

FIRST DRAFT

**ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW
WITH
SERGEANT MAJOR OF THE ARMY
JULIUS W. GATES (USA-RET)**

**SERGEANTS MAJOR OF THE ARMY
HISTORY BOOK PROJECT**

**Center of Military History, United States Army
and the
United States Army Museum of the Noncommissioned Officer**

**Interviewer: SGM Erwin H. Koehler (U.S. Army, Retired)
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US ARMY MUSEUM OF THE NONCOMMISSIONED OFFICER

SERGEANT MAJOR OF THE ARMY BOOK PROJECT

INTERVIEWER: ERWIN H. KOEHLER (U.S. ARMY - RETIRED)

INTERVIEWEE: SMA JULIUS W. GATES (U.S. ARMY - RETIRED)

Interviewer: Today is Thursday, March 24, 1994. My name is SGM Erwin H. Koehler, U.S. Army - Retired. I'm at the home of Sergeant Major of the Army Julius W. Gates, U.S. Army - Retired, located in Huntingdon, Tennessee. My interview with Sergeant Major Gates will cover the time frame from his birth to his tenure of Sergeant Major of the Army. Sergeant Major what is your date of birth and where were you born?

SMA Gates: My date of birth was 14 June 1941 and I was born Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

Interviewer: Where is Chapel Hill located in the state of North Carolina?

SMA Gates: They have three sections of the state, so the people of North Carolina say; the Mountain Section; the Piedmont Section; and the Coastal Section. Chapel Hill is in the center, in the Piedmont section, probably thirty or forty miles north-west of Raleigh, North Carolina;

the home of the University of North Carolina.

Interviewer: Were you raised in a rural, a small town, or a city environment?

SMA Gates: I was born and raised on a farm. I guess about a fifty acre farm in the rural part of Orange county, North Carolina.

Interviewer: When was your father born, and where was he born?

SMA Gates: He was born in Orange County. I'm not so sure that can tell you what city he was born close to, but near Chapel Hill, and he was born in 1902.

Interviewer: And your mother?

SMA Gates: The same with her. Her family was settled in and around Chapel Hill. Again, in rural area. The entire family were rural inhabitants.

Interviewer: What was their occupation?

SMA Gates: Farmers.

Interviewer: Farmers?

SMA Gates: Farmers. She was born 1910, so they went through some very difficult times.

Interviewer: Do you know when they were married?

SMA Gates: My God, I have no idea. I can find that out. I have the date.

Interviewer: Tell me a little bit about your father.

SMA Gates: My father was a farmer, who was a fairly strict person. He believed in hard work and he believed in people trying to do the right thing at the right, and I'm not saying that he didn't have faults. Certainly he had faults, just like everyone else, but overall he tried to make a living for the family from this farm. That was very difficult at times.

Interviewer: Who handled most of the discipline if you didn't do something right. Your mom or your dad?

SMA Gates: It sort of depended on what that disciplinary problem was. If it was something very minor, then Mother would probably handle

that, and that was fairly unusual for her to discipline, especially the boys. Now my sisters; my mother would discipline them. But the discipline for the boys came from my dad, in most cases, and you can almost remember those incidents. The time, and date, and place where those discipline actions took place. He didn't believe in paddling the kids with his hand. He normally saved those disciplinary problems until they built to such a magnitude, that he used a leather strap, so to speak, and it was probably necessary for some of us. Some of the disciplinary measures that he used were fairly stern.

Interviewer: What were some of the rules that your father and your mother laid down to you when you were growing up; to both you and your brother and sisters?

SMA Gates: I don't think they really set us down and explained all the rules. We had rules about when and where we could go places. We had rules about when and how long we could stay out at night. And we had rules about using foul language in the house around Mother. It didn't bother dad too much, but Mother, she did not condone it. Then we had certain things that we were required to do on the farm. Those probably were the disciplinary measures that were laid out to us, more so than anything else; those chores that we had to do in order to make the farm work.

Interviewer: So what your father would do is, if you did something wrong, he kind of let it build up until finally, he got to a point where he couldn't take it.

SMA Gates: Absolutely. Then you received a disciplinary measure that you probably would remember the rest of your life.

Interviewer: Tell me some of the trouble you got into.

SMA Gates: I didn't get into trouble. I was a model person. I think that people growing up in a rural setting or country--we call it out in the country--have great opportunities to have a lot of fun. At that time, it probably wasn't fun. But we did some fishing and hunting,

just walking along a creek, swimming in creeks, working with animals, horses, and cows, and certainly pigs and hogs, and things like that. We even had goats, and we would have a lot of fun with those. But there were time where we did things that was not necessarily where it would cause bodily injury to someone. I remember one person I didn't care too much about. He had a new car and no one else had a new car in the neighborhood then. One night we caught his car sort of parked by itself, and we put some sand in his gas tank. One time, instead of bailing the hay, we stacked it around the pole, and later on we did start bailing the hay. But we just stacked up hay around. It made it convenient so you could take and feed the animals on the farm.

Interviewer: Basically, what you do is you put a series of poles out, and you just stack it?

SMA Gates: Right. Right. Then it would be convenient to where the animals were located. You would just pull it off the top and feed the animals. Probably one of the most disciplinary actions that Dad took against me was sliding down those haystacks and tearing the hay off. Another time I was smoking, out in the cotton patch. He had caught myself and my younger brother smoking in the cotton patch, and we got a spanking with the cotton stalks. And there were times when he would take up for us too, when he believed that we were right. An example. There was this lady that owned the farm a couple miles down the road from where we lived. She planted a large watermelon patch one summer. We went down in the southern part of North Carolina and we brought home a load of peaches. Dad would do that every year, and we would sell the peaches. We would sell some of the peaches and most of the time we would can the peaches for the wintertime. But anyway, we brought a truck load of those peaches back. I guess it was about four or five o'clock in the afternoon when we returned home, and it started raining. When it started raining, everything sort of stops on the farm. Everyone went inside, except myself and two other friends of mine. We

went to that lady's watermelon patch. We busted four or five, maybe fifteen of those watermelons, trying to find a ripe one. Of course she found out about that, and she came over. She knew exactly who did it. There was only three boys in the whole county that was that mean to do something like that. She confronted my dad. My dad said, "Absolutely not! The boys wasn't over there. They went to the peach orchard with me in the southern part of North Carolina. When we came back it was raining and they were right at the house." But we did. We never did tell him. Very seldom did you receive any praise for anything, from Mom and Dad. But later on in the years, when I was, I guess, about fifteen years old, I was the main stay of the farm. I was taller than my dad at that time. I would do all of the plowing, and the harrowing, and the hay bailing. At that time we had about two hundred hogs, and were raising those hogs. To make a long story short. I had about four acres of land that I was supposed to break on Saturday, and of course with one tractor it would take all day long to do that. My friend and I planned an evening at the movie, in town, which is about five miles down the road. There was no way in the world I could ever plow that land. It would have been dark, you know, when I finish it. Dad gave me that task to plow that land that day. So my buddy brought his tractor and we both broke that land. And shoot, we had that land broke by noontime. He thought was the greatest thing in the world. He went all over the county telling all his friends, and everything, that was the plowingest damn boy in this county, but we never did tell him the difference. I was going to, but he passed away on me. I was going to tell him that I didn't plow all that land by myself; it took two of us. But I can't ever remember Mom disciplining me. Now like I say, she would take care of the girls. Mom was just a great lady. It appears to me that she was kind of what held the family together.

Interviewer: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

SMA Gates: I had nine. There was nine of us.

Interviewer: How many boys?

SMA Gates: There was five boys and four girls.

Interviewer: Are they all living today?

SMA Gates: No. My oldest brother passed away in '72.

Interviewer: Where are your brothers and sisters living now?

SMA Gates: They're all living in North Carolina, in and around the Chapel Hill, Orange County area, except one of my sisters is living in Charlotte, North Carolina.

Interviewer: How many were older and how many were younger than you?

SMA Gates: Let's see. I have two sisters younger than I, and one brother younger than I. So I was about the fourth.

Interviewer: What was the name of.....

SMA Gates: By the way. Except for my younger sister, we were all born at home. That's when you had the country doctor come out and deliver them.

Interviewer: That's also when, back in the days when you got sick, the country doctor came out to the house?

SMA Gates: Right. But very seldom do you have a doctor. Mom had a solution for everything; the ear ache, the stomach ache, the flu, the whole nine yards. She had a home remedy for everything.

Interviewer: That's back when they used a lot of epsom salt and stuff like that.

SMA Gates: Salts, and turpentine, and kerosine. I believe why my mom was so good at that, her mother--my grandmother on Mom's side--was a full blooded Cherokee, so certainly Mom had a lot of Indian blood running through her.

Interviewer: That part of Carolina has a lot of Cherokee, doesn't it?

SMA Gates: Yeah, they have. Now it's not as predominant today as it was when I was growing up. If you go a little further down south,

toward where my daughter was going to school, there are a lot of Indians down in that part of North Carolina. Then you go to the western part of Carolina, it's totally Cherokee. In fact, they have a large section of the western part of North Carolina that is Indian. They have shows, and hotels, and the whole nine yards, run by the Cherokee Indian tribe. But Mom was, I'd say, she was probably about fifty percent.

Interviewer: What was the name of the elementary school you attended, and in what town was it located?

SMA Gates: Well, we attended two. I think they had the battles of the school districts, the same back then as they do today. We went to elementary school, except for the seventh grade, in Carrboro, which is right next to Chapel Hill. In fact, you can't tell the difference; they just run together. We went to Carrboro Elementary School; that went through the eighth grade. When we started seventh grade, someone decided to redistrict the school districts there, and we had to go to White Cross, which was about twenty miles further up into the county, and it was a country school. We attended that for one year and then they redistricted the school zones again, and I went back to Carrboro and finished the eighth grade. Now the high school's in Chapel Hill; downtown Chapel Hill.

Interviewer: We went up to White Cross, did you ride the bus up there?

SMA Gates: Yes. We rode a bus about ten miles. To the elementary school in Carrboro, it was only about four or five miles down the road.

Interviewer: How did you go from your house to Carrboro? Did you ride a bus?

SMA Gates: Well, yeah. We rode the bus. Initially, we lived on the farm, almost a mile from the major highway, and we had to come out to the end of that road every morning to catch the bus. Then we'd get off the bus and walk that mile back home, every evening. Later on we moved, I guess, a mile or so up the road from Highway 54. Dad bought a

section of land up there, about ten acres of land, and we built a new home on it. At that time he operated a service station and a garage, plus the farm. So he ran a service station/garage and the kids ran the farm.

Interviewer: About what time did your school begin and end during the day?

SMA Gates: It started about 8:00 o'clock in the morning, and ended about 3:30 p m. in the afternoon. It appears to me that the White Cross school probably started a little early, probably about 7:30, and depending on what grade you were in, the school day would end at 2:30 or 3:30. They tried to program the kids out so there wouldn't be so much traffic on the road.

Interviewer: What was your favorite subject while you were attending elementary school?

SMA Gates: Oh lord, I don't know if I had any of those favorite subjects, but I was always a geography and a history buff. My weakest subjects, all the way through, was mathematics and algebra. I had a little interest in science, too, but history probably is the thing that I enjoyed the most.

Interviewer: Who was your favorite elementary teacher, and why was that teacher considered your favorite?

SMA Gates: Probably the... Not probably, but the teacher that I believe anyone had the opportunity to attend her class; classes was Miss, M-I-S-S Agnes Andrews.

Interviewer: What kind of influence did she have on you?

SMA Gates: She taught the third grade in elementary school, and during the third grade is when you had to learn the times tables and divisions. Miss Andrews ensured that everyone in her class certainly understood the times tables and the basic way to do division. I don't know whether I do that very well today. If you didn't, she would use a little in class discipline.

Interviewer: What would the in class discipline be?

SMA Gates: I think her favorite thing was a pencil over the forehead if you were not paying attention, and certainly she had rulers that would burn your hand. It was anywhere from that, to seeing the principal. Very seldom did Miss Andrews go to the extremes of sending a child to the principal. She normally took care of it. She also had a good relationship with the families. No matter how distant the families were, if you were having a problem at school, she would let the family know, and not through a letter. She would drive out to the house and tell Mom and Dad that you were not doing well in school, or you failed to come to school two days straight, and she needed to know the rationale, or the reason for you not being in school.

Interviewer: That was worse than a letter.

SMA Gates: Absolutely. There was first hand information passed. If you had a problem though, if you didn't understand how to multiply six times eight, she would take enough time with all the kids to make sure that they did it right. I think that is important. I guess what she did, she ensure that every child in that class met a certain standard before they were passed to the next grade. Certainly she had a grading system, but the fact of the matter is, she made everyone perform at a certain level so when we left the third grade, everyone was a "B" or an "A" student. She didn't have any "C" students.

Interviewer: The other teachers, did they use basically the same type of disciplinary action? A pencil across the forehead; a ruler in the hand? Did they?

SMA Gates: Well, in early stages of elementary school they did. But when you got up about the fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth grade, they didn't do that very often. In high school they didn't do that very often, unless a person was very disruptive. Normally in high school, the person would probably get expelled from the class for a week or two, or report to the principal, and certainly the principal could expel the

individual. They didn't take a lot of physical disciplinary action.

Interviewer: You probably didn't have that many disciplinary problems either, did you?

SMA Gates: Not really. Probably the most predominant disciplinary problems we had in high school was kids smoking on the school grounds. You were not allowed to smoke on the school grounds. In elementary school, you couldn't go off the school grounds. That probably was the most predominant disciplinary problem then, was kids going off the school grounds, because they wanted to go to the little service station and buy a little piece of candy or something. You were not allowed to do that, or breaking lines. You know some kids would break lines. You just didn't do that.

Interviewer: If you would have gotten in trouble, when you were in either in elementary, junior high, or high school, if your teachers disciplined you in school and you parents found out about it, how did they handle that when you got home?

SMA Gates: You received a little discipline when you got home, too.

Interviewer: So you knew that there was such a thing as double jeopardy in those days, if you messed up. Right?

SMA Gates: Absolutely.

Interviewer: What was your favorite sport throughout your school years?

SMA Gates: Well, it sort of changed in high school, but in elementary school it was baseball. I love baseball. When I got into high school, it turned into baseball and football. Never cared too much for basketball.

Interviewer: Did you play football in high school?

SMA Gates: Yeah.

Interviewer: During your high school years, who was your favorite teacher?

SMA Gates: Mr. Jaynes. J-A-Y-N-E-S. I guess the reason being, he was a history buff. He was a person who had a lot of knowledge about the historical perspectives about the United States, and certainly the rest of the world, too. I think he probably influenced me more so than anyone else in high school. Of course, I only went to high school for three years. I did not complete high school.

Interviewer: During the summertime, other than working on the farm, what did you, your best friends, and your brothers and sisters do during summertime?

SMA Gates: Our leisure time was spent fishing, you know, and just going up and down the creeks and things like that. They had a theater in Chapel Hill and I would get an opportunity, about one a month, to go to a movie. There wasn't a lot of money available for us to do things. We did have opportunities to go on long trips, and go to the beach, and to the mountains, and do things like that. We just couldn't afford too many things. Most of the time, the leisure that we had was right on the farm, riding the horses and anything that we could do.

Interviewer: Did you have an opportunity to have a part time job as you was growing up?

SMA Gates: Absolutely not. Not until I was sixteen years old.

Interviewer: What kind of part time job did you have then?

SMA Gates: I worked at a Ford Motor Company, part time, for a while.

Interviewer: What kind of job did you have there?

SMA Gates: I started out assisting the service manager. The service manager in this automobile company--Ford Motor Company--he ran the entire show. He ran the sales, the services, and the parts department. So he was a very busy person. He had a couple of assistants who wrote service orders for the car repair. My job was to write those orders, if I knew basically what was wrong with the car. If a person just wanted a lubrication or a front end alignment, or something like

that, then I would write that service order, and then I'd deliver the person back where they were going, or when their car was completed--the repairs were completed--I'd deliver the cars to them. I got to know a lot of people that way.

Interviewer: What were some of the names of your friends that you grew up with?

SMA Gates: Probably my best friends were my brothers and sisters. We all believed the same way then. Ross Lloyd and Steve Lloyd. The Lloyd family was a renter family who lived on our farm. They just rented a small house that we had on the farm, that I was born in, by the way. We got to be real good friends. Then there's Gene Lloyd, who is today a very personal friend. There was Gerald Ferrell and Jennings Dale.

Interviewer: You said that you didn't have a chance to graduate from high school. Is that right?

SMA Gates: Yeah. I had a chance. I had an opportunity, but I didn't take that opportunity.

Interviewer: Did you get your high school GED (General Education Development) while you were in the military?

SMA Gates: Right.

Interviewer: Who encouraged you to get your GED? Did you do that on your own, or did somebody encourage you to go ahead and get your GED?

SMA Gates: My platoon sergeant, when I was stationed in Berlin, had a counseling session with me one day and explained that I needed to do something to get the GED. It wasn't that much of a problem. I just went out and took the test and passed the thing. Then we sent it in to North Carolina, and they gave me a high school diploma. I only lacked about a half a year to graduate from high school.

Interviewer: When was the first time you got a chance to get take college level courses? When you attended the Academy? Is that the first time?

SMA Gates: No. My first experience was with college books was in

ANCOC; the Advanced NCO course, in Fort Benning. We were required, at that time, to take college courses. ANCOC was oriented a little different than it is today. The ANCOC, at that time, was oriented toward a master sergeant or a first sergeant, so we were required to take a college course during ANCOC. It was at night; we had to take it at night. So I got interested in it, and after that, I tried to continue the education as much as I could by taking night and after duty courses.

Interviewer: What was your major?

SMA Gates: Business Management.

Interviewer: You got your Associate Degree. Right?

SMA Gates: It took a while, but I received my Associate from the Community College, in El Paso, like most of the Academy students do. Then I went on to continue the education in business management at the University of Maryland. Today I think I lack about twelve credit hours of having a degree; a Bachelor Degree.

Interviewer: Did you ever serve in the National Guard?

SMA Gates: No.

Interviewer: When you came in the Army, were you inducted, or did you enlist?

SMA Gates: When I reached the age of seventeen, I went down and enlisted in the Army.

Interviewer: What led your decision to enlist?

