

Interviewer:

Today is Monday, July 9, 2012. We're at the studios of the Center for Oral History at West Point with Amos Jordan, Brigadier General Amos Jordan. General, could you spell your name for the transcriber, please?

BG A. Jordan:

Amos, A-M-O-S, Jordan, J-O-R-D-A-N.

Interviewer:

And where does the name Amos come from; how did you get the nickname?

BG A. Jordan:

My father's name; I'm a Junior.

Interviewer:

I see, so your father's name.

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

And where did you grow up?

BG A. Jordan:

Grew up in Idaho, southern Idaho on the Snake River.

Interviewer:

And when did you -

BG A. Jordan:

Town of - towns of - well, born in Twin Falls, and grew up in Burley and Heyburn.

Interviewer:

And what did your father do? What was your -

BG A. Jordan:

He was a house painter.

Interviewer:

A house painter, really.

BG A. Jordan:

Mm-hmm. Except during the Depression when I was growing up; there were no houses being painted, so he did whatever could put food on the table.

Interviewer:

He'd paint anything at that point, I guess -

BG A. Jordan:

Yep.

Interviewer:

Right?

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

What do you remember about the Depression, being a child during the Depression?

BG A. Jordan:

Well, I remember that money was extraordinarily scarce. A nickel was a pretty important piece of exchange. And the rule was waste not, want not.

Interviewer:

Now, what did -

BG A. Jordan:

We ate an awful lot of beans, because they were extraordinarily cheap and good protein, and Mother made bread a couple times a week, and we ate an awful lot of bread and beans. Yeah.

Interviewer:

Was that part of the country hit pretty hard?

BG A. Jordan:

Yes. Southern Idaho, of course, agricultural, so that people didn't starve, but they had no money to buy clothing or much of anything else.

Interviewer:

The farms really hit before the rest of the country, isn't that right? Farming went into depression in the mid-20s, yeah.

BG A. Jordan:

Early; yeah.

Interviewer:

Yeah. So you felt it out there, or what you remember of it.

BG A. Jordan:

Well, yes. I can remember that the farmers were extraordinarily hard-pressed, and an awful lot of them lost their farms in debt. And

Interviewer:

What kind of farming they do out there; what sort of -

BG A. Jordan:

Well, mostly potatoes and sugar beets; some cases, beans. And then grain - primarily wheat, but also oats and barley. Alfalfa was the hay that you fed your cattle, so there's lots of alfalfa. In fact, your crop rotation depended on alfalfa, because it was nitrogen-building.

Interviewer:

Now, you grew up a Mormon.

BG A. Jordan:

Yes.

Interviewer:

Your parents were Mormons, I take it.

BG A. Jordan:

My mother was a Mormon; not my father.

Interviewer:

Ah. What was your father's religious background?

BG A. Jordan:

Didn't have any.

Interviewer:

Didn't have any; I see.

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

And does that area of Idaho have a lot of Mormon churches and congregations?

BG A. Jordan:

Oh yes. Southern Idaho, particularly southeastern Idaho where I grew up, was heavily Mormon country, yes.

Interviewer:

And when did you decide you wanted to come to West Point?

BG A. Jordan:

When I was a senior in high school, my chemistry teacher was a Army National Guard Officer who had served with West Pointers, and there was no such thing at that time as guidance counselors, and there was no such thing, in my view, as scholarships. And so when he talked to me about the possibility of West Point, I was enthusiastic and applied, which I did then for the succeeding three years, and I finally got in on my fourth try.

Interviewer:

Really. So during those three years, did you attend other colleges?

BG A. Jordan:

Yes. I went to the southern - well, I laid out a year between high school and college, because there was no money for tuition and my earnings went to put food on the table. And

then the succeeding years, I went to the southern branch of the University of Idaho in Pocatello.

Interviewer:

Always dreaming of coming here, though.

BG A. Jordan:

Yes. Kept reapplying.

Interviewer:

Now, did your family have a military background at all?

BG A. Jordan:

No - zero. Zero.

Interviewer:

None; really.

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

So other than the interest from this chemistry teacher -

BG A. Jordan:

Teacher, yeah.

Interviewer:

Did you have any idea what you were getting into, and was it something that attracted you?

BG A. Jordan:

Well, I knew that it was a honored profession, the military. I knew that West Point had a high reputation as an educational institution. And I knew they paid you to go here, which astonished me. I was not used to that sort of a consideration.

Interviewer:

Now, who sponsored you on this application? You had to have a politician sponsor you.

BG A. Jordan:

I had a Senatorial appointment as a second alternate. But in those days, I have the impression it may have been a new policy that if there were a vacancy, that the Academy could choose from among all the qualified alternates nationwide, and I was chosen as a qualified alternate.

Interviewer:

I see. But who was the Senator that -

BG A. Jordan:

John Thomas.

Interviewer:

And this is a Senator from -

BG A. Jordan:

Idaho.

Interviewer:

Idaho, so.

BG A. Jordan:

Yes. Yeah.

Interviewer:

And a Republican, a Democrat, what was he?

BG A. Jordan:

I don't even know, but I suspect he was a Republican, because southern Idahoans tend to -

Interviewer:

So you never met him or anything, did you?

BG A. Jordan:

No. No.

Interviewer:

So he just did it based upon your record.

BG A. Jordan:

Yes, mm-hmm.

Interviewer:

So when you arrived here with the class of '46, which is your class, right?

BG A. Jordan:

Yes.

Interviewer:

So this would've been the -

BG A. Jordan:

Summer of '43.

Interviewer:

'43, okay. The war was on.

BG A. Jordan:

Yes.

Interviewer:

And what did it feel like here during the war?

BG A. Jordan:

Well, the sense that a war was on was overwhelmed by the sense of being a cadet, particularly a new cadet; Beast Barracks and all the rest. And I was really not aware of the war until classes started, and really not much then.

Interviewer:

Well, surely you knew there was a war going on.

BG A. Jordan:

Oh yeah, sure.

Interviewer:

You mean that you weren't aware of the impact of the war -

BG A. Jordan:

Yes.

Interviewer:

On West Point until it -

BG A. Jordan:

Exactly. Exactly, yeah. But we anticipated, I anticipated that the war would still be going on when I graduated.

Interviewer:

But you say you were aware of it once classes started; how? What was it that - how did it show itself on the hallways of West Point?

BG A. Jordan:

Well, for one thing, we all had to take the New York Times and read it, and so we got war news that way. But then we had instructors who would have been wounded on the battlefield, D-Day for instance, come back to teach. We were highly aware that the war was on.

Interviewer:

You fully expected you would be fighting in Europe -

BG A. Jordan:

Yes, exactly.

Interviewer:

Or the Pacific or something.

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah, exactly.

Interviewer:

Yeah. Did that - was that a source of excitement for you, adventure, or was it a source of terror and dread? What did you feel about the thought that you might be going to war?

BG A. Jordan:

Challenge. Challenge. Learn as much as possible, and do as well as possible at West Point. I had a drive for excellence that if I couldn't out-think them, I'd out-work them.

Interviewer:

And what was your - first of all, did you have majors in those days like they do today? What was your major?

BG A. Jordan:

No, there were no majors. It was all prescribed curriculum.

Interviewer:

So it was mostly math and science basically.

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah - math, science, engineering.

Interviewer:

Sure.

BG A. Jordan:

And it was, the course was shortened from four years to three, but they didn't shorten the math, science, engineering as much as they did the social sciences, humanities, which were really squeezed, yeah.

Interviewer:

They shortened it because of the war, right?

BG A. Jordan:

Yes.

Interviewer:

In order to get more officers out into the field.

BG A. Jordan:

Exactly.

Interviewer:

Who was the superintendent at the time?

BG A. Jordan:

Maxwell Taylor.

Interviewer:

He went on to have something of a career of distinction himself, right?

BG A. Jordan:

Yes.

Interviewer:

What were your impressions of him as a cadet here?

BG A. Jordan:

We were all enormously impressed by Maxwell Taylor. The first, the superintendent before he came was Frances Wilby, who was a little dumpy, overweight chap, that was not terribly inspiring, but Taylor was a very inspiring figure.

Interviewer:

So Taylor was there the rest of your term here.

BG A. Jordan:

My senior year, yeah, first class year.

Interviewer:

I see.

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

Did you ever get to meet him?

BG A. Jordan:

Oh yes. I was First Captain, and so I used to get invited to his house when distinguished visitors came, such as Harry Truman.

Interviewer:

So you met Harry Truman.

BG A. Jordan:

Yes, and at the superintendent's house, and various -

Interviewer:

Tell me about that. So you're -

BG A. Jordan:

Foreign dignitaries.

Interviewer:

At the superintendent's house with Maxwell Taylor and Harry Truman.

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah, mm-hmm.

Interviewer:

That's a pretty rare experience.

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

Tell me about that.

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah. Yeah. Well, I was impressed by two things. One was the camaraderie, the very informal kind of person that Harry Truman was. He sat down and played the Missouri Waltz for us on the superb piano.

Interviewer:

Which he seemed to do everywhere he went, right?

BG A. Jordan:

I think he was asked invariably. He had a military aide, Harry Vaughan, who was a great raconteur, and I spent most of my time with Harry Vaughan, listening to his stories.

Interviewer:

Do you remember any of them; remember what he -

BG A. Jordan:

No.

Interviewer:

But you remember they were very entertaining, I guess.

BG A. Jordan:

They were very entertaining, yes.

Interviewer:

So as First Captain, that's pretty impressive; you must've been very proud of that.

