.

MG LASHER: Now that about closes out what I have about Korea.

COL LASHER: So from Korea, you then went back to Washington, picked up your family and went down to Fort Eustis, Virginia, to command the Transportation School, right, at Fort Eustis?

MG LASHER: Yes. There is a little story there, too. Frank Heileman, General Heileman, Major General Heileman was Chief of Transportation when I returned. And your mother had some health problems while I was in Korea and he had been very helpful in them. And as a consequence talked to her once or twice and she was quite surprised that he had asked her where she'd like to go for our next station. Anyway, she told me this at the proper time, after my return. I, of course, took some leave. I went down to discuss this with the Chief of Transportation as to what my next station would be. And he said,he had three possibilities. One was station at Fort Mason,

Port of San Francisco, which was very appealing from a location point of view to both Alice and me. And then I could go there, but he said that he couldn't guarantee what job I got, that would be up to the commanding general. He said or I could go and have command of the Hampton Roads Port, but he said, "We are going to deactivate that in a few months," and he said, "You haven't got anything when you get down there anyway, even before it's deactivated, cause it's practically that now." He said, "The third place is the Transportation School at Fort Eustis, the commandant." Well, the stories I had heard about Eustis, it wasn't the nicest place in the world to live, and all you could think of was the hot weather and the rain, you know. So they said, "You go on home and talk it over and let me know." And I said to him, "Where do you want me to go, General?" He said, "I want you to go to Eustis to the school." So I went home that night and we talked it over and, of course, "traipsed" down there the next day and said, "General, we have decided that we would like to go to the Transportation School."

COL LASHER: So you took mother with you, the two of you . . .

MG LASHER: Oh, no. I "traipsed" down there. I said that we had decided the night before, so he was pleased with that. And it turned out, so were we. It was the only time we had lived on an Army post and by 1950 we had had over twenty years service, twenty-one or-two years' service, and had never lived except on commutations. And we enjoyed the tour very much, not only personally, but as commandant of the school. It was one of my most rewarding jobs of all my jobs really, to see these young men come in and go through and graduate, ROTC students. How much they had progressed in just the few months we had had them there at the school, from the time they graduated from college to that

first year afterwards. And it was a very rewarding thing to work with these young men.

COL LASHER: You mentioned the ROTC only. Didn't you have an advance course at that time, too?

MG LASHER: Yes. But I meant the younger men, really the younger officers. Also early on in my tour there we dedicated the new school building. A new school building was built and we got out of these old wooden cantonment buildings, which the school had used for several years up to that time, and it was a very modern plan. General Heileman came down and laid the cornerstone and we had the proper ceremony and it was very nice getting into a brand new building on an old, old post such as that was. And only one thing I want to say about it is that the bronze plaque which is on the front of the building says only, "The Transportation School." It was at my insistence that we left it that way because I looked forward to the time, having been in the Joint Chief of Staff and so forth, looked forward to the time that this school might possibly be "The Transportation School" for all the services. It never did turn out that way . . . but it still could, and the name is there anyway, and I felt that it could possibly be. Now the commanding general when I first got there was a fellow by the name of Duffy, General Duffy, who had served in World War II and he was a reserve officer called to active duty for the purpose and wound up his career as commanding general at Fort Eustis. He was a rather obstreperous guy, very interested in the morale of his troops, feelings of his troops, but a little too interested in success of his athletic teams and getting his name in the papers than he was in much else. And as a subordinate unit in his command,

it was very difficult for me to get the type of officers I wanted, because he would skim off all cream, so we had a little bit of a fight. Duffy was a very strange guy and very politically inclined, and we had several run-ins. I, however, felt the need for top instructors in the school, both commissioned and enlisted, was a very high priority, higher than any of the units on the post as a matter of fact, because they would multiply themselves many times as they graduated, got out of school and went and taught others. So I just had to force my way and Frank Besson was the Chief of Transportation and we had a little pipeline going.

COL LASHER: You and General Besson?

MG LASHER: Yes. And he would see to it that his personnel man would assign certain officers to Fort Eustis for duty at the Transportation School. So Duffy had no . . . he was sore as hell about this. He had no alternative but to do this. We had a pretty good football team, thanks to Duffy, but as soon as he found a good college player graduating, he would get him right in--because everybody was getting drafted, you know. He would get these guys right in. One fellow, I don't remember who it was, that reported for duty one morning of a game, he swore him in under the stands at a football game and put him in the game that day.

COL LASHER: That's a story.

MG LASHER: No. That's true. And we had Willie Mays there, for instance. Willie Mays was a youngster and . . . but a hell of a steal at that time, even then a good baseball player.

COL LASHER: Had Willie Mays already made a name in pro baseball?

MG LASHER: Pro baseball and through hook or crook,

Duffy got him in the Transportation Corps and down to Fort Eustis and he played baseball. He had two Cadillacs there; one of them was a gaudy purple station wagon that he drove around in, and, of course, there was a lot of black gals down there . . . they weren't black then, but he I'm sure, Mays looked back on his tour of duty at Fort Eustis with a great deal of pleasure because Im sure he had a big time down there. He certainly didn't have any duty to do; if he played good baseball, that was enough for Duffy. And then there was a story about his transferring some guys, I don't remember just what it was, but in the auditorium he made a speech once a week to all the sundry and all the officers. We tried to get out of going, but he'd practically count noses before he'd get started and he was always challenging people to . . . if they didn't like it here, did they want a transfer. And he got three hundred of them one day--raised their hands in the auditorium and wanted to get out. It was not the most military post, as you can imagine.

COL LASHER: What did the personnel people do about that? Did they back him up? I guess they had to.

MG LASHER: They had to, yes. But the school by virtue of the realization that the Office of the Chief of Transportation, not just General Besson, but many others, that the school was all-important down there. We were able to keep little away and aside from these more or less petty things that occurred. And we were given very good officer instructors, men on their way to Leavenworth or graduates of Leavenworth who came back in. And all of the oustanding officers who were returning from Korea were assigned to the school, just as fast as they could assign them, so that we would get the combat experience right into the classrooms. And there is no question in my mind and I may

sound egotistical about this, but probably during those three years that I was there was the high watermark of the Transportation School. I don't think there was any question but what we turned out very superior officers. The latter part we transposed some of the basic enlisted men duties into the new machines. We had the DUKW and later the BARC, all of which were developed there at Eustis in the Research and Development Command. We had the helicopter and this was the big thing. And we set up a series of courses to teach helicopter maintenance and those boys all . . . I remember when I was in Korea, of course, it seemed that there was about four hours of maintenance for every two hours in the air--four hours of maintenance to two hours in the air for these machines. Most of them were two-seaters, you know, and the need for people who knew the helicopter and knew how to repair it and put it back in shape was pressure at that school that we had for two and a half years while I was there. And we built extra buildings and took in more and more all the time. It was push and shove all the time. They wanted them graduated the day before they got there almost. However, it worked out all right and we developed it in the next few years to be quite a helicopter center. But one of the things which I started there and which I feel was one of the most important things I did was I started closed circuit TV instruction.

COL LASHER: That must have been one of the first in the schools.

MG LASHER: I think it was.

COL LASHER: Fort Monmouth about the same time, maybe.

MG LASHER: That was '52, '53. Just as soon as I read enough about it to know what we could do, I put in money for the necessary basic equipment. And put in for the personnel, expert personnel, civilian personnel I hired

to get the thing started. And little by little, we got it; of course, you never get enough money for such things, particularly the new things, but one of the things . . . we had many mechanical shops teaching mechanics, how to repair motor vehicles and all this stuff. Well, you can only get so many people around a carburetor and show them how to take it off . . . around the hood of an automobile to watch the instructor go through the motions of taking it off. Whereas if you position your camera right and you can throw that on a screen, you've got 80 guys there that can watch it being done and with voice as each step is being done. It has terrific possibilities. And, of course, one of the reasons for education in the Army, of course, is to prepare and here if we had growing mobilization this is the only way we can teach some of these skills in the Army, not just then, but now--how to repair parts of a helicopter, for instance. So here, twenty years later, they've got a pretty good set-up down there at Eustis for this. So I was quite proud of having gotten that thing started. But by and large the key to the school system, any school system--not just the military--is the right kind of instructors, motivated, and example setting, men of character. That is very important. Of course, one of the jobs there was keeping material, printed material up to date for the correspondence courses we had all over the country, all these manuals and everything, and they were always going out. We never had enough people to keep them up to date. We were always behind the eight ball, and getting skinned all the time by inspectors coming by and telling us we were behind in this serial number or that serial number. It irritated the hell out of me because we just didn't have the manpower, never did catch up. And I suppose this is true throughout the Army.

COL LASHER: I think it's true today, too.

MG LASHER: And then, of course, my duty there was after Korea and Korea brought in the start of the helicopter and many other new innovations just as Vietnam has now. And all the old manuals were no good. I am sure following Korea they had a whole new sweat about it. Here I'd like to say here it was one of the best of my tours of duty and I was proud of the output. The whole staff and faculty was proud of the output, and I am sure the output was proud of themselves.

COL LASHER: Yes.

MG LASHER: They were just the better for it, and they knew they were and acted as though they did. It was a very rewarding three years for me.

COL LASHER: Many of them were my contemporaries and some of the sharpest officers we have are ROTC officers. They are a pretty proud and pretty well thought of group.

MG LASHER: Are they?

COL LASHER: Yes.

MG LASHER: Glad to hear that. No doubt the school had its influence on them.

COL LASHER: Tell me something about General Hurow. At the time, I guess, he was a lieutenant colonel . . . well I guess, maybe he was a major. . . Hurow. That was not where you first met him, but wasn't he . . . ?

MG LASHER: I met him first in Korea. At that time he was a captain when I first met him and while he was in Korea, he was promoted to major general, major . . . not quite major general yet, but anyhow he came out of Korea as a major and was in the Transportation Corps. And we got to know each other pretty well over there although he was, as I've said before, he was in

Headquarters Detachment and was busy moving generals back and forth, although they had their own vans, of course; there were certain . . . a considerable amount of stationary equipment that had to be moved every time headquarters moved. And I remember that we had an early morning briefing everyday as to the situation and so forth and reports from the assistant Gs and so forth. And after that was over most of the tech services guys would repair over to the headquarters commandant's office for coffee. He had coffee made. Gustifson had coffee made and Hurow wasn't at the briefing; he was always ready with coffee, sugar, milk when we all moved in, the signal officer, Lemnitzer and engineer and all the rest of them. And we would sit there and chew the fat about the staff meeting, whatever happened, if anything had happened there, the general situation and just blew the breeze. It was a very nice half hour or so, when we had coffee. Well, I got to know Hurow pretty well and then he was stationed at Eustis while I was there and, of course, I got to know him better. He was quite an example, to me at least, an example of what could be done in the United States. He was born in Poland, he was Polish-Jew, came to the United States and couldn't speak English in the late '30s. And married here, went to Officer Training (OCS) and he's now an administrator and instructor at the University of North Carolina, working on his doctor's degree. He retired as a brigadier general of the United States Army, had a master's degree and will soon have a Ph.D.

COL LASHER: Got his master's from Harvard, did he not?

MG LASHER: No, I don't remember.

COL LASHER: No. I am wrong, but he did go to Harvard.

MG LASHER: Yes, he went to Harvard. He had that ninety-day course at Harvard . . . and a tremendous individual and a tremendous life story of what we used to think of as just a poor little immigrant, you know. And I had every kind of respect for him and for what he has accomplished. Well, this is a little digression. Another . . . and this has to do with the composition of the military in the United States. I feel that it's got to be a citizen's Army. There is no question about that. And we must always keep this in mind. We've got to keep and enhance the status of the reserve officer, ROTC and its training. There is no question in my mind that we must do this. Almost regardless of the cost, not just in dollars, but the cost in other things, political and so forth are hopefully our statesmen will shoot down any attempts to downgrade the ROTC or to eliminate the ROTC. This almost happened a few years ago and it's only now just building back up and fairly well, I understand. I am not right up to date on this.

COL LASHER: Yes, it is.

MG LASHER: But it's in pretty good shape now, where it was pretty bad maybe ten years ago; and the same way with the National Guard. We've got to keep this National Guard. We've got to have this citizen soldier ready to move on a short notice, which brings me around to the Volunteer Army. Now when I went in the Army in 1929 as a 2nd lieutenant it was a Volunteer Army. Of course, there was only 12,000 officers in the Army at that time and about a 100,000 men, enlisted men. That was a pretty small Army, but it was volunteer. I, therefore, have no fear of a Volunteer Army. But I cannot see how the country can afford a Volunteer Army whose pay is competitive with the pay and salaries of industry. I know I've mentioned this before, but I feel very

strongly that money alone cannot be the lure for a man to proffer his life, so to speak, because there is no money that can buy it really. We must have something more than just money and I think we have it--the opportunity, the accomplishments that can be attained, and the dedication to the country. These appeal to many thousands of men and always will. On the other hand the mercenary's master is he whose purse strings are loosest.

COL LASHER: That's well put.

MG LASHER: And the right people, for a Volunteer Army, are available, but we must motive them to enter it. And it cannot be just money. Could there ever be a way to present universal military training in a political acceptable manner, we would solve most of the difficulties we now have as far as the Volunteer Army is concerned, something like two years after high school, between high school and college, or eighteen months or something--everybody take it without exception and then put in a class for his year for another five years, six years, whatever. To me this is the only fair way of doing it. And yet politicians, from our Presidents of the United States on down, have said that they are unable to sell the idea of universal military training to the country. Today that's particularly true, I am sure.

COL LASHER: I am sure.

MG LASHER: But there will come a time that it will or will have to be acceptable, either on its own or forced. And it just seems to me that we'd get two or three classes through, two or three years of it and it would be duck soup. Most boys, at the age of seventeen or eighteen, when they get out of high school, really don't know what's what. I think they've learned a lot more at that age than I did at that age, but they still haven't the wisdom

to choose for themselves for the next fifty years.

COL LASHER: Well, this you mentioned before, too, and I am sure that it's true, but I wonder if today, with the increase in our population, if we could afford total universal military training. . . rather than just drafting, because that's a rather expensive proposition and assumes a rather large military which it's obvious are not going to have in the way of bodies in our military.

MG LASHER: One of the fall outs from this would probably be that fewer young men would go to college and go to college right now, a smaller percentage. And the military would be training the crafts, mechanics, bricklayers, carpenters, what have you, and we would turn out a boy who is fitted probably that can't go to college.

COL LASHER: But is that properly . . . ?

MG LASHER: The government's role?

COL LASHER: Yes, particularly the military's role as opposed to some other part of our economy.

MG LASHER: I didn't refer to it as part of the role. I said it was an offshoot, it was an overrun of universal military training because by the fact that they are going into a year and a half or two years of military training that are bound to be training in many of these areas. So they are a better young man out of high school than they would be had they not been in.

COL LASHER: Well, we have in the Army today a thing called "Project Transition" where the last six months of a man's service, he can be retrained into a craft, if you will, or trade of some sort . . . and actually be placed in industry.

MG LASHER: Well, of course, the vast majority of enlisted personnel are

killers, trained as killers, so they have to be debriefed so to speak. But there are a lot of thousands of them who are automobile mechanics.

COL LASHER: Yes.

MG LASHER: Telegraph operators--well, we don't have telegraph anymore, but there are programmers as far as computers are concerned and many of them operate flying machines of one kind or another--you take the Transportation Corps, particularly the technical services--let's stay with the technical services, they've got all kinds. They learn all sorts of trades. They certainly, in a two year span, would get some sort of apprenticeship, if they are in the Signal Corps, for instance, or the Transportation Corps . . . apprenticeships, if only it was to learn to tie knots, you know, on a boat. And you can't tell up to how many that will appeal, and he may want to go on and study more knots so he can be . . . he could get in the Merchant Marines. Well, I guess I have kind of squeezed everything out of that that I can. Back to the Transportation School for a few moments. As I said my greatest innovation was introducing closed circuit TV for instructional purposes. One of the greatest problems we had was the restructuring of the roles and missions of the school. The introduction of the helicopter posed a great big problem as compared to say the steam locomotive, which we were very able and capable of instructing then--the helicopter was a whole new thing. And this had to do with roles and missions, new concepts changes in curriculum, you know, and the mechanics of presenting this whole new mode was entirely different from that of a steam locomotive or a boat or something that we had otherwise. So Eustis had a great challenge, and I think that by and large, aside the part of my part in it, that Eustis has accomplished a great deal as reflected in

the logistics attendant upon the Vietnam War. Probably the spearhead, if I go back far enough was Frank Besson, General Besson. Before he was a commander there when I first got there, he was in command of Fort Eustis. He soon left and went to Europe. No, I beg your pardon, he left and went to Washington and then went to Europe with NATO. He was the chairman of what we call the Transportation, Research and Development Command at Eustis. It was a board that we had there. I was a member of it and he was the chairman and sat at the head of the table when we had our meetings. He was a very far-thinking guy and challenged everybody with concepts, good and bad and different, screwy and everything else, and yet a lot of them stuck. And I think that the advancement of the helicopter and many of these other things, such as the BARC and our off-training forklift from their flower, their full bloom in our logistic system in Vietnam. However, from what I hear and I am not sure of my grounds here, that actually the logistics didn't work too well in the early part of the Vietnam situation. The buildup at port side in Vietnam was pretty much a snafu all the way for a matter of a year or two before they got it straightened out, and I am sure that there was a great waste of materiel because of this. However, the machines that we had, the Delong Pier that they put at Cam Ranh Bay, for instance, was conceived in the interim period between World War II and Korea. Besson pushed that just as hard as he could. He believed in it as a pier that could be quickly assembled and quickly transported and quickly put into operation. So a lot of that all stemmed out as far as the Transportation Corps was concerned, and I suppose the other services, too. I think the Transportation Corps, the transportation center at Fort Eustis, met its challenge pretty well. Now the helicopter, of course, is a very good case in

point because like so many other wars, the Vietnam War has progressed the use of the vertical take off vehicle so much more rapidly than it ever would have done if it was strictly a commercial vehicle. In a few short years, relatively speaking, the helicopter came into its own as a commercial vehicle and as I've said before in Korea for every six hours we had to put out on the grounds in maintenance and only two hours effective, it was not an economical vehicle. So industry generally for this reason and many others, I feel has historically gained knowledge, experience from what has happened in the military forces, by, for and to them. My next assignment was, as usual, back to Washington.

COL LASHER: That would be in 1954?

