

Dr. Gordon Shrum
July 2, 1973

Interview ____, Tape 2, Track 1.

Mr. Specht: You were describing the rifle range in the basement of the Arts building.

Dr. Shrum: Well, Col. Letson was a very fine rifle shot. He'd been on the Bisley Team many times and he was one of the best shots in Canada so naturally he wanted to encourage this in the C.O.T.C. So, we built a rifle range under what you'd call the South end of the Arts building, that wing. It was a very fine rifle range but unfortunately the target area was right under the Dean of Women's office.....and some of the other professors were over in that wing. That's where the offices were, on that side of the building. They were very worried for fear some of the shots would get through but we put a steel plate under there. Of course from the position in which the rifles were held, the bullet might have pierced the steel plate but it wouldn't at a glancing angle. In any case, that was just one of the little problems.

Mr. Specht: Then you had your parades and drills in the Beatty Street Armouries, is that right?

Dr. Shrum: There were all in the Beatty Street Armouries because I don't think the Seaforth Armouries was built at that time so that we used the Beatty Street Armouries. Col. Letson had some connection down there too.

Mr. Specht: How was the response of the local military command in the Vancouver area and the militia? Did you have a co-operative relationship with them?

Dr. Shrum: Oh, a very co-operative one with the militia here. This was in the very early days. Of course the military head-

quarters were in Esquimalt and the different commanding officers over there were very helpful and co-operative all the way through.

Mr. Specht: Who provided the instructors for the officer's training?

Dr. Shrum: Well, the first instructor we had was Capt. Gibson. He was quite a good instructor but then he was followed by a fellow by the name of Staff Sgt. Smith. This fellow was just out of this world as far as an instructor is concerned. He had very little education, very little but he had very high ideals, he was hard working. He used to have his office in this basement and it wasn't a basement, it was underground of the Arts building. We had a little arrangement there where the members of the corps, in one of the instruction rooms we had...they could use it for a lunch room. Staff Sgt. Smith, sometimes he'd go out in that lunch room and he said, "Look you boys, I have no education but I wouldn't dirty my mouth with some of the language that's going on out here! And you can't be members of this corps if you're going to use language like that! Get out!" But he was the one who kept them working and won the prizes for us in the competition. He was not only a good shot too but he supervised that and on the Certificate 'A' and Certificate 'B' examinations he was a tremendous instructor. Then when the war broke out and we had it he said, "I'm not going to stay in this funkhole during the war." So he headed East. Poor fellow never got farther than Saskatoon I don't think. He became a Major and I think they retained him there as instructor. He was just too good. (laughs) He was so anxious to get into the war.

Then we were sent a number of instructors here, by the military. But you see, immediately they made it compulsory to be a student in the university you had to be in good standing in the Officer Training Corps. So that gives us about 1800 students. Some of these people weren't at all interested in military training. Different from the old days when you only had thirty or forty who were very enthusiastic and willing to face all this opposition in order to train and set a good example and do nothing to bring any discredit on the C.O.T.C. Here we had 1800 students, you see and no student officers to speak of. The students that we had had enlisted and were gone. But by this time the cadets were pretty active in the schools and I found that some of these cadet N.C.O.s and so on were quite good. They seemed to be mostly freshmen so I enrolled many of these cadets stripes and they took charge of a great deal of the instruction. They helped and we had some officers but it was a very difficult undertaking. Then of course, we had a large group of these people who said, "We're not going to waive our pay." They had the feeling, why should we waive our pay? Well, my attitude was that the boys who had been in there before waived their pay and they were taking their training voluntarily. These people had to take their training in order to stay in the university. But you can't force a man to waive his pay because he has to sign. So what we did was that we only had an establishment for 1200. That was the establishment but we had to train everybody. We had to train 1800. So we had to train 1800 with whatever funds and staff were provided for 1200, so when it came to pay, there were only 1200 would get paid. So,

we lined them up and we had two registers for them to sign. We'd say to the fellow, "Do you want to waive your pay or not?" Well, he doesn't want to waive his pay. Alright, he goes in that line. If he's willing to waive his pay, he goes in this line. Well only the people in this line got pay. The ones in the other line were super numera there was no pay for them... (laughs)...They didn't have to waive anything, do you see?

Mr. Specht: Did you get 1200 out of 1800 to waive their pay?

Dr. Shrum: Oh yes. We had no trouble. And after we once established it, we never had any problem....real problem. I think these people thought this was quite a good stunt....that they refused to waive their pay and signed the pay sheet for which there was no pay. We never had any trouble after that.

Mr. Specht: Who paid? The Department of National Defence?

Dr. Shrum: Yes.

Mr. Specht: And administered by the local headquarters?

Dr. Shrum: Well it was a standard arrangement for it. But then the money came to us, you see? When the pay was waived, we had this and we built the armouries. Then we set up these trust funds. There are two trust funds at the University now, one for the Navy. The Navy always wants to be a little different. And the other one for the C.O.T.C.

Mr. Specht: Well you were an officer right from the beginning, 1928. You were a Captain of one of the two companies.