BG A. Jordan:

Well, it was an honor, yes. Eisenhower presented me with the Pershing Saber, which is given to the graduating First Captain, and told me that he'd demote you tomorrow. You'll never be this important again. Or maybe he said, "For many years you won't be." I've forgotten precisely. But the clear idea was it was a demotion.

Interviewer:

So he was - he presided at your graduation -

BG A. Jordan:

Yes. Yeah.

Interviewer:

So tell me about Eisenhower, then; you met Eisenhower.

BG A. Jordan:

Well, I had been given the Pershing Saber, which had a cadet crest welded on the hilt. And the crest, which was new to me, on the cadet saber caught my white glove and the saber went out of control, and the tip circled Eisenhower's nose and he didn't blink.

[Laughs] I got to know Eisenhower slightly later, when I served with the president's committee to study the foreign aid program, and I was a staffer; borrowed -

Interviewer:

This was when - this is when he was president, orâ€¦?

BG A. Jordan:

Yes, when he was president, I was borrowed from my professorship at West Point to go down to help with that.

Interviewer:

Did you remind him that you had met him before?

BG A. Jordan:

No. [Laughs]

Interviewer:

So the war ends while youâ€™re here.

BG A. Jordan:

Yes.

Interviewer:

And do you recall VE Day and the -

BG A. Jordan:

Yes.

Interviewer:

Mood around here on that day?

BG A. Jordan:

Yes.

Interviewer:

Tell me.

BG A. Jordan:

Well, it was exuberance. Everybody was very happy indeed the war was over, but there was a feeling that darn it, weâ€™d missed our chance.

Interviewer:

Of course, of course.

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

Now, what did you branch?

BG A. Jordan:

Field Artillery. But I was only in the Field Artillery until 1955, when I was made a statutory professor.

Interviewer:

Right; weâ€™re going back to that. So -

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

So when you were commissioned out of West Point, where were you sent, then, from there?

BG A. Jordan:

Well, when I went to the Field Artillery School, and then the Anti-Aircraft Artillery School, they were respectively Fort Sill, Oklahoma, and Fort Bliss, Texas. I volunteered for the paratroops, and went to Fort Benning for paratroop training. In the meantime, I had won a Rhodes Scholarship, and so they kept me at Benning with school troop for two or three months, until it was time for me to leave and pick up my, start my Rhodes Scholarship.

Interviewer:

So you went to Oxford, then, for a year.

BG A. Jordan:

So I went to Oxford, yeah.

Interviewer:

What was that like?

BG A. Jordan:

It was a wonderful experience. It's a magic -

Interviewer:

This would've been '47, '48, something like that?

Interviewer:

So this - Churchill's still around -

BG A. Jordan:

Actually, it was the fall of '47, yeah. Churchill is no longer prime minister.

Interviewer:

Right.

BG A. Jordan:

He -

Interviewer:

Well, when does he give the Fulton, Missouri, Iron Curtain speech?

BG A. Jordan:

'46, I'm quite sure; quite sure it was '46. Churchill was still a massive figure, but he was replaced by the Labour Department.

Interviewer:

Anthony Eden was the prime minister at the time?

BG A. Jordan:

No, no, no. Eden was also a Conservative; he came later. This was a modest little man, as Churchill described him, who replaced him. Labour - Labour. Churchill lived large in the English consciousness because he had been the prime minister in those dark days, but the Conservatives had been in power for I don't know, six years or something like that, and the British electorate was weary. Turned him out.

BG A. Jordan:

Well, Oxford was a total contrast to West Point. For one thing, we had the tutorial method, so that although we could go to University lectures, and there were a number of University lectures. But Oxford is essentially a collection of independent colleges, and you could go to any college and attend its lectures. But in your own college, you were tutored in the subjects that you were specializing in; in my case, Philosophy, Politics, and Economics, PPE. Yeah.

Interviewer:

And your college was which one?

BG A. Jordan:

Brasenose, which was well known as a law, for its outstanding law instruction. And then any time you told somebody you were from Brasenose, they'd assume you took law. But I had chosen Brasenose in the absence of any information about its qualities in PPE because it was centrally located, and it didn't have the name of a religious order - Christ Church, Magdalen, Saint John's. These I thought might have compulsory chapel. I'd already had that at West Point, so

Interviewer:

Well, speaking of religion, what did the British make of a Mormon in their midst, or did you not bring that fully out into full view during that time?

BG A. Jordan:

Well, there was no - at that point, there was no Mormon services there at Oxford, and so I didn't, I wasn't aware that - no one -

Interviewer:

But you must've said something about your religious faith to others.

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah, and my third year there, my wife came over, and we formed in effect a little branch, and worshiped with one other family.

Interviewer:



You haven't told me about your wife. Where did you meet her?

BG A. Jordan:

At Idaho Southern. She was -

Interviewer:

Before you came to West Point.

BG A. Jordan:

Yes. She was a year behind me.

Interviewer:

Uh-huh. And her name?

BG A. Jordan:

Mardeane Carver.

Interviewer:

Mardeane?

BG A. Jordan:

Mardeane, M-A-R-D-E-A-N-E.

Interviewer:

I don't think I've ever heard that name before.

BG A. Jordan:

Unusual name.

Interviewer:

Yeah.

BG A. Jordan:

Mardeane Carver Jordan. Mardeane was a year behind me. I met her in American history class. She loved to dance, and I liked to dance, and so we danced together at the school dances and fell in love. So we were engaged at Christmas of 1942 - no - yes, Christmas of '42 -

Interviewer:

And you were 20 years old, right?

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah. No - it was Christmas of '41. Christmas of '41, I guess it was.

Interviewer:

You were 19, then.

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah, 19, yeah. She was 17, yeah. And we thought we would get married when I got commissioned, because I was going into the Air Force, the Army Air Corps.

Interviewer:

Sure.

BG A. Jordan:

Which would've been January of '44. But in the meantime, I'd gotten this appointment to West Point, so that delayed it for two and a half years. We were married in July of '46. I'm sorry, June of '46, yeah.

Interviewer:

I see. And how long were you married - how long have you been married, I should say?

BG A. Jordan:

Well, my dear wife passed away in February, 2010, so what's that?

Interviewer:

We'll figure out the math.

BG A. Jordan:

60-some years.

Interviewer:

It's impressive whatever it is.

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah. Yeah.

Interviewer:

So you mustâ€™ve seen the -

BG A. Jordan:

65-plus years, I think it was.

Interviewer:

You mustâ€™ve seen the remnants of the British experience with the war.

BG A. Jordan:

Oh yes.

Interviewer:

When you were there.

BG A. Jordan:

Oh yes. Rationing - rationing was still in effect when we were there. The British were really impoverished by World War II, and they may have sunk under the waves if the Americans had not come to their rescue with the Marshall Plan and so on.

Interviewer:

How were you greeted as an American there?

BG A. Jordan:

Favorably, but there was a little bit of - I wonâ€™t say hostility. Thatâ€™s certainly not the case. Little bit of uneasiness, because Americans had so much, and the English were in such desperate straits.

Interviewer:

So some envy, you think?

BG A. Jordan:

Maybe a little, but I didnâ€™t really sense it. I didnâ€™t sense it, no. I came to be a real Anglophile.

Interviewer:

Are you to this day?

BG A. Jordan:

I am to this day, yeah.

Interviewer:

So then from your year at Oxford, where did you go?

BG A. Jordan:

Three years at Oxford.

Interviewer:

Three years at Oxford.

BG A. Jordan:

The scholarship is for two, and I asked - as did most of my contemporaries - to extend it for a year, which was done.

Interviewer:

Now, what did you learn while you were there? How do you remember that experience in terms of an academic -

BG A. Jordan:

Well, I learned I think to recognize garbage; that may have been my most important achievement there.

Interviewer:

What do you mean by that?

BG A. Jordan:

Well, I did not have a discerning eye when I graduated before going to Oxford for baloney. But I learned to be, if not a cynic, at least a skeptic, and like a Missourian, I needed to be shown.

Interviewer:

So did you learn this by witnessing a lot of baloney when you were there, or by developing the mind to the point where you recognized it other places?

BG A. Jordan:

Critical mind, yeah; critical mind, yeah. It was an absolutely marvelous experience. The tutors there were extraordinary men, and that experience - you wrote an essay every week on a subject that you were told to prepare. And you were given at the same time three, four, five, six books that you were supposed to read. I was used to West Point's system, where you had an assignment of 20 or 30 pages, maybe, or 50 pages would be considered outrageous, so I was a little overtaken by the idea that I had to read three books before my next tutorial, you know. But your tutor critiqued your essay, which was again a new experience, and it was extremely useful learning experience.

And as I say, I think my primary take-away from that education was the ability to recognize a spurious argument.

Interviewer:

So you learned to reason, essentially; is that right?

BG A. Jordan:

Hmm?

Interviewer:

You learned to reason from that.

BG A. Jordan:

Yes.

Interviewer:

And you learned to write, it sounds like -

BG A. Jordan:

Yes, I did.

Interviewer:

They were highly critical in the most productive way of -

BG A. Jordan:

Exactly, yeah, yeah.

Interviewer:

Of an argument.

BG A. Jordan:

Yes. Yeah. Yeah, you got anything that you were a little bit hazy on, or a little let's say unwarranted conclusion, etc., they punctured holes in that immediately, yeah.

Interviewer:

That's why they're such great debaters, right?

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah. Yeah.

Interviewer:

All right, so after your three-year Oxford experience -

BG A. Jordan:

Then I came back to teach in the Department of Economics, Government, and History.

Interviewer:

Right here at West Point.

BG A. Jordan:

Right here at West Point, yes.