MG LASHER: Yes. I went to the Office of the Chief of Transportation, Paul F. Yount, Yount was the Chief of Transportation at the time. And I was an assistant and in charge of the movements control division, which was essentially the same job, though broadened responsibilities, as I had with the quartermaster general in 1940, actually. It was different largely in many respects, but essentially the same thing, the responsibility for the commercial movements of troops and supplies. And when I got up there and got settled down, I found that a new idea was formulating in the Department of Defense, which came to be known as General "Managers."

COL LASHER: "Single Managers."

MG LASHER: "Single Managers," and . . .

COL LASHER: "Executive agents." Wasn't there another term for it?

MG LASHER: Yes. "Executive Agent." I guess I was an executive agent and Secretary of the Army, Brucker was . . . or was it Brucker, or whoever it

was, I forget now, I guess it was. He was executive agent, I am not sure.

COL LASHER: And you were the single manager or . . .?

MG LASHER: No, he was the single manager, and I was the executive agent. . . his executive agent. And it was supposedly set up so that the executive agent reported direct to the single manager, the secretary. But this is a rather difficult thing in the technical service where I in my position, and I am sure it occurred in the other technical services, had a chief of service intervening in between there. You had to keep your lines of demarcation pretty clear and you had to be sure that you touched the bases when it was necessary, which I think we did pretty well. I recall no conflict we had but . . .

COL LASHER: But the single manager was your real boss insofar if he were to be your rating officer, for instance. Right?

MG LASHER: Yes.

COL LASHER: Whereas your chief of service was not truly in the chain.

MG LASHER: Not truly in the chain.

COL LASHER: Now wasn't the single manager also a defense single manager for a joint. . . ?

MG LASHER: Well, he was single manager for the single part, meaning one for all services.

COL LASHER: Right.

MG LASHER: So let me go on here . . .

COL LASHER: It's therefore not necessarily joint, but it served all three services.

MG LASHER: Yes. Well, actually it was a consolidation of certain responsibilities common to all the services, Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps--put them under one manager, those common services under one manager, such

as medical, signal, transportation and so forth. My area of traffic management was one of the earlier ones to be tried, and, of course, once it was determined that the Secretary of the Army would be the single manager for this area of responsibility, it moved right down to the Transportation Corps. And I was the one who happened to be there at the time. I suppose anybody who happened to have had my job at this time would have had the job also. But it was a question of the timing, so I was chosen as the executive agent, I suppose you could call it, or the single manager in the area of traffic management. And the Secretary of the Army and as we call it, the military traffic management agency . . . let me go back. Once it was determined that it would be with . . . that the Secretary of the Army would be the single manager and that the transportation area in the Army would be the executive agent; as I say, it was natural that it came to my office where it should have been, no matter who was there. And I was given the job of conceptualizing the thing, if you want to call it that, organizing it, staffing it and putting it in running condition under certain very broad directives from the Secretary of the Army. And, of course, this was not easy--it wasn't hard either, really. The hard part was to get all the services to agree on certain things that they were--they were doing the same things, but they were doing it in different methods. So you had a regear the whole thing altogether. I think I had three deputies--a Navy file, an Air Force file--two deputies, Navy and Air Force, with some Marine officers, but they weren't deputies. So we put it on a pretty broad basis and we tried to apportion the civilian slots as well as the military uniform slots on an impartial basis, which we did pretty well, I think. And it took a lot of doing. We had a lot of meetings where we had

to brief people on what the objectives were and how we were getting along, progress reports and so forth. We had to go in the lower echelons and explain what we thought we had taken this, that or the other procedure, no matter whose it was--decide it was the best and then try to impose it on the other three, you know. Well, you had to explain to the other three why that was the best. And, of course, with the more recent reorganization of the Army I am sure currently this is well understood that we are aiming toward some sort of unification of the military services. And this was one of the methods that was used--it resulted in a truly multi-service organization and it was considerably smaller than some of the parts from which it came.

COL LASHER: Which was the basic objective.

MG LASHER: One of the basic objectives, of course. Because of this it considerably enhanced the more rapid execution of command desires; you could do things faster, you improved the position--this was an office that procured transportation services, commercial transportation services and it placed the military in a much better position vis-a-vis the sellers of the commercial transportation. And we weren't running across purposes or competing with each other for the same sort of thing.

COL LASHER: Then you could buy . . . since you could, in essence, buy more at the same time or more you'd buy it for less per unit of whatever you got.

MG LASHER: And this went for all modes, land, sea, air, railroad, trucks and we . . . and one of the principle ideas being that we would utilize commercial transportation wherever we could rather than military transportation and keep viable a fine commercial transportation system in the country. We were, I think I've mentioned this before, it was very important we have this because

we could never (the military) could never have ever done it for themselves, so they had to depend on it. And the way to depend on it was to use it and keep them financially strong. And we had the same problem here. Lockheed is a good example of how important it is that certain areas of industry be continued . . . continue to remain viable and able.

COL LASHER: A good case in point today is also our maritime service which is apparently atrophying to a great degree much to the chagrin of both the civilian industry, who are interested, but the Navy too, I suppose, and the transportation people. We are a dependent to a great degree on foreign bottoms (ships), and there are plenty of them all around the world, but very few are our own and this is quite an issue.

MG LASHER: We always thought that this was necessary--merchant marine was one of them, and just as much as a good railroad or good airline, a good truck line was very important. Now we saved money on account of this as far as the running of this particular job was concerned. And we did it with about two-thirds of the people. What happened to the other third? They are still on the payroll. They just found other spots for them in the Army, Navy and Air Force. So you didn't save the money you thought you were going to in that respect, which was one of the big possible areas of saving. It's this government thing again, and I relate how President Nixon's recent determination as expressed in his inaugural speech of defederalizing Washington a little bit. He's got quite a job cut out for him. I think we know about this to a certain extent.

COL LASHER: This is where you got your first star, is it not?

MG LASHER: Yes. Well, that's another story. I told you awhile ago that I

really didn't pay much attention to these things. I never saw a paycheck, for instance--from the very beginning I had it sent right to my bank. And the first thing I know I have a deposit slip and this went right on through grades and raises and everything else. And I never went in and hit the boss for a raise in the form of a promotion. This just wasn't the thing to do, I didn't think. And you asked me about decorations--well, the same thing there. I could have had the Distinguished Flying Cross in Korea. I took enough take-offsaand landings to get a couple of them, but I never even put in for them. And so here I had been a colonel--now we are coming into '54--I am a colonel. I had been a colonel since 1941--that's a long time. And I wasn't getting any younger. I was about fifty years old. And I knew if I wasn't going to be a general, I wasn't going to be a general. But on the other hand I knew that if I wasn't going to be a general I wanted to get out at an age where I would have some salability. So I mulled this over for weeks and months and I finally went in and told General Yount, the Chief of Transportation, just how I felt about this. And I said, "If you can't do it, you can't do it. If you don't want to do it, you don't want to do it--it's all right with me. But I would like to know." Well, he said, "I've put you in two or three, four times, just can't get it across." Well, I said, "If this can't be done, why I'll probably put in for retirement . . . look around for a job and put in for retirement." Well, about the next second or third general officer list that came out, I was on it. And once I had broken that barrier my second star came within a year, or two years. But that was the only time that I ever . . . that and the time I tried to volunteer for the China, Burma, India Theater were the only two times I went for something, more or less, for personal

reasons. And so yes. And the job, as you put it, the executive agent of the single manager, it was a large enough job to warrant a general officer.

COL LASHER: It's a two-star slot now.

MG LASHER: Now it is, yes. And the guy that is in the job, although it's been expanded, he's still sweating with a two-star rank and they can't get him a third star. I don't know why not, everybody else has been upgraded. Of course, much of my work in this was promotional and educational and so forth for both the military community as well as the civilian community--keep them up to date as to who is doing what to whom and he got the two bucks, you know. So I was out yakking all over the place, all over the country at all sorts of transportation meetings, conventions and what not--where I could get a good audience to explain this thing. The rationalization to this thing was quite simple. It seems just common sense to put these things together and do the same thing for all services. However, the execution was something else--to get the execution so that you'd have a viable outfit and one which could do its job as it went along and continue to do it. Now as the years have passed, this idea has proven its worth, I think, from what I've seen and the execution of jobs improved, responsibilities in fact have been broadened as a matter of fact to bring in more responsibilities to this particular single manager area. And most of all it's been accepted by all services. The current commander of this is the fourth successor to my knowledge. There have been five of us altogether. And the current one has been on the job for pretty near four years, I think, and has done a very good job. I think it's pretty well accepted. And I might add here that, I go right back to when Forrestal was the first Secretary of Defense, how he insisted on a unanimous

paper from the Joint Chiefs before he would take any actions. I mentioned that. And the trials and tribulations I had as executive director of the Joint Military Transportation Committee on the Joint Chiefs of Staff, I was convinced and still am, that there is still about another generation to go before this full concept can be completely accepted. In other words, I knew then that we had to retire two or three generations before we really got to where this thing was going to work and work honestly and with everybody cooperating. It hasn't gotten to that point yet.

COL LASHER: No.

MG LASHER: But it's getting closer all the time, I think. Now during these last two years of duty and they were the last two years because, of course, I retired at the end of '57 or the end of January '58, and during these last two years our personal life was marked by some considerable misfortunes, which hung and have hung as a cloud over us for a long time. Chauncey's attitude was always somewhat of a problem and while we were at Eustis was capped by his sending himself from home. He was out of touch with us for several months, but at last he was discovered by somebody in Washington, D.C., because he had broken a traffic law by driving a car without a license plate in the middle of the night--the car he had bought for ten or fifteen dollars and he was trying to get it to where he lived. Thought he could at one o'clock in the morning, but a cop picked him up. He had no visible means of support and was thrown in a youth detention place. We were notified of it. And up to Washington we went to spring him, and he was very glad to get home, there's no question about that.

COL LASHER: Hadn't he parked cars in a State Department parking lot for awhile?

MG LASHER: Right next to the FBI. And it was the FBI we called in to find him and they couldn't find him. They reported unsuccessfully two or three times and he was parking cars right alongside their office. Now one thing about, I am not sure where I am, but one thing about our life--and I think that personal stuff should be interposed on this tape every now and then to show its importance to the officer and his accomplishments or lack thereof and so forth. And this was quite a blow to us. He had always been a kind of mischievous guy as a youngster. And, of course, Julian was pretty sick, getting sicker, and this started when he was eight and remained undiagnosed properly there for several years, and it culminated when we got back to Washington on the last go around. And he . . .

COL LASHER: He was about . . . ?

MG LASHER: He was about fourteen or fifteen. And he was a constant care after we got back to Washington--and his condition, which had always been poor, continued to worsen. I don't know that I mentioned that Donald graduated from Woodrow Wilson High School and after Chauncey came back he also graduated from Woodrow Wilson High School and Julian almost did--he wasn't in school in the latter part of May, June and part of July. He underwent the second surgery. But he was due to have graduated that June from Woodrow Wilson High School, also. This is a strange thing in the life of an Army family, who bats around from pillow to post, to find that all three sons all graduated from the same high school, which is one of the finest high schools in the country. And we were all very glad that it worked out this way. So we felt that none of our children lacked anything in education because of the fact that they had gone to so many schools, so many different times and broken into the middle

of years and so forth. But we were lucky we were in Washington as much as we were and were able to take advantage of the fine school of Woodrow Wilson. As I say, Julian's condition was always poor, continued to worsen; when we moved to Washington we bought a house on Springdale Street and settled in. Julian's trouble was chronic ulcerative colitis and the best at Walter Reed and including expert outside consultants just could not seem to slow the inexorable deterioration of his condition. Two operations, both performed by General Heaton, who, incidentally, had successfully operated on General Eisenhower for somewhat the same thing. Do you remember when General Eisenhower had ileitis?

COL LASHER: Yes.

MG LASHER: It was essentially the same thing. Those operations did no good for Julian and he expired on the morning of July 16th in 1957. He was buried in the West Point Cemetery. Both Arthur Hurow, whom I've mentioned before, and Bill Henderson, whom I've mentioned before, were of great help to us in this extremity. You probably remember some parts of that.

COL LASHER: Julian was eighteen, right?

MG LASHER: Yes. These two operations were spaced sufficiently far apart to allow Julian's mother, Alice, to take him on an automobile trip. They took in all the sights between Washington and the west coast. Donald and Nadia were living in Mountainview, California, at this time. Donald was a student at Stanford University taking his master's degree and made a nice terminal point for this trip. And it was the turnaround spot for the trip, and they took in the Alamo, the Grand Canyon, Las Vegas, Yosemite, San Francisco, and all . . . the both of them were the better for it.

COL LASHER: I am sure.

MG LASHER: It worked out very nicely, very nicely for them. That, of course, was Julian's last great adventure. By this time Chauncey had already entered West Point in July 1956, and I was home alone so there was no problem as far as children was concerned. But such scares as these are bound to remain with a family for quite some time. How long no one really knows, but perhaps always with some people, longer with some. We have all had our misfortunes. And I think that this side of a dissertation such as this is a fact which should not be omitted. In 1958, about December, Chauncey was discharged from West Point for lack of aptitude for the military service.

COL LASHER: After having been on the Dean's List for two or three years, right?

MG LASHER: Yes, but more of that later. That was 1958, about December of '58, but I am a little ahead of myself. It was late in December of '57. I'll go back for a moment. Julian had died in July. I was invited to make a speech before the Federation for Railway Progress. The Federation for Railway Progress was the association for the railway business, and this was its annual meeting that year and it was to take place in November, the latter part of November. Though I had made many, many talks and speeches and addresses and so forth over the years in many ways, shapes and forms and to many audiences this perhaps was the most august audience that I had ever been asked to address, so I accepted it. I felt it was another feather in my hat to be asked. But part of it, of course, a lot of it was due to the fact of my position as the single manager thing, you know. There is no question about that. If it hadn't have been me, it would have been someone else if someone else had been there,

but I had a modestly good reputation amongst the railroad industry and then as the commander here in this consolidated thing--I was a pretty big procurer of their services. So I accepted. Now I spent a great deal of time and a great deal of research together with the counsel of many of my friends, both of the military and the railroad industry, and I wrote the speech personally. It was very frank, not always complimentary to the railroads on any or all levels. And I knew them all very well, everybody that was there. So I drafted the speech and I went over it until I knew it--I learned it word for word, and I practiced it. Hurow sat there as an audience of one and corrected me, you know. So I wasn't going to let it out . . . I think it was on a Thursday, I am not sure, but I didn't put out any copies of it until Monday. And Tuesday morning I got a ring from the President of the Association of American Railroads who wanted to talk to me about it. So . . . Faricy, his name was Bill Faricy, came over to the office.

COL LASHER: How do you spell that?

MG LASHER: Faricy. He still is in Washington. And we passed the time of day and some niceties and we got down to the fact that I had said some uncomplimentary things about the railroads.

COL LASHER: But you hadn't given the speech yet; you had just released it?

MG LASHER: It was a release, yes, to a very chosen few. I didn't give it out to the railroads. I just gave it out to the AAR and a few other people.

COL LASHER: Did you have to have this cleared at DOD level?

MG LASHER: Yes.

COL LASHER: You did. And they let it go with what were somewhat controversial?

MG LASHER: They weren't controversial. They were all true. I'd picked out

some things and I had asked the railroads some questions, four or five questions, and I felt we had a right, we, the military, had a right to know the answer to these questions on service and so forth. Bill Faricy didn't like it very well. So we sat there and argued, discussed it and argued--well, the upshot was I didn't change it.

COL LASHER: You did not?

MG LASHER: Did not change it. Of course, I had learned the darn thing and I didn't want to change it and relearn it. That was one reason.

COL LASHER: That was reason number two, I suppose.

MG LASHER: Half a dozen railroad presidents I had talked to. I had shown this to good close friends of mine--Perry Shoemaker is one, he's retired now. Charley Denny was another--he's dead now. And they said, "Yes, this has got to be asked. These questions have got to be asked and they should be answered. We can't do it inside of the industry. It's got to be done from somebody outside; and there is nobody in a position to do this but you in the job you have." So I was emboldened by these counsels . . .

COL LASHER: Encouragement.

MG LASHER: Yes, encouraged and so forth. And so I went ahead with it. And it was at the Wardmen Park Hotel, in that new auditorium, the big one downstairs.

COL LASHER: That's a beauty, yes.

MG LASHER: And it was full, just full. Most of the railroad presidents were there and many others, vice presidents and so forth, the Interstate Commerce Commission, all the commissioners were there. Your mother sat next to James Roosevelt at her table, for instance. He wasn't anybody then but he was James

Roosevelt. Why he was there I don't know, but anyway he was her dinner partner. And the Senate, Interstate, of course, the Commerce Commission . . . committee was there and members of the House and a lot of the military. And I got up and I said my piece. Well, I was told that Jim Simms, who was president of the Pennsylvania Railroad, got up in the middle of it and said goddamn if he was going to have to sit there and listen to this balderdash and he walked out. At one point I talked about the delivery of liquid oxygen from Michigan City or up around Gary, Indiana, where it was made down to Alabama to add to the arsenal . . .

COL LASHER: Oh, you mean Redstone.

MG LASHER: Redstone Arsenal, and I said . . . told them how many miles it was--I don't remember, but we were getting about 7th, 8th, 9th morning delivery. And it was very, very sensitive, see. Took a special car--liquid oxygen was, you know. And we were tracing it, every car we shipped and the mere fact that we traced and wanted to find the passings every time we got to the terminal point, you know, it was enough to tell the railroads we were handling it, but we were very interested in this. And I said, "Can you imagine that it takes seven days to get from Gary, Indiana, to Huntsville, Alabama?"

COL LASHER: Or nine days.

MG LASHER: Yes. Well, this was on a Thursday; the next time we had a shipment it was on the third morning delivery. And they said two or three guys from the railroads involved left the room while the speech was going on to check up on this record that they hadn't made. Well, anyway those are details. I had a hell of a good time making this speech and there was a lot of labor--all the labor involved. All the brotherhoods, heads of the brotherhoods and so forth, so when it was over Al Perleman . . .

COL LASHER: Who is this, Perleman?

MG LASHER: Al Perleman. He was president of New York Central at the time. He came up and started arguing points with me.

COL LASHER: After dinner?

