

Mr. Robert Bonner
July 19, 1973

Interview ____, Tape 2, Track 1.

Mr. Specht: You were at summer camp in Chilliwack?

Mr. Bonner: Chilliwack, yes. I think that's the only summer camp I attended with the O.T.C. That was at the end of the war. I don't recall that the summer camps continued thereafter.

Mr. Specht: You mentioned before when we were talking that at a summer camp you had the men stage an invasion.

Mr. Bonner: Oh yes, at Nanaimo.

Mr. Specht: Was that in this period after the war?

Mr. Bonner: Yes. There must have been two camps.

Mr. Specht: Tell about that.

Mr. Bonner: Well I thought it would be interesting to do a simulated landing at Qualicum Beach. We devised a scheme whereby _____ would take charge of 2" mortars and others take charge of machine guns. We were firing to the flank andsmoke mortars into the faces of the oncoming people. It was just to give them atmosphere and it was part of the general scheme. The G.O.C. at the time I think, turned a little pale when he showed up and saw this exercise going on.

Mr. Specht: How did it go? Did you make a beachhead?

Mr. Bonner: Yes, but we didn't do a landing because we didn't have the barges. But we had people on the beachhead situation and had them move into the fire and then deploy. and some other exercises. In those days Qualicum was pretty well deserted.

Mr. Specht: What gave you the inspiration to have this?

Mr. Bonner: Well, you know it's a sort of typical manoeuvre. The sort of thing that a person might expect to do at some point.

Certainly with the Far Eastern thing going on, it was a typical Pacific manoeuvre that had to be accomplished.

Mr. Specht: The war ended in 1945. Do you remember how you felt?after 6 years of war?

Mr. Bonner: Oh I think everybody was relieved and pleased. My personal situation was a little untypical. I received a low medical category as a result of being knocked about in Italy and I really began to lose interest in the whole thing. For example, there was an order came around that people might volunteer for the Far East. I thought it was rather a stupid thing...having volunteered for the war that you should be asked to volunteer for the Far East! If I'd been directed, you know, I wouldn't have thought anything about it but the notion of volunteering again put in mind the possibility that there was an option. So far as I was concerned I had no expectation of active service once they altered my physical category severely so I thought I'd get back to the business of qualification. I had saved sufficient money. I had intended merely to go to Osgood Hall but I learned that a faculty of law was being organized at the Univeristy of British Columbia and since I intended to practise here I thought I might just as well get in on that if I could.

Mr. Specht: You never considered a career in the army at this time, then?

Mr. Bonner: Not seriously. I'd been nominated for a staff course which I was then taking which might have led to a permanent appointment but I really didn't have in mind that a desirable goal to be a professional soldier.

Mr. Specht: How would you account for your continued interest in C.O.T.C. then?

Mr. Bonner: I think it's just a matter of general civic responsibility. Well, you know the post war period wasn't all that settled. It was really quite uncertain what the Russians intended to do. I didn't think there was very much point in having won a war to disband probably there'd be somebody else who had quite different ideas. So I suppose by this point, I felt that the military had an ongoing function.

Mr. Specht: This was quite different from World War I when sentiments were decidedly against anything continuing the military.

Mr. Bonner: Well of course, at the cessation of World War I there was no other subsequent danger perceived. The intention of the Soviets was really quite unclear. Any clarity that attended was menacing, the Berlin blockade and things of that sort were coming about. The Soviets were really quite a threat.

Mr. Specht: Would you say that student and possibly faculty opposition at this time was negligible then too in terms of the uncertain international climate?