SMA Gates: It's what I always wanted to do, was to be in the Army. I guess I was influenced by people coming back from The Second World War. I was then a young, youngster after the Second World War. I was impressed by all the uniforms and everything we seen when they came home. I was one of those war babies they talked about, born in 1941, in the middle of the war. But, I guess I had an uncle that sort of impressed me, and my brother was in the Second World War and served in the Pacific. In fact, he was in the Philippines. So those people influence me to join the Army. At that time, you had all the comic

books and everything; Sergeant Block, G.I. Joe and all those things. We played war. Another recreation part when we was growing up, is playing cowboys and Indians, and playing war games; probably more so than anything else. That's probably where we got our recreation at. We played football, baseball and softball, too. I don't know, I sort of always wanted to be a soldier.

Interviewer: When did you enlist?

SMA Gates: 12 August of '58.

Interviewer: Now at that time, you were seventeen years old. Was that old enough so you didn't have to have anybody sign for you?

SMA Gates: No. You still had to have your parents sign at seventeen years old.

Interviewer: Did you have any problem getting them to sign for you?

SMA Gates: The problem was my mother. My father signed right away. He thought that maybe the military would do me some good. But my mother had some difficulty signing.

Interviewer: Did you have any friends of your's that joined with you?

SMA Gates: No, I sort of went by myself. Most of those guys, again, was still in high school. I sort of went alone.

Interviewer: How long was your initial term of service?

SMA Gates: Three years.

Interviewer: At what military installation did you enter the Army?

SMA Gates: Well, we entered the Army at Raleigh, North Carolina. We took the oath of enlistment there, and then we went to Fort Jackson, South Carolina and in-processed; my initial entry processing. I attended basic and advanced individual training at Fort Jackson.

Interviewer: Fort Jackson was actually your...

SMA Gates: First Army post. My Reception station.

Interviewer: Your Reception Station.

SMA Gates: Right.

Interviewer: How long were you at Fort Jackson, processing, before you went over and began your basic training.

SMA Gates: A week and a half; probably about ten days. Here again, you were issued your clothing. We pulled some details and things like that. We didn't do a lot of things. It appeared to me that most of the time, during that ten days, we were just sitting in the barracks waiting for the cycle to change.

Interviewer: Where did you take your tests and get your physical examination? Was that at Raleigh, or did you do that at Jackson?

SMA Gates: They had the same process as we have today. They gave you a real brief examination at the Induction Station. Most of the people there were draftees and the majority of people were trying to get out of coming in the Army, so they were all talking about something that was wrong with them, medically or physically. But the fact of the matter, they gave you an induction physical in Raleigh, at the induction station there. They gave us some exams there, but the detail physical examination was at Fort Jackson. The same thing with the test to determine what aptitudes that you had and what MOS (Military Occupation Specialty) you probably could perform in.

Interviewer: What was your first reaction, or first impression of the Army when you got to Fort Jackson, when you were in the Reception Station?

SMA Gates: Well, I think it was so new and there were so many unknowns, that we really didn't have a good perception of what the Army was all about. It wasn't a shock or anything, because the sergeants and the people who were over us didn't have real tight control, except that you were restricted to the company area. You couldn't leave the company area. We didn't visit the PX (Post Exchange) or anything like that. So other than just getting you from point "A" to point "B," they didn't try to teach us how to march or anything. They did teach us how to put on a

fatigue uniform, and how to properly wear the hat. We weren't even allowed to blouse the trousers. They didn't do a lot, other than details. We pulled a lot of details. We found out what KP (Kitchen Police) was. In fact, we volunteered for KP because everybody was saying how great it was. I never volunteered for it again. I hated KP with a passion. (In the background you can hear his wife Margaret say, "You still do.") I still do, right? I would rather have paper plates and just throw the things away, rather than wash them. I hate KP. I always have. I just thought that it was something that just didn't fit Bill Gates. We pulled some guard duty there, and it wasn't sophisticated guard duty. It was like watching the boilers, because they still heated and cooked with coal. In the dining facility, you had to rub the old stoves down with bricks and things like that. That part of the Army was not very difficult. All we were doing, I think we were focussed. All of the rumors that came down from the Tank Hill, at Fort Jackson, about how tough basic training was, and how rough the sergeants were, and just waited until you get to Tank Hill and you'll find out what the Army is all about. I think it just sort of put us in a state that, instead of having perceptions, we were having expectations of what in the hell is going on, on Tank Hill, because all of the old soldiers, that had been up there two or three weeks, came down and spread the rumors throughout the Reception Station.

Interviewer: When did you go up on Tank Hill to start you basic.

SMA Gates: I don't know the exact date. I couldn't remember the exact date, but I remember it was a Friday. Very clearly I remember that.

Interviewer: You got sworn in on the twelfth of August, so it would probably have been around the twenty-second or twenty-fourth, or some where around there.

SMA Gates: Something like that. Something like that. Yes.

Interviewer: How long was your basic training then? Eight weeks?

SMA Gates: Eight weeks. The cadre from Tank Hill came down and herded us like cattle onto trucks; we had our duffel bags. It was a new awakening as to how much harassment they could really give us at the Reception Station. Then, of course, we got to Tank Hill and to our company, it was just a different world.

(End of Tape OH 94.5-1, Side 1)

(Begin Tape OH 94.5-1, Side 2)

Interviewer: When the last tape ended, we talked about you going up on Tank Hill. Let me ask you some questions about your basic training. Tell me about your billets up there on Tank Hill.

SMA Gates: They were the World War II wooden billets, with the open bays. Certainly you had two floors; the first and second floor. All it was, was just an open bay with some bed and wall lockers, metal wall lockers, and that was the extent of it. I guess they called the things bunks, and they were double bunks. You had about eighty people per platoon; about forty downstairs and about forty upstairs.

Interviewer: Were most of the guys that you took basic training with from the South, or did you have some from the North?

SMA Gates: There were a few people from the North. Most of the individuals were from the South. Yeah. Most of the individuals were from the South, and we had sort of a mixture there of blacks and whites. We had a few Spanish speaking individuals, but not very many; just one or two from Puerto Rico.

Interviewer: What was your RA number?

SMA Gates: 1-4-6-6-2-0-2-9.

Interviewer: That 1-4 means you were from the 3rd Army area, right?

SMA Gates: I don't know whether it means 3rd Army or not, but I thought it meant North Carolina; the section of the country you were from. But it might mean the 3rd Army.

Interviewer: Yeah, because mine started out with 1-4, too, and I'm

from Alabama.

SMA Gates: Yeah.

Interviewer: How do you rate the quality of the chow that you had in basic?

SMA Gates: Well, if you compare it to the food of today, I think overall, we had fairly good food. The food was different. It appeared to me that we probably had more beans and things like that, during basic training, then you probably see in the dining facilities of today. The only difference is, we didn't have a lot of time to eat. We had to run in and run out of the dining facility. It was a very small dining facility, to start off with. I think we had five platoons in the company. In fact, we did have five platoons, and so you had to stand in line, run in and get your food, set down and eat, and get the hell out of there. There were a hell of a lot of sergeants standing around making sure you did, in fact, do that.

Interviewer: How often did you get to pull KP?

SMA Gates: I pulled KP in the Reception Station, and I decided right then that KP was something that I would never, ever enjoy doing. I pulled KP, I think, one time in basic training.

Interviewer: Do you remember what kind of job that you had?

SMA Gates: Yes I do. I was a deep sink man. I washed all the pots and pans. The cooks would mess up as many damn pots and pans as they could, and we had to clean them. Of course, when I got the pots and pans clean, they always found out something else for you to do in the dining facility.

Interviewer: What were the meals like when you were out in the field? Did you have any C-rations, or did you have A-rations, or a combination of both?

SMA Gates: Normally, we had C-rations in the field, and it was old time C-rations; some of the cans were sort of rusted. But there was pork sausage patties, and hamburger patties and things like that. We didn't have the Vietnam era C-rations, so they had crackers and pork

sausage patties; it seemed like that's all they had was pork sausage patties and hamburger patties. Very seldom did we receive any beans or anything; something that you could eat. But I think they saved all of the old C-rations for the trainees. It appeared that way, anyway.

Interviewer: While we're talking about rations. When you talked to the troops during Desert Storm, what was their opinion of the MRE's (Meal Ready to Eat)?

SMA Gates: I think that any field rations that we have, people have a tenancy not to speak too highly of them. And certainly the soldiers did not have such a high opinion of the MRE's. Now if you look at the value of the MRE's, compared to those C-rations, the nutritional value its much, much higher than the C-rations.

Interviewer: Tell me about your fellow recruits that you went to basic training with.

SMA Gates: Well, I think we all started out in the same frame of mind. We really didn't know what to expect. There were some prior service people there, that acted as platoon guides, and they were the individuals that were supposed to have assisted us, a little more than they did, by the way. You learn real quick--at least we did--that you have to get along with one another and you have to develop a very close relationship, because you sleep on top or below another person, and you have, you know, the latrine had to be cleaned, the floors had to be swept, mopped and buffed. We didn't have buffers; you had a hand thing that you pushed up and down the room. So even though no one mentions the words "team work," you develop that very rapidly. Very quickly you have to develop team work in order to get the things done that you were required to get done. We had to police up outside, and the sergeant was very, very quick to tell us our areas of responsibilities outside. So having said that, there was always some people--two or three--who talked loud. I remember one individual who got in the middle of the floor one night and did a little dance there, and scared the floor up. So it took

us half the damn night, cleaning the floor up. Needless to say, he didn't do it again. But I think we made some ever lasting friends, at least in the platoon, and especially in the squad that you was in. We didn't know the people in the other platoons too much, because we lived in the one building. After you learn to get along with one another, you sort of make everlasting friends, at least the people that you respect and admire, for a long, long time.

Interviewer: Did you ever run across any of the people that you went through basic training with, when you were Sergeant Major of the Army?

SMA Gates: You'd be surprised how they crop up, after the years, when they read about you in some type of magazine, or heard about you by word of mouth. There were a few people that came up. There was a couple who, you know, was still in the Army.

Interviewer: How did the manner in which you were raised, as far as discipline is concerned, help you when you got into the Army?

SMA Gates: Well, I think it was easy for me to adjust to the Army, because I had to make my bed at home. Like I say, we had to do things in order to make the family work at home and on the farm. So having to do that, it made the Army, initially, easy. The only thing hard about the Army was the way that we were treated. We weren't treated with all the dignity and respect that a human being probably should have been treated with. Initially, anyway.

Interviewer: What was your first impression of your drill instructors when you went up on Tank Hill?

SMA Gates: They called them guys "platoon sergeants" then. They didn't call them drill instructors. They didn't wear anything special. Yes, I'll take that back. They wore a helmet liner, with the unit on the helmet liner. The Platoon Sergeant we had, was not the most dynamic person in the world. Like I said, he taught us the basic things that we needed to know in order to get through basic training. Like PT

(physical training). He taught us how to do the PT--the movements in PT--and certainly the drill and ceremonies. The rest of the stuff was normally taught by committees. He also taught us how to wear the uniform. But it appears to me that, as I recall, the former, or the prior service people in the platoon, taught us that more so than the Platoon Sergeant. It appeared to me that he was there early in the morning, and when we finished, he was sort of gone, although he lived in the barracks.

Interviewer: So he lived in the cadre room?

SMA Gates: Right.

Interviewer: What time did your normal training day begin, and what time did it normally end?

SMA Gates: We normally was required to get up about 4:30 or 5:00 o'clock; that's normally we were woken up in the morning. He would come through and blow his whistle and make sure people got up. It sort of depended on what we were doing, but normally at 10:00 or 11:00 o'clock at night, the lights was out. You know, they cut the lights out at 10:00 o'clock, and then you had tattoo, I believe, at 11:00 o'clock. So lights had to be out. There was many, many nights that we had to stay up until two or three o'clock in the morning, without lights, GI'ing the barracks for inspections, and packing field gear for the field, and stuff like that; but the lights had to be out.

Interviewer: In other words, you had to spit shine your boots before the lights went out?

SMA Gates: Right. Or many, many times you would find the latrine; we could keep the latrine lights on, and the fire lights on the porch. Since it was in the summer or early fall, you seen a lot of people out on the steps, shining boots, and cleaning weapons, and doing things like that. We had our weapons in the barracks too; they were in the racks locked in the platoon bays. So that part of it, when lights was out, you still had things to do and you had to go in the latrine, or outside.

Interviewer: Did you train on the weekends?

SMA Gates: Absolutely. Now we did have time to go to church, and initially, we were required to go to church. They'd march us over to the chapel, and we all went in for church services.

Interviewer: Tell me about your physical training.

SMA Gates: It wasn't very rigorous. They started out with very basic stuff, like how to exercise you hands, then we did arm circles, and then they taught us some bending movements. Then they got into, what is kind of refereed to as, "The Daily Dozen." That's where you learn how to do the push ups, sit ups, the side straddle hop, and things like that. So it started out very basic. We would do that the first thing in the morning, about six o'clock. We'd stand reveille, and then we'd march down to the PT field and do physical fitness training on the PT field.

Interviewer: Did you do PT every day?

SMA Gates: Every day. Now during the last week or so we didn't, because we were in the field; the one week bivouac, we called it.

Interviewer: Tell me about your dismounted drill and your drill and ceremonies.

SMA Gates: Here again, they started out with very basic stuff. You know, the position of attention, parade rest, and then they taught us, you know, the proper distance. It was very basic. Then they built that up to squad drill, and then platoon drill. Initially, when we would march in a platoon, we just kind of stumbled on the person in front of you, but you still had to march. The day the platoon learned to do a rear march, I was on KP, so I didn't learn how to do that. The next day we were out in formation, and the Field First... I never seen the First Sergeant. I don't remember who the First Sergeant was, in basic training. Neither do I remember the Company Commander. I remember the XO (Executive Officer), I guess it was, but I don't remember the First Sergeant, nor the Company Commander, except the

Company Commander was a complete... I want to use the right terminology. It appeared to me, he didn't want anything to do with the soldiers at all; he thought he was smarter than them. When he came in the dining facility, we had to serve him coffee, and if he didn't like the coffee, you had to take it back. He was the type of person that looked like he didn't wanted to be around enlisted soldiers at all. Now the XO, was a real people person, and he spent a lot of time with the troops. Everywhere we was at, he would normally be there.

Interviewer: You were going to tell me about when you went out...

SMA Gates: Oh yeah! I had KP the day that they learned how to do rear march. So the next day I came out to formation, and the Field First was going to march us up and down the street, and make the whole company do rear march. So, hell, he gave the command, "rear, march," and I stumbled all over and fell out. So he came over to me, and just knocked the hell out of me. And then, to show you how crazy this fellow was, he grabbed my arm, and bit me on the arm. He told me that I was the sorriest soldier he'd ever seen in his life. I was dumb as hell, because I didn't know how to do rear march, and that everybody knew how to do the rear march. But I didn't, because I'd never done it before. I never even heard the command before. So it's very interesting. The other thing is, there was something wrong with the company. Now, of course, being a new recruit and everything, you don't know everything. But the Company Commander got relieved, during the cycle. So did the Field First Sergeant; he was relieved. The IG (Inspector General) got involved in that. Evidently, there was some things that went on in that company that was sort strange. Soldiers would end up being beaten, and things like that, so the IG got involved. So it was difficult. One of the individuals that I'll remember the rest of my life--in fact he's from Tennessee--is a guy by the name of Haislip. Haislip was on KP one day, and as I said before, we had to serve the Company Commander his coffee. You had to pour his coffee in his cup. Being a young recruit,

he didn't know any difference. Haislip poured him some coffee and he took a taste of it and he just spit it right back in his tray. He said, "This coffee is sorry." Haislip said, "Well sir, everybody else is drinking that coffee." That was the wrong thing to say. The cadre got up and just beat the hell out of Haislip, right there in the dining facility. The last time we seen him, they were taking him down toward the orderly room, by each arm and his legs, and his back was sort of dragging on the ground. They called the people in the dining facility to attention, and made us face the wall. Haislip was transferred to another battalion up there. So there was a lot of problems in that company that we didn't know about entirely, but I know the Company Commander either got relieved, or he was reassigned, and the same thing with the Field First Sergeant.

Interviewer: Tell me about your daily inspections, and your weekly inspections.

SMA Gates: We certainly had a daily inspection. Every day you had to make your bed, or if it was linen turn-in, you had to fold the linen and the blankets a certain way. We would have those inspections, and they were progressive. They started out with just the barracks inspection. Then we would start out with the wall locker inspections, when they told us how to put our clothes in the wall lockers. And certainly the shoes were inspected. You had to mark everything; that was the big inspection. You had to put your name and service number on your boots. You had to stamp your last four on all your underwear and your shirts, in certain places; even a hanky had to be marked. Then we had to go to the PX and buy a display for the footlocker, and hell, the only thing that was in the footlocker was a display that you had to buy from the PX. There were certain things, and they had to be a certain brand, you know. I'll never forget that. We had to have Gillette razor blades.

Interviewer: You also had to have the Williams Shaving stick.

SMA Gates: Yeah! Williams Shaving Sticks. And in the bottom of it, you had to roll your t-shirts and underwear. You were supposed to have five sets of t-shirts and underwear. You know, they didn't have any leeway for anything being dirty. You had to have those five, and especially for the company inspections, which was on Saturday, by the way. We always had Saturday morning inspections. Then after that, we'd have something else on Saturday. Normally, Sunday afternoon you did some makeup training. A lot of people had to do makeup training. We did drill and ceremonies, and PT, and basically things like that on Sunday afternoon. But then on Saturday, you would have the Company Commander's inspection. He would come through and inspect the barracks, but it was progressive. It started out just the basic barracks, and your stuff, the bed, the way you made your bed and everything, and they would tear those beds up if it wasn't made right. Then it progressed up into wall locker and footlocker inspection, and then it was a full field inspection, where you laid all your equipment out, and they came to inspect it. So I guess you had all types of inspections there in basic training. We also learned how to do the inspection in ranks; that was a daily thing. They would inspect your uniform, in the ranks, and then we learned how to do that with weapons. The Lieutenant or Captain would come along and look at your weapon, and then you did that in Class "A"s. The Class "A" inspection was sort of the grand finale, where you had the Class "A" inspection in ranks, and then you would fall back inside the barracks and stand by your beds, and you had your wall locker and footlocker opened, with all your field equipment on the bed.

Interviewer: Did you qualify with the M1?

SMA Gates: Right. The old M1 rifle. We learned every piece. The great thing about basic training was that you learned every piece of that M1 rifle, and you could even put the thing together with your eyes closed. They trained you that well, and that was important.

Interviewer: You fired the KD (known distance) range, right?

SMA Gates: We fired the KD range at basic training, and in AIT (Advanced Individual Training) we fired the... what do you call it?

