

Lee Sherman, Colonel

*HQ and HQ company 2nd battalion 422nd infantry regiment
106th Infantry Division*

Interview of Lee Sherman Transcript Number 196

Good afternoon. My name is Paul Zarbock, a staff member of UNCW's Randall Library in Wilmington. Today's date is the 9th of September in the year of 2002. We're going to be interviewing today Dr. Lee Martin Sherman.

INTERVIEWER: Dr. Sherman, when did you go into the military, where did you go into the military and why did you go into the military?

SHERMAN: I got into the military in 1943. I was born in Baltimore, raised in Baltimore and all my Baltimore buddies that I was friends with when World War II broke out were about six months older than I was. They were all being drafted at the same time in the same group. I was six months younger so I was not in that group, but I wanted to be with my friends. I figured as long as I knew I was going to go into the service, I would volunteer and go hopefully and be with them during the war years.

I was accepted readily when I went down to the draft board and said I want to go with my friends. That was about the 7th of March 1943. I reported with all my buddies and we all were sent to Ford Meade, Maryland. At Fort Meade, we were given a battery of tests and half of my friends were sent to Florida for Air Force training and the other half was sent to Fort Monmouth, New Jersey for signal corps training and I was put on a train with some friends, newfound friends that I didn't know before and after about three days of traveling on the trail up and down and sideways, I guess it was for security reasons they said, the rumors were rampant where we were going to go.

Nobody really knew a thing except that it was 6:00 in the morning and don't forget we were all in coaches. There was no such thing as a Pullman and no sleeping cars of anything.

INTERVIEWER: By the way, how old were you at that time?

SHERMAN: I had just turned 18. The train stopped and some acting sergeant started yelling, "Okay, everybody up". We looked up and it was just pouring down rain and we all stood out in the rain and they put us in open trucks and there was a big sign and there was a band blowing, a welcome flag blowing in the breeze, "Welcome 106th Infantry Division." Everybody looked, 106th, nobody heard of that.

They had a big banner with, we called it the puking lion. It was a lion's head with his tongue sticking out and that was our insignia that we would wear on our shoulders, the 106th infantry division. I guess I should say infamous 106th because in the Battle of the Bulge, _____ hit the 106th. It was the first division that was hit, it was overrun. In three to four days, they lost their colors. My regiment was completely wiped out. The 422nd infantry regiment, everyone was either captured or killed. Anyhow I'm getting ahead of myself.

That was the sign, "Welcome 106th infantry division". So after a long slippery ride in open trucks, two and a half ton trucks, we were dumped off at our barracks and assigned bunks

and we were fed. Then the fun began. There was no such thing as holidays, Sundays were regular work days. It was a wartime situation and this was the first 18 to 19-year-old division to be activated. General Alan W. Jones, who later suffered a heart attack during the Battle of the Bulge, he wanted to make a name for himself.

The assistant division commander, Perrin at that time, Brigadier General Perrin, he took over when General Jones had to be evacuated because of his heart condition.

INTERVIEWER: Was the division specifically designed, the population and restricted to 18 and 19-year-old men?

SHERMAN: No, the officers were usually reservists who were called on active duty and there was your age. Your age was in your officer ranks, but the enlisted men, we were all, the whole group, we were 18 to 19 year olds. If you were over 21, they were closely scrutinized to see if they could become an acting corporal or acting sergeant. I was assigned as a basic private. A basic private was one who could not be promoted (laughter).

That's right, you weren't promoted. You had to learn every job in the company as an enlisted man, every job that was assigned to enlisted people and I was assigned to [headquarters and headquarters company 2nd battalion 42nd infantry regiment](#). Now the headquarters company was divided into several different groups. We had an anti-tank group, had a communications group. We had an A&P platoon, ammunition and pioneer. We were to blow up bridges and make fortifications.

Then we had the basic private group which I was part of and we had to just learn all the different jobs that could be done as a support company and headquarters and headquarters company was a support company for the rifles companies and the heavy weapons company and the cannon company that we had. It was quite a trying experience because I know the food was lousy and the accommodations weren't very good.

The training was extremely rugged. As I said, there was no such thing as a day off. On Sundays, usually the basic privates were given all sorts of details, you know, whether it was guard duty or KP, but I know I spent an inordinate amount of time in the kitchen either peeling potatoes or worst of all was cleaning out the pots and the pans until 2:30 or 3:00 in the morning and then you'd be released. Usually they kept you so busy, they didn't even feed you for your dinner or anything.