Interviewer:

Now, you wanted to do that? You wanted to come back here, you wanted to teach?

BG A. Jordan:

Yes, but while I was on the ship, an Army transport, returning from England to the United States, June 25th the North Koreans invaded South Korea, and so I got a cable from a ship to Colonel Beukema, who was then Head of the Department, asking to have my orders changed to send me to Korea, the theory being that if you're going to be a professional soldier, you go to the sound of the guns. And Beukema wired back and said, "No, you're going to teach here; there'll still be a war going on when you finish." So I reported in and taught three years in the Department.

Interviewer:

Were you itching to go, though? You mustâ€™ve been -

BG A. Jordan:

I was; yeah, yeah.

Interviewer:

The way you describe things; yeah. And did you get to Korea?

BG A. Jordan:

Yes. But there was - I had after I finished my three years to go to the Advanced Course at both Fort Sill for Field Artillery and Fort Bliss for Anti-Aircraft Artillery. So I didnâ€™t get to Korea until just after the armistice; yeah.

Interviewer:

You have a habit of showing up just a little bit late for these things, right?

BG A. Jordan:

Yes. We still had infiltrators coming in, so I had a forward artillery battery in support of the combat outpost lines, so we were constantly checking for infiltrators, but that was the size of it, yeah.

Interviewer:

Letâ€™s talk about Korea a little bit, â€™cause a lot of your classmates mustâ€™ve gone to Korea, Iâ€™m guessing.

BG A. Jordan:

Yes. Yes, and we lost a fair number of them.

Interviewer:

We refer to this as the Forgotten War, and itâ€™s -

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

True in our experience here that you hear much more spoken about Vietnam and World War II as the sort of bookends -

BG A. Jordan:

Exactly.

Interviewer:

Around it, but not about Korea.

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

To a cadet watching this, wanting to understand what Korea was, tell me; tell him, I should say.

BG A. Jordan:

Well, of course I wasnâ€™t a cadet by the time Korea came along.

Interviewer:

No, I said to a cadet watching this interview, and wanting to know what Korea was.

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

Tell them something that gives them a sense of what was definable about that particular war.

BG A. Jordan:

Well, I think the crucial point was that this was an unprovoked act of aggression, which, because the Soviet Union was absent from the Security Council -

Interviewer:

Of the United Nations, weâ€™re talking about now.

BG A. Jordan:

Yes. Yeah. It was absent from the UN Security Council. There was a UN Security Council resolution which provoked, or invoked Article 7 of that treaty, and permitted the United

States to go on into Korea under a UN banner. And we were joined by a number of other countries: the Brits, the Australians, the New Zealanders, the Turks, and so forth. The consequence was that in this fight to oust the invading North Koreans, who almost ejected the South Koreans from the peninsula, they got way down to the southern port of Pusan, where a perimeter was established. And they gradually built that perimeter up.

And forced - as the American reinforcements came in from Japan, and ultimately from the States, and other countries came in with forces - gradually pushing the North Koreans up close to the 38th Parallel, where they had originally launched. And then MacArthur did the enveloping maneuver, which put American troops behind the North Koreans and routed them. And we were able then to move almost up to the Chinese border, and MacArthur didn't pay any attention to the Joint Chiefs, who told him to stop. He was going to go right to the Chinese border, and that was a mistake, because it did in fact provoke the massive Chinese intervention, which drove us back again to around the 38th Parallel, where we finally had an armistice.

Interviewer:

Now, in the course of this, MacArthur comes into a confrontation with Truman, right?

BG A. Jordan:

Well, it's really not - it's not so much a matter of tactics. It's a matter of strategy that Truman and the Joint Chiefs couldn't rein in MacArthur. MacArthur was going to call this as he saw it, and he said, "There's no substitute for victory" - that famous line of his. And so he would not be constrained, and so Truman went ahead and relieved him, yeah. Installed Ridgway.

Interviewer:

Now, do you remember when that happened? Your attitude towards it, and the -

BG A. Jordan:

Well, my attitude towards it was all for Truman's action.

Interviewer:

Really - you support Truman -

BG A. Jordan:

Yes. Yes.

Interviewer:

Demoting or firing, essentially, MacArthur.

BG A. Jordan:

Yes. Yes. I was thoroughly turned off by the massive ego of MacArthur.

Interviewer:

Had you met him ever, or not?

BG A. Jordan:

No, but I knew his record, and I knew how he had treated Wainwright, whom he left behind at Corregidor, and whom he tried to deny a Congressional Medal of Honor, etc. And I had absolutely no use for that kind of ego or that kind of treatment by a distinguished soldier.

Interviewer:

Now, you must've been unusual, I'm guessing, from the cadet population of that time. I realize you probably formed your opinion of him over a long period of time, but -

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

But I would imagine that a lot of the cadets might've been enamored of MacArthur.

BG A. Jordan:

Could be; I don't know.

Interviewer:

You don't recall that?

BG A. Jordan:

I don't. Well, we were all following the Pacific war very closely, and admiring his island-hopping tactics, which not only evicted the Japanese, but spared an awful lot of American

lives.

Interviewer:

Now Ridgway; did you know Ridgway?

BG A. Jordan:

No. I met Ridgway many, many years later, when he came to West Point. But just to say hello and listen to him talk, yeah.

Interviewer:

Other famous generals of the time - do you recall any?

BG A. Jordan:

Well, I got to know Marshall slightly, whom I was -

Interviewer:

This would be George Marshall.

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah, George Marshall. Not a West Pointer.

Interviewer:

VMI.

BG A. Jordan:

VMI. He was an extraordinary man, and I was a great admirer of Marshall's. I met Bradley, again at West Point, and I met Arnold, and many of the two and three-star generals.

Interviewer:

Who did you fashion yourself after? You must've thought as a First Captain you were on the track to become a general at some point.

BG A. Jordan:

Well, I certainly anticipated it, or hoped for it.

Interviewer:

Whose career did you want to follow?

BG A. Jordan:

Eisenhower's, yeah. I felt that the education I had - that is, my time at Oxford, and then I got a doctorate in international politics at Columbia University, commuting down in the evenings from West Point - that with my education and my experience, that I could succeed along the Eisenhower path.

Interviewer:

And was there something about his temperament that attracted you?

BG A. Jordan:

Well, it appealed to me that he was unpretentious. He didn't have an overweening ego, such as Patton or MacArthur. He was very considerate of his fellow officers. He was able to get along with his allies. To my mind, he was the very model of a modern major general. [Laughs]

Interviewer:

Gilbert and Sullivan; since you are an Anglophile, I can say it, right?

BG A. Jordan:

Yes. Yes.

Interviewer:

Was he president of Columbia when you were doing your graduate degree there?

BG A. Jordan:

No. I'm not sure, but I don't think so.

Interviewer:

~Cause he was president I think in the early '50s, I want to say.

BG A. Jordan:

'50s, yeah, yeah. I did not go there to get my doctorate 'til much later.

Interviewer:

I see.

BG A. Jordan:

I think itâ€™s 1961 I finished my doctorate, yeah.

Interviewer:

So you are teaching here.

BG A. Jordan:

Yes.

Interviewer:

And what years are we talking about now, then? Sort of middle â€™50s, Iâ€™m guessing?

BG A. Jordan:

â€™50 - â€™53.

Interviewer:

Yeah, okay.

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

So what was the Academy like? Had it changed at all from the time when you were a cadet here?

BG A. Jordan:

Not really. Not really. It was 95%, if you will, the same kind of an institution, yeah. In fact -

Interviewer:

Did you enjoy teaching?

BG A. Jordan:

I came back as a full professor in the summer of 1955. It was still very much the same institution. In fact, I was a young, at that point, lieutenant colonel, having jumped the rank of major. I was a captain when I was appointed to a statutory professor position. The people that I sat the Academic Board with were the people whoâ€™d been my professors when I was a student nine years before, and they were teaching the same courses. I suspect they were lecturing from much the same notes.

Interviewer:

And the superintendent wouldâ€™ve been Gar Davidson, is that right? Or was it -

BG A. Jordan:

Yes, Gar Davidson.

Interviewer:

Now, Gar Davidsonâ€™s known for changing the Academy quite -

BG A. Jordan:

Yes.

Interviewer:

Dramatically, particularly on the academic -

BG A. Jordan:

He did.

Interviewer:

Yes. Tell me about that. Tell me about what difference he made.

BG A. Jordan:

Well, come -

Interviewer:

And had you known him before? Did you know him before? Did you know him from the -

BG A. Jordan:

No. No. Come to think about it, Davidson was not the superintendent when I came back. Well, I take that back. Davidson was the superintendent at the time that we broke the core curriculum and provided the opportunity for electives, so that wouldâ€™ve been later, yeah.

Interviewer:

During the late â€™50s, I think, probably for Gar Davidson.

BG A. Jordan:

Early â€™60s.

Interviewer:

Early â€™60s, okay.

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah. Yeah. And what was your question?

Interviewer:

Oh, I wanted to know what difference you saw in the way that he was able to break the core curriculum, and what a challenge that mustâ€™ve been to be on -

BG A. Jordan:

Well, it was a tremendous -

Interviewer:

The old Academic Board, right?

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah. It was a tremendous challenge. But he had George A. Lincoln, Colonel Abe Lincoln, as his point man on that. And Lincoln was not only extremely bright, extremely well-connected in Washington, but he was also extremely skillful. He had great feel for his colleagues, and despite the distrust of the math, science, engineering people, for whom he or with whom he was continually in battle trying to carve out the non-MSE slice of the curriculum. Despite the fact that it was this distrust and even animus there, Lincoln, with Davidsonâ€™s help, was able to trim that core curriculum.