Dr. Shrum: That's right.

Mr. Specht: Could you describe what your duties were, prior to you becoming officer commanding?

Dr. Shrum: Oh well, give some lectures, not very many. I couldn't compete with this Staff Sgt. Smith...(chuckles). He was too

good. But on parade, I'd always have to go down to parade at night when the parades were on. Then there was the inspection, always inspection every year and a great rehearsal for this inspection.

Mr. Specht: Did you give drill yourself?

Dr. Shrum: Oh yes. I was quite good at that because I had been the Sergeant in this large group in Toronto, a couple of hundred university students. They had no N.C.O.s. I was one of the first N.C.O.s...so I did alot of training and handling parades. I was quite good at that, I think. I had a voice that could be heard, in any case. You know, on the inspection...when we had the great mob of students in the C.O.T.C. and Senator Griesback, he was Inspector-General for Western Canada. His headquarters was in Edmonton. He came down here and he was inspecting everybody in all the military units and so on and he was just really raising Hell with them. He was supposed to be very tough. So he was coming out to U.B.C. and everybody was nervous and so on. My spies had told me what tricks he was up to and so I though we'd have to fight fire with fire. One of the things he had asked these people to do like you were on active service..and the N.C.O. wouldn't know all his people and all the history about them. He was their leader. Well at U.B.C. they might have one group of students one day and other groups another day. There was so much changing around...the units were large and there was no way they could get to know these people. So beforehand, when he came to the inspection, it was at the West end of the Auditorium building where those huts...I mean buildings...are now for Education

or something, I don't know what they are. In any case there was a plot of land there we used for inspection. After we had gone through what we could do, march pasts and the routine for these, then he goes along the ranks....up and down the ranks. Then he'd stop and he'd say to the N.C.O., "What's this man's name?" or "What year is he in?" and so on. So I had all the students in the auditorium and I explained how this was done. Now, I said, "When he comes along and he says to the Corporal or Lance Corporal or Sergeant or whoever it may be, 'Do you know the name of your people?' You tell him, 'Yes sir.' 'Well, this man, what is his name?' "Oh, his name is Jones. John Jones' "What faculty is he in?' 'He's in Agriculture. 'What year is he in?' 'Second year.'" And I said, "You just tell it just as if it's fact." You know, I said, "Never stop to consider anything. Just give him a name and a year...bang..bang..bang. And practice it." Those fellows went out and we had them practicing this. So then old Griesback came along and he went through this very same thing. He'd say to the fellow, "Is that correct?" You see? Well, I didn't put enough emphasis on the response. Some of these fellows would be very shy and hold back and say...."Yes, it's correct." So when he finished the inspection he completed it and then he compliments all the N.C.O.s and said they did a terrific job. He thought they could have had a little more co-operation from the men in the ranks. (laughing)

Mr. Specht: This was of course, during the war where you had a very large unit. I mean like in the 1930's before the war it was probably compact.....everyone knows each other.

Dr. Shrum: Oh, before the war we only had 30 or 40 all together. Some of them would change.

Mr. Specht: That's 30 or 40 in one company?

Dr. Shrum: Yes, that's right. Some of them would change their minds and they wouldn't be very active when the examinations come along.....We used to have a little difficulty getting them out. The interest lagged a bit. The very beginning 1928 and '29 there was tremendous enthusiasm and then it sort of tapered off til the war came along, you know.

Mr. Specht: How did the Depression effect the corps? Like military spending generally was cut back, especially in 1932.

Dr. Shrum: Yes. There wasn't very much spending as far as the Corps was concerned but I don't recall that it effected us very much. We had such a small unit and the amount of money involved was very small.

Mr. Specht: Did the local militia give you a lot of encouragement as far aswere they really interested in the officers that you were training out there?

Dr. Shrum: They weren't. No not really really interested.

As a matter of fact they would liked to have some of these fellows enlist in their units and take their training downtown rather than at C.O.T.C. And there were a few students who did that but they couldn't get the same officer's qualification. But if they grew up as a Seaforth Cadet, they might want to stay with the Seaforths or something like that. I think there were a few of these. Generally speaking they co-operated. But they

weren't 100% enthusiastic about the C.O.T.C. I think that because we were being attacked at the university, they felt loyalty to support us, you know because we were actually a part of the military organization.

Mr. Specht: Yes. What sort of feedback did you get...I'm speaking of before the war, as far as the quality of officers who were commissioned in the ranks? Do you recall.....

Dr. Shrum: Well, I don't recall very much but most of these fellows we had were extremely good because they were in there and enthusiastic and they were selected....thirty or forty from the male student body. The student body was small but there were high percentages of males in the university anyway. So they were quite a select group and the ones who actually qualified or were ready to qualify and stayed with it, they were superior people. I don't know how many Air Vice-Marshals.. when the war broke out, John Plant and Smith and Kennedy and a number of the C.O.T.C. people ended up as Air Vice-Marshals.