Then you had to be at reveille at 4:30 in the morning, fall out. I'll never forget the lecture that our first sergeant gave us. He said, "This is wartime. When you got to the bathroom, you're allowed one patch on the roll of toilet paper and if I catch anybody using more than one, they're in real trouble". So everybody tried to use just one little patch of toilet paper. That's some of the things we had to experience.

The details were really demanding. I know every day while we were in training in the barracks, we had to take out the shower boards. They had to be taken out, scrubbed down by hand, hosed off with buckets and then put out to dry and then later they were put back in. It was trying things like that that made military life in 1943 in the 106th division pretty rugged for most of the people.

I stayed with the 106th division for 16 months. During that time, I was made company messenger during the 2nd Army maneuvers in 1944 in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. That was in the tents. We lived in tents and worked out of tents, didn't see the inside of a building for I'd say about eight months. Everything was outside. It was all through the winter.

At that time the Army would not let you use anything over your ears to protect against the cold, no such thing as scarves or anything like that. If you had guard duty or patrol duty, you would just go out there. The water would run off of your helmet, down your neck and we didn't have the nice warm parkas that we had later in Korea. It was very demanding, very strict and very disciplined.

INTERVIEWER: I interviewed a man that was in the Tennessee maneuvers about the same time and he said that was tougher than combat.

SHERMAN: Well it was extremely tough and the 106th racked up a very good reputation and a good training record. See what happened to the 106th was after the maneuvers and before D-Day, entire groups, not by number but by individual, thousands at a time, up to 3,000 of their trained troops that were on maneuvers, this was up at Camp Batterbury now, they were put on trains and sent over to Europe to act as fillers for the divisions that were going into combat.

So the 106th while it was there, it was completely depleted of its trained people and I was pulled out. I was still a basic private. When I was at Baltimore City College in 1941, I had taken as an elective, I took up shorthand and they needed evidently people that had that skill, so I was pulled out and I was sent to headquarters 2nd Army Memphis, Tennessee which was a complete different world.

It felt so great. I was able to sleep and I got promoted right away up the line to staff sergeant. They called it T3's, tech 3, you have the three stripes and the one under in a T and that was the secretary to the G2 of 2nd Army headquarters. Second Army was training to be turned into the 8th Army to make a landing on Japan. We were supposed to be training, we were a cavalry for another army that was being formed. We were the training army.

We were the training army and I spent about a year, year and a half, in 2nd Army headquarters in Memphis, Tennessee, and that was really a plum. That was the best assignment I ever had.

INTERVIEWER: You were not living under canvas then, were you?

SHERMAN: No, no, what we had done, they had taken over the Memphis fairgrounds which is where they had all the animal shows and all their contests for better home and gardens. They had converted the rooms into sleeping quarters for the enlisted personnel. It was, you know, I just felt like I wasn't doing my job. My father visited me. He was a sergeant in the 29th division. He had just come back. He had spent a year in Texas, he was all crippled up with arthritis and I felt like I really wasn't doing my share.

I volunteered for the 18th Airborne Corps. They wanted glider people to make this landing on Japan. This was before the bomb was dropped so I volunteered. I went there as a tech sergeant and took the glider training.

INTERVIEWER: Where was this training done?

SHERMAN: This was at Fort Campbell, Kentucky. I only stayed there for about four months or so because the bomb was dropped and they said we don't need you troops anymore and they pulled me out. I had been assigned incidentally as the chief of enlisted personnel for the Intelligence Division of the 18th Airborne Corps which was a good job.

INTERVIEWER: What were your requirements? What were your duties?

SHERMAN: Well I was in charge of all the enlisted personnel in the division. The division acquired all the intelligence that they needed for making assessments, intelligence assessments, bombings, raids, anything. During the actual war, the 18th Airborne Corps was, during the fighting, over in Europe and they had done quite a bit and now they were getting ready to make an airborne landing on Japan.

INTERVIEWER: What divisions were under the 18th Corps?

SHERMAN: You know, I really can't recall that. They were all airborne. They had the 101st. The ones that you saw, that Band of Brothers, the 101st. In fact, I ended up as a company commander, company D of the 502nd Airborne, 101st as a captain in the same area where I took my basic training at Fort Jackson, South Carolina. This was later, this was in 1954. I went back as a company commander.