Mr. Bonner: Well, I don't think I could generalize about anybody's attitude but the O.T.C. was pretty generally accepted. In fact, in the years that I commanded the O.T.C. I think U.B.C. proportionately had more people involved than any other O.T.C. unit in Canada and more on active service or into the reserve than any other unit in Canada. Then the Korean thing came along and of course we had those qualified become involved in the

Korean exercise. All of this in that day and time was a perfectly normal and commendable thing to be involved in. I'm not sure that those are the attitudes today. In that immediate post war period everybody was very much of the mind that the military had a place and a certain amount of international law and order arose from the fact of being prepared. As a matter of fact, I think that point of view continued until the Americans got sadly involved in Viet Nam. I think much of the current disillusionment with military activity is a reflection of the American involvement in Viet Nam. I think that's true in North America anyway. The British don't seem to be so adversely affected. They have a high rate of recruitment and high morale in their units and their units are intact.

Mr. Specht: How about the attitude towards the United Nations... Did you see this as possibly not being as effective in keeping international peace?

Mr. Bonner: I think the U.N. had a very good reception as it began and for a number of years afterward but it increasingly began to be seen as an ineffective organization. The notion of an international peace keeping force which is really implicit in the U.N. sanction really never emerged and probably cannot be expected to emerge. I don't know. It's just that the realities of the Cold War put the attached to the U.N. really into the shade.

Mr. Specht: In January 1946, General Greer visited campus and a meeting was held with officers and veterans of the contingent. The commanding officer's reports, I think Mr. Shrum would be the author of the report at this point, said that there were informal discussions regarding future officer training. Do you

have any recollection of this meeting? Did you attend?

Mr. Bonner: I must have attended. There were quite a number of meetings in those days. In fact we were going back to infantry meetings in Ottawa and that sort of thing during this period. I don't think it was at this meeting but at a subsequent one in Ottawa where General Crerar said in effect we were manning a Roman wall. That was the mentality of the period. Military training was geared to the accepted menace which was involved in Eastern Europe. The Russian thing was viewed as a large undefinable but valid threat.

Mr. Specht: You became commanding officer in February 1946 succeeding Col. Shrum. Can you describe how you became C. O.?

Mr. Bonner: Well, I suppose at one point Gordon Shrum asked me if I would take over from him and I think I thought that would be an interesting thing to try and because I was an undergraduate on the campus at the same time I was going to be there anyway.

Mr. Specht: You were quite a young man. Did you have any apprehensions about it.

Mr. Bonner: Not really. I remember thinking that the secret to success of the exercise was not to venture beyond certain knowledge. I suppose I adopted that as a general course of conduct. I don't hesitate to draw on the knowledge of others and unless I've had an opportunity to research a thing, I don't take too many flyers beyond a certain knowledge. That's sort a scheme of dealing.

Mr. Specht: Can you tell me your recollections of other people in the corps? Captain Riddihough, for example, what did you think of him?

Mr. Bonner: Oh yes. He was always a great wit. We used to have luncheons in the mess almost daily and he was usually in attendance, a very spritely conversationalist and good humour...give it to the classes.

Mr. Specht: And Captain Topping?

Mr. Bonner: Topping, yes. He'd been an instructor of mine in Economics. He was always fairly dogmatic in his view points. Willing to see another point of view but usually he held his opinions pretty strongly.

Mr. Specht: Do you remember Captain Walmsley?

Mr. Bonner: Oh yes, Sheridan Walmsley, yes. A very urbane fellow, he was adjutant. I haven't seen him in recent years. In fact I don't know whether he's still in the city or not. He was a very careful man, very precise and always did a good job.

Mr. Specht: Okay, C.O.T.C. was reorganized in 1946. There were several important changes. One was that for the first time the C.O.T.C. was recognized as a body that was able to give commissions. This wasn't the case before. You had to apply with the regular forces. First of all, what machinery was set up so that you could commission cadets directly yourself, into the services?

Mr. Bonner: Well it was a machinery which consisted not only of campus training but of a qualifying examination.

Mr. Specht: How would you, for example decree that a person is commissioned into a particular reserve unit?

