

Dr. Gordon M. Shrum  
July 2, 1973

Page 1

Interview \_\_\_\_, Tape 1, Track 1.

Mr. Specht: Dr. Shrum, can you tell me where you were born?

Dr. Shrum: I was born in Smithville, Ontario. That's down the Niagara Penninsula about twenty-five or thirty miles from Niagara Falls.

Mr. Specht: What year was that?

Dr. Shrum: 1896.

Mr. Specht: What was your father's occupation?

Dr. Shrum: Well, he was originally a farmer and then after I passed the entrance when I was eleven years of age and went to high school, we moved off the farm and went to the little village of Smithville. He had a coal business there and a bakery.

Mr. Specht: Was your father born in Canada?

Dr. Shrum: Yes.

Mr. Specht: How long has your family been here?

Dr. Shrum: My father was born in Canada and his father came to Canada from Alsace-Lorraine when, I believe, he was nine years of age. My grandmother on my father's side, she was a Sullivan and came from Cork in Ireland when she was a young girl. Then on my mother's side, my mother was a Merritt. Merritts were not really United Empire Loyalists, they never claimed they were, but I guess they had about as much right as anybody else. They were living in New York State and they moved up into the Niagara Penninsula. I'm related to Hamilton Merritt who built the Welland Canal and Cecil Merritt of B. C.

who lives here in Vancouver is a distant cousin of mine. The Merritts are a very old family down there. They came originally from England, but I don't know how far back. They were living in New York State and moved up a little later than the United Empire Loyalists....a matter of six months or something afterwards. They came into Ontario, the Niagara Peninsula. My great-grandfather came out with three or four boys and they were really in the lumber business because in that area in Ontario there, they were busy clearing the farms so they had a sawmill. He was a very small operator.

Mr. Specht: This was back in the early part of the nineteenth century then....when they were in lumbering...?

Dr. Shrum: Yes, I think my father was born in 1867. That's when my father was born so that...my grandfather was nine years of age when he came out and they settled in that area so it must have been thirty years before that.....1840 or something like that.

Mr. Specht: Is Shrum an Alsation name?

Dr. Shrum: It's a German name. It's not correctly spelled, I don't think. It should be S-C-H-R-U-M or S-C-H-R-U-M-N or S-C-H-R-U-M-M. Some of my relatives do have this more sophisticated spelling but my immediate ancestors just spelled it S-H-R-U-M. I've always said there are two reasons for that... either they couldn't spell very well or they were very anxious to try to Anglicise their name and get away from any German connections. So they dropped off the 'C'. They thought they were making it more English. I think they made it more like the Chinese but they didn't know that.

Mr. Specht: What about Merritt?

Dr. Schrum: That's a very old English name, I think. There are a great number of Merritts down in the Niagara Penninsula. My daughter went over to Cork to see if she could trace my grandmother's family over in Ireland but she found about half the people there were named Sullivan or O'Sullivan. There wasn't much hope. My grandmother's name was Sullivan. So I'm German and Irish and English. And the other parent, Thelker, they were English too. That's where I get my height. They're all tall people, the Thelkers. The Merritts were tall and the Thelkers were all very tall but I don't know very much else about them....where they came from.

Mr. Specht: Did you have brothers or sisters?

Dr. Shrum: Yes, I had two brothers and two sisters. Well, I had, I suppose, three sisters. One sister was older than I was but she passed away when she was just three or four years of age.

Mr. Specht: Did you go to school in Smithville? Is that where you spent your childhood?

Dr. Shrum: Oh yes I went to school at Smithville. I went out in the country to a one room school first then when I passed the entrance into high school I was eleven years of age and we moved into the town that fall and I went to high school there. Then my parents thought I was too young to go to university so I spent about five years in this high school. I could have gone through in three or four years. I could have gone through in three years, really.

Mr. Specht: You were quite precocious then?

Dr. Shrum: I was compared with the other people in the area but, (chuckles) when I passed the entrance into high school there were only two of us in the class and the other one failed so, (chuckles) competition wasn't very keen. Then when I was in high school and my parents didn't want me to go on to university when I was fourteen or fifteen years of age....

Mr. Specht: Is that when you finished grade twelve?

Dr. Shrum: That would be grade eleven. So, I kind of learned poor work habits there. I did very little work. That was grade twelve....then for grade thirteen I went to Hamilton Collegiate. They didn't have grade thirteen in this country high school in Smithville. There were only three teachers so I went to Hamilton Collegiate. There I was in the same room with Mike Pearson. He had been there before in his Junior Matric. We called it Senior Matric then or Honors Matric. You have to do this to get into an Honors course in University. You had to have something beyond Junior Matric.

Mr. Specht: Did you know Mike Pearson?

Dr. Shrum: Oh, I knew him very well because as I say, he was in the same room with me all the year I went to Hamilton Collegiate and then we both went down to Victoria College and I lived in Burwash Hall and so did he. This was a residence at Victoria College, one of the new residences at the university.

