

Interviewer:

Good afternoon. Today is 17 May 2016, and I'm here in the West Point Center for Oral History with Lieutenant General Edward Rowny, USMA class of 1941. Welcome home, sir.

Edward Rowny:

Thank you.

Interviewer:

Sir, will you please spell your last name for the transcriber?

Edward Rowny:

R-O-W-N-Y. R-O-W-N-Y.

Interviewer:

Thank you, sir. Sir, if you could please, tell me a little bit about your childhood; where you grew up, and what your parents did.

Edward Rowny:

Well, my father was a Polish immigrant who came here in 1895, and he got a few jobs as a laborer, and was not - he was working in a shipyard, so he couldn't go into World War I when it started. But anyway, he wanted to marry my mother, the landlady's daughter, and she wouldn't have a man unless he was a citizen. So she said, "Get your citizenship paper," and one of our favorite family stories is that he went to the judge in Baltimore, and the Baltimore judge said, "Well, tell me about the separation of powers." And he says, "Well, there's executive, legislative, and judiciary, and the executive has the President, the Vice President.

Your legislature has two senators per state, and the number of Congressmen, 1 for every 300,000 people, and so forth. And he said, "Oh, you know all that stuff." He said, "What ship did you come over on?" My father looked him straight in the eye, and he said, "Mayflower." So the man wrote "Mayflower" down, so I have papers that show that my father came on the Mayflower. But anyway, when I was - after they were married, my mother and father were married in 1916. I was born in 1917, and until then, we lived - and for a while afterwards - with the landlady; had a room in my grandmother's house. And they moved out, we all moved out when I was five years old. And about a month or two after we moved out to their own house, my mother got seriously ill.

So - when she was giving birth to my younger brother - so my younger brother was farmed out to an aunt. My mother went to the hospital for a while. I went back to my grandmother's, where I stayed from the time I was 6 until 16, when I went to college. So I was basically more raised by my grandmother, who was a very educated woman; had been a governess in Poland, spoke several languages; and very industrious, worked three jobs to send all her children through college, actually, or help them go to college, I guess. She always said she had helped them go to college, all through doing labor, like sewing buttonholes on ORDINARY clothes, and stringing beans and the canning, too, anyways. So it was a very lively time, but very poor. When we were lucky, we had meat once a week on a Thursday night, which was bologna, and then our grandmother inspired me a lot about Casimir Pulaski and Thaddeus Kosciuszko, and very anxious that I go to West Point, which she said was the proper thing for me to do, which I did. Well, I went to the Johns Hopkins University to start when I was 16 years old, and in my junior year, when I was 19, I got a scholarship through the Kosciuszko Foundation at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow. You remember Jagiellonian University is the place where Copernicus did his experiments on the sun being the center of the universe, and not the earth.

Interviewer:

Yes sir.

Edward Rowny:

While I was there, I got to travel quite a bit. I got the equivalent of a year rail pass to travel

anywhere around the country by rail, and I had a dollar a day for food allowance. So I went to Rome, and Paris, and London, and all over, and in 1939 I went to the Berlin Olympics -

Interviewer:

36, sir?

Edward Rowny:

1.

Interviewer:

Yes sir.

Edward Rowny:

I've still got a few years yet. 1936 I went to the Berlin Olympics, and there I saw Jesse Owens win his four gold medals, but I was greatly impressed by how strident the Germans were, and saw war coming. So I came home, I graduated from Johns Hopkins in 1937, in June; 1 of July, I entered into West Point.

Interviewer:

Now sir, you mentioned that your grandmother wanted you to go to West Point.

Edward Rowny:

Yes.

Interviewer:

How did - what was her connection with West Point, or did she -

Edward Rowny:

She had no particular connection with West Point.

Interviewer:

Yes sir.

Edward Rowny:

But she said that this place in the first place must be good, because it was built by Kosciuszko, but she said it had duty, honor, country.

Interviewer:

Yes sir.

Edward Rowny:

And she said, "It's the one place where you'll have mobility. You'll have social mobility." Poles were known as "dumb Polacks" in those days and couldn't get very good jobs, and were discriminated against, so she said, "You can get equality and mobility, and whatever you do, you'll be rewarded for it if you go in the military." So she was very anxious that I go into the military, and to West Point. And June 29, or a couple weeks after I graduated, Paderewski died, and my grandmother was a great devotee of Paderewski, not only as a composer and a great pianist, but also as a statesman.

And she made me promise that one day, I would return the remains of Paderewski to Poland.

Interviewer:

Yes sir.

Edward Rowny:

The circumstances there were that in '39 - it was when I was in my second year at West Point - the Germans had overrun Poland, and Poland was no longer free. And Roosevelt said, "Put Paderewski in the Arlington Cemetery. Bury him there." Secretary of War Stimson says, "They can't do that, Mr. President, because he's not a U.S. citizen. We'll put him there temporarily." So he was there temporarily, and there's a long, long saga, which I won't go into. It took me 50-some years to accomplish that. Of course, it wasn't until after the Berlin Wall came down and Poland had the beginning of freedom that I was able to get the body back, in 1991. Meanwhile, part of the

drama was that his heart had gone missing for 18 years.

Paderewski wanted his heart to be buried separately from his body, and had wanted his body to be buried here in the United States. So nobody knew where it was, but by a freakish accident they found it some 18 years later. Well, anyway, I went to join in August, went to join the 41st Engineers, and it was the Singing Engineers, a black Afro-American group of Construction Engineers, which we were known, though, as the Combat Engineer Regiment.

Interviewer:

Yes sir. Sir, can we back up a little bit -

Edward Rowny:

Yes.

Interviewer:

To a little bit of your West Point time, before we get there?

Edward Rowny:

Yes.

Interviewer:

So right really a few days after you graduated from Johns Hopkins is when you reported to West Point, correct?

Edward Rowny:

Yes.

Interviewer:

What was your most vivid memory of R Day?

Edward Rowny:

My most vivid memory was a great place to be. I had gone hungry for so many years, and was tired, and while a number of people complained about the hazing that went on, and the hard treatment, I didn't. I had three square meals a day, and I had lots of time to read and study, because I had already finished college. So my impressions of West Point were very high, and I was particularly high on its code of duty, honor, country. I was taken on in my Cadet days by a Professor of Science who's famous - has a place down here at Lincoln Hall after him, George "Abe" Lincoln.

Interviewer:

Yes sir.

Edward Rowny:

Who became the Army Planner for Marshall, or World War II Planner for Marshall, and I became one of his team, and he kind of micromanaged my career. He and my first boss, "Smokey Joe" Wood, both micromanaged my career, so I have very fond recollections of West Point, and I would say very little anything negative about it.

Interviewer:

Yes sir. One more thing before we go a little further. I heard that when you were traveling around Europe, you went to Turkey at one point.

Edward Rowny:

Yes, towards the end of my tour, I thought I'd go as far east as I could go, and I went to Constantinople, which became Istanbul. And I heard that the new President of Turkey was visiting here, Kemal Ataturk, and on a lark, I went to the Embassy there and asked if I could get an interview with him, and they said, "Fine." So my 15-minute interview lasted an hour and a half.

Interviewer:

Wow.

