

Interviewer:

Good afternoon. Today is the twelfth of August 2016 and I am here with Colonel Don Nowland, USMA 1965, at your home in Marblehead, Massachusetts. Sir, thank you so much for having us out here today.

Nowland:

Thank you for making the trek from West Point. Sorry about the construction on the highway.

Interviewer:

Sir, you can't avoid that.

Nowland:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

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

Nowland:

The last name is Nowland, N as in November, O-W-L-A-N-D.

Interviewer:

Thank you, sir. Sir, you were born in Michigan. Can you tell me a little bit about your childhood?

Nowland:

I was born in Detroit and then I was raised in a little town called Charlevoix which is up in the northwest corner of the lower peninsula.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Nowland:

It's a small town, about 1,500 people in those days year-round, but it was a tourist - mostly a tourist town. It was on Lake Michigan. And so I went completely through school there. There's a few points we can talk about later about that. Probably the biggest important thing was that I was the first person in my family to go to a college, and as such, we didn't have any money so it was a struggle to figure out how I was gonna get in a college.

Interviewer:

Right.

Nowland:

Academically, I had a few offers, but they weren't enough, let's put it that way.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

And I wasn't athletic enough to, you know, get any sponsorship there. So my band leader's son, who happened to be my age, was interested in the military academies and I've - other than seeing the Army-Navy Game on television I really didn't know anything.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

And so I did some research, found out that they paid you to go there, which was a huge incentive, but particularly for my parents.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

But I was very ill-prepared.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Nowland:

I played high school sports and if you did you often were excused your last class in the day, which meant, for example, I got very little Colonial, Early American History. I had no calculus background. In fact, when I got to West Point and I drew a slide rule - of course, they don't know about slide rules anymore - my A&E slide rule, I thought it was a ruler. I didn't know what the heck it was. So the bottom line was I was ill-prepared. I roomed in my regular academic year with two guys that had been to college, John McMillan and Lloyd Briggs. Briggs had been to Dartmouth for a year. I don't remember where McMillan - I think he may have gone to Georgia Tech. But they were so far ahead of me and it was kind of a joke, you know, this hillbilly guy.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

But there were other things that affected, but that's pretty much how I got to West Point.

Interviewer:

Tell me, growing up, what did your parents do?

Nowland:

My dad worked for the Federal Government in a fish hatchery. There are a lot of lakes and ponds, a lot of them private, in Michigan, and they raised fish to be seeded into these ponds.

Interviewer:

Right.

Nowland:

It was part of the post War - post Second World War effort. My mother was a homekeeper. She didn't work. She didn't even know how to drive.

Interviewer:

Sir, did your dad serve in World War II?

Nowland:

Yes. He was in the Marine Corps.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Nowland:

He was an enlisted sergeant. He spent his whole time in the South Pacific, Southwest Pacific. He was wounded outside of Guadalcanal. He was on - he was in a radar - a raiding battalion, I think they called them.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

And they went in the night before an invasion to blow up obstacles that were on the beach, and it was a pretty dangerous position to be in but that's what he did.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

And he was at Tarawa. In fact, some of the guys that were in that picture, Rosenthal's picture of raising the flag, they were in his unit.

Interviewer:

Wow.

Nowland:

So he wasn't - he said when they came around looking for volunteers, he said, "I'm not volunteering for anything that I don't need to do."

Interviewer:

Yes, sir. Well, it sounds - by that time he'd been in a bunch of engagements, I'm sure.

Nowland:

Well, it was lunchtime and they wanted to eat. They were hungry.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

And he said the dumb guys that went over there to raise the flag, they all became famous.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

Soâ€¦

Interviewer:

And you had a sister as well.

Nowland:

Yes. She was actually my half sister.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Nowland:

She was their biological child.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

Weâ€™re not sure about my biological upbringing or origin, but I was adopted by these parents. My motherâ€™s family was from Detroit and so they knew about this orphanage I was in. It was a very small operation.

Interviewer:

How old were you when you were adopted?

Nowland:

Well, itâ€™s a long story, but I went to live with them when I was pretty young, like three or four.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

The actual adoption, formal adoption, didnâ€™t take place until I was around nine.

Interviewer:

Wow.

Nowland:

I didnâ€™t know any of this until - and Iâ€™ll explain later - they were killed in an automobile accident while I was at West Point, and they found this by - found out this information by happenstance from my motherâ€™s sisters.

Interviewer:

Wow.

Nowland:

Soâ€¦

Interviewer:

Yes, sir. Now you mentioned a little bit about your educational background and that you played sports in high school. Did you hold any jobs as a young man?

Nowland:

Yes. I worked from the time I was nine or ten. I started out by mowing grass and doing caretaker kind of jobs. I built up a pretty good little business. I was making - in 1950, I think it was, I was making - â€˜52 - I was making \$1,000 a month -

Interviewer:

Wow.

Nowland:

In the summertime, but I was working full time and I didnâ€™t have time to - most kids go to

the swimming hole or they go play baseball or whatever. I didn't have time for any of that. And then I - when I was 15 I sold that business to a couple of adults and I went to work in a Chevrolet garage. I just happened to know the owner and he gave me a job being a gas attendant and a grease monkey and that kind of stuff, and I had odd jobs, but I stayed in that job till I graduated from high school.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir. But I read that you didn't know you were getting into West Point because the Congressman didn't have a slot for you and then somebody dropped out and -

Nowland:

Yeah. I forgot to mention that. I was a first alternate after the testing, and in those days there was only slot.

Interviewer:

Right.

Nowland:

And Victor A. Knox was my Congressman. He only had that one slot and I didn't make it. I was an alternate. But the year before, his principle appointee who got in the year before flunked out or left or whatever reason, so now he had two slots. So at the very end of May, right about a week before my graduation, they sent a telegram. In those days that's how you got notified of things like that.

Interviewer:

Right.

Nowland:

And it was pretty exciting for my parents, especially for my mother. Of course, we didn't know where West Point was. I mean I obviously, when I applied, I found out where it was and stuff but my parents were not very worldly. So, anyway

Interviewer:

So that didn't give you very much time to prepare.

Nowland:

I was completely unprepared.

Interviewer:

Wow.

Nowland:

And the only thing I was prepared for was to make it.

Interviewer:

Right.

Nowland:

I was not going home in disgrace.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

And that's what it would've been like, a little town like that. I'm a big - you know, they called me Donny in those days. Donny Nowland's going to West Point, and so after they got over what is West Point then it all started to dawn on them.

Interviewer:

Right.

Nowland:

This was a big deal.

Interviewer:

How did you get to West Point?

Nowland:

My parents drove me.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Nowland:

Yeah, and - yeah.

Interviewer:

That must have been a long drive from Michigan.

Nowland:

Well, it was a long drive and it was quite an exploratory, letâ€™s put it that way - they werenâ€™t good at map reading and we got lost a few times, â€™cause you cut across Canada -

Interviewer:

Wow.

Nowland:

If you want to cut down your travel time. And then we got into New York City and my mother said, â€œWell, Iâ€™ve never been to New York City. I want to at least see it.â€ So somehow my dad got on a street in Harlem that went by a really bad section, and so all my mother got to see was the Bowery section of New York and a couple hotels but - â€™cause we had to get up to West Point so I could check in to - you know, we had dormitories then.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

And thatâ€™s how I got there.

Interviewer:

Whatâ€™s your most vivid memory of R-Day?

Nowland:

Wellâ€I was actually prepared for the shock. I think that the speed of it all and its constant red sash guy. You know, there was find the guy with the red sash. And I think that maybe right equal to those was my roommates. Art Mark was one of my roommates. Heâ€™s now in Chicago I think still. Great guy. He was a walker. In those days we had speed-walking as a sport. And the other guy was Jerry Hoffman who later changed his name. He left West Point, became a doctor, still is very close to our class, but he had been to the prep school so he knew how to shine shoes and how to wear a uniform, and so weâ€™d keep him up all night, Art and I. We were both spastic, you know? We had this problem of how in the hell do you spit-shine a shoe anyway?

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

So that was my most vivid.

Interviewer:

Okay. How was Beast Summer for you?

Nowland:

It was - I was in good shape so it wasnâ€™t that hard for me. I think staying hydrated was the big issue in those days. They used to make us take these salt tablets to absorb more of the water. I think it probably was more dangerous to us than helpful. I lost a lot of weight. I came in at a trim 142, 143 pounds, and I went down to 128 or something like that.

Interviewer:

Wow.

Nowland:

And I didnâ€™t have it to lose.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

And - but I was one of those guys that thought - if they told me to do something or just stop eating to whatever -

Interviewer:

And weâ€™re back. Sir, go on, you were sayingâ€™?

Nowland:

Yeah. I lost a lot of weight.

Interviewer:

Right.

Nowland:

And that concerned me. You know, they used to line us up for shower formation down in the stoops. I was in the Lost Fifties in those days.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Nowland:

And after you reported your bowel movements and all that stuff, you know, you got an incredible amount of hazing, and I didnâ€™t need to lose any more weight.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

But thatâ€™s what happened. And I was one of these guys that felt - if they told you to do something I did it, even if it meant I wasnâ€™t gonna eat, â€™cause I was afraid - I didnâ€™t know what infraction would cause me to be thrown out.

Interviewer:

Right.

Nowland:

So I couldnâ€™t take a risk.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir. During your plebe year I read that you had three different surgeries.

Nowland:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

How did that shape your time as a cadet? That must have been difficult to overcome?

Nowland:

Well, at first it was nice to go in the hospital and eat. It was the old hospital. I think it was called Carson. The first injury was a knee injury that I actually sustained as a kid playing football before I went to West Point, and it flared up when I was playing intramural or organized whatever that was - I think it might have been soccer. Then I had an infection. This was an operation on my right knee. I had an infection which caused a boil to grow on the back of my leg and they had to do another operation.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

That was actually more dangerous, that - they used to put an air tube down your throat to not constrict your breathing. Mine came out and they had a hard time getting my mouth open.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

â€™Cause I was under - you know, I was out. And then the last one was an emergency appendix. One day I started feeling, you know, bad pain. Anyway, they had me operated on immediately.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

And the catching up was the hard part. When you were in the barracks you were motivated to study â€™cause thatâ€™s what you did.

Interviewer:

Right.