Mr. Specht: Where was Victoria College?

Dr. Shrum: It's part of the University of Toronto. The University of Toronto is a federation of colleges. There was

Victoria College which was a Methodist College and St. Michael's College which was Catholic. Trinity was the Anglican and then there was a Non-Denominational University College which was really part of the University. It's a curious federation at the University of Toronto because although I was enrolled at Victoria College, all the Mathematics and Science subjects are University subjects. You took those at the University. So at the college I merely took languages and English. Even History , I took at the University of Toronto rather than at the college. Yes, History was a University subject rather than a college subject. I don't know why it was. To explain the federation system at the University of Toronto would take more than our two hour sessions if I were capable of doing it. I don't understand it well enough even though I spent about eight years at the University of Toronto.

Mr. Specht: Why did your parents oppose your going to university?

Dr. Shrum: They thought I was too young. They wanted me to go to University, but they didn't want me to go at fifteen.

Mr. Specht: Were you quite a close family?

Dr. Shrum: I think so. I've just been back east and I visit. I have two sisters and a brother living there now and I visited some of the other relatives there.

Mr. Specht: What year did you enroll at the University of Toronto?

Dr. Shrum: 1913.....sixty years ago!

Mr. Specht: You were there two years then before the war broke out?

Dr. Shrum: Well no, the war broke out before I went back for my second year. You see I was there 1913-1914. Then in the fall of 1914 the war broke out when I went back in my second year.

Mr. Specht: Did you know what you wanted to study at the time, 1913? Did you know what you wanted to be?

Dr. Shrum: I came from a very small village. There was only one university graduate in the village that I knew, he was a surveyor. He had gone through in civil engineering at the University of Toronto, but he was out west surveying. That was in the days when there was so much surveying to be done on the prairies, you know, setting up the provinces and the prairie roads and things.....so I really never had a chance to talk to him about going to university. I wanted to be sure and get my money's worth so I took mathematics and physics. The subjects were all about the same as far as I was concerned but here was one where I sort of had (chuckles) two strings to my bow. Then when I got down there I found that this was a normal course for people who wanted to specialize in physics and the professor of physics was a far more dominating personality than the professor of mathematics so he persuaded me very quickly to take all the physics options.

Mr. Specht: What was his name?

Dr. Shrum: He became Sir John McLennan, J. C. McLennan. He was a very great man in many ways. Of course, in my estimation most of the professors were great men and they were characters. I think they were great men too. The professor of English

I had, Alexander, he was Head of the Department. He said, "I never teach freshmen but this year I just wanted to take a <sup>class</sup> freshman / to see what kind of material was coming in to the department." So I was fortunate. He was an author and a very fine lecturer. My professor of mathematics and all the senior people they were all extremely able and had personality and so forth. McLennan was very unusual. Anybody from the University of Toronto who ever knew him would say that as far as personality is concerned, he was superior to any of the other people, I think.

Mr. Specht: Do you think that your admiration for these men influenced you to seek a university career yourself?

Dr. Shrum: Oh well, I guess so because he was a very dominating personality and I had thought I was going to university to qualify as a high school teacher. I thought that was a fairly good job and then of course the war came along and interrupted. I left almost at the end of my third year. I left April the first, 1916. I didn't go in '14.

Mr. Specht: When did you enlist in the services?

Dr. Shrum: April 1, 1916.

Mr. Specht: That's when you enlisted?

Dr. Shrum: That's when I enlisted. Mind you in my second year we started C.O.T.C. training right in the fall at Victoria College. Mike Pearson and I were in the same unit. Vincent Massey was our Company Commander. C.O.T.C. was made up of several companies, medicals

and then Victoria College got a company, you see and Vincent Massey was the Captain. He was the Dean of Residence as well. Nearly everybody enrolled in teh C.O.T.C. could qualify as an officer and I qualified the first year.

Mr. Specht: If you went over in April 1916, you were in C.O.T.C. therefore for.....

Dr. Shrum: Two years.

Mr. Specht: Two years?

Dr. Shrum: Yes, I enrolled in the fall of 1914 and then I qualified in the spring of 1915 as a Lieutenant. Then in the fall of 1915 I enrolled to qualify as a Captain in the C.O.T.C. but I never completed that qualification because I enlisted the first of April before I had completed the work.

Mr. Specht: Why did you enlist before you had completed it?