Edward Rowny:

And I remember very vividly how impressed I was with this man's knowledge. He was interviewing me more than I was interviewing him, and he wanted to know what I thought

about the future of international relations. I said, "There's a war coming," and he was very much interested in that. But I also was very much impressed that here was a President of a foreign nation that spoke some English, and also could recite our U.S. Declaration of Independence. So that was a very memorable meeting with Kemal Ataturk.

Interviewer:

That's incredible. Now, was there any event during Beast or during your military training at the Academy that had a profound effect on you?

Edward Rowny:

I would say there were these two things. One, the great benefit I got by being mentored by Captain-then Abe Lincoln, who saw to it that I got special treatment and special instruction, and befriended me. And of course the other thing was the great shock we had on September 1, 1939, when the Germans overran Poland, and conquered Warsaw. So that was a great shock I had militarily, but otherwise, I found my stay at West Point very pleasant.

And I fell in love with the Army, I fell in love with West Point.

Interviewer:

Yes sir.

Edward Rowny:

And I would say it's been the second-best, my second great love, second-best decision I ever made, to go to West Point. First being marry the woman that I did and have a nice family.

Interviewer:

Yes sir.

Edward Rowny:

That was number one, and number two was West Point.

Interviewer:

Sir, I'd say it's a testament to how many of your children and grandchildren are sitting in this room right now with us.

Edward Rowny:

Right.

Interviewer:

So on September 1, 1939, when Poland was invaded, did you correspond with your folks, with your parents, with your grandmother about this?

Edward Rowny:

Oh yes, and of course, she was quite worried as to what was going on. Might also mention that we had a couple of cut-ups in our Company, and ill-disciplined practical jokesters, and they made a swastika on what we called a B cloth, where you shine your breastplates with, brass with. They made a swastika, put up over West Point, and New York Times ran a picture of that, and over 200 people wrote to New York Times complaining about these Cadets. Well, rather than discipline or throw them out, the people at West Point decided that they were still just youngsters doing practical jokes, and they didn't really mean anything by it.

So they made them write replies to all 200 people that had written these letters complaining to the New York Times, and submit them to the English Department for approval. And the English Department would return them time and time again, until they got perfect, and one of these, Peer de Silva, got to be such a good writer that in his off-duty hours, he became a fiction writer. Made a lot of money as a fiction writer about that. I was very much in love with international foods, and plays, and New Yorker, so I joined every extracurricular thing I could.

I was in some 11 different extracurricular activities.

Interviewer:

Yes sir.

Edward Rowny:

In addition to Debating Society that Abe Lincoln ran, I became, I joined the Philatelic Society. I joined the Numismatic Society. A lot of things I knew very little about, but became expert so I could get on the team. For example, I learned to play chess, and so I was the number 10 man on the chess ladder, in the top 10 people. I got to go to New York, and travel around, and to leave West Point for the holidays, so this was one of the pleasures I got from my extracurricular activity.

Interviewer:

Yes sir. Now, you already spoke about being aware of the events going on in Europe. Were Cadets also tracking what was happening in the Pacific?

Edward Rowny:

Not much.

Interviewer:

Yes sir.

Edward Rowny:

Not much. The emphasis was on Europe, and of course, being part of Abe Lincoln's special squadron he had, his students that he picked to come to off-duty hours, we talked a lot about things. So I got some special information about Europe, and of course, knew that there was a war coming on.

Interviewer:

Yes sir.

Edward Rowny:

And she and I corresponded, and when I got a chance to go home, went to see my grandmother, and she of course was worried about what was going to happen there in Poland; and the worst did happen.

Interviewer:

Yes sir. Now, were any of your instructors World War I veterans?

Edward Rowny:

Oh yes. Oh yes, quite a few. I mean there were people - like Patton had been at West Point. Well, he was not an instructor, but he came back and lectured to us, and there were several others who were instructors who had been in World War I, so yes, there were.

Interviewer:

Did they give you any advice about combat or officership, or anything like that?

Edward Rowny:

Some. Their biggest complaint was that here, warfare has stagnated and become solidified, and machine gun fire, the machine gun became paramount, and there were a lot of casualties. There needed to be some ways to break out of that particular thing. Now, we were following an officer by the name of Wehrmeyer, who had been a military attache to Germany, and he was writing back to Abe Lincoln and others about what was going on with the German military building up their Blitzkrieg attacks. And there were certain people who followed that certain line.

Such as Patton, of course, who was one of the greatest ones, and also some early thought about the parachute training and air mobility, which was really gotten, the idea was really gotten from Russia. And we had very fine Tactical Officers. One was a fellow name of Waters who became Patton's son-in-law. Another was Gavin, who introduced parachutes into the United States Army. So we were part of a group that were selected to join with Gavin and Waters to study new types of tactics, like the German Blitzkrieg tactics.

Interviewer:

Yes sir. Now, I had read that Gavin was sent here as an instructor because of anticipation of World War II, and his ability to train Cadets for what was probably going to happen.

Edward Rowny:

Right. He was a very good trainer, very inspiring man. Whereas most of the Tactical Officers prepared themselves for teaching cadets, Gavin spent an average of seven hours of training for every hour of instruction that he gave. He really did a lot of research and was very thorough, and was truly inspiring in this way of the greater amount of attention he paid to these things, and to cadets.

Interviewer:

Yes sir. Now, when it came time to choose your branch, what branch did you choose?

Edward Rowny:

Well, I chose the engineers, because it was the prestigious branch, and most of the people from Robert E. Lee on - and MacArthur and others - decided that while the infantry and artillery and others were pretty underpaid, the Army always needed engineers. Because of our rivers and harbors, thing was we could always get a civilian job later, but that you were always kept pretty busy, so I wanted to be an engineer. Now, I almost missed it. I dropped precipitously in my cadet rankings because in my senior year, I was one of ten classmates who developed severe myopia, and you had to be able to read 20/100 without glasses, and I couldn't.

I was 20/200, and I couldn't read 20/100. But Lincoln sent me to an in-law of his in New York City at his expense who was an ophthalmologist, and he told me not to read anymore, and to do certain exercise, eye exercise, and so my class standings dropped. I don't know how much I would've stood, but I had dropped. I had just barely made it into the Engineers that particular year.

Interviewer:

And did you remain an Engineer your entire career?

Edward Rowny:

No. In World War II, my division commander had a theory that there were no good battalions or poor battalions, only good or poor battalion commanders. And so there were a lot of battalion commanders came back in body bags, and in one week, we lost seven out of nine infantry battalion commanders. So I was moved over from engineers to command at an infantry regiment - I mean infantry battalion - and given an infantry task force during World War II, while we were in the next phase, which was a rather disastrous battle, Battle of Cinquale, or the Cinquale Canal.

The commanding officer had a brilliant idea, and that is that if a unit would march out into the coastline at low tide and move up the coast, get behind enemy lines, the enemy would commit his reserve against that unit that did this, and the unit remaining, the mission was able to succeed. Well, it was a brilliant idea, except it didn't work. With a great deal of casualties, we did our part of the job, but the division attacks, repeated attacks failed. I started out with 1,225 men in my task force, and came back with a little over 100.

Interviewer:

Wow.

Edward Rowny:

So I was very decimated nine times. To decimate means to lose 1/10. Well, I lost 9/10 of my unit during this attack. One of my, my oldest son is here, and he's nicknamed Cinquale, because while I was surrounded by the Germans at this point that we had seized in the rear of the German front lines, a Red Cross man came up and had a message for me that - he got through the line somehow with the Red Cross, and said the message. "Dear Ed - from Rita, my wife - saying, "You are a father of a proud baby boy. What do you want to call him?" So I look up at the sign, and I said to her, "Name him Cinquale. He'll know where his father lost his life, because I didn't expect to come back.