Interviewer: Pop up targets?

SMA Gates: Pop up targets. Right.

Interviewer: Tell me about your CBR (Chemical, Biological, and Radiological) or NBC (Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical) training. I think back in those days we called it CBR, didn't we?

SMA Gates: Yeah. It was CBR training. Here again, you were issued a protective mask. We were issued the atropine serrate, and we were issued all the things that go with the protective mask. We were issued something that resembled, sort of like a salve, that you put on mustard gas, or "blister gas," they called it. The training was very detailed, at least we thought it was. Now here again, the atropine for nerve gas was not as sophisticated as they are today; it was just a needle. So you had to hit your hand on your leg, and push in, and stick it in your leg, in the meaty part of your thigh.

Interviewer: Then you had to squeeze the...

SMA Gates: You had to squeeze the little tube; it's a little different today. But the same ingredients were there then, as they are today, except they have progressive now to where they are very simple and easy to understand. Then we had paper in your protective mask, that changed colors, depending on what type of attack you were under, and what type of gas was being used, whether it was blister gas, or nerve agent, or blood agent. It would change to a different color, supposedly. Then we went through, you know, we went through a gas chamber. At that time they made you go into, what we call "chlorine chamber." We went through a tear gas chamber, and you had to go in and take your mask off, and say your name, rank, and serial number. Then, of course, it was to get you breathing that stuff, so you knew what it felt like. Then we'd go into the chlorine gas chamber, and that's when you kept your mask on. That sort of built your confidence, that you could put your mask on and

go into a place like that. You know, chlorine gas is very deadly, but they didn't seem to think it was so bad.

Interviewer: How far were your training areas from the barracks?

SMA Gates: It sort of depended on what you were doing. If you were firing weapons, it was a significant ways down the road. We would march about an hour to get to the training areas. There were some other training areas that were located--like the CBR--two or three miles from the barracks. The PT area was just down the hill, four or five hundred meters. But the other training areas--the classrooms--were fairly close to the barracks; across the road, maybe a couple of hundred meters, or something like that.

Interviewer: How realistic do you think the training was, that you received during basic?

SMA Gates: I think it was very, very realistic. I think everything that you do in basic training is very realistic, because you're learning something. We didn't have a identifiable standard to the training, but we had to accomplish all of those things, otherwise you didn't graduate from basic training. So it was like the PT test. You had to do so many of the pull ups; you had to do so many push ups; and you had to pass all phases of it, otherwise you didn't pass, and you were not allowed to graduate from basic training. You couldn't miss training. So if a guy got sick, or went to the hospital with an injury or something, he was recycled, and the word that you didn't want to hear was "Recycle". Everyone was certainly aware that you could be recycled through basic training.

Interviewer: Did you crawl the infiltration course?

SMA Gates: Oh, absolutely! That was realistic. The machine gun firing. Here again, I think that we were in such a daze that a lot of that stuff didn't effect us too much. I remember crawling the infiltration course, with the machine guns firing, and the charges going off; the C4 charges, or whatever they were. It was probably TNT charges

at that time, going off. That was very realistic. Here again, we were so pumped up and ready for things like that, that it didn't bother us to much.

Interviewer: Did you go both day and night?

SMA Gates: Yes we did. We went day and night.

Interviewer: What was some of the most humorous things that you could remember about basic training?

SMA Gates: This one individual, and no reflection on anyone from New York, but this recruit was from New York. I don't think he ever got through basic training. Right in the middle of formation, he asked the Platoon Sergeant, what did he do for dirty underwear. How does he go about getting his dirty underwear clean. So the Platoon Sergeant had him to drop his trousers and crawl around the company area, saying, "This is what I do for dirty drawers. This is what I do for dirty drawers." I thought that was comical. You know you wash the dirty underwear, and everybody understands that. They don't give you clean underwear. They don't say, "You got dirty underwear. It's time time ot change." They just assume that you're grown up enough, that if you got dirty clothes, you sent them to the laundry. We had laundry turn in. You could turn in laundry once a week there, and it would take about a week to get the stuff back. If you had enough underwear then you could do that, otherwise you took the things and you washed them yourself. So, you know, I guess the Platoon Sergeant sort of figured that everybody was supposed to know that if you had dirty underwear, you should wash the damn things. But I thought that was comical. The other thing was on guard duty. You know, they taught us how to perform guard duty. There were eleven general orders, and you had to learn those eleven general orders. We also had to learn the code of conduct. Those are the things you had to learn. One of the general orders was "Call the commander relief in any case not covered by instructions." Do you remember that?

Interviewer: Yes, I do.

SMA Gates: Okay. "Call the commander of relief in any case not covered by instructions." I guess they put platoons on guard duty at the time. There was different things you had to guard. This one friend was on guard at the PX, and we were restricted to the barracks. We didn't receive post privileges until about the sixth week of training. Now we were marched to the PX and you could buy things and come back, but we didn't have, what they call post privileges, where you could go anywhere you wanted to on the installation. In fact, you could go down to the beer hall. But we were not allowed to do that. We were restricted to the company area, unless in formation, for almost the entire cycle; for about six weeks. But anyway, this ass hole seen a girl come out of the PX. It was about nine o'clock at night; it was dark. He figured that girls--women--should not been using that PX. That fool called the commander in relief. It sounds like something doesn't make any sense, but that was the damnest incident. They got us all in the day room, and the day room wasn't large enough for the whole company. The Company Commander, and everybody else, stood up there and told us that family members did have access to the PX, and not to be calling the damn commander of relief and the officer of the guard, in case you seen a woman come out of the PX. I thought that was the stupidest thing I've ever heard in my life.

Interviewer: What do you think was the most difficult thing you had to do during basic?

SMA Gates: I don't know. I don't remember anything that was very, very difficult because, you know, I'd done shooting, and that wasn't any problem to me, because we had done all that. Running and doing the PT and that, I can't remember being sore at all, or being overly physically exhausted. I think the road marches were fairly significant, because with the new boots and everything, we did receive blisters, regardless of who you were. We just wasn't used to marching that far with those

type of boots on. I think the most difficult thing was learning how to properly put things on the uniform. You had to measure, and that took a lot of time and effort. The most difficult thing for me, and I'll get back to it, and I've said it before, was the KP. I despise the KP. It appeared to me that it just made me humble to pull KP, and I had so much pride in myself, that I just thought it was something that a soldier shouldn't never have to do.

Interviewer: Do you remember the first time you wore the steel helmet?

SMA Gates: Here again, I can't remember it causing us a lot of trouble, but it did make your head a little sore, because of the helmet. They started us out a little different. They made us wear the helmet liners around for a while first, and then we put the steel helmet on, so it wasn't as bad as some of the people we heard complaining about just putting the steel helmet on, all at once. So we ran around for, I guess about a week, with the helmet liners on before they allowed us to wear the steel helmets. The other thing was loading the M1 rifle, because if you wasn't careful with the M1 rifle, when you pushed the clip down, the thing would close on your thumb. So rapid loading the M1 rifle, I think, was very difficult for a lot of people. I'm not saying I didn't have a problem with it, but here again, we've been used to weapons, and hunting and doing things like that, before we came into the Army, so it wasn't that much of a problem. But I think, living with so many people, in a close environment, is probably the most difficult thing. Living with people, representing our entire society, in that close environment, was difficult to adjust to. Now like I say, it didn't mean that you didn't like the individual, but it just took a while to adjust to that. Some people didn't like to take baths. Like I say, some people didn't know how to make their beds right, and they'd cause all of us grief, because all of those things had to be done, regardless. If you had one person that had a messed up bed--it was made

wrong--everybody's bed was messed up. The same thing with cleaning weapons. If all the weapons were not clean, then all the weapons was dirty. So all those things fostered team work, and made us, regardless whether we wanted to or not, get along with one another. You always had two or three individuals that come in and do things that are dumb and it causes everyone to have to work a little harder. I decided, during that time, that I would never, ever--if I had any say so--cause people to try to be individualists in the Army. You can be an individualist when you have your civilian clothes on, all you want to, but in the Army, it could kill you. I think those things were the most difficult. Here again, the strict discipline that we had was very difficult, initially. Initially, it was difficult.

Interviewer: Did you find that throughout your military career, occasionally, you would think back to your basic training days?

SMA Gates: I think everyone does. We all like to reminisce, and we all like to think of how good the old times was. I'm not so sure that basic training was all that great. I'm not saying we didn't learn. We certainly learned how to be a basic soldier. We learned how to march and how to take orders. We learned teamwork. We learned how to salute the flag and how to salute officers. We learned the chain of command. All those things we learned. But I think probably the most important thing in basic training was that you were leaving there with a title. You're no longer an individual, but you're a member of a group, and you leave from there with a title, and that title is "Soldier". I'm now a "soldier." You're not a soldier until you graduate from basic training. They call you "recruit," and they call you some other names, and some of the names I probably shouldn't repeat.

Interviewer: Do you remember any of the names of your platoon sergeants or any of the instructors?

SMA Gates: I remember our Platoon Sergeant was Sergeant Jackson, and the Field First Sergeant was Noman. N-O-M-A-N. We called him,

"Mad Man Noman", but he was a fanatic; at least we thought so. The instructors out in the field, I don't remember them, because we didn't spend that much time with them.

Interviewer: You said before, other than you drill and ceremony and your PT, your training was normally done by committee group, right? They would march you up in the committee group would give the instruction.

SMA Gates: The committee group would give the instruction, like the assemble and disassemble of the M1 rifle. That was taught in a classroom by a committee group. Land navigation, what little we were taught, was taught in a classroom. CBR was taught by a committee group, and range firing. I'm not saying that the Platoon Sergeant wasn't there; he was present. At least one of them was present all the time.

Interviewer: How was the weather? Pretty hot?

SMA Gates: It was very, very hot at Fort Jackson. We never cancelled training, but we had to keep our fatigue shirts out, and our trousers rolled up, instead of bloused.

Interviewer: Back in those days, they didn't have such a thing as a "wet bulb," did they?

SMA Gates: Well, they had it, but I don't think paid attention to that. We had people, quite a few men, that were heat casualties. Some of them were very serious. I know that it was extremely hot the day we went on the twenty-five mile road march, and two or three individuals passed out. Like in the mornings for the PT, the humidity was so high that people would pass out. But it appeared that nobody paid a hell of a lot of attention to them. I guess they really thought these guys were wimps, and they probably didn't have any place in the Army. They were just taken to the hospital, and if they missed so much training, they'd just be recycled.

Interviewer: Did you get a leave between basic and AIT?

SMA Gates: Yes. Yes we did. I think it was about two weeks.

Interviewer: Where did you take your AIT?

SMA Gates: At Fort Jackson., but not on Tank Hill, though. We left Tank Hill. Tank Hill was a terror place at Fort Jackson. In fact, they still call it "Tank Hill" today, because of the large water tank. But we went down the hill, sort of down to the low ground there. and did our AIT. We were fortunate in AIT, because we lived in barracks, wooden barracks, and most of the individuals lived in tents.

Interviewer: Did you take infantry AIT?

SMA Gates: I enlisted in the Army, infantry, unassigned. That's what I enlisted in the Army as. I guess it was the easiest for me to come in as infantry, unassigned.

Interviewer: How long was your infantry AIT?

SMA Gates: Eight weeks.

Interviewer: Eight weeks. Did you live in the same type of barracks as you did during basic?

SMA Gates: Same type of barracks. Right up the road we had a PX. There was a beer garden up the road where we could go, if there wasn't training. They didn't have a lot of restrictions on us, after duty, in AIT. Of course, you know, you have to maintain the barracks and everything. You had to keep your weapons clean. We did a PT test in AIT, too, and we did PT in the morning. I don't think we did it every morning in AIT, because we had to leave early in the morning to fire all the different types of weapons we had to fire. It was late at night when we finished, because all those weapons had to be cleaned and taken to the weapons warehouses and turned in.

Interviewer: What type weapons did you fire in AIT?

SMA Gates: We fired the BAR (Browning automatic rifle), the .30 caliber machine gun, the 3.5 rocket launcher, and we worked quite extensively with mines and booby traps. We did some land navigation and map reading. I think AIT was fairly easy. Not saying that it wasn't regimented, but it wasn't regimented to the point of where you lived in

fear. It was a different army altogether. They didn't try to teach you how to march or anything. You were supposed to already know that.

Interviewer: Did you normally train in squads?

SMA Gates: Platoon and squad. We did a lot of squad tactics. We did squad live fire exercises, where it was geared toward the squad, but no larger than a platoon. A couple of times we did do a platoon live fire exercise. We fired the mortars; even the 11 Bravos (11Bs). It was something else at that time.

Interviewer: Was it the 60mm, or 81mm mortars?

SMA Gates: It was the 81 mortars. We learned how to adjust fire and they'd fire the mortars. Then we went down and learned how to be crew members on the mortars. The rationale for that was, if a mortar man gets killed and you had a regular infantryman, he will have to take over because that mortar was important for the company's firepower. The same thing with the 106 recoilless rifle. We learned how to shoot that, but not as much as we did the BAR and the 3.5 and the .30 caliber machine gun.

Interviewer: In other words, anybody can move into another position...

SMA Gates: Right.

Interviewer: Back in those days, we had a weapons platoon, and so you could move into the weapons platoon and everybody knew what their job was.

SMA Gates: Absolutely. Absolutely. I thought that was unique. It really gave you a different perspective. You didn't have a weapons platoon, and it was out there by itself. All of the people in all of the platoons were capable of firing a mortar. They were certainly not as good as the people who were assigned to them--the 11 Charlies (11C)--but the fact of the matter is, you were capable of firing the mortars, and the same thing with the 106 recoilless rifle. And they were capable of firing the .30 caliber, and the 3.5, and the BARs.

Interviewer: How many of the people that you took basic with moved down to AIT with you?

SMA Gates: Not very many. Most of those people went on their merry way to other places. But there were some in the same platoon that I was in. I guess they went by alphabetical order as to what platoon you were assigned to, but we had some of those individuals.

Interviewer: After AIT, you came out with a 11 Bravo MOS, right?

SMA Gates: Uh huh.

Interviewer: Did you get a chance to pull KP during AIT?

SMA Gates: Yes I did pull KP. Here again, one time during AIT, and it wasn't like KP in basic training. I was the outside man. What they call the "Outside Man." You know, you cleaned the grease trap and things like that, but there wasn't an E2 standing over you and watching you, and harassing you, and threatening you, and we didn't stay in the dining facility all night, that night. After dinner, about two hours later, we were back at the barracks, because you had things to do. You couldn't miss training and, you know, they didn't want you staying out there all night doing things that was probably harassment.

Interviewer: Was the chow any different in AIT than it was in basic?

SMA Gates: The chow was the same. Now let me back up to basic training just a second. We had plenty of chow in basic training. We never ran out of anything. It was the stuff that you had to eat. The SOS, the ground beef and gravy, we had a lot of that. I don't think we lacked any food, but if you took something on your tray, you didn't throw it in the garbage can. You couldn't, because you were not allowed to put any food in the garbage can. You had to eat it....

(End of Tape OH 94.5-1, Side 2)

(Begin Tape OH 94.5-2, Side 1)

Interviewer: As the last tape ended, we were talking about the mess hall, and once again you said that what ever you had on your tray,

you ate and you didn't throw it in the garbage can. And you made reference to the sign that I think we're all familiar with, "Take all you want, but eat all you take."

SMA Gates: Right.

Interviewer: When you were out in the field were your meals C-rations, or did you have some A-rations?

SMA Gates: Here again we had sort of a combination of the two. Like at breakfast, we would have A-rations. They called those, things B rations. The eggs were powdered eggs and thing like that, but normally you have a hot meal for breakfast and dinner, and lunch was C-rations. We spent a lot of time on ranges firing everything. We sort of ate that way, throughout AIT. We didn't spend a lot of time in the barracks. Most of the time we spent out on the range.

Interviewer: Did your platoon sergeants do the training, or was it back to the committee group type training?

SMA Gates: It appeared to me that there was more committee group training in AIT then there was in basic training. They didn't teach us hardly anything in AIT. I don't remember who the platoon sergeant was. I can't remember his name. In fact, I don't remember any of the cadre in AIT. But most of the training was conducted by committee groups.

Interviewer: Were your daily and weekly inspections about the same in AIT as they were in basic?

SMA Gates: There were spot checks everyday to ensure that we were in uniform. We didn't have so many open wall locker inspections. We had one of those a week, and that normally was on a Saturday.

Interviewer: How realistic was your training in AIT?

SMA Gates: I thought it was probably about as realistic as you could get, given the circumstances. We did a lot of hand-to-hand combat. Not a lot, but we did learn the basic hand-to-hand combat techniques. And we had to qualify with the machine guns. We shot the targets. In AIT when we fired our individual weapons--the M1 rifle--we

fired at the pop-up type targets; transition ranges, if you will. You know, targets would pop-up at different ranges and you had to shoot the things. It was about as realistic as you could get, given the circumstances.

Interviewer: Did you see a difference in the attitude of the NCOs toward the trainees in AIT than the ones that you had in basic training?

SMA Gates: I believe there was a real difference. In AIT, they were teaching us how to be an infantryman. They were not trying to teach us basic things, if you will. They just assumed that we were already soldiers, so they didn't have to keep reminding us that we were not soldiers. And really, that was the title they gave us. They didn't call us any names; they didn't have to. They called us "soldier this", or "soldier that." It wasn't Private Gates, it was Soldier Gates; or they would just say "Soldier, come here." There was a funny thing that happened, and we probably all have seen it. Myself and a couple of other soldiers were walking down the street toward the dining facility one day, and a sergeant call "Hey soldier, come here." We just kept walking. He hollered it two or three times, and we just continued to walk, because everyone was a soldier. I know we got out of a detail. The fact of the matter is, it was sort of comical.

Interviewer: Were your training hours in AIT about the same as in basic?

SMA Gates: Here again, after dinner, if we fired the machine gun we had to clean the machine guns and then turn them in to the storage depot. So you may be there until ten or eleven o'clock, cleaning the machine guns. Everybody had an opportunity to help clean the machine guns. But the fact of the matter is, it was work. It wasn't cleaning barracks and getting ready for inspections. It was maintaining the equipment that we were using. But if we finished in time--say at 1700 in the evening--we were off until about 0430 the next morning; first call was normally at 0430.

Interviewer: Did you train on weekends and holidays?