Mr. Specht: 1934,'35 I think was sort of a peak of the anti-war movement on campus....This would be judging from articles in the Ubysey and the meetings, the commotion going on. Do you have any memory of that? They voted to abolish the C.O.T.C. for example.

Dr. Shrum: Yes. We didn't let the people bring their uniforms. They couldn't come on the campus in uniform. Even in the militia units, some of the militia units had to build quarters, New Westminster for instance, I know built quarters in the Armouries for people to come and change and then go back in civilian life.

It wasn't safe to walk home with a uniform on.

Mr. Specht: Was this the case on campus?

Dr. Shrum: I wouldn't say that it wasn't safe on the campus but we didn't want to antagonize the students by appearing on the campus in uniforms. They could put the uniform on and go to the Beatty Street Drill Hall but we didn't do anything on the campus in uniform. Even Staff Sgt. Smith, as a rule would always be in civilian clothes on campus in the early days.

Mr. Specht: Did you have any personal encounters at that time with.... people who were....?

Dr. Shrum: No, I had no personal encounters at all.

Mr. Specht: How did you feel about it? Did it affect the morale of the Corps?

Dr. Shrum: No, it just sort of knitted together a minority group, you might say. If you wanted to maintain high morale in a minority group....I guess, attack them by a majority, you know.

Mr. Specht: Do you think the morale was quite good?

Dr. Shrum: Yes, excellent. They would do anything ever asked of them, pretty well....the C.O.T.C. people. I, myself, having been in the ranks appreciated how students felt about officers. There were some pretty poor officers in my day. So that the one thing that I always tried to do was not to ask the men to do anything I wasn't prepared to do myself. Tho' I had an officer's uniform, I used to go over with them at Christmas to the Work Point Barracks. The floors were wooden floors that had been well oiled to keep down the dust but I used to lie on the floor with the men. Whatever they were going through, we'd go through the same thing....not too much of this standing by supervising, you know.

Mr. Specht: What was it like at Work Point? Compared to say, U.B.C. campus?

Dr. Shrum: Oh I don't know. I enjoyed it because it was sort of nostalgic. They burned coal in the little stoves in the huts and you smelled the coal smoke...it reminded me of the First World War. Smelled the same....(chuckles)...sort of nostalgic, I guess.

Mr. Specht: Was your training still sort of First World War premises? Trench warfare, massive use of infantry, was that sort of the basis for your.....

Dr. Shrum: No, we were always trained to fight in the open... in the Certificate 'A' examination. I don't think trench warfare was ever mentioned in the....before World War I in training. Then when we were training the artillery for World War I, we never had any instructions as far as I know about building a gun pit. We always had these horses and it was tremendously exciting...like going to a fire...galloping as fast as the horses could go and then halt. Unhitch the horses, quick release, full action front and see how quickly you could get firing. These were the competitions usually....which battery would be the first one to be in action, you know. Well of course you only do that....once in three years. Well actually in the war I was involved in open movement of the guns and halt and action front..once only. The rest of the time, we'd sneak up after 11 o'clock at night by some back road and try to get the guns into a gun pit that had been built before hand. But there was no instruction on that. Even the infantry instruction before World War II, the manuals hadn't been rewritten very much

and so that I can't recall any instruction, tho' there must be some in the old manuals, about trench warfare....even for World War II. We were still manoeuvring out in the open.

Mr. Specht: What do you remember of the Balls at the Jericho Country Club? I think they followed your annual inspection.

Dr. Shrum: Yes, yes. Well, these were tremendous events.... (laughs)....We enjoyed them. Of course they didn't cost anything for the boys....and they were very well behaved. We would invite some of the officers from the regiments and they would come in their scarlet and blue uniforms and so on.....so it was always written up as a colourful event. I think the boys enjoyed it. I always enjoyed it.

Mr. Specht: In the 1937 issue of the annual the Totem it said that one of the Balls of that era carried on the "noblest of British tradition". How would you interpret that?

Dr. Shrum: Oh, I don't know exactly what that meant. But they were rather formal affairs. People were in uniform and they exchanged dances with other people.

Mr. Specht: I wasn't sure how to take that. I felt that it was an understatement of some kind maybe...?

Dr. Shrum: I don't know exactly what it means myself.

Mr. Specht: I'm not sure what British Traditions they are referring to.....real wild..?

Dr. Shrum: Well there would be no problem whatsoever with fellows drinking too much or anything of that sort....never. Maybe thats what they meant. Formal, very well behaved and so forth. Nothing rowdy about it.

Mr. Specht: Compare Lt.-Col. Letson's command with Lt.-Col., Doctor Logan's....?