Dr. Shrum: It's not easy to describe that. As a matter of fact I had enrolled in December 1915. It was very difficult to study. People were leaving from classes and there was a lot of war excitement.....different from World War II because Canada had only experienced the South African War up 'til then and that wasn't a whole hearted effort but they realized by 1915 that this was an all out effort. I signed up to go as a reinforcement officer to some British Units in the Infantry but because I was under the age that they were allowed to take without my father's consent.....and my father didn't like this idea. He wanted me to go with a Canadian Unit so he wouldn't agree. This was very upsetting for me and my studies, you



know? (chuckles) I'd thrown in the books! In December I'm finished and I'm off to England to become an officer in one of the British Regiments. It's very lucky I didn't go I guess because they were slaughtered. So then I kept waiting for a Canadian Unit and then they organized this University of Toronto Unit. Word got out that there was to be a University of Toronto Battery in which we could all enlist and be together. I was one of the first ones to enlist in that as soon as it was organized...as a gunner. Fortunately we didn't stay together as a unit because quite a few of them were pretty superior people and to have gone over as a unit wouldn't have been a good idea I don't think. In any case it would have been rather traumatic an experience to have so many close friends in one unit in action if maybe something goes wrong. So this Battery was split up and went as reinforcements to other Batteries.

Mr. Specht: A lot of the C.O.T.C. Units were broken up. The Western University.....

Dr. Shrum: The Western University wasn't a C.O.T.C. Unit. When I enrolled in the C.O.T.C. I wasn't in active service in the fall of 1914.

Mr. Specht: This was strictly training?

Dr. Shrum: Was strictly training, yes.

Mr. Specht: What was your training?

Dr. Shrum: Oh, it was pretty tough military training.

Mr. Specht: What type of activities?

Dr. Shrum: Oh, drill....and rifle shooting. Hart House was only partly completed and they converted one of the basements

of Hart House into a rifle range. We had all the usual officer training qualifications.

Mr. Specht: This would be regular drill and infantry soldier training.....

Dr. Shrum: All infantry training....Certificate 'A' they call it. But we'd drill in the morning, first thing in the morning. In the fall of 1914, I guess it was about the middle of October, it was pretty chilly in the morning. But we'd be up to do our drill before we'd go to lectures and then we'd have periods during the days when we'd have lectures in military subjects and periods when we could go and practice rifle shooting.

Mr. Specht: You were a gunner, during the First World War. What training did you have to be a gunner?

Dr. Shrum: Well I got most of that training in CANada before I left. I enlisted the first of April and we trained first of all at the University.....very rigid discipline and tough training.....a great deal of running and so on almost like a football camp. Then we went to Niagara on the Lake and did more training down there. There was a big military camp down there, then to Pettawawa and from there I left overseas. Because I was qualified as an infantry officer, I suppose, I got one stripe and then two stripes and then three stripes, I became a Sergeant before I left Canada. But as soon as we got to England why, one of the Sergeant-Majors in the camp at Shoringcliffe, (well, originally the barracks that were a part of Shoringcliffe Camp) the first morning he looked at these three stripes and he said, "You might as well take those Goddamn

things off. They won't do you any good around here." As a matter of fact it was a handicap because when I took them off the tunic had faded a little bit and you could see where they were. I think some of the Sergeant-Majors we had took great delight in giving us little extra chores now and then because we had been sergeants.

Mr. Specht: You weren't commissioned as a Lieutenant then when you went into the active service?

Dr. Shrum: Oh no, this University Battery, I suppose 250 people enlisted, they were all gunners. Everybody enlisted in the ranks. The officers were graduates from the business world or the professional world that they'd brought in as officers. There were only 3 or 4 officers anyway. So everybody enlisted and there were no N.C.O.'s either in the early stages. Everybody enlisted as a gunner.

Mr. Specht: So when did you land in France?

Dr. Shrum: We didn't stay long in England. I arrived in England sometime in November and I spent Christmas in France. So I wasn't in England very long. I did very little training in England....just waiting to get overseas to France. I had a pretty rough time of it. It was pretty rough in France at that time. I had enjoyed pretty good health but we had a very rough passage over to England....very rough. Then in England it was very wet and damp although I still maintained good health. But going over across the channel they packed them in down below and I was subject to sea sickness so eventually I got up on deck. But then when the water washed up onto the deck I had a hard time hanging on and I got soaking wet

and cold and I didn't feel well again until after Vimy Ridge. That was April 9, 1917.

Mr. Specht: Were you involved in the Vimy Ridge Campaign?

Dr. Shrum: Oh yes. I was then a Junior on the gun crew and our gun had a premature the very first morning in the Battle of Vimy Ridge. That means that the shell bursts before it gets out of the barrel, you see. It didn't hurt any of us but it put the gun out of action. The battle was going better than they expected so they called for volunteers to carry wire because the signallers ran out of wire. They didn't have all these walkie-talkies they had to string wire back and forward to phone back where they wanted the fire directed and the reinforcements and so on. This wire was just strung on the ground. It was forever getting broken with shells and so forth. People had to go out and fix it at all hours. But in any case, they called on volunteers to carry more wire up to the top of Vimy Ridge. Now Vimy Ridge isn't really a ridge. It was an escarpment, more or less. We were on this side, the Germans were here. They'd pushed them back and there was a drop and a plain below and a plain above. So another fellow and I, we volunteered. We went forward carrying this big roll of signal wire. I don't know how much it weighed but it took two of us to carry it. We had quite a good time and went past the German lines right up to the ridge. I really can't remember to whom we delivered the wire. All I remember is the excitement of watching the battle. We were sort of out of it

Mr. Specht: You'd be behind the first advance?