INTERVIEWER: Well let me take you back to...you've taken training as a glider, infantryman, not as a pilot.

SHERMAN: We were going to do our job after we landed. In the military, there are so many jobs that have to be done. Don't forget that now we have women to do a lot of the administrative jobs in combat. In World War II, it was all white American males that did the fighting and that did everything. Your black troops were quartermaster, laundry, drivers, but we didn't see a woman or a black person for years. It was all white males. In fact, when we went to war, we lost the cream of the crop. You look at your battle casualties and you'll see that they were all white American males that were doing the fighting.

INTERVIEWER: And healthy to boot.

SHERMAN: Oh yeah, you had to be healthy.

INTERVIEWER: Well you were in Fort Campbell...

SHERMAN: When the war was over and they said well you're going to get out, but we need your skills and they sent me to Washington to Army ground forces. At that time it was called Army ground forces. I don't even know what they're called now, but it's not Army ground forces anymore, but it's the ground element of the U.S. Army. There I was

made the chief of enlisted personnel for the G2 of the Army ground forces. I was promoted to master sergeant.

It was at that point when I said I can't go any higher as an enlisted man. I was about a 22 year old master sergeant and you couldn't get any higher as an enlisted man. I said I better get out while the getting is good and get my college degree. But I could tell already through my job in Army ground force, they were already starting to accumulate information on Russia because we knew Russia was already starting to give us a hard time.

We knew we were going to have trouble with them and I said I'll be damned if I'm going to go back in as a buck private, pull all that KP and guard duty for another war. I said I'm going to sign up in the Reserves in case I have to go back in, at least I'll go back in as a master sergeant. So I did that and then after two years at the University of Maryland, I received a letter from the Army War Department saying that since I had two years of college and I was a first 3-grader in World War II, that I was eligible for a Reserve commission as a 2nd lieutenant.

If I wanted it, sign here and they would arrange for the tests, the physical and the mental tests that you have to go through in order to be appointed a commissioned officer in the Reserves. I did that and about six months later, I received a call saying report to so and so. I had to take this battery of tests, mental, physical tests. I took it and then I got a letter saying, "Congratulations, you've been appointed a 2nd lieutenant in the infantry".

INTERVIEWER: You're still a college student?

SHERMAN: Still a college student, yeah. I had just one more year then before I graduated from the University of Maryland. When I graduated in 1950, Korea had broken out and I was recalled as a 2nd lieutenant in the infantry and sent to Korea (laughter).

INTERVIEWER: When did you get to Korea?

SHERMAN: When I was recalled, I was sent to 2nd Army headquarters again at Fort Meade as an intelligence officer under Major General Gerhardt, who was the commanding general of the 29th division in World War II. He had been demoted to full colonel and was the G2 of 2nd Army. General Gerhardt made me a briefing officer so my job was to go back and forth to the Pentagon, get the latest briefings, come back, set up in the war room what the latest activities were in Korea, the fighting.

Then to brief in, I had to brief in the staff. Whenever they came in for a briefing, I had to keep everything up to date and go back and forth. It was quite an interesting job so that when I did go to Korea physically, I knew what was going on and what was what.

INTERVIEWER: How did you get to Korea, by ship or by plane?

SHERMAN: In those days, the ships weren't used anymore. Everything was contract aircraft. They would fly you right over there. In fact, when I went to Korea, I went to Elmidorf Airbase. This was American Airlines, they were contracted too. Then I had something to eat there and then flew right to Korea. It was quite interesting.

INTERVIEWER: Where did you land in Korea? What year is it, that would help?

SHERMAN: Here's a 33 year history. Incidentally before going to Korea, I went to the infantry school for junior officers. I hadn't been to the infantry school.

INTERVIEWER: Where was that?

SHERMAN: That was Fort Benning, Georgia and I went from Fort Benning to a far east liaison detachment, 8240th AU. 8240th Army unit was a cover for new special forces that were to come in. We had five regiments, it was all classified, we couldn't talk about this until about five years ago. They declassified it, but we had five gorilla regiments of Koreans, North Koreans, South Koreans, jailbait, they would just clean out their jails and send them. We had a leopard division, we had a wolf pack division, they named them all after animals.

