

Albert Laithwaite
April 20, 1974
Interview No. 504

Tape No. 1, Side No. 1

Mr. Laithwaite: ...our friends the enemy from across the Pennines. The pennines being a mountain chain that go down the centre of Britain.

Mr. Specht: So where you came from is Lancashire which is on the west side?

Mr. Laithwaite: Liverpool, where the Beatles came from.

Mr. Specht: Is that where you were born, in Liverpool?

Mr. Laithwaite: About twelve miles from there, in Lancashire, St. Helens.

Mr. Specht: What year was that Mr. Laithwaite?

Mr. Laithwaite: 1915.

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

Mr. Laithwaite: My father was a lumber merchant and had been a plasterer by trade and when I was born, he was operating a plastering business in St. Helens in Lancashire with the beginnings of a lumber yard and what they called a jobbing business. In those days house repairing business which if you wanted a new chimney on your house, you'd phone him and he'd quote a price and do the chimney or build you a house.

Mr. Specht: Where did your father import the lumber from?

Mr. Laithwaite: Well I think most of the lumber in Britain was from Scandinavia in those days. We had a considerable amount of plywood and I think that probably came from Canada or from the United States.

Mr. Specht: You mentioned when I was talking to you before that your father had immigrated to Canada. When did he come?

Mr. Laithwaite: I think in 1911 and he went back to join the army for the 1914 War.

Mr. Specht: Which regiment did he join?

Mr. Laithwaite: I can't recall, I don't know.

Mr. Specht: He joined the Army though for the war years?

Mr. Laithwaite: The Army, yes.

Mr. Specht: And he remained in England after the war?

Mr. Laithwaite: Yes he didn't come back. He had intended to come back to Canada, but never did. He bought the beginnings of the business then and the firm is still in operation. My father gave the business to my elder brother who died quite recently and the business is now being run by my brother's son and his widow.

Mr. Specht: Where did you go to school?

Mr. Laithwaite: I went to school at Cowlie School, in St Helens in Lancashire. Its an old endowed Grammar School. A boy's school.

Mr. Specht: Where did you go to take your training to be a teacher?

Mr. Laithwaite: I started as a teacher in the old plan as a pupil-teacher and I did, I left high school, I did two years student teaching as a pupil-teacher with the St. Helens local educative authority and then I went to College. I went to Chester College and after Chester I went to specialist college and took physical education which was a branch of Leeds University. Carnegie Physical Training College it was called in those days.

Its now Carnegie College of Physical Education, but its still in the same location. Its in Leeds and is on the same grounds as the city of Leeds Training College for teachers.

Mr. Specht: Why did you specialize in physical education?

Mr. Laithwaite: I don't know really. I'd always wanted to be a physical education teacher. I was a fairly good athlete I suppose and played a lot of rugby football and I was just crazy about things athletic.

Mr. Specht: How many years did you teach before the war?

Mr. Laithwaite: Well I graduated in 1938 and I taught '38 and the beginning of '39 and '40, until July, 1940 and then I was allowed to get into the armed forces in July, 1940. Until that time we had been in a reserved occupation and I believe when I did finally get in I was still in a reserved occupation, but someone at the air ministry must have been able to pull strings to get us in.

Mr. Specht: Why did you choose the Air Force?

Mr. Laithwaite: I suppose it was the new thing. I didn't, I was a little less than steeped in tradition about the armed services. My father was in the Army. I probably felt that the Air Force was a new thing. Flying was a new idea, that was probably what attracted me, I think.

Mr. Specht: So what were the steps which led to your being sent to Canada during the war?

Mr. Laithwaite: Well the formation of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan, the lack of space in England to do all the flying training. I suppose the second consideration was the

weather in Canada was very much more suitable for flying training than it was in Britain and particularly in places like Moose Jaw, to which we came. Our flying training school at Moose Jaw could operate right round the clock with not too much worry about the weather. I think that was the main consideration...the Royal Air Force in getting all these flying stations in the Commonwealth countries, the weather was better.

Mr. Specht: What year did you come to Canada?

Mr. Laithwaite: Oh, in November, 1940.

Mr. Specht: What was your main activities with the Air Force?