Mr. Bonner: Well, he would have to apply and be received by that unit. There would be recognition of his C.O.T.C. qualification. Precisely who issued the paper, I guess I've forgotten but it would be on a concurrent certificate of qualification from the C.O.T.C., acceptance by the reserve unit and the laying on of hands by Army. The commission papers actually issue out of D.N.D.

Mr. Specht: How about the syllabus. Were there any notable changes?

Mr. Bonner: No, at that point the syllabus had become pretty well established in terms of the various military manuals which at that point were completely reflective of wartime experience. You always had a certain amount of discretion as to how the syllabus was given out and applied in instruction. I suppose the fact that we had a small group of relatively experienced people was some assistance in imparting a sense of realism into the instruction. At that particular point there was pretty general acceptance of the O.T.C. as a unit and we had our selection really of those who wished to enter. Many would apply and no^t all would be received.

Mr. Specht: Do you think that the corps is becoming more oriented towards profession rather than training for warfare? Like was there less emphasis on drill and regimentation after the war and more towards technical knowledge?

Mr. Bonner: No it was essentially a military professional training.

In other words there was no concession to the fact that the country wasn't at war. There was no purpose in making that type of concession. If you're going to qualify an officer, you're going to qualify an officer for what he's expected to do. If you want to train civilians, it's something else. You train civilians. If you're training officers, you're training officers.

Mr. Specht: One thing I noticed in one of the C.O. reports was that parade wasn't compulsory. Not at first anyways! In 1946 '47. That changed later.

Mr. Bonner: Well it might not have been compulsory but if people didn't parade, they weren't with the unit very long!

Mr. Specht: What was your attitude towards that? Did you feel that people really had to turn out for the parades?

Mr. Bonner: Oh yes.

Mr. Specht: Did you initiate any effort to bring the contingent closer to the reserve unit...the local reserve units?

Mr. Bonner: Yes, there was quite a bit of liason back and forth. I brought commanding officers and company commanders out to give instruction. For a number of years, I think the relationship was fairly close. The reserve unit commanders in those days too were freshly returned and so to a greater or lesser degree we all knew one another. It wasn't a matter of any difficulty. They were anxious to be of assistance. It was a matter of assisting their own officer recruitment from their point of view

and also a matter of not having a wide access to experienced officers for the purpose of giving greater depth to the instruction which was taking place.

Mr. Specht: In 1947, '48 the Commanding Officer's Report has a statement which criticizes the disparity of pay between C.O.T.C. officers and those in the regular services. The reason for this was that because you are now granting commissions, or produce qualified cadets and officers, the work you had to do in administration and documenting the officers was as great as any reserve unit.

Mr. Bonner: Yes, it would have been. Is that part of my report?

Mr. Specht: It would probably be yours.....your statement.

Mr. Bonner: I suppose it was. Well, I must say, I haven't thought of it from that day to this. (laughs)

Mr. Specht: Did you ever resolve it?

Mr. Bonner: I don't think it was resolved. O.T.C. always existed on a kind of a separate effort in the military. The opportunity of resolving it on a local basis I think would be minimal.

Mr. Specht: I'd like to ask about the University administration. Were they fully co-operative with the O.T.C.?

Mr. Bonner: Oh yes, extremely so. Norman McKenzie was the president of course. He'd been a soldier in the First War and I think he was a very aware sort of person in terms of the implications of the Second War. He'd had considerable connections with the National Government and he was a man of many parts in that sense. He saw the O.T.C., as I gathered his opinion, as being an important feature and one of the things a person might

do at university.

Mr. Specht: So in any occasion when you had to consult him or have a meeting with the committee⁹ for military affairs, he was always pretty well supportive.

Mr. Bonner: Oh yes, I would say so.

Mr. Specht: How about Chancellor Hamber?

Mr. Bonner: Well, I think his role was less formal but Hamber was also honorary Colonel of the Seaforths...(laughs)..so I had no problems in that connection. I knew him quite well.

Mr. Specht: Did you retain your connection with the Seaforths at all?