Dr. Shrum: Well, I rather liked Col. Letson's way of doing things. (chuckles) It was more my way of doing things. I'll give you an example. When you're in the military you expect your commander, whoever he is, if he's a corporal you expect to be told what to do and you do it. But if he's a Lieutenant, a Captain, a Major, whatever he is.. So I'll give you this just as an example. It isn't a criticism of Col. Logan. But we were having inspection down the Beatty Street Armouries and I said to Col. Logan, "Now, what do you want me to do?" Because ...oh, the Colonel falls out and stands beside the Commanding Officer and there's all this. So I said, "Now just what do you want me to do?" And he said, "What would you like to do, Gordon?" You know? Well, I felt so let down because in a military organization you don't expect that, you see. That's the way he ran it. It was very popular and people liked him and everything that he did. But from a military point of view he wasn't as decisive. Now Col. Letson would say beforehand. "Now you will do so and so and that will be your job and so on." Everything was laid out very concise and with snappy orders and so on. It was more the traditional military handling of things. From that point of view he was good. He had a great number of connections too with the senior military people both in Ottawa and in Victoria so it may have been a little easier to get the arrangement for camps

and things.

Mr. Specht: You obtained a certificate in 1936 from the Military Staff Course. This was in

Dr. Shrum: Yes, I went. Well in those days to qualify as a major you had to have what you call equitation. I went to riding school up here at the Police Barracks up on 33rd. I enjoyed that tremendously. For about two weeks I'd go up there every morning and ride. Of course I'd been in the field artillery and had ridden horses for three years in World War I but I didn't have any certificate so I liked it so much that I took it two years in succession. Even though I passed it, I went back and took it again...nice free riding and good horses. Then I went down and took this Military Staff Course at and that was a very good course.

Mr. Specht: What did that qualify you for?

Mr. Shrum: Well I guess it qualified me for a major or field officer, I guess. Once you get qualification for a Major there's very little further qualification that you need for a Colonel. Majors and Lieutenant Colonels were known as field officers, I think. I took that in order to qualify for a field officer.

Mr. Specht: Did you know that you were going to be appointed Commanding Officer?

Dr. Shrum: No, I didn't know that the war was going to break out.

Mr. Specht: But this was in 1937?

Dr. Shrum: Well things were getting pretty disturbed in the international situation. No, very suddenly Col. Letson I guess he was Officer Commanding for the Duke of Connaught's Rifles. He had the Beatty Street Armouries. D.C.O.R.s I think they called themselves. I think he became Colonel down there and so he had to leave the C.O.T.C. But this came on very suddenly.

Mr. Specht: He was under instructions then, from his superiors then, to take over the new post....

Dr. Shrum: Oh, I think he was offered it and he took it.

Mr. Specht: Did you want at the time, to become a commanding officer?

Dr. Shrum: Well, I didn't have much time to think about it. I wasn't consulted. He said, "well I'm leaving and you'll have to take over." I don't know. I couldn't say whether I wanted it or not. I wasn't really a keen student of military affairs. I didn't spend a lot of time on it. Now Col. Letson did a lot of reading and studying on this. I don't think Col. Logan did either. I mean, he did the job here. But I had no ambitions to go on to a higher rank than just my association. My interests were entirely with the university and the C.O.T.C. I had no ambitions to go any farther than Colonel. Letson did. And he went on and became a General in the Second World War.

Mr. Specht: What was your attitude as a commanding officer? How did you see, for example, what would you think a proper relationship between a commanding officer and his subordinates?

Dr. Shrum: Well in World War I, I felt that I was able to come back as a healthy individual from World War I because the Colonel that we had was a very strong disciplinarian. The training officer we had when I first enlisted in the artillery in World War I was a very strong disciplinarian. Then I was fortunate to get post^{ed} to a unit in France with a very strong disciplinarian. For instance, our battery wouldn't be shelled but other batteries in the same brigade, there'd be 4 batteries in a brigade, we'd see them getting the daylights knocked out of them by shelling. We wouldn't be shelled. Why? Because we had good discipline. When the Colonel said, "Nobody puts his head out." or "Nobody steps out in the daylight." Nobody did. But other people would be fooling around and maybe go out behind playing catch or something, you know, and give away their position. So I told the students when I took over the C.O.T.C. and the war broke out, I said, "You know we don't have any equipment. We don't know what the fighting is going to be like. There's very little training that I can give you that's useful other than good discipline." So I said, "We're going to have ^{very} strict discipline." And we did...and we had a good way of enforcing it too. We used to say if a fellow didn't do as he was told, we'd turⁿ him out of the C.O.T.C. and then he'd be called up right away. I always had quite a nice working arrangement with Judge Manson. He lived around the cor^{ner} here. He was in charge of call up. I don't know ^{what} the official title was. But by this time, Dean Finlayson was the Dean of Engineering and unlike Dean Brock who had been Dean of Engineering and very enthusiastic about military, Dean Finlayson had no use for the military at all. He felt that all engineering

students should be exempt....that their engineering training was more useful than their military training. And he told the students this! He didn't help us at all, I would say. Well, he had one student who was a top student...one of his very best students in civil engineering. This fellow refused to take training. I mean we struck him off strength, he wouldn't turn out. So he got called up. Well the university used through Dean Finlayson, all the pull that they had but Dean Manson held firm and this fellow got called up and he was put in the ranks. Well that was a fairly salutary lesson to the other ss students that Dean Finlayson wasn't running the show as far as the military was concerned. So we had less trouble when we firmly established it. But we did have a few students. One of them is a judge now and a very strict judge, very severe. (chuckles) But we used to have an arrangement. We built the shower room. We thought maybe that when we built the Armouries that in one corner there was a shower room. Well we didn't need it. We didn't use it. We didn't have people working hard there. So we made that into a place where a student, if he broke the rules and regulations, we'd give him four or five days.....