SMA Gates: We never trained on Sundays at all. I can't remember if we trained on holidays. I know Thanksgiving came during that time frame and we were off for Thanksgiving. I said, off. We had to put on our Class A's and go to the dining facility and eat lunch, but other than that, we were off. We has post privileges. We could go anywhere on post that we wanted to when we were off.

Interviewer: You mention the incident when the sergeant called out "Hey, soldier," and you ignored him, and by doing so, you probably got out of a detail. Can you think of any more humorous things that occurred during AIT?

SMA Gates: There were quite a few humorous things that occurred in the beer hall. At that time in Fort Jackson, they had a beer hall for each section of the post. To see my fellow soldiers drink that 3.2 beer and get drunk off of it was a sight to see. I didn't think anyone could ever get drunk off that beer. You know, you fill up. That was sort of comical to watch people drink three or four beers and be drunk. I can't think of anything that stands out. On the machine gun range, you know, they give you a command to "commence firing," and you're only supposed to fire the machine gun in five or six round bursts; that was the policy. They taught you to fire the machine gun in five or six round bursts. There was an individual who, first of all, started shooting early, and then he fired the whole belt of ammunition through that machine gun. I guess his hand stuck on the trigger. The sergeant went over there and just broke the links in the belt, and it stopped the machine gun from firing. But to make a long story short, when he stood up he was still shaking, so the sergeant asked him, "What the hell do you think you're doing, dancing with some girl down there, or are you firing the damn machine gun." That was comical. The way he said it was comical, and he named some bar downtown. He said, "Do you think you're dancing with some damn girl down there, or do you think you're firing a

machine gum?" I thought that was very comical. But everything was business in AIT. Everyone was trying to do their best; anyway that's how it appeared. Our schedule was so tight that we didn't have a lot of time to play.

Interviewer: Did you feel that you were prepared to function as a soldier, within the 11B MOS, when you completed that AIT?

SMA Gates: There was one other thing. We also fired the .50 caliber machine gun there too. We had to learn how to set the "head space" and "timing" on a .50 caliber machine gun. That was quite unusual to learn how to do that.

Interviewer: The Go, No-Go.

SMA Gates: The Go, No-Go. Yeah, I think we were pretty well prepared to assume the duties and responsibilities of a private, but certainly there were other things that you needed to know. We worked a lot as a squad. Everything that you did in AIT was in a squad and in a team. So that bonding, to me, was more realistic in AIT than it was in basic training.

Interviewer: Did they give you the test for the EIB (Expert Infantryman Badge)?

SMA Gates: Not in AIT. I took the EIB test at my first TO&E (Table of Organization and Equipment) unit.

Interviewer: What were the requirements for graduation from AIT?

SMA Gates: Here again, we had a series of tests and we had to pass those tests. It involved a PT test, and I know you had to set the head space and timing on the .50 caliber machine gun; I remember that one. I think we had to disassemble and assemble the BAR. There were other things we had to do; it was a series of tests. But the emphasis was not on the tests, like it was in basic training. At the end of basic training you had a test on everything, and the emphasis there was passing the test. There was a lot of coercion to pass that test. But in AIT, it appeared that nobody got overly concerned about us passing the

test. I think it was because we were after something them; we were after an MOS. So everyone tried a little harder to learn. How don't get me wrong, the Platoon Sergeant did bring some BARs, .50 calibers, .30 calibers, and the 3.5 rocket launcher, into the barracks and we worked on those things, setting the timing and head spacing, and couple of other things with the .30 caliber; putting it on a tripod and things like that. We practiced a little bit before we went out to take the test. So, in AIT it appears that instead of trying to force you to learn, they tried to encourage you to learn.

Interviewer: Did you kind anything to be difficult when you went through AIT?

SMA Gates: Absolutely not.

Interviewer: When did you graduate from AIT?

SMA Gates: I guess around the 20th of December, 1958. In fact, we shipped out of there to Fort Dix, New Jersey, to the Overseas Replacement Company. We stayed there during Christmas and New Years.

Interviewer: That was on your way to Berlin?

SMA Gates: Yeah.

Interviewer: During your military career, your assignments were in the combat arms. Correct?

SMA Gates: Yeah.

Interviewer: What MOSSs did you hold?

SMA Gates: I had an infantry MOS and an Operations and Intel MOS.

Interviewer: Then you had your additional skill identifiers behind that. You Ranger, Airborne.

SMA Gates: And I had an Instructor additional skill identifier.

Interviewer: What I'm going to do is continue to ask you about your military training, and then we'll get into your units of assignment. You attended an NCO academy while you were in Berlin, and then later on you attended the Third Army NCO Academy, while you were assigned to the 101st Airborne Division. What rank were you when you

attended the NCO academy, there in Berlin?

SMA Gates: I was a specialist. I had just very recently received the promotion to specialist, in Berlin.

Interviewer: You was a specialist four at that time.

SMA Gates: Yeah, we called it a spec. four. We also had specialist five, and all the way up through specialist nine.

Interviewer: Right.

SMA Gates: We didn't have very many specialists in a rifle company there, but we had, I guess, two or three.

Interviewer: Approximately how many soldiers were in your class at the NCO academy?

SMA Gates: About fifty.

Interviewer: What was the average rank?

SMA Gates: Specialist. In fact, I think we had about two sergeants in the class. The rest of the individuals were specialists.

Interviewer: Tell me about your days at the NCO academy, such as: what time your day started, the type of leadership training that you received.

SMA Gates: I don't believe we learned a lot at that NCO academy. The academy was geared toward Brasso'ing the pipes in the shower room and spit shining the floors and making the floors look like glass, blocking the t-shirts in the footlocker. The same thing with the clothes we had hanging in the wall locker. The clothes in the wall locker were blocked so all of the patches were perfectly aligned, and things like that. I remember the first day. We had to report to the school with our individual footlockers from our Company. We ran up and down the stairs with the footlockers, changing them from left shoulder to the right shoulder, and just some things that were probably not necessary. The time that we wasted doing those things probably wasn't worthwhile. But those were the type things that we learned more in the NCO academy in Berlin than anything else. Now having said that, we did

learn the principles of leadership, the traits of leaders, and we did some map reading. We went to the field for map reading and land navigation. We learned how to instruct in physical fitness, and we learned how to present training and how to write lesson plans, and things like that.

Interviewer: How were the soldiers treated by the NCOs? I don't know if they called them TACs in those days, but...

SMA Gates: Right, they did. TACs and instructors.

Interviewer: How were you treated by them?

SMA Gates: In that academy they treated us more like trainees --very similar to basic training--than a seasoned soldier, if you will. Here again, the emphasis there was on spit shining the floors, and aligning boots, and things like.

Interviewer: That sounds like that was patterned after the 7th Army NCO Academy.

SMA Gates: It was a rough cut of that.

Interviewer: You attended the Third Army NCO Academy while you were assigned to the 101st Airborne Division. Since you had already attended the one in Berlin, why did you have to go to the NCO academy again?

SMA Gates: I really can't answer that question. I was promoted to the rank of sergeant and the Company received an allocation and the Company Commander... I say the Company Commander, but I'm sure my Platoon Sergeant and the Platoon Leader had something to do with it. So the First Sergeant selected me to go to the Third Army NCO Academy, at Fort Jackson. We didn't get a lot of allocations for the academy. But I think what they were trying to do is develop me as much as they possible could, into becoming an NCO, and preparing me to be a staff sergeant, if you will. But having said that, the NCO Academy at Fort Jackson was much, much different than the NCO Academy in Berlin.

Interviewer: There was much less spit and polish there. Right?

SMA Gates: Right. Now I'm not saying that you still didn't have to do that. You still had to have everything lined up, dress right, dress, and cover down, but it was more of a learning environment; I learned some good leadership. Here again, we were taught leadership principles and traits, but we had examples of leadership and leadership problems. The same thing with map reading and land navigation. We worked a lot of problems; it was sort of problem solving. You received a task to move from point "A" to point "B" and you had to figure out how to get there. We had that type of land navigation in the classroom and then we would go out in the field and do it. The environment was different. The TACs there certainly came around and inspected the barracks, but we had to inspect the barracks, as a platoon sergeant. As a student platoon sergeant, you had to inspect the barracks and write down the deficiencies of all of the guys. The same thing with the squad leaders; they had to inspect the barracks. That was the difference. In Berlin we didn't do that. So, we had to do all of those things. We had to give platoon drill and ceremony. We had to give the squad drill and ceremony. We had to teach squad drill and platoon drill, at the Third Army NCO Academy.

Interviewer: It was more realistic training.

SMA Gates: Right. Right. By the way, I was Distinguished Honor Graduate from the Third Army NCO Academy.

Interviewer: What year did you attend the Third Army NCO Academy?

SMA Gates: Probably '63.

Interviewer: Do you have any other comments about the Third Army NCO Academy?

SMA Gates: I don't think so, except that was a pleasant experience. I really enjoyed it. We had NCOs there from the entire Third Army; from everywhere; Fort Bragg, Fort Campbell, my word, just from all over the Third Army Region; the southern part of the United States. It was an opportunity to sort of see and talk to NCOs from the rest of the Army,

if you will. There were all different MOSSs. In the Berlin Command--the school I went to there--most of the guys were combat arms. But it was an opportunity to hear other people talk and to interface with NCOs from other type units, and other units throughout the Third Army.

Interviewer: When you came back from Berlin you reenlisted after that tour. Right?

SMA Gates: Yeah.

Interviewer: Did you reenlist for the Airborne?

SMA Gates: Right. There were a couple of interesting things in Berlin that we did while we were there. You may want to take note of this. One is, we performed Spandau Prison guard, where they had the World War II Nazi war criminals, and that was very interesting. Each of the four Powers--the United States, the Soviet Union, France, and Britain--would take turns guarding the prison. I think they guarded it for a quarter at a time; three months at a time. But we relieved the Russians, and I was on the first relief of the guard when we relieved the Russians. Around the prison they have these watch towers or guard towers. Certainly you have a door that goes inside at the base of the tower, then you have steps that go up, and then you have a trap door that opens and then you're up on a catwalk. We had to walk around that and we had ticker-tapes that we had to punch every five minutes, and you had to call in every ten minutes, so there were a lot of things to make sure that the guards were alert. The unique thing about this was--and it sets in my mind so clearly today--we were relieving the Russians and I was the second guard and I was going into the second guard post. The Russian had the bottom door locked, and he unlocked it. And then they have a lock on the trap door, above the stairs, so he unlocked that. I went ahead and relieved the Russian. We saluted and everything like that, and he went down and they closed the trap door. The lieutenant and the commander of relief--the sergeant--they wouldn't put the lock back on that trap door for me. This is crazy. You may not think about,

but it's a good example of the difference in the two societies. So the Russian told him that he had to lock the trap door, and my lieutenant said he was not going to lock one of his soldiers up there. What if something happened? How would he get down? That almost caused an international incident there. It was Lieutenant Ford; I'll never forget him. He said that he would never lock the door, and my commander of relief, Sergeant Kanard, said he'd be damned if he would lock one of his soldiers up there. I think he told the lieutenant that first, that he was not going to lock the door up there. But Sergeant Kanard just told the Russian officer, "That ain't the way we do business in the United States Army." So, I thought that was sort of unique in its self.

Interviewer: Did you just patrol the top of the wall then?

SMA Gates: Yeah, we walked around that catwalk and we had certain angles of observation that we had to perform. Like I say, we had a ticker-tape and you would punch the ticker-tape; you'd turn a small handle there and it would ticker. You did that every five minutes, and you had a telephone and every ten minutes you would have to make a call. But the Americans ran the entire thing, even the physicians, the medical people. We had a governor, an American governor who was there; a military type. And we lived out there; when we moved out, we lived there. Not for the whole ninety days, but I think we were there for a month, and we had to live out there.

Interviewer: Were you in a position where you could observe the people they were holding in the prison?

SMA Gates: There were four there. There was Hess, Von Scherok ...

Interviewer: Wasn't Speer there?

SMA Gates: Speer was still there, and there was another one. I can't recall his name.

Interviewer: Wasn't Speer the last one to die.

SMA Gates: That was Hess.

Interviewer: Yeah, Hess.

SMA Gates: They don't know whether he died or what happened to him. The next day the British came with a bulldozer and tore the prison down. They didn't ask anyone. So, there was something very strange that took place there. Regardless, there were four of them, and they used to come out into the courtyard. They had gardens out there and they would work in the gardens. Hess would go over by himself. There was a bench and a small tree and he would go over there. He didn't participate in anything; he would just sit by himself. The rest of them sort of talked; at least that's what it looked like they were doing. And they would work their gardens. I thought that was interesting. The other thing is, we had the opportunity to tour East Berlin. When I arrived there, we could go into East Berlin; all we needed was a pass. There wasn't a wall or anything up there, but certainly they didn't want us to. We had the right to go over there if we wanted to. Before you could go on pass in Berlin, as a replacement you had to go through an orientation and take a tour of East Berlin before you they would allow you to go on pass.

Interviewer: While we're talking about Berlin, I think this is a good time to talk about when the wall went down. You were Sergeant Major of the Army when they tore the Berlin Wall down. Right?

Interviewer: Yeah, right. Yes I was.

SMA Gates: What kind of reaction did that cause around the Pentagon?

SMA Gates: I think there were very mixed emotions. One was total jubilation, if you will. I'm talking about people throwing their hands in the sky, running up and down the halls saying, "The Wall is down! The Wall is down!" On the other hand many people didn't really trust what went on. They said that it might very well be a trick of some kind. But I think the overall reaction was not a total chaos type jubilation, but there were a lot of people that felt so much pride and joy in seeing The Wall come down because we spent so many years, and did

so many things, and spent so much money, and that wall cost so many American lives, that is did spread joy for a few days among the people that work in the Pentagon.

Interviewer: Did you get to visit Berlin before the Wall was down, and then after?

SMA Gates: Right.

Interviewer: What was the difference in the atmosphere before and after, when you made your visits?

SMA Gates: Well, of course before, there was still the sense of possible confrontation and the definite separation of the two sides, and even when we flew into on a C-12 aircraft, you had to make all kinds of turns and everything, and fly just so in order to land at the Tempelhof airfield. The second time we went in there, we just zipped right in.

Interviewer: Did you get a chance to visit the former East Germany?

SMA Gates: No, I didn't have an opportunity to do that, but I did have the opportunity to go see where the Wall was torn down at. That sort of made me feel good, because we left Berlin in '61, and the Wall was being built, of course they had barbed wire all the time. They started to build the Wall, I believe in '61, and they completed it in '62, or something like that, and we had some fairly significant tension builders while we were stationed there. At one time the Soviets stopped a convoy at Checkpoint Charlie, and we only had one company of tanks. I never will forget this. So, the Berlin Commander rolled that company of tanks out and threatened to fire on them. God, there was just an army, you know, a front right there in East Germany, and that one company of tanks would have got sucked up in no time at all. But, having said that, we fully intended to defend a part of that city, until help arrived. Now help had to come one hundred and ten miles through the East German Zone to get into Berlin. But we felt we could do some damage, at least defending a part of the city. The majority of training

that we did in Berlin was combat in the cities type training. We had a mock village out there. My God, I can't even think of the name of the place, but we did have a mock village out there and most of our training was centered around combat in the cities.

Interviewer: After the Wall went down, how did the mission of the Berlin Brigade change?

SMA Gates: It changed because all at once you no longer have an East/West confrontation there. Don't get me wrong, the East was still Communist. You know, they hadn't combined the two Germanies. There is another thing that happened over there that's history now. There are a couple quotes that will certainly go down in historical volumes, and I'll speak about that in a second too, if I may. But anyway, the Berlin Brigade all at once said, "Good Lord, what is our mission." Then we started looking at possible missions for the Berlin Brigade, as the rest of Europe, as possibly something like Somalia or providing some type of security while the East and the West Germany does become one, you know, and possibly provide them some type security for the German Government. So, there was a lot of discussion that went on as to just what in the world would be the mission of the United States Army, Europe, once the barbed wire and the Wall was torn down. You know, they have a tough mission because many, many countries over there today are totally unstable. Probably the mission that the United States Army, Europe has today is trying to maintain stability until democratic countries can emerge into a true democratic society. Whether that will ever happen, I seriously doubt it. You know, I'm not the person who makes the policy.

Interviewer: You said there was something you wanted to mention a little later on that would go down in history volumes.

SMA Gates: Oh yeah. There was one other thing that we did, and soldiers will be soldiers regardless of where they are; I'm convinced of that. They do some good things and they do some bad things. Also, they deserved to be loved. Some you have to love a little more than others,

and more often. If you know what I'm talking about. I'm convinced that there is no such a thing as a bad soldier. You just have a soldier that you have to love a little more than others. Sometimes that love means recommending them for disciplinary action.

Interviewer: You're right about that.

SMA Gates: But anyway, a friend of mine from North Carolina, Jerry Grindstaff, he and I went to Berlin together. We were on the same ship. We floated on a ship to Germany. It took us seven days, and I pulled KP for seven damn days on that ship. That may be another reason why I hate dirty dishes. But I did; I pulled KP the whole time I was on the ship. But anyway, Jerry Grindstaff and I went to Berlin together, and we completed a tour of duty over there. We were really great friends, and we are so today. We had a three-day pass while we were there and we went up to the border between East and West Berlin. Near the Brandenburg Gate that have a Russian War Memorial, and there's a Russian guard who walks around that memorial, twenty-fours a day. You're only supposed to go to the bottom of the steps. In fact, they have a sign up there in English that tells you not to go beyond there. We got talking to one another, and there was a Russian private walking around there. Soldiers being soldiers, I took out a cigarette and offered him a cigarette, You thought we were old friends. He really wanted an American cigarette, and I wanted a Russian cigarette, so we traded cigarettes. You know, he stuck his hand out and wanted to shake hands, and here's a guy that I'm trained to shoot, or to fight. Okay. So we shook hands and we left there smiling at one another. I told Jerry Grindstaff, I said, "You know, he's just like you and I. We don't really hate those guys over there. It's just the fact that we're trained to fight them if necessary." I thought that was sort of unique. What was the question you asked me a while ago?

Interviewer: Originally, I asked you about when you came back from Berlin and you decided to go ahead and reenlist.

SMA Gates: Well, I left the Army first. I got a little taste of leadership in Berlin. Even though I was a specialist, I still was a fire team leader in an infantry squad, so we had a little bit of leadership responsibility while we were there. I think that maybe the NCO academy prepared me to a small degree to assume that leadership role. We had a lot of fun. I really enjoyed Berlin.

Interviewer: Why did you decide to come back into the Army?