We also had intelligence penetration. See all this through my career, you notice intelligence. Even in the 106th division, I was assigned as reconnaissance. We would have patrols that would go out and find the enemy and come back.

INTERVIEWER: The R&I platoon. Where was this training of the clandestine forces? Where did it take place?

SHERMAN: It took place on the island of ...they have lots of big islands, you know, in Korea and on the west coast, Yong Udo, something like that, Cho Do, was it, I can't think. Anyhow they had guerillas. We had them all over, I won't say all over because I know when I got to Korea, there wasn't a bridge standing.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me again, what year was that?

SHERMAN: This was in 1952. The fighting was still going on strong.

INTERVIEWER: What use was made of these clandestine forces that you were involved in training?

SHERMAN: Well I was put in charge of a group of 165 line crossers that I had to work through an interpreter and they made shallow penetrations. The Americans would stand out immediately if the Americans went. What we would do is we would send the Koreans over for shallow penetrations to find out where gun positions, mortar positions, where they were, report back in two or three days.

We would debrief them and then we would send the information to the Air Force, to the Navy, to the Marine Corps, to the divisions on the line and let them know where these positions were, what was going on with troop movements and all that.

INTERVIEWER: What were living conditions like for you? Were you sleeping under canvas?

SHERMAN: In the field, yes, when I had the company and line crossers. It was a tent, it was a big tent that was set up fairly permanently just a few miles behind the front lines. I had two sergeants and myself. I had been promoted to 1st lieutenant of my men and I

had two sergeants. All the rest were Koreans and a Korean 1st sergeant who incidentally later turned out to be a double agent.

He went in on a penetration raid, came back six months later and that was really unheard of, coming back six months later. He had a cock and bull story about being shot. He was shot. He had a bullet hole and a rock CIC interrogated him and found out that he had switched sides and he was a double agent.

INTERVIEWER: Now you were on the western border, west in Korea.

SHERMAN: In Korea, we were on the southern, the north Koreans were here and they had come down and had been pushed back. You know, that's why there were no bridges standing.

INTERVIEWER: Were you on the western coast or the eastern coast?

SHERMAN: In the middle, I was in the central part. I didn't keep that job very long. I only kept it for about six weeks and then I came back to Seoul and was in the UNPIK, United Nation Partisan Forces in Korea, at their headquarters and was responsible for compiling and disseminating all these intelligence reports that were coming in from all the field units and then getting them all distributed.

Then the commanding general, I was put in the G1 section there, personnel section. I worked with a Lieutenant Colonel Risdend Fountain who is now deceased and General Archibald W. Stewart, Archie Stewart, who had been a prisoner of the Japanese in World War II. He was on the staff as a full colonel in the Embassy and he was interred and he couldn't get out, he was a West Pointer, and he got promoted to brigadier general and put in charge of all the intelligence forces, FECL, Far East Command Liaison group which was the cover for all these clandestine activities.

The most interesting and important things were accomplished by the guerillas, not the intelligence forces which I was more familiar with. But the guerillas were actually sent in to destroy the rice fields, to rob the banks, to burn, to destroy and cause mayhem. There are several interesting books that have been written fairly recently now that it's been declassified. Some of the lieutenants that I knew ended up as full colonels or brigadier generals in the regular Army.

INTERVIEWER: How long did you spend in Korea?

SHERMAN: I spent a year in Korea. See that's all you were supposed to spend, 12 months, and then you rotated and they brought in new people. While I was there, I was pulled out and made aide de camp to General Stewart. I was his right arm (laughter), handle his administration and handle his briefings.

INTERVIEWER: And you're a first lieutenant at this time?

SHERMAN: Yeah, first lieutenant, see because his aide had rotated back so I was given his job and then he was transferred over from Korea to Japan and he took me with him. I

went with him as his aide de camp and I stayed there and served a full tour as his aide de camp.

INTERVIEWER: And where were you stationed in Japan?

SHERMAN: It's called Grand Heights. It's all gone now, but it's some very permanent military buildings, almost like a little Pentagon they would call it because it had a lot of rank in there.

INTERVIEWER: This is outside of Tokyo?

SHERMAN: Yes, outside of Tokyo. Then I brought my wife over. I got married before I went to Korea and I brought my wife over and we had a little girl that was born in Tokyo Army Hospital and she is now 48 years old. She was born in 1954. She's a mother, she's a grandmother already.