Interviewer:

Wow.

Edward Rowny:

Well, later, I did survive, of course, and then I got a telegram back from my wife saying that, "Your message came back garbled, and our son is named Peter," so anyways, so Cinquale™s here today.

Interviewer:

That's™ an incredible story. Incredible for the fact that a Red Cross message got to you while you were in combat.

Edward Rowny:

Yes. Yes, it was, and that he had got to me. Now we - as I say, we had a tremendous casualties. A classmate of mine, a signal officer, was killed while I was talking to him; he was hit by a sniper and was killed. And then I lost in one shell that hit us, hit 10 of us in a command group; killed 3, wounded 6. I was the only one that was unscathed.

Interviewer:

Wow.

Edward Rowny:

So this shell was one of the shells that came from La Spezia after World War I. When we had our peace treaties and disarmament treaties with other nations, Italy was reduced - from a 5-3-2-2 ratio - down to 2 battleships, but they put spare 17-inch guns on the peninsula at La Spazia, so these guns came in, traveled about 10 kilometers down to where we were, and wreaked quite a few casualties on us, so.

Interviewer:

Yes sir.

Edward Rowny:

That was one of the things that we had to fight in this battle.

Interviewer:

Well sir, let's™ go back to after graduation.

Edward Rowny:

Yes.

Interviewer:

You probably went to the basic course after graduation, or did you go right to a unit?

Edward Rowny:

I went right to a unit first.

Interviewer:

Yes sir.

Edward Rowny:

Because they saw the war coming, and so I later went to a basic course, but I went right to the unit. And I hear my commanding officer is very colorful and a very good trainer, he considered himself the best trainer in the Army. So when we furnished a cadre about every six weeks, he would force us to give all our best men to the need, and said, "Look, they need our best men, and we can train these others." So after five or six iterations of this, we were left with a lot of substandard dregs on our hands, and the commanding officers were revolting.

Said, "Look, we spend 90% of our time on these few men who are just so hard to train and discipline." So Smokey Joe said, "Well, do you know who these are?" and I said, "Yes." So he said, "Well, write down the names of 10 people you never want to see again." And then he said, "Lieutenant Rowny - I was a senior or S3 at this stage, operations officer, junior operations officer. I collect up the names, and I collect up 120 names, 10 men from 12 Companies, put them in front of Smokey Joe Wood, and said, "Here." He said, "No, no, no." He said, "That's™ your unit. That's™ I be J Company, and I want you to - it was a Friday afternoon.

"I'll visit you on Monday morning on the training ground, where you'll set up a

training camp, and I want you to command these 120 people, these other people that you never want to see again.â€ So I was, as far as I know, the only commander of J Company. I believe there was one in the Civil War, but maybe some of your historians can look that up.

Interviewer:

Yes sir.

Edward Rowny:

Historians can look that up.

Interviewer:

Now, where were you when Pearl Harbor was attacked?

Edward Rowny:

I was just finished finishing a maneuver in the Carolinas, and Smokey Joe Woodâ€™s brother had been a military attache in Japan, and kept telling Smokey Joe that there was going to be a war, and the war would come in the Pacific. And so war trained us very hard. A lot of people resented the fact that we were trained harder than a lot of other people, but he said that he was really saving lives in the long run. So we were sitting around a campfire critiquing what have you when a few people had the newfound little walkie-talkie radios in those days said that the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. And we didnâ€™t know where Pearl Harbor was, a lot of us, so Joe told us.

And then Joe said that, â€œNow, you all think Iâ€™ve been eccentric -â€ and that was certainly true. You could get my book ?Smokey Joe & the General? to see how eccentric he was - â€but you ainâ€™t seen nothing yet. Iâ€™ve got to go absolutely ape, because when thereâ€™s a war, the Army likes to see people with imagination thatâ€™ll innovate, so Iâ€™m going to go ape.â€ And one of the things he did before Christmas of 1941 was to write a telegram to the Chief Engineer, saying his unit was trained for combat, ready to go, and wanted to go serve overseas. So we were the first unit to be sent overseas in World War II.

Interviewer:

Yes sir, and this is the 41st Engineer Battalion?

Edward Rowny:

41st Engineer Regiment.

Interviewer:

Engineer Regiment.

Edward Rowny:

Regiment.

Interviewer:

Yes sir.

Edward Rowny:

Combat.

Interviewer:

Now, you were the S3 of that unit.

Edward Rowny:

Assistant S3 originally; later I became S3. But during that year, I was also Iâ€™d start out commanding a company and weâ€™d have only one Officer, and I had four Non-Commissioned Officers, all veterans of the Ninth and Tenth Cavalry, the famous black cavalry units. 25 years average service each, 100 years service out of the 4, so I rose quickly to be a company commander and S3. And at the end of or within 1942, two things happened. One was Smokey Joe Wood was promoted from a captain to brigadier general. And it started, told the former cadre to put together the 92nd Infantry Division of the United States, and I was promoted to captain, and he brought me with him. So I spent all my World War II service under Wood, really, in the 92nd Division. In 1944, having failed a 1943 test to go overseas, they gave us another year of training, and we failed that also, but they said,

â€œYou go anyway.â€ So in 1944, fall of â€˜44, we went to Italy, landed administratively at Pisa, although Livorno is the port there, and fought the Gothic line until the spring. And then Cinquale and a few other disastrous attacks of that type caused the Army to finally dissolve the 92nd, and reorganize the 92nd Infantry Division.

Interviewer:

Yes sir. Now, did you spend any time in Africa?

Edward Rowny:

Well, the first unit that was in it, the 41st Engineers, went to Africa; went to western Africa, to Liberia, to build an airfield there, because of two reasons. One, they were supplying the Soviets with lend lease equipment by air, and we needed an airfield on the coast of Africa. Also, we needed the rubber, which is critical, and the greatest rubber plantation in the world at that time was the Firestone rubber plantation in Liberia. So we built the airport there, and then later, as I said, I came home towards the fall of 1942.

Interviewer:

Yes sir. Now, the 92nd Infantry Division, the Buffalo Soldiers, was an African-American Division.

Edward Rowny:

Yes.

Interviewer:

And you commanded the 317th Combat Engineer Battalion -

Edward Rowny:

Right.

Interviewer:

Which was also an African-American unit.

Edward Rowny:

Well, yeah, we were all - yes. Weâ€™re all black soldiers, and about 90% of the Officers were white and 10% were black. We had great difficulty getting any black Officers, because they asked us to send all people with the average score of 100 or more to OCS, and in my whole regiment, I had none. So they dropped it to 90, and then I sent about 12 or so to OCS; 10 of them came back and joined me as young black officers when they returned from OCS. But we had very few black officers.

Interviewer:

Yes sir. Now, did you experience any difficulties commanding the 317th, either internally or externally?

Edward Rowny:

Well, we had a great deal of difficulty, because they resented being segregated, and they did a lot of demonstrations, and said that we wouldnâ€™t let them into our white clubs - which we didnâ€™t. And so they resented that, and they either couldnâ€™t fight or wouldnâ€™t fight very well. Now, have to be careful, because there were some notable exceptions, and there were some black soldiers and a few officers who did very well. I had one engineer company commander who distinguished himself, and he did very well, and I had one or two other good black officers.