Interviewer:

And what was your attitude at the time; how did you feel about the -

BG A. Jordan:

I was very much in favor of opening up some electives.

Interviewer:

For what reason; what did you -

BG A. Jordan:

Because I had found in my teaching as well as my time as a cadet that there was an awful lot of, an awful substantial number of the cadets that did not enjoy the math, science, engineering, were not really bent in that direction. And I didnâ€™t see why, since a relatively small slice, 10% or so, of the class would go into the Corps of Engineers, why the other 90% had to have this MSE over-emphasis.

Interviewer:

You think if you had had that opportunity, you wouldâ€™ve been in the percentage that wanted to go someplace other than math, science, engineering?

BG A. Jordan:

Of course. Yes. Yes.

Interviewer:

Which you demonstrated when you went to Oxford.

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

So weâ€™ve come to the middle â€™50s, then, sort of.

BG A. Jordan:

Yes.

Interviewer:

So after your time, the three-year stint teaching here, Iâ€™m guessing, right?

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

So you went where from there?

BG A. Jordan:

After my stint here, I went off to Korea, and I was in - to the advanced courses at the



Artillery Schools. And then -

Interviewer:

Then to Korea.

BG A. Jordan:

To Korea, and I was in Korea when I got the offer to become a statutory professor, which was an astounding offer.

Interviewer:

So your first tour as a captain, then you came back as a statutory professor; is that right?

BG A. Jordan:

Yes.

Interviewer:

Uh-huh, okay.

BG A. Jordan:

As a lieutenant colonel, which statutory professors are, unless theyâ€™re already a colonel. Yeah. Yes, I came back too with the understanding that I had traded my opportunity to become a three or four-star general for a professorship.

Interviewer:

In engineering.

BG A. Jordan:

No - social sciences.

Interviewer:

Social sciences; I see.

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

But the first stint around - Iâ€™m sorry to be confused by that. The first stint around was in engineering; werenâ€™t you teaching in engineering?

BG A. Jordan:

No. I was teaching -

Interviewer:

I misunderstood that. I apologize.

BG A. Jordan:

No.

Interviewer:

So youâ€™re in social sciences -

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

And you knew that you wanted to be in an academic setting, then, if you were giving up that dream to be marching up the ladder and getting more stars, right?

BG A. Jordan:

Yes. Well, I enjoyed teaching. I knew that teaching these students would be a wonderful way to spend a career. My wife and I very much enjoyed West Point, the experience. The Department of Social Sciences was an elite group that we thoroughly enjoyed involvement with, participation in. And I saw the opportunity, based partly on Lincoln, who kept his Washington contacts and his international connections alive. Thereâ€™s an opportunity to reach out and do things beyond West Point that would be broadening, and would be a source of professional growth.

Interviewer:

At the time, history wasnâ€™t even its own department, right? It was still -

BG A. Jordan:

No.

Interviewer:

Part of social sciences, right?

BG A. Jordan:

At that time, it was part of social sciences, until the early 1960s, when it was pulled from the department, combined with Military Art to make a new Department of History; yeah.

Interviewer:

So it was a huge department, I'm guessing, social sciences.

BG A. Jordan:

Well, I think we had something - this was before there were any electives, and I think we probably had something like 60, 65 officers. Big department.

Interviewer:

What did you actually teach? What were your courses?

BG A. Jordan:

I taught - when I was an instructor, I taught American history, Far Eastern history, comparative government, American government, international politics, microeconomics. At that time, my first tour here, we also had geography, economic geography in the department, so I taught economic geography. It was later transferred to military topography and graphics, which later became Earth whatever it is sciences, yeah.

Interviewer:

And then when you returned as a statutory professor -

BG A. Jordan:

When I returned as a statutory professor, the statutory professor is not expected to teach regularly. In fact, I was one of the very few who did, and I taught an advanced course or two. I started a course in political economic development. And I taught, started a national security policy course. So I was in the classroom occasionally. But the statutory professors, for the most part, lectured to the class sort of a quarter at a time, once or twice a semester, in their area of particular interest, and I did that. Mostly international politics.

Interviewer:

Now, you said during this time that you served on a council with the Eisenhower Administration; is that right, or am I - you mentioned something about meeting Eisenhower.

BG A. Jordan:

Yes. I was borrowed from the Military Academy to help staff this group, the president's "well, it was to study the foreign assistance program. Council or commission or whatever it was, yeah.

Interviewer:

And tell me about that. What was the size of the commission, and what was your mission, and what were some of the personalities involved with that?

BG A. Jordan:

Well, that was a very distinguished group of a dozen or more. Had people like Tom Watson, the head of IBM. Father John Corkney Murray, the great theologian. It had Tommy White, the former Head of the Air Force. Al Grunther. It was a very "and John J. McCloy, who was really the most senior. He'd been not only a preeminent banker in the country, but he'd been our administrator of Germany after the war, succeeding Lucius Clay. This very distinguished group put together a staff of 15 or so people.

And then commissioned a number of studies to outside experts in addition to having its own staff, looking at every aspect of political and economic development, and the role of foreign aid in that development. And -

Interviewer:

What did you do? What was your part in it?

BG A. Jordan:

Essentially, I was brought in to help draft the report of the commission. I was only there for three months. I came down during a summer.

Interviewer:

What year are we talking about here? Roughly?

BG A. Jordan:

â€ˆ57?

Interviewer:

So foreign aidâ€™s connection to the Cold War was pretty critical, Iâ€™m guessing.

BG A. Jordan:

Yes.

Interviewer:

That was part of what you were -

BG A. Jordan:

Yes.

Interviewer:

Studying.

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah. Well, when I was in Korea, I had taken a Saturday afternoon to go down and visit the foreign aid, American foreign aid organization. I had a troop unit up at the DMZ, and I went down because I was interested in economics, taught economics. I went down to visit this aid organization, and found that they were desperately understaffed. There were only two economists assigned to it, and one of them had had a nervous breakdown in trying to cope with the Koreans. The other one was over his head with hundreds of millions of dollars that he was supposed to be administering. The Treasury representative had been called back to Washington because of a quarrel with the economic aid organization, and so the head of the organization, C. Tyler Wood, whom I later came to know very wellâ€¦

Ty Wood, who had not been there when I went down, but who heard about my visit, probably called Maxwell Taylor, whoâ€™s commanding the Eighth Army at this point, and said, â€œI want this Captain Jordan assigned to the economic aid organization.â€ So sort of 24, 48 hours after I was down visiting, I found myself assigned to the economic aid organization, and I worked there for six or seven months as a young Army captain, responsible for hundreds of millions of dollarsâ€™ worth of aid, and for running the auction that we held every week, because the Americans wanted to have won for local expenses, and the Koreans wanted to have dollars for imports, and so there was a won-dollar auction. That was one of my responsibilities, and as the Treasury representative, I was the economic and fiscal policy officer in the mission.

Interviewer:

So it was partly out of that experience that you were chosen then to be part of this commission so much later.

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah. Yeah.

Interviewer:

Paint the picture for -

BG A. Jordan:

And it became known - in fact, I lectured across a number of universities as a foreign aid expert, including Harvard, where I met Kissinger first.

Interviewer:

I see. Letâ€™s go into that a little bit, because I think itâ€™ll be helpful for those watching this to have an understanding of the role of foreign aid in the prosecution of the Cold War, essentially.

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

Paint that picture for us here.

BG A. Jordan:

Wellâ€¦ Europe was prostrate after World War II. The Soviet Union had, in effect, subdued Eastern Europe, brought it behind what became known as the Iron Curtain. And the consequence was that if Western Europe and the Near East were to continue to be independent, they needed help. And so the United States put a substantial effort, known as

the Marshall Plan after George Catlett Marshall, who at this point was the Secretary of State. And his Deputy Acheson -

Interviewer:

Dean Acheson, right?

BG A. Jordan:

Dean Acheson and he put together this very large economic aid program called the Marshall Plan. And because it was essentially rebuilding an existing advanced, if you will, developed economy in the Western European countries, it took hold very quickly, and Europe recovered very quickly. It did not have the same rapid results in say, Turkey or Greece, which were particularly threatened by the Soviet Union, and so we had a separate Greek-Turkish aid program. But the concept of the United States assisting its former wartime allies to get back on their feet by providing generous assistance funds was widely accepted by the American public.

Interviewer:

And part of the motivation behind this was to prevent these developed countries from -

BG A. Jordan:

Being taken over by the Communists.

Interviewer:

Right.

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah. They had their domestic Communist parties, particularly in Italy and France - and Greece. But those parties couldn't get purchase as the governments began to revive and get their economies going again.

Interviewer:

So when you were a part of this study or this commission, what were you looking at, Greece and Turkey, orâ€¦? â€˜Cause the Marshall Plan predated your period on that by six or eight years, I believe.

BG A. Jordan:

It was ahead of that by quite a bit, yes. But we were looking worldwide. It was not focused on Western Europe particularly, no. It was worldwide.

Interviewer:

Asia.

BG A. Jordan:

Very largely Asia, yeah; very largely Asia. But also southeastern Europe, Turkey, and, to some degree, Central Europe.

Interviewer:

Now, what are the lessons of foreign aid in the 1950s? Itâ€™s not just a matter of throwing money into a culture or an economy.

BG A. Jordan:

No.

Interviewer:

You were the expert, as you describe yourself, at the time. What kind of knowledge did you have, or have you, about the application of foreign aid in those circumstances?