Mr. Laithwaite: Well I was a member of the Administrative and Special Duties branch...My main duties were as a physical fitness officer for most of the time. We did as I say, various administrative jobs as well.

Mr. Specht: What physical qualities were desirable for a pilot? How did this relate to the training which you would have undertaken?

Mr. Laithwaite: I think, speaking technically, general good health, but to be highly specific, I don't think that there's any one particular component of fitness that one could say is necessary for a pilot any more than the other except perhaps a component of abdominal strength. If you got right down to fine details of what particular component could you point to, I'd say a pretty good stomach and stomach wall to maybe hold the blood in the right place while you're doing flying maneuvering. I don't think there's anything else. You see, virtually that's what a pressure suit is now in high speed or high altitude or even the

astronaut work, they have a pressure suit which, when you're under large forces of G, holds the viscera and the general structure of the human body in the same place while you're under the great stress. So if...I suppose the earliest flying suits, pressure suits were, that was the main reason they were so successful. They stopped the force of gravity from displacing various organs or making those organs fill up with blood and emptying other organs of blood. For instance, when you pull out of a dive, you blackout because the blood flows towards the bottom of this large belly receptacle you have and lots of people who have a large belly have a big receptacle there and the legs and so on and the blood flows away from the brain and the reverse happens in an inside loop. You can get red-out.

Mr. Specht: Let's change the topic now to something a little more general. While you were in Canada during the war years, what was your impression of Canada during the war effort?

Mr. Laithwaite: Of course I enjoyed it very much. I was a little bit influenced by my father telling me what a great spot it was and what a good country and the idea of people not being so hide-bound in tradition or by tradition if that's one of the functions of tradition, I don't know. But there was generally an air of freedom in Canada which I liked and above all I found that the people were very much more interested in your ideas, in Britain it was a slower process to try and get things done. One could ask people for help and they probably might say "Well you can't do that, Old Boy." rather than the Canadian attitude which seemed

to be "Come on let's see what we can do to help." This is what I found interesting.

Mr. Specht: That's an interesting observation. I understand the last years of the war you returned to England?

Mr. Laithwaite: Yes. I spent approximately six years in the service and three years I spent in Canada and three years in England. I was on training stations all the time. I suppose I did what I'm doing now in a sense, training young leaders to be teachers or leaders in situations very much like teaching I guess.

Mr. Specht: What kind of leadership training were you specifically involved in? With the forces?

Mr. Laithwaite: Well the physical fitness officer was, as it sounds like, responsible for the fitness training of the students plus the skill training, instruction in sports and the skills of sports. In addition to that we'd give some instruction in the physiology of high altitude flying, that kind of thing which interested the flying trainees very much. The psychology of the young flying officer's job, things like that. The admin' duties were very interesting and were a great experience I thought. For instance, one would run a track meet and have only a small number of people to do it. We had command track meets that were quite a challenge to a young flying officer, as it was then. You went into the service and someone said "could you run a track meet, the whole command is sending people and your station will house, feed, sleep them, and entertain them while they're here. They'll be here for a week to do this track meet and there'll be trials and there'll be practices and have you got enough knives, forks

and spoons for them?" and so on and so on, it was a most interesting training in just general administration as well.

Mr. Specht: Where were you discharged?

Mr. Laithwaite: I was discharged in London.

Mr. Specht: What year?

Mr. Laithwaite: Now what was it?...almost July, '46. Almost went six years, well I did go six years.

Mr. Specht: What did you do right after the war?

Mr. Laithwaite: Well I was bound by my agreement with the St. Helens education authority to go back to teach for them for a small period, I don't remember specifically what it was, but a certain number of months to give my notice that I was leaving. In Christmas 1945, I was asked if I would come back and go to Ridley College in St. Caterines, Ontario, to run the physical fitness program and run the cadet corps.

Mr. Specht: Air cadet corps?

Mr. Laithwaite: Yes.

Mr. Specht: For school-aged cadets?

Mr. Laithwaite: Yes, secondary school. Well actually the Ridley College is a large private school in Ontario and has a junior school as well as a senior school so the boys virtually are from the age of six right through to eighteen in grade twelve, and grade thirteen. The school is very, very well equipped. We had a swimming pool even in 1946. An indoor swimming pool, heated and a very modern gymnasium building and very, very fine playing fields all around the school.