Mr. Bonner: I still do. Yes.

Mr. Specht: Do they have a Legion?

Mr. Bonner: Well, they have an association. I belong to the association. I'm not really very active with it but I've remained a member of the mess all these years. Once a Seaforth, always a Seaforth! (laughs)

Mr. Specht: It seems to be one of the most well thought of, and popular units in Vancouver.....and the Patricias.

Mr. Bonner: Well, the Patricias are a Victoria outfit. The Seaforth has been very popular and probably still is. It's in a lesser role than it used to be. But the Seaforths were a very professional crowd albeit reserves, for the most part. I think they produced as many Senior Officers in the Canadian Army as any unit you could think of. We gave a number of senior officers to other units. Bert Hoffmeister was probably the most senior among them. He was Colonel of the regiment when

I joined and he became Brigade commander and then commanded the Division and then he commanded the Corps. He was in charge of the Far East force. There were quite a variety of officers, I would think a few dozen who rose to positions of prominence in the Army hierarchy from our unit. The unit has always been very demanding in its standards and very successful on that account.

End of track I

Mr. Robert Bonner
July 24, 1973

Interview ____, Tape 2, Track 2.

Mr. Specht: I'd like to go back to when you assumed the Commanding Officer's position. You stated that Col. Shrum asked you if you would assume the command. You still have to be appointed by the committee for the post, don't you?

Mr. Bonner: No.....what committee are you speaking of?

Mr. Specht: The Committee for Military Affairs....mostly the campus people, the president and chancellor, the C.O. and faculty members who presided on the committee.

Mr. Bonner: I don't think it went that route at all. The record may show it did but I don't recall that it did.

Mr. Specht! I know that they appointed the previous commanding officers.

Mr. Bonner: I don't think it worked that way in my case. As a matter of fact, I'm suprisingly vague in my recalling how it came about....because I was there all the time on a professional basis. Then it came through Army orders and I took over. I'm sure there was more to it than that....but I was living a rather intense life as a law undergraduate at the same time, so....(laughs) I think probably my mind was as much on law as anything else while all this was going on.

Mr. Specht: The fact that Col. Shrum sort of nominated you.. This probably had a lot of weight with the authorities.

Mr. Bonner: Oh yes, I would think so.

Mr. Specht: Were there other candidates at the time?

Mr. Bonner: I'm not aware that there were.

Mr. Specht: You mentioned that you attended meetings in Ottawa as the representative of the U.B.C. contingent.

Mr. Bonner: Yes, these were gatherings of officers for various

briefings. I think there were two or three of them.

Mr. Specht: What kind of briefings? What were they about?

Mr. Bonner: Well they were background briefings as to the general role of the Army at that time, general observations about the situation in Europe, and generally what was expected of the O.T.C. from the standpoint of production of officer personnel. In those days the Army had a fairly clearly defined role, the atomic bomb notwithstanding. We were proceeding along what would now be regarded as conventional lines in the role of the armed services, generally speaking. We had a strong position in post war Europe in what became the NATO organization. Of course Korea was boiling up and there were lots of alarms and excursions about the Russian situation in Europe. As I say, it culminated with the Korean exercise. So although we were not at war and peace had technically set in, it was considered officially to be somewhat fragile so far as future involvement might be concerned with the Russians.

Mr. Specht: Yes, I did want to ask you about NATO, established in 1949. Was your approach to training cadets affected by NATO? The fact that there would have to be a Canadian contingent in Europe as part of NATO...

Mr. Bonner: Well, it gave a sense of realism to the whole exercise. We were training essentially for two aspects of service, the reserve units which would be our primary goal and secondarily for active service. The army was in a fairly good state of readiness but Junior officers were in some requirement especially when Korea began.

Mr. Specht: Were there very many cadets from C.O.T.C. that went to Europe? Were there some anyway?