Dr. Shrum: Yes. They were over the ridge by the time we got to the top. The infantry was over the ridge. Of course there were prisoners around and all kinds of people and a great number of wounded and dead all around us. The weather was very bad that day but then it turned nice....spring weather over in France. Then I sort of recovered from this tremendous chill I got on the ocean water. One old sailor/<sup>came</sup> along when I was shivering so much I was afraid I'd crack the enamel on my teeth. He said, "Don't worry mate, if that were fresh water you'd die of pneumonia but salt water....nobody ever gets a cold from salt water."

Mr. Specht: How did you get your military medal?

Dr. Shrum: Oh....this was after Amiens. The war was going pretty well by this time. We went up one of the main roads in France, Paris-Mons Highway and they were on the point of taking a city called \_\_\_\_\_ and we went forward with a forward gun. Well first of all we went forward with the forward gun and then we brought the other guns up but the Germans apparently knew right where we were. We were in an old quarry. So that was the worst beating we ever had. They started to put the shells in there and that exploded our ammunition, you see and they could see they were getting results. So that when it was all over we had lost a great number of men and most of our officers and horses and things. So another fellow and I we sort of took charge and we organized things. We sent some horses up from the rear and we got two guns out and back into a position that we had left earlier. We were ready to fire when the barrage started the next morning for

the attack. It was quite important to have at least two guns firing. We should have had six but they were knocked out.

I don't know but they thought it was worth a military medal.

Mr. Specht: That was in one of the last campaigns of the war, wasn't it?

Dr. Shrum: It was pretty late. I guess it was early October, 1918 and the war was over in November.

Mr. Specht: You were at Passchendale too, weren't you?

Dr. Shrum: Yes, I was wounded at Passchendale and that's where I lost my diary. That was a very trying experience.

Mr. Specht: What was Passchendale like? It was supposed to be one of the worst battles.....casualties.....

Dr. Shrum: It was just a sea of mud and there seemed to be no bottom to it. They put a plank road. Now these planks would be about 4" thick, 6 or 8" wide and 10 or 12' long and they put this over the top of the mud. Of course it was wet and muddy and awfully greasy. Sometimes things would slide if the planks got tilted. In any case, when we got up there we tried to get the guns in position but there were no proper gun fits or anything. To get the guns in position, the best way was to put the drag ropes on them and get an infantry platoon on each drag rope because the horses couldn't.....as soon as they step off the plank road they'd get mired down over in the mud. They couldn't move the thing. Then we had to fill sand bags with mud to kind of make a platform for the gun to keep it shored up and from going down into the mud itself. There was a great deal of shelling. You know people didn't worry so much about the shelling there because there

was no safe place to go. Where one loses one's nerve and gets nervous about shelling is when there's a good secure place not very far away..but you have to be out and face it, you know. But if there's no place to go...it's surprising. The shells weren't very effective either because they went down in this mud and exploded and I suppose there was one tenth the casualties there would be if it had been hard ground. It would give you a chill to have one come right overhead behind you or something.

Mr. Specht: What was your role as a gunner? What did you do?

Dr. Shrum: Well I was usually the person who..... In the field artillery there were three batteries of what they call 'eighteen pounders' and one battery of four or fives. Four or fives were the howitzers. It was 4.5" in diameter..the barrel and you were supposed to take a ram-rod, you put the shell in and then you take the rod and drive the shell home so that the copper band on the shell that gives it the spin as it goes out the grooved bore of the gun makes good contact. It was against all rules and regulations but all respectable gunners never used that ram-rod, they always used their fist. So you take the shell on your arm and drive it home. If the timing was good and so on, you'd get a good job. But if you'd make the tiniest little mistake, you'd hit your knuckles on that bore. You had to get your hand right in the centre of the shell as it wasn't a very great hole you're pushing it through. The banging up that took place learning to do it! But you could fire much more rapidly than if you had to push it in there and then pick up a stick and do it. Then the man

who did this also laid the gun and pulled the trigger. So you fired it home and checked it and then pulled the trigger. And of course the burning cordite or N.C.T. or whatever it is sort of gets it into your blood....the excitement. A person is never nervous when you're firing because you think you're giving them Hell, you know. But if you have to stand by and not fire and he's firing at you, well this gets on your nerves.

End of track I



Dr. Gordon Shrum  
July 2, 1973

Interview \_\_\_\_, Tape 1, Track 2.