But not many, soâ€! But the soldiers were low AGCT scores, down in the 70s and 80s, and were subpar, as I say. The artillery and engineers did very well, but the infantrymen would, with a great deal of difficulty, would make an attack, but as soon as they were attacked, would run to the rear, so. Finally, after this happened several times, General Marshall decided that he better reorganize, so he took all the best blacks from the 92nd Division and put them into one regiment. He brought in a white outfit from Africa -

Had been anti-aircraft outfit, the 473rd - and asked for the best colonel in the Army, and got it to command that. So then they did fairly well, and then he got the 442nd Nisei, Japanese-Americans, who did excellent. They had more Medal of Honor winners and more Purple

Hearts than any other unit in the United States Army. So we went from the worst unit in Italy to the best unit in Italy almost overnight.

Interviewer:

Yes sir. How was the fighting in Italy?

Edward Rowny:

Rough. Rough, first because the Germans occupied the high ground, and second, because of the way we didn't have the combat skills to do much about it. We were given extra artillery and extra Air Force units to help us succeed, but even with that, we didn't succeed as long as we were all together as the 92nd Division.

Interviewer:

Yes sir. What sort of missions was the 317th assigned?

Edward Rowny:

Well, the 317th Engineers?

Interviewer:

Yes sir.

Edward Rowny:

Well, we had to clear the many minefields that were sown along the way by the Germans, which were very difficult to clear. We had to build bridges, because the Germans blew up the bridges. And we built a few airstrips, so that some aircraft could come in and give us supplies. But mostly, fighting, and anti-mines, and digging up the mines, and building bridges - and maintaining roads, of course. It was very muddy, wet in Italy, and we had tons and tons and tons of rock that had to be put down to be able to build any roads; intensive work. So those were the types of units that we had.

Interviewer:

Yes sir.

Edward Rowny:

Very intensive jobs we had.

Interviewer:

Yes sir. You were a battalion commander within about three years of graduating from West Point.

Edward Rowny:

Yes. I went from a second lieutenant to a lieutenant colonel in three years.

Interviewer:

What sort of challenges did that present to you?

Edward Rowny:

Well, it put me - made me go learn new things and bigger things quite easily, and I found myself as a younger man commanding older men, and I found a number of my classmates resented the fact that I was being pushed ahead because of Colonel Wood had this idea that he would give me these impossible jobs to do, and difficult jobs, and when I succeeded - which wasn't often. Well, first, when I failed, which was often, he said, "Well, you've learned something from that. Let's try something else." When I succeeded, which wasn't as often, he would promote me. So I kept being promoted way ahead of my time, so it was difficult socially, from that point of view.

Interviewer:

Yes sir. Now, 10% of your class were casualties during World War II, and I know they're all important, but who first comes to mind out of your classmates?

Edward Rowny:

Well, of course, those who landed at Normandy and were killed come to mind, and those who went into the Air Force and were killed during the early raids, so they came to mind. I had a number of brilliant classmates, of course, who were killed, mostly in Germany, in the Battle of the Bulge and so forth. My classmate, man who became the class president later,

Mike Greene, distinguished himself in combat. My roommate, Larry Greene, his brother, also distinguished himself in combat. My best friend, the First Captain, John Norton, landed in all five parachute jumps in World War II, and he was quite distinguished.

So we had a number of distinguished people, including George Brown, who rose rapidly in the Army Air Corps, and later became the Chief of Staff of the new Air Force, and became the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff later on, so.

Interviewer:

Yes sir. At the end of the war in Europe, you were assigned to plan the invasion of Japan. Can you tell me a little bit about the planning process for that?

Edward Rowny:

Well, yes. I might go back just for a little better background, that I had gone to Yale. I wanted to study, and Abe Lincoln wanted me to continue to study, and he didn't want other Engineers to study political things. So he tried to get Goodpaster, number two man in Class of '39, and Dziuban, the number one man in Class of '39, and myself, assigned to Harvard, Princeton, and Yale. And we were accepted, but the Army wouldn't pay for our training, said that they didn't need people trained in political matters, but they needed engineers. So we went to school as engineers, and I moonlighted and got my two master's degrees in the two years I was there.

Goodpaster and Dziuban stayed on another year, so they had a leisurely time of it, but I had a pretty hard time. But at the end of that training, Abe Lincoln and Colonel Wood were still micromanaging my career and said, "Well, Rowny has worked for two of the top three generals in the Army, Marshall and Eisenhower. He should get to work with the third top general, MacArthur." So they sent me out to join MacArthur's staff. Besides, my division commander in World War II became the Chief of Staff to General MacArthur and the Far Eastern Command. So I was sent out, and during the planning session for the Far East Command -

I was the Duty Officer, actually, by a great stroke of irony, on the 25th of June when the North Koreans struck, and I received the first order, or first dispatches from Korea saying that the North Koreans had attacked. Took these, called up the Chief of Staff, my boss, and he called the Chief of Staff of the Army, Army Chief of Staff Corps, and we met at General MacArthur's place, and that began my relationship with, close relationship with General MacArthur. Several days later, after that invasion, General MacArthur's spokesman became nervous and undone, and he couldn't handle his job.

So I got a famous two-line directive, saying paragraph one, one sentence: "Lieutenant Colonel Rowny, in addition to your duties as G3 Planner, you are now my official spokesman." And sentence two: "You will tell the press everything they need to know, and nothing they need not know. Signed, MacArthur." So I had some rather broad instructions.

Interviewer:

Yes sir.

Edward Rowny:

So in addition to my job as a planner, which is hard enough, I was official spokesman, where I'd handle the daily press briefings -

Interviewer:

Wow.

Edward Rowny:

For MacArthur.

Interviewer:

Sir, before we get to that portion, could you tell me a little bit about MacArthur and Marshall, and how they differed.

Edward Rowny:

Well, first, they differed greatly in personality, so Marshall was easily the most faceless and most modest of generals. He gave other people credit, and he kept himself in the background. MacArthur was not. He was flamboyant and egocentric, and so they had rather difficult personalities. But they were both brilliant.

Interviewer:

Yes sir.

Edward Rowny:

And they were both very good Officers, distinguished themselves. Actually, Marshall had fought in World War I, and so did MacArthur, and MacArthur got a Medal of Honor, and he commanded a division at the age of 25 in World War I, so they were both brilliant people. But rather different personalities.

Interviewer:

Yes sir. How was it working for MacArthur?

Edward Rowny:

Mixed. It was - of course, you felt you were in the presence of a man who was brilliant, and really a great military leader. On the other hand, you got at an early age to, early time, to recognize he had feet of clay; that he trusted certain people's advice who didn't deserve to be trusted. They flattered him, and he went on it. For example, Colonel - I'll think of his name in a minute - German name, who became, was his G2. And I have to go back a minute to say that after I arrived in Tokyo in December of 1949, I found out that I'd arrived a month earlier than expected.

And they didn't have a seat open for me, so I got a pass to travel by air and sea and rail around Japan, and I took a trip from the west coast down to the south all the way up the east coast, or went down the east coast and up the west coast, all the way down to southern Kyushu up to Hokkaido. And when I came back, I wrote a memo saying that my impressions of the trip were there were had a lot of people in these hamlets and villages that would waste the time of the U.S. Army by being there; that the Japanese emperor was perfectly willing and able to carry out MacArthur's orders, so we didn't need these occupation forces [indistinct] interfering with things.