End of track I

Dr. Gordon Shrum
July 2, 1973

Interview ____, Tape 2, Track 2.

Dr. Shrum: Oh there were limits of course, to what we could do in the way of discipline. According to the K.O.R., King's Orders and Regulations, but I made our own rules. So that we'd say, "Oh, we'll give you five days confined to barrack." Well we didn't have any barrack. They weren't in barracks, they were students. But we'd say, "now you give us your time table." and all the spare time they had from nine o'clock in the morning 'til six o'clock at night, we'd make them sit in this room and study. If they refused to do it then we'd strike them off strength. All we had to do was put through an order to strike them off strength and Judge Manson would check these orders. If he saw a fellow struck off strength well, he'd get a call, you see. So they knew they had to do it.

Mr. Specht: Well, military service wasn't.... There wasn't conscription until 1944, so how could they call him up if he didn't volunteer?

Dr. Shrum: Well, I know they did call them up, anyway. Conscription didn't start 'til 1944?

Mr. Specht: Well it wasn't used at least as far as I know. Mind you, Mackenzie King, I think in 1941 had a plebiscite to release the government from its pledge not to use conscription. So the government could if it wanted it. I'm not sure how this would have fitted in. I understand he didn't really have to use it until 1944.

Dr. Shrum: I don't know. Right from 1940, it seems to me that these students were given exemptions by attending university. It was compulsory to take C.O.T.C. training in the university.

Mr. Specht: This was a decision by the Board and the Senate, right?

Dr. Shrum: It was a decision by the University presidents, meeting in Hart House, I believe at the University of Toronto. I was down to the meeting and they passed a regulation there. Now what did they call it? The National Conference of Canadian Universities, or something.....that military training would be compulsory in the universities.

Mr. Specht: How could they enforce that? Under what...?

Dr. Shrum: Well, they couldn't enforce it other than they agreed that it would be and each president came back, went to his institution and said that other universities were doing it and we're going to make it compulsory here.

Mr. Specht: And if a student objected....?

Dr. Shrum: Well, if a student objected....he couldn't stay in the university, I think.

Mr. Specht: He was expelled from attending university then.

Dr. Shrum: You say conscription came in when?

Mr. Specht: Well, I understand that they rarely used conscription...

Dr. Shrum: It was a lot earlier than 1944. That was near the end of the war!

Mr. Specht: I know.

Dr. Shrum: Well, I don't know but it certainly was before 1944 that Judge Manson had the deferments of people from call up. I don't know. That would be a point worth looking at. But in any case, this is the point about Dr. Klinck. I don't think he was in favour of this regulation. But if the universities had agreed to it and he was there at the meeting, then he was

going to see that U.B.C. played its part in accordance with what had been agreed upon. I say he personally wasn't in favour of it, you know. Of course I think he appreciated that this was a very dangerous situation with Hitler and that Canada needed to do everything possible to stop this evil force in the world. I think he would feel that.

Mr. Specht: Yes.

Dr. Shrum: He would dislike having to become involved in forcing people to take military training, I think. But when he'd once committed....there was no wavering. He never did. He was an unusual person that way.

Mr. Specht: Did you initiate any changes when you became Commanding Officer after Letson?

Dr. Shrum: I don't think so.

Mr. Specht: 1937, 1938 an Army Council report listed U.B.C. as one of the universities where 'A' and 'B' graduates certificates were eligible for commissions in the British Army. Do you recall this? I wonder if it signifies that you were fully recognized.

Dr. Shrum: Yes, I guess I faintly recall it. Yes, that's correct.

Mr. Specht: Also in the years 1937, 1938 the training period was extended like I think you must have added about a month during the university term on to the actual training period. I wonder why that came about at that time.

Dr. Shrum: Well, I think because of the international situation. We felt that we were really training people for war. Before that it was not so definite that they'd be using this training immediately.

Mr. Specht: Were there any other repercussions like say during the Spanish Civil War and the re-armament of Germany, did you receive instructions from the command regarding this from the National Defence?

Dr. Shrum: I don't think we had any. We would get intelligence reports. I didn't have too much time to read these because I was still active in my university work. But I think the thing that was most decisive was the failure of the United Nations to curb Mussolini and his venture into Ethiopia. It became obvious that the League of Nations was not going to function as everybody had hoped. The axis between Mussolini and Hitler, it became obvious that we were going to have another world war.

Mr. Specht: Did public opinion change in your favour a lot more than in the late 30's?

Dr. Shrum: Oh yes, yes. Well the opposition to the C.O.T.C. died out pretty well. There wasn't any opposition left by the time I took over. Col. Logan was the best man to command the C.O.T.C. when the opposition was at its peak because he wasn't a military man in any sense. He was a mild mannered fellow. He was so popular with everybody and he was so involved in so many good works that they couldn't possibly attack him personally. This was just one of his many activities at U.B.C.