INTERVIEWER: The hospital, was that the 49th General Hospital?

SHERMAN: Oh I don't remember, we just called it the Army Hospital, I think it may have been. It sounds familiar.

INTERVIEWER: It was a big one.

SHERMAN: Yeah, it was a nice hospital. They would bring a lot of their battle casualties from Korea over there to get well. Then from there, General Stewart was transferred to the 101st Airborne Division as the assistant division commander and he took me with him. But when I got there, see an aide de camp has to know what's going on and know the locations and how to get to different places.

At Fort Jackson, see I didn't know that, I didn't know any of those things so as soon as I got there...in fact, I got promoted. I made regular Army on the boat coming over from Japan. As a regular Army officer, you know, you need your leadership training. I was made company commander of company D 502nd Airborne Infantry regiment, 101st Airborne Division of which General Stewart was the assistant division commander.

I did that for almost a year and then was transferred to the G3 as an assistant division coordinator of training which did all the inspecting for the training. See we had like 50 some companies in training at any one time. As soon as the company graduated, they went to Korea. They were shipped to Korea. Some of them went on for advanced training or schooling, but most, the majority were sent to Korea.

INTERVIEWER: These are all airborne troops?

SHERMAN: No, in name only really. The designation of Airborne, you wore airborne and all that, but it was really a training division. A training division is a ground division really. It was a straight leg division although they had the nomenclature of airborne. Then General Stewart later got transferred, got promoted to major general and was sent over to command the 25th division in Hawaii. I sure would have liked to have

gone with him then (laughter), but I was stuck in Fort Jackson, South Carolina as a company commander and then later as an assistant G3.

Then an interesting thing happened. We had a reorganization of the division and they had one room about three times this size that we're in now with training charts of every single company of the 57 companies that were in training. As a captain, I was put in charge of, called coordinator of training, and I was put in charge of making sure that every company had its shots, that the transportation was lined up so that they could get to the range on time, everything moved.

They only had eight weeks of training and you could not deviate. They had somehow or another, if a hurricane came up, you had to make it up. You had to make that training up. So it was really a hectic job. We got a General Norman Costello, he took over the division when General Ennes left. He came in and he had the assistant division commander who was responsible for all the training, the training of all the troops, he said, "Coops, tell me what's going on here" and Coops didn't know (laughter). I was the one that was doing all the lining up and all the scheduling.

He said, "I wish somebody could tell me what the hell's going on around here". He was a very flamboyant commander, drove around in a white jeep from Korea that he had had. So he said, "Captain, tell me what's all this" so I was able to tell him because, you know, I was living with the stuff. He said, "I'm glad we finally found someone who knows what the hell's going on around here" (laughter).

From there, I received notice that I was going to the advanced infantry school from Fort Jackson. That's at Fort Benning also. So I went there. Let me refresh my memory now. Then I went from there, that was the advanced course, a nine month school, I went from there to Ohio University in Athens, Ohio, to be an assistant PMS&T, Professor of Military Science and Training.

We had one here at UNCW. We had ROTC instruction here for years and I was on the faculty here at that time. I was on the ROTC board during the entire time that I was here at the university. There at that place, I was in charge of all the GMS3, the general military science third year training. I was the PIO, public information officer and there the PMS&T wanted radio programming every week which had television and radio and everything else. It was really all encompassing.

I was the administrative officer for the whole detachment which meant you had to make sure that everybody got their shots on time, all the records were maintained. It was actually I think that was harder than being in Korea. It was a more difficult job because it was so...we were short of help.

It was when the military, this was in '56-'57-'58, a mass exodus, when they were giving pink slips out. This was where officers, every enlisted man that I had under me as a regular army captain had been reserve major or lieutenant colonel, and they had come back in as corporals. My administrative sergeant was an ordinance major. He was an ordinance major on active duty and in order to get his time in to retire, he reverted back to master sergeant.

At first they were bringing the ex-officers in as master sergeants. They had too many master sergeants so they started bringing men as corporals. I had a lieutenant colonel of

infantry who was a corporal under me, part of my training staff, my GMS2 group of trainers. I stayed there for three years.

At that time, the ordinance corps put out a letter to all regular Army officers in combat arms and they said, please consider transferring to ordinance because they were so short of officers. What they had done, their standards were so high in the ordinance that they fired most of their officers. Then all of a sudden, they had a tremendous shortage.