And I said, "Besides, there could be an outbreak of war in Korea." So I sent that message on, and it immediately drew the ire of this German-born Major General who was MacArthur's G2, who said, "Look, Rowny's wrong, and he should mind his own business." But MacArthur backed my plan and pulled the troops back out of the cities and hamlets, and put them into training camps, and that's where they were beginning to get trained in time for the time the Korean War broke out.

Interviewer:

Yes sir. How receptive were the Japanese people that you met to having Americans around?

How?

Interviewer:

Were they receptive to the Americans, or not?

Edward Rowny:

Oh. The Americans - the Japanese were greatly receptive to the emperor, and would do anything the emperor told them. Now, while I was still in the Pentagon, between VE Day and VJ Day, I had what was called a MacArthur desk, and I received the messages from MacArthur and decided where to send them throughout Washington - the Pentagon and other places. And one of the things that was being debated was what shall we do with the emperor at the end of the war? And the State Department had three options: option one, shoot him; option two was hang him; and the third was imprison him for life. We sent that to MacArthur, and overnight a message came back, "None of the above.

We will, after we win the battle with Japan, we'll put the emperor in charge. He'll

take my commands and carry them out, and weâ€™ll have the Japanese not obeying us as occupying troops, but obeying their own people.â€ So with that relationship, and also the fact that the U.S. brought a great deal of cash with it in its troops that it brought to Japan and so forth, I would say that the Japanese were quite receptive. I wouldnâ€™t say they were exactly friendly, but we went at an early age into Japan and found no great difficulty dealing with Japan.

Interviewer:

Yes sir. How rapidly were they rebuilding their nation?

Edward Rowny:

Not much.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Edward Rowny:

But they were being pushed to do so by MacArthur, who had two staffs. He had his FECOM, his Far Eastern staff, and then he had his military staff, or his civilian staff, the SCAPE, Supreme Commander Allied Powers Europe. And he chose a brilliant engineer, civilian engineer, Whitney, to head that, who brought in the best people from the United States in each department; went to all the universities around the United States and found the best people. So the best agronomists, the best financiers, the best educators were all sent over to join his staff, and completely redid the Japanese economy and wrote their constitution for them.

Interviewer:

Yes sir. Now, at the outbreak of the Korean War, you were one of the planners for the invasion of Inchon, one of the most daring plans in American military history. Can you describe-

Edward Rowny:

Well, Inchon Coast came later now.

Interviewer:

Yes sir.

Edward Rowny:

That particular war, the North Koreans went through the South Koreans like a knife through butter, and they had trained their - that is, the Russians had trained the North Koreans well. We didnâ€™t train our South Koreans very well. They had equipped theirs with 4,000 of the more modern tanks, while we gave the Japanese our old cast-off tanks. So we were quickly pushed down into the Pusan Perimeter.

Interviewer:

Yes sir.

Edward Rowny:

And at that point it was a stalemate. Two of the three corps commanders wanted to evacuate to Dunkirk, and going back to Japan, saying that we could never succeed there. But one of the three, who turned out to be Almond, later commander of the X Corps, decided to stay, so General MacArthur said he wanted the three of us in the planning staff to devise invasion plans up the coast, west coast of Korea, to outflank the Japanese. So the senior man drew up his plan, and chose to attack right at the hinge between the North and the South.

Interviewer:

Yes sir.

Edward Rowny:

The next senior man between the senior man and myself, he went about five miles inward, where we lost some use of artillery, but had a better landing beach, thought he had better surprise. I thought I was pretty bold in going 20 kilometers up the coast, where I didnâ€™t

have any artillery support, but had a very good landing beach. I thought I had complete surprise, and that we could count on the Air Force in giving us support. So MacArthur listened to all three of us present our plans, and didn't say anything, but then he took his grease pencil, went up to the 10 foot map on the side of the wall, and drew an arrow way from down at his ankles up to his eyebrows on the map, right in through Inchon towards Seoul.

He said, "That's where we're going. We're going to land here in the vicinity of Inchon," and "Always go through for the objective," he said. And he said, "What's wrong with that?" One of the Planners said, "Well, in the first place, it's a 31-foot tide there, and second greatest tide in the world, and no invasion has ever succeeded in such a tide. You'll land, and 12 hours later, you'll be beached for 12 hours, and you won't be able to supply your troops, and your landing craft will be beached and you're going to get pushed into the sea. And the second place is that it's going to be defended well by - the capital will be defended well by the Koreans, who don't want to lose Seoul. And there'll be a lot of underwater obstacles at sea and sea lions and so forth to fight."

Edward Rowny:

So MacArthur says, "Well, you're pusillanimous," he said. I didn't have a smart phone in those days; I didn't know what that meant, but later found it didn't mean anything very good, anyway. But we were pusillanimous in there. So he invited the Chiefs of Staffs to come over, who incidentally disapproved of our plan after we sent it in. He invited them to come to Tokyo, and in an eight-hour presentation where he pulled out every histrionic stop - he was the John Barrymore of his day at giving examples from Arbelá and all famous battles of the world - why this would succeed.

So everything went very well, except there was one flaw. We decided that we really needed a total of four divisions in order to make this invasion, and we could only muster three. So General Almond - because as Chief of Staff he would've been my division commander in both of those divisions - went to his classmate from VMI, General Lem Shepherd, who was commander of the Marine Fleet Forces, and said, "Look, if you can pull together some troops that had fought in World War II, some Marines, pull them back from Reserve, have them volunteer, we can put together another division. We'll have enough to make this invasion."

And it was fortuitous, because unknown to all but a few, in the spring of 1950, President Truman had written a memo to the Secretary of Defense saying, "Let's do away with the Marine Corps. We don't need a Marine Corps anymore, and it's duplicating resources and duplicating roles and missions." So the fact that they put together this division and it succeeded so well meant that the Marine Corps was put back on the map again, because Truman didn't dare do away with a Marine Corps which had built up such a brilliant reputation for itself on its invasion at Inchon.

Now, it was at this time that General MacArthur said, "Rowny," he said, "one of the hard parts of this is going to be crossing the Han River, which has this huge tide going both ways up the river from Inchon, up the Han, up south of Seoul, and I want you to be my engineer." "Well, I can't do that," I said to him. He said, "Why not?" I said, "I'm a lieutenant colonel and corps commander calls for a brigadier general job." "No problem," he said, "give me a pencil and a piece of paper." So he wrote out an order effective immediately, "Rowny is brevetted brigadier general." So I was promoted on the spot -

Interviewer:

Wow.

Edward Rowny:

To Brigadier. As far as I know, I'm only one of two officers that had that happen to them;

the other was Kosciuszko, during a time when he was the engineer for General Washâ€“
But I never really researched. Maybe you historians can look that up sometime to tell me if
there are more. There probably were some more brevetted brigadier generals in the U.S.
Army.

Interviewer:

Yes sir. So then you became the X Corps Engineer.

Edward Rowny:

X Corps, yeah.

Interviewer:

Yes sir, and what sort of things did you do as the X Corps Engineer?