MG LASHER: After the thing was all over, yes. Two or three others did the same thing. He was madder than hell. He had a short fuse anyway, and he was trying to tell me where I was wrong, prove me wrong, you know, on these points. Well, that wasn't really the point of the thing--they were essentially correct, what I had said. It was just a matter of maybe his railroad didn't do this, but his railroad did the other things. So he argued with me at length. One of my friends, Calhoun, you've heard me speak of Les Calhoun. He was a brigadier general (T.C.). He was with me at Fort Eustis. He was in the school. He had one of the divisions at the school--fine officer, one of the greatest. He died very young, but he retired, and I'll come to that later. And he stood on the outside of the ring that was around Perleman and me, and I think he said to Hurow, he said, "This is the end of Lasher." But it really wasn't. This all died down as well as arguments and difficulties. I got innumerable compliments, of course, some sincere and some just "great speech," you know, that sort of stuff. Many of the persons I had talked to before, all were very sincere that it was really well done. And as I said, I didn't have a note, didn't have a note, see, and it was a thirty-five, forty minute speech. So we went home and this was, let's say, early November . . . late October, I guess. The next three weeks I had five job offers, five offers of jobs; one of them from Al Perleman, the president of New York Central Railroad, who had argued with me. He wanted me to be vice president in charge in Chicago.

COL LASHER: This was '57?

MG LASHER: Yes. Another one was from Bill Faricy, who had tried to get me to change the speech. He offered me the job of vice president, public relations for the Association of the American Railroads. Another job was president of the New Haven Railroad, which wasn't quite as bad off as it is now.

COL LASHER: No, then it was . . .

MG LASHER: And another one was . . . turned out to be North American Car Corporation.

COL LASHER: What was the fifth?

MG LASHER: I don't remember.

COL LASHER: Wasn't it something with Illinois Central?

MG LASHER: No. It wasn't a railroad, but anyway I think it was a traffic managers job. I didn't want that anyway. Perleman was a member of the board of directors of the Association of American Railroads, and he didn't know that Faricy had offered me a job and Faricy didn't know Perleman had offered me a job. They were all tied up.

COL LASHER: I guess that was . . . Perleman's offer was about your second choice, wasn't it?

MG LASHER: Well, I . . . Perleman called me up one day, the way this happened . . . called me up one day and asked me if I was going to be in New York or if he could come down and see me. And I said, "It just so happens that I am going to be in New York next Tuesday"or whenever it was. He said, "Can you have lunch with me?" I said, "Yes." So we had lunch on top the Chrysler Building, private club. And he posed this, that he needed a vice president in charge in Chicago. And we talked it over at quite some length and I said,

"Well, what will my duties be; to whom would I report, and so forth?" Well, he said, of the duties, services and operations and so forth, I will be his personal eye in the whole Chicago west area of the New York Central. And I said, "Suppose I found something deficient?" "Tell me right away." I said, "Al, I am an organization guy, you know. I've been raised in the Army. I know what a chain of command is." I said, "Art Baylis is one of my best friends." You remember Art Baylis. He was vice president of traffic. I said, "If I found something wrong with service, I wouldn't report to you. I'll tell Art Baylis about it. I'd say, 'Art, people are bitching out there that such and such should be done and why hasn't it been done and so forth?' And I am sure Art would correct it. But I don't go for this going around to the head man and letting him get the club." I told Perleman this right out. Nothing happened. He didn't want me under those terms.

COL LASHER: Oh, he didn't?

MG LASHER: No. Well, that was just one of the incidents. Of course, in addition to this I had the offer from North American Car Corporation in Chicago. The approach here was made by a so-called executive placement firm in New York called Handy Associates. Jack Handy was the head of it and he was considered an expert in the evaluation of executive talent. And, as a matter of fact, among many other things, Jack Handy lectured to military groups, schools and so forth on executive talents and how to recognize them and how to utilize them. And he ran this, I always called it a headhunter shop in New York, Handy Associates. He approached me one day and said there was a job and had I any idea of retiring? And I said well, I had given it some thought and I said, "I am close to my retirement age. I wouldn't mind retiring early or waiting."

I said, "Yes, if it is of sufficient interest." So he outlined it to me and asked me a great many questions about myself and my work in the Army and told me a great deal about North American Car. Then he did the same thing for North American Car at which point neither North American Car knew who I was, my name, nor did I know what company he had as a client. When he, Handy, decided that there was sufficient interest on both sides and that it was probably going to work, he disclosed to us who each other was. And a meeting was set up in Washington for the chairman of the board of North American Car to come in and talk. . . this is the first that we knew. Up to this point either side could have backed away from it without any embarrassment whatsoever. Nobody would ever have known the difference. I thought it was a very slick way of handling it.

COL LASHER: Sort of like a Jewish matchmaker.

MG LASHER: Yes. So I went over to the Mayflower and Bill Spencer was the chairman--had a suite; we had lunch up in his suite. We talked it over and I knew that he was favorably impressed because he asked me could I come out to Chicago and interview some of the other directors of the company and when. I said, "Yes." I asked him; I said, "You know it takes me awhile if this thing jells at all. It takes me awhile to retire. I've got to put in a letter and get it approved. This takes sixty days anyway and . . . " Well, he didn't like that very much. He wanted to do it right away. I found out later that he was very impatient. If he decided to do something, he wanted to do it. So anyway, I came out here to Chicago and was interviewed. Well, here again, names pop up--Ralph Budd, who I knew as a consultant to President Roosevelt and before the war in the transportation field, who I did a lot of work with, was one of the directors. He's a retired president of Chicago, Burlington and Quincy

Railroad and he set up the Chicago Transit Authority, the local mass trans thing here in Chicago--was very big in Chicago. But I knew him as just another guy when he was president of the railroad and I was sure that his reaction to me for this job was a favorable one. Next I talked to Robert E. Wood, General Wood, who was also a director. Well, it turns out that General Robert E. Wood for Sears would hire anybody who had ever graduated from West Point, and he was so high on West Point that he never missed an opportunity to say what a character builder it was, how great the graduates of West Point had been. He hired many of them at Sears at all levels. So I went over and interviewed him. He had a great big fat file on me, and I chatted with him about fifteen minutes and went on my way. And I talked to two or three directors at the same time in another office and then I went back to Bill Spencer, who was handling this--the chairman of the board. And Bill wanted to know what my objectives were. (END SIDE ONE)

COL LASHER: You were discussing your interview with the board of directors before becoming president of North American Car.

MG LASHER: Yes. After interviewing, as I recall, I talked to all of them at one time or another, and then ended up in Chicago with Bill Spencer, the chairman of the board. Incidentally, Bill Spencer (he was at Princeton), was a lieutenant in World War I, he reached the grade of colonel, apparently covered himself with some glory because . . .

COL LASHER: Reached the grade of colonel when? Not in World War I?

MG LASHER: World War I.

COL LASHER: Oh, he did!

MG LASHER: And later on, incidentally, he was a very close friend of George

Marshall who was out here as a lieutenant colonel. I'll digress just a minute, if I may. He was out here as a lieutenant colonel, had been assigned out here in charge of the National Guard in this area, and Spencer got to know Marshall very well socially, particularly. And he told me that General Marshall was so disappointed that he had been sent out here in the boondocks as a lieutenant colonel to look after the National Guard he thought his career in the Army was absolutely through. This was a shelf that somebody put him on.

COL LASHER: Oh, really?

MG LASHER: And he was very disappointed in this particular assignment. So you see, as you look back on your own career and recall the disappointments and how they were overcome or faded into insignificance with what occurred later on, it's very interesting and you can take some heart in the fact that this has happened to most everybody.

COL LASHER: Apparently so. When was that, do you know approximately when General Marshall was out there?

MG LASHER: No, I don't; I don't know. This was long before I came out here, of course. It was quite some years ago. It was probably in . . .

COL LASHER: Early '30s?

MG LASHER: Yes, I would say in the '30s. And Spencer is a very fine man, a gentleman in every respect. And as an example, he was very attentive to Mrs. Marshall through General Marshall's last illness. He and Mrs. Spencer went down several times and now that Mrs. Marshall is a widow and in a rather precarious health position herself, he still goes down to North Carolina and calls on her once in awhile. He's just that kind of a guy and he's eighty-two this year--and he took a new job the other day. So let's get back. So

we sat down and he said, "What do you think your requirements are?" And I just gave him two. I said, "If I retire from the Army, and I don't have to," I said, "I have several years yet, and I don't have to retire. But if I don't retire fairly soon, my age," which was fifty-one at the time, I said, "my salability declines. But my objective is that I'd like for Mrs. Lasher and me to be able to live comfortably the rest of our days. And hopefully whatever I do, I'd be able to put together a modest estate for my children." Those are the only two things. So we horsed it back and forth and no figures, and I went back to Washington. He came down again, and we talked again and he said he had been authorized by the board to offer me the job. And I said, "What's the job?" Well, he said, "There are four of us in this company who all of a sudden discovered we were all close to sixty-five years old and we had to get new blood. I am the oldest, but the others are right behind me." And actually those four men retired from active management duties within about fourteen months after I got there. That's how close they were to sixty-five, all of them up in age. And he said, "We as a board decided that we need to infuse new blood in here," and he said, "I am chairman of the board. Mr. Roblee is the president. I, however, am the chief executive officer." And he said, "The job is the presidency of the company." And he said, "I am authorized to tell you that the next annual meeting of the stockholders, which will be in April, you will be elected president. And I will remain chairman of the board until I retire. We will pay you fifty thousand dollars a year and give you a stock option of ten thousand shares." Well, I didn't fall out of the chair quite. I managed to hang on to the arm, and I allowed as to how that would be a pretty good start, the bottom, like at the bottom, you know.

So we finally drafted the letter which he sent to me, and I signed and returned with these bare things. One of the points of the discussion with him as well as with some of the other directors was that of a contract. I said, "I don't want a contract." And as I look back now with much more wisdom than I had then, I said no, it was wrong. I said no, and I had met all these guys. They were very high principled people, from General Wood, Bill Spencer on down. "No," I said, "if I want to quit . . . if I don't like what I see after six months or a year, I don't want to have any strings on me, and vice versa--if I don't fit what your bill of particulars is." So we didn't have one. I don't know whether this impressed him or not, but it was a silly thing to do because it's like making a handshake with somebody and then that somebody gets hit by a truck the next day and there is nothing--you've got nothing.

COL LASHER: So you in retrospect . . .

MG LASHER: In retrospect, I don't think that was a smart thing to do. Now you don't have to have an ironclad contract, but you do have to reduce to writing some sort of term with outs for everybody and it can be written. I know it can be written. I've written them, but this I learned later. But anyhow it turned out just as I thought. They all were--some of them are still alive. Of course, General Wood isn't alive, Ralph Budd isn't alive, but Spencer is still alive; this fellow Roblee, who was president--he's still alive, and Mr. Hagenagh, who was a senior director, he's still alive. And they were all honorable men. So I was in good hands just as I knew I was, but yet it could have been otherwise. Now at this point before I go further here, I would like to tell you, and I don't know whether I have ever told you

this or not, despite your interest in computers and so forth, but when I started my last tour in Washington, which as I told you was essentially the same job I had in 1940 in the Office of Quartermaster General, but a much more expanded thing, and we had this new idea of the single manager. So the job expanded and took in the whole military organization, the uniformed services. One of the things that had always bothered me and one of the things we always paid a lot of money for were what we called rate men, people who could interpret the tariffs or railroads particularly at that time and come up with the price of shipping pounds of "Y" products from "A" to "B." And it was a very long and very tedious operation done by hand. So when I got back and we got this Military Traffic Management Agency started, I immediately started looking around to see if we could . . . whether the computer, as we knew it in those days, would benefit us. We had several different companies working on it. IBM was one, of course, and the problem, we found out, was beyond the ability of a computer, particularly insofar as storage was concerned.

COL LASHER: Mass memory.

MG LASHER: Mass memory, if that's what the term is now. There were literally hundreds of millions of combinations of products, costs, origins, destinations. You take one order and look at all the destinations you have in the United States--all the ports, camps, stations, and arsenals and so forth and they just couldn't cope with them. Nevertheless, we started a nucleus computer and we computerized what we could. And now I don't know, I haven't kept up with it in the last fifteen years, but I am sure that the technology has narrowed the gap quite considerably if not entirely. Whether they are still doing any in the hand method, I don't know. But this was one of the innovations

that I put in there in this business before I left. And I was quite proud of that because it took . . . well, you talk about briefing people, trying to get the money for this you know, it was kind of new and you had to persuade everybody right from your own boss right on up, you know, to shake the money loose to even begin it. Now back to this. I, as I say, signed this letter of agreement and I put in for my retirement. As you know, I had a little over twenty-nine years service when I retired--two stars--I was in a technical service, and had in my mind, and this wasn't particularly egotistical at all, but I had a chosen field, the traffic management field essentially, as my field. I had gone to the top as far as the military was concerned. And I was heading up the whole thing for all four military services, so there was no place for me to go.

COL LASHER: There was no real possibility for a third star if you stayed in?

MG LASHER: Oh, there might have been, but it was . . . the probability of it was very low because when you've got men . . . there weren't that many three star and four star slots and you were in competition with the combat soldier, the line general who had come up the hard way and were usually given the nod. Otherwise, I would go to some out of the way place as an advisor on military aid and assistance, you know, under the Marshall Plan or something and be a third rate clerk in some embassy somewhere and I didn't fancy that particularly. And I felt that I would therefore . . . my next station would be somewhat of a problem for the Department of the Army. And I told Magruder when I took my letter in to him, Magruder was Deputy Chief of Staff for Logistics, and I handcarried my letter to him and visited with him about it. About the only time I ever saw him smile in my life was when I told him I

thought I was going to be a problem to the Department of the Army and I didn want to be a problem to anybody. I was enough of a problem to myself. And he sort of grinned, but anyway the thing was approved and my date was set for January 31st, 1958.

COL LASHER: How much did Julian's death have to do with your decision to retire?

MG LASHER: Well, I have a note on that. That's one of the things . . . I didn't say this directly to your mother, but one of the things was that it was very obvious that she was still very sensitive to the death of Julian which had occurred in July, the previous July of '57. And I felt here's an opportunity to change our whole way of life, not just the location in Washington or on a military post, but where we lived, how we lived in the civilian economy, new job, new friends, a whole new thing. And I felt that that was a good thing. Now how good it was going to turn out to be I didn't know, but it did loom very high in my list of reasons for accepting. And I don't think she and I ever talked this over, but it was too sensitive a thing. Julian's death had affected her very deeply and I don't know whether she is . . . well, I know she is not over it completely yet, here fifteen years later. So it was quite a . . .

COL LASHER: Was it a good thing?

MG LASHER: I thought it would be good. On the 30th or 31st of January I had a reception and review given for me in Fort Eustis upon my retirement and we went down and then we had a lovely, just a lovely retirement situation for two or three days at Fort Eustis. Now in the meantime, up to now, I refer now again more to personal things. Chauncey had left West Point; although he had been an honor student most of the time he had been there, he was relieved because of

lack of aptitude for the military service. I was very disappointed about this and the unfortunate part in the whole thing was that he was informed by a sergeant, not by his tactical officer of his company, but by a sergeant who came over with the orders and told him. It was communicated to me and Gar Davidson was the superintendent at the time. I called Gar Davidson on the phone. He didn't know much about it, and I didn't get any satisfaction from Gar Davidson. This irked me no little. Here I was just retired, and I was a major general, retired, a graduate of the Military Academy. I had a son who had graduated from the Military Academy, and I had devoted a big part of my life to it, and I thought that I should have a little more sensitivity from the superintendent. Of course, he's a busy man. I know this and I realize this, but nevertheless . . . and this is a part of public relations that Gar Davidson had missed in my opinion. Now Gar Davidson is quite a hero in the Army, you know--football player as a cadet, got to be a three star general, engineer; he mapped out many of the lines of defense in Korea, and he coached football at West Point for a number of years. And later on as a member of the Board of Trustees of the Association of Graduates I got to know him a little more. As a matter of fact I served on a committee with him. And the reason for the committee and the discussion of that is beside the point. But throughout the several meetings we had, this committee, I could realize some of the attitudes that Davidson had had during his active career. In retrospect I could see he was very . . . he domineered and obviously tried not to let it show as chairman of the committee and as a matter of fact the findings that he wanted were substantially made in the findings of the committee, but were rejected by the Board of Trustees as a whole when it was put to them. And

this isn't generally known, but he was really teed off at this. And we all let him down just as gently as we could because of his past service and his position as superintendent and lieutenant general and so forth. He was very disappointed, but I could see some of the traits and understood Gar Davidson better after having sat on this committee with him. But that was one of the disappointments. Chauncey came out here and we talked it over and at the time we talked it over was the only time I told him I was disappointed. I haven't mentioned it since, but he knows there is no question about that. And he knew what he had to do to stay in just as well as I knew what he had to do to stay in--and I told him he could have done it, but he didn't and now he is sorry.

COL LASHER: He had sufficient warning, I think.

MG LASHER: Oh, yes, he was warned several times. He had a girl friend down there that bothered him quite a bit, and I think he got written up several times for a little too much smooching around in semi-public, I think, and his mother didn't like her. So when he came out here he had finished two and a half years of undergraduate study in a recognized college--West Point--and had good marks, so we wanted, of course, and he wanted to go on and finish and get a degree and we discussed all the schools. Your mother wanted him to go west--just as far west, away from this girl down in New York. So we picked the University of Denver, and he went along and majored in transportation and graduated alright. But before he graduated he had to get married to a nurse out at Fitzsimmons Hospital. He must have had a high IQ for the opposite sex or whatever you want to call it. I don't know; I suspected it. And maybe he got it from me, I don't know, but anyhow gals featured in some of the things

early in his life, I think, more than they should have. The wedding was at her house in Kansas City and you, Nadia and William as well as your mother and I came out for it. And he got a job with a truck company first when he graduated and then later on got a job with Emery Air Freight in Washington, D.C. where he started really going to work. At this time Donald had progressed; you had progressed more or less normally according to the rules of the game as far as the Army is concerned. You had had good assignments; you had been picked to go for graduate work at Stanford which was very complimentary to you; very satisfying to us. And your marriage, marred considerably by losing two children, was a thing which I didn't know whether either one of you would fully overcome, but your mother and I have many times talked about the way you did overcome it and the extent to which you put it behind you and moved on. Both you and Chauncey, of course, moved into the computer field at different times and in different ways, but it was strange that they were independent decisions and eventually Chauncey, because he wanted to get into the headquarters of Emery Air Freight did so via computers, and they sent him to school and so forth. But you both did. Your mother and I stayed at an apartment . . . I am now getting back to the thread of the thing . . . stayed at an apartment at the Ambassador West for about three or four months while we looked for an apartment, permanent apartment, and finally chose 1420 Lake Shore Drive, where it turned out we would live longer than in any other one place in either of our lives, and here we are still here. My association with North American Car . . . I've told you the understanding was that I would be elected president and chief executive officer and was . . . these other four men retired which gave me the opportunity to move younger men up into those slots and do some hiring of some additional

men because these guys just got out. Some stayed on the board and some didn't. And I could move some of the younger men up and my, you see, I had the prize in my hand to give out. So it was a very fortuitous timing on the whole thing. This is one way to get loyalty--to pick the men yourself, get the men you want, men you know you can work with.