SMA Gates: I think there were three reasons really. One, I missed the Army. I really did miss the Army. The second reason is that I had very little in common with the people that I grew up with back in my hometown. In most cases, my friends were either married or off in college, or something like that, so a lot of the people that I actually grew up with were no longer around. Those are the three reasons. Shoot, I had a good job there with the Ford Motor Company, where I worked before I entered the Army; they hired me right back on. This time they made me Assistant Service Manager. I probably could have worked my way into the Service Manager's position there, very quickly. The fact of the matter is, I just missed the Army. I guess once it gets in your blood, it kind of difficult to get it out, unless you get a transfusion and then most of the time you get soldier blood put back into you. That's what it was. I got out in early August and I set out a couple of months, and about October I reenlisted for Fort Campbell; Airborne.

Interviewer: What led to your decision to go airborne?

SMA Gates: I guess I was looking for a challenge; something different. Maybe the fifty-five dollars a month had something to do with it; I don't think so. I made up my mind that if I reenlisted I was going to go all out and try to do the best I could and make the Army a career.

Interviewer: Tell me about you jump training there at Fort Campbell.

SMA Gates: At that time they did jump school a little different

than they do today. You know, you go off to Fort Benning, Georgia and you go to THE Army Jump School and undergo the training as airborne trainees, at Fort Benning, and you live with airborne trainees there. At Campbell, you went to a TO&E unit and you lived in the TO&E unit as a "leg" and all of the other guys are airborne or paratroopers, or whatever you want to call them. So, you had to go through all of that harassment again. You weren't even allowed to eat at the same table with the guys or live in the same platoon bay with them. They separated you. But the good thing is the 187th Infantry "Rakkasans" fought in the Pacific during the Second World War and fought in Korea during the Korean War. They had a fairly good reputation. Of course, all of the units did; I think every unit in the Army has a good reputation. The fact of the matter is, they had a good pre-airborne school. They would send you to that for about a week or so and make you do PT for about eight hours a day. That's all they did was PT; push-ups, sit-ups, we'd climb ropes, and run, and things like that. The sergeants would scream at you and holler at you. So, they prepared us to go to school, and when we went to jump school, it wasn't all that difficult.

Interviewer: You probably went through the same training procedures they had at Benning, with the exception of the 250-foot towers. Right?

SMA Gates: Right. We only had the 34-foot tower; everything else was the same at Fort Campbell.

Interviewer: Did you have to make five qualifying jumps?

SMA Gates: Same thing. Of course, we jumped out of the old C-119 airplane. We had the C-130s at that time, and the C-123s and the C-124s, but for the jump school purposes, we jumped the C-119. But here again, you had the five jump requirement.

Interviewer: About how long after you joined the unit did you get your Jump Wings?

SMA Gates: Less than a month.

Interviewer: So you were better off going thru jump school at Campbell than going to Benning.

SMA Gates: Oh, absolutely.

Interviewer: You were with a TO&E unit.

SMA Gates: Sure. There was more to it than that, too. The 101st, that unit left a everlasting impression on me. The soldiers there were so professional. Victor G. Franco, my Platoon Sergeant there, he was just a great soldier. You know, I will never forget this individual. He is probably one of the finest NCOs that I have ever had the opportunity to serve with. I said one of them. There has thousands of outstanding NCOs, and he's one of a thousand; probably tens of thousands. But Victor G. Franco tried to make you learn stuff and he took a hell of a lot of time developing his NCOs. Not so much with formal instructions or anything, you know, using his experiences. When you'd go to the field, he would make your squad the point squad for the platoon, in a minute. Every man in the platoon had a map and they all had to land navigate from point "A" to point "B." So, when you went down the road or cross country, it wasn't just the squad leader looking at his map or following his compass, every soldier in my squad had a map and a compass. I don't know how he got all of this stuff, but the fact of the matter is, we learned a lot. I'll tell you right now. I don't think there's anywhere in the World I couldn't navigate, because I learned by doing. I learned the basic principles of how to navigate across country using a map and a compass. I'm not bragging or anything, but I'm damn good at it. But I wasn't by myself. What I was trying to say is that I believe every soldier in that platoon did that well. Inspections were nothing. We were always prepared for inspections. Field training. We just loved to go to the field. You know, when it come time for you to go to Jumpmaster School, you had to go. The same thing with the Third Army NCO Academy. It was my turn and, by gosh, I went. The same thing with Ranger School. Victor G. said, "Hey, Bill Gates, you're going to Ranger

School." I said, "Why in the hell am I going to Ranger School?" He said, "If you're going to make a career out of the Army, you need to be Ranger qualified." That is the type of soldier he was. He was a Mexican-American; he couldn't speak very good English. I never will forget how he pronounced "water moccasin;" a snake. It was a "water macusa." He couldn't say "moccasin." He would say "water macusa." There were a lot of words he couldn't pronounce well, but the fact of the matter is, he was a great soldier. You didn't fall out of a run in his platoon either. We would run around Fort Campbell, five miles, at port arms with an M1 rifle. You didn't fall out of the run. I'm not saying that he would... I don't know, Victor, he'd probably hit you or he'd probably kick you, but I doubt it. It was just through respect and admiration.

Interviewer: What company were you with in the 187th?

SMA Gates: "A" Company, 187th Infantry. At that time Lieutenant Carpenter was the Company Commander.

(End of Tape OH 94.2, Side 1)

(Begin Tape OH 94.4-2, Side 2)

Interviewer: As the last tape ended, you gave me the name of your Company Commander. You said it was Lieutenant Carpenter. Do you want to tell me about Lieutenant Carpenter?

SMA Gates: Lieutenant Carpenter was the "Lonely End" when he played football for West Point. He played end on the Army football team, and evidently he played well while he was at West Point, so he came into the Army with a good reputation. He had been the XO for the Company for a while, and when I reported in, he was the Company Commander; but only for about three or four months. He did a good job and everyone in the Company had a lot of respect and admiration for him. We were getting into the Vietnam War, and he was "C" Company, 502nd Commander. He called the artillery and air strikes in on his own position to save his soldiers over there. He received the Distinguished

Service Cross for that. That really is where we knew him from. He was a good man. But he was not a colorful person. He was sort of person that you didn't know well. The sergeants were the colorful folks in the airborne. There were some of them that had served in the Second World War. My First Sergeant served in the 75th Infantry, which is the Rangers today. It was Merrill's Marauders during the Second World War. In the 187th, there were a lot of Korean veterans who served with the 187th in Korea; they were very colorful. Hell, you just about knew everyone of those senior NCOs by name. There were about five or six Medal of Honor recipients in the Division, and you knew all of those individuals; at least you knew who they were when they walked down the street.

Interviewer: Do you think that being an all-volunteer unit, like the airborne is, you didn't have all of the problems you would normally have in a regular infantry division, particularly back in the days of the draft?

SMA Gates: I think so. We had draftees in the airborne.

Interviewer: But they were volunteers.

SMA Gates: But they were all volunteers. You're right. I think that really was what made it unique, in my opinion. There was a closely knitted organization there. After two or three years at Fort Campbell, you knew just about every NCO in the Division. People would go and come. Like they would go to Okinawa and Germany, and then they would come back to Fort Campbell, so you pretty well knew most of the people; especially the NCOs at Fort Campbell, regardless where they served at.

Interviewer: I have a question here. "What led you to your decision to become a Ranger?" I guess Victor G. Franco made your decision. Right?

SMA Gates: Yeah. I guess the reason I have so much admiration for Victor G. is, he taught us the basics of how to be a good soldier, and how to train soldiers to go into combat and survive. I guess what I'm

saying, there was absolutely zero politician in Victor G. Franco; he was all soldier. Everything he did was for the Army and for the benefit of that platoon. And he spent as much time as necessary, there with the troops. I'm not saying that you would call him at home or anything. You know, you had better not, but the fact of the matter is, he was always available. He gave you responsibility. I was just promoted to sergeant and he made me a squad leader in the platoon. There were other sergeants there, so I don't know what for, but the fact of the matter is, I was a squad leader. There were senior sergeants to me in the platoon. There was a squad leader by the name of Barajas; Barajas was a great soldier, and he was Ranger qualified. Yeah, Victor G. just said, "Gates, if you're going to have the Army as a career, you need to be Ranger qualified. When an allocation comes down, we'll see if we can get for you."

Interviewer: Tell me about your Ranger training.

SMA Gates: Ranger training was probably the most intense course you'll ever go to in the Army. I really don't think they have changed the standards, even today. We like to say it was tougher when I went through there than it is today, but it might be more difficult today. The 101st sort of prepared you for the Ranger Course. They had a Recondo School. Recondo School is the toughest damn school I have ever been to in my life. It is two weeks of pure hell. That was undoubtedly the toughest thing that I have ever done in my life; the two weeks of Recondo School at Fort Campbell, Kentucky.

Interviewer: What all did they teach you?

SMA Gates: It's all Ranger-type training. Even in Ranger School, we didn't inspect barracks. You know, they looked at them to see if the things were clean. The TAC officer or the TAC NCO would look at them, but they didn't give a damn about inspecting the barracks. They just made sure that your stuff was straight and the equipment was in the right place. But when you went to Recondo School, the day you got there

you did push-ups all over the place, they harassed the hell out of you, and they kept you in a total state of stress--is the word we use today--the entire time you were there. In fact, we went crawling under the barracks at times, just for mental and physical alertness, if you will. But it was an intensified two-week course; it was an abbreviated Ranger course. You did patrolling; you did mountaineering techniques; you did river crossing techniques; you did survival techniques; but the big thing is, especially the last week, you go into the field on Friday and you get back-to-back patrols for a week. You're walking around like a mummy. You know, you run into trees and things. You get off a patrol, and they'd give you an order, and you'd go on another one. By the time the two weeks was up, you were totally, totally exhausted, and the people who could pass the course were those guys who could continue to put the left foot in front of the right, and continue to go, and react under the stressful situation that you were in. They had what they called "a recondo march." You were not allowed to run. At that time we had packs; we still had the old packs with the horseshoe roll. We had to force march, and it was only three miles. It was only three miles, but it was the damnest fastest march I have ever been on in my life. You know the speed walkers that you see, that is the way we was marching, and you wasn't allowed to fall out. If you fell out, they would kick you out of school. There were guys that did fall out, but that was the end of it. It hurt every bone in your body. By the time you got to the end of that march, every bone in your body was just totally exhausted. I never will forget that. The good thing about it, the cadre was right there with you; every last one of them. So, that course definitely prepared you for Ranger School. First of all, I would like to just mention that they have Allied students in the Ranger Course, too. They have Allied students, some field grade officers in there, and some fairly senior noncommissioned officers, and then certainly a few--in the class I went through--just a very few young

officers, and we had a few specialists, and then young NCOs; that sort of made up the class. I remember we had an Israeli captain that went through the course with us, and we had a couple of Vietnamese or Thais... They may have been from Thailand. They went through the course, or at least started. I don't think any of those guys finished the course; in about two weeks they quit. Here again, I think the thing that you learn in Ranger School, more so than anything else, is that magical word, "teamwork." You're not going to pass Ranger School unless you learn how to work as a team. The next this is, possibly having a mind set that "this course is not so intense that it will ever make me get to the point where I can't do the things they require me to." They damn well try. We had a lot of guys fall by the wayside. The other key to Ranger School is being able to function well in that environment. It's not too difficult to plan and do coordination and give an operations order for a patrol in the little camp site environment, but in the field, after you have been going for three, four, or five days, for you to give a patrol order and to go through all of those same things, to include maps and... I can't think of the name of that thing. Where you make a thing on the ground out of dirt and stuff. It's sort of got me baffled.

Interviewer: Terrain model?

SMA Gates: A terrain model. You have to make a terrain model of... You have to do all of this, and I'm talking about out in the woods; in the middle of a damn jungle. Or, you know, in the mountains, it don't make no difference where you're at, you still have to do all of those things. You didn't have to, but if you intended to pass the course, all of those things had to be done. You couldn't do all to that; one person can't do all to that, so it takes everyone in that patrol. At the same time you've got to provide security, do these things, and do these things, get resupplied, and about ten thousands it seems. I think that is what Ranger School is all about. So, if you

could do those things and develop that teamwork, and at the same time you are the patrol leader, so you've got to impress upon the cadre there that, "Yeah, I'm in charge." Sometimes you don't get all of the cooperation from your fellow Rangers. You know, if you can't do something to get that cooperation, then you have a problem. And then, certainly you have the different phases of Ranger School; now they have a desert phase. That in itself is very interesting.

Interviewer: Did you go down to the Okefenokee?

SMA Gates: Oh yeah.

Interviewer: A lot of people that I've talked to, over the years, said that was what they didn't like the most, because of the water moccasins and everything else.

SMA Gates: That part didn't bother me. You know, snakes and things like that. I played with snakes when I was a kid, so the water moccasins and things like that didn't bother me, but there were a hell of a lot of people who were afraid of those snakes. But even in the mountains, you know, you had rattlesnakes in the mountains. You'd step over a log and you'd hear a rattlesnake rattle.

Interviewer: That was up at Dahlonega?

SMA Gates: Dahlonega, Georgia. The thing that interested me more than anything else in Ranger School, was something that I had never done before, was small boat training. We had an LCU (landing craft, utility) there and we had to come off the LCU and paddle in to the shore, hit an objective, and go back out on the small boats, and back to the LCU and catchup while it was moving. You know, it didn't stop for you. You had to catchup and get on it while it was enroute. That to me was the interesting part of Ranger School; that was something I enjoyed, because I had never done that before. Repelling, rock climbing, and all that, we got a little taste of that in Recondo School, but small boat training, to me, was very interesting. Everyone was the same rank in the Ranger Course. It was interesting to see some of the senior leadership that

attended the course and couldn't make it. They could not get through there, or they didn't want to; one of the two. It probably was the latter.

Interviewer: We discussed your airborne training and your ranger training. You didn't take Special Forces training, did you?

SMA Gates: No, I didn't.

Interviewer: The next thing I would like to talk about is your training out at the Sergeants Major Academy.

SMA Gates: Let me throw one more thing at you. While I was at Fort Campbell, I also went to Jumpmaster School, Aerial Delivery School, Air Transportability School, and I went to CBR School. So, all of those things... When I left Fort Campbell, we really had a good feel for what the Army was all about.

Interviewer: Did you attend Pathfinder School?

SMA Gates: Pathfinder School? Yeah. I went to Pathfinder School while I was at Fort Campbell. So, we had that amount of knowledge, at least training wise, before we left from there. Of course, when I left Fort Campbell, I went to Vietnam, and all of that training was but to use over there, and any damn fool that ever says that combat is different from the training you receive, is exactly that; he's a fool. You do the things the same way in combat as you do in training.

Interviewer: I think that is one of the remarks that one staff sergeant made during Desert Storm, when they asked him about the war, he said, "Well, we just fought the way we were trained."

SMA Gates: Most of the soldiers you talk to that served in the Middle East, during Desert Storm, would have told you that the NTC (National Training Center) was tougher than that damn war. The only difference is, they didn't have live bullets at the NTC. An NTC rotation was much, much tougher than what they went through over there. That's interesting, isn't it?

Interviewer: Yeah, particularly the way the OPFOR (Opposing

Forces) operates out there.

SMA Gates: Yeah. I had a little something to with that.

Interviewer: Class 8 was the class that you attended out at the Sergeants Major Academy. When did you graduate? Was it December of '76, or January of '77.

SMA Gates: January of '77.

Interviewer: That's when they went over the Christmas. I know some time before that, they graduated in December.

SMA Gates: Yeah, they tried it both ways. We went there in July of '76, and left there the first part of January of '77.

Interviewer: Tell me about your days out at the Academy.

SMA Gates: I think... I say, I think, but there's no thinking about it. The Academy, to me, was probably a little different experience than for the majority of my classmates. To me the Academy was a time for me to just be responsible for myself. I wasn't responsible for anyone else, except myself and my family. And it afforded me the opportunity to spend some time with my family. It also afforded us an opportunity to do some things that we had been wanting to do for years, together as a family. At the same time, the experience of being at the Academy was certainly worth its weight in gold. It taught me another dimension of the Army. It taught me how to research; how to write papers; how to prepare for group discussions. Small group training methodology was something fairly new to the Army at that time. We hadn't completely imbedded that into the Army's mind at that time. And then the opportunity to meet some old friends--some people that I had known for years and years in the Army--and to meet the rest of the Army in that environment out there. That certainly was an experience that was well worth the money that the Army and the taxpayers of the United States invested.

Interviewer: Do you think the interaction between the combat arms, combat support, and combat service support is one of the valuable

aspects of the Academy, where you see how the whole Army operates? A lot of times you lose sight of that if you stay in one particular branch.

SMA Gates: I think so. In fact, I'm convinced of that. I had an opportunity to serve out there as the Sergeant Major of the Academy, later on. That's is probably one of the most valuable tools of the Academy; putting the Army together. I'm not so sure that some of the things that we try to teach NCOs out there is on track; this is strictly Gates' opinion. From what I've seen and the experiences I've had in the Army, I'm not so sure it is on track. I think we need to change the philosophy a little bit. The fact of the matter is, "I don't do a damn thing in the Army." You need to quote this. "We do it."

Interviewer: That's right.

SMA Gates: So it takes the combat arms, the combat support, and the combat service support, and it takes the National Guard and the Reserve, and it takes the civilian work force, all those working together, to do the things the Army has to do. I think you've got that perspective at the Academy. That is very, very important for you to be able to pickup the phone, as a battalion sergeant major, and call the Division G1 and say, "Hey, this is the problem that I have. Can you help me." And ninety-five percent of the time, he will say, "Yes." Not, "I don't know him. He's not a friend of mind." In the past it was, "He was a friend of mine. And if he's a friend of mine, yes, I'd get that soldier I needed." A soldier with a critical MOS. But being able to relate to him and understand what his job is, and him understanding what my job is, he'll say, "Damn Bill Gates, I didn't know you was missing a computer operator in that battalion. I'm glad you brought it to my attention. I see if I can't get you one." And I didn't know him from Adam, other than his name. I'm not saying that it's a "good old boy network." It's a professional network. Professional soldiers working together, trying to make things happen. I think that

in itself is worth its weight in gold. But the other thing, you find that everybody is the same. We're all NCOs. We're all trying to make things happen. We're all trying to do the best we can to train the Army and prepare the Army. Believe it or not, we all try to prepare an army that has to be ready to fight. You know, the guy that is an AG (Adjutant General) NCO, he just as concerned about getting soldiers prepared for war as the Battalion Command Sergeant Major. It's amazing what does take place out at the Academy. Whether or not you establish a network of NCOs, throughout the Army, which I really think you do because you sort of remember all of the guys that were in class with you, really. I don't think they give you any special favors, but it isn't too bad to know someone's name if you need something for the unit. Now if you need something for yourself, you're kind of stupid to call somebody that was a classmate of yours. But all of those things put together, I think is what the Academy is all about. Not only do you go there to learn, you go there to get an understanding that there's a total Army here, and it's a total Army effort. I don't believe that sergeants should be worrying about maneuvering armies across the damn battlefield. That is somebody else's job. If we get the weapons to firing, and the equipment we are responsible for to work, and we get soldiers properly trained, and make sure soldiers meet the training and discipline standards, and do the best we can to take care of those soldiers and their families, then that really is what a sergeant is all about, in my opinion. Some times people don't totally agree with that.