BG A. Jordan:

Well, the principal problem in the developed countries, or what had been Central Europe, letâ€™s say, or even Western Europe, was to rebuild the basic infrastructure thatâ€™d been destroyed by the war. In less developed parts of the world - and this is particularly true in Asia - it was to develop the capacity of governments to handle additional resources and mobilize them to generate growth in their own economies. So it was a matter of political and economic development, as well as or perhaps primarily in addition to the increment of funds.

Interviewer:

And how do you do that? Particularly in economies, these underdeveloped economies are

probably rife with corruption, and to know exactly how to seed development must be very hard.

BG A. Jordan:

It is. Foreign aid is a hard, is a hard process, precisely because you do lack the capability, and you do face corruption and the rest of it. So what you have to do is simultaneously infuse fresh resources into the economy, and develop the capability of governments to use those resources wisely. Which means you have to get into the policy planning process in the recipient governments, and influence the way that they are going to use that money, and supervise, in effect, the disbursement of those funds.

Interviewer:

But you must be very resented in those situations as outsiders coming and telling them what to do.

BG A. Jordan:

Which would be true if you weren't also bringing a nice bag of goodies, yeah. Contemporary problem with dealing with less developed countries now is that if we're trying to help them, we put all kinds of conditions on. And the Chinese are happy to just put in money, and if it goes into corruption, so be it.

Interviewer:

You said you met Henry Kissinger during your work on this, because you were at Harvard.

BG A. Jordan:

Well, I wasn't at Harvard. He was at Harvard, and he asked me to come up and lecture to his students on foreign aid, and then I had Henry come down and talk to the cadets about international politics. And we formed a friendship that has lasted all this half-century or more. In fact, when I made it known that I was thinking of retiring in early 1972 -

Interviewer:

From here.

BG A. Jordan:

From here - Henry, who at that time was National Security Advisor to Nixon, offered me a job on the NSC Staff, which I didn't take because Henry had a reputation for being a very demanding tough boss, and it was well-deserved.

Interviewer:

So let's talk about him a little bit.

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

You were friends with him.

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

But you could see that

BG A. Jordan:

Oh yeah, sure. And I talked to some of his contemporaries at Harvard, and found there was a pretty negative reaction to him among other professors there, whom I knew, because I was at that point sending our prospective instructors to Harvard to get master's degrees, so I knew that faculty. And many of them were, if not detractors of Henry, at least a little critical of him.

Interviewer:

Well, again, to give the viewer some sense, this is Henry Kissinger, who is an extremely important figure in American history

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

For his time in the Nixon Administration, principally, although he began as an ally of Nelson Rockefeller, I believe, isn't that right?

BG A. Jordan:

Yesâ€|protege of Rockefellerâ€™s, yeah.

Interviewer:

What were his strengths, or are his strengths, that you witnessed as a friend for so many years?

BG A. Jordan:

Well, heâ€™s an extraordinarily bright individual. Heâ€™s a historian by training; his doctorate is in history. He has a very broad grasp, a deep grasp of history. Heâ€™s particularly strong on the Soviet Union, Russia, which of course was critical in those Cold War years. And he has the ability to see a complex situation in its entirety. Very broad intellect. Henry writes beautifully. He writes better than he speaks; because of his Germanic training, he tends to go in long sentences and bunch the verbs up at the end of the sentence.

So heâ€™s a little hard to follow sometimes in his speeches, although heâ€™s gotten much better over the years with that. Heâ€™s just a brilliant man whom I enjoy very much.

Interviewer:

What insight did he have, though, about Soviet behavior, do you think, that was so critical?

BG A. Jordan:

Well, he was an extreme critic of the Soviet Union, and recognized its weaknesses, and sought to exploit them. And although Nixon gets the primary credit, at least as much as Nixon and probably more than Nixon, Henry was the architect of the U.S.-Chinese rapprochement, which broke the Soviet-Chinese tie, and set up the triangular relationship that was a check on the Soviet Unionâ€™s expansionist desires.

Interviewer:

And the author of the related policy of detente, right?

BG A. Jordan:

Yes.

Interviewer:

With the Soviet Union at the same time.

BG A. Jordan:

Yes. Yeah.

Interviewer:

So he had a kind of brilliance for knowing how to play the worldâ€™s big chess players off against each other, isnâ€™t that right?

BG A. Jordan:

Yes, thatâ€™s exactly right. Kissingerâ€™s ability to see the future is I think, relatively speaking, unsurpassed. He could visualize where we wanted to go, and the steps that we needed to take to get there. A vision and a depth of understanding that permitted him to set out on a voyage.

Interviewer:

Now, â€72, National Security wouldâ€™ve been a very exciting position for you during that time, I would imagine.

BG A. Jordan:

Oh yeah.

Interviewer:

So you mustâ€™ve been very tempted to take the offer.

BG A. Jordan:

I was tempted, if he hadnâ€™t had this reputation of being such a terrible boss. Iâ€™d had a young captain that worked for me here who was an ROTC graduate, and Iâ€™d gotten him a job on Kissingerâ€™s staff when he finished his ROTC obligation. And he had a terrible experience with Kissinger, said, â€œWhatever you do, take distance from that man.â€ [Laughs] So that sort of curdled my willingness to listen to Henry.

Interviewer:

So do you retire in 1972 from here?

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah, I did; I retired.

Interviewer:

And where did you go from there?

BG A. Jordan:

I went immediately as the Executive Director of something called the Aspen Institute of Humanistic Studies, which had offices in New York City where we planned programs for our campus in Aspen, which we ran programs, executive seminars, in both the summer and the winter. And then in the fall and the spring, we did mostly planning, but sometimes, for instance, we set up three-week seminars in Japan, or in Iran, or what have you.

Interviewer:

So a different kind of teaching, but teaching nonetheless.

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah, teaching corporate executives, yeah.

Interviewer:

And what did you learn from that? Must've been a big thirst out there during that time for that kind of knowledge, right?

BG A. Jordan:

Well, yes. We had a very successful program. Basically, what we were teaching is the great ideas of Western civilization and their continuing relevance to the present. And so I had a chance to reacquaint myself with the great teachings - you know, Plato and Aristotle, and John Locke, and so forth - and also had the opportunity to learn American corporate culture, what made these corporate executives tick.

Interviewer:

And this was your first experience with it, I'm thinking, right?

BG A. Jordan:

Yes. Yeah. Yeah.

Interviewer:

What makes them tick?

BG A. Jordan:

Well, I find that they're very much " or at least at that point " very much like the rest of us. The principal difference is a focus on money, and an ambition to maximize their economic position. So if they're a chief operating officer of a corporation, they want to be the Chief Executive Officer in that corporation or another one at least as large. Yeah. And the CEOs, the chief executive officers and presidents of these organizations want them to be the biggest and best in their field.

Interviewer:

How long -

BG A. Jordan:

Very ambitious - very ambitious, money-oriented people. But otherwise very much like you and me, you know. Put on their trousers one leg at a time.

Interviewer:

How long did you do this?

BG A. Jordan:

I did this for just about two years. And then Schlesinger, who was then Secretary of Defense -

Interviewer:

This would be James Schlesinger.

BG A. Jordan:

James Schlesinger.

Interviewer:

So this is now we're in the Carter years, I'm guessing, right - yes?

BG A. Jordan:

Yes. Yeah. No.

Interviewer:

No, weâ€™d be Ford years - Ford.

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah. Ford.

Interviewer:

Yes. And then he moved on. He was in the -

BG A. Jordan:

Actually -

Interviewer:

Carter Cabinet as well, but he -

BG A. Jordan:

Actually, he got that job while he was still very much in the Nixon years; it was in the Nixon years.

Interviewer:

I see. Mm-hmm.

BG A. Jordan:

And he actually got fired by Ford. Schlesinger, who was again an extraordinarily brilliant man, a little bit warmer human being than Henry, just as bright. An economist by training, but very broad base of knowledge in politics and economics and so on. Schlesinger was basically a strategist. Heâ€™d headed a strategy division at Rand before he came into government. As an economist heâ€™d come in as a deputy director of the Office of Management and Budget, I think; at that time it was called Bureau of the Budget. And he had an economistâ€™s perspective in the sense that he was always focused on whether you had the resources necessary to do the job.

And if not, what could you do with the resources you had? Which was a bit of a novel perspective in American government.

Interviewer:

So what did you do for him? What was your responsibility?

BG A. Jordan:

My responsibility was to head his Office of International Security Affairs, which was an office organized parallel to the State Department, so that I had people that were dealing with Middle Eastern affairs, that worked with, knew the Middle Eastern experts at State. Or the people in arms control that knew the people in State in the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, etc., etc. So we had a parallel organization to State and ACDA, and were able to shape our defense policies in a way that they were supportive of and parallel to the programs at State, the Treasury, and ACDA.

Interviewer:

There was a notorious competition between State and Defense even back then, right?

BG A. Jordan:

Yes. Itâ€™s certainly true.

Interviewer:

So you mustâ€™ve been resented a little bit, I think, tapping into their territory, or crossing over their turf.

BG A. Jordan:

Well, if you did it in a collegial fashion, you could get along, and I got along very well with the people at State.

Interviewer:

What was Schlesinger fired over?

BG A. Jordan:

Wellâ€¦you get different versions. Jimâ€™s version is that it was essentially over budget, and he clearly was trying to protect the Armyâ€™s 10 Division structure. He was - he and Creighton Abrams had worked out - Abrams was at that time the Secretary of Defense.



Interviewer:

Or Abrams wouldâ€™ve been Chief of Staff, you mean.

BG A. Jordan:

Chief of Staff, yeah. Iâ€™m sorry, yeah, Chief of Staff. He was clearly in -

Interviewer:

But Kissinger was at State, right?