Nowland:

When youâ€™re in the hospital they had these donut ladies, we called them. The Red Cross people would come and give you food and felt sorry for you and then you didnâ€™t study like you should have.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

That was my big problem.

Interviewer:

Right. Now speaking of studying, how did you find academics at West Point? You said your high school really didnâ€™t prepare you all that well. How were academics for you?

Nowland:

Terrible. I just didnâ€™t do well. I think at the end of my plebe year totally I was about 25 or 30-so below - I mean from the bottom of the class.

Interviewer:

Right.

Nowland:

By the time I graduated four years later I was 100 from the bottom, so I made - I was very proud of myself. I made some progress.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

But, yeah, I had a hard time. I think the only thing that saved me in the end was I did very well in English composition for plebe year and then later we had law and we had a couple - sociology. Anything but physics and chemistry and - which will come up later.

Interviewer:

Which is surprising.

Nowland:

Yeah. Well I - thatâ€™s another whole story.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir. Weâ€™ll get to that part.

Nowland:

All right.

Interviewer:

So your best subjects then were the humanities.

Nowland:

Yes.

Interviewer:

And so the subjects you struggled in were physics and -

Nowland:

Chemistry. I have no clue on chemistry. I never figured it out.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

Physics I figured out later. Mathâ€¦ I - once I got to have some calculus under my belt then I was pretty - I felt pretty good. Things like geology or - I forgot what we called it in those days, but I liked those courses I just wasnâ€™t real good at them, but I liked them.

Interviewer:

Now during your time at the Academy you experienced a deep personal tragedy that you alluded to before. Can you tell me a little bit about that?

Nowland:

Yes. In my third year, our Cow year, right around Christmastime my parents were in an automobile accident. We knew - left Charlevoix you drove 50 miles to get to the nearest

airport, and they were on their way to the airport to fly down to Detroit to go to a funeral of - my father's sister died and they were going to his funeral - or her funeral. And they had a - it was icy and snowy and they had an accident. My sister was in the backseat with her boyfriend and - but my father was killed immediately. The car came into the driver's side. When I got to New York, the old Idlewild Airport, they had a loudspeaker at Pan-Am looking for, you know, Cadet Donald Nowland and that - of course I went up to the desk and they told me that I needed to call a number right away.

I was on my way to visit a girl I was dating. Her mother had called to try to track me down. So I found out about it then and I had to get back on the plane. I don't know if it was the same plane. It might've been, but to go - and this was the first time I had ever been on an airplane -

Interviewer:

Wow.

Nowland:

In my life. So I then flew back to Michigan and I flew back up to Northern Michigan and some friends of my parents picked me up at the airport. One quick side story is I didn't have any money to pay for a ticket to go back so I explained it to the Pan Am agent, a fairly young guy, and he said, "Don't worry about it." He says, "I'll pay for it and I'll get the airline to reimburse me." So he paid for my ticket.

Interviewer:

Wow.

Nowland:

It taught me a good lesson in life. Excuse me. I get a little sentimental about these things but -

Interviewer:

That's understandable.

Nowland:

It taught me -

Interviewer:

Sir, you can go on, please.

Nowland:

So, anyway, I got an appreciation for doing good for others which comes up later in my life. So it was kind of a long story but my sister was a senior in high school when this happened and we had no other relatives that were either in the state or I thought were reputable enough to be her guardian. So the town formed a little committee of the mayor, the owner of the Chevrolet garage where I worked and a couple of other people, our minister, and a financial guy, and they helped guide me in what I should do. And we ended up appointing a guardian who was a Coast Guard captain. He happened to be - we had a Coast Guard base there and he was the guardian for two years until she finished high school.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Nowland:

Then I became the guardian, which drove my whole career in a way because that's how I ended up in artillery, ended up in Michigan to start with in my career and so on, but -

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Interviewer:

Wow.

Nowland:

So -

Interviewer:

Was your sister injured in the accident?

Nowland:

No, and her boyfriend wasn't either. They were obviously very shook up.

Interviewer:

Right.

Nowland:

My sister was in shock for a long time. I didn't get back to West Point - this occurred at the very end - Kennedy had been assassinated a week earlier than that and then I didn't get back till the middle of January and I had lost a lot of class time and I already wasn't doing well so. And then I had what I would call my first shock experience in my life which comes up later. We didn't know what PTSD -

Interviewer:

Right.

Nowland:

Was in those days, but I think this was some kind of a related - 'cause I stayed in this shell-shocked mode for several months. I got turned out. I got - I flunked mathematics, calculus, at the end of the summer before we were to go on leave. And in those days if you had 30 turnouts you were lucky if 10 passed. So they'd call you in to the central guardhouse - a lot of this I'm sure has changed now but - so I went in there with my group that was called and they brought you through the front door but they made you go out through the back door so that people waiting couldn't see the glum look on your face or you were cheering or whatever. So they - in those days they went person to person. Cadet Nowland, and they gave you this blurb.

Some lawyer probably wrote it for them, about you could go into the Reserves now and so on and so forth. Well in my case they said, 'You've passed your turnout,' which was a huge deal 'cause I was one of - I think there were 35 turnouts and I was one of 12 or 13 that passed. So I went out the back door. Now we were to get out of our barracks the next day and I was only half partially packed. So some upperclassmen came and helped me and I made my flight the next day and went home. I came back the following year but it was a struggle to get there.

Interviewer:

Now, sir, it's difficult to complete West Point on your own. You've talked about some of the folks that have helped you along the way. Who comes to mind as some of the folks who really helped you make it through?

Nowland:

Actually, Fred Laughlin - your camera guy, Scott, was telling me that he had just said hello and passed on the hello. It was kind of a group made up of people that already knew me from - in his case, we grew up in Michigan. A guy named Chuck Shaw who you may be aware of, I don't know. Chuck's a real tremendous guy. There were a number of people who not only helped me academically but they helped me emotionally.

Interviewer:

Right.

Nowland:

I went to Chuck's house in Flint, Michigan for holidays after that, and there were a couple of other class - upperclassmen, one of which helped me a lot and I don't remember his name offhand, but he was a Goat also, he was very low, so he kind of knew what it was like. If you have a star man as your mentor, he had no clue that you didn't understand what the simplest calculus move was.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

Now one last thing about this; there were I think advertised to be 17 theorems - I don't know if you still have theorems - but we had theorems that any one or more could be on the test. So I knew I wouldn't be able to remember them if I saw them, so I memorized all 17. So when I saw it and they had a title to it I just wrote it down by memory, and so I think the memory got me through.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir. Now you said you played some sports in high school and you played intramurals at West Point, but at one point you tried out for the basketball team, right?

Nowland:

Yeah. Well what happened is when I got there I was 140 pounds or so and then wrestling coach took immediate liking to me 'cause I was very strong, very wiry, and so he wanted me to try out for wrestling which I did and I got injured, I'm back in the hospital but only for a couple of days. Basketball was my next shot at it and Bobby Knight, later a well-known coach, was our plebe basketball coach.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

He was doing his active duty time 'cause he had been an ROTC student at Ohio State and he was a tough bugger. Russ Dornier and I - Russ will remember this - we were the final cut - or one of us was gonna be the final cut and it was me 'cause Russ could dunk the ball.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

I only had hopes - I had dreams, I had no talent. So Russ did a great job. He became a player. But I liked intramural sports and I did well in it.

Interviewer:

But tell me about Coach Knight. How was he during tryouts?

Nowland:

He was awful. He was so - and what made him - I think he liked being brutal.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

He liked - he had gone to ROTC. Now he's at West Point, ring knockers, he called us. He said - and, you know, he was there because the head coach was a guy named Tate. I think it was Tate, who hired him 'cause he knew him from college basketball. But now I'm sure I've got classmates who loved him.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

But I didn't have that relationship.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir. Now while you were at West Point you heard a bunch of VIPs speak.

Nowland:

Yeah. I was very fortunate -

Interviewer:

Eisenhower?

Nowland:

Yeah, in fact you see up here there, that's MacArthur when he gave his 'Duty, Honor, Country' speech in the mess hall.

Interviewer: Right. How was that?

Nowland:

Oh, it was unbelievable. I mean I had - to this day I have never heard anyone who can speak like Eisenhower - or I mean MacArthur could.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

But what was interesting is I actually got a chance to meet them. They were out walking,

and I don't remember if they were separate when I met them or later, but they stopped me. You know, they called me over, "Hey, plebe," they wanted to ask me questions about the Academy and I got up close to them and I realized who it was, and they were shorter than I thought because they had gotten older, and it was very impressive. They were such nice guys.

Interviewer:

Now which ones were these? Is this -

Nowland:

This was MacArthur and Eisenhower.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Nowland:

They weren't big buddies but - certainly not politically, but they're grads and they were there for their various reunions. So that was a - and I had a chance to hear many speakers and got a chance to meet some of the speakers.

Interviewer:

Right, sir. And did you run into Westmoreland while you were a cadet?

Nowland:

Well he was our superintendent until the - near the end when General Lampert. I think it was when Lampert took over. I actually met his wife first, Kitty. She was one of those Red Cross donut girls that was in the hospital, and she was a very attractive woman. She came and introduced herself one day to me and of course I was stunned. Here's the superintendent major general and here's his wife in here serving donuts to a bunch of malingerers, you know? But anyway, I didn't get to know him personally like obviously many others did. I think that - I'm just gonna bring it up now but I want to make sure I talk about it before we end and that is what I call the unwashed.

The run-of-the-mill - and I put myself in that category - and let's just talk about classmates, for example.

Interviewer:

Sure.

Nowland:

We weren't - we didn't become generals and we weren't football heroes and we didn't - we achieved. We became successful in business or we got promoted to colonel or whatever, but we were always reluctant, I think, to speak up. And I think today - it'll be interesting when you guys are finished with your interviews how many of these folks came out of the shadows. I did this on purpose partly because of my illness, but when I read about Ladd Metzner, in Bob Doughty's book I think is where it is, I knew Ladd very well and his daughter, who describes his problems with alcohol and so on, brought it to my mind that here was a guy who died at 43.

He probably could've taught us a lot about PTSD. There were things that he knew that he was struggling with but he wouldn't bring them up.

Interviewer:

Right.

Nowland:

And I think at some point we should talk a little more about that at the end.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir. To get back to West Point, sir, what branch did you select and why?