Interviewer: When you go to the Academy, they are training you for positions of greater responsibility. How important is it to involve the wife in the different programs out there?

SMA Gates: It's critical. There's more to it than that, too. Even some of the social things that you do at the Academy, with the students, is critical too, because you continue to do that throughout your military career. But your families are a very, very critical part of the

Army. The more we can get the spouses and the families involved, the healthier the Army becomes. So, they are teaching spouses today how to conduct small group sessions. They were teaching that. I don't know whether they are today or not, but they were during my watch. They were teaching spouses how to conduct small group sessions and how to interface with some of the support activities on an installation. I think all this pays a dividend. At Fort Stewart, Georgia--I'll just use this as an example--they had very outstanding Division Command Sergeant Major's spouse there. She did some of the most outstanding things. The service that she performed for the Army, and for all of those families that were left at Fort Stewart while the Division was in the Middle East, there isn't enough money to pay her for that, and it happened everywhere, not just there, but every installation in the Army. So, my God, if can do something to influence and to train and to prepare our spouses--especially the senior NCOs and officer spouses--to do some of these things that normally is not done or is done by someone in a paying position, we've really made a lot of money. I think the spouses enjoy the Academy too; I know my wife did. She really had a lot of fun. Not only did she participate in all of the activities, but she learned while she was there. She took a college English course, she took some painting classes, she took an artistic course while she was there. The big thing is, we sort of bonded our family while we were out there too. All of those things are important.

Interviewer: One of the questions that we have, that we normally ask later on in the interview, concerns the Army's Family Policy and the Army's Family Support System. I think right now would be a good time to talk about that. During Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm, when we had a hugh number of soldiers deployed over to the Middle East. What sort of problems did the Army encounter during that period of time, as far as the Family Support System is concerned? You mentioned the wife of the Division Command Sergeant Major and all of the work she did.

SMA Gates: It was all of the spouses, it just wasn't her. She had a very large role in that. Of course, she was a very special lady. But you see the same thing at Fort Bragg, and at Fort Hood, Texas. Even at Fort Bliss, you see the spouses emerging with leadership and getting things done. If a family had a problem they knew who to call. They established networks. With a very minimum military structure left on an installation, that small military structure just couldn't handle all of the family problems. They setup hot lines. At Fort Myer, Virginia, they had a hot line into the Family Support Center, and the people who manned this hot line were local wives; even the Chief of Staff's wife went over and manned it. I went over and manned one for about an hour, but I couldn't handle any more after that. If nothing else, it gave the family members a point of contact and somebody would listen to them if they had a problem. Having said that, many, many problems were handled by those great women, and men, who manned those hot lines and those Family Support Centers at installations where those soldiers deployed from. It just gave the Army more of an opportunity to focus on what the hell it was that we were doing in the Middle East, and that was fighting a war.

Interviewer: What changes did you see in the way that we gave support to our families after Desert Storm, because of the lessons we learned?

SMA Gates: One of the big things that came out of... And this may not sound like a problem, but I think we had time to prepare the soldiers to deploy, if you understand what I mean. You know, we had a time line, but the war was fought over there on our terms. You see, we were the ones that started the air war, and then we started the ground war; we commenced that thing. I'm not saying we didn't start the war, but I think Iraq started it by taking Kuwait. The fact of the matter is, we had an opportunity to move our equipment and our people over there and stockpile it before we started the actual shooting war. The mail system was totally broke in the Army, and I'm not saying who's at

fault for this. We just took the active duty mail clerks and we just stopped training mail clerks; we didn't have active duty mail clerks. So who is it that ran the APOs? I think there was only two active duty APOs left; one was in Korea and the other was in Europe. The divisions and corps... The XVIII Airborne Corps didn't have people who were dedicated to doing nothing but handling mail. The mail was backlogged and that was a problem. Now the entire U.S. Mail System is broke. It took about ten days to get a letter from any state in the United States to Fort Dix. That's where they really took the mail from. It all came into Fort Dix and they flew it over from there. It took about ten days to get the damn letter from North Carolina to Fort Dix, because the U.S. Mail System is broke. After it got on the airplane and got over there, we didn't have people that could operate the APOs. The didn't have Division APOs. You know, at Fort Bragg, you've got civilians who run that post office there. They found out very quick that when we did away with those slots, that shouldn't have. We should have people trained. Now we did give 71 Limas (71Ls) a little training, but we didn't teach them how to operate Mail Distribution Centers. The same thing with the rations. My God, we took so damn many cooks out of the inventory, and this happened before my tenure, but we took so damn many cooks out of the inventory, we didn't have enough people to cook for our soldiers out in the field environment. We really didn't have the field rations into the system, and even if you do have the MREs and the tray packs in the system, you still need to cook some bacon or some eggs; fry some eggs and make the soldiers a decent meal if you're in a field environment for a year. I'm not throwing rocks at anyone, but somebody made a bad decision when we took all of those cooks out of the system.

Interviewer: How did you solve the mail problem?

SMA Gates: Yankee ingenuity. We did have Reserve Components that were trained in APO operations, so when we got some of those over there it settled down a little bit. I say Yankee ingenuity, like the 82nd

Airborne Division. The Division Sergeant Major took the people who were on light duty, down to the damn APO at night, and separated the mail. So, that Division didn't have no problem with mail. That is one way they solved the problem. The other one was beefing up the APOs and trying to get people trained to go over and get the Reserve Component units in there so they could operate the thing.

Interviewer: How did you solve the cook problem?

SMA Gates: The same thing. The same damn thing. Anybody could cook, so we made cooks out of them. But technically what happened is, the soldiers who were in an environment... Like I was telling you before, there were some contract dining facilities operated in, what I call the rear areas; the built up areas where people lived in buildings over there. They were air conditioned buildings, by the way. In some cases they were better than the barracks here in the United States. So, we moved some of those cooks, and we had National Guard and Reserves and we used those guys as fillers, in a lot of cases. Then we moved the soldiers from the high level dining facilities, like Corps, down to the battalions. So, that's how we solved the problem with the cooks. There were thousands of lessons learned over there. One of the things that we run into, and we knew it, was friendly identification; identification of friendly units. And also friendly fire causing casualties. So, I think we've come a long way. I read in the paper the other day where they had killed that program that we had ongoing to identify our friendly units by very high technology means. I understand that they are going to delay that program three or four years before they get it into the system, where each vehicle is identifiable to people who are placing friendly fire out in those locations. There were a multitude of problems that was associated with the casualty reporting system. It was not accurate and it was not up-to-date to our capabilities. Some of that casualty reporting, you know they notified people that a family member was wounded and the seriousness of the wound or whatever, and

some of that wasn't exactly true. Those are just a few of the problems that have stuck in my mind. But here at Hometown, U.S.A., the biggest problem that I've seen was pay. We just still don't have the pay situation fixed to whereas we have the money going somewhere, from that soldier, and some type of systematic way so that the spouse and the children at home have money available. There were all kinds of money issues that was raised. I think, in the future the Army will have to have some way of causing the soldier, if you go to war you're going to have to have a check going to the bank. Now some units did that. They had to have a check going to the bank. Again the 82nd Airborne comes to mind. If you're there, you damn well better have a check going to the bank. You know, that's it. They still have units though, where the soldier gets a check in the mail, and the damn mail is a month late getting to the soldier. If you get a check in the mail, it comes to you, so it get to you on the last day of the month. If it takes a month to get to you in Saudi Arabia, and it takes another damn month to get it back to your wife, that's two month without any money, so what do you do? You activate the AER (Army Emergency Relief), and the AER was very, very busy during the Gulf War. So, those are some of the things we need to do. Then the replacement system. I'm not so sure that we prepared for overseas replacement posts, whereas we bring soldiers in to a particular post and we would prepare them to go as replacements to the Middle East. There were a lot of damn things that we did great. We trained crews for tanks. I don't know if you're aware of that or not, but we had many, many standby tank crews. We didn't replace individuals in tanks. We replaced the entire crew. So we had all those crews trained and ready to go, in case they needed them. There was a lot of that that went on. The great thing about the Army--and when I say this a lot of people were not able to see it--the cooperation between commands in the Army was the best. I could never, ever envision it being as good as it was. I have never in my life seen where a Chief of

Staff would say, "Hey, I need this, and this, and this. Europe you need to supply it." "Yes sir, Three bags full. We can do it." There was no pissing and moaning. There was no fussing. I'm serious, and it happened throughout the entire Army. When that Field Commander needed something, he let the system know, and by God, he got it. It wasn't easy, because in some units in Europe, they field stripped those units, totally, so, it wasn't easy. You had family problems in Europe just like you did here in the States, and more so. We even talked about moving some of those families back to the States. In fact, a lot of the did come back to the States.

Interviewer In Germany, they can't get in the car and drive home to mom and dad.

SMA Gates: That's right, so, we did move some of those families who elected to come back to the States. We had a hell of a problem in Panama. What do you do with the families when that war went on down there. Some of them did come back to the States, before the Just Cause kicked off. But the majority of the families stayed right there. You know, we had to secure the families.

Interviewer: We were talking about the Family Support System. That requirement that, before you're deployed that you have your finances squared away, has that been implemented yet?

SMA Gates: I don't know, I haven't followed that up, but the fact of the matter is, there's a system in place where, if a person does deploy, you have an option to send a check to the bank, or a check to something, other than coming to you in the mail.

Interviewer: What improvements do you envision that we need in the Family Policy and the Family Support System, based on your knowledge?

SMA Gates: We can always make improvements. One of the good things that has come out of all of the good things that we have tried to do with the families, is a sense of need for that Family Support System. I think that perception and that realistic sense has now infiltrated the

entire Army. The awareness of the needs of families are for ever present in every organization in the United States Army. So, that's probably the best thing that we have been able to do over the last five or ten years, and that is to maintain that sense of awareness of family needs. Now in some units they take that to the extreme, and there has to be a balance in there. You can't have nothing but concern for families, because we have single soldiers, too, and that was one of my primary concerns as the Sergeant Major of the Army, that we did--God bless the Army and everybody in it--we didn't not forget, but we certainly didn't give the emphasis to the single soldiers like we should have, at the same time we were giving emphasis to the families. I think all of that has turned around now, and we have a happy balance there. But the fact of the matter is, I think we have a good system in place. What we have to do is build on that system, and decentralize that system as much as we can possibly can, and get it out of the hands of the bureaucracy in Washington, D.C., so we can have a good Family Support System at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, and it works well. And if everything works well, then that is the ultimate goal.

(End of Tape OH 94.5-2, Side 2)

(Begin Tape OH 94.5-3 Side 1)

Interviewer: We were talking about the Family Support System. You said that it worked real well at Fort Campbell. Do you want to continue to talk about the Family Support System?

SMA Gates: Yeah. I was saying that it worked not only at CONUS (Continental United States) bases, it worked well overseas too. So we found that the value for the Family Support System was tremendous and it really took a hell of a burden off the shoulders of the commanders in the field, knowing that the Family Support System was working back at home station. They were able to concentrate their efforts on the war, and the tasks at hand. But I think the key to the Family Support System is to work that system through the chain of command. I don't think you

need to have a separate chain. Just the family support. If it works through the chain of command, and you have a good Family Support System at the installation level, and everybody's aware of the Family Support System, all the way down to the squad leader, then I think the system works well. Where you have problems is, when people don't understand that you can't take the problem away from the chain of command, and we don't need a separate entity... strictly my opinion... we don't need a separate entity over here called the "Family Support Channel". It all has to take place within that structure of the Army. So I think that structure understands the Family Support System.

Interviewer: Do you think a good system would also take that burden off that individual soldier that's out there trying to do his job?

SMA Gates: Absolutely. It takes a heck of a burden off the individual soldier in the field that's trying to perform in a wartime situation. The same thing in a peacetime situation, if they're deployed for a period of time. We have soldiers deployed, as you well know. We have a battalion in the Sinai Desert; they've been out there a long, long time. It's a rotational type unit. We have a battalion down in the Baltics, in Macedonian. We had all those soldiers in Somalia. If the Family Support System works right on the installation, it really takes the burden off the chain of command and the people in the field that are trying to prepare and fight a war.

Interviewer: Also, do you believe that the Army's attitude that we have now is a little different than when you and I came first came in? Because right now the saying is, "We enlist the soldier, but we re-enlist the family."

SMA Gates: Yeah. When I came in, the saying was, "If we wanted you to have a wife, by God, we would have issued you one." I think that is where we come from, isn't it? You know to make a long story short. There were very few people married in the Army of the late '50s. You

know, my First Sergeant was single. The first platoon sergeant I had was single, and all the squad leaders were single. So about the only people who were married were a few draftees. Those individuals were married, and we really didn't care what happened to those families. We went ahead and did the things that we had to do. The same thing with my wife and family. Shoot, when I went to Vietnam, nobody was concerned about them. They had to make it on their own, the best they could.

Interviewer: I don't know if we have this on tape but let me ask you a couple more questions about you assignment over in Berlin, before we move on. You were with the 3rd Battle Group, 6th Infantry, is that right?

SMA Gates: A company, 3rd Battle Group, 6th Infantry. Right.

Interviewer: Okay. You went over as a private, and you came back as a specialist. Correct?

SMA Gates: Right.

Interviewer: What was your job over there at that time?

SMA Gates: Oh my God. I started out in my squad as a sniper. We still had the snipers in the squad. Then I was a senior rifleman, and then I got to be a fire team leader.

Interviewer: What type of training did you do while you were over there in Berlin?

SMA Gates: The major focus there was combat in the cities. We spent a lot of time in a mock village we had down in the city, training for combat in cities. We still had an annual trip to what we call the "zone," down in the West German; Hohenfeld, Grafenwohr, Wildflecken. We did some training there; live fire training. We still qualified with our weapons and all that stuff in Berlin. We spent a hell of a lot of time on Four Ring Strasse, marching. We did a lot of parades. There was another story there, of international significance. Each year they would have an armed forces day parade at Tempelhof air field, and all of the British, the French, and the Americans would march in that parade.

The Russians, they never marched in the parade. But anyway, this one year, we had all of our units. A platoon of tanks would pass in review. We had people riding in jeeps, passing in review. It was be very impressive parade. We even had the Air Force march in it. But the fact of the matter is, this one year, attending the parade was some Russian field marshal that was in charge of the combined field army that was stationed in Eastern Europe. As you know, when the American tanks pass in review, they turned the turrets towards the reviewing stand; that's a salute. So they did it, and old Russian ducked down. I guess he thought they were getting ready to shoot him. That really happened, by the way.

Interviewer: He probably thought there was a rebellion going on. How was the leadership of your NCOs over there?

SMA Gates: Well, we had some great NCOs, and we had some not too good. Now when I say this, don't get the wrong impression, because most of the older NCOs were World War II and Korean vets. Some of those guys were not the greatest thing that ever happened to the NCO Corps. But the younger NCOs, like my squad leader, was a good man, and our 2nd platoon sergeant we had, while I was stationed there, was a good man. We had a tough old first sergeant. God, that man was something else. On Friday afternoons, we fell out for retreat parade. We had a retreat parade on Four Ring Strasse, outside of the compound there. One Friday, we did it in fatigues. Normally you did it in Class A's or OGS (olive green uniform). Remember the OGS?

Interviewer: Yeah.

SMA Gates: Or ODs (olive drab uniform). By the way, we were issued a green and a OD uniform when I came in. So we were getting ready to do that retreat parade, and I fell down. I was running to the formation, on the sidewalk, and I fell down and hit my knee and it tore a hole in my fatigues. It just so happened, I was in the first squad, of the third platoon. The Company Commander came down through there and he seen that hole in my trousers. He didn't ask me what happened, he

just said, "Report to the First Sergeant when you get back from the parade." He asked me was a rag man or a soldier. I said I was a soldier, and it must of really pissed him off. Anyway I came and reported to the Platoon Sergeant, and I said, "My God. I just fell down." Half my knee was torn all to pieces too, you know. It was bleeding and everything. So anyway, I reported to the First Sergeant, and I had to do fourteen days of extra duty, for falling out with a set of fatigues on, with a hole in it.

Interviewer: No excuse, right?

SMA Gates: No excuse. They could give an Article 15, so, you know, you had to do that.

Interviewer: That's what is known as, either my punishment or the Article 15.