Mr. Specht: What brought you to U.B.C.?

Mr. Laithwaite: Well I found that the program at Ridley College was little bit traditional and the idea of the physical education teacher did not suit my idea of what should be done and I resigned for that reason, that I did not like the job. I knew that my particular training would be more useful at U.B.C. because of things like English Rugby being prominent and my particular back-ground in schools would be very useful and I thought perhaps that there wouldn't be too many applicants for the job say of English Rugby coach at U.B.C. So I wrote to U.B.C. and said I was in Canada and was available and did they have any openings and by luck there was an opening at U.B.C. and it was my understanding that there was a short list of about six and I got the job.

Mr. Specht: Can you give me the date?

Mr. Laithwaite: It was the first of July, 1947, was the date I joined U.B.C. It might be of interest to know that the person who interviewed me on behalf of U.B.C. was Colonel Shrum, who had been the Army C.O. at one time, was then Dr. Gordon Shrum, who later was head of the physics department and Dean of graduate studies, and later on Chancellor of Simon Fraser University.

Mr. Specht: So you were at U.B.C. in 1947. The following year was when the Air Force Squadron started on campus, reserve squadron, which you became involved in, could you tell how you became involved?

Mr. Laithwaite: Yes, I...I was always very interested in the idea of training young adults after my exposure to it in the Air Force and I had been very keen to get a university job for that very reason, that the adult education appealed to me much more

than the high school job. So when I came I was very interested to find out whether the C.O.T.C. idea was carried on in Canada as it was in Britain in the old days, the gentleman soldier idea. I had some experience of that myself in England in the old days when it was customary for the young fellows, men, to join the reserve.

Mr. Specht: Did you...to go back, maybe I missed that, did you, were you in an O.T.C. in England before the war?

Mr. Laithwaite: No. I was a little too young at that time and when I was away at college I went, they didn't have such a unit at my colleges, but I had known a good many young men who had joined the reserve Air Force in England and had been interested in it.

Mr. Specht: Would you continue your story of how you took a post with R.U.F.?

Mr. Laithwaite: Yes, well at the particular time I was looking mainly, I suppose at that time, for something to do in the summer time when one was free and I heard that in 1949 there was to be a camp at Abbotsford for the western universities and although there was no establishment for me at the U.B.C. unit at that time, I did make application and was taken on as a special...in a special capacity to help run the physical fitness program and the drill program at Abbotsford in the summer of 1949. After that the establishment for the university squadron was increased to include an adjutant or training officer and I was then able to join the U.B.C. unit. I don't remember the exact date of my joining, but it should be available.

Mr. Specht: Well you were with the unit officially in the year '49 - '50?

Mr. Laithwaite: Yes. That would be the fall of 1949.

Mr. Specht: The Commanding Officer was Roy Haines, I believe?

Mr. Laithwaite: Yes. Squadron Leader A. R. Haines. Roy had... I don't remember now, but I believe Roy had been in the English Department as a sort of graduate assistant, I'm not sure. I don't think he was officially on the professorial ranks, I don't think he was an assistant professor at that time. I think he was an instructor in the department of English, teaching English 100 type course and the reason Roy did not stay was because, I suppose the lack of advance qualifications which would be necessary and increased as the years went on in peace-time at the university. So Roy went back and took flying training in the Air Force and got his wings I think.

Mr. Specht: How would you account for Mr. Haines interest in the university squadron?

Mr. Laithwaite: Well he had been in the service during the war. And wanted to carry on with it in the reserve capacity when he came out. One must not deny also, the economic aspect. The salaries were very low. My first salary at the University of British Columbia was \$2,600.00 a year and that was as an instructor. My salary was raised to \$3,000.00 at Christmas as I remember, in Christmas 1947, but it was less than I'd been living on as an officer in the services. It was less than I'd been earning at Ridley College in St. Catherines. The salaries were low and...one had to look for extra money.

Mr. Specht: You'd be referring mostly to the summer training wouldn't you, because the winter term was probably not too financially remunerative?