Nowland:

Well, I selected Infantry partly 'cause I was ranked so low in the class I only had Artillery and Infantry as choices. I had an injury and the doctors told me that I would not be able to go to Ranger or Airborne school, and I had planned to get out anyway, a four-year commitment in those days. But I was also becoming the guardian of my sister and I found out I needed to be in the State of Michigan to be her guardian and I couldn't trust that to someone else. So I took an assignment that put me at a Nike Hercules Air Defense

battery outside of Detroit. All the big cities in the United States had these Nike Ajax, Nike Hercules units around them.

Sometimes when you're flying into an airport you'll notice something that looks like an old fort or whatever. Many of those are remnants of the old Nike bases that we had.

They were nuclear -

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

Which was scary because downtown Detroit, for example, here you are putting a nuclear missile up on a launcher in plain view, and we had all these guys that came out of the gallows and stuff in Detroit with guns. So it was a little bit scary at first.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir. Now what was the purpose of putting nuclear weapons around airfields?

Nowland:

Well, in those days the big threat were Russian air attack. This all came out of the Second World War when there was huge armadas of bombers. And so in those days the politicians had a tendency to be right wing or even further right wing, and they convinced the government and the congress to build these sites, outfit them with these nuclear weapons. I later wrote a book, which we'll talk about when we get to a later assignment, on the history of nuclear air defense, and I go into it in some detail in there.

Interviewer:

Now you've written down that you've learned a lot from the NCOs and the soldiers in this battery. So what lessons did you learn while you were stationed in Detroit?

Nowland:

Well, I think the important big lesson is that West Point taught me a lot about the Army and being an Army officer, the traditions and so on, but the nitty-gritty of day-to-day - how come the first platoon sergeant didn't show up for work today? What's this I hear about his wife, you know, threatening him? What is this business about he's abandoned his children? We had all men in those days in the units. These were practical, everyday things that happened in units and how to deal with them. So the NCOs and the warrant officers -

~cause we had four warrant officers in each battery who were the technicians, if you will - they taught me a lot about how to deal with these day-to-day issues.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir. Now how often did you see your sister while you were in Detroit?

Nowland:

I would say once a month. I bought her a car so she could get around. She got - in those days, there was a hippie culture that was only partly born out of the Vietnam War. Part of this was already there between the rich and the poor, and she fell in with professors - I'll use that term loosely - professors who tried, in my view, on these hippie - particularly the men for the girls and so on and so forth - and she got caught up in this wave. So she didn't like to be around the military, and when she found out I was going to Vietnam I suddenly became a baby-killer and all that stuff and that led to an estrangement which even exists to this day to a certain degree.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir. All right. So you mentioned Vietnam. In March of '67 you deployed to Vietnam as a field artillery officer. Now when you were at West Point had you - were you getting any idea that you - most of your class was going to go to Vietnam?

Nowland:

Yeah. I've heard from a lot of classmates they didn't know much about Vietnam. I have to say, I don't know why but I got interested in it early on and I had studied the Viet - the origins of the Viet Cong, our experiences with guerrilla, anti-guerrilla warfare, et

cetera. In fact, a funny thing occurred to me while I was - I don't remember what year it was, but I had an instructor, a major lieutenant colonel who had just come back from being an advisor, and our paper had to be written on why we should be in Vietnam, what were the benefits of it. And I started off my paper with there weren't any benefits. I didn't believe much in this domino theory, and economically it just didn't make sense. We were gonna spend all this money on a war that, I didn't know it then, but I soon learned out - learned that it was unwinnable. And anyway, I turned in my paper and I flunked it. He gave me a 198 or whatever flunking was in those days, and he said, "Well, it's well written but I don't agree with your thesis," which I didn't know was part of the equation. I thought you wrote, you presented your argument and that was your case.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

Anyway, so I knew a lot about Vietnam, and when the time came I knew that I had a choice. Both choices would end up in Vietnam. I could either volunteer or I'd be sent, and I, like many of my classmates, was gung-ho and I went for it.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir. So you arrived in Vietnam in March and you were assigned to First Cavalry Division.

Nowland:

Well, I was assigned to a non-divisional artillery unit that was supporting the First Cav.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Nowland:

I went - the only background I had was this air defense battery, nuclear air defense. I was now in the real field artillery and I had no training. I'd been to Fort Sill for two days or something like that, so I had no gunnery training, no fort observer training, but I got - and I don't know why this plagued me, but for years I kept getting these questions about do you want to be my aide or would you be interested in interviewing to be an aide? So I got one of those, I went to the interview and I said, "No, I don't want to be your aide. I just want to get to a unit," and so he helped me. And then that night there was a reception for something and the battalion commander came up to me and said, "I understand you want to get into an artillery unit. I can pick you up at 7:00 in the morning. You be at helipad umpty-um," and away we went.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

And that's how I became a - and then when I got there the forward observer in this Cav unit - assigned to this Cav unit - had been killed the week before, so they said, "Well, we got this opening." They neglected to tell me at first why it was open, but then they told me and I was all right with it. I mean that's the way it is.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir. So can you describe what it was like being a forward observer?

Nowland:

I can tell you what it's like when you're not trained? That was scary.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

Now fortunately for some reason I was good at map reading, compass. A guy named Captain Fischer, class of '62, '63, was our company commander in that Cav unit. Incidentally, Mark - Art Mark was the - was a platoon leader in that same unit. But I remember Captain Fischer came to me and said, "Whatever you do, you need to be able to tell me where we are at any point in time." So he tested me and I was good at that.

First few times I fired, you know, defensive targets or fired anything with white phosphorus which what we used primarily as smoke â€” cause we were in the canopy. It took us a while to find the smoke â€” cause it kind of weaved itself around the canopy, but that was my - you know, gun target line was foreign to me. I had to learn that from, you know, more experienced officers.

I ended up doing okay. I was in ground for the First Cav. I was also in air. Certain missions they had were airborne. They would move a whole unit somewhere. In those cases, I usually went and got in a bird dog or a small H13 helicopter and I did spotting, called artillery from the air, which was way easier than on the ground. And then a few cases where I went out with ARVN units. I had my first experience with a real Viet Cong soldier then. We dug him out of a spider hole. The way we tackled caves and stuff like that in those days was to drop white phosphorus into the cave, maybe a couple grenades if we thought he was alive, and then weâ€™d haul - weâ€™d get somebody to go down there and weâ€™d haul him out. Well, this guy, Viet Cong guy, was missing a leg when we got him out. He was - he had - one of the grenades, I guess, took his leg off. One of the ARVN guys told us that he - during the daytime he would hide in the water and breathe through a reed to get air, and when I saw this guy still wanting to fight, I said to myself, â€œThereâ€™s no way we win this thing.â€ Their will to win is way beyond where we are and probably hope to ever be, not that I would say that we should ever entertain suicide missions, but that taught me a huge lesson.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

And then - I may be jumping ahead, but then they had some more losses and I ended up as the exec in another battery, a different battery.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir. Before we get there, you discussed missions with the ARVN, ground forwards or air forwards. Which type of mission did you prefer and why?

Nowland:

Well, the air with the First Cav. I had a lot of variety with that unit. I actually fired a destroyer, The New Jersey - I think it was the New Jersey - offshore one night. There were a bunch of caves and this Cav unit wanted to get some big artillery. All we had were just 105s.

Interviewer:

Right.

Nowland:

So they were working with a Marine liaison who actually talked to the ship. My job was to talk to the Marine liaison and to call, you know, over, right, whatever. So my first fire mission with this destroyer was the scariest thing that ever happened to me. It sounded like a huge train coming through the air. The shells were huge. And when it hit the mountain the whole mountain shook. So I had two of those missions, two successive night missions, and that was enough for me.

Interviewer:

How close were you to that?

Nowland:

To the impact area, maybe - I had to be at least a kilometer from it.

Interviewer:

Wow.

Nowland:

Maybe -

Interviewer:

And it still shook the ground?

Nowland:

Oh, yeah. That was very huge. And I can remember now I'm on a mountain, so you're feeling it differently.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir. So then you became an executive officer, and how did your job change then?

Nowland:

Well, execs are - they're in charge of the guns and because I hadn't had any training I really didn't know all that happened except that you typically had an E6 or an E7 sergeant who was the - we had a name for them. I think it was 'Czar'. Whatever. It was the Czar of the Guns, the Czar of Fires, and he taught me everything, and I had manuals - I'm one of those guys that I have to know why we're doing this. He taught me about charges and what happens if you don't keep track of charges and you end up, you know, with a barrel that's too fragile for the charge it goes off and it kills gunnery crew. So you also doubled as the fire direction officer. It was a little easier for me to understand that job coming from an FO position than being the exec itself.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir. On a typical day, how often would you fire?

Nowland:

Oh, we fired every day. I thought you were gonna ask me what's a typical amount of sleep I got.

Interviewer:

Sure. Want me to ask you -

Nowland:

Which was, you know, like three hours if I were lucky. So we were up and shooting them most of the time.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

We were in the Central Highlands north of Nha Trang, north of - I'm trying to think of - we were outside of Bong Son which was a reasonable-sized town south of Chu Lai up in the mountains. We could see - on a clear day, we could see the South China Sea. And we moved a lot. We moved that battery every two to three weeks to either another mountain or maybe down on the plain somewhere.

Interviewer:

So you'd get helicopters in to move the artillery?

Interviewer:

Yep. They picked us up in Chinooks, people in Chinooks, and the guns were strapped below Chinooks. As the XO, later I did it as a battery commander, I did the recons so I took a small helicopter and went to the new location and my job was to scope it out and understand where we were gonna put the guns and be the first guy on the ground so when the gun chiefs arrived I could get them to where the stakes were, where their guns were gonna go.

Interviewer:

So then you transitioned to be battery commander. What battery did you command?

Nowland:

A Battery. All of a sudden I've forgotten the battalion.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

But we changed mission. The First Cav moved somewhere and we became - we supported the Fourth Infantry Division and the 173rd Airborne for the rest of my tour. And we did more groundwork than air mobile when I was a battery commander.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir. Now so were there different, I guess, characteristics of the units, the different units that you supported? Was First - go on.