SMA Gates: Those are the types of things that went on. I think we spent more time practicing parades and doing parades in Berlin than we did anything else. Also, maintaining the barracks. We did a lot of spit shining in the barracks. We had a lot of visitors. They were very high visibility organizations, so we just spent a lot of time doing those things. There was another comical thing that happened. I say comical. It wasn't comical to me, but it was. Gosh, I trying to think of the name of this General, that was the Berlin Commander; he was a two-star general. He commanded all the U.S. forces in Berlin. And at that time, he was sort of like a governor. You had the U.S. Sector, the French Sector, the British Sector, and then the Russian Sector. It's kind of odd. Russia had all of East Berlin, and we had West Berlin broken down into three different little sectors. But that general was also the governor for that section of Berlin. The first time you pulled guard, what they called "Berlin Command Guard," at the Berlin Command Headquarters, at the large installation up there in roughly the center of the city. If you was a private, you had what they called "Post Seven". It was right at the entrance way to the Berlin Command

Headquarters building. You know, where the general and all these high level officers come through that door. You had to stand at parade rest or attention, and then you had to open the damn door for all these high ranking visitors. The first time I pulled guard, boy, we was so proud. I think the guard changed about four o'clock; 1600 in the afternoon. We went through that night and everything was okay. The next morning, I had guard duty, when the general was coming. So the Commander of Relief explained exactly how I was supposed to stand inside the door, and when I seen a car coming, I was to open the door, go outside, open his car door, and then when he got out, close his car door and run over and open up the big door, and let him inside, and at the same time, you know, salute, when you came up to the car. I rehearsed that all night long. So the next morning, I knew that it was cold outside, and I knew that it had rained a little bit, see. But I didn't realize that the cobblestone had ice on it. So when I opened the door and went running outside, after his car stopped, to opened his car door, I fell over. My damn feet just slid out and busted my rear end right open, man. My God damn M1 rifle went one way, and my helmet liner went the other way. The General gets out of the car, and boy, I just said, "Gee," you know in my mind, "I really screwed this thing up." He said, "That's the best damn effort I've ever seen in my life, soldier. Here, let me help you get up." I said, "Sir, I can get up by myself." I got up by myself. I got my damn rifle, hurried up there and saluted that guy, shut his car door, run up and opened that door, and then he come on inside. He come over and patted me on the shoulder and he said, "That was still the best damn effort I have ever seen." Boy, that was sure embarrassing. I kept thinking, "God, you're going to get court marshaled for this shit. For messing this thing up." But here again, the TO&E (Table of Organization and Equipment) unit is a little different from training, so people are a lot closer. You spent a lot of time with people. I'm not talking about two or three weeks, I'm talking about a year. We had this one individual

in the squad that thought he was the greatest thing in the world. He was about six foot tall and he tried to intimidate all of the squad members. Not the Sergeant, but the young soldiers. I think he was a specialist at that time, and we were privates, and he would try to intimidate us. He thought he was the badest thing since animal crackers, you know. But one of the soldiers was in the latrine there one day, and he sort of hemmed him up and slapped him around a little bit. He said, "We'll just fix him." I guess about two or three nights later, this joker was laying down on the bed. Three of us got together and said, "We'll just beat the hell out of him." He was laying on his bed, and we came in and took the blanket, and pushed that blanket down, and the guys got on each end of that blanket, and buddy, we took a stick and we beat the hell out of that soldier. I'm serious! We didn't have no more problems. He was the most humble specialist you ever seen in my life. Whether it works or not, I don't know, but we sure whipped him.

Interviewer: Let me ask you about your combat assignments. You had two assignments in Vietnam. Correct?

SMA Gates: Right.

Interviewer: Was it '66 and '67, and '69 and '70. Correct?

SMA Gates: Right.

Interviewer: What company were you assigned to during your first combat assignment?

SMA Gates: B Company, 2nd Battalion, 502nd.

Interviewer: And that was with the 101st Airborne Division?

SMA Gates: Right. The 101st. Well, we didn't have a division over there. We only had a brigade at that time.

Interviewer: Okay.

SMA Gates: The 1st Brigade was over there.

Interviewer: Okay. Where was the 1st Brigade's area of operation?

SMA Gates: Central Highlands.

Interviewer: Central Highlands. Right up around the Pleiku area?

SMA Gates: I never did see Pleiku, but it was in that area. We started out at Kontum. Our base camp was in Phan Rang. When you rotated in there, you went through the base camp, for about a week of, what they call, "P Training" (preparatory training). We did a little training for about a week and then we were shipped out to your unit, and then you rotated out of there whenever you went on R&R (Rest and Recuperation), or you would DEROS (Date Established for Return from Overseas) through Phan Rang. The base camp was in Phan Rang. I seen Phan Rang twice and that was when I went on R&R, and when I DEROSed out of there.

Interviewer: Phan Rang; that was south of Nha Trang, right near the ocean, right?

SMA Gates: Right. But we operated from Kontum and Dac Tho. Correction; we were not at Kontum. When I joined the unit, it was at Dac Tho and we had a hell of a battle up there, about two weeks later. That was a good baptismal fire, the first two weeks with the unit. But the fact of the matter is, we patrolled... I say patrolled. We were sort of a reaction force for the II Corps area. We worked all the way from there, all the way down to Phan Thiet. Phan Thiet, was over on the coast. We went to, oh my God, I can't remember all of the names of the places over there. But I remember going to Phan Thiet, and to Tuy Hoa, which is right on the coast. Dac Tho, Kontum. All through there, we operated.

Interviewer: Did you go over as an individual replacement or did you go over with a unit?

SMA Gates: I went over as an individual replacement.

Interviewer: What date did you arrive over there?

SMA Gates: I don't know the exact day. I think that's the 11th of May.

Interviewer: But it was May of '66. Right?

SMA Gates: Right.

Interviewer: What rank were you when you went over?

SMA Gates: Staff sergeant.

Interviewer: What was your duty assignment at that time.

SMA Gates: Squad leader. Rifle squad leader.

Interviewer: Tell me about some of the combat operations that you were involved in, and your role during those operations. Did you say that you were involved in the in there at Dac Tho?

SMA Gates: Yeah. Some of the names of these operations I can't recall. Probably if I sat down and think about the things for a while, I probably would recall. At the squad and platoon level, you really don't give a damn about the names of the big operations. Those things are to put in newspapers and for everyone to talk about back here in the United States. Probably the most dynamic thing that can happen to an individual is your first taste of live combat. It is not all that unusual, but it is something that you sort of prepare yourself for over the years--at least I did--not only mentally and physically, but I tried to develop my leadership skills, to overcome the leadership obstacles of leading soldiers in a live combat situation. So the preparation that the Army gave me, and the help the people that I served gave me, it prepared me for that about as well as you could be prepared, I guess. At least I think so. The old cliché, now like I say again, "We don't do it this way in combat," in my opinion, is strictly wrong. No one should ever make that comment, because you do things in combat exactly the way you do it in training. The only difference is, it is live bullets, and somebody's trying to kill you before you kill them.

Interviewer: If that saying is right, then your training is wrong.

SMA Gates: Then the training is wrong. You need to change the way you do the training. But anyway, I went there as a squad leader and was assigned to a squad, and most of the men in the squad were seasoned. They'd been there three to six months, and some people ten months. In fact, a couple of them were about ready to leave. Their year was over

and they were about ready to leave. So we had the opportunity to take about a week of training and then we went in and married up with my unit, which was in Dac Tho at that time. There was a threat for me; the 95th NVA (North Vietnam Army) Regiment. I'll Never forget. That was a phantom regiment over there. The 95th NVA Regiment was about to overrun Dac Tho, and the Special Forces camp located at Dac Tho. So that is why the brigade went in there. I guess about two days later, we were in a sort of base camp there. The base camp was nothing more than a poncho hooch, and the Battalion was spread out around that damn airfield, on poncho hooches. That was the base camp, you know. We were able to eat one hot meal a day, while we were in that base camp. But to make a long story short, at the start of our operation, the platoon I was in, we flew out one evening, about dusk, and secured an artillery battery way out in the valley, way across the mountains over there. That artillery battery was positioned out there for the Brigade to start their combat operations. We hadn't had any operations; they had just moved in. So they were going to block, and search and destroy. That was our mission over there, by the way; search and destroy. Not search and health, and all this other shit, you know, that came up later on. Our mission in the 66th was search and destroy the enemy, and that's really is what we did. We had a real tough Battalion Commander there by the name of Gerald Emerson; Old "Hatchet Hank." They called him "Hatchet Hank." But anyway, we moved out and secured this artillery battery. I guess they'd moved out before we got there. Normally, you put your security up first, but that ain't the way they done this one. They put the artillery battery up, and those guys had been shooting all day and they shot that night, on the mountain side up there. I guess about one o'clock in the morning, everything was real quiet. It's very difficult to sit here and tell you the story. The NVA lined up at the tree line, and we could see them out there. We had security out there, and we pulled security in. They had the three artillery pieces. One here and

two back here. (The three artillery pieces were in a triangle shape setup.) That was the way they set the artillery up, so it was sort of a triangle, anyway you looked at the artillery. But they had this point gun, and I had the security around this point gun, and I had the security for the tree line up there, we pulled back. We had dug holes. We had time enough to dig holes. Anyway that night, about one o'clock in the morning, the NVA lined up there and they were going to take that artillery battery. I guess from where we sat to the jungle, to the tree line, it was about fifty meters of open terrain; rice patties. We knew they were there, and we heard them coming down, and seen them, and everything. God damn, we kept shooting artillery at them. They even got a gun ship up and shot down there, but it didn't do any damn good. Anyway, they lined up there and they started to cross that field. It was something that would remind you of the Civil War. It was just dress right, dress, and they was marching across that field. One line would come, and then they had the second line, and they had about four lines of people, lined up like that. It was terrible. It wasn't terrible, it was great the way we were handling that thing, because we were just shooting our damn machine guns, and the artillery was firing upon the hillside. We even had mortar support coming in there and helping us out and everything. But to make a long story short, there were so damn many of them, those ass holes finally pushed us back from that free gun; that first gun. The unique thing about it is, I never was afraid. There was so damn much stuff to do, I never had time to get scared, you know. Later on, you sit down and think about it. So anyway, we pulled back and they were trying to get that gun. They were trying to take his gun, but they didn't realize that the gun had pegs in the ground. It was an old airborne 105 howitzer, you see, and they had to peg it down. They never could understand that. They would have got it, but then they dropped the other two guns down and direct fired on them. That got their damn attention. After that, they left. After all this shit, it

seemed like it was well organized, but I'm sure it was total chaos the way we were doing things, but evidently we stopped the assault on the artillery battery. But I don't know how we came through that thing with not one soldier wounded or scratched. It was the damnest thing I ever seen in my life, with all the fire and everything that was coming in on us. They even threw mortar rounds in on us. No one got wounded. But after I sat down and thought, I said, "Damn, I don't know what made those guys stop." It looked like fifty, maybe two hundred of them, on that one artillery piece, trying to get it. It seem like they were all like little worms or something. God almighty, it was a terriblest thing you ever seen. The battle went on until daylight, and then they left. They just left and they left all their dead and wounded laying there out on that damn field. But that was the only time that I ever really found that my life probably was in danger over there. I say in danger, but being captured, or killed, or something like that.

Interviewer: You didn't have any dead or wounded?

SMA Gates: No. Not that night. You know, there is all kinds of war stories you could tell. I don't know if I whether I should tell all these things on the tape. But anyway, I was a squad leader, I guess for about six months, and then the Platoon Sergeant rotated and I took over the platoon, as a staff sergeant.

Interviewer: How was morale within your unit?

SMA Gates: Outstanding. They were just great soldiers. Probably two of the funniest damn things that happened. We had this young black soldier, his name was Feldor, and he was a South Carolinian. I'll never forget Feldor. What we would do is, at night we'd set up a perimeter if we were in the deep jungle, or we were near trails and stuff, we would ambush the trails at night. We would have the evening meal away from our positions that we were going to set up for the night, or our ambush site. You know, we didn't move to it. A lot of units didn't do that, and a lot of units got hit at night. We didn't. A lots of platoon

never did. In a sense, training pays off. You know, you could do dumb things all you want to. Like I know we walked through many ambushes. The unit I was with, the soldiers stayed ten meters apart. Sometimes you would have to close it up, but the rule of thumb was, you stayed spread out. You know, you put forty soldiers, ten meters apart on the damn trail, it would a battalion to ambush those forty soldiers, because you're four hundred meters long.

Interviewer: I know the VC (Viet Cong) probably said, "I'll just wait until somebody else comes by."

SMA Gates: Right. Right. "I'll wait till the main body gets here.", and before you know it, the main body is gone. So all that training pays off. But anyway, we set up this perimeter. We moved into this area, and it was almost dusk. We had just set the machine gun down there and over there. You know we had two machine guns, and we were getting ready to put all of them into position, and at the same time the squad leaders were putting their men in position and everything. And all at once I heard this damn noise, you know. I looked up and this deer come bouncing through the damn perimeter, you know. Just like those over there. See those deer, (pointing out to his yard)? But anyway he come bouncing through the perimeter, and the next damn thing I seen was a tiger. This damn tiger looked like it was as long as that couch there, that love seat. He made one bounce in the center of the damn perimeter, and then he was gone. And it went running over Feldor; Feldor was down at the machine gun. I said, "Damn Feldor. Did you see that tiger?" He said, (SMA Gates says in a whisper), "Paws. Paws." That's all he could say. He seen them damn paws coming at him. Old Feldor's eyes were as big as saucers. He said, (SMA Gates says in a whisper again.) "Paws. Paws. Damn it, paws." And the other one was this guy by the name of... I think it started with a K. But anyway, we ambushed this trail, and you know, when you sit on an ambush, a guy would have relieve himself. We moved in there and set up. It was dark

when we moved in and set that ambush up, so you can't see everything. This one soldier had to use the latrine; he had to relieve himself. He moved back and you should never do that. You should never move by yourself. You tell everybody and you always go with a buddy. Even though it stinks, you still got to go with a buddy. So he moved back about ten meters away from the trail that we had to ambush, and he was going to relieve himself. He told me what happened out there. He said, "I took my trousers down and I was relieving myself and I laid my weapon down." He said, "All at once, I heard this real light noise coming." And unbeknown to us, there was a hidden trail, and this VC come walking up that damm trail, and he was sitting right on it because, you know it was sort of an...

Interviewer: Open area.

SMA Gates: an open area in the damm thicket out there, see. This will God damn truth, you know. All at once, we hear a damn sound. You know, yaaaaaaaaaaaaa! I said, "God damn. You know, one of them jokers done slipped up here and cut one of my soldiers throat." But what had happened... God damn, I can't think of his name. I'll think of his name in a minute. But anyway, he said, "That damn joker was right even with me." He said, "I reached my hand real slow for my M16, and when I moved my hand, he moves his AK and brings it up towards me. So here I am, sitting there with my pants down, the damn weapon is not in hands reach, so the only thing I could do is grab that son of a bitch." He said, "I grabbed him, Sergeant Gates." He said, "I grabbed him around the legs, and when I did that, the joker hollered, jumped straight up, dropped his God damn AK, and run down through the bushes." That guy was something. But it was something. It was the damnest scream you've ever heard in your life. You would have sworn somebody had really gotten hurt. But you know, it's just crazy things like that, that happens. But the other comical thing was, we were moving up this trail one time. Boy, we was really moving. As the platoon sergeant/platoon leader, my

position was behind the point squad, or sometimes the point fire team, depending on how busy you are. You know, we didn't want to interrupt the squad leader's business up there. Sometimes if it was tough, you'd go up there. But anyway, all at once these damn soldiers started running back this way, see. I said, "My God. What the hell is going on?" This guy says, "There's a damn snake up there in the trail." I said, "Jesus Christ, you know, a combat veteran and all these weapons and shit, and there's a damn snake up there. You're going to run from a snake." He said, "Sergeant Gates, you would run from a snake too." I moved on up there and it was a python.

Interviewer: Python. Yeah.

SMA Gates: That damn snake was that big (Approximately eight to ten inches.), you know, and he was curled up in a circle as big as this table (Approximately five feet.). It covered a circle as big as this table. Hell, I'd run from him too. We just went around the snake and went on. Boy, those kids were something. But getting back to the squad. We maintained fairly good strengths. We normally had eight or ten. And in the platoon, sometimes they had as high as sixty or seventy, and down as low as thirty-five. We were supposed to have forty-four; exactly forty-four people. Sometimes we had two platoons, because that was just the way the replacement system worked, you know. We had a double platoon, and then in some cases, we went down to about thirty-five. It never was too bad, the first tour. I think the morale and the esprit of the soldiers was fine. They were well trained, well disciplined, no problems. I didn't have any discipline problems at all. None.

Interviewer: When you moved from squad leader, up to become the platoon sergeant, as an inexperienced platoon sergeant, who provided you with most of your assistance, your guidance, and your advice? Who did you look to as you moved from that one position to the platoon sergeant position?

SMA Gates: There, during that time frame, unfortunately there was

nobody. When I say that... The First Sergeant was there. Sometimes the First Sergeant would be on the operation with us, and sometimes he was in the rear. If he was with us, he was with the company CP (command post), unless the company CP was moving with the platoon. Hell, we'd go for months and you'd never see the rest of the company.

Interviewer: They would just put you out there on operation, resupply, and that's it, huh?

SMA Gates: Yeah. But sometimes, every couple of weeks, we would emerge and form a company perimeter and get a resupply, you know, to change clothes and give the guys an opportunity to take a bath, if we was close to a river or something like that. And that would be one of the reasons why we would emerge, or we would finish an area. We did what they call... The Battalion Commander's terminology was "Clover leafing". What we'd do was go out in an area, and we'd send patrols all around that area, and seek out the enemy. If we found the enemy, we would try to pile on and overcome him. Search and destroy is what we were doing. We called them recondos. A patrol in that battalion was a recondo. We'd sent a little four or five men, fire team, or some kind of a squad, to patrol an area. You'd cover a couple of clicks, the platoon would. If you had any contact, you know, the company would emerge and try to overcome that position.

Interviewer: So actually, they'd go out just like a spokes of wheel then, right?

SMA Gates: Identical. That's exactly the way it worked.

Interviewer: How many different platoon leaders did you have?

SMA Gates: We had about four during the first tour. Hell, didn't serve--I'm not throwing any rocks at them or anything-- but hell, they only serve two, three months in a platoon and then they'd find some other job for them.

Interviewer: Well you know that's the one thing that I found out through every one of my interviews, one of the criticisms was the fact

that they sent so many officers over there, to get their ticket punched from platoon leaders, company commanders, battalion commanders, right on up,

SMA Gates: They did.

Interviewer: and also the problems that caused.

SMA Gates: I had four different platoon leaders, in the year I was there, and I think about four different company commanders. And you're right, they'd only serve a couple of months and hell, they were gone before you could even understand who they were and how they operated, and before the men got to know who they were, they were gone. I think that was one of the reasons that we had a feeling of uneasiness between the officers and the NCOs during the Vietnam. A lot of ticket punching went on, if that's the terminology you want to give it.

Interviewer: When you became the platoon sergeant, did you have some pretty good squad leaders?

SMA Gates: Yeah. They had some fairly experienced squad leaders. They were young, but they all performed well. They could just about do anything you asked them to do, and they understood, you know, what our job was, and they did it well. You know I still have a book with all the names of my platoon in it. A little notebook, you know, I bought from the Vietnamese economy. And all those great soldiers were just that and they did what... Hell, they saved my life. They did well. I think my biggest job was holding them back at times. Now don't get me wrong, the rumor went out in the company that I was a "big zapper." You know, they called me "The Big Zapper" there. I wasn't a big zapper at all. That damn squad was though. Those guys were tough, man. Yeah, they called the squad "The Big Zappers". The rumor went out that Bill Gates was after the DSC (Distinguished Service Cross). I was after survival for one year, and trying to take care of the soldiers as much as I possibly could. But the fact of the matter is, we had a pretty good reputation throughout the Battalion. Even the Battalion Commander

was going to talk to the guys and telling them how great they were and everything. But to make a long story short, the NCOs, hell, they were good. As I say, I had some young ones, and had some that were replacements. That year that I was with the 101st, we didn't have any disciplinary problems. I don't know of any soldier who had that. I'm not telling you that I didn't have to kick a couple of them in the butt, you know, but that's part of it.