Mr. Laithwaite: No. It was really to find an extra source of income during the term, if you like, the night parade, but that was a small amount, thirty-five days pay at one's rank per year, as I remember. And we were paid at the rank we held, at the pay that we would have received if we'd been in the permanent force, less marriage allowance. We did not get marriage allowance and, but, otherwise we got the pay of a flying officer or whatever rank we were. I was a flying officer in those days, no, I don't remember, Flight Lieutenant I think. That's awful, I can't remember.

Mr. Specht: Can you tell me what it was like getting the squadron under way? It had just started off on campus right?

Mr. Laithwaite: Yes. Well, it was pretty easy for us because it was just like stepping out of the war-time and carrying on with our war-time work, I'd been in officer training all the time, virtually and it wasn't a big jump at all it was very nice to come back and do it again.

Mr. Specht: How about organizing your parade night?

Mr. Laithwaite: Well we had the facilities as the university had so thoughtfully provided by the energies of the aforesaid Dr. Shrum, and we had a place that we could parade even in the rain. We could parade indoors in the armouries and we had enough classroom space to do the lecture program. We were better off than

most people because we had an officer's mess and we could have an evening meal together before the parade and that was what happened in the old days. The cadets who wished to could use the facilities of the officer's mess. We had kitchen facilities and we employed a cook and we had an evening meal before the parade in our own officer's mess.

Mr. Specht: How about the syllabus? Was this all detailed from above or?

Mr. Laithwaite: Yes there was a rudimentary type syllabus, but Air Force Headquarters, of course, were governed by facilities the universities had. I must say ours were the best that I heard of. And some of the universities did not have the ability to do some of the training and were not so well off facility-wise as we were. We also had a number of other professors on the campus with service backgrounds, who wanted to carry on and do evening work and come and lecture to the troops. We managed very well.

Mr. Specht: I was wondering if you had a little more freedom in getting things set up because the unit was just starting up and possibly it wasn't so rigidly defined yet?

Mr. Laithwaite: Yes, I think so. I think that by and large the Air Force was not so worried about the winter program as in the summer program as we developed and I thought the Air Force, perhaps, had a little better organization going from the point of view of the citizenship training that the Air Force was able to give to our cadets because in the Air Force, the cadets of all universities were pulled together in one place and so the maritimers could meet the westerners and we could meet the Ontario cadets. Everybody was mixed up and Canadians began to get to know one another a little better because they were all in one

place. The Army did not do that type...did not follow that type of organization, they still followed the regimental idea, the unit idea, where our group of engineer trainees would go to one station and people of other trades would go to another station. Whereas the Air Force all went together to the summer program and stayed at one particular place while training. I think this was a very fine thing for the citizenship aspect of the training.

Mr. Specht: During the winter term what were some of your specific duties?

Mr. Laithwaite: Well, the adjutant job was the one when I first joined.

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The roll of honour and the book. I think these are things that should be remembered. I'm not sure that the Armistice Day function now, has the full impact that it used to have. You see, I knew about two Armistice Days, if you like, and my particular period of time, I was born during the First World War and knew all about it and was, it was a part of my life and a part of my father's life and so is the Second World War, but the new generation does not have that kind of experience at all and I think to remember what happened, how U.B.C. grew up, what these young men at U.B.C. did in their day, how they went to the war and sacrificed themselves, hung on to this little bit of land we call Canada I think is important.

Mr. Specht: What do you think it does for people when you preserve the heritage of the forces?

Mr. Laithwaite: Well, I think its a good thing for us to know how it all, how we came to be here and in the place we are and what our forefathers did to establish this kind of a life for us.

Mr. Specht: So it needs the understanding of our present day culture because they can see some of the origins of it, how it developed.

Mr. Laithwaite: Yes. I don't think the impact of history is as apparent to the youth of the country right away. I think probably history and tradition are something which leave their mark

without you really knowing, but I think to see a college like Royal Military College and realize where it is built and whose feet walked on that piece of territory before and how they came to build Fort Henry next to it and how the particular wars were fought and why the ships were sunk in the bay right outside the college, this is all very, very interesting and part of knowledge which everyone should have of how Canada came to be Canada and not part of the United States.

Mr. Specht: Did you give lectures?