Mr. Bonner: Oh yes. I don't have a number in mind. My recollection of the period was that we had quite a number go in active service and quite a large number indeed go into the reserve force. I think our record among the O.T.C.s in Canada in that connection was pretty high. I think the University of Toronto may have been better but it would have been larger to start with.

Mr. Specht: Did you receive any feedback, letters or comments from officers abroad, in the case of Europe, as far their training went and how it equipped them for their role in Europe?

Mr. Bonner: No. But I would say that they would get their most important training after leaving us because of the limited nature of O.T.C. training. It's one thing to train out of a book and another thing to train on weekend exercises and it's one thing to train on reserve camp situations but all of this is pretty pale alongside field training with a unit, whether with an active force or an actively engaged force....that's where your real training begins.

Mr. Specht: Did any of your training envisage acting in conjunction with the other Allied ground forces in Europe, The British and the Americans? Did you go that far?

Mr. Bonner: It wasn't that far. This is pretty rudimentary professional training.

Mr. Specht: 1950, '51, '52 this was the height of anti-Communist feeling in the United States. McCarthyism arose at this time.

I wonder what sort of repercussions you would have felt in Vancouver, at U.B.C in the corps?

Mr. Bonner: I'm not aware of any particular repercussions. The McCarthy hearings were on certainly. I think they were viewed essentially with a sense of detachment....as something going on rather strangely in the United States.

Mr. Specht: Do you remember feeling yourself that it was a rather extreme situation in the United States, compared to Canada?

Mr. Bonner: Well, I thought McCarthy was certainly extreme. The role of the Communist Party in those days, of course was viewed with great suspicion as to its objectives and what it really intended. In many respects I think Communist activity was linked with active espionage and suspicion that they were furthering Imperial aims of the Soviet Union. How well founded those impressions were in fact, I was never in a position particularly to say....not with respect to those days anyway. I later had other impressions but they touched on another role that I had. However, I think that the official view was very substantial. Remember there had been the G exposé in Ottawa in the post war period. The revelation that there was an active espionage activity in Canada aimed at deriving information from official quarters, clandestine like. The Soviets, either through the Communist Party or otherwise, were thought to be very active and I think that was close to the truth of the matter. The secrets of the atomic bomb weren't sent by Air Mail! They were derived by detailed espionage.

Mr. Specht: You didn't have lectures or things like that in the Corps that would warn the cadets against subversion?

Mr. Bonner: No, there was no ^{par}ticular emphasis on that point.

Mr. Specht: In 1949 the Soviets exploded the first atomic bomb. I wonder, seeing the nuclear age coming, did this affect the corps in any way? Did you see it perhaps as having a diminished role in military policy?

Mr. Bonner: Well the presence of the nuclear bomb on both sides, I think cast into very considerable doubt the role of the armed forces generally, but particularly the Army. It's one thing to depend on conventional fire power and to cope with it, it's quite another thing to be confronted with atomic warfare and its aftermath. So, I think a very considerable confusion in the moralization arose at all levels in the armed forces in not seeing clearly what they might be called upon to do for the future. That was particularly evident in the reserve forces apart from O.T.C. For a time the reserve forces were cast in an atomic role which really made them akin to preservers of civilian law and order and kind of a clean up squad for whatever order might be introduced in the aftermath of an atomic holocaust. I'm not sure that the services have entirely recovered their sense of purpose as a result of the atomic bomb. I think what sense of purpose now exists is largely in spite of, not because of the atomic bomb. I think that probably the present opinion is that it is just too horrible to be employed and therefore conventional forces have a more or less conventional role. But it's taken some years for this opinion to re-emerge.

Mr. Specht: I'd like to ask you a little about the Korean war.

Were cadets from the C.O.T.C. involved in the Korean War in any way?

Mr. Bonner: Yes, a number on graduation, did serve. I can't be certain at this time how many but I would think half a dozen or more.

Mr. Specht: Did you receive any feedback in this case?