Mr. Specht: Most sort of military historians were predicting at the time that warfare...this is regarding the army....much more mechanized and much more technical. Did your training programme modify itself over the years to take that into account?

Dr. Shrum: Oh, to some extent. Slowly I would say but not very much. The manuals didn't change very much. It takes a long

while, it did, to change one of the military training manuals. I think most of them were written after the South African War.

Mr. Specht: Did the status of the Corps change when war broke out? Were you still just a training corps or were you under any military obligation?

Dr. Shrum: No.

Mr. Specht: You weren't under any military obligation.

Dr. Shrum: But we took in graduates who were not students for training in the evening. Well, they would join the corps. They went to camp with us and so on. We had special parades for them in the evening....to help them qualify for commission.

Mr. Specht: I see.

Dr. Shrum: But they weren't always graduates too. There were one or two that we took on. We said that they had to be university graduates but there were one or two that we accepted that weren't even university graduates.....because they couldn't get the qualifications downtown. They didn't have the staff. They didn't have the manuals. They didn't seem to know how to go about it..training people for the officer's qualification.

Mr. Specht: There was an interesting turn of events, this was in September 1939, the Canadian General Staff stated that enlistees in the C. O. T. C. should be prepared to serve in the forces very soon. Then a few days later, this was reported in the Ubysey, they reversed this decision saying, no, they'll have no obligation at all. Do you recall any of that?

Dr. Shrum: No, I don't recall it but I would say that the first was a mistake....to suggest that they enlist the C.O.T.C. They were then obligated to join the service. This was never

the intention of the C.O.T.C. I don't think so.

Mr. Specht: Now the Department of National Defence adopted a policy encouraging students to stay in university and graduate before they enlisted in the active services.

Dr. Shrum: That's right.

Mr. Specht: Do you know how that decision came about or why?

Dr. Shrum: Well because I think that they felt that this was a war in which there would be far greater need for people with technical training. Science didn't play much of a role in World War I but it was very obvious in World War II that not only in the military but in all the supporting services they would need university graduates in great number.

Mr. Specht: Did U.B.C. support this point of view?

Dr. Shrum: Yes.

Mr. Specht: Did you yourself?

Dr. Shrum: Yes.

Mr. Specht: How about graduates from the Arts, did you think it should apply to them?

Dr. Shrum: It applied to them too because they were required in intelligence service, interpreters and there was always a demand for them too, I think.

Mr. Specht: When there was compulsory military training, all the students who you recruited, did they all.....were they sort of all aiming for commissions...officer training or was it basic soldier training?

Dr. Shrum: Well, I think some of them thought they didn't want to be officers and they took it as basic training. One could take basic training without taking any certificate. If you wanted

to become an officer and qualify you had to take extra lectures. There was a certain basic training you had to take, mainly ten parades and so forth and go to camp. But you didn't have to take the lectures. There were quite a number of lectures associated with the officer training. Oh, a great number of students didn't take it all. Most of them thought the war would be over by the time they were out of the university anyway, I think. So they just took the minimum. The minimum really involved mainly parades.

Mr. Specht: So when these students graduated they would have had some basic military experience?

Dr. Shrum: That's right.

Mr. Specht: Presumably they would enlist in the ranks.

Dr. Shrum: Yes, but some of them could go into the National Research Council and various other organizations. Everybody wasn't required to go into the military when they graduated.

Mr. Specht: Oh.

Dr. Shrum: You see there were deferments for people working on the National Research Council. If you graduated from U.B.C. and then you could go and work in the National Research Council and still get deferment. And there were other organizations, Polymer I suppose, it was in operation then. You could get exemption to work for an essential war industry. I'm sure that some went and worked at the Boeing plant down in Seattle. They would get deferment. You wouldn't get exemption, you'd get deferment so that if the situation changed and they did need more people they could call them up. But they were deferred mostly indefinitely.

Mr. Specht: How did the campus change during the war, vast recruitment and how did you cope with such an influx?

Dr. Shrum: Well the thing that bothered me most...some of the professors enlisted in the ranks in the C.O.T.C. Quite a few of them took training. The thing that bothered me most, I used to be embarrassed about it because we used to wear our uniforms on the campus some days then, if it was a parade day. One of these professors would come along and he'd salute me, you know. (chuckles) There was no way to get around it, you know. I didn't think it was proper for senior professor to salute me on the campus but.....well it didn't happen very often, fortunately.

Mr. Specht: How about space for drill and accommodation....office space, equipment? There must have been a real problem at first to handle all this.