Dr. Shrum: But Passchendale was a disaster because there were so many lives lost there. But it was not possible to make any kind of advance. Even if they had made an advance in the front you couldn't bring the reserves up to consolidate it. I was wounded the night before the first advance. It was just the night before. Then I eventually worked my way back but I didn't get to England. That was a great disappointment. I went to hospital in Rouen and then I was convalescing in France but I didn't lose a great deal of time. I got wounded about the 25th or 26 of October and I was back with the battery around Christmas time 1917.

Mr. Specht: Was the war anything like you had anticipated when you were back in Toronto?

Dr. Shrum: When I was back in Toronto of course my main concern was that it would be over before I got there. (chuckles) No, I had no idea of what it would be like. I can't say it was different from what I expected. In Toronto when we were training we began to realize that we were going to make it. It was before I enlisted that I was afraid that I wasn't going to get there but the Battle of the Somme was in the early summer 1916. I had enlisted, you see the first of April and the reports were coming through about the Battle of the Somme and what a beating the allies were taking there. So I began to realize I guess I'll make it. But I must say that I had no idea of what it would be like. The sort of thing is that I wouldn't go through it again for anything but, I wouldn't have missed it for anything either. You know? Of course when you

consider the number of people that didn't come back and that there are some people up in Shaughnessy who've been in the hospital ever since World War I you can appreciate the tragedy of it. But for one who came back and is healthy, it's the kind of experience one wouldn't want to repeat but wouldn't have missed it.

Mr. Specht: Did you have any reflections after the armistice about war, in general?

Dr. Shrum: No really I don't think. I think that not only the troops but students in my day were not very socially conscious or politically conscious. We didn't worry about these things...I don't think. We didn't give much thought to them I don't believe.

Mr. Specht: Did you agree that it was 'a war to end all wars'?

Dr. Shrum: Yes I think we had an idea that the 'Huns' as we **were** called them / very evil people and that it was extremely important to conquer them and if this was done then nobody else in the world would be so evil minded as these Germans had been. I think that as far as I was concerned I was naive enough to think that that was it, you know.....that we had made the world safe for democracy. There was a great deal of interest in the League of Nations and confidence in the League of Nations. I think that to me this was a sort of reassuring, the development of a League of Nations for control of these things.

Mr. Specht: After the war, where did you go? Back to University in Ontario?

Dr. Shrum: Back to University, that's right. I didn't get

back in time to get into the special session so I had the summer free. I did whatever jobs I could get until the fall when I went back to the university. That's when I really started to study because up 'til that time in my life I had never really done any studying to speak of. I'd had a pretty easy time although when I left university, competition was very much keener and I didn't do so well in my first and second year. Third year, they gave it to me when I enlisted. I didn't have to go back and repeat the third year. So my first and second year I didn't do too well. The competition was keen, I didn't have any good study habits, I had a wonderful time, I enjoyed living in residence there was always lots of company and studying was the last thing I thought of doing. But when I came back from the war I realized that I didn't want to be a private all my life. (laughs) The people would tell us to get out at night and wash the guns...heat up the water and wash the guns because there was going to be an inspection the next day. I rebelled at this but I said it was my own fault. So when I went back to University I was frightened. I had been away for three years and I was frightened because mathematics, you forget a good deal. Physics wasn't so bad but I hadn't done any studying so I thought well, if I'm going to pass and I'm in competition with our young fellows who hadn't been in the war.....you see they were coming from the third year right fresh into the fourth year.....I started to study. You know I thought that the only way I'd be able to pass would be if I studied and I'd have to organize it. So I started studying right away in the fall and you know....I got to like it! And I've been studying ever since, I guess.

That's how I started it. Then I did well in my fourth year. I did far better than I'd expected to do. As a matter of fact I was the top student from Victoria College but I was second in the university. I was beaten by a fellow who came from the third year into the class right fresh and he'd been a good student. I don't think he was as good a student as I was but in any case, he beat me. He was from University College. It was a fairly large class. So that's how I started my academic career but I didn't intent to stay in academics I intended to go into business then. I'd decided that after the war I wanted to be a big business man. So I tried that and it didn't work so I went back to University and got involved in research. I had some pretty good luck and then I came out here.

Mr. Specht: You got your PhD in Physics in 1925?

Dr. Shrum: '23.

Mr. Specht: 1923, oh, I see.

Dr. Shrum: I came out here in '25

Mr. Specht: Did you continue with the C.O.T.C. at all in Toronto after the war?

Dr. Shrum: No.

Mr. Specht: Completely divorced yourself from them?

Dr. Shrum: They had one there but it was the last thing that I wanted to be involved in....the military. So, I had nothing to do with it in any way whatsoever. As a matter of fact I was so fed up, in a way, with the military that when I arrived back in Canada I couldn't wait to go to Toronto to

get demobilized. I got demobilized in Halifax. This was a stupid thing to do as then I travelled as a civilian from Halifax home. I couldn't wait to get demobilized. I couldn't wait until I got to Toronto.