Mr. Bonner: One cadet, McLeod, came back and spoke of his experiences. There were others but I didn't happen to become aware of them.

Mr. Specht: Was there confusion to some extent as to the moral role of Canada in the Korean War?

Mr. Bonner: No, our involvement in the Korean War was comparatively uncomplicated. There was no particular indecision about it that I recall.

Mr. Specht: That was under United Nations auspices.

Mr. Bonner: It was under United Nations auspices but it was seen as being more or less in the black and white context of World War II.

Mr. Specht: How about fighting in tropical or semi-tropical countries in a semi-guerilla setting? Was guerilla warfare taken into account in the army training?

Mr. Bonner: Well, what theatre are you referring to?

Mr. Specht: Korean War.

Mr. Bonner: Oh, that wasn't tropical.

Mr. Specht: Well, semi-tropical?

Mr. Bonner: They have pretty bitter and cold winters, you know, heavy snow?

Mr. Specht: That's true.

Mr. Bonner: I think that was pretty conventional^{al} and it wasn't

guerilla warfare. It was straight line warfare. It was pretty well a conventional theatre. Mind you anything that I might say about it is derived as any spectator might derive it from the vantage point of North America. I've never been in Korea. But there was fairly full information about the nature of the fighting. The North Koreans were very steadfast soldiers and gave maximum difficulty to the American forces particularly who were involved. It was conventional warfare in that sense.

Mr. Specht: A relatively clearly defined front?

Mr. Bonner: Yes.

Mr. Specht: The Air Force played a tremendous part in the Second World War in assisting the Army in its strategy of deployment, I wonder if the three services were moving closer together as a fighting force?

Mr. Bonner: Well, arising out of the second war was the concept of the task force which was the ad hoc bringing together of troops for a particular job, Navy, Army, Air Force . I suppose the best early evidence of this type of thing had to do with the combined operations which were really the Brigading of the elements as required for the objective. I don't think there was ever any difficulty with the task force concept in so far as the services were concerned. There were no psychological barriers to working in a task force setting. But I've always distinguished in my own mind between task force concepts and the so called unification of the services which has been brought about in Canada....8 or 10 years ago. I thought the unification idea was psychologically unsound. I still think so and perhaps the best evidence of my conclusion in that connection is that

connection is that we're the only people who have invented it. The nations who rely more heavily on their armed services than we do have never found it either necessary or desirable to enter into a unification program.

Mr. Specht: Did you know that back in the twenties the Federal Government attempted to form a unification too?

Mr. Bonner: Well, I think it was cock-eyed then too. See the whole thing that holds the military fabric together is an induced psychology. You can't thin that out effectively among the three services and still have it work. I think it's pitiful to see Naval Officers walking around in sea green uniforms when every other Navy in the World is in Navy blue. It's an odd ball thing that you ought not be called upon to explain in a strange port. It's not so bad for the army, the army can get along in almost any kind of a uniform. But I think the fact is that we're getting away from unification since it's been introduced. Eventually I think the three services will be restored. That's not to say that at certain levels of command there ought not to be a unified command. That's a perfectly normal and logical thing. But the notions of turning out soldiers and sailors and airmen in a common mold...that's a lot of baloney. It's just psychologically unsound.

Mr. Specht: Do you know what the political motives are behind the unification?

Mr. Bonner: I'm really uncertain what the motives were. I think they had notions of economy and they had notions of national identity and a lot of trumped up notions. I was

never persuaded. I told Hellyer so on plenty of occasions.

(laughs)

Mr. Specht: You had joint annual parades with the other two services.

Mr. Bonner: Oh yes, these were on occasion, you know.

Mr. Specht: How did they work out?

Mr. Bonner: No particular difficulty. Just , you know, put the three units together and we paraded.

Mr. Specht: Was there any rivalry or competition between the services?

Mr. Bonner: Oh no.....well each arm would think themselves the best of the lot, you know. That's normal. It's healthy.