Dr. Shrum: Well we started to build the Armoury pretty shortly after the war. This was quite a problem. There's an interesting story there too because we couldn't....timber was under control, you see and we couldn't get the timber to build the Armoury. I went to Ottawa and the timber controller was down there. I told him I was going to sit in his office until he agreed to it because I said, "Don't tell me I have to go back and tell these students. The university says that military training is compulsory." And I said, "It rains all the time in the winter out there and we have forestry as a main industry....and you tell me we can't have a few carloads of lumber to build a shelter for these students when they've waived their pay!" I just laid it on the line. Eventually I got it. Then later we wanted to put an addition on the Armoury, so I went down and

tried the same thing again and he said, "You know Shrum, the mistake I made was ever agreeing the first time. I guess I'll have to let you do it a second time now." So we had the Armoury. We were one of the few C.O.T.C.s in Canada that had good accommodation. We had the best in Canada.....best by all odds. The best facilities, we had a very fine officer's mess, orderly room, everything we needed.

Mr. Specht: The war broke out and you stated that training " will be more theoretical and technical than formerly." Why did you make that statement and how did.....

Dr. Shrum: Well I guess we had to put in more time and since we didn't have the military equipment to do the more practical things we'd better do what we'd be equipped to do. So we did a lot of work on map reading and this sort of thing where we could get professors who were well qualified in the field to help. I think that was the main reason, just necessity. We didn't have the military people and we had no military equipment so we tried to do. We wanted to put in more time. People wanted to prepare for the future and this was the best way to do it, I think.

Mr. Specht: There was a serious problem of lack of instructors, wasn't there?

Dr. Shrum: Oh yes.

Mr. Specht: Because they were in the active services.

Dr. Shrum: That's right. There they were needed to train the troops that were enlisted.

Mr. Specht: Did you partly overcome this problem?

Dr. Shrum: Well as I say we used these Junior students for

military parades because they'd had cadet training in the schools. Some of them were very good and so we used those. We borrowed some. Our parades were on a Saturday afternoon, most of them, and some of the military units didn't parade on Saturday afternoon. So we'd make arrangements for some of the instructors to come over from town to help us.

Mr. Specht: Was the faculty on the campus co-operative and helpful during the war?

Dr. Shrum: With one or two exceptions, yes.

Mr. Specht: Would they volunteer their time for lectures?

Dr. Shrum: Yes....and they would arrange for students to get into sections where they could take the training. So yes, I would say that the faculty was very co-operative.

Mr. Specht: How about the student body?

Dr. Shrum: Well they voted in the auditorium to waive their pay even after the Navy came in. The Navy and I had this meeting in the auditorium and put it up to them. I didn't think they would but they did vote to waive their pay. So I think that's a pretty fair indication that they were trying to be co-operative and helpful. Now I don't say what would have happened if they had voted not to waive their pay. I didn't (chuckles) issue any threats or anything. If I had they wouldn't have voted. I appealed to them on the basis of what the money was being used for. Some of them would say, "Well what will happen when the war is over, what are we going to do with all this money?" Well I said, "I'll guarantee that it'll stay at the university. It'll be used here." And it's still at the university, the money. We had more than we could use.

Mr. Specht: How about the Student War Chest and the Red Cross? Were these quite successful?

Dr. Shrum: I don't know very much about them.

Mr. Specht: October 1940, this is a controversy, there's an editorial in the Ubyyssey which argued that the timetables of the C.O.T.C. be altered to accommodate applied science courses. Either that or they should be given credit for their courses. A meeting was held with the Science students and you attended the meeting and you excluded the press.

Dr. Shrum: Which?

Mr. Specht: You excluded the press from the meeting...the Ubyyssey reporters, and after the meeting the Science students agreed that there was no conflict. I just wondered what you said at this meeting.

Dr. Shrum: (laughs) I don't know.

Mr. Specht: You don't remember, eh?

Dr. Shrum: I can't remember. But I was saying earlier that Dean Finlayson wasn't whole heartedly supporting it. He felt and maybe quite honestly, that the engineering students would be better, they were going to be used as engineers in the war anyway, and that they didn't need this parades and military training and so forth. He wasn't very co-operative in that respect. But I can't remember the meeting.

Mr. Specht: It sounds as if you must have been quite angry tho' if you made sure that the Ubyyssey...you didn't want any part of them at the meeting. Oh, you said they had made a mistake in their editorial too. Just wondered what....

Dr. Shrum: I can't remember it.

Mr. Specht: Was the university sensitive to criticism from the public that students were being privileged because of being deferred?

Dr. Shrum: There was a little bit of this but I don't think it was very serious. There was a little bit of that but on the whole I think that most people agreed that the sort of war we were fighting was going to be a long war and that we needed university trained people to prosecute it. Certainly if university students went downtown I don't think they were subject to any snide remarks or anything because they were students in the university.

Mr. Specht: Were there any defence measures on the campus at the time?

Mr. Shrum: Only in connection with down where Fort Camp was. There was nothing I don't think. I don't think there were any military restrictions on the campus. There were, yes, in the Chemistry Department they had some rooms that were double locked and so on. They claimed they were doing war research and there was some restriction on these but it didn't amount to very much.

Mr. Specht: How about black outs?

Dr. Shrum: We had black outs on University Hill here. That was very early in the war. I had this place I had this all blacked out. They had civil defence volunteers going around at night to see if they could see a little bit of light through the window. Harry Warren was very active in this. He could tell you about that. He was very active. It used to be a bit of a joke. We'd say, "If you don't get the lights out, Harry

Warren will be at your door." He took this very seriously. He had no military experience or interest but then he threw himself wholeheartedly into Civil Defence.