COL LASHER: You were free to do that without interference from the board?

MG LASHER: That's right . . . well, if it was a vice president they had to approve it. I might add here that before I accepted the job at North American Car I conferred with two very good and very old friends of mine in the civilian life. One of them was a chap by the name of Coleman, who worked for a company which was called Evans Products, located in Detroit, who did some work with the military. And another one, who was also a friend of mine by the name of Walter Curley, who was in Pittsburgh--he was a vice president of a competing firm, a firm competing with North American Car--but he was a friend of mine and I knew he would give me the benefit of this experience. Both of them recommended that of all the opportunities I had, North American was the best, and, of course, it turned out that they were absolutely right. I told these interviewers, the board, the members of the board, that I had some experience in transportation, but I realized as a leasing firm, one of the main thrusts of the business was financial--that I had nothing in my background which would qualify me in this. And they brushed that aside right away and said, "We have plenty of financial assistants to give you." Well, it turned out that, yes, there were lots of guys who would give you advice, but you had to make the decision. And . . .

COL LASHER: You had to understand it to make the decision.

MG LASHER: Yes. And you were stuck with the decision no matter whose advice you'd taken. You couldn't lean on that guy afterwards, so I had to learn it anyway. And that was the hardest part. I didn't have to learn it very well, but I got onto the ropes pretty fast and I got most of my help from the financial officer before he retired. I had lunch with him daily for quite a long time, and we would talk and talk about the things and what I would have to know and I read up as much as I could. So although they assured me that that wasn't too necessary, I found that it was probably the most necessary thing I would have to know.

COL LASHER: For the record, what was North American Car's main business?

MG LASHER: North American Car was a leaser of specialized freight, railroad equipment, freight cars.

COL LASHER: Built some, too, did it not?

MG LASHER: No. It never built. We never built them. We merely assembled them. We bought the parts and put them together--in tanks cars. We didn't even fabricate the tanks. We bought the tanks to our specifications from foundries and so forth. We would buy them and then we would lease them on long term leases. When I say long term, we had no less than five-year term leases and as high as ten, as high as fifteen in some cases. I think our average was around nine or ten-year leases. So once you locked that in, you had a steady income from that four million dollars invested in a couple hundred cars--the company had a steady income from this. And we maintained these cars, painted them . . .

COL LASHER: Oh, you did the maintenance on the cars?

MG LASHER: We did the maintenance. This was what was called the full service

lease. All the leasee had to do was load them and route them and get them backed; we followed them for them. We'd help the guy and then we would take them out on regular maintenance cycles and put them in our shops and maintain them. We never did assemble cars for sale--we didn't sell cars; we just leased them.

COL LASHER: But you assembled special cars on consignment or special orders for a guaranteed lease?

MG LASHER: Yes.

COL LASHER: If they had a special item that they wanted to ship.

MG LASHER: If it was a very special item, we wouldn't put the car together until we had a lease. But it was a relatively . . . what I call, we went long on car inventory on the common ordinary boxcar and hopper cars we would build them ahead of leases sometimes, but if it was a specialized car we would not do it until we got a lease for it. And our leasing was not to the railroads, but primarily to the industry, who had requirements for special cars. And the company was a very heavy user of capital funds and we were in the market for money two or three times every year and borrowed anywhere from forty to a hundred million dollars a year. So this was a . . . you see how financial . . .

COL LASHER: Increased your long debt by that unit every year?

MG LASHER: Yes. So you see how financially oriented we were. The money market, the cost of money, was very important to us. The sell of our paper on which this was placed was a trick in itself. We had outside investors, bankers, do this for us. I might say here that we increased every year. We increased our long term debt, there was no question about

that. And don't forget that at the back end we were paying off debts finally and therefore the net increase in our long term debt was not forty to seventy, eighty, ninety million dollars a year, our net increase, but, of course, the amount of the leverage I could get out of this was based entirely upon our net worth. And as one thing grew on the other, and as our net worth increased, then our leverage increased and our ability to borrow more money increased.

COL LASHER: Money begets money.

MG LASHER: And we had an asset which we wrote off in fifteen years, but which had a physical life of thirty to forty years. So after you paid off the debt on this car, the fifteen years, the next fifteen or twenty years the only charge against that car was the maintenance, keeping it running. Whereas every time you renewed the lease or every time you released it to somebody else you would get a higher price for it, because inflation had taken care of this. And you had only this one service, there was no debt service against that car after the fifteen years. So you see that car was a heavy earner in the last fifteen to twenty years of its life. A real good business, no question about it. And, of course, leasing now has changed considerably in the last few years and the advent of the big surge in computers has turned around the leasing business quite considerably. But they still don't have the advantage of this railroad car asset, which is a slowly obsolescent creature; it does not obsolete very fast. And therefore, you get this extra life of fifteen to twenty years which you don't get from a computer, for instance, or an automobile or many other items that are being leased.

COL LASHER: What were your main sources that you leased to? The types of industry that you leased to?

MG LASHER: Well, we leased to chemical companies and heavily, we leased to . . .

COL LASHER: Meat packers?

MG LASHER: Oh, yes. We had a big fleet of refrigerator cars, first all ice and then later mechanical, and we leased to vegetable oil people. A. E. Staley was an account we had. It was one of our biggest accounts. We had twenty-five hundred cars with A. E. Staley, which was vegetable oil. And some of the oil companies, grain, hopper cars . . .

COL LASHER: Milk?

MG LASHER: No, we never had milk. That went almost at once to highway, the movement of bulk milk went almost at once from the can. You remember the can with the two handles on it about two and a half feet high--milk car?

COL LASHER: Five gallon car, yes.

MG LASHER: And that went in baggage cars . . .

COL LASHER: I guess it was a ten gallon.

MG LASHER: And then from that small can it went into bulk, but the bulk was handled by truck.

COL LASHER: Roughly what was the size of the fleet of cars when you came with North American versus when you left?

MG LASHER: Oh, it was about double. I about doubled it.

COL LASHER: What are we talking about in numbers?

MG LASHER: Twelve or thirteen to twenty-five, twenty-eight . . .

COL LASHER: Thousand railroad cars.

MG LASHER: And we had two large shops--one at Chicago Ridge, Illinois, and one at Texarkana, Arkansas, and we had about eight small shops. Like for A. E. Steely, for instance, we had 2,300 cars with him. We had a shop

right there so when the cars came in they went through our shop first before they went for loading and if there was anything wrong with them we fixed them. We did that with some others and packers.

COL LASHER: The question that has always interested me is whether or not railroads looked upon the leasers or companies that leased cars, you and what other company . . . there was another very large . . .

MG LASHER: General American . . .

COL LASHER: General American . . .

MG LASHER: . . . and Union Tank Car Line and there was another one. Three of us headquartered in Chicago and one in New York, which was called Shippers Car Line, a subsidiary of American Car and Foundry, which later became ACF Industries. So there were essentially four of us and it was a pretty close situation primarily because of the financial situation. It took an awful lot of money to get started.

COL LASHER: Big investment before you get into . . .

MG LASHER: Heavy investment before you start getting anything back in. And our company was seventy-five years old when I came to it, which means it was the early part of the century . . . well, it was about . . . well, not quite. It started about 1904, 1905, and General American was started about 1880 something or 1890. Union Tank Line was an offshoot of Standard Oil Trust. And part of Judge Landis' decision on breaking up the big Standard Oil thing of Rockefellers was that they had to divest themselves of the car line, they carried their own part.

COL LASHER: Oh, really?

MG LASHER: And that went to another company, so they set up the Union Tank

Car Line and took all the cars that old Standard Oil had. Well, this is a funny thing. The oil companies also came from that, most of them, the Standard Oil of Ohio, Standard Oil of Indiana, Standard Oil of Kentucky, Standard of California, Standard of New York, Socony, you know, and they were all offshoots of this. And we couldn't get into that business. We couldn't lease that many cars. Who had it? Union had it. And that monopoly lasted well into my regime at North American Car. We knew we had a better deal on a particular car for, let's say Standard of Indiana, and the traffic manager of Standard of Indiana was an old friend of mine, a long time, good friend of mine back in Washington--and his hands are tied. We would give them a bid and he said, "You are going to get it finally," and all of a sudden we didn't get it. It went to Union and he had been told to give it to Union. You talk about manipulation. There was no way we could prove it, but I am sure that somebody called somebody in New York and somebody in New York called somebody in Chicago and said, "Take those cars from Union." We were convinced of this.

COL LASHER: It almost had to be.

MG LASHER: Yes. But laterally in the mid-'60s we started it. And I think our first one was Ohio, Standard of Ohio, a few cars, fifty maybe. And General American started getting in some, too, who never had any either. See, these were all tank cars. We started going, we got some with Kentucky, we got some with California and, I guess, General American did, too. See how long that lasted? Judge Landis' decision was a landmark decision. There is no question. It broke up the Standard Oil Trust, I guess, before 1910. So you see how long that affiliation lasted. And probably toward 1950 and '60s, it was more apparent than real, but nevertheless the vestiges of it

carried with the older men involved. Very strange thing. But North American now has quite a few cars with Standard Oil Company--they've got different names, but, as you know, Standard of Kentucky, Standard of Illinois, Standard of Indiana, Standard of Ohio, many of them. Well, anyway that's besides the point, but it was an interesting sidelight in the whole thing.

COL LASHER: Well, now what I was asking, how did the railroad perceive the leasing companies as to whether they looked upon you all as competitors or actually helping the industry?

MG LASHER: Well, here again before I came to this company the fortunes of the railroads had started to slide. Through World War II and for a few years later afterwards they did pretty well, but the trucks started moving in a big way as a competitor. And due to strictures of the Interstate Commerce Commission and the pressures of unionism, the railroads' fortunes started to decline in many ways. And in context to your question, one of the ways was that their paper, their debt paper, was not as salable as it had been before. Therefore, they couldn't borrow the money to replenish their fleets in many ways or in many instances or to satisfy customers with special demands--boxcars, okay, forty-foot, fifty-foot, sixty-foot boxcars, they could always use this. But it was a little odd for even a good customer. They didn't have the money to go and get it. They couldn't borrow it except for at very high rates, money rates, whereas the Interstate Commerce Commission kept their transportation rates down so they were between the devil and the deep blue sea. And from an investment point of view from an outsider, who is investing money, my advice is to stay away from the regulated industries--industries regulated by the government, the Interstate

Commerce Commission, Civil Aeronautics Board, Merchant Marine, any of them because the railroad situation for instance, they go to the bargaining table at the expiration of a contract with this, that and the other. And they had a multitude of unions to deal with and they may sit and haggle over this for six or eight months. And they come to an agreement and they make it retroactive to back when the old contract ceased. So the railroad goes to the Interstate Commerce Commission and says, "Our cost has gone up for this and so because of this new agreement, when does the new rate go in?" Six months later because they had hearings all over the country and asked everybody, "Do you want your freight rates increased?" Of course, the shipper comes in and says no, this is ridiculous. And finally the compromise that, but there is a year or more, every time lapsed, and this has just cut the legs right out from under the railroads in many ways. I have a great deal of sympathy for the plight they find themselves in today, because they, in many instances, they couldn't finance this. They never did touch tank cars, they never wanted to own tank cars. Now some of the railroads who were in better financial position, Santa Fe, let's just take for instance, said, "We'll never let a rental car in our lines," originally. In other words when we had a shipper on, let's say the Santa Fe, a big shipper and he wanted four or five hundred cars and he wanted to lease them from us for one reason or another, whatever it might be, we'd have to go to Santa Fe and ask their permission, get their okay before we could place those cars on their railroad at an originating line. Usually we would get it.

COL LASHER: What if Santa Fe said they wouldn't?

MG LASHER: Well, I meant generally. Usually we'd get it, but Santa Fe

had a policy they wouldn't allow them. Southern Pacific tried to keep this through, too, and we had a hell of a time with Southern Pacific on the same thing. And I had a lot of friends on the Southern Pacific, but it didn't do any good. But those lines were wealthy and they could afford to do just about what they wanted to as far as satisfying their customers were concerned.

COL LASHER: So the answer to my question is that it depends upon your position.

MG LASHER: Depends if,there was only a couple of them like that. They were about the only two.

COL LASHER: But most of them looked upon it as helping the industry though, like fulfilling a need . . .

MG LASHER: They were outfoxed with a specialized car, that's all. They wanted the GI, all-purpose car; that's what they wanted. So if this customer went bankrupt they could use those cars on the other end of their lines somewhere for other customers.

COL LASHER: How about coal cars, were they mostly owned by the railroads?

MG LASHER: They were, but not anymore. They are mostly leased now.

COL LASHER: Oh, really?

MG LASHER: Yes. Because they didn't have the money to buy them. And new leases were set up, the leasing techniques became improved and streamlined and new concepts of, what we called, special trains. And they would lease a train of cars . . . give trains of cars to serve a particular utility. They were the big users of coal I'd say, from mine to their production plant and those trains would go back and forth all day and just shuttle train-loads at a time. This was possible because of the advanced techniques in machinery where they could load the train faster . . . almost in motion and

unload it. The trick of this was to keep the cars moving, transportation. Now you may or may not remember down at Eustis, we were at the ocean end of the Northern and Western and the Chesapeake and Ohio, both very heavy coal carriers. Those yards down in Newport News were always full of loaded coal cars and they would sit there, sit there and sit there waiting for a ship to come in to load. There was an asset, this car, sitting under a load waiting to be unloaded there for days and weeks sometime. And the trick on our part was to keep our cars moving. But to get back to the more major points of my civilian end of my experience. As I said I was elected president at the first annual meeting after I arrived, which was in April 1958. About the end of that year, Bill Spencer, who I forgot to mention to you, wears the Distinguished Service Cross from his World War I service, and, of course, in those days it was a little bit different than a DSC is today. But anyway he retired and as he retired I was then made chief executive offic so within the first year I was president and chief executive officer. Our plan was, and all agreed to it, that we would leave the chairmanship of the company vacant and not have a chairman. I chaired the meetings of the board, but we didn't have a formal chairman. The idea was, and I think it was a good one and we adhered to it, that when my retirement age became imminent from the company, I could move to the vacancy of chairman and retain the title of "executive officer," but bring in a man or promote a man and name him as president and give him a year or two as president while I was still on active duty as chairman and chief executive officer, which is what we did. We thought it was a pretty good idea. I found the company was divided into two rather political cliques; one toting up to one of the officers of the

company, as I found it, and another one toting up to another one. Well, this seems to be a way of life. I thought it was a way of life, but I think I rather successfully broke this up because both of those guys were in the four that retired within a year or so. So they had no real place to go to lay their grievances or plot their moves and so forth. So the fact that these four guys did retire was another factor in the timing of my advent in the business world. I brought to it a great deal of military experience that was highly valuable. And I had always considered that men were probably the most important things. Now in this company there were three things that were of primary importance; men, money and raw material, whatever they were, freight car wheels or whatever our raw material was. And I placed men as the number one problem; money you could get, all you had to do was pay enough for it. You could get it, but men you could pay all you wanted and the man might not cut the mustard. And the way that military personnel was handled, with many people not agreeing with me, its basic principles were good, and I applied them in this company. I held them somewhat aloof as president and chief executive officer, played no favorites and although we didn't have to have any kind of system of evaluation, yet we had one informally. And the senior officers in the company, the vice presidents, were pretty conscientious in their recommendations.

COL LASHER: That particular point is one that is today a very, very high interest in the Army, very high interest.

MG LASHER: What thing?

COL LASHER: Personnel evaluation, personnel policy. I would like to ask you what you did do, particularly in the executive, mid to top executive

level to evaluate and bring along and educate and groom executives? You say you had no formal policy.

MG LASHER: Reporting system.

COL LASHER: Reporting system?

MG LASHER: It was a small company.

COL LASHER: Well, how did you evaluate and promote?

MG LASHER: Based upon production. Whatever the guy's job was, how well was he doing it? And we were small enough so . . . not that I could supervise more than a couple levels down, but I saw everybody everyday pretty near. And I could go through the vice president to the next echelon certainly and know how the guy was doing, no matter how his superior might get down below that I couldn't, but we were small enough so you could. I don't care what system is set up to do this, there is some basic principles that have got to be followed in the handling of people.

COL LASHER: Such as?

MG LASHER: You've got to be fair with them. You've got to recognize ability or recognize lack of ability.

COL LASHER: And tell them?

MG LASHER: Yes. Talk to them.

COL LASHER: . . . that they have lack of ability or that they have it.

MG LASHER: Yes.

COL LASHER: So you are saying that counseling is very important in keeping a guy . . . leveling, being honest with him.

MG LASHER: That's right. It's a two-way street. You just cannot ignore these people. They put their pants on one leg at a time just as you do,

and they have families and they have problems at home. Many of them . . . some can leave them at home, some have to bring them to the office and you've got to recognize it, you've got to sense it and feel it. Well, for instance, right away I put in a system of annual physicals for about the top three echelons of people in the company--it wasn't mandatory. Some didn't choose to do it, some felt it was an invasion of privacy.

COL LASHER: But it was provided as a service?

MG LASHER: That's right. Well, now this is one thing I brought from the military. A physical meant nothing to me. I had had it ever since I was seventeen years old. And it was no invasion of my privacy as far as I was concerned. And I set it up so that . . . the only thing I got from the clinic that did it . . . we contracted for it . . . the only thing that I got was a letter that it had been done for Mr. so and so, no problems had been found or some problems had been found, and he has been advised to go to his personal physician to have them looked at. So it was really no invasion of privacy, but some just didn't like it. I had one vice president who was a terrible hypochondriac, and he wasn't going. Well, okay, he didn't want to, but by and large this among other things indicated that the top guy was interested in the welfare of the individuals, you know, and even below this the people who weren't entitled to this . . . we didn't do it for all . . . the people who weren't entitled to this knew that the top was looking at everybody and was doing what it could for the best. And I think this matter of honesty is a two-way street and so forth; counseling, as you call it is very important, and I think that the other side of the coin, which is giving credit when it's deserved, is very important, too. And the Army has

strived, for instance, to, in cases where it can, to award a battle award on the field of battle, right at the time it happened almost, if possible, so that everybody around, everybody knows and can connect the act with the deed. So we did a lot of things in this.