BG A. Jordan:

Yes.

Interviewer:

Yeah.

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah. Schlesinger was clearly very much in opposition to the budget cuts, and that may have been the primary source. Thereâ€™s also a view that Ford felt that Schlesinger had dissed him. That he looked down on him, and this could well be, because Schlesinger did not suffer fools easily. He was extraordinarily bright himself, which you could not say about Ford, and so he may have dissed him. But thereâ€™s also - and I tend to put some weight on this one - you can talk about being dissed, but - Schlesinger always went around the office with his shirttail half out and his tie askew. And Scowcroft, too - was at this point National Security Advisor - felt that maybe that was what tipped Ford over.

[Laughs] Schlesinger felt that this was not appropriate for the Secretary of Defense to come in with his tie askew and his shirttail out.

Interviewer:

You mean Scowcroft and Ford felt that about Schlesinger, youâ€™re saying.

BG A. Jordan:

Ford did, yeah.

Interviewer:

Yeah, yeah. And he was a little too casual for their taste, in other words.

BG A. Jordan:

Yes. Yeah.

Interviewer:

Yeah. It sounds like it maybe was a combination of things.

BG A. Jordan:

I suspect.

Interviewer:

Then when he left, he does come back in the Carter Administration, I think -

BG A. Jordan:

Yes.

Interviewer:

As Secretary of Energy.

BG A. Jordan:

Yes, thatâ€™s correct.

Interviewer:

I think thatâ€™s why I was asking that. Yeah.

BG A. Jordan:

Thatâ€™s correct, yes.

Interviewer:

Did you leave when he left at Defense?

BG A. Jordan:

No, I stayed on for Rumsfeld for about -

Interviewer:

Well, thereâ€™s another name, then, yeah.

BG A. Jordan:

Five or six months. Rumsfeld, in contrast to Schlesinger, was not nearly as bright, and certainly was not nearly as well-grounded in defense issues, although he had been our

ambassador to NATO. He had some background. But he was -

Interviewer:

He was a former congressman.

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

He was a politician, essentially, yeah.

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah, he was a politician, essentially. He was - had a short attention span. He did not want to entertain complex ideas. I found him so thoroughly obnoxious a boss - the only obnoxious boss I ever had, really - that I was going to quit, and look for a position in the think tank world or academe, when the Deputy Secretary of Defense, who was a friend-admirer, said, "Well, let me talk to Henry," who was at this point Secretary of State. And Kissinger had an Under Secretary of State position coming open, so I went over and worked for Kissinger the rest of the administration.

Interviewer:

Probably resented by Rumsfeld for doing that, I'm imagining.

BG A. Jordan:

Perhaps. I'm not sure. [Laughs] Rumsfeld was so full of himself he may not have even noticed. I'm not sure.

Interviewer:

Let's do a little comparison: Rumsfeld as you knew him as the youngest Secretary of Defense, and then I assume you watched him from afar, but -

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

Watch him as the oldest Secretary of Defense engage in two very different but very critical periods of American defense history.

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah. Well -

Interviewer:

What was your sense of him at that time?

BG A. Jordan:

When he was Secretary of Defense the second time, I was on the president's Intelligence Oversight Board, and so we in effect checked on and interviewed the SecDef regularly in that capacity, so I got to see him a little, and was of course able to talk to the people who were continuing to work there, and sort of stayed abreast. And I had the impression that he was definitely a wiser Secretary of Defense the second time around, but he still was arrogant and unwilling to entertain other ideas, open mind.

Interviewer:

Well he was "the critique on him for that second stint was filled with that, right?"

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah. Yeah.

Interviewer:

And so what would your assessment be of his conduct and the leadership of the war in Iraq?

BG A. Jordan:

Well, I think he served the country badly. This tendency that he had not to listen to other people, having his own ideas and forcing them down his subordinates' throats, resulted for instance in our going in under-strength. Which was an absolutely crucial mistake. So many of the problems that flowed therefrom, including the loss of lives, and a very much more difficult task in establishing a viable Iraq, etc., can be attributed to his unwillingness to follow the recommendations of the Chief of Staff of the Army and -

Interviewer:

This would be Eric Shinseki, right?

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

Yeah.

BG A. Jordan:

So - and Shinseki, because he was not in agreement with Rumsfeld, was not renewed, which was the pattern.

Interviewer:

He tended to want to silence his critics.

BG A. Jordan:

He wanted yes men.

Interviewer:

Yep, mm-hmm.

BG A. Jordan:

And if he didn't get yes men, he wanted to get rid of them. No, I had no regard for the man, and I think that the culmination of his service there in Iraq is indicative of the kind of steward he was.

Interviewer:

It's interesting. You can see in someone, or you've seen clearly in someone in a position of such responsibility the costs of coming in with the wrong set of skills, right?

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

And I'm curious what you would, since you watched Secretary Kissinger, Secretary Schlesinger, Secretary Rumsfeld, I'm sure half a dozen others we haven't gotten to yet - what are the strengths of a successful manager, in a sense?

BG A. Jordan:

Well, you have to be, first of all, a leader, not just a manager. You've got to have people who want to follow you, and are prepared to give you their best advice, and to pursue your objectives. And unless you've inspired trust in your relationship, you don't get that kind of an organization. And people like Rumsfeld simply couldn't, and it showed up.

Interviewer:

Who did you think, who did you see in all your career that did that well?

BG A. Jordan:

I think Schlesinger, best of all, yeah. Schlesinger listened to his Assistant Secretaries, and particularly his Assistant Secretaries of Defense, and particularly his Chief of Army, Navy, Air Force, military people. And was prepared to accept and alter course, change his mind, if the course of action he was on didn't seem to make sense in light of what the experts and people with responsibilities were telling him.

Interviewer:

So he used his people -

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

To deliver knowledge to him that he didn't have the arrogance to think that he -

BG A. Jordan:

Knew it all.

Interviewer:

Possessed to begin with.

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah. Yeah. He was better at that than Kissinger, perhaps. Certainly far better than

Rumsfeld. Who was he? Who was the Secretary of Defense?

Interviewer:

When? When are you speaking of?

BG A. Jordan:

Ford Company executive -

Interviewer:

Oh - McNamara.

BG A. Jordan:

McNamara, McNamara. Better than McNamara.

Interviewer:

You knew McNamara also.

BG A. Jordan:

Yes. I had opportunity.

Interviewer:

Well, tell me about him. Tell me about his reign as Secretary of Defense.

BG A. Jordan:

I had the opportunity to work with him a bit, because I was borrowed from my professorship to come down to run the Near East South Asia Region in the Office of the Secretary for International Security Affairs.

Interviewer:

When was this?

BG A. Jordan:

When was this? Phew!

Interviewer:

This had to be the heart of the Vietnam War.

BG A. Jordan:

Yes, it was. It was the heart of the Vietnam War.

Interviewer:

So you have been in an incredible place -

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah. Yeah.

Interviewer:

To witness history here, now. So there's two things I want to go on, both of them relating to Vietnam. One would be your experience with McNamara, and the other is you were at State when Saigon fell, it sounds to me.

BG A. Jordan:

Yes. Yeah.

Interviewer:

All right, let's do them one at a time. You're in the Office of the Secretary of Defense during the most troubled war - you could even argue the most troubled war in American history. What was that like?

BG A. Jordan:

Well! We had a disjunction - it was partly probably inevitable, between the perspective of the people in the field and the people in Washington. But it was exacerbated by the people in Washington's unwillingness to accept unwelcome news from the field. Initially, that problem didn't exist, because Westmoreland served up data that the people in Washington wanted to hear.

Interviewer:

He cooked the books, essentially, right?

BG A. Jordan:

Well, I perhaps wouldn't use that cool a phrase, but he did not paint the full picture.

Interviewer:

Wanting to be seen, though, as a success.

BG A. Jordan:

Yes.

Interviewer:

Wanting to endorse the policy that he was actually executing.

BG A. Jordan:

Exactly, yeah. Exactly, yeah. And the consequence -

Interviewer:

Where you were, could you see this happening?

BG A. Jordan:

Yes. Oh yes.

Interviewer:

And - no, I mean were you aware that you weren't getting the full picture?

BG A. Jordan:

Yes.

Interviewer:

And you were in a position to speak to McNamara and say you weren't getting the full picture.

BG A. Jordan:

Well -

Interviewer:

Now, I know in retrospect, McNamara says he knew he wasn't getting the full picture, but -

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

At the time - well, let's have you unravel it. I feel like I'm going at this in different directions here.

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah. My experience in Vietnam goes clear back to the mid-1950s, when I first visited there. And then I went almost -

Interviewer:

You visited there as what, though? What were you doing in Vietnam in the mid-50s?

You were an advisor?

BG A. Jordan:

No, I was traveling back from my appointment, my service -

Interviewer:

In Korea.

BG A. Jordan:

In Korea -

Interviewer:

Okay, so -

BG A. Jordan:

To be a professor, in 1955.

Interviewer:

But you passed through Vietnam.

BG A. Jordan:

I passed through Vietnam, and -

Interviewer:

To do what? What were you doing there?

BG A. Jordan:

I was trying to find out what the situation was in Vietnam. And then I subsequently, because I thought there was a fair prospect that American military might be engaged there - remember, this is before there were any American troops there.

Interviewer:

Well, sure. This wouldâ€™ve been -

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

After the French were out, but we werenâ€™t in there yet, right?

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah. Yeah. We had a very small joint mission with the French, as a matter of fact, aid mission. Because I thought that there was a substantial prospect we would be engaged there, then I, as a professor, went back there almost every year and spent a week or two, and talked to my classmates and my students who were out there.