Mr. Specht: In the term beginning in 1942, you announced a change in training. "Now most of the time will be spent on practical training." Do you know why do you think this change came about? Was it because of demands for men?

Dr. Shrum: I don't know.

Mr. Specht: Were you supplied with equipment all of a sudden?

Dr. Shrum: I guess the units that were taking our people said that they weren't capable of handling men. These university students they needed more practical experience because they were going directly into reinforcements and so on. They went into units that were already established and I expect that there was this suggestion that.....At first we were really training them theoretically because they were going to take part in various aspects of the war. But if we were going to feed more officers into active service units, they had to have more practical training. I think that was it. To handle men and so on.....

Mr. Specht: Also in 1942, that was when the university Naval Training Division started and the university Air training Plan. How did you fit that into your directing military affairs on campus? How did you co-ordinate those?

Dr. Shrum: Well this was a little difficult at the time. We made it clear though, and I had great support from Dr. Klinck on this, that I didn't want to take over these units. If the Navy and the Airforce wanted to have units on campus, well that

was alright but....the C.O.T.C., there would be an over-riding authority and I would have that over-riding authority as far as these units were concerned. But for instance they couldn't come on the campus and say, "We will not have any parades." you see? Students didn't like parades very much, especially when it was raining. "We'll just do theoretical work or something." I had the authority to say, "No, that your programme has to be such that it doesn't embarrass in any way the C.O.T.C. which has the mass of the students." This was done when the Commanding Officers were appointed. They were university professors too, you see so we had very cordial relations. There was never any problem. When they started, we were worried about how it would be co-ordinated and there was some concern about that. But after they were formed and they picked good people from the university to head up these units, as a matter of fact both the people they picked were C.O.T.C. officers....to head up the Airforce and the Navy. They were officers of mine so there was no problem. But if they had sent somebody on the campus from outside it might have been different. We were just worried that there wasn't any conflict.

Mr. Specht: Did you continue all your duties as the head of the Physics department?

Dr. Shrum: Yes.

Mr. Specht: You never slackened off on anything because of your responsibilities?

Dr. Shrum: No, I was Head of the Physics Department and Director of the Extension Department.

Mr. Specht: You must have been extremely busy then.

Dr. Shrum: Yes.

Mr. Specht: Do you think that the officers training that the men underwent on campus, do you think this equipped them well for service abroad?

Dr. Shrum: The training we got here?

Mr. Specht: Yes.

Dr. Shrum: Oh I think it was just a start. They certainly wouldn't be equipped to go into active service but they would have some basic training. They would have to have some further training for an officer. They couldn't go from the C.O.T.C. into a unit in France, directly.

Mr. Specht: Where would an officer go once he left U.B.C. and enlisted? Would he go to another Royal Academy or to a special training.....

Dr. Shrum: He'd go to a special officer's Training school.

Mr. Specht: What sort of feedback did you get? Did you get any of your recruits or officers who had trained in C.O.T.C. writing you letters during the war?

Dr. Shrum: Oh yes. I had one fellow, he wrote to his mother and his mother sent me the letter. He says, "You know when I was at the C.O.T.C." No, he said, "The conditions over here are very hard, frightening, the shells and so forth." But he said, "You know I don't think that even overseas I've ever been quite so frightened as I was with Col. Shrum in the C.O.T.C." (laughs) So I think the discipline worked pretty well. The C.O.T.C. people distinguished themselves but I think that they would have distinguished themselves anyway because they were superior people. It wasn't the training they had. I guess the

only V.C. from U.B.C. was a chap that went into the Naval Service. He'd been in the C.O.T.C. Then there was another fellow who had a tremendous record....medals. I can't think of his name now...from Vancouver Island. He was one of these young sergeants in his first year in the C.O.T.C. But this was because they were superior persons. I don't think that the training... the discipline was the most valuable part of the training because it's very difficult for a person to go from civilian life into an officer training school. Immediately you're subjected to this intense military discipline. If you start to fight it and resent it then you're really in difficulties. So I think that the indoctrination to discipline was a great help to these people to go on in their military service.

Mr. Specht: Camps were set up in Naniamo, for summer training. There was a comment in the annual that this was much more rough than out at U.B.C. I wonder...this was set up as kind of a transition before action....

Dr. Shrum: Well, when they were in camp we treated them just as if they were on active service. Absolutely. There were other units on active service right adjacent to us...all round us. Our boys were required to behave just as if they were on active service....when they were in camp. No fooling around! All the spit and polish and everything else. The wet weather and the mud and the rain! They were in tents too and that wasn't very comfortable. See we went to camp usually the last week in April and the first week in May and in Nanaimo that isn't always balmy weather. We also went to Vernon. I went two years to Nanaimo, one up at Courtenay, and two years in Vernon, I believe. And

I was one year up in Chilliwack.

End of track II