Nowland:

Actually - actually, it's interesting you say that 'cause there was a difference. B Battery - that's where I was the exec - they were very airborne-qualified, air mobile.

Interviewer:

Right.

Nowland:

They really knew that stuff cold. When I got to A Battery I figured they must know how to do this and it was totally alien. So we had more problems getting them trained to do air mobile.

Interviewer:

Right.

Nowland:

Their attitudes for the most part were good. We had a fair amount of draftees, brilliant. Some of these guys had like master's degrees and, you know, my battery clerk was - you're familiar with MASH?

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

And there's this guy Radar who knows everything about everything, well I had one of those guys. He was a college graduate. He was the battery clerk and he knew everything. He knew when replacements were coming in, who was leaving, and I had a personal role in those days. I wrote every mother, wife, next-of-kin, when their soldier hit my unit to let them know I was now in charge of Johnny and that I would keep them informed. We had a problem with soldiers who in one hand glorified their mission, exaggerated the danger. I never really quite understood why they did this, but some actually exaggerated the danger they were in where others that were actually in danger were reticent about speaking. So I made sure that I wrote to the parent, and then often they wrote back to me and we had some communications.

Interviewer:

Do you remember any of those offhand?

Nowland:

I don't remember their names. I -

Interviewer:

No, but I mean the types of -

Nowland:

The letter?

Interviewer:

Communication you all would exchange?

Nowland:

Yeah. It was not a long letter. It wasn't a form letter 'cause I found out where the guy was from, what were the circumstances of him being in the Army, so I knew some background. So when I got a response back it usually had something to do with - and, oh, by the way I only told - I only - or Johnny may only have told you that he only got to eighth grade. They wanted me to protect this - the son. So - but I wouldn't say it was a continuous thing. I never had anyone killed, thank God, but I had a lot of wounded and I would write them and tell them that they had been medevaced, they were in the hospital. I had just seen Johnny the night before, doing great, be out of the hospital in a couple of weeks. If he had to be brought back to the States, where in Japan he was gonna go or wherever.

And that usually caused a flurry of writing so -

Interviewer:

Yes, sir. That certainly is different than how it is today where a commander can pick up a phone and talk to the rear right away. Was it a difficult transition for you from forward observer to battery commander in a year?

Nowland:

No, but I had the luxury of ignorance. I didn't know anything about either one of them, so I had to study and try to learn them. But I don't remember there being huge disconnects. It was just mostly me learning the job.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

I had good first sergeants. I had a variety of people. I had a center fielder from the Cleveland Indians.

Interviewer:

Wow.

Nowland:

I don't remember his name now. I had people with lots of different backgrounds.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir. Now you spent 13 months in Vietnam, correct?

Nowland:

Mm-hmm.

Interviewer:

That's generally a month longer than most folks did.

Nowland:

Yeah, I don't know why that occurred but I just followed orders.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir. How did your Vietnam experience change you or did it change you?

Nowland:

Well, I went from a really green, second lieutenant- actually, I was a first lieutenant when I got there - to what I felt was a pretty seasoned captain.

Interviewer:

Right.

Nowland:

When you first got there you saw the guys going home. They were all dirty and musty and - but they had this air of experience and camaraderie. There was something different about them and I'm sure I gathered that stuff up. And I had another one of these aide deals where I got this radio call about going to Thailand to interview to be an aide. Well, the only reason I did it was 'cause I could get out a week early. They would fly me to Thailand. I could get a new uniform, 'cause all my stuff mildewed and it was trash. So I flew home from Bangkok. As soon as I got in to see the general I just told him I - thank you very much, I'm honored, but I've got a - at that time I had a child that I had never seen yet. I said, 'I just think I need - I owe it to my wife just to take my next regular duty tour.'

Interviewer:

Yes, sir. So what was that like then coming home and seeing your son for the first time?

Nowland:

Well, it was pretty emotional. I was - I think I was in a little bit of that shell-shock mode. I was so used to being on fire missions and patrols and slowing down - I don't know if this makes sense, but slowing down to be with the family and realize it's my family, at least my wife and my son. They were staying with her parents outside of Detroit. I began to have a problem that pretty much stayed with me the rest of my career. I got into a bad habit of drinking too much. I got this from - 'cause I had never drank before. I think I got it from - the Army attitude in those days was that you went to Happy Hour at the Officer's Club and if you didn't go you were a wimp. You went there and you drank as much as the next guy.

And I had some anger management problems in '61. This all came about because of the shock, maybe going all the way back to losing my parents.

Interviewer:

Right.

Nowland:

I just didn't have a very good tether on things.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir. So is that how you experienced PTSD, as anger issues?

Nowland:

Well, I didn't know what that was of course at the time.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

All I knew was that I had a tendency to drink too much, but if my wife and I were having an altercation I could sometimes - I caused it to accelerate when there was no need to do that. I think I was - it's hard for me to describe and I didn't really begin to understand any of this until I talked to Buddy Bucha at our fiftieth reunion, and Buddy said a very interesting thing to me. He said that it's not post-traumatic stress disorder it's stress condition. He said, "don't think of it as a disorder. I think it's almost like a medical condition."

Interviewer:

Right.

Nowland:

And he made a lot of sense to me. So a lot of this didn't come on to me until later. In fact, some of it even when I was trying to put together my thoughts for you guys. So anyway, that's the origin of it. There are a couple of other incidents I'll bring up later.

Interviewer:

Okay. What are your most vivid memories of Vietnam?

Nowland:

I had a lot of pride. I was very concerned about losing someone.

Interviewer:

Right.

Nowland:

I knew that death was an inevitable part of combat but I didn't want it to happen to me and I certainly didn't want it to happen because we'd made a bad decision.

Interviewer:

Right.

Nowland:

I had an incident occur that really brought it home to me. I got a radio call at midnight one night or 2:00 in the morning, whenever it was, that I was to move my battery 15 or 20 kilometers down this dirt road and I was to be march ordered and on the road at 4:00 AM. This is my - I'm talking to my battalion commander now. And I said, "Well, will the road be swept? Will the engineers have time to sweep the road?" He said, "No, you're gonna have to go without a sweep." I said, "That road is unbelievably dangerous," and he said, "I'm sorry, but you're going." Well, I couldn't put my soldiers through it. So my driver at that time was a guy - his last name was Queener, and so I told Queener, I said, "We're gonna take a jeep and we're putting an M16 machine gun on it and we're putting sandbags on the floors."

Nowland:

Cause these were percussion-driven mostly - "and we're gonna go like a bat out of hell down this road," "cause the theory being that it'll blow up behind the vehicle. And we swept the road and then march ordered unit, but my battalion commander didn't seem to have the empathy for losing a soldier. Maybe it was because he was back in higher headquarters or something.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

But that stuck with me to this day.

Interviewer:

Taking care of soldiers like that?

Nowland:

Right.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir. Now after you returned from Vietnam you were offered the opportunity, it was either field artillery or air defense artillery. Which one did you choose?

Nowland:

Well I took air defense because they offered me almost 100 percent chance I would go to grad school, and artillery - even though I had all this training in Vietnam the - I felt that I was still behind my contemporaries, my peers, and I was getting out in, you know, maybe not four now, maybe six because of the obligations, but I was gonna get out and so I took air defense.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

And that's how I ended up at Fort Bliss.

Interviewer:

Okay. And what - tell me a little bit about Fort Bliss then, 'cause that was still a fairly new post, wasn't it?

Nowland:

No. Fort Bliss goes way back to the days of Polo and Pershing was stationed there and so on, but - excuse me. What was important about my time at Bliss was that I had learned Spanish a little bit at West Point and I had a chance to really work on that. The course I took, the military course that was to lead to this master's course was highly technical so it gave me a good grounding. 'Cause remember now, I've been in units and I hadn't been around the academic setting in a long time. So I was well prepped having gone to that school, and there were some classmates of mine that were there going through the advanced course or whatever. At that point, I had not been to the advanced course.

They had cut that out for West Point guys, maybe even for regular Army guys that were ROTC, I don't remember. So what they did is they tacked on a couple weeks to the technical course to give me basic, you know, air defense training.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir. And then from there you went to Colorado Springs, correct?

Nowland:

Right. I went to a four-star headquarters. Actually, it was a three-star headquarters. It was in charge of all air defense, U.S. Army air defense, aircraft and missile systems in the U.S. It was underneath operational control of NORAD, the North American Air Defense Command, and I was the low man on the totem pole. I was a captain and these were all majors, lieutenant colonels. I got every duty that you could think of. But what it did do for me was expose me to what a higher headquarters looks like and what it does and then - so then I got orders to go to graduate school.

Interviewer:

And to get a master's in physics.

Nowland:

Well, it's a long story. I'm gonna make it short 'cause we don't have a long time to do this. When they first called me, they said, 'We want to send you to West Point to be an instructor in English, and you had very good grades in English and we see that and we think you'd make a great instructor.' Well I was very gung-ho and I didn't want to lose three years out in the trench - excuse me, I didn't want to lose three years at West Point when my classmates were all out there in commanding units.

Interviewer:

Sure.

Nowland:

I had never commanded an air defense unit. I commanded a field artillery unit. So I said, "I don't want to do that. Do you have something that would allow me to go two years to graduate school?" He said, "Well, we have two or three programs," and one of them was at UTEP, University of Texas at El Paso. And they said, "But you'll have to go in under probation, so if you have a flunking grade then you're subject to be dismissed from there and that goes on your military record," which scared the dickens out of me but I didn't know any other way to get this done.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

So I took it and I did actually fairly well considering.

Interviewer:

Probably because you had a lot more time than you did at West Point to focus.

Nowland:

Yeah, that's a good point. That's - for sure that's true.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

I could play golf in the morning and go to class in the afternoon.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir. And so from there, once you got your master's you went to what is now the Lawrence Livermore Lab.

Nowland:

Right.

Interviewer:

And what was your job there?

Nowland:

The military loaned Army officers to the Atomic Energy Commission in those days for one of two principal assignments; one to Los Alamos and one to Livermore, and the labs wanted us because we were free labor. We didn't - it didn't come off their budget books. So I went there. I was given my choice of what I wanted to work on, which was nice. I ended up in a small, 50-person group whose job was to come up with innovative designs to package nuclear weapons, anything from - we had this crazy scientist who wanted to make a nuclear hand grenade, for example.