Mr. Laithwaite: Yes. We had many lectures that went to make up the knowledge which a young officer would need. We used to try to give introductory lectures on all the service subjects in the winter time so that our cadets would be at least not complete greenhorns when they went into a station like Royal Military College where most of our summer training was done in the early days. The first year we went to London to an airport named Crumlin Airport. Crumlin Airport, London, and its still an Air Canada station by the way, I think, although its a year or two since I was back there. The second year we went to Royal Military College and occupied their buildings while their own cadets were out on their summer training on various units across Canada. So we also, we did see the Royal Military College cadets who were not quite finished when we went down in May to start our training so our reserve cadets got an idea of what kind of training the permanent force regular army cadets at Royal Military College were getting, and the sort of living quarters they lived in and what they did, where they spent their time and what they did for

recreation. Our cadets knew as well, which is a good thing. It gave the average reserve citizen a look at what permanent force cadets were going through. This was good.

Mr. Specht: What topics did you deal with when you gave lectures to the cadets?

Mr. Laithwaite: Really almost everything they came across we would cover what lectures are necessary about the admin' side of life, how you house and sleep and feed a number of the armed services and his legal entanglements with the civillian population, any implications of that kind. It often did happen that some of our cadets were involved in a legal sense with the civillian personnel living around the stations. This was inevitable. Car accidents or boating accidents or whatever, things like that happened. So there were a certain number of legal lectures. There were a certain number of administrative lectures. There were lectures on how you survived on the station in the summer time. What happened when you put the uniform on. To whom were you responsible in the legal sense and medical arrangements in the summer time and just the process of staying alive in the service.

Mr. Specht: As Adjutant, how did you relate to the resident staff officer? Weren't you kind of like being in administration, would you be kind of between the resident staff officer and the needs of your unit? Is that correct or not?

Mr. Laithwaite: Yes. I think so. The resident staff officer was a permanent force officer, of course, and he dealt with any communication between the unit and the regular force from whom

we took our administrative orders, of course and my main concern was with our own cadets and their behavior and training and their recruitment and selection so that the selection was not only done by the reserve officers, the regular staff officer sat in on the selection boards as well and helped with our induction of new trainees each year.

Mr. Specht: Do you remember in 1958, there was one resident staff officer for all three services? This was tried out as an economizing measure.

Mr. Lathwaite: Yes, I remember the economy movement, yes I do.

Mr. Specht: How did that work out?

Mr. Lathwaite: Well, I think, because of the reduction in numbers, we didn't suffer unduly. We had a number of people like Wing Commander Herbert and myself who'd been in a long time and had seen many changes and we're not thrown by problems like that. There was a move to put the administration down on Fourth Avenue and things like that that confused everything right at the end, but we were sad to see the squadron going down, because I really still do believe that the best recruiting grounds are the universities. I think that the best types of young men surely must be the university recruitment for the permanent forces officers for the country.

Mr. Specht: Do you think there are advantages to having units on campus other than the fact, of course, that you have the students on hand? I'm referring to facilities, the professors in the university who could help you.

Mr. Laithwaite: Yes I think so. I think that, for instance, if you are to give lectures on well let's say something like motivation, and leadership, that it is a good thing if you have the top psychologist available and he can talk about motivation and leadership without the slant of the military background. I think it just gives a different viewpoint from the military leader who may treat motivation and leadership in a different way...although there's slightly different angles there.

Mr. Specht: Could you elaborate also on other ways you think the training on campus would be different than the training in let's say in the regular forces? Let's say as compared to the Royal Military College. You mentioned for example,...its suggested that you would, by bringing in a professor who was say head...the tops in psychology you would get a different slant other than strictly military. How about, does this carry over to other ways too? How the training would be more liberal or something?

Mr. Laithwaite: I know what you're trying to say and I'm inclined to agree with that idea, but maybe some of us didn't like the...quite the same degree of rigorous discipline as the...degree at the service colleges for example. I perhaps did not view myself as a permanent force officer in the very first place anyway and had decided by the middle of the war that I would not stay on in the permanent force...that things were perhaps too...a little too rigid for me, a little too structured. I felt that the armed forces were very wise to take a smattering of the university reserve type on in the

permanent force afterwards to give another angle to the rigorous armed forces discipline problem type. I don't know how to explain it...we leavened the bread a little bit, I guess. We gave a slightly different viewpoint.