COL LASHER: The act of recognition.

MG LASHER: Yes. The act of recognition with the deed. And the pay structure, I changed that . . . I didn't increase it very much, but rearranged it. I put in a vacation policy which was better than the one I found. I announced a policy of promotion from within and not going out and getting other people, except in very rare circumstances. All these things, many that I can't think of now, but which came very normally to me from my previous thirty years in the Army did much to make a cohesive outfit of this.

COL LASHER: This is an interesting point. What you are saying in essence is that the Army's personnel policies and management policies that you learned are basically as good as possible and largely responsible for your success in civilian life as well as military.

MG LASHER: Yes.

COL LASHER: How much of these do you . . .

MG LASHER: I can say it even better--I think the military was way ahead in the handling of its people than I found in industry, and certainly than I found in my company. And from what I learned of other companies the same was true. We were way ahead and I found that they slowly were adopting things, policies, that the Army had had in for years.

COL LASHER: Well, maybe this is premature, but how much of your success as a manager, commander in the service and manager in industry, do you ascribe

to what you learned from policy of the Army and what you learned on your own?

MG LASHER: Oh, the learning process while I was in the Army all seemed routine while it was happening. You gave and took, you went along, the rules were set down, you tried to follow them as closely as possible. Some you could do to the letter; some you had to temporize on or modify. And as you went along you got a feeling inside you, almost by osmosis, but it all was routine. And this kept growing inside of you, in your mind, everything as to how you comported yourself and everything. The whole thing is based on the character of the individual, in my opinion, entirely. Not only in the handling of people, the handling of money--North American Car in the late '30s had a defalcation by a junior employee of 400,000 dollars--General Wood, they said, nearly had apoplexy when he found out about it. And they finally got the guy--they never got the money back, but he went to jail. When I got to the company one of the first things I found was a bank account in a little bank out in the northwest part of the city. I said, "What is this?" It was in the president's name--I don't know how many thousand dollars was in it, but it was used for, I was told, purposes that couldn't get on the books. I cancelled the account right away and brought it in with our other money--it was a bag job, that's all it was. I mention . . . all right, I'll say it. A. E. Staley was one of our big accounts. The first Christmas I was there the traffic manager of A. E. Staley received a whole new set of aluminum screens and storm windows for his house from North American Car. Now we know that's wrong, don't we? We know that's wrong, but it wasn't unusual . . . but the mere fact that I knew it was wrong

and I changed it; it went through the company like wildfire. It was a routine thing as far as I was concerned. I didn't want any part of it, see. I didn't want to go to jail. Maybe there was some fear in it, but there was also some character that I had had in the Army. And so I cancelled it out, we never did it, but it was no big thing to be . . . but the fact that I did it. . . everybody in the company knew that we were buying some of this business, everybody there, slabbers, file clerks--but Lasher didn't, he wasn't going to stand for this. Lasher always wore a different suit every day, he always had his hair cut, shoes were shined, he always had fancy neckties--all the guys started getting new neckties. I always got there on time, little things like this, you know--reveille blows, you get out and get in ranks and report "Here, sir." Well, I couldn't go after a vice president, who called in at 9:30 . . . where the hell are you, if I hadn't been there at a quarter of eight. Now these are little things that really don't occur to you, you know. They have been part of your life in the military, you discover something different.

COL LASHER: But they are management techniques that are very important that you don't find as much of on the outside.

MG LASHER: It had an impact on the people that you worked with.

COL LASHER: And you take them as second nature after so many years.

MG LASHER: You don't even know you are doing it half the time.

COL LASHER: That's very interesting.

MG LASHER: Just like this bag deal. I didn't think it was any great thing. It was simply that I didn't think we should do this. I wouldn't do it, so I didn't think the company should do it. And so I stopped it.

I just went to the treasurer and I told him to pick up this account and put it in the other account in the major bank and that's all--it got around.

COL LASHER: Yes, sir, I am sure they do.

MG LASHER: And now then I . . . oh, yes, not long after I got there I wondered why we were not on the New York Stock Exchange--our common stock was listed on the Midwest Stock Exchange. So I looked into it and I found that we qualified, by far more qualified for the New York Stock Exchange than was needed, so we moved . . . this is quite a thing . . . we didn't move we just went to the New York Stock Exchange and continued on the Midwest. That was a big deal and I was quite proud of it--big fanfare and one of our vice presidents bought the first hundred shares of stock. He was the first purchaser on the tape. I have the tape as a matter of fact of the first hundred shares. And the stock exchange makes quite a fuss out of the company that comes with them, you know, and we got a tour--your mother went down to a luncheon and we went through the New York Stock Exchange and how they did it. This was very good for our stock, incidentally, that we were listed on the New York Exchange. And one of the other major moves I made early, and I don't . . . well, I just made it a point to learn some of these things. The company was incorporated in the state of Illinois and so many companies are located in Delaware, their corporate headquarters are incorporated under the laws of the state of Delaware. And I wondered why. And the reason is that the state of Delaware's corporate laws are probably better, better in a legal sense than most any other state because most of these laws having become solidified, not only by enactment by the law, but by the interpretation of that law by the courts so that anything which impinges upon the corporate

structure of the company, you know where you stand and what avenues you can take and what you can't take because this law has been tested over and over. And you will find, I don't know how many hundreds of companies who are incorporated in the state of Delaware and have their business headquarters elsewhere, but they are incorporated and, of course, they have to have a lawyer there and have an office there. But that's about all it is, but there are these very important basic considerations for being incorporated. So this took some action and we did this as soon as we could and this helped the company in many ways. And so as we went along . . . and, of course, I was in a very bad position. The only guys I could ask questions of were the directors, the people who hired me and most of them were old management people--why hadn't you gone to the New York Stock Exchange long before, why hadn't you incorporated in the state of Delaware and these things. I couldn't ask these questions; I just had to make up a presentation to the board and recommend that we do . . . talked it over and they agreed. And so it was with most everything I brought to the board. I had a very good board. But yet I never pressed them for the things which were too outrageous and before I brought it up formally at a meeting of the board, I always talked it over with most of the board members and knew that they would vote for it. If I knew it was going to be controversial then my approach would be different. But by and large my board was very helpful to me--a bit on the conservative side, I might say. And the conservativeness of this group of men was reflected to some extent in the action of the company--they were always worried about the way I leveraged the debt, how much debt I incurred. And yet we made more money, the size of our fleet increased, we built a whole brand new

beautiful modern plant in Texarkana, Arkansas; our plant in Chicago Ridge burned--two-thirds of it. We tore it down and built another new plant there. And during my tenure the value of the common stock, the person who had one share of stock when I came in, when I left had four shares. So . . .

COL LASHER: He had four shares and what was the value of them?

MG LASHER: Quadrupled, one of the values quadrupled. My ten thousand share stock option, we split the stock and I had twenty thousand shares of stock option. We then split the stock again and I had forty thousand. This is about the measure; it was only one year that we did not increase the dividend. And the increase each year in dividends more than offset the increase in the cost of living index by far. So as a going concern I am quite proud of the things that happened. And the fact that we were taken over eventually was in one way a compliment because we pulled a very poor company up out of th[illegible] That's all there was to it. And we would not have been taken over had they obeyed the law in the operation that they conducted against us--we never proved it. I might go after this later as I come closer to retiring, but I am sure that we could have beaten it.

COL LASHER: I'd like to get back to that.

MG LASHER: So all and all the experience I had was very great. I knew a lot of people and, of course, this was a fairly good size company, not the biggest by any means, but by no means the smallest. So part of my duties had to do with extracurricular things. And I participated in civic affairs to quite an extent. I spent quite a bit of time for various fund drives I participated in. I interested myself for a long time in the Boy Scouts because I felt that youth was very important and starting these youngsters

out in the right direction, at least getting them pointed in the right direction was important. For several years I was vice president of the Chicago Council of B.S.A. here and participated very highly. I was given an award of Man of the Year or something like that for it. And I interested myself in the city itself. I was for a number of years the vice president of Dash Transportation of the Chicago Association of Commerce and Industry which is the Chamber of Commerce here. I was on the policy council of that group for quite a long time. I spent a lot of time on it. And I affiliated with various other things--Salvation Army I had a little to do with for a few years. And then I associated myself with the Laymen's National Bible Committee, who annually solicited funds for their activities. And I was what they called the transportation industry chairman and I would solicit money from the transportation industry--did that for six or eight years and the last time I was general industry chairman and Justice Goldberg was overall chairman that year.

COL LASHER: Chairman of what?

MG LASHER: This was the National Bible Association headquartered in New York--and I got a plaque from that for my services. I became, later on, quite interested personally in antiquities of one sort or another and particularly books and started to collect Revolutionary War, primary sources of Revolutionary War and joined a club called the Caxton Club--Caxton was the first printer in England around the sixteenth century or something. And I am on the policy committee of that now. So my interest ranged pretty far and wide. Of course, I was associated with practically every transportation group in the country, national and local as well, mostly national . . . the Transportation Association of America, the Newcomen Society, the National Transportation

Association, and the National Freight Traffic Association, any number of them, it always took a little time, but I also kept the North American flag waving in the right, I thought, the right places.

COL LASHER: Did you find that it took too much time away from your job?

MG LASHER: No, I don't think so. I turned a lot down. Like everybody else, I wasn't singled out, don't misunderstand me, but like everybody else I was pestered to join in this or join in that or help collect money for this thing or the other. And there was just so many hours in the day and most of those went to the company. But what you could spare, and some you couldn't spare, otherwise you tried to do what you could. I was in Who's Who before I came here, but I remained in the Who's Who and I became Who's Who . . . I was put in Who's Who in Industry and Who's Who in Transportation and a couple of other such similar things. I was a member of the Chicago Club here until after I retired and of the Mid-America Club, which is another nice club here. Although I was not a golf player, I did not affiliate with any country club. And I was rather chary of allowing golf club expenses on our expense account. This was another thing which was a rather tough situation for me--what you allow on expense accounts and what you don't. Well, I found that, for instance, that boy this really went through the company like wildfire. We had a young man down in Houston, running our Houston office--the sales department had hired him and they thought he was real great. And he was riding his expense account just something terrible. One of my trips down there, somebody went down with me, but anyway Johnny met us and everything, you know, and we went somewhere and had a drink. Johnny had girls all lined up for us that night, you know, and Johnny got fired very shortly after that. We had another guy out in San

Francisco. He died a young man, died of cancer. Let me see if I can recount this one. He was a bachelor. What family he had was up in Wisconsin and he belonged to the sales department. And Christmas time came and they found a reason for bringing him in for consultation and, of course, he'd go up to Wisconsin to visit his family. And he wanted to buy a new car and he could get it cheaper here. He lived in San Francisco and he could get it cheaper here. As I recall the thing, he did and then charged the company mileage out to San Francisco when he drove it out. Well, you run into these things, you know; particularly in this gray area of expense accounts there are some pretty tough decisions. Some of them are moral and when you start sitting judgment on the morals of the other person, or another individual, you are already in trouble when you decide to sit in judgment--whatever your judgment is, you know. So these are things which were new to me. Things like this we new to me. It was very cut and dried--I tried to make it as cut and dried as I could here, but there was a flagrant misuse of company cars, company automobiles . . . flagrant misuse. Well, the president of the company, the guy who was president, Roblee, the company owned a Chrysler Imperial which was the top car, the executive car . . . it was his really. He used it more than anybody else. His daughter had a bunch of kids out one day and wrecked the car--this was before I came here and I heard about it and the company paid for it. It was just before I came; he was injured to an extent. This is what I mean, something we never did in the Army was to put military property, let's call it, to our own use. There were so many new things, but on the other hand I get right back to the fact that the kind of man you are, after thirty years with one association you pretty well fix what kind of

person you are. And you move into another situation and those things--you don't know any other way to do things. And most of them, I must say I think most of them that I got from 1925 on and West Point were good things that I learned. And this was in the Army too. I don't know whether I recounted the incident which has always been in my mind. We had an assistant chief of transportation under Gross by the name of Bob Wiley. He was a waterman, came up from the Quartermaster Corps and he had been in the Army transport service for a number of years and knew the water situation pretty well, and had a lot of service and he was no Johnny come lately like we got in at the wartime. I liked Bob. He was a heavy drinker and he had been married a couple of times and he was somewhat of a high binder, but he was a pretty solid citizen nonetheless. And one day I got fed up with Williamson, you know . . . I've told you about Williamson?

COL LASHER: Yes.

MG LASHER: Did I tell you about when I was talking to Wiley about him?

COL LASHER: No.

MG LASHER: Well, I went up to Wiley. I called him up on the phone and he said, "Come on up." So I went up there, I guess, probably my chin was down to my knees.

COL LASHER: He was above you, Wiley was?

MG LASHER: Well, he was on the next floor up and he was a brigadier general. He was one of the assistant chiefs of transportation under Gross, during the war. Williamson was my boss--just raising hell with all of them. He didn't know anything about how to handle people, how to handle himself or anything. And I went up to tell him, I suppose it was some special thing that triggered

this. I had gone up and was griping about it. Well, Wiley had a lot of papers on his desk like we always had, you know. He nodded curtly to me and I sat down. Finally he got through with the papers and he said, "What's up? What have you got on your mind?" So I started out. He listened to me for a couple of minutes and started doing what he was doing, never looked up and I went all through this thing. I didn't think he was listening, but nevertheless I went through my speech. And pretty soon I stopped. He went on for a second. He said, "You all through?" I said, "Yes, sir." He said, "You feel better?" I said, "Yes, sure. Thanks." He dismissed me. I just got it off my chest, you know. It's a great thing. You may have done that or something like that.

COL LASHER: Yes, I have done exactly the same.

MG LASHER: Go charging in, you know, and you want him to do something about it . . . you just can't stand this any longer. That's the only time I ever tipped over like that, but he said, "You all through?" He said that's fine, that will be all, and back I went. Well, these are the things which you grow up with, which get into you and you don't know it--but they form part of you. And that's what the whole thing makes you. Now I think I am about at the end of . . . oh, yes, I want to say something else about the growth of the company. Shortly after I came there . . . well, let me put it this way. Standard and Poor, among many other things, puts out a rating booklet every month and it rates all the common stocks and well preferred, too. It's a little book about a half inch thick and tells all about earnings over the years and lots of data and it has a rating on it on the stock. And all of a sudden we got an A+ rating which is the highest rating that Standard put

in and our common stock had an A+ rating all the time I was there.

COL LASHER: It never had one before?

MG LASHER: No. I felt quite pleased with what I had done, even though I was vulnerable to an attack such as Flying Tiger made. Now so we come to about 1970 and I had failed in this respect. I had not found a successor. Did I say 1970 . . . ?

COL LASHER: Yes.

MG LASHER: And you see I was to retire in 1971 for age. And I think one of the important things for a top official, one of his important tasks, particularly in a situation as I was in, was to insure the continuity of the company--no matter who is sitting in what chair. And I had not done this. I fired three different people, all vice presidents. I fired them, let them go, because early on the first one was quite awhile, maybe like 1965, he was the financial vice president, an important job and a good man. He wanted to be designated executive vice president. In other words, heir apparent, and I couldn't do it. I couldn't promise it to him. He had not comported himself otherwise ~~Heavenly~~ as I thought he should. He introduced me to a whorehouse in New York, where he left his business card, incidentally, with the madame. He was playing with a girl downtown at lunch hours . . . he was Catholic, lived on the north side, and would usually do his confession downtown to a priest who never knew him. And he would brag about it and he would come back from one of his sessions with a gal and tell me he didn't know how he was going to take care of the old lady tonight. You can imagine how it bothered me. And yet he had been hired just about a year and a half before I had by Bill Brooks, who was one of the directors who thought

very highly of him, but didn't know this. And so he started getting itchy pants. He wanted to assure his future. He was going to be the successor and the title would have been executive vice president. See, that would have meant that he was the number two man without any question. And I just told him no, I wasn't going to do it. I couldn't promise him anything or the board couldn't promise him anything at this time. It was several years before I'd retire and anything could happen in the meantime. Well, he bugged me about it two or three times and one day he came in and he said, "I thought this all over, our conversations about this." He said, "I think that if you can't do this, why I'll have to resign." I said, "All right, George, give me your letter." It was about ten o'clock in the morning. And he got his acceptance by one, and I went and handed it to him and I told him that we'd make a car available to him to take his personal effects home that afternoon.

COL LASHER: Just like that?

MG LASHER: Just like that. Two others tried to back me in the same corner, and I let them go. You see in a small outfit like this where there are four or five vice presidents who hope they might be president, you know, and to name one eight years before I was going to retire--everybody knew my retirement was 1971 and here we were in 1965, '66 and to name one would have just dampened everything all across the board, you know.

COL LASHER: But that's a perennial problem in industry. You have to, as you say, groom somebody.

MG LASHER: That's right.

COL LASHER: As soon as you do, everybody else knows it; then there is a certain let off.

MG LASHER: But you've got to wait until you are somewhat close to the time of change. You can't do it eight years ahead. This guy may . . . you don't know what he'll do. He might run off with a million dollars or something in the meantime. Or you become disenchanted entirely with him and find out that he really isn't the guy that can do it. And yet you've designated him. Of course, you can always promote somebody to the president on top of them. That's not good either, and the whole thing, I think, is the maintenance amongst the second echelon of people. The maintenance of their enthusiasm and their drive in the competition for the promotion, maintain that. So I had three such cases, not just one of them. Very terribly intelligent young fellow, I got him through Handy's Associates, the same outfit, and he was to replace this George I was telling you about as financial vice president. We hired him. I thought he was the answer to many prayers. He had had two or three jobs. He started out with the Chase Bank, went to TWA and Northeast Airlines, financial. Kept Northeast Airlines going when nobody seemed to think he could possibly do it by his fast footwork in the financial area, and this is what I needed. So we hired him and he wanted to be named, he was just too eager, he wanted to be president--hell, he wasn't as old as you are. Paid him a good salary, but that wasn't enough, soon enough, so he wanted to go. So I let him go. He got this offer--there was a vice president down at Chase who was constantly offering him new jobs. This is one of the things, he kept a burr under his tail, and you get these influences that you have no control over on people . . . and he has had three or four jobs since then. So he is not going to do what he wants to do . . . just can't stay.