Interviewer:

[Whistles]

Nowland:

And, of course, I'd had some experience with nuclear artillery and I didn't want to be anywhere close to somebody with a hand grenade so -

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

Anyway, I was in this design unit and -

Interviewer:

And that was about '72, '73 timeframe?

Nowland:

Yes.

Interviewer:

And you also worked with Dr. Edward Teller, correct?

Nowland:

Yeah. Teller was the head director - whatever their titles were - he was the head of Lawrence Livermore Labs. He was the father of the hydrogen bomb. He had worked on the atomic bomb and then when they went to fissile materials and they went towards hydrogen he became the leader of that movement. Very interesting - he was a Hungarian and you had to listen carefully to get his accent, but I met incredibly bright people. You could go into a bar downtown in Livermore and there were two bartenders and both of them had Ph.D.s in chemistry in math and physics. They got burned out, became bartenders.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

Amazing. But anyway, that second year - I was only there two years - the first year I did this research and design stuff and then the second year, I'm not sure who came up with the idea, but I ended up being the author of a book on the history of nuclear air defense.

Interviewer:

Right.

Nowland:

And my job was to go interview something like what you guys do, oral history, of all these guys that were at the beginning of how did we package a nuclear weapon to get it in an airplane that can be used for other than just high-level, high-altitude bombing? And that's where I learned things like why a Nike missile is built the way it is, 'cause that's - it had to be a certain circumference in order to get the bomb itself, the weapon inside of the aircraft.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

Things like that.

Interviewer:

Wow.

Nowland:

The lab published it. It was classified for many, many years. I don't even know if it's in open literature now or not.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir. That must have been fascinating -

Nowland:

It was.

Interviewer:

Doing the research for that.

Nowland:

Well, also to try to keep your notes on three by five cards and then get that all typed up into a book.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir. Well after you left the laboratory in 1973 you deployed to Korea -

Nowland:

Right.

Interviewer:

As the battery commander of a Chaparral Air Defense Missile Battery.

Nowland:

Right.

Interviewer:

How was that deployment for you?

Nowland:

Well, first of all, the reason I went was because I had never commanded an air defense battery-level unit and this is where I could get the experience. Otherwise, I would've gone back to Vietnam which I wasn't adverse to but Korea was a better career

opportunity for me. I must say, though, that the problems we had with drugs and racial issues and so on were just enormous.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

It probably cost me my - in terms of my time, 80 percent of my time was dealt dealing with these issues. Korea itself - I'll explain about adopting my daughter there - but Korea itself, I loved the Koreans and they were very good to us. I was in the Second Infantry Division and Hank Emerson was our commanding general. I could go on - it was a whole fascinating life about Emerson. But anyway, that's what I did and I served 12 months in that job.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir. So as you were in Korea, the Vietnam war was drawing down. So did that cause any issues for the soldiers in Korea?

Nowland:

I don't think so. They - we didn't get soldiers from Vietnam straight into Korea. It came from Stateside units. The problem we had was the black soldiers, even if they didn't want to be in these quasi gangs they couldn't help it, their peer pressure was so great that there were sections of these villages where only blacks could go. And we couldn't - as a white officer you couldn't go into those areas without high-level approval.

Interviewer:

Right.

Nowland:

I thought it was bizarre the way we handled these problems. And then we had the drug issues and they manifested themselves in many ways. Soldiers who were kind of going off the rocker to begin with. Drugs just exacerbated it.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir. What sort of drugs did you have to deal with?

Nowland:

Well at first it was predominantly marijuana and stuff but then heroin and - I think we had some crack problems, but mostly heroin.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir. And you also faced some challenges to your integrity while you were in Korea.

Nowland:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

Can you tell me a little bit about that?

Nowland:

Yeah. I was a battery commander and we had a tendency to have these competitions from combat football, for example, where you played football with two balls, 12 guys on a side or 24 guys on a side, and no helmets, no padding, I mean just brutal stuff. And then the other kind of competition was, you know, outdoing the next battalion or the next brigade or whatever in fundraising and that kind of thing, and we had a fundraiser - I don't remember what it was about - but according to my battalion commander, if we didn't hit the 80, 90 percent - maybe 95 percent level of participation we were gonna lose. So I was told you will report 95 percent and I refused. I couldn't - I just couldn't bring myself to lie. So I told my commander, I said, "I'm gonna have to resign because I just - I'm not gonna do that."

And so I did. I went back to my Quonset hut and turned it over to my XO and I quit.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

It bubbled up to the division commander, to General Emerson, and when he heard about it he was incensed and within a day I had an apology from my commander and reinstated as a commander.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir. So the - it's interesting because it was your chain of command trying to force you to - or strong-arm you to violate your integrity.

Nowland:

Right.

Interviewer:

And you stood on principle for the thing. Why was it important for you to stand on the principle?

Nowland:

Well the anvil was to stay in the Army or not, and if this is the way the Army really is then I'm not sure I want to be part of it. So it was in my way a test of my own - you know, do I have the guts to do this or not? 'Cause that's the end of your career if you get the wrong judgment by some senior guy.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir. And so did this go back to your time as a cadet and your learning about the honor code or not?

Nowland:

It actually went further back.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Nowland:

I was a - when I was raised I was a very honest kid. I was one of these kids who borrowed pencil from the - it's actually happened to me - I borrowed a pencil from the principal's office one time to fill out a form and then I realized later I had that pencil in my pocket. So I went back to the office and gave it back to them. So that was - and then West Point I was really happy about - when I found out about their honor code and so on.

Interviewer:

What's the importance of the honor code to you?

Nowland:

At a higher level, it stands for the principles of an institution like that. I was working for the Secretary of the Army in '77 when we went through the big scandal, the cheating scandal. So from the Secretary of the Army level I could see what was going on. The business about did I mark my card right, unauthorized absence or whatever, those were indicators, but the big deal to me was, hey, we're not supposed to do this. If it's just a high jinks, you know, a joke, whatever, that's one thing, but if it's a - if it crosses the line then that's too much for me.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

So that's kind of where I put myself.

Interviewer:

Right. Now when you were in Korea you also worked for Lieutenant Colonel Colin Powell, correct?

Nowland:

I didn't work for him. He was a battalion commander of a leg Infantry - of a non-mechanized infantry unit that was in the same brigade as - actually, my battery supported his brigade. So that's where I first met him, and we didn't know anything about him and I didn't know what a White House Fellow was and he had been a White House Fellow and I didn't know any of that kind of stuff. All I knew was that he was just a great guy. Everybody loved him. He was a little overweight. We used to kid our - kid around a little. It was too bad an old guy like Colin Powell never got promoted, you know, 'cause

heâ€™s too good a guy. Later on in the Pentagon and Iâ€™m working for Secretary Hoffman and heâ€™s working for Secretary Duncan who was the Deputy Secretary of Defense -

And he comes walking down the hallway in his full colonel, all his paraphernalia on him. I said, Colin Powell, what are you doing here?â€ He says, â€œI beg your pardon, Don.â€ He said, â€œWhat in hell are you doing here?â€ [Laughter]

Nowland:

So anyway, we stayed close right up until - he was a corps commander in Germany and I was his support, air defense support. And I donâ€™t know if youâ€™re gonna ask me about - in Korea is also when I adopted a little -

Interviewer:

Sir, that was the next thing on the -

Nowland:

â€Cause Iâ€™m very proud of that.

Interviewer:

Tell me about it, sir.

Nowland:

We had four boys at that point â€cause we had two twin boys born at the Air Force Academy when I was stationed at - in Colorado, and then we had a boy right near the end of my tour in Livermore. So we were kind of looking for a girl, and I knew that girls in Asia were not favored and so the adoptive parents were looking for boys. So I became the sponsor of an orphanage, my battery did, and so the chaplain, the division chaplain of the Second Infantry Division came to me one day and said, â€œI understand youâ€™re interesting in adopting. We have a little girl, baby girl down in Tongduchon, the little village, whoâ€™s the daughter of a prostitute and the prostitute is taking care of a woman who has tuberculosis and she doesnâ€™t think itâ€™s a good idea for the baby to be around this older woman,â€ blah, blah, blah.

The bottom line being she was looking for someone who would take the baby, pay her \$500 I think it was, and get the child legally adopted. So I worked with a Canadian missionary who had experience with that kind of thing and the U.S. Embassy in Seoul and it was an incredible amount of paperwork. You can just imagine trying to go through this. We finally - I got - my wife, of course, is taking all this by - Iâ€™m telling her on the - you know, in letters. She had never seen the baby. The baby was very sick and cross eyes and had - later on we found out it had parasites throughout her body and it was ugly. But we had - when we - when I got permission to take her we still had 30 days to go in my tour. And I had three roommates in this Quonset hut and they were all bachelors. So we convinced our battalion commander to let one of us stay back every day to watch after the baby and we had a Korean houseboy - houseboy, he was 45, 50 years old, but he took care of making sure we had heat and shined our shoes and so on. So he was a big help taking care of this baby.

Interviewer:

And what did you name the baby?

Nowland:

The babyâ€™s name was Uchidi when we got her but I changed it to Kara Myong, Kara so sheâ€™d have an Anglo name and Myong means beautiful baby. I think it means beautiful baby but primarily in Chinese, but I thought it was a nice name.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir. Now since I know a little bit more about your story now, was it important for you to adopt a girl, a baby, being that you yourself had been adopted?

Nowland:

I donâ€™t think -

Interviewer:

Did that play anything into it at all?

Nowland:

No, I don't think so.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Nowland:

I think it was just a matter - we weren't gonna have any more children of our own so I thought this was the best route to take.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

And she's now 45 years old.

Interviewer:

Wow.

Nowland:

And she's a chemical engineer, of all things, brilliant kid. Was a - you know, the girl who won the gold all-around - what's her name? In women's gymnastics, a little short girl. Oh, shoot. I just saw it last night.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

But anyway, she looked just like her when she became a gymnast in high school.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Nowland:

Four foot, eight, bouncy, and so on.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

Biles, I think is her last name.

Interviewer:

Now how did your three roommates like taking care of the baby?

Nowland:

Well at first they thought it was a lark but then they found out how many diapers they had to change. [Laughter]

They tried to get Sam, the houseboy, to change the diapers. Sam wasn't having anything to do with that. So that - usually when I got back at night that was my job.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

Clean that up.