Mr. Specht: Why was that?

Dr. Shrum: I don't know. There was just the feeling that.... I don't know. Not many people did it but.....well. See I was then only corporal although I had been sent to an officer training school at the end of the war. I missed the last two weeks in the war because I was there at this school in France. But as soon as the war was ended we all deserted this school and went back towards our units, yes. I was a rascal I went on to Brussels and pretended I was lost and couldn't find my unit. I had quite a good time in Brussels for about a week. It was liberated and so was I. (laughing)

Mr. Specht: So why did you choose to come to U.B.C.?

Dr. Shrum: Well I wanted to go to Winnipeg. I wanted to get a university job. I had this job at Toronto but the professor was very selfish too.....he took the credit for a great deal of work that other people did and I had some pretty good luck. Then I had a bit of an argument with him. I told him I said, "I don't mind sharing my hard work with you, but I hate for you to take the credit for my good luck." You know? He and I had a little bit of a row. He was very annoyed with me. There were two jobs, one out here and one at Manitoba. But there were two of us that had our PHD's that were looking for jobs, permanent jobs. Although I could have stayed on at Toronto, I didn't want to. I thought, oh, it would be so nice

to go to Winnipeg. It's not too far from Toronto. But in any case, the only unselfish thing I ever did in my life, I said to the other fellow, "Well now, we both can't apply to both places. You want Winnipeg and I want Winnipeg but you're married and you're older than I am, you try Winnipeg and I'll go out to B. C." So I only came here for one year. I didn't intend to stay but I liked it from the day I arrived. That's how it happened.

Mr. Specht: Do you remember what the campus looked like when you arrived?

Dr. Shrum: I came here when they were just moving. It was brand new. Everything was brand new and they were just moving from the old campus out here. I went into the Physics building and I saw a fellow there in an old smock and I thought he was one of the laboratory assistants or a labourer or something. I said, "Can you tell me where any of the professors are?" He said, "Well, I'm a professor." He was Hennings, the second man in the Physics Department. But all the professors dug in and helped move. You know it was quite a big job to move from down there. So it was brand new in 1925, brand new.

Mr. Specht: Was there.....what buildings were there on campus?

Dr. Shrum: Well, there was the centre part of the library and there was what is now the main part of the Chemistry building. The one with the cut stone on it and the powerhouse. The centre part of the library and the solid part of the Chemistry building and the powerhouse were the only permanent structures. All the other structures were stucco. Oh, and the auditorium

was there then and what is now the mathematics department, that was the arts building. The agriculture building was there. Those buildings were all there and they looked quite nice. They said they were there for thirty years....well it's been forty-eight years and they're still there.

Mr. Specht: Did you associate with the local Legion or any military organization?

Mr. Shrum: No, I had nothing to do with it at all. I had no intention.....I thought that I was a scientist. I had had some good luck in Toronto with my research work so I had no interest in it. I didn't even belong to the legion. I never joined the Legion and I didn't want anything to do with the military. It was a closed book as far as I was concerned.

Mr. Specht: That seems to be somewhat ironical because of your long time involvement with the C.O.T.C. later on.

Dr. Shrum: Well, when I once get involved in something I like to see it through. I got involved with the C.O.T.C. because of Harry Logan. I was interested in sports out here. Not that I'd ever been a great athlete or anything but Dr. Davis who was in the Physics department was greatly interested in sports. I was fourth man and he was number three. He was wanting me to help him so I got involved in this. Then I got involved in student affairs. The Dean of Arts asked me to be a sort of counsellor for other students. This I enjoyed and I got involved in athletics. But Harry Logan was very much involved in athletics but he was also involved in the military. He had kept up. He was one of these fellows who had maintained his connection with the military after we had come back and

so they were reorganizing the C.O.T.C. or thinking about reorganizing the C.O.T.C. I was if not popular, a very well known younger member of the staff because I was quite a good lecturer I think and I was involved in athletics and student affairs and he was such a persuasive fellow, Harry Logan. He came to me, "Gordon, won't you come and help me?" he said. "If you'd just help me get it started." There was a great deal of opposition to reorganizing the C.O.T.C. on the campus. They had tried to reorganize it down at the old place and they had some rather sad experiences. Well, by this time I was more politically conscious and I realized that I was one of the people who thought there was going to be a war and so that it wasn't such a crazy idea to reorganize the C.O.T.C.

Mr. Specht: Well this was in 1928?

Dr. Shrum: Yep.

Mr. Specht: Winston Churchill described that as the high point of the chances for peace between the two world wars, so I wondered why you at this time felt that another war would come about?