COL LASHER: You've got to show some stability.

MG LASHER: You're going to stop this one now?

END

SECTION 5

INTERVIEW WITH MAJOR GENERAL LASHER BY COLONEL D. R. LASHER, 27 JANUARY 1973, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS, UNCLASSIFIED MATERIAL.

COL LASHER: This is side one of tape five of the oral history of Major General E. C. R. Lasher. General Lasher, at the end of the fourth tape, we were discussing North American Car just before it was taken over by the Flying Tiger and shortly before your retirement.

MG LASHER: Yes, well, as I said one of the major things that I failed to do for this company was to find a successor and I lost, for various reasons, three pretty senior vice presidents. So it was a little difficult for me to find the right kind of man inside the organization. Before I go into the other end of that further, I would like to tell you that I felt the timing. . .to put it this way, considering the success, modest though it might have been, the success of the company during the presidency. . .one of the fortunate parts was that I came to the company at the right time. The economic climate was right for an expansion of this company. The market was ready so far as the market price was concerned. Many of those factors over which I had no control were favorable although I wasn't ready at the time. I look back and I find that they were favorable. In addition to the monetary gain to the stockholders, I also tried to move some innovation into the railroad industry. I felt that they were building the same car, using the same car essentially in 1960 as they were in 1930. It truly was. They were still using the forty-foot boxcar, and in our discussion on financing this was an advantage to the company actually because of the slow obsolescence of this type of equipment. One of

the reasons was because the railroads were just not innovating. They were not innovating engineering-wise in order to get new ideas into it. Forty-foot boxcar, the fifty-foot boxcar was still being used the same way. They had advanced a little bit in their handling of cars and yards. They got automatic switching and electronic devices of one kind or another. But no real thing in the car. I had a study made by outsiders on the movement of automobiles by railroad. I felt that it was much more economical to go by railroad than it was being done by over-the-road vehicles. We gave Battel Institute in Ohio a contract to study. They felt that it was feasible and gave some start on engineering ideas. About the same time we find the car in Germany which was called the auto-porter. It was three cars in one articulated. It held, I have forgotten how many, about fourteen or sixteen automobiles on two decks, self-contained. But it never took. We were the first ones however, and the only ones for many years who leased automobile, cars as we now know them, automobile rack cars. None of our competitors got in it. We got in it first with both feet because we had had this background and this proved very profitable to us over the years. We also innovated the plastic tank cars.

COL LASHER: Plastic or fiberglass?

MG LASHER: We called them plastic for want of a more precise name. We had a precise name. Then the first thing we went into was wound fiberglass on epoxy resin. We had it done for us by a company in Oklahoma who was making missile casings for the Navy, large ones, and they thought they could do it. We told them that the engineering

requirements, the strength requirement, were entirely different. The casings they were making were a one shot deal. They were destroyed upon firing and yet the weight and strength essentially was there. So we made a contract with them to build us a tank. We gave them the specifications. They didn't meet them. We modified it and we showed it as a car. We made a car out of it but it never did hold water as a matter of fact. It was very strange. They couldn't get this vessel to hold water. They just couldn't do it and it hasn't been done yet. But the whole idea was to. . .we made a tank for a tank car which was nine tons less in weight than a steel tank car, in the steel tank. Therefore, the same size tank had nine tons more material in. In other words heavier liquids.

COL LASHER: Yes.

MG LASHER: And there is a great range of liquids as far as weight is concerned. But we were taking nine tons out of dead weight. Now, this not only helped the shipper perhaps if he had heavier liquids, but it also helped the railroads. The railroad has to pull tonnage and one of their biggest statistics is ton miles. How many tons do they move? How many miles? One mile. The dead weight that they pulled, the more live weight the locomotive could pull. But as I said this didn't go. We spent a lot of money on this. But we came to be known as the only ones interested in railroads who were innovating. This helped our image so to speak. It helped our stock and so forth. Now, we tried acquisitions. None seemed to fit. As the time went on we. . .the composition of our board was changing, and it was getting a

little bit younger all the time, average age. The last few years we had some very good people. We had a Canadian subsidiary headquartered at Montreal. Among others we had a banker and a lawyer, and we had Mr. Lester Pearson as a director there. I beg your pardon Mike, Pearson was at one time Prime Minister of Canada, was Secretary of the United Nations, and just recently died. He was on our Canadian board. Here we had Bill Patterson who was retired then from United Airlines. He was the president. He really formed and saw it through its early years, United Airlines. He had just recently retired as Chairman of United Airlines. We had George Baker. George Baker just had been, and now he is retired, the Dean of the Harvard Business School. He was on our board. And so was Jervis Langdon who was president of the Rock Island Railroad and then went to be the number one trustee of the Penn Central. He is working down in Philadelphia now.

COL LASHER: Yes.

MG LASHER: So the company prospered and people prospered with it in many ways. But as I said before I had not found a suitable president, and I started to look for one. Mr. Handy who had hired me some twelve years previously was no longer active and there was a good firm here in Chicago that I retained to do a search. We finally came up with someone whom I suggested to start with, a man by the name of Richard Boyd. Richard Boyd was a vice president in charge of the transportation of PPG Industries--Pittsburgh Plate Glass. He lived in Pittsburgh and had quite a bit of service. He graduated from the University of Kentucky in ROTC. He was a Reserve second lieutenant when the war

broke out. He had graduated from college and had been working for the Illinois Central for some time. After he graduated from the University of Kentucky, as I say, he served as a Reserve second lieutenant. He went to work for the Illinois Central Railroad. He was high on the list to pull in and help with the transportation job the Army had to do. I asked for him and got him. He became head of all the freight side of my job. He rose to be a colonel in the Army. I finally had to lose him because I couldn't keep him in Washington any longer. He finally was ordered to the Philippines. By the time he got to the Philippines everything was all over there and he came back home and mustered out. He went back with the Illinois Central. Within a year I guess PPG Industries or Pittsburgh Plate Glass picked him up and offered him a good job and gave him the title of traffic manager. They gave him more and more responsibilities as the years went on, and he finally was made a vice president and was doing very well. So I knew him beforehand and we checked him out again and so forth, and offered him the job. He accepted. He was told that he would come in as president, that I would vacate the presidency, and that I would move to chairman of the board which we had originally planned to leave open. I would be a chairman and chief executive officer for six months to a year. The two of us agreed that he could take over the whole thing while I would vacate the chief executive job. Now, this was in early 1970 and I was to retire in 1971, September. You see we had a year and one half, almost two years to accomplish this. So this looked pretty good until I think it was June or July

that 500,000 shares of North American Common was sold one morning. We saw it. We were told when it went across the board. Of course the minute we found out we started trying to find out who.

COL LASHER: Who sold it?

MG LASHER: Who bought it.

COL LASHER: Who sold it, too?

MG LASHER: We knew where it came from. We knew there was only one place that 500,000 shares could be put together--David J. Greene & Company in New York. Those people never figured in it at all, however. In about twenty minutes, maybe a half hour after I had heard that the stock had moved, I got a call from Los Angeles and it was Wayne Hoffman, chairman of the board of Flying Tigers telling me that they had bought it, and he would like to come talk to me about it. I said, "Alright." We set up a date and he and another man came and we talked about it. Well, this was a long harrowing experience I will tell you. They continued to buy and hypothecate what they bought to get more money to buy more stock. But one thing that they did not disclose was the source of the first 500,000 shares. In the statement that they made in accordance with SEC regulations, they should have disclosed this. But they didn't. I am sure that there was a conspiracy to put this together. This was not disclosed. We hired a law firm, a very knowledgeable law firm in New York, in Chicago to take this to court. We hired a law firm in Washington to handle it with the Civil Aeronautics Board. We hired the First Boston Corporation, and New York, too, to seek other possible partners, and to assist us in fighting

this. The CAB was our biggest hope. We won our first round in court. No question about that.

COL LASHER: You won in what way?

MG LASHER: Well, they were enjoined from doing anything.

COL LASHER: Flying Tiger was enjoined from interferring in North American Car business?

MG LASHER: Yes. But if they wanted to do anything more, they could come to the court and ask them for it, which meant that if they wanted to buy some more stock all they would have to do was to check with the court. Well, we wanted a full enjoinment of their actions and status quo maintained until we could prove the things we thought we could prove, and the only solid way to do this, even though we had this partial injunction with the local court, was to get the Civil Aeronautics Board to set it down for a hearing. Maintain the status quo until they heard it and made their judgment. Had this happened Tiger would not have been able to buy our stock because they wouldn't have been able to. . .not only been unable to buy our stock but they were too heavily indebted for the money that they had borrowed to buy it in the first place that they couldn't pay the interest on the loans they had out. They fought it very much. The CAB went along with it. They just didn't pay any attention to us. I talked to Senator Hartke of Indiana about this. He was at that moment very much engaged in looking into the Penn Central difficulties. The Penn Central difficulties were exactly this. Here was a regulated industry of railroads getting into all sorts of other

businesses through the general harm to the railroad. They weren't just paying enough attention to the railroad doing their business. I said, "This is a similar case." I said, "Here is a regulated airline that is trying to get into other business where it doesn't belong, and where it is disobeying its capital assets in trying to make this acquisition. You may find a similar situation eventuate from this. I would like to have it stopped. We have gone to CAB and I want to make this known to you and your committee." Well, he contacted the CAB but it didn't do any good. So the CAB never has put the thing down for hearing. So the next thing that happened was they made a tender offer for our stock, and it went down to the wire. By the time that was over they had 45 per cent of our stock. The Flying Tiger acquired 45 per cent. Now, by all rules and customs, twenty per cent is nominal control. Any one owner having twenty per cent or more of the stock has nominal control. As soon as they owned it, there was no way we could stop them then from taking over. So that was the end of it. We called off our suit after a great deal of counsel and soul searching and figuring and so forth. This is very capsulated. We decided there wasn't anything further we could do. If only we could have gone on with the court action, but our lawyer, our special lawyers, said, "You have got to just face this fact; that here is a man, an individual, a company who has bought and paid for with hard cash 48 per cent of your stock, and if he wants to do something with this company, any judge, any court in the land will listen to him, because he has bought and paid for this stock. His desires and wants are

going to be given serious consideration." Well, this was the straw that broke our back.

COL LASHER: But suppose that you could prove that they had done this in a manner that was against the rules laid down by the Securities Exchange Commission?

MG LASHER: By that time two or three years had passed.

COL LASHER: No. It hadn't been that long.

MG LASHER: Well, there would have been if we had taken it to court.

COL LASHER: Oh!

MG LASHER: The delaying actions and so forth and so forth. They probably would have continued to buy more stock until they had fifty per cent. Before we would have gotten a judgment on the thing they would have had fifty per cent, just taken it over, lock, stock, and barrel.

COL LASHER: Not if they were enjoined not to by SEC until they determined what the outcome of the case was.

MG LASHER: There was no indication of the SEC, not the SEC.

COL LASHER: The court?

MG LASHER: The court wouldn't give us a full injunction, a full enjoinment, only a partial one. They said, "If you want anything more, report them back. We will give it consideration," which meant that everytime they wanted to buy stock they would come in and tell the court that they were about to do it-- ask permission and we would have to take our lawyer and go down and fight it, but we would lose. We knew the court would let them continue the march. This was the way those things had happened

before. Our counsel really thought we should stop. So did our local general counsel, outside general counsel. So we quit. We knocked it off and as I say 48 per cent of the stock.

COL LASHER: Where did they get the cash? Do you know?

MG LASHER: Borrowed it. Swiss banks.

COL LASHER: Short term?

MG LASHER: Oh yes. Had the CAB suspended the action until they had heard the case, the Flying Tiger would have gone down the drain. They didn't have the money.

COL LASHER: You mean they would have backed off, would have had to sell that st

MG LASHER: Well, they would have to sell the stock, yes.

COL LASHER: Sell the stock to pay off the debt? And did they, by the way? What happened after they finally took over? How did they pay the debt off? That is interesting.

MG LASHER: They changed the nature of that. Of course they had all this North American stock and they had all our earnings. We had the money.

COL LASHER: So they made it a long term debt?

MG LASHER: Yes. Well, so that was the coup de grace of the whole thing, and a rather difficult way to end up this kind of career. Nevertheless, my stewardship of the company over the years was successful. The common stockholder who was in when I became president and who stayed in through it all and took the trade of the Flying Tiger stock, eventually sold it and made a great deal of money.

COL LASHER: Percentage-wise?

COL LASHER: I mean relative to what he sold out for.

MG LASHER: Unfortunately, well by that time I did have a contract. I had learned I had a retirement contract. We had a pension plan, funded pension plan. It is Prudential Life Insurance Company, and this paid on a basis somewhat similar to the pension plan of the Army. I won't go into the details--somewhat similar to this. I, of course, only had ten years of service, twelve years service so the amount I would get out of this wasn't very great. The same way with some others at the top. So about six of us, I as spokesman,went to the board and said that we felt that these half a dozen senior officers, which included me, should have a retirement contract to reward them a little bit in a somewhat greater percentage than the run of the mill employee was rewarded. We drafted it. One of these gentlemen was our inside counsel, the vice president, and we drafted it. The board approved it. Essentially it was six per cent per year. Sixty per cent of the highest salary for ten years after retirement. My retirement on the funded part was approximately $1,400 a month. Of course the sixty per cent of my outgoing salary was considerably higher than that. So that is the basis on which I retired when I retired at age 65 at the end of September 1971. Part of that sixty per cent, the $1,400 stays with me through life, as a fund for life. The balance ceases in ten years and actually in return for this it is called a contract. I hold myself ready to consult on any matters, do any chores the board of directors might have for me. I agree to serve on the board of directors if elected, and that is about all.

COL LASHER: Since Flying Tiger took it over I presume that your duties

have been practically nil?

MG LASHER: They have. We have only had one, maybe two sitdown board meetings since I have retired and they took over. All have been by telephone which are worthless. You can't ask questions or confer on anything. They run it entirely differently. So I made my determination after this that I would liquidate. I liquidated about half of it early in '71, or in '71. The other half of that in early or mid '72. Both at a fortuitous time as far as the price was concerned, and reinvested the proceeds primarily in tax free securities. So I made out pretty well all in all. So I have this retirement in addition to my military retirement. I am still in a pretty high tax bracket but we have more exemptions. I have no difficulty with the future in what it holds. So I retired. It was a graceful retirement. I was thanked by the board of directors. I have got an illuminated book inscribed there in the resolution of the board of directors thanking me for my contribution to North American Car. We had an office party. Upper echelon of the company attended and I was presented with an antique silver epergn. On the first of October 1971, I was out of the office. My only stipulation there was that I wanted to stay in the office through September. I wanted to get rid of my stuff. Well, the new president came in and he had an office right next to me. I just didn't pay any attention to him. He went ahead and took over. I made no attempt to do anything. See, one of the first things they did was change the board of directors.

COL LASHER: Yes. Load it up with. . . .

MG LASHER: They nominated seven people and we kept six.

COL LASHER: What happened to Boyd?

MG LASHER: Boyd had a contract and they bought it off.

COL LASHER: So what is he doing now?

MG LASHER: He had to get a lawyer. The two lawyers got together and they finally agreed on an arrangement which was quite satisfactory, I felt. But anyway, Boyd looked around. He took his time and he is now the vice president and manager of central region of AMTRACK with headquarters here in Chicago. A very good job. I don't know what he gets paid but it is a good substantial job.

COL LASHER: That kind of winds up your two careers, doesn't it?

MG LASHER: It does. Of course to bridge the transition I knew we were going to move out of Chicago so I had been looking for two or three years prior to this period for a place to live. Your mother wanted to live in San Francisco or on the west coast. I wanted to live in the east, particularly in the Hudson Valley. We had a lot of talk and consideration about that. But there were factors for and against each side. We finally agreed only this year, 1973, on a house in New York, upstate New York, and bought it in December of last year.

COL LASHER: Your house is just opposite West Point?

MG LASHER: I beg your pardon?

COL LASHER: Opposite West Point?