Interviewer:

You were very prescient.

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

You understood that that was going to be a tender spot, let me put it that way.

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah. Yeah, I did. And thenâ€™letâ€™s seeâ€™

Interviewer:

Let me ask you, just to stop you for a moment - when you were in Vietnam in those years, how high a level of surveillance were you able to do? I mean did you - I meanâ€™

BG A. Jordan:

Because I was a professor -

Interviewer:

Yeah. Yeah.

BG A. Jordan:

I could get in -

Interviewer:

But youâ€™re a professor from West Point. I mean -

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah. I could get in and talk to Westmoreland, and all the senior people.

Interviewer:

But I mean back in the â€™50s, first of all. I mean when you go back to the â€™50s, were you aware of the turbulence?

BG A. Jordan:

Oh yes.

Interviewer:

That was about to erupt even more deeply than it had under the French?

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah. Yeah. Well, the Vietcong, the South Korean Communists, were in the â€™50s, mid-â€™50s and later â€™50s, systematically going in and assassinating the village leaders. It was clearly engaged in an insurgency or pre-insurgency kind of warfare. And Iâ€™d been studying the British experience in Malaysia, and I was giving lectures on counterinsurgency long before it became the vogue, including the Counterinsurgency School at Fort Bragg and so on, the Military Assistance Institute that was set up down near Washington, and so on, so that I was hyper-conscious of what was going on in South Vietnam.

And I spent enough time there that I jeeped, helicoptered, and rode boats in all six military regions, so that I knew not only the situation on the ground there, but many of the leaders.

Interviewer:

But did you think at the time - I mean â€™cause at the time we were not prepared, I think, to engage in counterinsurgency operations, right? We didnâ€™t have experience.

BG A. Jordan:

We didnâ€™t have the experience -

Interviewer:

Or the know-how.

BG A. Jordan:

And we had commanders out there who thought this was nonsense, that this would be a Korean War-type of experience, and we should be prepared to fend off the North Koreans - I mean the North Vietnamese when they came over the line the same way we had handled the North Koreans when -

Interviewer:

But they saw it as a more conventional war -

BG A. Jordan:

They came over the line. Yeah, conventional war, exactly.

Interviewer:

-Didn't understand the role of the Vietcong, didn't understand the notion of insurgency.

BG A. Jordan:

Exactly, yeah. General Williams, "Hanging Sam" Williams, I had terrible disagreements with Williams, who could not get his mind around the idea that he faced a insurgency. He was deploying and organizing for a conventional defense.

Interviewer:

Now, is that just because we want to fight in the classic historical term "the last war"? Or is it also this was the kind of war that we just didn't assume we would ever have to fight?

BG A. Jordan:

I think mostly the latter. We had had some experience -

Interviewer:

Your shoes are making a lot of noise. I'm going to move your!

BG A. Jordan:

We had had some experience, of course, in the Philippines -

Interviewer:

Yes.

BG A. Jordan:

At the turn of the century, the so-called Philippine Insurrection. But apart from that and the Indian wars we had zero background, yeah.

Interviewer:

Right. But there were insurgent wars going on during that time in Algeria. You had -

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

Vietnam, with the French, was an insurgent war of its own.

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

So it was obviously present in the world global conversation, but it was not yet something we thought of as part of our mission, right?

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah. Well, the Chinese were trying to sponsor insurgencies throughout Asia, particularly in Southeast Asia, and they had in fact made real inroads in both Indonesia and Malaysia. But -

Interviewer:

But when you set "so when you, going out from West Point, coming back, and eventually joining up with the McNamara Defense Department, you are critical to describing what kind of new kind of war, as Kennedy called it, I think, at one point, we were actually going to have to engage in here, right?

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah. Well, Kennedy did understand that we were going to be confronting insurgencies, and the Kennedy Administration â€” and I think this was as much Bobby as Jack â€” instructed the military, or at least the Army, at every military school to institute counterinsurgency instruction, which I was in charge of doing here at West Point.

Interviewer:

Really. Letâ€™s talk about that for a bit, then. Number one, was there resistance here to doing that?

BG A. Jordan:

No. No.

Interviewer:

There wasnâ€™t. They agreed.

BG A. Jordan:

Because we incorporated it into our international politics course.

Interviewer:

I see. So you taught it not as a tactical discipline, but as historical -

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

Study.

BG A. Jordan:

Well, as strategic study, yeah.

Interviewer:

As a strategic study.

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

But the tactical was not taught.

BG A. Jordan:

Well, Iâ€™m not sure what the TAC Department was doing at that point, but I sort of doubt it. I donâ€™t know.

Interviewer:

And -

BG A. Jordan:

I probably knew at the time, but Iâ€™ve forgotten.

BG A. Jordan:

Sure. Sure. But what did we know, then, and what were we blindsided by? Let me put it that way.

BG A. Jordan:

Well, we knew that the British had successfully waged counterinsurgency warfare in Malaysia, and we knew that the Dutch had not successfully waged counterinsurgency in Indonesia. So we had some -

Interviewer:

Two sort of classic studies to work from.

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah. Yeah. Two studies.

Interviewer:

And what were the lessons of each? What were the positive lessons of the Malaysia experience? What were the negative lessons of the Indonesia experience?

BG A. Jordan:

Well, the main positive lesson I think out of Malaysia was the absolute necessity of protecting the population. That the war would be won in the minds of the population, which could only be done if you could secure them.

Interviewer:



Which carries right up to Afghanistan today, right?

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah, right. Yeah, that's the classic lesson.

Interviewer:

And the Dutch had not done that.

BG A. Jordan:

No. No. No. Westmoreland, based on his success in World War II and Korea, was in effect adopting a mode of warfare that played right into the hands of the insurgents, because he was doing search and destroy instead of search and protect and build. Search, protect, and build. The population protection there is the crucial thing.

And that's what Abrams, when he came in to replace Westmoreland, did, by vastly strengthening, upgrading the militias that were protecting the villages, cities.

Interviewer:

What is your attitude about this actually increasingly pointed argument among historians that Westmoreland failed, Abrams was succeeding, and lost the political support that would have won in Vietnam?

BG A. Jordan:

I think that's essentially true. I think that's essentially true. There are a lot of nuances in there, but I think that's the essence of it, yeah.

Interviewer:

Do you think that if Abrams had arrived earlier â€”

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

We would've had a better experience in Vietnam?

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah. In fact, when I heard that Westmoreland was being considered to replace Paul Harkins as a commander out there â€” and I knew them both, because Harkins had been commandant here and Westmoreland had been superintendent while I was a professor hereâ€” I knew them both. I went to Cy Vance, who was a friend â€” I had helped bail him out on an important venture. I went to Cy and said, â€œI understand you're considering Westmoreland. Please don't send him there, because he will not fight a counterinsurgency war. Send General Abrams there.â€ He said, â€œIt's too late. It's been decided. West's going.â€ [Laughs]

Interviewer:

So even way back then, they had already assumed their posture as one fighting a conventional war â€” search and destroy â€” and the other one fighting a counterinsurgency operation. And Abrams had a sense from â€” and Abrams was a World War II general, too, so it wasn't like he was â€”

BG A. Jordan:

No, no.

Interviewer:

Just a counterinsurgency specialist.

BG A. Jordan:

No, no, but he was open to learning and listening. That was the difference.

Interviewer:

Is it intellect? Was he just smarter than Westmoreland? Or was he just -

BG A. Jordan:

Just a different personality.

Interviewer:

Not the traditionalist that Westmoreland was.

BG A. Jordan:

That's right, yeah.

Interviewer:

Alright, let's come back to your role in the middle of all of this. You are

BG A. Jordan:

I'm a professor, and so I can float around, and talk to the Secretary of the Army, or the Commander in Chief, or what have you. It's an absolutely wonderful [laughs] mantle.

Interviewer:

You don't have to take responsibility for anything.

BG A. Jordan:

That's right.

Interviewer:

You can just sort of wander in and give advice.

BG A. Jordan:

That's right.

Interviewer:

But you are at Defense during the McNamara years. First of all, what kind of a man was Robert McNamara?

BG A. Jordan:

He was an extraordinarily decisive man, very much a numbers man. He wanted to be able to quantify things, and I think that drive for quantification tended to lead the Army into some grievous mistakes in Vietnam. You know, we judged our success by body count, because body count was something you could tell McNamara. [Laughs] That's what he wanted, so "body count, rifles captured, and so on. He was very much a numbers man. Limited attention span. Extraordinarily bright, and you really had to have your ducks in a line if you went in to see McNamara.

Impatient, driving, Driving. Difficult boss. Difficult boss.

Interviewer:

How much "you talked before about Washington not having the full picture of what was going on in Vietnam.

BG A. Jordan:

Mm-hmm.

Interviewer:

And you also said that in your role "and I'm still not quite sure what your role was during this time "but you sensed that there was a dissonance between what you were hearing in these reports, for instance "

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

And what was really going on.

BG A. Jordan:

Oh yeah.

Interviewer:

But did McNamara "did McNamara have the information in front of him that he could've come to those conclusions and just resisted? Did he hide it from Johnson because he didn't want to give bad news to him, either? Or did he fully believe that he was prosecuting the war in the most effective way possible?

BG A. Jordan:

I think the latter. I think the latter.

Interviewer:

He believed it.

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah. I think the latter.

Interviewer:

Because he measured by body counts, and he figured if the numbers were coming in, the numbers had to be the truth.

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah. And that the North Vietnamese couldn't sustain these kinds of casualties for long.

Interviewer:

What did he not understand, do you think?