Interviewer:

And then when you left Korea you left her with her strapped on?

Nowland:

Yeah. It was a papoose kind of thing. It was a Korean contraption. I'm in my captain's uniform and I don't remember what time we started but it was early in the morning we took a - we called them Kimchi cabs in those days, a regular town - not a cab, but bus. Went to the airport. Our first leg was to Tokyo, second leg all the way to Tacoma, Washington in Tacoma, and I'm changing diapers all the way. And we didn't have an extra seat so I - it was in my lap. Fortunately, my seat mate was very - well, he didn't help much but he was a source of morale, I put it that way.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir. How was it when your family first met her?

Nowland:

It was fine. It was - I think my wife - it took her a while to get used to - particularly her

mother, my mother-in-law - to get used to having an Asian child. Theyâ€™re white through and through, you know, Christian Americans and now theyâ€™ve got this little Asian kid and they donâ€™t know what to do, but it all sorted itself out.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir. And then when you got back, in 1974 you attended the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth.

Nowland:

Mm-hmm.

Interviewer:

How was your experience there?

Nowland:

Oh, it was great. Youâ€™re in there with your classmates and friends. We were in a small bungalow and we had these five kids under the age of seven. They were seven and below. So it was tight quarters.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

But we had a really good time there and it was - studying wasnâ€™t a big deal and everybody was either getting ready to go back to Vietnam â€˜cause it was pretty much winding down at this point or had just come back.

Interviewer:

And so a good family experience for you.

Nowland:

Yes.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir. But after that you went to the Pentagon -

Nowland:

Right.

Interviewer:

And what department were you initially assigned to?

Nowland:

Well, it was called DCSRDA in those days, which was Deputy Chief of Staff Research and Development I think - and Acquisition. And they assigned me to a program that was in deep trouble, which was norm for my career. I got the short end of the stick usually, and I got this - it was a French German developed system called ROLON. Jay Garner was my buddy on this one. Jay later became the - a three-star and later was the guy in Iraq who was sent over there, remember, to pacify things and so on after the fall of Saddam.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

Anyway, I did that job for a little over a year, but it was high visibility. I was briefing the Secretary of the Army, the Chief of Staff, the vice chief. It was a lot of face time because it was politically important to show Americans who were willing to accept European development.

Interviewer:

Right.

Nowland:

And thatâ€™s what exposed me to what became my next job which was a military assistant to the Secretary of the Army.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir. And so thatâ€™s how you were selected for that?

Nowland:

Well thatâ€™s how I was - I came to their attention, letâ€™s say.

Interviewer:

Right.

Nowland:

The Vice Chief of Staff, General Kerwin, Dutch Kerwin, an incredible guy, he was testing me, I think. He called me in one day and he said, "I'd like you to be my aide." And he said, "Before you answer that, I've had 29 aides in my career and they haven't been all pleasant," so - but I already knew the answer. I didn't want to be an aide. But he said, "We do have an opening, a lieutenant colonel position opening as a military assistant in Secretary Hoffman's office. Would you be interested in meeting him?" And I said sure. So I went and saw him and we had a camaraderie right from the beginning and I got the job.

Interviewer:

Okay. So tell me a little bit about what it was like to work for Secretary Hoffman.

Nowland:

Well it was hard work but it was like a spyglass over the entire Army, the political process. Now this occurred during the time of the Watergate break-in.

Interviewer:

Right.

Nowland:

So I went through the Nixon resignation, the Ford ascent to President and then the Carter beating Ford, and as a result we went from a Republican administration with Hoffman having been a Schlesinger appointee which was underneath Nixon to Carter, Democrat, who then picked Alexander, Clifford Alexander, as the Secretary of the Army, and they were completely different kinds of people so it was almost like getting a Ph.D. in how the military fit in with the political arm of government.

Interviewer:

Could you describe a little bit about how they were different?

Nowland:

The Republicans were much more confident that they had the right story. We had this huge argument going on about the volunteer army, and the Republicans were kind of lukewarm on the whole idea where the Democrats thought it was the way to go. The Republicans had - Cheney was - Cheney had been a White House counselor consultant guy. He became the Chief of Staff of the White House under - I think under Reagan. Rumsfeld was in his first go-around in the Pentagon as the Secretary of Defense. They were just more confident. When the Democrats came in I think they felt, "We gotta shake this place up. There's too many old-timers around here. We need to get rid of -" so they got rid of some institutions, some things that I think they might have regretted later.

Interviewer:

Right.

Nowland:

The Panama Canal was a huge deal. The Republicans didn't want to give it up. Democrats said, "We have no business being, you know, in charge of the Panama Canal." The only other thing I would mention about being - working for the Secretary, I got to meet anyone who was senior politically or senior in business or whatever. They came to see the Secretary 'cause he could get things done for them. I met an incredible array of bright, good people from Sandy McDonnell who - McDonnell - Douglas aircraft guy, for example, the founder. I think it's a famous helicopter - I can't even remember all these names.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

But I met all of these people and I had a chance to sit in when the secretary talked to them. The other military - there was an aide who was called a military assistant, but he just took care of the Secretary's itineraries and so on. Bill Carpenter was the other military

assistant, the old Lonesome End from West Point fame, and he took care of the legal personnel side of the secretariat and I took care of the R&D procurement, logistics and primarily the budget, Congress relationships. Bill took care of a lot of the relationships having to do with personnel, so we worked together really well. So that's pretty much what the difference is.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir. Now you also mentioned earlier that you were working in the secretary's office when the honor scandal in '76 happened. Tell me a little bit about that and your recollection of how that percolated up.

Nowland:

I don't remember how - I think it came up through the vice chief and the Chief of Staff of the Army, and because it was a politically-sensitive item they immediately passed it to the secretary and the secretary was basically put in charge of solving this problem. And we had a lot of dealings with the commandant at that time whose name escapes me.

Interviewer:

Right.

Nowland:

He was a defender. A little bit of an apologist, but he was also well-meaning.

Interviewer:

Was this Ulmer?

Nowland:

Yes, Walt Ulmer. He was a Mainer, he was from Maine.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Nowland:

And he had a lot of the traits of a good Maine guy, you know, stick to his guns and

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

I met a lot of interesting people through that. A guy that you may have run across 'cause he just recently finally retired after serving 30 years I think as a civilian, Trefry, Dick Trefry, who was then two-star personnel, one-star and two-star. He was the point man, the action officer, and an incredible character and very famous today. If you talk to anybody that's been in the Army many years they'll tell you stories about Dick Trefry, who by the way his family came from Marblehead.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Nowland:

So I didn't know this until much later when I moved here and I found out about it.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir. So - but did the honors - what sort of waves did the Honors Scandal cause?

Nowland:

Well, it was a political problem.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

A lot of people in Congress didn't understand what it was about. They thought honor meant did I steal something from somebody, did I rob somebody? They didn't get into this higher level, you know, what does it really all mean in the end to the integrity of a group of Army officers? So I wrote a lot of letters 'cause I was the correspondence guy between Hoffman and the congressmen, and I sat in on a lot of the discussions. So I had a ringside seat. In fact, I even had an opportunity to voice my own opinion. You know, there were times when Hoffman would say, "Well, Don, what do you think?" Now I had to be a little

careful â€˜cause it was all these generals who either went to West Point or didnâ€™t and they were always keeping their eye for this smart-aleck major who probably shouldnâ€™t have been speaking up in their minds.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

Not everybody, but some did. I had a big supporter in Carl Vuono who was the Chief of Staff of the Army then and Dutch Kerwin who was the Vice Chief. But I think Hoffman and Ulmer were ultimately the guys that put it back together and came up with what I think was a fair compromise. And so the honor system lives on and I think maybe stronger because of this.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir. You must have also been working for the Secretary when women were admitted to West Point.

Nowland:

That came later.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Nowland:

That discussion was under way.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

But not as heated as the all-volunteer Army was.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Nowland:

That was a big deal, and incidentally, itâ€™s interesting that today you read the op ed pages and so on is that all this hue and cry about the fact that our congress people have not been - they didnâ€™t serve. We have very few congressmen that have ever served in the military.

Interviewer:

Right.

Nowland:

And the big argument was if you go to an all-volunteer youâ€™re gonna get the lower end of the economic crust of the citizenship and youâ€™re not gonna get these people who have higher education and later aspire to become congressmen and so on, whereas when I joined the Army it was very common for your congressmen to have military background.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir. Now after the Pentagon, in February of 1978 you were assigned as the S3 for the Tenth Air Defense Group in Darmstadt and eventually you were promoted and in June of â€™81 you took command of the Second Battalion of the 62nd Air Defense Artillery at Spangdahlem Air Force Base. What was it like to serve in Germany during the Cold War?

Nowland:

Well, we were all focused on the Fulda Gap and keeping the Russians out of Western Europe. There were some bizarre things that we did and that youâ€™d probably never do in todayâ€™s Army, but we were highly conventional. You know, we were not focused on - even though we had come out of Vietnam and with all these lessons learned, I didnâ€™t see much of that going on in Germany. We had all the same tactics and strategies that we had. I must say that the reason I went to Germany was to get out of the - I spent too much time in the Pentagon. I felt a need to get back with the troops.

Interviewer:

Right.

Nowland:

And the only way I could get there was through this S3 job and then that later led me to the battalion.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir. Now did - in Germany, did you experience any of the racial or drug problems that you experienced in Korea?

Nowland:

No, not to the same extent. There were a little - there were pockets of that. I think that violence maybe played a bigger part, but there were soldiers who were accused of murders and rapes and stuff, but it was a much lower level of participation amongst the rank and file soldiers. I think most soldiers were happy to be in Germany.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

You know, it was - their dollar to mark ratio was good and so on, soâ€¦

Interviewer:

And -

[Off-topic side conversation]

Interviewer:

Okay, sir. You were talking about your time in Germany. How was it commanding a battalion in Germany?