MG LASHER: It is at Cold Spring, New York, which is a little north, not quite exactly opposite. It is north of Constitution Island actually. It affords me some space that I think I can utilize to good particular purposes. We are now looking for some household help that will keep

house for us. We plan on doing a lot of travel. We want somebody to take care of us and see that we are fed and the lawn is mowed and everything else. I've become very interested in this sort of thing, particularly the architectural side of it. So I will have a lot of fun getting the property in the condition that I wanted it. In the meantime of course I am a trustee of the Association of Graduates. That entails three or four, five meetings a year. Sometimes mostly at West Point. Some otherwise. I am currently serving on two committees which also have committee meetings. And my interest in first editions and the Revolutionary War era is just as strong as it ever was. I will hopefully enhance my library as well as my map collection and continue with my collection of Georgian silver. I am sure that I will enjoy the next several years. Before we close this part of the oral history out, there are a few personal things I would like to summarize for the tape itself. One of the strange things about our mode of living here in Chicago in fifteen years was the fact that since we lived very close to the downtown section of the city, namely the Loop, we disposed of both the cars we had when we came here. We never did own a car until only a couple of years ago when we decided we were going to retire. I was only about fifteen minutes from the office by taxi. I got there every morning with a group of people who went in the same direction. We had this taxi cab pick us up every morning. It was very convenient. Also, we had several company cars including a limousine with a chauffeur. Short trips around town were accommodated very nicely as far as I was concerned. If Alice and I wanted to go for any extended trip by motor,

it was much less expensive and really much less bother to rent a car and do that which we did on several occasions. We had a very good cook and a cleaning woman here. Both took care of us through the years very nicely. The middle part of the Sixties, the mid-Sixties, I started getting a mania for collecting various things, and became interested in antiquities of various kinds. It well occupied my leisure hours, particularly the research that was involved in knowing how and what to approach in the way of purchases and acquisitions of such things as Georgian silver and Revolutionary War books and so forth. In '68-'69 we started thinking and looking toward retirement. Donald had been in Germany and when he came back, he came back with a Mercedes sedan and a Volkswagen. High on both as far as performance was concerned and the Mercedes, for instance, he kept for some eight years before he got another one. He kept telling me what good cars they were and we ought to get one. Well, as it turned out, we did. It was a car which although was expensive it would last longer than the US built cars. It would depreciate in style considerably less. And so Alice and I went over in 1971 and picked up a car at the factory. We put about 3000 miles on it in Europe and came back on the Italian line with the car. We are now the proud possessors of a Mercedes and we are very happy with it. This is the first car we had owned, as I say, since 1958. We have never missed having a car. When we were traveling, we would rent cars wherever we were in Europe or elsewhere. The question of where we were going to live always popped up in our minds the last few years. I really wanted to get some privacy and get out of the city atmosphere, the urban atmos-

phere. I wanted to be back in New York State where so many of my ties were. Finally and only just recently, we purchased this house in Cold Spring, New York, and it seems ideally suited for us. We are not far from New York. Rail commuter service is available, and if you want to take your car in it is only about forty or fifty miles. It is a commodious house and one I think will occupy a great deal of our time in planning, fixing up and restoring here and there and making it a place that we will be proud of. As Alice's health improves, we will do a considerable amount of traveling I am sure. But until we get settled that will have to wait. My banking affiliations will have to be shifted to New York. It will be too unhandy to stay out here. This constitutes not only the banking facilities themselves but the custodial facilities for securities. The arrangements for my trust and will and so forth, which, I think, I will have the Chase Bank handle. This has all got to be done and completed. The Chase Bank has given me the mortgage for the house. So they will own it together with me. I think we will make out alright in that regard. Donald at this present moment is a student at the Army War College, enjoying it very, very much--considerably more he says than Leavenworth, and is now here about the first of February looking forward to his next assignment. This is par for the course. We always got a little itchy feet about the second or third year of any given tour of duty as to where we were going next. He is not too sure. But the fact that he is where he is he got his full colonelcy early in December of '72. He also, in '72, received his second oak leaf cluster to the Legion of Merit, and with William about to graduate from high

school and possibly going to West Point, and Robert, his other son, doing very well at school and turning out to be quite a man, I feel very happy about that. We both do. As far as Chauncey is concerned, with his two girls, he is well on his way. Laura is getting to be quite a young lady now and maturing very nicely. Of course, Alice, who is considerably younger, seems to be going to be more like Robert as far as personality is concerned where Laura is more like William. It's very strange how children develop so differently with the same environments and the same parents. That was true in our case with our children. It is true in these two families. Chauncey seems to be very happy in his job and feels that he is accomplishing something. So at this point in our lives, while we are not smug about it, we feel quite satisfied with what we have accomplished in our lifetime, and that is a comfort to people as they progress along in life. What their children are and what they do and what they have become and what their children seem to be doing and becoming is a great satisfaction. I am sure they will all be fine citizens. One of my major projects is going to be the updating of the geneology of the Lasher family. I think the interest in me for geneological research came from my mother, though after I got here in Chicago and mixed up with the Newbury Library, which is very big in the geneological area, my appetite was again whetted. Of course my association with the annual Lasher family reunions has made me determined that I would go ahead with this. So I think that is one of the projects I will have and one which I am sure that I will enjoy. Now, Mister Narrator, Mister Questioner, perhaps we should sum this thing up with some broad questions

which the oral history section of the War College discussed before we leave this tape.

COL LASHER: Well, General, in looking back over what we said, I have come upon a few little things that I would like to clean up regarding some of your past that we either left out or didn't cover sufficiently. One of the things that I would like to ask you is going back to World War II. I wonder if you have any particular opinion or had any reaction back in 1940 or '41 when we were sending so much Lend-Lease over to Britain? I understand that this was somewhat of a controversial policy that many people viewed it as stripping us of our capability to rearm should we need to and a lot of people foresaw that need to rearm. What were your opinions at that time or how did you get involved?

MG LASHER: Well, I think the decision to assist Britain in this struggle she was in, started I guess with the transfer of the four stacker World War I destroyers to her. It was a good decision, and I say this primarily because of one thing. It started our industry gearing up to make the machines that might be necessary if we ever did get into a conflict. We were building a lot of airplanes, for instance, over here thereby enlarging our airplane building capability. Prior to our entrance into the war, prior to our entrance into Pearl Harbor, we were shipping knocked down airplanes. We were moving them from inland factories to seaboard and shipping them out to Britain. Now, what the arrangement was on how we got paid for them was no matter of mine. But we were sending them.

COL LASHER: But some people maintained that we were sending them too

many to our own detriment should we need them.

MG LASHER: That might be so. However, when Pearl Harbor hit not only was Pearl Harbor devastated but there was a great possibility that the West Coast would be attacked in one or another place. Everything was bent toward the defense of the West Coast. At this time airplanes were being shipped to Britain. Well, one night, knowing all this, I myself stopped the movement of those airplanes. We unloaded. We had ships loading in Hoboken and I myself, at about ten o'clock at night, stopped this. We set up the special trains, turned those airplanes around, unloaded the boats, unloaded the ships and set up special trains and started moving those airplanes right back to the West Coast. I was sure those planes could be put together, assembled, and more manufactured by the time we got more pilots training for them. So as far as I could see the fact that we were helping Great Britain was a plus rather than a negative, unless we had decided two years before that we were going to go into the war and therefore we should start stockpiling all sorts of things which was apparently not the case. So I think as we edged closer toward the war that this was one of the better ways to prepare ourselves by helping others.

COL LASHER: Was there any particular effect, either quartermaster or transportation-wise, in this controversial area of the defense?

MG LASHER: No. Not that I knew of. Now, the fact that we were sending a lot of stuff to Russia and a lot of stuff to Great Britain did gear us, transportation-wise, to heavier loads just our civilian loads.

COL LASHER: So it was beneficial to us.

MG LASHER: Yes.

COL LASHER: Okay. One other thing that we skipped over in World War II, particularly having to do with transportation, was the security measures taken, or necessary to be taken, regarding troop movements. You know you were moving hundreds of thousands and in fact sometimes millions of troops back and forth. A lot of them going out to ports were congregating there. This constituted a considerable piece of intelligence if foreignly obtained and used. What measures did you all take to preclude the gathering of this sort of intelligence regarding your troop movements?

MG LASHER: Well, any persistent attempt toward learning the movements of troop trains in the United States would have borne fruit because they were moving all the time. Too many people had to know about them, not only in the military itself as to who was going and where they were going from and to. The railroads had to carry them. They were not secret. They were set up confidentially. But this was not sufficient. However, these interior moves were many, from one training camp to another training camp; from home to training camp. Between stations troop trains were moving all over the place. But the sensitive part was when they departed from the United States for Europe. We would move train loads of troops into staging areas. They were at staging areas for various lengths of time. They were even allowed to have their parents come say good-bye to them knowing they were going overseas. For instance, if a father and mother went down to New York and stayed in a hotel for the staging of their son who was staging in any one of our staging areas

around New York, the first thing they would know, the boy would be gone.

COL LASHER: Such as Fort Dix. That was one, sir?

MG LASHER: Well, Dix and there was a new setup there. I can't think of the name right now. A couple of them, one up the Hudson River and one down below Newark a little ways. (Camp Kilmer)

But anyway, it was a brand new one. It had easy access to New York. The boys' movements in and out of New York were, I am sure, curtailed. But no one knew when the ship was going to be loaded and when any particular unit was going to be shipped out. As I say the father and mother would often find out that the boy was gone. The boy didn't even know when he was going. He wouldn't know when he was going. So the secrecy there was very great. It would be done at night.

COL LASHER: So the point is, by putting up these holding, reassignment and staging areas for personnel. . . .

MG LASHER: Staging areas, yes.

COL LASHER: You essentially precluded the knowledge of who was going when.

MG LASHER: Precise and finite now.

COL LASHER: Yes.

MG LASHER: Of units, and of course units and types of units whether it was strictly an infantry unit or artillery unit or what not, or an ordnance service unit. Types of units were as important as the number of men.

COL LASHER: Yes. I understand.

MG LASHER: This was not available to them. I think it was handled very

well. But the movement within the Continental United States from post camp and station training areas and what not, anybody could have stood on a railroad track and got or counted the men you put on the train.

COL LASHER: There is another one that is even a little earlier than World War II. That was President Roosevelt and his New Deal. I was wondering if you had any particular words that you want to put down for posterity regarding this very unusual turn of our. . .

MG LASHER: This started. . .this had nothing to do with the war. It was only 1932. I only had three years in the service when Roosevelt took the presidency.

COL LASHER: I mean in retrospect.

MG LASHER: Well, yes. These were all crash programs. I am sure they were horribly expensive because of this. My closest association with it was the CCC. So far as that was concerned it was handled exceptionally well. Why? Because it was handled by the Army--the only going concern in our country who could handle thousands of people, and knew how to handle them and what to do with them and all the myriad details of this thing. It was fortunate that it was given to the Army. So I think that part turned out very well. However, some of the things which had economic impact on the whole length and breadth of the country were perhaps felt to be, I am sure, necessary at the time but had such a long term impact on the country. I feel that they were in the long run not good.

COL LASHER: Well, let's say the TVA, the Tennessee Valley Authority?

MG LASHER: Well, I will answer that this way. First of all you must realize that I bring a bias to the answer to this question. I feel that

we should have less rather than more federal regulation of our lives than we have at present. The great wave of concentrated federal power, as far as my lifetime is concerned, began with President Roosevelt. I relied so heavily upon the commercial railroad in World War II, and I understood that they had been in business for some 75-80 years at the time, and they knew the business better than anybody else and that it would be complete suicide had we tried to do it ourselves, or the government tried to do it. Similarly I bring that same attitude into all other phases of economic life, including utilities, electricity, or what not. I don't think the government should have gone in there with this which was purely a watch dog thing to make sure that the government knew how much it cost to produce electricity such as the TVA, so it could compare the cost of that electricity to that in adjacent areas who are buying it from regular commercial publicly owned firms.

COL LASHER: Didn't the TVA also do a lot of good in providing services in the rural areas? It might never have gotten there nearly as soon at least. So there was some beneficial side to this, too.

MG LASHER: Yes. I think that is possibly true. Are you going to be that paternal with your government to bring electrical power to a remote share cropper somewhere who otherwise couldn't get it? Or would you let it move in there when it is economically possible to move it in-- economically possible. I think that the market place has got to determine these things rather than the government or else we are going to have complete socialization. Sure! We can provide anything for anybody anywhere in the United States if we make the effort with the bountiful purse

that the United States government has, namely the people.

COL LASHER: The people.

MG LASHER: We can do this. This can be done, but is this the right way to do it? We are still defying individual initiative to have papa government do everything for us, including bringing the electricity into the middle of the Ozarks to four or five people. And who is paying for it? Sure you can do it. But it isn't just economically sound.

COL LASHER: It does help develop the country in areas that might not get developed. It provides more equal opportunity for people.

MG LASHER: The country will develop!

COL LASHER: Sure, but slower.

MG LASHER: Maybe slower. But certainly with less appeal than if you put a crash program in for this or a crash program in for that.

COL LASHER: You don't disagree for instance with trust busting as it was needed and done with Rockefeller?

MG LASHER: Well, here we go again. You can go back to Teddy Roosevelt's regime. He was the trust buster.

COL LASHER: Yes.

MG LASHER: And every caricature shows him with a big club knocking over John D. Rockefeller, Sr. Here, when we come into the thirties and the SEC regulations that were put in to regulate the money markets and the stock markets, some of those were very necessary. There is no question about that. One of our troubles is it goes to a basic fault in human nature, and that is greed and avarice. The upstanding citizen, and there were many of them, was put in jail for fraud and defaultation. There were

necessary. It was a regulatory power that was required. When we came to regulating beyond the need, I think we. . . .

COL LASHER: You see that is a matter of perception.

MG LASHER: True!

COL LASHER: Relative to your own judgment.

MG LASHER: It is a judgment decision. There is no question about it.

COL LASHER: That's right.

MG LASHER: I think that had we not had World War II, most of these things that were done in the Thirties would have slowed the growth of our country down. Either it would have slowed the growth of our country down or we would have moved further and further toward socialism.

COL LASHER: Well, we do that every day to a degree.

MG LASHER: I mean faster.

COL LASHER: Faster. In some ways good.

MG LASHER: But World War II came along and of course we had a mini, and it wasn't so mini either, a mini-depression in the later Thirties you know, '38-'39. But that was nipped in the bud by the fact that we were starting to build these airplanes for Great Britain and so forth and so forth and so forth. It rescued the country. Had we not had this World War II, I don't know what would have happened because that just lifted us up by our boot strings, and of course our debt went up. We borrowed money you know. I still don't think that is good. We are still doing it.

COL LASHER: We are still doing it. Our deficit is still there. You can argue forever with the economists on that, too.

MG LASHER: So I am against this much concentration of power in federal government.

COL LASHER: Well, as long as we are on this, one more comment. What do you think when you talk, when you mention, that, about the regulating of the public services, such as telephones and some transportation? Well, transportation?

MG LASHER: Well, I am on the fence on this. Again, I see where the Interstate Commerce Commission, and that is the one that I am most familiar with and there are a myriad of others of course, has so defied the viability of the railroads, the railroad system, and has not recognized the impact of the competition when the railroads were in truth a monopoly. The railroads practically up until World War II, late Thirties, was in truth a monopoly. There was no question about it. It needed some benevolence, some regulation, and certainly benevolence in that regulation, simply because the railroad managements could have conspired to gouge the public. There is no question about that.

COL LASHER: They very well may have.

MG LASHER: Well, they did. As a matter of fact that is why the ICC came into existence. But once competition started, the motor carrier and the airplane, one in freight and one primarily in passenger, the situation was entirely different. I don't mean so much the truck itself but the facility of roads. This was fine. There was no question about that. But the Interstate Commerce Commission never fully recognized that these huge networks of roads provided a government supported competition to the railroads, and never compensated the railroads for this. Never has, and

this has been one of the sad things about the railroad industry. I still believe the railraods, and for a long time to come, are going to be the primary mover of heavy material. Although there is no question in my mind also that the airplane will take over a lot more than it has. But the Interstate Commerce Commission has not recognized, maybe recognized, but has never solved the problem of the balance between these competitors. Now, you take the telephone industry with which I am not so interested and not so knowledgeable. Of course, it is still practically a complete monopoly. So is the electric utility, in any given area, a pure monopoly almost. I think that regulation is necessary. But it has to be a very knowledgeable regulation, and must take into consideration the needs of the profit making system because there is only one source, only one source of wealth. That is the entrepreneur, the individual entrepreneur, or the large corporation. Whether it be a store on the corner, a cleaner, or whether it be a steel company. There is no other place from which money can come unless you print it, unless the government prints it and just throws it around. Where do our taxes come from? From the people they say. But where do the people get their money to pay the taxes? They get it from this entrepreneur. And unless they let that entrepreneur make a reasonably good profit, they are never going to have the success that is inherent in the capitalistic system. Now, a very good example of this is right before us in what we now call the energy crisis. One of the reasons here is because everybody was talking about loopholes for the rich. One of the so-called loopholes, and that wasn't a loophole because it was a law, it was in the law that this could be done. No loophole; don't ever think it was a

loophole.

COL LASHER: They referred to it as a loophole. They, in the law, the law purposely gave them a loophole.

MG LASHER: Well, a loophole means you go around the outside and surreptitiously take advantage of your government. Well, that is not so. This was set up this way to encourage the flow into very risky investment. That you may get some gas if you dig this hole. On the other hand, you may not. If you don't then you can write it off as a loss against your income. See?

COL LASHER: You are speaking of the natural gas?

MG LASHER: Yes. This is the natural gas part of the energy thing. They are starting to ration natural gas around here. This was a loophole in the first place. But there was so much hue and cry about this that they changed some of those advantages to this risk money, this risk capital. Much of it was lost in dry, empty holes you know. People stopped taking the risk because it was too great a risk for the return.

MG LASHER: That is all there was to it. So the money stopped flowing. What happened? We are running out of gas. This is just this simple.

COL LASHER: You have very little in the United States at all.

MG LASHER: That's right. That's right. Because the exploration has been severely curtailed. That is just one of many, many examples where the capitalistic system has got to be understood with all of its ramifications, in order for the capitalistic system to survive. If we are going to regulate, we have got to regulate some of it, there is no question about that.

COL LASHER: Sure!

MG LASHER: But it has got to be understood by the regulators. They have got to be, I'll use the word, benevolent. That is maybe not the right word.

COL LASHER: Pragmatic! How about that?

MG LASHER: Well, no.

COL LASHER: How about sides for the consumer.

MG LASHER: I wouldn't use pragmatic because the regulator would take advantage of that word. You got to understand it. I believe in the capitalistic system. I believe that there are individuals in it who are dishonest. I believe they have got to be regulated. But I believe the regulation has got to be very carefully controlled itself.

COL LASHER: Okay. I suppose you imply similar logic to the regulation of the environmental problem today, of over regulating environmental problems. Or do you feel the same way about that?

MG LASHER: Yes. I feel the same way. It is over regulated. I don't see any good in this bumper, for instance, that we are forced to buy on our automobile. Forced to buy it. They are going to have them on all of them.

COL LASHER: Yes. I know.

MG LASHER: It is absolutely silly. They show these pictures on the advertisements in TV. The automobile approaches the barrier and hits it and bounces back, and then hits it again. But that automobile is only going three or four miles an hour. The only place it will help you is on the parking lot.

COL LASHER: Maybe not even there.

MG LASHER: Maybe not even there.

COL LASHER: We tend to overreact to our problems.

MG LASHER: That is historically true. The pendulum swings and we never catch it at the right time.

COL LASHER: General, one other point I would like to go back to, we have already talked a little bit about it, but your views on the creation of the Defense Department, its viability, and particularly the viability of the JCS. Have you anything that you would like to add in that area?

MG LASHER: Only a very broad observation. This is all from my own personnel experience and opinions. I think the idea of the Department of the Defense is a good one. I think that there are too many examples in history, and particularly 20th Century history, where lack of coordination between the various military branches of the country has led to disaster one way or another -- loss of lives and so forth. We have seen this happen. We know. We can document it. I think coordination is necessary. We are getting more and more to the point where the proper force to use in a given situation is a mixture where you have to put together not just several branches of the Army but you have to put together several portions of each of the services.

COL LASHER: Yes.

MG LASHER: That there must be an overall coordination amongst these is almost obvious I would think. However, we started a Department of Defense and it has turned around to come to the point where it almost has devoured us in our military posture. I think the execution of the concept has been

wrong. I think they have overdone it. We find ourselves now with the people who are. . .who have spent a lifetime in the study of military operations and military management and military defenses, are not given their due weight. These people. . .and they are uniformed people who have dedicated their lives to these things. They have studied it all their lives. They know it better than anybody else, and every four years a whole new set of people who have no idea what it is all about. . .they are the political side. And they come in and form a decisionmaking layer over and above the military professional.