You know, living in Baltimore, I had some leave and I went up to visit my folks in Baltimore and I stopped off at the War Department Ordinance and I spoke to Colonel Rust or somebody there, and he interviewed me and he said we need your type, we need you so transfer and we will send you to get a master's degree.

I said, where do I sign. So I did, I put the papers through and it came through about six weeks later. My first assignment was, I was given 16 months to get a Master's degree.

INTERVIEWER: In what area?

SHERMAN: In research and development, R&D. I was sent to the American University.

INTERVIEWER: In Washington, D.C.

SHERMAN: In Washington, D.C. and I graduated cum laude from there.

INTERVIEWER: The year is?

SHERMAN: The year was 19...no I wasn't sent there first, I'm sorry. From ROTC, my first ordinance assignment was White Sand End Missile Range. I went there as a captain. See I was in a big hump. I spent 7-1/2 years as a captain. It was a big hump that I was in. Having had all this infantry training, you know, the commander at White Sand Missile Range, he was a lieutenant colonel and he said, "You know, I got a job for you. I want you (and this was my first regular Army assignment) to find out who's doing all the stealing in the mess hall."

I said, "What kind of assignment is that? Don't you have a CIC detachment". He told me they hadn't been able to catch anybody and he wanted to put an officer in charge that was going to be dedicated to finding out what was wrong with that mess hall, why all the food was disappearing. So he made me a mess officer. He said he wouldn't put it on my record as mess officer, he was going to put it on my record as assistant plans and training officer.

I took over as mess officer. They had a gigantic mess hall, 3000 meals at a time they would serve at White Sands. You know, White Sands is the largest military base. It's even larger than LeJeune. It's got hundreds of miles because you've got missiles that are being fired. So I said you know this really isn't a very good job for an Army officer. Well he wanted me to get this solved and then he said he'd get me out of there in a hurry.

So I contacted the MP's and the CIC and all that and we set up some spies. We sent somebody down there, an agent down there to work as a cook (laughter). We found out where the food was going. It was going...one of the corporals, it was a regular ring really

of low ranking enlisted people that were stealing the food and then taking it out and selling it. We found out who they were and ended that.

Then I was taken out of the mess hall and made commanding officer of the student detachment, not the student detachment. All the officers were assigned to one detachment. It was a scientific and engineering detachment I was a commanding officer of. I had 3000 people. I was the housekeeper for 3000 people and the administrator and the law and order and everything else.

I'll never forget the first time that I had, that I was required to have muster. All the men had to come out and give their name, rank, serial number. The first time I came out, I knew I had this great big list of people that were under my command. I look out and there's about 100 people. It was a Saturday morning. I asked my first sergeant there, "Where are all the people". He said they were off doing things. I said, "Well I want you to get the word out that we there's going to be a muster and that if I catch anybody that's not present, I'm going to take a stripe away from them".

So the next time I got out there, you couldn't see the end of the block. There were about eight that didn't show up so I busted eight of them, found out who they were and took a stripe away. After that, they were always there. Then working with the missiles, they were greasy and all that. They didn't have much military discipline. Each morning, I noticed they would just walk out, walk down to the instrument lab. They just looked so unmilitary.

I found out some of the men that could beat a drum and I had them march over and the general was riding back and he sees all these soldiers marching and he said, "What's going on? Whose work is that?". He was told that was Captain Sherman, the new detachment commander over there. So he said he wanted to meet him. So I went up to his office. This was General John Shenkle. I don't know if you know him or heard of him.

He was a major general. He was the one that I think when these astronauts burned to death, he was the project manager. He retired after that, he died later. General Shenkle was a real prince of a guy. After I served my time there as the commanding officer of this detachment, he pulled me up as acting chief of staff for the whole White Sands missile range because they were awaiting a full colonel, I was still a captain, they were awaiting a Colonel John C. Bain who was supposed to come up and be the chief of staff.

So I filled in until General Bain got there and then General Bain, I moved over from being the chief of staff to the staff secretary. The staff secretary was responsible for presenting all the major issues to the commanding general. It was like a senior aide. I did that for about two years. I got promoted to major. Then I went to commanding general staff college.