Nowland:

It was great. One, we were far away from headquarters, and being far away from headquarters is always a good thing, at least thatâ€™s what we used to tell ourselves.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

I had four batteries of air defense artillery. They were Hawk missiles, and our - the battalion headquarters was on Spangdahlem, which was an air-to-ground aircraft mission primarily, and then Bitburg was 15, 20 kilometers down the road was primarily an air defense, F16, F15 base. So our job was to protect those two bases and the air caps that were around them. And I got three years. In those days you could get two or three years as a commander. I felt very fortunate to get to the third year â€™cause I was getting pretty good at the third year. In fact, a lot of the artifacts you see in my office here come from my time there.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

It was just a real good experience.

Interviewer:

Now the Army was very well trained at that time because with the threat from the Soviets, if anything happened everybody had to jump into action very quickly. I imagine your unit was very well trained as well.

Nowland:

Well, the problem was that there was a constant rotation.

Interviewer:

Right.

Nowland:

So you might have a very experienced NCO, letâ€™s say, and one of the sections was gone - when he left we had to train a new guy â€™cause the mission was similar but this was a different area, we had different kinds of issues. We were near a French corps, for example.

Interviewer:

Right.

Nowland:

When I gave my change of command speech I found out the night before I had to give it not only - we always gave it in German and the U.S., a language, but I also had to give it in French and I don't speak a word of French, but fortunately I had a tech rep whose wife had studied in France, and so we spent the night translating my change of command speech. And one of my troops told me later on - it was a warm day and they're all out there on the parade field, and I give the speech in German and then - or I think English first and then German, and then I start in on the French and this soldier said, "And we were groaning out there. How many languages is this guy gonna speak?" [Laughter] But I shortened it a lot because I didn't know much French.

Interviewer:

What language did you take as a cadet?

Nowland:

Spanish.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir. Now what was it like working with the French Army?

Nowland:

It was great. The officers were very well trained. A lot of them had been to the Command and General Staff College, had been to the War College, which we'll talk about in a minute, so I really got to know the officers. I didn't get really a good sense of all the troops.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

So - and they were very good to me. If I wanted to take a trip to Paris they would arrange for me to stay at their officers' club. You know, it was just a nice relationship.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir. Well after you left Germany in 1984 you returned to your Army War College year, but you spent that year at Fort Leavenworth working on the AirLand Battle Doctrine.

Nowland:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

Tell me about that process.

Nowland:

That was very interesting, and again, I was very fortunate to - two primary influencers was John Pickler, who was my classmate, who was in the previous class and had been working at Livermore - excuse me, at Fort Leavenworth in lieu of his Carlisle War College, and the other was General Vuono who was then the Vice Commander of the - of TRADOC and he was commander at Leavenworth. And they had a new program that had been started by Wass de Czege.

Interviewer:

Huba?

Nowland:

Huba.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

Huba Wass de Czege had come up with this idea of - Huba is another story. You could write books about Huba.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

He was Hungarian, family was thrown out of Hungary when the Russians invaded. His parents split up in Germany, he comes to the U.S. with his father not speaking any English. Ends up going to West Point. He was a nonconventional - a guy who marched to his own

drummer. They didn't have terms like think outside of the box. He was outside the box.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

He - a lot of times he didn't come to work in the day. He only worked at night. You know, he brought his dog. They had like 10 or 12 horses. He was just an incredible guy, but brilliant. And Rick Sinnreich, who was a classmate of mine, was working with him to establish this school for military studies. He was basically a - it's now a master's degree in today's Army, in lieu of - the way it works now I think is you go to Command and General Staff College and you can stay an extra year. But AirLand Battle had - was a new concept and General Vuono and the TRADOC command was trying to get it documented. What does it really mean? So we had an FM to rewrite, FM 22-10 or whatever it was.

And so Tim Timmerman, my classmate and I went - Sinnreich was already there. Don Holder, who later retired as a three-star was brought in from Carlisle also. There may have been one or two others. And our job was to work for Huba and we were on our own and we sort of divided up the work. And I was more the - my job was more the big picture and then Holder was a Cav guy. His job was how do we deepen the battlefield and so on and so forth. It was a wonderful education for me and we - I was able to walk from my housing over to the Bell Hall or whatever the institution was. And we traveled. I went with General Vuono to a lot of places.

The one-legged general who later became Schwarzkopf's corps commander for the big left swing -

Interviewer:

General Franks?

Nowland:

Franks. Tommy - not Tommy Franks.

Interviewer:

Fred Franks.

Nowland:

Fred Franks. Vuono formed up this little committee of high-ranking guys, colonels and generals, and Huba and I were both on that. I think maybe Timmerman and Holder also were on that group, and Sinnreich of course was principle. And Freddie was there in - I got the feeling that if Freddie didn't agree with something then we all stopped and listened, like that E.F. Hutton thing, you know?

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

So it was educational. I learned about being a general officer I think more so than even in the Secretary's office - cause these guys were comrades, they were - you know, and if they were enemies for some reason - almost everybody was an enemy of Schwarzkopf so - cause he was a screamer and a difficult guy to get along with, and so he didn't come to a lot of the meetings. But when his deputies did they were very vocal and very good.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

Anyway, we honed out a first draft when I left. We were there just a year. Sinnreich, who was a brilliant guy, was a principle author, I think. Huba guided the whole effort and the rest of us did our job.

Interviewer:

It must have been amazing getting all that brainpower into one project.

Nowland:

Yeah, it was. It was another one of my great experiences. You remember that - if you start me out in high school where I was unprepared, naive, had no clue, all the way to at this point in my career I'm starting to get there. You know, I really understood about the military and - even though I was an air defense officer I was accepted as a guy who was pretty smart about armor and infantry and airmobile and I had a lot of Air Force background because of my air defense time.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir. Well after Fort Leavenworth you returned to Germany and you're assigned to U.S. Army Europe Headquarters in Heidelberg as a department head and G3 of operations. So what was it like working in an army headquarters during the Cold War?

Nowland:

It was the same thing.

Interviewer:

Still worried about Fulda?

Nowland:

I was in charge of exercises, so REFORGER was my baby, and these REFORGERS were all oriented on, you know, how do we stop the Soviets on the border, which guys like me was - of course we're not gonna stop them on the border.

Interviewer:

Right.

Nowland:

These guys are gonna have a head start on us and we're just gonna be catching up.

Interviewer:

Sure.

Nowland:

But that was our mission and that's what we tried to do.

Interviewer:

And so for our younger viewers who are watching this, REFORGER is Return of Forces to Germany in case the Soviets came across the border and it was the process of bringing units from the United States back to Germany to fall in on equipment and rush to stop the Soviets, correct?

Nowland:

Yes, that's a good synopsis. Fill in units that didn't have their full complement of weapons and so on. There were some offshore storage areas where they picked up stuff and then moved on. It was a big deal. REFORGER took me six months of the year by the time I did the planning. I led the teams that did the planning and the execution and then umpires did much of the rest of the work.

Interviewer:

And so then it was just a process of getting back into plan the next one, right, sir?

Nowland:

That pretty much it.

Interviewer:

And then you were selected to command a brigade, and in January of 1987 you took command of the Tenth Air Defense Brigade at Darmstadt, correct?

Nowland:

Right.

Interviewer:

Now earlier you said it was nice being a battalion commander because you were decentralized. Now you're commanding four battalions that are also decentralized. Did that post any difficulties?

Nowland:

No. I spent a lot of time on the road.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

And they were different 'cause they were two Hawk battalions and two Patriot battalions. I enjoyed it. It was great fun, it was great, hard work. I had for the most part really good soldiers, good commanders. My job was to train them. I had a philosophy in those days that it was very difficult to be a captain commanding a company or a battery, 'cause you're right there where it all happens. Now you're detached somewhat as a battalion commander 'cause you just got these captains out there. But when you're a brigade commander you've got lieutenant colonels out there, and if they can't solve the problem at that level then I'm probably not gonna solve it as a brigade commander unless we had to move the battalion commander.

Interviewer:

So what was it like commanding the different types of air defense assets; Patriot and Hawk?

Nowland:

Well, I was fortunate I had three years of Hawk experience plus my S3 time, and when I had been in the States in the Pentagon I had spent a lot of time with the Patriot early development, which was called SAMD. I knew a fair amount about that and the whole Huntsville operation. And we were very fortunate, General Chuck Mean was the commander of the 32nd ADCOM at that time, was the father of the Patriot missile system. He had been the program manager of SAMD.

Interviewer:

Right.

Nowland:

And then Terry Shaw was in the Pentagon as an infrastructure guy and we - Barry Capps was a budget guy in the Pentagon. And so - and my job was on the ground in Europe. So we had this kind of thing greased so when there was a testimony to be made on the Hill or something then Means and I would get in the plane, come to the States. He would talk about the big picture, my job was to talk about how we're gonna get it done, you know, how did we - 'cause we were building new facilities for the new missile system.

Interviewer:

Right.

Nowland:

So - but it was - just two years. I just commanded for two years, and that's when I decided to leave the Army.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir. And you retired in January of 1989. So how would you summarize your Army career?

Nowland:

I think maybe I have to put it in terms of why I got out. Without exaggerating, I was in a very good position to become a brigadier, but I wasn't sure I wanted to be a general officer. I saw what they went through. They were in the spotlight. They were - it was tough to be a general. I mean your day is programmed, and a lot of the programming events and responsibilities were not - they weren't like you and I might like with the soldiers or units and - they were more - I wouldn't say kissing babies but they were events you had to go to to keep up the flag, and had I been fortunate enough to be promoted I wasn't sure I wanted to do that and I was only 45 years old. I thought what a good time now to just make my break.

And I was pretty confident that I would have opportunity.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir. And so then you had a decision to make. You could either go and earn a Ph.D. in physics or you could go and work for a defense contractor and you ended up choosing Raytheon. Why did you pick that?

Nowland:

Again, going back to the history behind it, the Rand Corporation was really pushing hard to get me to go to Rand to get this doctorate. They were going to send me back to Germany to start a Rand field office. Chuck MEES by then had retired and he was working at Raytheon and Raytheon is the builder of the Hawk and Patriot missile systems, and to a certain degree responsible for the command and control between. And I don't know how the Army allowed this to happen but the command patrol systems between these weapons were given to a different contractor. So there was this constant conflict that it's your problem, no it's your problem and so on. So I was brought in more or less to try to solve that problem and it was a logical fit for me.

I had never been in Boston before, but it was - and I only planned to be there five years. I figured five years and I know where I want to stay and do this or go do something else.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir. And during - in this job you traveled a lot to the Middle East and to Europe, and how were those missions?