Mr. Specht: One important change in the C.O.T.C., I don't know the date, the government took a much greater financial responsibility for the cadets. They paid his university education, his tuition fees and monthly salary and of course the summer camp. I wondered how this affected the corps, recruiting, for example and the type of cadets that would have come in under these circumstances. There was also the compulsory military obligation after completing university.

Mr. Bonner: I think you're referring to the Reserve Officer Training Plan, aren't you?

Mr. Specht: Yes.

Mr. Bonner: That really post dates my involvement. I don't have any experience with the concept. However it was introduced at a time when generally the momentum toward the services was diminishing. It began in the period that I referred to a little while ago, when there was maximum confusion about the role of

the services. I think it was probably introduced as a means of inducing more interest....but I'm speculating when I make that suggestion.

Mr. Specht: Did you observe any problems with recruitment in your last couple of years there?

Mr. Bonner: No, generally speaking we had high interest. We didn't accept everybody who applied. We had a regimental selection board and that was their regular function. I don't know what the rates of application and recruitment were as related to one another but while I was there we had a selection.

Mr. Specht: I noticed that the Naval Training Division on campus seemed to have recruitment drives. These were reported in the Ubysey...but not the C.O.T.C.

Mr. Bonner: Well, we had drives, of course, but we had a very healthy number of applicants. More than we could handle.

Mr. Specht: In 1948 you graduated and left the campus to practise law. Did you at this time contemplate giving up the command?

Mr. Bonner: Not then, no.

Mr. Specht: But it would have been less convenient for you, obviously now...not being on campus.

Mr. Bonner: Oh no. As a matter of fact it didn't make that much difference. I built a home on University Hill in 1951 so I was very close to the campus at that time.

Mr. Specht: Of the commanding officers, you were unique in having come up through the C.O.T.C. ranks....beginning as a student cadet and then an officer in the corps and then commanding

officer. I wonder, do you think your outlook was different from some of the other commanding officers who had quite a different background, experience in World War I for example? Col. Letson was very much a part of the campus military establishment.

Mr. Bonner: No, I think so far as attitudes focussing on the corps were concerned, there was probably a very high degree of consistency. The differences you can point to. But they're differences of age and differences in experiences in point of time more than anything else. Once you're turned out in the Army there's a pretty high degree of consistency in thought among those who survive the system. (chuckles)

Mr. Specht: When you were a student and also commanding officer, mind you, you were one of the older students on campus, alot of the cadets must have been your peers in age and status in a lot of ways in education. I wonder if you ever recognized any problems in that way?

Mr. Bonner: Well there didn't seem to be. When I took over I was 26. I suppose the age of the cadets would be in the 19-22 range. At that age 3 or 4 years makes a little difference and I'd had the advantage of service so it wasn't a question of one student talking to another from that standpoint.

Mr. Specht: What do you think is the most important contribution of the university educated cadets to the armed forces?

Mr. Bonner: Well anybody who is in the armed forces with a university background, I would think at this point all the

commissioned officers would be in that category, has the undoubted advantage of a somewhat liberal background....somewhat broader viewpoint than might be available to some one who had no^t had a university education. Mind you university education is increasingly common but I think there are undoubted advantages associated with it. If you're going to be an officer you know, you need all the background you can acquire, muster, beg, borrow or steal, to be effective in that role. It's not a technicians job. It's a job that ideally requires quite a breadth and a certain humanism albeit, couched in disciplined discharge. You're not really turned out as a technician when you're an officer. You have a certain technical capacity but more than that, you're supposed to be an example. You're supposed to bring some superiority of intellect and some superiority of vision to the job. I'll never forget my old Platoon Sergeant in the unit I took over in the STaforths. We had taken up a tour of duty for 24 hours in the town of M in Sicily. It was the first real job I had with the regiment and I was very keen to see it go well. We were the law in M my platoon and I for 24 hours. So I had pickets out and we were in occupied territory of course...so we were on the of course, and all the rest. I was pretty anxious to see it go well. I was making quite a number of rounds to see that everybody was correctly disposed and behaving himself. About 2 o'clock in the morning, I guess it was the Platoon Sergeant came to me and he said, "Do you mind if I make a suggestion?" I said, "Certainly." I was getting a little tired at this point.