From White Sands missile range, that was a fine assignment, that sort of set a pace for me, I went to commanding general staff school which was at Fort Levinworth, Kansas, and that was a long course where they gave us a nice house. After graduating from there, I tried to get into the...well I wanted a command really because I needed to command. I was starting to have an awful lot of staff work.

It didn't end up that way. I ended up in Washington, D.C., as a student. It was at that time that I got my Master's degree from the American University. I was already a

major. From there I felt it was time for me to go to Vietnam because I had just had some surgery and it was major surgery. The surgeon wanted to postpone my travel to Vietnam for six months.

I said no, I'd better go when I'm supposed to go. They put out the call that they needed me so I'm going to go. He said to make sure that I didn't carry any heavy weights while I was there. First thing at the airport, this was the time of the big buildup for big pushes, I had two helmets, two rifles, two full field bags and I flew over to Kimpo...Kimpo was the airport in Korea. Anyway it was a big airbase.

INTERVIEWER: Why were you carrying double equipment?

SHERMAN: Because they were preparing for big pushes and they needed more supplies so we were carrying double.

INTERVIEWER: Now the year is what?

SHERMAN: The year is 1964. No, I'm sorry, I got my degree. March 1, 1966, I was en route to Vietnam. I stayed in Vietnam for my full year. I was given a very interesting assignment there. I was made executive officer to Brigadier General in charge, he was a J2, General McChristian. There it was more of a paperwork job. It was compiling and sending out different reports. I had to brief in General Westmoreland while I was there.

It was a good job administratively, but I didn't feel like I really contributed too much to the war effort. After that was over, I came back to...

INTERVIEWER: The tour of duty was one year?

SHERMAN: The tour of duty was one year. I came back and was assigned to AMC, Army Material Command, which was located on Eisenhower Boulevard in Gravelly Point, Virginia, an adjunct to the Pentagon. We were responsible for all the army's material, research and development. I was assigned to the R&D section of Army Material Command. I was already a lieutenant colonel then.

I was made a division chief. I was made Chief of the Programs Division which handled all the congressional accounts, all the congressional interfaces and support. It was like a support. We were responsible for all the regulations that came out that applied to the army research and development activities. I served three years there. That was a pretty demanding job too. As a lieutenant colonel and as a chief, you always had lots of demands on your time. I worked with a good staff.

Incidentally everyone of them now is gone. Everyone is gone from the full colonel, the civilian chief, every person that worked for me, they're gone now.

INTERVIEWER: You mean retired?

SHERMAN: No, dead. They all died from heart attacks and different problems. After that assignment, I got a divorce from my wife because things had come up. While I was going through that divorce, I was fighting for custody of my two daughters, General McChristian

who was now a two star general at Fort Hood, Texas, asked for me by name to come to be his post-ordinance officer.

He had an armored division and I was supposed to be the division ordinance officer responsible for all of the weapons including the tanks and I was going through this divorce. I turned the job down and instead went to Thailand to ARPA, Advanced Research Project Agency as the development officer, as the program management officer, project development officer. It was at that time right in Bangkok.

That was good. It was turnkey operation. The Thai's had no military R&D and it was our job to train the Thai's to have military R&D organizational activity and each of us had a counterpart. I had a major general counterpart. We trained them, turned the key over to the chief Thai officer and ARPA was later closed down, but it was turned over to the Thai's and they had their first military research and development facility in Thailand.

From there, I was ready to extend, that was a really good plum of a job, but I received a telegram from Washington, D.C., stating that I was appointed as Chief Planning Officer for the merger of all the ammunition and weapons in the research and development in the United States. All these arsenals that had anything to do with ammunition and guns, they were merging so that the ammunition people couldn't blame the tubes people for anything that went wrong and they couldn't blame the ammunition people.

It was all going to be under one command. It all was going to be a Rock Island arsenal. So I reported to Rock Island arsenal. That was quite a job. I had a staff of 350 scientists and engineers.

INTERVIEWER: And again, what year was this?

SHERMAN: It was in 1973. I had already been promoted, 1973, I had been promoted to full colonel. We had 5,000 scientists and engineers merge and we had a \$300 million dollar a year annual budget for Army's research and development, Edgewood arsenal, Picatinny arsenal, Watevliet, Aberdeen proving grounds. There was one other one that was defunct. We did a really good job.

We had a good unit going. The politics of the situation were such that the people, the powers that be wanted a separation between the tubes...

INTERVIEWER: What do you mean by tubes?