Dr. Shrum: Well, certainly the League of Nations hadn't failed but I just felt that we hadn't handled wars at this time. I don't know if there had been any disarmament conferences or not but if there had, they'd been failures. That was for certain. The very first ones were failures. In any case, it was very much his persuasion that persuaded me to come in. So I did and I went in as a captain.....I don't think I ever qualified. Then I qualified as a major and I went on and took the other qualifications. I rather enjoyed it and got involved.



Then for some reason or another there was a certain amount of jockeying and Col. Logan was out as Commanding Officer and Harry Letson was in. Now Harry Letson was a great friend of Dean Brock and he was a Seaforth and Dean Brock was the man who had the C.O.T.C. reestablished. The president was away on a sabbatical. He only took one sabbatical leave. He only left once and he was a Quaker, you know. Although he was very fair about these things, he would never have gone out of his way to re-establish any military on the campus.

Mr. Specht: This is President Klinck you're referring to?

Dr. Shrum: President Klinck, yes. So he was away for a year. He went to Italy and so on and Dean Brock was Acting President when he was away. He was very anxious to get the C.O.T.C. established and get it through the Senate. There was an awful lot of opposition but he managed it anyway.

Mr. Specht: Who were the people who were in favour of it, on campus? Who were some individuals who spear-headed it?

Dr. Shrum: Well, it was just a very small group. A small group of students....Tom Brown. You should talk to Tom Brown. He was one of the active ones. He was a student. Tom Brown and Air Vice-Marshal Plant, he was a student then. There was just a small handful of students and Dean Brock, you might say. I think he pushed Col. Logan in to take it on. Then after they got established Logan was out and Col. Letson was in. Well I got along well with Letson. I rather enjoyed him. Then just before the war broke out, he left and another person that was in at that time was a Major, Allan Finlay of the Engineering faculty. He's still around. You could talk to him.

He and Logan left at the same time. I don't know, I wasn't in on all the skull-duggery that went on but, there was something about it but I don't think Logan wanted to give up at the time. But he did. Logan was a very fine fellow. He wouldn't pick a quarrel with anybody. So I stayed on and I became Commanding Officer. Then I was Commanding Officer until after the war....all during this period and beyond my term of an ordinary commanding officer. Then I turned it over to Bob Bonner.

Mr. Specht: How long is a term for a Commanding Officer supposed to be?

Dr. Shrum: Three years, I think.

Mr. Specht: Going back to the formation, who were the opposition and what were the obstacles to it being formed?

Dr. Shrum: I think the reason they eventually got it approved, passed the Senate and so on, was the opposition....they were too extreme. I think that one could say that the main reason that it was re-established was that the opposition was so strong and so extreme in the statements they made and so on. Some became quite neutral and said, "Well after all, all these boys want to do is to take some training in case they ever need it and why shouldn't we let them do it. They're not going to be such ogres as the opposition maintained they would be." They said, "Well these boys only want to earn some money." So that was one of the reasons that from the very beginning everybody that enrolled in C.O.T.C said, "We can't touch any

money." So they turned the money back to the organization. That's how that all started.....because they were accused of joining because of the money they were going to get out of it. The officers turned back their money too now. That's how we built the Armoury. Well, first of all we weren't saving this money for an armoury we were saving it for a uniform or something....but that's how that got started. We were successful. We carried that through right to the end of the war. The people training in the C.O.T.C. waived their pay. They tried to do that in other C.O.T.C.s across Canada but no place were they able to do it except U.B.C. and the reason they were able to do it at U.B.C. was that the officers.....as a Colonel I waived my pay too and my pay was fairly considerable compared to what the men were getting. The other places they only suggested that the students waive their pay and the officers would draw their pay, you see. Well that isn't so popular. So I had more money invested in the Armoury than any other individual that was for certain. So that's how that one came about....and when the numbers became large, these sums became considerable. As a result of that, we not only built the Armoury, we built an addition to it, equipped it, bought those Emily Carr pictures that were given to the university. Now they're worth \$25,000 apiece. Have you seen those?

Mr. Specht: Nope.

Dr. Shrum: They're up in the Faculty Club, up near the Social Suite. At the end of the war, we had so much money...well we had money anyway, maybe not so much and I wanted to.....

well here again I had somewhat the same reaction that I'd had at the beginning of the First War. It's over with now. I wanted to get out. We had this very nice Officer's Mess but instead of putting up old weapons I wanted to buy some pictures. So we went out and bought these pictures. We bought these two Emily Carrs at about \$250 each. There was quite a bit of opposition from the officers. They didn't like them. But I liked them and I guess I railroaded it through. We bought them anyway. They're worth now....! So when they finally disbanded the officer's mess we gave all the pictures to the university, including these two Emily Carrs. Some of the others were valuable but not the same extent. I think they're insured for \$25,000 each now.

Mr. Specht: I'd like to ask one more question on the formation of the C.O.T.C. There was a great deal of student opposition. In fact, judging by one report in the Ubyyssey, the student newspaper at the time, a vast majority, about 75% of the students at a meeting, voted against permitting it to form on campus.