He said, "Well, I've been watching you. You're going around and looking at everything and keeping a sharp eye out." He said, "I just wanted to tell you sir, that's not your job." (chuckles) He said, "All me and the boys want you to do is read the battle and we'll do the rest!" (laughing) I thought it was a rather valuable lesson. An officer is supposed to read the battle. Read the battle is an expression that was used in the Army. It really meant that you would size up a situation and see what was required...and issue orders to see that what was required was done. So this was very kind of my Sergeant. He was an old man. He was in his thirties! (laughing) I was 22 at the time. He was telling me that really all that the boys wanted me to do was to keep my eyes open and tell them how to stay out of trouble. That's really what the job of an officer is all about. To foresee difficulty, to analyse what's required and to issue orders to contain or overcome the difficulty and press on. That's really what it comes down to. So I got the best lesson of the whole army in that exchange with my Sergeant in Sicily. (chuckles)

Mr. Specht: What do you think are the values of military training to a person not only in army life but also in civilian life?

Mr. Bonner: Well, leaving aside the technical things that you have to learn, the chain of command and the organizational structures and so on....I suppose the chief thing that you would get from it would be a tremendous amount of self control. When you're turned out certainly as a combat officer, battle

school and everything behind you, you have been pushed to the limit physically and psychologically. In battle school, you go until you drop. You're harassed by your and they try to confuse you and to lead you astray and try to get your goat and make you lose control of yourself. Those who do, flunk the course. It's a program of calculated harassment, physical and mental. So that by the time you survive that, you know the limits of your own endurance physically and psychologically. This can give you a tremendous amount of self confidence. There's probably no other way of getting it.

Mr. Specht: So a situation that you might ordinarily fear, you'd realize that you could cope with it.

Mr. Bonner: That's right and that's what the training was really intended to give you.....a sense of your own capacity and a sense of how far you could go and still be in control. The general result of this is that the tougher the situation in which you find yourself, the calmer you force yourself to be to cope with it.

Mr. Specht: As a commanding officer what values or experiences did you want the cadets to obtain from their training, in the period with C.O.T.C.?

Mr. Bonner: Well, the C.O.T.C. training concerned itself with fundamental knowledge about the army. Fundamental knowledge of military law, fundamental knowledge of tactical concepts, fundamental knowledge about army structure, fundamental knowledge about man handling and man, management. I don't think you should reach the conclusion that a very high degree of

proficiency was necessarily sought or attained. It was because of the limited exercise...it was a fundamental attainment in most cases. But out of it all, a man would have a sense of perspective about the service that he wouldn't previously have had. He would have a basic knowledge on which to build in terms of his later service experience. So unless he was a fool he was reasonably well prepared as to information and psychology in terms of what might be expected of him later. The training was nevertheless sufficient to tell. You could weed out people whose prospects were obviously limited. In respect of whom, both from their point of view and the Army's there ought to be a separation.

Mr. Specht: Do you recall your feelings when you left the corps in 1953?

Mr. Bonner: Yes, I left under pretty obvious circumstances. I had been pretty active in politics and I was then Attorney-General and it really wasn't practical. I had continued for about a year until a succession was arranged. But it wasn't practical to be an active politician and commanding officer of the unit at the same time..... from many points of view not the least of which was time. But more important it was a duality of role which was inconsistent. So in that sense leaving was a very logical thing to do.

Mr. SPEcht: Why exactly was it inconsistent?

Mr. Bonner: Well, you can't be an active politician and running a military unit at the same time. In the first place, the Army is supposed to be divorced from politics. It's just an inconsistent role.

End of Track II