Edward Rowny:

Well, my biggest problem as X Corps Engineer, of course, was to first get across the Han
River, and lo and behold, the Marines said they didnâ€™t know how to cross a river. They
had been taught how to make an invasion on a foreign shore, and I had to teach them that it
was just leaving one shore to another, like a foreign invasion, so. But the Army had little
wooden paddleboats, and the tide was so great that as soon as you put these invasion
boats into the Han River, they sank. So we used the Marine Corpsâ€™ amtracks to do the
invading.

So one thing was to get across the Han River, help them get across the Han. The Seventh
was supposed to build a ridge. Now, because they wanted to land with Syngman Rhee in
Seoul, Korea, in just two months after the invasion, because it was a symbolic date with the
Syngman Rhee, so I was still building a bridge under fire, which is very dangerous. I mean
you just donâ€™t - and we lost quite a few, some casualties, building this bridge under fire,
so it was a very difficult job. And then the tide runs strongly both ways, and the tide was so
strong that itâ€™s like trying to cross the Snake River in a canoe.

Seven feet per second, which means about nine or ten feet per hour, tide, and so it was
very rough. You had to put anchors both ways, one time when the tide was going one way,
an anchor for these pontoon bridges, and we only had - we finished this bridge with just
hours to spare when MacArthur came on in. So that was one of the great difficulties on that
job. And later, when we went up to the east coast and X Corps went around to the other
coast to move north from Hungnam, we went too rapidly up to the Yalu River.

But then the Chinese came in around Thanksgiving time, and pushed us back, and
surrounded a group at the Chosin Reservoir, 5,000 feet above the plain there on the east
coast of Korea. And the Chinese had blown the bridge, the only bridge across a chasm, so I
built a kind of an erector-set bridge in parts, and air-dropped the bridge into the perimeter,
where they bolted it together, and the engineers were able to put it together, and we came
out of the invasion. I was then later, the next couple weeks, the chief of the evacuation of
North Korea, and in charge of loading the equipment and men both.

And as fate would have it, all the equipment had left, and almost all of the men had left, and
all I found was a handful of men left at the beach on Christmas Eve, 1950. And the last boat
that came in for me sank; it was blown up, and the people on the ships, including the corps
commander, thought that I had gone down with it. So they took off south, and here I was,
stranded on the beach with a jeep driver and a radio operator - radio operator with a radio
that didnâ€™t work. So anyway, the radio operator was pretty smart.

And he found some powdered milk that we were abandoning there on the beach, and put
up a sign, â€œU.S. S.O.S.â€ and a U.S. reconnaissance plane came in and picked us up,
and took us back. So at 4:00, we left North Korea, being fired on, pushed out by the
Chinese, and Christmas Eve dinner I had at home with - my family was then in Japan; they
were having a Christmas Eve dinner with my family.

Interviewer:

Wow.

Edward Rowny:

So now, part of that story why that powdered milk was abandoned was an officer, a very fine Marine Corps officer that I worked with on the evacuation, or planning the original loading for the Inchon invasion, name of Forney, had been approached by an officer who had become - a North Korean officer who had become a South Korean citizen, and wanted the U.S. to stay. And he said that there were these hundreds of thousands of North Koreans that felt that they were going to be slaughtered by the Chinese, so he asked that I evacuate a lot of these people.

And I said, "Well, we have to take - we're under orders to take back everything we can use, all the milk and equipment, and not leave supplies for the Chinese and North Koreans." But we went to General Almond, and he said, "Yes." He says, "Abandon some of these less necessary supplies, like powdered milk and some of our lubricants and so on." So we took 100,000 North Korean civilians south in what's known as the Christmas Cargo, down to the southern part of Korea when we evacuated.

Interviewer:

Wow. So that powdered milk became your salvation.

Edward Rowny:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

Yes sir. Now, and then after that, you became the commander of the 38th Infantry Regiment?

Edward Rowny:

Yeah. The story there was that I went back after having been brevetted brigadier general, and the G4 - think his name was Smith - of X Corps had gone home for the holidays at Christmastime, and was murdered by his wife, who found him in bed with a Japanese maid. And she actually was the daughter of General Krueger, the Sixth Army commander, later court martialed. But anyway, General Almond said, "Rowny," he said, "you were an engineer, and by now I want to make you a G4."

I said, "Well, I don't want to be a G4. I want operations." And he said, "Look," he said, "I'm my own operations officer," but he said, "it's going to be very difficult moving north and getting railroad rebuilt, and the roads rebuilt to go north, so I need a X Corps G4." So he made me the G4, which I was for a while. And then he said if I stayed with him for another year - and it was only a one-year requirement to stay in Korea - he would give me an Infantry Regiment. And I said, "Fine," so I stayed on, and commanded then the 38th Infantry in the 2nd Infantry Division.

Interviewer:

Yes sir. And what sort of operations did you get involved in?

Edward Rowny:

Mostly operations see-sawing up across - we were flying back and forth along the 38th Parallel for better positions, and there was a famous Heartbreak Ridge battle. And my unit was given a hill to take, which flanked the Heartbreak Ridge, and I was very proud of the fact that, with a great deal of hard work and planning, and sending thousands and thousands of Korean chogi bearer, ammunition bearers, up and down those hills, we sat with three fire bases, so that when we started the battle, we delivered an artillery barrage which was 10 times as great as any barrage that had ever been put down in combat. So it so startled the North Koreans that they really lost a lot of casualties, and a proud part of this successful operation was that they lost about 3,000 wounded and killed. I had about 30 wounded, not a single fatality, in the 38th Infantry. So I was always proud of the fact that I lost no men in that battle.

Interviewer:

Yes sir. Now, if we could, I'd like to jump forward to your Vietnam experience.

Edward Rowny:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

And during the Vietnam War, you pioneered the use of helicopters.

Edward Rowny:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

Can you tell me a little bit about that?

Edward Rowny:

Well, some of that began back in Korea. When I had the 38th Infantry, I would always get to the right part of the Division for two reasons: One, that - well, for one reason, but with two sub-reasons. Always want to get next to the Marines, because the Marines had their own close air support, and very often I could get some air support from the Marines for my battle. And also, the Marines had some helicopters that they used for logistic purposes. So I got together with the regimental commander from the Marine Corps Regiment, and with 10 of his helicopters and 100 of my soldiers in the 38th Infantry -

We made a raid about three miles north of our front lines to capture a bunch of guerillas that had a high point. So I got the whole experience, and got to be a great believer in air involvement, that we should arm helicopters. Well, after the Korean War, I went down to teach at Fort Benning, and I established what was called PROFIT Time, Professional Improvement Time, off-duty study hours where we could experiment with different tactics which were not approved. We were not allowed to give anything except approved tactics in the classroom, but I did this so that we could experiment with ideas.

And I developed what we call the "swarm of bees" concept, and that was that we would land a nuclear weapon to the rear of our lines against an enemy troop, and then move in with our own troops with protective clothing while the enemy was still in a state of shock and take over. So I got to be a great believer in helicopters, in the Army helicopters, as were several of my classmates. One, the First Captain, my best friend, who was a helicopter pilot himself, and another was the number one man in my class, Al Moody, who was a helicopter pilot, and also secretary to Secretary McNamara -

And another, who was Powell, who was a Secretary to the Secretary of the Army. So we were experimenting with it. Well, anyway, to go back a bit to what happened in the Infantry School, I was teaching this course when I met a disheveled captain, a disheveled, ill-fitting uniform, needed a haircut, got up and asked some questions, had the opportunity to tell him, but they were brilliant questions. And I said, you know, "Captain, you know a lot more about these topic things and different than I do. Come up and take over and teach this class." So he did. I took him home for dinner, and I said - my wife said to him, "What do you do in civilian life?" He said, "Oh, I'm a congressman."