SHERMAN: The artillery, the guns.

INTERVIEWER: As opposed to?

SHERMAN: As opposed to the ammunition that went into them. One was blaming the other. Actually General John Roland had the right idea. He was the major general in charge of it. He was a good man, but the politics were too much for him too and he later retired as a major general and didn't get his third star, although I think he should have gotten it.

It was from Rock Island arsenal that, after three years you know, you're transferred. My new job was supposed to be Director of Small Arms for NATO located in Brussels. I was all packed, ready to go, and I got a call from OPO, officer of personnel operations, they said they were sorry, but I couldn't make that trip. They said I had to go to OCRD, officer chief of research and development in Washington.

I said that I already had 33 years experience, I said that I didn't want to go back to Washington. That's a real rat race. "If you're not going to send me to Europe, sayonara. I'll send in my papers for retirement". I had already been offered a real good job with a management consulting firm, A.T. Carney.

INTERVIEWER: Where did you pick up your doctoral degree?

SHERMAN: In the evenings while I was at Rock Island, I was writing my dissertation. It took five years.

INTERVIEWER: Who granted the degree?

SHERMAN: George Washington University.

INTERVIEWER: Let me ask you, in this sweep of 33+ years, just kind of give me a back of the envelope response, you were in World War II, you were in the Korean conflict, you were in southeast Asia, how have things changed in the military? Now you have changed too of course.

SHERMAN: Yes, well I think number one, it became a lot more human. When I first went in, it was sort of inhuman. The demands were so petty and so picky, so demanding. I think the powers that be have become more humane. I think it's become, in addition to more humane, it's become tremendously more technical, extremely technical.

INTERVIEWER: Which then requires more training and more higher education.

SHERMAN: That's right. I think that we are attacking that right now with additional education and training of people more humanely so they will appreciate what they have to do and what they have to do it with because you've got a person in charge of hundreds of millions of dollars worth of equipment. One nuclear weapon, I know as a company commander at Fort Jackson, I went through his Apple II explosion which was 37 kiloton atomic explosion above ground. I went through it as a company commander. I had a whole company. It was supposed to be a four day operation, but because of weather conditions, it extended itself out to 30 days before we finally had the explosion.

That meant every day at midnight we had to get out, get on a bus, go to Frenchmen's Flats, get into the holes by 4:00 in the morning. At 4:00 it was supposed to go off. A few minutes after 4:00, they'd say no go. We'd go back to our barracks and finally they did set it off. When they set off that atomic explosion, and that was just 37 kiloton, that was almost a front line tactical weapon versus what we have now with the fusion bombs and what power we have now, it's unbelievable. I was in a six foot trench down below the ground level.

I was facing where the bomb was going off and I had my hands over my eyes like this and when that explosion went off, you could actually see, you could see every bone in your

hand. It was just so, the light was so bright. You could see the bones. They had made the announcement that no one could take photographs. Well after the first six or seven days, that was forgotten. People had their cameras up above taking pictures when it went off.

Every camera was blown back or set on fire from the blast. First you had a blast that came forward. Everything in back of it was burning, all the latrine covers and everything were on fire. There wasn't a single camera that was workable. Then we got up out of the holes. We all had the readers, the RADAC meters, as we marched up toward ground zero, the explosion had...we had giant tiger tanks in front of us, the torques were ripped off.

They were 150 yards in back of where the tanks were. Even the torques were smoking from the heat of the explosion. We had birds that were flying into the ground. We had snakes that were smoldering. It's really a destroyer.

INTERVIEWER: Something I meant to mention before we went on camera, I'll mention now. Through the technological miracle of videotape, you will never be a day older than you are today. The videotape will assure that you're always this age. I sometimes think of President Kennedy whom I think to be 40 years of age. Well he'd be in his 80's now.

So you'll never be any older than you are. Given that, would you look directly into the camera and assume you're talking to your grandchildren or even your great-grandchildren, please what did all of your...how would you synthesize all of your military experience in a phrase or in a couple of sentences. What does it mean to have been a career military man?

SHERMAN: Well I feel as though I have helped preserve the many freedoms that this country has and I hope that you children and relatives recognize the sacrifices that were made by so many people so that you today are free, happy and can do what you want to do.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you Colonel Sherman.



Page last revised
James D. West
www.IndianaMilitary.org
jimdwest@centurylink.net