Dr. Shrum: That's right. But Dean Brock, he didn't pay any attention to this because he knew he had to get it through while the President was away and so he pushed on in spite of the student opposition.

Mr. Specht: How did President Klinck react when he returned?

Dr. Shrum: I think he accepted it as a fait accompli....you know. I had many dealings with him later on with the C.O.T.C. and he was always very proper about it. He suppressed his own feelings and he operated on what a president should do, not what his personal views were. He was always very proper

and there were never any problems....as long as we were doing things as they should be done.

Mr. Specht: One of the criticisms of having a C.O.T.C. contingent on campus was that this would give outside influence into campus affairs.

Dr. Shrum: Well, they used every possible argument. But there wasn't any. This was for certain. The C.O.T.C. was always manned by members of the staff and student officers. There were no outsiders to influence.

Mr. Specht: I see.

Dr. Shrum: That was an unjustifiable fear that they had.

Mr. Specht: The Committee for Military Affairs, now, this was set up to kind of over see the C.O.T.C. on campus.

Dr. Shrum: That's right, an advisory body sort of.

Mr. Specht: Can you tell me how the programme itself was structured? First of all there was no military obligation, was there? ....if you were enrolled in the C.O.T.C.?

Dr. Shrum: No, none at all, no.

Mr. Specht: The training was supposed to prepare students for possible officer's commissions?

Dr. Shrum: Officer's qualifications. First Lieutenant and then Captain. There was Certificate 'A' and 'B'. And these qualifications were common throughout the Commonwealth. So our examinations were set in London and the papers were sent back there. We were very lucky at the C.O.T.C. We established some pretty good records and standings on these examinations.... Commonwealth examinations. We also did very well in shooting, in competition. This was also Commonwealth wide. But the

whole purpose was to qualify as an officer. It wasn't to train for battle other than that which would be part of the officer training. But we went over to camp during the Christmas holiday, over to Victoria, to Esquimalt to do more practical work over there. Practically all the work at the university was in the form of lectures. We'd go down the the Beatty Street Armouries to do our drill once a week. When the war broke out, we had a great influx and demand on these graduates to come to the university to join the C.O.T.C. to get qualifications because we were the only organization in British Columbia, I think that had the syllabus for officer's training that could qualify officers. The other units hadn't put any particular emphasis on this in their military training here in the city.

Mr. Specht: How did your syllabus compare with say, some of the Royal Academies or the regular services in promotion of officers? Your preparation for the 'A' and 'B' Certificates..

Dr. Shrum: Well, I would say that the training wouldn't be in any way comparable with what was given at the Royal Military College. For instance, a person went down there and took three years at the Royal Military College, he would be a better trained officer than one who took this C.O.T.C. but you have to bear in mind that many of the people who took the C.O.T.C. training were also Engineers or Scientists and they were very able people. They may not have had as much military training as some of the others but they probably had more academic background in Science or Engineering or History.

Mr. Specht: Up until the war, did very many of the people

who had completed their certificates actually apply for commissions in the services?

Dr. Shrum: Oh, in the Second World War very few students enlisted in the ranks. If they couldn't get a commission, they wouldn't go! But there was a much greater demand for officers. That's hard to understand, why that should be. But it was appreciated that when the Second World War came off, the equipment for the military became so sophisticated that you needed better trained people and university graduates to qualify as an officer. But very, very few students enlisted in the ranks. That applies to the Navy, Airforce, or some might have gone into the Airforce, but they went in with the idea of becoming pilots, you know.

Mr. Specht: A student, say who was on the training programme at U.B.C. during the Second World War and didn't succeed in getting a commission....

Dr. Shrum: But they did! Most of them got commissions or I suppose some of them went into the ranks. They got into one thing or another. There were Companies for different activities. Now the Canadian Scottish and the Seaforths they used to come out and interview the students and they're taking the very best ones whereas some other unit that wasn't so well known would have to take people that they didn't think were as promising. Very few people enlisted in the ranks in the Second World War whereas the First World war nearly all university students enlisted in the ranks because for officers they thought they needed people more mature or with a business

background who could afford to buy the uniforms and so on and so forth. If I'd been given a commission, I couldn't have afforded it probably in World War I, you know. But the times had changed, their allowances were better.....

Mr. Specht: Staying still in the pre World War II period, regarding the C.O.T.C., what were the facilities like that you had? .....and the equipment?

Dr. Shrum: (laughing) It was disgraceful! The univeristy wouldn't let us have any buildings. They didn't even want us to use a lecture room for fear it would be contaminated. So we took on underneath what used to be the Arts building, the Mathematics building there. There was a basement area and so we used this money that we had waived our pay and fitted up a place in the basement there in the one wing. In the other wing we built a rifle range and....(laughing) that rifle range.....the butts were right under the Dean of Women's office and she was terrible.....

End of Track II