And that was "Scoop" Jackson. And Scoop Jackson went back and told the Secretary of the Army what he'd seen, and a couple days later, I was ordered back up to the Army to report to the secretary, and I thought that I'd get a pat on the back. And I was reprimanded and jerked off the platform at the Infantry School for teaching unapproved tactics, and I thought my career was over. But Abe Lincoln and Joe Wood and a few other people saved me, and I did not make a matter of record of it, so it later turns out that I was not, that my career wasn't over; I was able to rebuild it. So I got my star with that.

So when I became a brigadier general in 1961, and assistant division commander of the 82nd Airborne, it so happened that the corps commander there was a lieutenant general pilot, a helicopter pilot. And he allowed me and egged me on to experiment with using a few helicopters we had in maneuvers, the type that we had in Korea, and this grew into

what became the Howze Board. The four of us - three classmates and myself - had to circumvent the Army, because the Army was against it.

The Army didn't want to make waves with the Air Force, who didn't believe that the Army should have military armaments helicopters. And also the strong core of the Army of those days was people who had fought in Armor in World War II, and believed that since a helicopter cost as much as a tank, every helicopter they built would be one less tank. So I found that, we found that the Army was against this whole idea, so let's say we had to devolve our plans and bypass the Staff.

We had the Secretary of Defense to write a memo to the Secretary of the Army, saying we want to have some plans, tests sent up, and they should come through right to the Secretary of the Army, bypassing the Staff. Which didn't sit very well with the Army Staff, but these three classmates, two of whom were in powerful positions - one was with the Secretary of Defense office, the other Secretary of the Army office - we got the Howze Board tests, and I became the Director of Tests. And the tests were a howling success. We got - all the helicopters in the U.S. Army belonged to Fort Bragg, and I commanded those, and with the troops from the 82nd Airborne Division.

We said that the Army helicopter could make a big difference someplace like Vietnam against guerillas, because they're slow-flying, so they come down low, and not be detected too fast, and kill the guerillas, and it'd be a great way to combat the insurgents. so we put this together, and I was rewarded for my work by being promoted at an early age, after only a year's service as a brigadier general, to a major general. So here, 20 years out of West Point, a brigadier general; at 21 years, on the list for major general.

Interviewer:

Yes sir.

Edward Rowny:

And I was putting my family here into Washington while I was getting ready to go to Korea to command the First Cavalry Division as a major general when a limousine showed up, and drive had a note for me said, "Please come and have breakfast with me. Secretary of the Army," brings this, "Come as you are," with this limo. So I went there, and he said, "You know, I like the whole concept," he said. "Who do you think - I want to try to test this in Vietnam? Who do you think could do it?" And I named him a major general I thought was a helicopter pilot, and quite qualified. So he said, "Fine." Well, next day the same limousine showed up and said, "That major general doesn't want to go, and so we fired him, and you're going to Vietnam."

So I was sent then to Vietnam, but I still had difficulty, because Admiral Felt as the Pacific Commander actually commanded the units in Vietnam, and he didn't believe in armed helicopters and he didn't want me to go. So he grounded me there in Hawaii, wouldn't let me on. So I managed to work through his Adjutant and get a leave of absence for a rest and recuperation to the Philippines. And while I was in the Philippines, I sent a back channel message to the Secretary, to my classmate Powell at the Army's office and told him what had happened. So he got the Secretary of Defense to write Felt an order to let me go.

So then I was able to take the first armed helicopters into - I mean take the first helicopters that we get now, with a bunch of machine guns and strapped-on rockets like where we experimented. Now, with the use of these, it was very difficult, because we were forbidden from fighting in Korea in those days, so our people can be pilots, but not fighting, so our helicopter pilots would pilot the helicopters, and we had Korean officers do the shooting.

Interviewer:

Yes sir.

Edward Rowny:

But that was kind of a subterfuge, because we were really using both, you know. But so this was very highly successful, and so then I finally got back on a track with them, and unfortunately, the people who had been opposed by me, who I had opposed in the Army, were now running things, and I was glad to be a major general, but I stayed a major general for the next six years.

Interviewer:

Yes sir. Well, sir, if we could, please, take a quick break here.

Edward Rowny:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

And weâ€™re back. Sir, during the period around 1967, you commanded the 24th Infantry Division in Germany. Can you describe what it was like commanding a division in Cold War Europe?

Edward Rowny:

Well, it was a time when we were under rather intense training, but particularly the division I got to command was poorly trained by a man named General Cunningham, who believed that if he gave large troops a lot of free time and then recreation, that it would raise morale. Well, it didnâ€™t, really; they were bored. And so I took over a poorly trained division, and by using a lot of â€œSmokey Joeâ€ training techniques - one of which is called â€œTrain Mainâ€ - I was able to build up this division to become the best division in the U.S. Army. So anyway.

Interviewer:

Yes sir. What was the atmosphere in Europe during this time?

Edward Rowny:

Oh, it was tense. They werenâ€™t quite sure what was going to be the next country to fall. I mean Czechoslovakia went, and Hungary went, and they were wondering who would be next. And of course, it was long after the Berlin airlift, but still they remembered that, and the Berlin Wall was there and in place, so it was rather tense. We did a lot of intense maneuvering during the year, but as I say, I was fortunate, in a way, to take over the worst-trained outfit in the Army and have been able to turn it into the best.

Interviewer:

Yes sir. Now, weâ€™re going to skip over the point where you commanded the U.S. Republic of Korea I Corps, because Iâ€™d like to get to your time as a diplomat. And during the 1970s and 1980s, you served as an advisor to the SALT II talks, and then you became the chief negotiator of the START negotiation with the rank of ambassador.

Edward Rowny:

Right.

Interviewer:

So now how did you receive the appointment as an American representative at the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks?

Edward Rowny:

Well, I have to go back to the time that I was deputy commander in NATO to General - what was his name - Steinhoff. And he - as deputy commander, I was in charge of the nuclear plan, because only U.S. officers had the plan. But anyway, Steinhoff was pretty clever. He knew that the U.S. Army was against any negotiations with the Soviets, and he wanted to negotiate on conventional warfare.

So he put me in charge of the planning to start the negotiations on conventional arms. I was going along with this for about a year, and was ready to have my first negotiation start in Vienna, when I was ordered back to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to the chairman. I thought to report on what we were doing, as letâ€™s say this was covered, because of knowing that the United States was against negotiating, he made me the chief negotiator and planner for

this thing so that the U.S. couldn't object. So anyway, I went back to report to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, I thought to discuss some of the - ramifications of being a conventional arms planner. And the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff said, "Rowny, I don't want to talk about that; I want to talk on strategic arms." And I said, "Well, not me, Admiral. I'm familiar with the conventional arms." And he said, "No," he said, "there's some crazy German over in the White House that thinks you should be my representative on the SALT II talks, and I don't want you. I want to appoint a Navy admiral." And I said, "Well, I don't want the job anyway." He said, "Well," he said, "I'll go talk to the Chief of Staff of the Army." So he went to talk to the Chief of Staff of the Army.