Mr. Specht: Would there have been any friction resulting from this? Maybe with a university trained cadet who would say go into the forces after graduation. Do you think there was any conflict?

Mr. Laithwaite: No I don't really think so. I think that in Canada, it had long been traditional that...in the Air Force particularly, that the aim for all was a university degree at the officer level. It was interrupted probably and possible during the war when we needed lots of air crew personnel quickly for instance, in the early days when the push for rear gunners was so very great it was possible in 1941 to my knowledge, to be commissioned as a pilot officer as an air gunner for instance, within a short period of time, maybe six, eight, ten weeks from induction you could be a commissioned officer. Well we found that this was not really most advisable thing. The background of the people was not what the Air Force required in the long run. So I think its always been the aim of the Royal Canadian Air Force to have people with a comparable training to university degree in the officer corps.

Mr. Specht: Yes, that pretty well explains it then that you would have really...the university squadron and training and others it really fitted in very well together then.

Mr. Laithwaite: Yes I found so. I still think that some of the things that we taught at the air crew officer's schools and the

R.U.S....in the R.U.S. The items like public speaking, leadership...should really be taught now to all our young degree people at the university, if it were possible, because I think they go out into positions of leadership in industry and leadership in the teaching profession, doctors, lawyers, I don't think, I think the leadership training and the public speaking aspects of the course were just great and I think they were most useful to the civillians, as well.

Mr. Specht: I did want to get to that, you've already kind of mentioned one of the values to the individual was he would have got this leadership experience.

Mr. Laithwaite: I personally felt that I did things in the service maybe because there was a war on at the time, that I would never have been able to do in civillian life 'til many years later. When you got to be a more senior member of some organization like a business firm, but in the war time we were thrown into positions of leadership as quite young men because we expanded so very very fast to take care of the war effort. This leadership training did give everyone a chance to show whether he had any potential to stand in front of a group and open his mouth and say something intelligent.

Mr. Specht: What do you think is the value of the training they received, what do you think it does for the community?

Mr. Laithwaite: One of the things I've always been concerned about is prejudice and I see it in all its forms in today. I don't see it being very much diferent. There's always been a certain amount of prejudice about the armed forces. I particu-

larly welcomed the intake of our young ladies when we...the first group of officer cadets taken in and we had fifteen girls the first year I remember, but I remember one of the senior officers making a remark at R.M.C. in the summer time that it was very nice to get the mothers of Canada involved in some knowledge of what went on in the armed services and I thought that this was a very good idea. That we would have much more support and much less prejudice about what went on in the armed forces if the mothers had been involved in some way, had some knowledge of what went on, there'd be a lot less prejudice about it. I personally found my days in the service to be of the utmost value to me. I wouldn't...I don't see the sense in some of the things that were done, but that was a good thing. All things change, I suppose. The idea of saluting has changed very much indeed. It was originally just simply that a man was showing his hand was empty and had not got a weapon in it and he wasn't going to smack you over the head with his sword while you were drinking your beer or something. People don't know this. They think there's something servile about it, but in real fact that was why it started. It was a sort of signal between men. Things like this, just the general idea of how tradition has evolved into what is done now, a general knowledge of one another from the civilian population to the service I think is good.

Mr. Specht: You were in the unit for twenty years in a way you've kind of accounted for why you have because you've said what you thought the value of the units were. What do you remember of when the government started the move to have the forces disbanded, the university units?