BG A. Jordan:

Well, he didn't understand for one thing, the North Vietnamese had a supply route down through Laos that they could send down not tens of thousands but hundreds of thousands of men who were prepared to do it.

Interviewer:

How could he not know that? That's a simple piece of geography and intelligence, right?

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer:

How could he not know that?

BG A. Jordan:

Well, for one thing, our information on that was ambiguous. It was not perfectly clear-cut. Secondly, even if he had understood the importance of that pipeline, men and supplies, he was unwilling to risk a confrontation with China, which was supplying the materiel for this. And I think also there was a sense that they could not sustain the level of casualties that we were inflicting. He didn't understand how deep and driven the North Vietnamese drive to take over the South was.

To unify the country under their control.

Interviewer:

Where did he come down, do you think, on the Westmoreland-Abrams divide that you just described to me earlier? Was he pleased with the choice of Westmoreland, or do you think he thought he made a mistake?

BG A. Jordan:

I don't know. I don't know. I don't know.

Interviewer:

Do you think that Abrams had his ear in order to try to push the idea that we needed to engage in a counterinsurgency operation earlier?

BG A. Jordan:

Well, obviously what we were doing was not working. It was not working, and so McNamara was no fool, by any means. He was prepared to change tack and change leadership to find something that worked.

Interviewer:

What was your role there? What were you doing during that time, during the time of the Vietnam War, then?

BG A. Jordan:

I was professor.

Interviewer:

Right, but you were called in as an advisor to the department?

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah. Yeah. I was called in to be a member of a small group that DARPA, Defense Advanced Research Project Agency, put together to analyze the war in Vietnam, what was needed. How do we get from here to there sort of thing. And I was also asked by DARPA to take a small team to Vietnam to look at the hamlet security system, how we were doing at protecting the villages in Vietnam.

In other words, to assess the militia program. The Hamlet Evaluation System, it's called - HES. And I took such a team - Donald Ogilvie, who was my deputy here. It was probably dumb to take Don. Had the two of us gotten shot, I don't know who would have led the department. But I had such high -

Interviewer:

Regard for him.

BG A. Jordan:

Regard for Ogilvie that I wanted Ogilvie to do that. And our executive officer, Major Simpson, John Simpson, and â€“

Interviewer:

Whatâ€™d you see when you got there?

BG A. Jordan:

Hmm?

Interviewer:

What did you see when you got there? What was the Hamlet Security System? How effective was it?

BG A. Jordan:

Wellâ€¦

Interviewer:

And what year are we talking about here, again, roughly? Where sort of â€“ is this â€˜68, â€˜69?

BG A. Jordan:

Well, weâ€™re right at the tail end of the â€™60s, or maybe â€™70, right in that period, anyway, yeah.

Interviewer:

Abrams had already assumed leadership â€“ or you donâ€™t remember.

BG A. Jordan:

I donâ€™t remember, but I donâ€™t think so. Iâ€™m not sure.

Interviewer:

But it sounds like thereâ€™d already been a shift in the policy towards holding, if the hamlet -

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

Security operations were being studied.

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Interviewer:

Youâ€™re beyond the search and destroy â€“

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah. Yeah, I think thatâ€™s true. But Iâ€™m shaky on my timing there. It was clear that we needed to have better training, better equipment, and a more focused advisory effort. See, we had advisors at the provincial level, and on down to the district level, American advisors. And they were receiving training, but we were not really creaming off the best of the Army officer corps for those jobs, and we needed the best, because they were tough, dangerous jobs.

Interviewer:

You mentioned before that you knew Cy Vance, and you got him out of a mess at some point.

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

Are you referring to the hostage rescue mission in -

Interviewer:

No. No. No, Iâ€™m referring to the fact that there was a major general down in Texas who â€“ or he was from Texas â€“ who was commanding in Germany a â€“ I think he called it the Pro Blue Troop Indoctrination Program, which was a virulently anti-Soviet program that

created some alarmist stories in Stars and Stripes, and got congressional people involved, and so on. And McNamara decided that he needed to appoint a commission to get on top of this. And he put it in the charge of his general counsel. At that time, Cy was the general counsel to the Department of Defense.

And he borrowed me from West Point to come down and form a staff, and service this committee, and produce a useful report on what to do about this program. And the individual that was chosen — and I'm not entirely sure who chose him or what advice they had — but anyway, this fellow was to the right of the general. And the consequence was that this distinguished committee was at six and sevens, because the chairman was trying to pull them into a strongly right-wing kind of anti-Soviet exercise that the rest of the Committee didn't want to do.

And it was likely to just completely fold. And so I told Cy that I thought we were in deep, deep trouble, and that I thought I could get a sort of little rump subcommittee out of this group that could produce a report that would be useful. And he told me, "Go ahead," which I did, and it was such a good little report — I know because I wrote most of it myself [laughs] — that the rest of the committee wanted to join. And so Bendetson, who was the chairman of the committee, had no option but to endorse it himself. And so it came in as a unified position.

Interviewer:

You're a brilliant politician yourself, see.

BG A. Jordan:

[Laughs] Well, in this case, I was a successful politician, let's put it that way. And I earned Cy's undying friendship for salvaging that operation.

Interviewer:

So after the — let's bring it back up to the Ford Administration.

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

And you said you were there for the fall of Saigon. You were in the State Department.

BG A. Jordan:

Well, I'm not completely sure of my timing here, because I was with the Ford administration the last six months.

Interviewer:

Of the presidency, of his administration.

BG A. Jordan:

Of Ford's presidency.

Interviewer:

Well, let's see — '70 — fall of Saigon is in '75 — let me think of what month. I want to say May; do I have that right? And so you would've been — There'd have been another year, you hadn't got to the election yet. So you probably had not arrived at State then yet. You were probably still in Defense, I'm guessing, then, during the collapse of Saigon. But you have something — you don't recall what it was like to be in Washington during the collapse of Saigon, and the failure of the Vietnam War, the sort of capstone to that.

BG A. Jordan:

Well, it was a great deal of recrimination ricocheting around Washington about who sold out Saigon, you know. A great deal of unhappiness about the first war we'd ever lost sort of thing. The casualty list was horrendous. And no one on the political side came out looking good, and the military was beside itself, feeling that it had not received appropriate support. That the war was essentially won when the politicians pulled the rug out from under us.

Interviewer:

When Congress stopped the funding.

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah, stopped the funding. Before that, they had with â€“ you see, when we withdrew our ground troops, we promised the South Vietnamese that weâ€™d continue to provide air cover. And in the major North Vietnamese so-called Easter Offensive, the Army of Vietnam, ARVN, had fought very effectively with American air support, and tossed back that major offensive from the North. And then the bloody Congress stated that there would be no more American Air Force support. And then they cut off the supplies. I went in and visited some of those units. South Vietnamese units were down to one grenade per man, you know? Just criminal, what we did Terrible betrayal of an ally, after all that sacrifice.

Interviewer:

After the Ford years, where did you go next?

BG A. Jordan:

I was offered a position to be the executive director of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, CSIS. Itâ€™s a major Washington think tank â€“

Interviewer:

Sure. SAIS, known as SAIS.

BG A. Jordan:

Which then I subsequently became president of. Thatâ€™s CSIS, not CIS.

Interviewer:

Oh, not SAIS â€“ Iâ€™m sorry.

BG A. Jordan:

SAIS is the School of Advanced International Studies â€“

Interviewer:

Right, right.

BG A. Jordan:

At Johns Hopkins, yeah. And CSIS, which I then subsequently became president of, was already an important research and policy institute, but it was fairly narrowly focused on defense issues, fairly small, and fairly right-wing, which I broadened it so it was acceptable on both sides of the aisle.

Interviewer:

Was Paul Nitze there at the same time?

BG A. Jordan:

No. No, Nitzeâ€™s connections were at SAIS.

Interviewer:

At SAIS, okay.

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah. Yeah. No.

Interviewer:

Who were some of the big scholars working there then with you?

BG A. Jordan:

Well, subsequently we got Schlesinger, Kissinger, Brzezinski, and Harold Brown, all four of them there as counselors, and they werenâ€™t just names. They were participants. Kissinger had an office in New York subsequently; he retained his office with us, but he spent most of his time in New York. But Schlesinger and Brzezinski were there regularly, participating in our program. Brown kept his headquarters on the West Coast, but he was in frequently also. They were all active.

Interviewer:

Sure. And this was - so this carried on post his Carter administration years, it sounds like.

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

So you ran this for quite some time.

BG A. Jordan:

Yes. Yeah. And thenâ€¦ And then I went out and headed a subsidiary that I had, in effect,

acquired in Honolulu called the Pacific Forum. Pacific Forum of CSIS for another, what, four and a half years after that, 'til I finally got retired in my 70s.

Interviewer:

So out of this long, distinguished career, what are you proudest of?

BG A. Jordan:

Hard to tell. I have always believed that if you wanted to have a significant, lasting impact, you should build institutions, which I've tried to do, here and at CSIS, and at the Pacific Forum. All of those. Now I'm engaged in building an institution which is about three years old called the Wheatley Institution at Brigham Young University, where I've initiated and developed and supervising an international affairs program.

Interviewer:

Again, a kind of think tank for international studies.

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

Well, I thank you very much. You've had a very distinguished career, and I appreciate your coming and talking to us about it tonight. Yeah.

BG A. Jordan:

My pleasure. My pleasure. Thank you. I hope that in all of that drivel, you can edit out something that's useful. [Laughs]

Interviewer:

There's plenty. Thank you again.

BG A. Jordan:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

Appreciate it.

BG A. Jordan:

Not at all.