COL LASHER: You don't disagree with the need for a central defense department and for them making the political decisions obviously?

MG LASHER: No! No!

COL LASHER: That is their role.

MG LASHER: But they have overstepped this role. I saw this as early as 1948. They have usurped a great deal of the military decisionmaking, and taken it unto themselves. All you have to do is to count the heads of the Department of the Defense, the civilian people, the number of people in the Department of Defense to know that if they are doing anything, they must be second guessing the professional. Or else they wouldn't need so many people.

COL LASHER: Or overguiding, overmanaging.

MG LASHER: Well, it isn't just guiding and managing. I think the decisions are changed. I am sure they are. Not that I knew General Marshall very well, but I did have some few experiences with him. One thing I heard him say, when he was Chief of Staff and Stimson was

Secretary of War at that time, I don't think that Mister Stimson had more than fifteen-twenty people in his office as Secretary of War. Of course the Army wasn't as big, the problems weren't as large, and so forth and so forth. You can argue this. But the proportion between then and now in the Secretary of the Army's office is very very obvious.

COL LASHER: Yes.

MG LASHER: General Marshall was a great admirer of Stimson. He thought him to be a great man, and he said, "But Mister Stimson never questioned a military decision I made. I in turn respected every political decision he made." He said, "We got along fine." This is the way it should be. But I cannot believe that all those people in the Department of Defense are making purely political decisions.

COL LASHER: No.

MG LASHER: I just can't believe it. I know they are not as a matter of fact. So I say the. . .I would almost go for a single uniform with the proper distinguishing labels or whatever you want, insignia and so forth, to distinguish the different forces. But it has got to be completely reorganized and I don't see any hope for that being done, not any.

COL LASHER: One of the things that we are interested in would be your opinion of the value and the role that you think that government civilians, that is Department of the Army civilians, should play in the military establishment, particularly in the Army? I assume you agree that there is a role for them to play, a very good role?

MG LASHER: I think it is a big role. I think confident, adequate civilian employees in the Army are very, very important. I think that they retain

a continuity of policy and purpose which the itinerant man in uniform cannot possibly grasp in a short period of time that he is in any one position. However, I deplore the discrepancy in the salary structure. This again points up partly the answer to the question of the Department of Defense. They have put the salary structure in the Department of Defense very high for the civilian so that he must assume certain positions that otherwise wouldn't be accorded to him. In the Army we find that we have civilians subordinate to uniformed people, and the uniformed people are getting half the salary the civilian is. It is just ridiculous. I don't think that, as much as the salary of the uniformed person has increased, that it is kept up with the salary of the civilian by any means.

COL LASHER: Well, it is kept up. The difference is still maintained. The percentage has gone up just like this.

MG LASHER: Not only that but they have opened up higher grades, have they not?

COL LASHER: Yes.

MG LASHER: For civilians in a particular spot.

COL LASHER: Yes.

MG LASHER: And therefore that civilian goes on. Now, I know one example,--a young man who came to me early in the war. I will not name him. He served his time in uniform, and he married a girl in the office incidently and came back after he served his time, however long that was, and made a career of this civilian position. He had retirement benefits from his military service which was two years, two or three or four, and

he proceeded right on up through all the grades. I think he ended up at $35,000 a year. I think he is about ready to retire now. He has never been to college. He was a good workman. He was adequate. He could cite regulations for you, and if you wanted to know where to find a particular regulation or a particular procedure or something or the history of it, he could research it for you. He knew it. There was no question about that. But his adequacy for making $35,000 a year decisions was just not present, I don't believe. I am very fond of this young man. He is not so young anymore. But I liked him very well. He liked me. When I retired and went to North American Car, he immediately started buying North American Car stock, common stock.

COL LASHER: A smart move.

MG LASHER: He educated both of his children with what he made on that stock. He finally is going to retire with something like a $35,000 a year salary. I don't know what a four star general gets but it can't be much more than that.

COL LASHER: I don't believe it is that much.

MG LASHER: I don't believe it is either. Of course that observation is a rather narrow one, I will admit. Yet, its psychological effect on the morale on people in uniform goes very very deep in my opinion. Apart from that, the people who make the military decisions must in my opinion make them from a background of field experience. Experience not on just the field of battle, but experience in the whole process of arriving on the field of battle and the process of making command decisions in other than a purely military situation. There are many other decisions

that have to be made by the military man, and they can only be done from a background of the completely rounded experience that the Army follows as a basic policy in its assignment and its education of the military, uniformed military man, which these others, the civilian, is not exposed to. He is static. He sees the situation from only one very narrow point of view, and he is not fit to make any sort of a global or even an area decision. I believe. . .I go back to one of our discussions on this tape to the fact that I felt the military was well ahead of industry and commerce, the industrial side of our lives. One of the things was the relatively rapid movement of the uniformed man from one position of responsibility to another. In other words, varying jobs from time to time. Now, I heard many criticisms that an officer would be in a job only two or three years, only long enough for him to really know what the job was, before he was reassigned. But this very process of reassignment, assignment and reassignment, makes for an individual who has a broader experience and who is better able to cope with varying situations, and better able to make the decisions on the broader scale than has that person who has stayed in one position all his life.

COL LASHER: Of course many civilians move around a lot too now. Position-wise, not too much in the country.

MG LASHER: One of the reasons they chose to be a civilian is because they can have a home life.

COL LASHER: And because they can choose when they want to move.

MG LASHER: That is right.

COL LASHER: The job is offered. They can turn it down or take it.

MG LASHER: And the reason they move from one to another usually is for higher salary, a higher grade status.

COL LASHER: Most often.

MG LASHER: Therein lies much of the difference, too. The motivation on one side is purely economic. The motivation on the other side is far deeper or broader motivation of service in my opinion.

COL LASHER: Well, I don't share the opinion. I don't want to argue. But I don't think it is always purely economic. I know quite a few sharp civilians who could probably make more in industry that have stayed on in the government.

MG LASHER: Why do you say that?

COL LASHER: Well, because they enjoy the work. They are getting adequate remuneration, and they like the responsibility that they do have in the bureaucracy. Some of whom get quite a great amount of influence anyway.

MG LASHER: Yes. You are getting up pretty high, pretty high.

COL LASHER: Yes.

MG LASHER: Grades.

COL LASHER: I am thinking more of a higher. . .well, okay. Along that same line then, and I think it fits right in with this last discussion, what are your opinions on the role of specialization to an officer? That is both when you were in the service and as you might perceive it today, realizing we are getting more specialized? You were rather specialized too as a matter of fact, and how it affected you and what you think it has for the future?

MG LASHER: Well, this is a very difficult question because it has many

ramifications as to what we really mean by specialization. You could say that entering the Army or the Navy or the Air Force is a very specialized thing. Now, you break those down into pieces, each one of those down into many different pieces, and you can specialize to your heart's content. I made the remark that one of the reasons I was motivated to retirement when I was, was that the slot I found myself in was specialization that I didn't necessarily make for myself, but fortunately, good or bad, put me in was that I had reached about the top of that specialization. I was doing for all the services what I started to do just for the Army when the Army was very small. And I finally was doing it for all of the military. Okay, this was fine. But there was no place for me to go then. I was probably a good executive, or a good administrator, and I could run a fairly adequate office, but probably was not able to make a lot of decisions that the very senior military men were forced to make.

COL LASHER: How about after you got your second star? The possibility of becoming the Chief of Transportation? Was it hurt a little bit by the fact that you really had somewhat specialized in the age of the area of transportation problems?

MG LASHER: No. I could have been Chief of Transportation perhaps.

COL LASHER: You think if you had stayed on that very well could have developed?

MG LASHER: Yes. That could have developed. Could have developed if I had been as lucky after that point in 1957 as I had been prior to 1957.

COL LASHER: Right!

MG LASHER: There was no question that I was broad enough for that. But to. . .and perhaps in a logistic job, maybe a DCSLOG sort of slot. But then to get over into the purely military side, I wouldn't have been adequate,I don't believe.

COL LASHER: You mean the combat arms?

MG LASHER: Yes.

COL LASHER: Well, that is understandable.

MG LASHER: There are only so many years in a man's life you know. He can't expect to be expert in everything, even in his specialization really. So you have to be satisfied, not exactly satisfied, but you have to accomodate to whatever structures there might be. But you take a man, let's take Eisenhower for instance. Here is a guy who had some pretty broad experience. Yet he hadn't had any experience, I mean, being president of a huge university let alone being President of the United States.

COL LASHER: There is only one way you get that kind of experience. That is become it.

MG LASHER: That is true. And that is so true in so many other things. But I. . .because I was brought up I suppose in as much as anything I liked the way specialization against generalization was handled in the Army in the old days when we had the technical services.

COL LASHER: Well, today of course we have specialty programs wherein you spend almost all of your assignments, or many of your assignments, in this particular specialty such as data processing, or operations research, or logistics. The LOG Program is a great one. There, up until recently, has been a great deal of feeling that this is a detractor in making

general officer. Not in making O-5 or O-6, but in making the higher ranks. The Army has said that they are going about taking care of this rectifying it because they realize specialities are more and more going to become the thing of the future. Do you think that that is true or not?

MG LASHER: I think it is true.

COL LASHER: Do you think it will change?

MG LASHER: Let me say this. Let's take data processing just for instance. I think the whole data processing system in the military could be handled by civilians.

COL LASHER: Except tactical data processing?

MG LASHER: Oh! I don't know whether I would accept that or not. But the data that is placed into the data processing system has got to be by professional soldiers. All they want is an answer. They don't care how they get at them. Why should a lieutenant learn programming except the broad aspects of it and have a reasonable understanding of the process? He is not going to be a data processer all his life. He shouldn't have to be. Now, in my case I never became a rate man. This big library of tariffs you know. We hired rate men and we told them we wanted a rate from A to B for something, and we got it. This didn't take anything but a little specialized knowledge, or higher specialized knowledge true. But anybody could do it. Any more than I want to lay bricks. But I know I could be a good bricklayer.

COL LASHER: Well, the data processing cuts the cost of all functions.

MG LASHER: Of course, but you just seek the data processing for answers.

That is all you want.

COL LASHER: True.

MG LASHER: I think the mechanics could be all civilians. They don't have to be all military.

COL LASHER: That is interesting. Another question that has come up, and is somewhat the subject of philosophical discussion I guess more than a real key point today, is why in the future we might need an army as such if it is assumed as many people do, there will never be a real world war confrontation, a world confrontation. Do we really need an Army as such? Couldn't we do with something like the Marine Corps and our missiles, and let it go at that?

MG LASHER: Perhaps! But that would almost be the millenium, arrive at the millenium if this happens. We are dealing with a basic fault in human nature when we believe that we will reach an entirely peaceful situation. You can take that right down to the police force in the small town if you want to. There will always be somebody who is going to steal. There is always going to be somebody who is going to violate ordinances of one kind or another, and who must be apprehended and corrected. So it is as you go on up the ladder to the community of nations. I think it will be a long time before we find that it is not true that the greatest deterrent to war is force. It is the preparation for war. I think we must, we will, for a long time find it necessary to have an adequate military force. There is no question in this last year that we have seen one of the greatest examples in history of the balance of power when the President of the United States just brought it right out in the open, and placed the

People's Republic of China against the U.S.S.R., and he did so by two calls. By two calls and the balance of power in the world immediately became apparent. Where did he place the United States in that balance of power? With either side. It was the most terrific thing I ever saw. Now, in order. . .so we must assume that that power is going to exist at least for some time, and while it is necessary for it to exist, we have to have this armed force, our military strength.

END OF SIDE #1.
THIS IS SIDE #2, TAPE #5, OF THE ORAL HISTORY OF MAJOR GENERAL E. C. R. LASHER.

COL LASHER: You were discussing "Why an Army" and I will let you continue.

MG LASHER: Well, I ended up there by saying that until this millenium arrives we will have to have some amount of military force. That has to be carefully decided and it is a very difficult thing to do as to how big it should be vis-a-vis the potential enemies which our country might have. I think we are moving toward it. I think this move that President Nixon made last year was a tremendous step, and the extent to which all of us can disarm depends a great deal upon the sincerity with which each of us, including the United States, disarm, the sincerity with which they put muscle on the bones of an agreement. We have constantly a mistrust of each other. There is no question about that. One way I think to go about this, and importantly, is through the device used in Europe in the last few years known as the European Economic Community. Now, where does the seat of power of a country get its strength? It gets its strength from its institutions, its people and its institutions. I don't care who it is. Whether it is an absolute, dictatorial type of government, or a

so-called democracy. It has to depend upon its institutions and its people for the money, the wherewithal, to wage the war with the money, the people, or whatever it is. Once those sources are denied central power, their ability for aggression declines. You take in the more advanced Western world such as Europe is in Versailles, you will find that the European Economic Community has welded together countries which almost within the recent past, the last couple 300 years, were fighting each other.

COL LASHER: Yes.

MG LASHER: You can talk about the wars of secession and the wars of the Austrian secession, the Spanish secession, the wars in the 18th Century. They were fighting against each other. Now, they have gotten together and they have reduced many of the frictions like tariff laws for instance to just take an example. It has been successful, so successful that everybody else wants in and everybody else is getting in. Instead of five, the outside seven are getting in. England has gotten in with some reservations. It may be good they think. It may be bad. They don't know. But when this commerce and industry of these countries are in agreement and when their future is threatened by conflict that we know as war, they are not going to finance those wars, because it is a threat to the whole fabric of their civilization, eight countries, nine countries. And I think the detente on the commercial level as evidenced in the European Economic Community is one of the greatest deterrents to war that we have in the world today. That is what I think.

COL LASHER: You think that is the coming thing.

MG LASHER: I do! I do indeed!

COL LASHER: I happen to agree.

MG LASHER: But to get back to the more narrow side of this as long as this millenium hasn't arrived and it doesn't look like it is coming for a few days, we have to continue to march. The most important thing in this continuing to march is our youth. And the education of that youth into the precepts we know are true, and I come back to the word character. Once we instill character into the youth of our country, we have absolutely no reason to fear the future.

COL LASHER: That should bring us right around to one of our last subjects which is West Point. What do you perceive as the need in the future for West Point? Many. . .well, there is a body of thought, I shouldn't say many, but there is a body of thought that feels that maybe West Point is now obsolescent, and it could be used in various other ways as opposed to an undergraduate military academy. Maybe as a graduate, or all of the academies as graduate academies. And turn to the colleges, ROTC, and to OCS for the basic source of all of our young second lieutenants. What do you think about that?

MG LASHER: The basic source of all of our. . .

COL LASHER: Yes.

MG LASHER: I don't think much of it. I don't think you are going to get the quality of individual at the bachelor degree level out of any school. I have seen graduates of many, many schools. I don't think they are going to get the type of person that West Point puts out. I believe West Point puts out a type which is absolutely necessary for the future of our country. I think that he is more dependable. He has had instilled in

him, whether he knew it then or not. Before he went to West Point, he had instilled in him a fiber which only a West Point could nurture and grow. is a fiber. It is a combination of traits and characteristics which is almost unique. He has a feeling for his fellow man. He has a sense of fitness of things. The right and the wrong both become second nature to him. He can differentiate between them. I think this is the moral fiber that we need as an example for the building of a large military force, the expansion into a wartime situation.

COL LASHER: But you would never advocate, I guess is the word, attempting to have all of our officer input come from a military academy, would you?

MG LASHER: It is not possible.

COL LASHER: But even if it were, would you like that?

MG LASHER: No.

COL LASHER: I wouldn't either.

MG LASHER: I said before in this tape that I felt that we must depend upon the citizen of the country to fight our wars. But there has to be a cadre to which that citizen can assemble, and from which it can take its direction and become a viable institution that can fight the war. There has got to be some leadership and that leadership has to have very, very stern standards.

COL LASHER: Well, I understand that and I appreciate that. Why couldn't, mind you I don't necessarily agree with this, but why couldn't we take ROTC students from the better or from schools that we insist on a certain amount of influence in the ROTC program to determine a little more of character building of the man. Do away with West Point as an undergraduate

school, and then trying to instill those same principles you mentioned to the officer say two or three years after he had been commissioned in some graduate work. Would that work?

MG LASHER: Well, one of the reasons is that I think that the four years as we know them, the four years of college of that area, the age area, is the time in which the young man is most plastic and most susceptible to direction, and in which all these things can be instilled in him easily. More easily than it could be three or four years later.

COL LASHER: But some people say that in so doing, what you are really doing is that you are molding a man who is not taught to think on his own because you are really brainwashing him to a great degree.

MG LASHER: Brainwashing! What is brainwashing? I don't know what it means as a matter of fact. I think it has little or no meaning except as a cliche to ridicule many things. It reminds me, for instance, of one of the ploys that is used by some of the supporters of the military academy when they say, now they say the cadets are saying, "Why sir?" instead of, "Yes sir." But that too is a cliche. It is fine to be inquiring. But there is a point in the life of young folks where obedience is, has to be, almost blind as does the kind of obedience in the heat of battle. Once the decision is made by a commander, obedience. . .lack of obedience, I will put it that way, means disaster. Now, I have said that I didn't think that the civilian institution would put forth the type of man who would be as good for the assembly point of the citizen army as the military academy would put out. One of the reasons for this is the thrust of the civilian institution is far different from the thrust of the military academies.

They have partially the same roles. In other respects, the roles and the objectives of the institutions are entirely different. I think that that has got to be taken in the early life of the young man. Now then, we give them at West Point a rather broad education, much broader than when I was there. There is no question about that. More electives and so forth, and the individual can go into almost any direction he wants to in specialization. But he does get a basically good education and even though we call it a Bachelor of Science, he gets many of the arts as well, and more if he wants to elect them. But then we take this graduate course, we go to civilian institutions to specialize even more in certain areas. We have our own post graduate seats of learning, such as the War College, and the National War College, the Industrial College of the Armed Forces, if particular individuals want to go into one of those directions. I think in the early formation of this individual, we have to have a regime, a regimen rather, not a regime, a regimen which will produce this type of individual. Therefore, I believe that we have got to retain these military academies substantially as they are. Moving with the times of course as we know they have. Substantially as they are, and the large number of people needed for an emergency must necessarily come from the citizen army, and hopefully from the ROTC schools and the National Guard. I think that they should be kept. But they certainly have to have an overall guidance from the individual who is specialized in his formative years.

Oral History Transcripts

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