Mr. Laithwaite: Well...we were very sorry of course. Our association with the service was a source of great pride to us all. The services just like civilian life, there's a social side to the Air Force, a social side to the life in the Air Force, life with the Air Force and the meeting between the permanent force and the reserve officers was very gratifying. Oh, just in a general sense to be able to meet some of the great men who were in the service in the first place, Gen. Pearkes, for example, who became the Lt. Gov. of British Columbia, the association with people of that type was very gratifying to us. We were sorry to see that side of our life being curtailed a little bit. I think that we maintained some of the ceremonial on the university long... well with no connection really in a sense with our own particular unit, for instance the uniforms lent a little bit to ceremonial days around the campus. We used to take part in the processions on the degree granting days, convocational days. I think to see the university did make a contribution to the war effort and we...preserving Canada for the youth of the country I think that's good. I think the university students of today should know that he could be involved in such a thing too, very easily. I was and...I think its good for the average person to know that somebody made a contribution which made his place in society secure. I was sorry to see the services diminishing because I still think that the type of person we need as a leader whether he's in uniform or not is one with an inquiring mind and that probably our number one job is to make a person with an enquiring mind at the university. That's the way I feel about it. I thought that probably the best recruiting for the armed services

would be at the universities. I still think so. And I think that also, no matter what walk of life we're in we do turn in upon ourselves a little bit and I like the idea of this group of university professors going down and associating with the permanent force and lending perhaps a new idea or two here and there to...broaden the outlook of the permanent force too. And it certainly was a good thing for us to realize it. Many, many changes had been made in the permanent force and that the permanent force dedicated soldier is still as dedicated as ever and contrary to common belief all is not jollity in the armed forces.

Mr. Specht: What sort of impact do you think you would, you might have had in this way upon the regular forces and can you specify a little more how you might have stimulated the permanent forces?

Mr. Laithwaite: Well I think that most of the commanding officers in the summer time who were regular force officers until the last three or four years of the program were very impressed by the quality of people who were running the reserve squadrons in the university. Of course the academic requirements were at least a Masters Degree and probably most of the men who were running the squadrons at the universities had Doctors Degrees. I think the permanent force officers were suitably impressed by the quality of people who were running the university squadrons in other words that the...scientists and the doctors and the lawyers were not all brains and no brawn and vice-versa.

Mr. Specht: In this way do you think then the military units on campus were kind of a way in which different elements in our society were bonded together, given common ground?

Mr. Laithwaite: Yes I do. I think there was a tremendous range of knowledge came to the Royal Military College in the summer time. The reserve officers were in every discipline at the university. There were engineers, there were lawyers, there were men in the faculty of education, there were men from physics, they were in everything and the amount of experience and knowledge available to the services in the summertime was quite remarkable really. And...we at the civilian life now as reserve officers were given the benefit of another look at the service type program and we benefitted too.

Mr. Specht: Do you think there were any common outlooks which might have been molded somewhat by the training?

Mr. Laithwaite: Well of course you know something which its hard for the average person to truly realize is that if you look back in history, a great many wars were fought by civilians in uniform. Probably all the wars that really mattered even if you like, the last and the biggest were really fought by ordinary people, you and me and its going to be that way I'm afraid with the cost of the forces. It still will be although its highly specialized now and we think we can press buttons, I think man is still the human element is going to be very strong as always. What we don't realize is that the service organizations grew from civilian minds probably just as much as it did from service minds and that the reason for drill was simply the need to move a body of men from A to B with the least possible fuss. It wasn't to make them service robots or to make them people who had no mind of their own or anything like that, it was simply expediency and probably was organized to start off with your left foot so that you could get everybody there without them falling over one another. People

don't realize that its expediency rather than some service mystique that makes people do drill. And you know I thought there was something weird and wonderful about the service too, that they'd invented all the things that went on in it and of course they didn't, it was men that did it, not some particular robot mind in the service. Just men decided that was the way to do it. And a great many ideas that they still maintain in the service, the administrative set-up in the services I thought was very good and still is very good. I learned to write a concise and intelligent letter without all the garbage. Service writing was taught in our program and it made us able to express ourselves in one half page and very concisely and very clearly, to do that in half a page and I find out when I take the tape recorder out and dictate a letter it usually ends up at two pages, that type of an idea.

Mr. Specht: I'd like to ask one final question. In the 1960's you probably started to get sort of wind of the corps being disbanded, quotas were being reduced and there was a very negative attitude from Ottawa and I wonder what kind of approach, philosophy you would have had realizing that possibly the end was coming? What was your philosophy towards this, you know? I mean to do your best even though its going to run out, Just as an example of what I mean?

Mr. Laithwaite: Yes I think we just...

End of Tape 1, Side 2