Next day, the Chief said, "Rowny," he said, "this German in the White House happened to be Kissinger, and he's very powerful, and he says that he made a deal with Senator Scoop Jackson that Jackson would back the ABM treaty if they made me the U.S. military representative." So he said, "We want you to stay on and be that." And I said, "What are my options?" He said, "You have only one other option, to retire, to leave the Army." So anyway, I stayed on. And so I stayed with that for the next six years, '72 to '79, and tried to make something of the SALT II talks, but I didn't. So in the end, I resigned in protest rather than sign up to the SALT II treaty when Carter made a deal with the Soviets.

'Cause I didn't think that the treaty was either - well, I knew it was not verifiable. They didn't believe in on-site inspection. And they wanted more weapons than we had. I thought that we could give them equality, but not more weapons. So I left in protest, and lobbied against SALT, against the SALT II treaty, and fortunately succeeded - with the help of the Russians, who meanwhile had invaded Afghanistan. And when the Russians invaded Afghanistan, the U.S. said that they were breaking off all relationships there with this. So I stayed on, and I got a phone call a little before Christmas from some man who described himself as a governor.

Said he had heard my testimony, and wondered if I would come meet him in January; that he was going to run to be president of the United States. So I find out that this is Governor Reagan, so I met with him, and we talked for about an hour, and he asked me to stay on and be his advisor. And I said, well, I was kind of reluctant to do that, because I'd become known in the press as a Cold Warrior, and he said, "Oh," he said, "you're not Genghis Khan." He said, "You come in and help me out, 'cause I need you to become president of the United States." So I worked for his election all throughout the next year, 1980, and of course, he was elected.

And he made me then his chief - well, first he appointed me as chief of the Arms Control Agency.

Interviewer:

Yes sir.

Edward Rowny:

ACA, and after weeks and weeks of testifying, trying and finally convincing the Senators to approve me, they approved me on a Friday afternoon. On the Monday morning, I read in the newspaper I'd been dumped; that they decided to put a Democrat who had been the chief of the law school at Yale as head of ACA. So I found out I was out of a job, but then President Reagan said, "Well, I want to give you another job, which I think is better. I want you to become my chief negotiator of START, Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty." And I said, "Well, I'm not so sure, Mr. President, because here you appointed me to ACA and didn't back me up.?"

"What assurance do I have that I'm going to have any backing here?" He said, "Well," he said, "give it a try," he said. "You know, I'm faced with a difficult personnel situation here, and trying to control my own staff on who they appoint and

don't appoint, but it will work out. So it did, and I stayed on. So I was the chief negotiator throughout the entire first term of Reagan. Now, we didn't get very far, because as Reagan said, the Soviet leaders kept dying along the way - Andropov and Chernenko and so forth died, and nothing happened during the first term. But in the second term, Gorbachev came in, and it looked like things might change.

So the president called me and said, "Rowny," he said, "Gromyko talked to Secretary Vance, and believes that we should have two new negotiating teams, start with a clean broom. What do you think about it?" I said, "Dumb idea, Mr. President, because we would make a new team, and they wouldn't. They'd keep their old one." He said, "Well, it's too bad, because Vance has already agreed with Gromyko." So anyway, I said, "Thank you very much. It was a pleasure working for you." "No. I want you to stay on to be my special advisor." I said, "Well now, I've been burned twice, you know, once too often, and I've had enough of this jockeying back and forth." He said, "Oh, give it a try." So I tried it, and I became a special - which was actually more powerful than having been a chief negotiator, because I was now part of the advisors to Reagan that told the chief negotiator what to negotiate about.

Interviewer:

Yes sir.

Edward Rowny:

So I spent the second term being the roving ambassador for him, traveling around the world, talking to leaders, Premier of Japan, Korea, China, Australia, and the Pope, so it was a very interesting eight years, in particular the last four years.

Interviewer:

Now sir, how was it negotiating with the Soviets?

Edward Rowny:

Tough. Very tough, because in the first place, the Soviets were good negotiators. They were schooled in what they were doing, and trained, and they all learned American culture and our literature and history. They knew how to deal with us, and they always spoke English, and I was the only man on our side that spoke Russian and had studied some Russian history and culture. So it was tough, tough from that point of view, that they would out-negotiate us quite a bit, so.

Interviewer:

Wow.

Edward Rowny:

And I had poor, poor people on my team, militarily speaking, while they had experts on their side.

Interviewer:

Yes sir. Now, you worked for the Nixon, the Ford, the Carter, Reagan Presidencies.

Edward Rowny:

Right.

Interviewer:

How would you describe those, working with those gentlemen?

Edward Rowny:

Nixon was good in my area. Had he stayed on, I think he would've made a, gotten a good treaty, but Watergate come along, and we lost out on that. Ford was not bad. Ford, I think, was greatly maligned by the U.S. press, and they gave him a hard time, but he was better in particularly my area than the press gave him credit for. Carter I think I can only describe as being a complete disaster. He was - he believed that the Soviets would follow his lead; if he took a Christian attitude about things, that they would follow suit. Well, they said, "We're not Christians," and were surprised at the naivete of these people in America.

And actually, during the election, they preferred Reagan to Carter during the debates, so - privately. So it was kind of a mixed bag with the Soviets. But then, of course, Reagan was by far the best. He really understood the Soviet. He didn't care as much about the details as Carter or Nixon did, but - he left that stuff to me and to others, but he knew the big picture very well.

Interviewer:

Yes sir.

Edward Rowny:

And he was a great believer in Strategic Defense Initiative, SDI, which had a great deal to do with winning what was at the time the downfall of the Soviet Union.

Interviewer:

Yes sir. Sir, what would you consider your greatest accomplishment to be over your long career?

Edward Rowny:

Oh God.

Interviewer:

Saved the hard questions for last.

Edward Rowny:

What was my greatest accomplishment?

Interviewer:

Yes sir.

Edward Rowny:

I would say building the, being part of the Inchon planning, building the bridge across the Han River; dropping the air bridge into Korea with the 38th Infantry I guess was kind of the highlight, this was the highlight of my military career in battle. Now, outside of battle, the highlight was getting the concept of air mobility approved by working around the Army Staff, and getting that done.

Interviewer:

Yes sir, because it seems like the iconic image of the Vietnam War is the helicopter.

You're one of 5 remaining members of 424 who graduated in the Class of 1941.

Edward Rowny:

Right.

Interviewer:

What is the legacy of your class, sir?

Edward Rowny:

Well, two people, Phil and Anne Wilcox, have written a book called "The Class of '41: The Class that Went to War," and they tell you the Class of '41 won the Cold War single-handed. Well, we didn't quite do it single-handed, but we had a great deal to do with it. And a lot of our people landed in high places and did key jobs, so I think rather immodestly probably more than any other class, we were in key positions for winning the Cold War. So I refer you to that book, "The Class of '41: The Class that Went to War."

Interviewer:

Yes sir. Final question for you, sir. What does West Point mean to you?

Edward Rowny:

West Point meant really the soul, heart and soul of the U.S. Army and patriotism, and particularly gave me a new concept of honor. I went to Johns Hopkins, which has a pretty good honor system, but nothing like the honor system we had at West Point, nothing like the training that we received. So it really, so it became my second great love, next to my wife and family, and West Point meant just about everything to me.

Interviewer:

Yes sir. Well sir, it has been an honor and a privilege of ours to have you come in and talk with us today. Thank you for being here, and welcome home, sir.

Edward Rowny:

Thank you.