Nowland:

Well, this is Desert Storm/Desert Shield. We're at the forefront. It started out with me spending time in Germany but then as the units began to deploy to Israel and to the Middle East I spent a lot of time helping them get integrated with the Israelis and the other parts of the Jointed Forces. It was also kind of nice to go see some of the old soldiers. I'd be walking down a gun row or something or a missile site and somebody would say, "Oh, Colonel Nowland, good to see you," and it was kind of nice, but I spent a lot of time in the field doing that job.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

And then when that - it got to the point where we were going to combat, and I don't know if you know much about civilians in combat or contractors, but there were certain prohibits and rules and regulations, so it was frowned on for me to be in the combat zone.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

So - at least that's what I remember. So I didn't do too much of that.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir. And when you came back, by the time we get to the Spring of '92 you were working in Brazil.

Nowland:

Yeah. Well that was another - that was a wild one. What happened, we had been - one of our jobs at Raytheon was air traffic control systems. We had built a system in Brazil that went around the airports. It was called Terminal Radar to help the planes land, but there wasn't any en route. In other words, you flew over the Amazon blind. There wasn't any radar on you. And so the Brazilians started off with we need an air traffic control system in the Amazon. That led to, hey, we have a smuggling problem of our precious woods and minerals and so on. That led to we don't have any weather forecasting and so on and so forth and it kept building and building. And this occurred only a few months after I first went to Brazil.

I had no experience in Brazil. And so the company allowed me to take a team of a dozen people or so, engineers, and we went to Brazil into a hotel and we built them a program, the Brazilians. Everything from how do you buy to how do you logistically support it, so on and so forth. And the biggest problem we had was that where do you get the financing? The Brazilians didn't have the money in their Central Bank to pay for it. They were not open to sovereign loans. In other words, the U.S. export/import bank could not loan - which was then a U.S. government loan - to the government of Brazil. And we were up against a French, Italian consortium, which was our primary competition, who could do anything they

wanted to do.

Thomson-CSF in those days, which is now Thales, was partially owned by their financial organization, Credit Lyonnais. Anyway, the bottom line was we put together a financial plan where we loaned the money to an offshore subsidiary of Banco do Brasil, which was a commercial bank, who then on loaned to the Central Bank of Brazil, who then financed the job. Sounds simple but it took us a year to negotiate all those deals.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

And it goes way beyond that. I won't take you through all that.

Interviewer:

But it's kind of interesting that an air defender who's trained to shoot down aircraft is now helping to build a system that helps civilian aircraft navigate across a jungle and land.

Nowland:

Yeah. I never thought of it that way, but I think I was sent mostly because I was experienced at international things. I think some of the vice presidents thought that they spoke Spanish in Brazil. [Laughter]

Which of course they spoke Portuguese.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

But - and I was available. I had just come back from the Middle East and that was going great. Don, can you get on a plane next week and be in Brazil? And that's how that all started and we won it. It was a \$1.4 billion contract. At that time the largest nonmilitary contract in Raytheon history.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir. And after you were finished with this, about this time, around '91, you moved to - here to Marblehead, Massachusetts. What brought you here?

Nowland:

Actually, it was - I moved to Marblehead just as I was getting ready to start working in Brazil. So I moved here in '91 to be closer to the airport, to be honest with you, 'cause I was traveling so much. And I wanted to live on the water and so I sort of did a reconnaissance from the airport along the coast and I found this town, which is a gorgeous town.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

And I moved here. A couple years later I met Davita and we ended up getting married here and we moved into this condo in '93 and have been here ever since.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir. And you've done a lot of different things; you've gone into different business ventures and you've raced sailboats and all sorts of things.

Nowland:

Well, Davita was a sailboat racer when I met her and she had a lot of experience with particular women sailing, all-women crews. And I didn't know how to sail. I knew a little bit about powerboats but not how to sail, so I got to go along as long as I didn't touch anything. [Laughter]

Show up on time, bring beer, keep your mouth shut.

Interviewer:

The important stuff, right, sir?

Nowland:

Important stuff. And so that's how we got into that and then we joined the Boston Yacht

Club which is right next door and that offered us opportunity to be more socially connected. I had never been a particularly social butterfly, if you will. And then we had this business venture offered where we could become part owners of the Landing Restaurant, bar and restaurant, on the harbor, just like three or four blocks from here. A good deal, which is paying off now. And various things like that. We now have a boat in Florida at our condo. We have a nice one here.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

So it all worked out.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir. And then unfortunately, in 2008 your health began to deteriorate, and in 2009 you discovered that you had carcinoid syndrome. Can you tell me a little bit about that?

Nowland:

Well what happened is way back in - seven years before that I had started to lose weight and we couldn't figure out what was wrong with me. One thing led to another but I ended up at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute and they diagnosed me with cancer and that particular type of cancer, which is not curable but if you're lucky you can manage it to a certain point. In my case it was seven years and then it blossomed at the eighth year. So even though I had to get treatment every month for seven years that was the only real drawback, and then - we knew that I was a little bit on borrowed time.

Interviewer:

Right.

Nowland:

That eventually it would come back in a more aggressive way, which it did a year ago, and ever since then I've been sort of on a downhill slope. I think the important thing about it with respect to our discussion and with respect to my life is that, you know, inevitably something's gonna get you.

Interviewer:

Right.

Nowland:

And you gotta enjoy whatever you got going on and you gotta make the most of what you have, and so that's where I'm at now. I'm - people who know me well, they kind of look at me and say, "He doesn't look like the same guy," 'cause I've lost 40 pounds.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

So I'm not the same-looking person.

Interviewer:

Right. What does West Point mean to you, sir?

Nowland:

I think it - if you've noticed one thing about my whole discussion - in fact, if I refer in the paper I gave you to the poetry I've been writing through the years, there's a lot of poetry about what things mean to me.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

And a lot of it's tied to military tradition and respect for our fellow human beings, citizens, friends, and I learned that at West Point. I learned about what I would call a formalization of integrity. I knew what it was but I think West Point gave me a much broader perspective. I'm not a huge guy. I mean I don't belong to any West Point organizations 'cause I didn't teach there and I didn't have the affinity for it, but I - as you look around my office you'll see a lot of references to, you know, diplomas and

pictures and reunions. And up here I have - that's my 45th - I think that's the 45th when Dan Christman was the superintendent and he and I are good friends.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir.

Nowland:

So - and I - the bigger picture is I want to put this in context with 50 years. You're doing these interviews I would assume to get some kind of context as to what has occurred either at West Point or because of West Point or because of its graduates. One, I think you're capturing on the interviews that I've seen is the influence of a lot of classmates on a lot of things. Personally, I don't think I'd have gotten through a lot of the - you know, I lost my twin boys when I was still at Raytheon. Of the five children we had, three of them - two of them were twin boys, the boys that were born at the Air Force Academy. They were inseparable. They were very close. They were out riding a motorcycle at night and Rob - one of them was killed by a vehicle, a car.

The other guy, Kevin, couldn't live with it. Two years later he committed suicide the same week, I think it was, that his brother had been killed. So I had lost my parents, I lost - there were a lot of personal tragedies that I might not have survived as well had I not had the - you know, my classmates or the sense that there was a bigger institution behind me.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir. Which leads into my next question for you. What does your class, the class of '65, mean to you?

Nowland:

That's an interesting thing 'cause we seemed to have a mix of what I would call the higher end - I mean how many classes have a POW, a Medal of Honor winner, you know, people who've distinguished themselves in civilian or military lives, Rick Shinseki, all that. But we had this large inner population of the class that doesn't speak up.

Didn't speak up before - I'm part of that. I never was much to speak up, which is one of the reasons I wanted to do this before I'm gone. I wanted to speak up. It's almost like the great unwashed. I think some of my classmates might not feel worthy somehow. I don't know if this is true and you can make your own soundings about that or any - they'll respond, but Ladd Metzner is the example of what I mean. He died at 43 of alcohol and drug - I don't know how much drug, but alcohol. Just poorly taking care of himself.

He was a really good guy and a smart guy. I had the sense that he lost his compass, he lost his bearing. It might be because he didn't feel that same camaraderie with classmates. I don't know, but I think so. We have guys that are passing away on a weekly basis it seems like or, you know, Rick Bunn who's our class scribe, a great guy. He's keeping track of all this and I get the sense these folks are passing away and they didn't leave us. I mean they left for their family but they didn't leave us with their thoughts. Were they - did they feel unworthy or, gee, that's for Danny Christman and Buddy Bucha and stuff to do that kind of thing. They can speak for the class. I'm not worthy of that. And so I wanted to speak that it's not only about being a general or a war hero or something.

It's about your growth and maturity as a human, and when you get close to passing you probably spend a little more time thinking about - excuse me. Was my time worth it?

Interviewer:

Right.

Nowland:

Did I do enough to help people? So that's what it means to me and I wanted to through this in there about the rest of the class 'cause we have so many tremendous people.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir. Now looking back on all you've done, both in and out of the Army, what advice would you give cadets who will watch this interview?

Nowland:

Well, first of all, never compromise your integrity. Whatever you do, your career is not worth it. If it's something that you think you can negotiate and with good faith and still meet your obligations from an integrity principle point of view then give it a shot, but otherwise don't ever compromise. Don't - you know, because at some point you're gonna look back at your life and you want to be proud of it and you those that are close to you to be proud. So I think that's number one. Number two is don't get hung up on careerism. It's - I've known majors who talk - captains and majors - mostly majors, lieutenant colonels - who felt somehow their career wasn't all it could be. Well, maybe something happened and I don't know.

But they've served an incredibly important tour in life and in the Army or in their civilian occupations. So, one, don't compromise on your integrity, don't get hung up about careerism, and just try to be a good person.

Interviewer:

Yes, sir. That is a great place to end. Do you have anything else you'd care to say?

Nowland:

No. There's lots of things but I think people watching are - have had enough of this guy. Thanks very much for you guys making the trip all the way here to Marblehead -

Interviewer:

Sir, it's been an honor.

Nowland:

For me not to have to - well, my wife would have to drive me down there, but anyway.

Thanks very much.

Interviewer:

It's an honor, sir.

Nowland:

I appreciate it.

Interviewer:

Thank you.