Interviewer: Whenever "B" Company first went over there, of course it was all airborne, then later on, were a lot of your replacements non airborne?

SMA Gates: All mine were airborne soldiers. I guess about a year, maybe six months later, they couldn't get enough airborne replacements, you know. But all my soldiers were airborne. I'm not saying it was a higher caliber soldier, but a soldier that had additional training, especially additional disciplinary type training.

Interviewer: Plus they had a different mind set when they got there.

SMA Gates: Yeah. A little different. A little different. Hell, we made a jump while we was over there, and everybody had a lot of fun.

Interviewer: Is that right?

SMA Gates: We jumped from Kontum. Yeah.

Interviewer: Was that classified as a combat jump?

SMA Gates: No. The 173rd got the combat jump. They jumped down on a secure LZ (landing zone) and got credit for combat jump. For some reason, they didn't credit ours. But the other shocking thing, I think, about combat is seeing a soldier get seriously wounded, or to the point to where they die. I think that is something that sort of sticks with you for a long time.

Interviewer: Did you receive any special recognition while you were over there on that first tour?

SMA Gates: I got a purple heart, and a couple of bronze stars. I

don't know whether it's any special recognition or not.

Interviewer: How did you get wounded?

SMA Gates: Oh my God. Some of this stuff is best to be forgotten. You see what I'm saying. I'm real serious about it. Hell, we're over that. I guess when I came home, I hollered and screamed and everything at night, and kept my family all shook up for a while, so some of those things, I don't like to re-invent the wheel.

Interviewer: The old saying is, "Point well taken." You served your second combat tour 69' and 70, with "K" Company, 75th Infantry.

(End of Tape OH 94.5-3, Side 1)

(Begin Tape OH 94.5-3, Side 2)

Interviewer: As the last tape ended, I had just asked you about being assigned to "K" company, 75th Infantry, and that was in '69 and '70. At that time, what rank were you when you were assigned to "K" company?

SMA Gates: I was a sergeant first class, platoon sergeant is what we used to call it.

Interviewer: Now is "K" Company the 75th, that was a long range patrol, right?

SMA Gates: Yeah. It was a long range patrol company. I guess about six months before I got there they converted from the 4th Infantry Division Long Range Patrol Company, to "K" Company 75th Rangers.

Interviewer: And what is the mission of a long range patrol company?

SMA Gates: Well, there is a multitude of missions, but primarily our mission was to patrol areas within the area of operation, detect the enemy, and then report that information to the next higher headquarters. Strictly surveillance or reconnaissance. That wasn't our entire mission. Sometimes we operated as a platoon. We'd go out on ambush missions. We patrolled primarily the Cambodian border, within the 4th Infantry Division areas of operation.

Interviewer: So your major command was the 4th Infantry Division?

SMA Gates: Right. And II Field Force.

Interviewer: Where was "K" Company of the 75th located in Vietnam?

SMA Gates: Pleiku.

Interviewer: Okay.

SMA Gates: Our base camp was Pleiku.

Interviewer: Did you go over as an individual replacement?

SMA Gates: Yes.

Interviewer: And where were you assigned when you got orders to go to Vietnam?

SMA Gates: I was assigned to the Ranger Training Command, at Fort Benning.

Interviewer: Did you serve one full year in Vietnam?

SMA Gates: Right. I guess about two months as a operations sergeant. Probably a month as a first sergeant, and the remaining nine months as platoon sergeant/platoon leader.

Interviewer: Tell me about some of your combat operations.

SMA Gates: There was two very successful operations. One was, my Platoon was given the mission to put a network of surveillance teams in the Chu Pah Mountains, which is West of Pleiku, I guess about twenty click, .at a small Montagnard village; Plei Marong. At one time, Plei Marong was a U.S. Special Forces camp, and they had turned this camp over to the Vietnamese Special Forces. My platoon was based out of that Vietnamese Special Forces camp, with the mission to put a surveillance blanket over the Chu Pah Mountains, because the NVA were moving from Cambodia, through the Chu Pah Mountains, toward Pleiku and into the Central Highlands. So, we did put a surveillance network over the mountains there, and we detected a regimental size unit moving in towards Plei Marong; the small Special Forces camp. The 4th Infantry Division reacted to that report and moved the unit in there. Over a period of two or three weeks, they stopped the NVA regiment from moving

into, and taking that Special Forces camp at Plei Marong, and possibly hitting the 4th Infantry Division base camp in Pleiku. So, I believe that particular operation was very successful. The other very successful operation we had was a platoon size area ambush that was south west of Pleiku. I guess about half way from Pleiku to An Khe, along a river there. I forget the name of the river. But, anyway, someone, somewhere, had detected some movement through there. So, we were given the mission to go out and setup an area ambush movement along this trail network, and to capture and bring back a prisoner; we did. In fact, I took a team out and reconned it for about two days, and then we moved the entire platoon in an area ambush along a trail network. Actually the first night out, we ambushed about a company-size NVA unit, and we captured the logistics NVA officer who controlled the NVA logistics for that entire area, if you believe that. He was something like a S-4 officer for a regiment. We captured him, and luckily we captured him. We evacuated him to the 4th Infantry Division. And evidently the G-2 got some fairly significant intelligence from him, and some of the other prisoners we captured. But, anyway, that ambush was probably the most successful area ambushes that I had, the two years that I spent over there.

Interviewer: The members of your long range patrol, did they have any special training, or were they just regular infantry soldiers but assigned to that job.

SMA Gates: Both. Some of the soldiers were Ranger qualified. The Army had changed in Vietnam, at that time, but not so much in the Ranger Company. Marijuana and drugs had been introduced to the soldiers, and there were some reports of violent actions being taken by soldiers, such as the grenades being thrown in the division area. We didn't experience any problem like that within the Company. But, you know, rumors fly. So, there were plenty of rumors of things like that, and the soldiers not wanting to go on operations. At that time, most of the units were

occupying base camps, located throughout the area of operation. They were sort of staying in a stable position. To me, that was very unhealthy, because all you do is set there and the NVA would mortar them and make penetration attacks on their position. In my opinion, we probably should have been out looking for them and destroying them, but regardless, you know, I didn't make the decisions. But the soldier changed. We had what they called the "Shake and Bake NCOs," where the people joined the Army, or were drafted in the Army, and six months later they were sergeants and staff sergeants. They went through Ranger School and the guy came out as a staff sergeant, with absolutely zero soldier leadership experience, and they found themselves in combat, leading three or four soldiers on a long range patrol for about five days. So, that situation was not the perfect situation, but we made it work the best we possibly could.

Interviewer: I'd like to talk about that NCO Candidate Course they had at Fort Benning, whereby they would put soldiers through basic training and AIT, and those who showed promise as leaders, they send them through the course. Like you say, they've been known as "Shake and Bake" and "Instant NCOs," and so forth. What were some of the good points about the program, and what were some of the bad points that you could see?

SMA Gates: Well, the good points are that it probably fulfilled a need that we had for NCOs. Of course, I am totally against a program like that. But, some of the individuals that went through that program are even still in the Army today and they have made fine noncommissioned officers; some of those individuals are major command sergeants major today. So, you can't criticize all of them; you can't criticize anybody. But, the fact of the matter is, the program is what I criticize. I don't think that we should short change an individual by making them a leader, in the schoolhouse, and then putting them in a combat situation where they have to lead combat experienced soldiers.

It just doesn't make sense.

Interviewer: At the same time you saw us involved in a war that lasted from 1960 until what? '75, or somewhere along in that area. Do you think because we had such a long drawn out war, we were almost forced to go that way?

SMA Gates: Well, I'm convinced that is not the way to build an NCO. There is certainly a much, much better way, and a common sense way to build NCOs, than doing something like that. And if we just think about it for a while, we probably could come up with two or three different ways. But, every division-size unit and major unit over there had replacement organizations, and they had some type of orientation training when they brought the replacements in. I don't know of any organization that didn't have something like that. So, the question is, how come we didn't take these experienced, battle experienced, combat experienced specialists, and send them back for a couple of weeks, like PLDC (Primary Leadership Development Course), and teach them a little leadership, and then promote them to sergeant, and put them back in the line as a leader? To me, that makes sense, instead of bringing in a recruit. Hell, he ain't nothing but a recruit; he's just got stripes on.

Interviewer: But, he's supposed to be leading guys with combat experience.

SMA Gates: Right. Now I'm not saying that if you're are a sergeant, and you're a combat replacement, that you can't go into combat and lead a unit, but you've had some troop leading experience along the line. Like my first trip over. I went over there as a replacement NCO to replace the squad leader. I didn't have any combat experience, but I had almost nine years of experience of being in the Army, working with other soldiers, and knowing what their problems are, and being able to train soldiers. I had been properly trained myself, from experience NCOs who'd faced wars in the past. So, I was properly prepared for it,

or at least prepared. The lives we saved, and the success we had, evidently it was proper, or the best it possibly could. So, that's a little different than taking a soldier, fresh off the street from Hometown, U.S.A., and giving him six months, eight months, or even a year of training in a schoolhouse, in the school environment, and then sending him into combat as an NCO; as a leader.

Interviewer: Do you have anything else you'd like to say about your two combat tours?

SMA Gates: You know there's been a lot said, and a lot written, and a lot of photographs about Vietnam. The things that we did over there, good, bad or indifferent. All I'll say is, that my experience, I did not experience any soldiers with disciplinary problems in Vietnam. I never had a soldier that didn't do what I asked him to do, and sometimes you have to tell him to do things, depending on what the situation is.

Interviewer: Do you think a lot of the discipline problems and the drug problems occurred back in the division rear and at the base camps, among the one's that weren't challenged?

SMA Gates: I am convinced that is exactly right, because there are two things that I need to tell you about, that causes me to totally concur with what you said. For almost a month, my platoon was out in Plei Marong, which is about twenty clicks West of Pleiku, You know, we didn't have a laundry and dry cleaners out there. We wasn't able to starch our fatigues. The clothes that we got come off a helicopter. They were new fatigues, some of those were washed fatigues, but hell, they didn't have any name tags or U.S. Army on them, in most cases they didn't have any stripes; certainly they didn't have any stripes. So, to make a long story short, when we finally pulled out of there, when our mission had been accomplished. We finished and we went back to the base camp, and I never will forget this. I went to the NCO Club. They had one on the camp there in Pleiku; the 4th Division NCO Club. I went with

the First Sergeant, and of course, he had all of his stripes, and patches and everything, sewed on. Hell, I didn't have any jungle fatigues with stuff sewed on. I think I had my pin-on stripes on that time, if I'm not mistaken, but I didn't have a name tag. Walked in the club and there was an MA (Master at Arms) there who said that, you know, since I didn't have my name tag, and my stripes, and them patches sewed on my fatigues, I couldn't come in the club. So, we had a little discussion. The Division Sergeant Major, at that time, was in there, too, half-crocked on beer, or wine, or liquor, or whatever it is that he drinks. He has his starched fatigues on, and spit shined boots, and everything. He had on his name tag and U.S. Army. He had stripes all sewed on all over. He comes over and says I can't come in the club until I get my uniform straight. To me, that is the most dumbest thing in the world. There was nobody in that damn club system there, that understood the whole purpose of that club. You can't have "the haves" and "the have nots" in a combat situation. I'm not saying that I should have had an opportunity to go into that club and abuse it; I wouldn't do that. I certainly should have had an opportunity to go into that club and watch the show. The only reason I went up there is because they had a show on that night. And hell, I hadn't seen a show, and I hadn't even been in a club in two or three months. I'm just saying, that was me. My soldiers had the same thing happen to them. They couldn't go into the PX unless they had their name tag on. A lot of them didn't have an opportunity to have his name tag sewed on. So, I think in Vietnam, the American Army allowed such thing as the "haves" and "the have nots," and it created some very strange feelings. It created some very strange feelings. Hell, I remember, I couldn't get boots for my soldiers, but all of them ass holes in the rear area, had boots. So, to me, we have to look at what the problems are. Somebody needs to be watching that, and that really is what senior NCO get paid to do. Hell, they weren't out fighting a war, they were back there in rear areas. They should

have been paying attention to stuff like that. Maybe it was just me. You know, we even had the helicopter units that was out on in the operation area for months at a time, and those guys didn't have any name tags either. Do you see what I'm saying?

Interviewer: Yeah.

SMA Gates: They ate C-rations and things like that. They didn't have any hot meals. They had to sit there and they'd take care of their aircraft. Then they'd got back to the rear area and people would fuss at them because the damn helicopters wasn't spit shined or something. Do you see what I'm saying?

Interviewer: Yeah.

SMA Gates: Or the engineers. The engineers live in the woods. I'm not just talking about me, as an infantryman. The engineer, that guy is out there building that damn road for a year. So he goes back to the rear and somebody fusses at him for not having a name tag on, or needing a hair cut. "You're damn right I need a hair cut, because I hadn't had a hair cut in three months."

Interviewer: Some of those engineers, all they did for one year was clear jungle, right?

SMA Gates: That's right. I know some engineers that built Highway 1. These guys were out in the woods all the time. I had an engineer in my platoon. He carried a ruck sack just like everybody else. There was a medic in my platoon. That guy, he carried a ruck sack just like everybody else. You know, they talk about all these things that are negative. My medic got shot just as much as I did. So, that's all I'm saying is, that it depends on where you're at, and who you are, and how you run things. I'm not saying that I was perfect. God, I had some of the greatest sergeants in the world, and some of the greatest soldiers that's ever put on a uniform. All I'm saying is, I didn't see any of that stuff. The rumors went on about it. I caught one soldier with some marijuana in his pants leg one time, I tried to break his damn leg

for having it. Whether he used it in the future, I don't know, but I could tell you right now, he didn't use it as long as he was in that unit, because every time I seen him, I'd make him unblouse his damn trousers. If you have a soldier in your unit that's using marijuana and you don't know about it, and you're a leader, you're not a leader. Even if you're wearing stripes or bars or stars. You know, I don't know how a soldier could use marijuana in a squad, without the squad leader knowing about it. That's kind of stupid. You know, unfortunately; or fortunately. Maybe fortunately, the Army changes with society. What ever goes on in society in the United States, the Army changes with society; not totally now. I'm not saying that we don't march and we don't have discipline, we don't wear uniforms, and things like that, but the Army does change, with the changes that go on in the society. It's like the hair regulation. In the early '70, we went through hell of an innervation with hair. We wasted millions of man hours trying to determine how soldiers should cut their hair. Before that, nobody really cared. You cut your damn hair so short you could see the white sidewalls. Do you remember?

Interviewer: You're right.

SMA Gates: But in the early '70s, you could wear it down here. You could block it. You could do that. Who really cared. Just cut your hair, you know? You know what I mean? So those are the type of things that I'm saying. The society changed. The short hair cuts left society, so we brought the hair cuts a little longer in the military. The same thing in society with women. The roles of women are changing, and have changed, in our society. So, the roles of women in the military will certainly change; whether we want it or not. So, I think we had the same thing in Vietnam. The American society turned against what we were doing over there. We had an undeclared war that went on for ten, fifteen years. Fifty thousand soldiers were killed over there, and it didn't amount to a roll of pennies. But having said all that, we

didn't lose the damn battle over there. The American Army came out of there, or should of came out of there with their head held high. We didn't lose the battle over there. We lost fifty thousand soldiers in those fifteen years, I think that's pretty damn good.

Interviewer: You know, that's another thing. Normally, when we get back to the section on opinions and observations, we ask about the role the new media had in the Americans' perceptions about what went on in Vietnam. What effect do you believe the news media had on the American people, the American government, and the military forces in Vietnam? Do you think the news media was fair in reporting what went on over there?

SMA Gates: Butch, this is coming straight from the heart. Straight from a strong belief, a strong opinion, a strong observation. The news media in our country is out of control. They violate the hell out of the Constitution of the United States. The news media should not, under any circumstances, have the authority to completely ruin peoples' lives, tell half truths, and continue to hamper, or continue to pound, pound, pound, pound, pound on a subject that causes people to believe half truths. I just don't believe that was the intent of freedom of the press, and freedom of speech in the United States. I don't think so. I don't think our fore fathers intended the news media to be able to change the way that the people of the United States sees things, and believe things. Unfortunately, during the Vietnam era, the mass news media came to birth; I'm talking about television. We had almost instant television. Then there's all the periodicals that go on, and on, and on, and on. Then you have very strong media personalities that would get on the television, and throughout the world, express their opinions, and that's all the hell it is, is opinions. Is it the truth; not necessarily. But they do stress their opinions, and they all, when they tell a story or cover a piece of news, they always have a little thing at the end where they stress their opinion. So, people

have a tendency to believe the news, and that is exactly what I think happened in Vietnam. Not saying that the people in the United States don't have a right to know. They certainly have a right to know. No one should cover up anything. But the news media people should not try to bend the beliefs, and opinions, and try to sway the American people to look at things a little different. Should we have been in Vietnam to start out with? Gates' opinion is, hell no. We should never get involved in anything like that, ever, never. Never in the history of warfare, has anyone ever truly won a guerilla-type, counterinsurgency war. They never have done it.

Interviewer: Do you think that maybe the inability of our government over periods of years, to really come out with a firm policy on what our goals are going to be, caused the news media, by default, to write our foreign policy?

SMA Gates: And they do, do that. The news media not only writes our foreign policy, but they write our domestic policy. If enough news media get behind a certain subject matter, domestically, we will have a tendency to chance that, if they continue doing that.

Interviewer: Take a look at the difference of the news media during Desert Storm. It was positive.

SMA Gates: It was positive. No, it wasn't totally positive. The news media is a business. Business are out to do one thing, and that is to make money. So, if I watch NBC news, and NBC news attracts me to watching it, then they are going to do something to cause me to continue to watch that news. This is strictly my observation.

Interviewer: They want to be the number one network.

SMA Gates: They want to be the number one network, and they'll do anything in the world to be the number one network. The news media covered Desert Storm in a positive manner, because there was some fairly good reporters there, that looked at things in a positive matter. Now there was a couple of guys over there that sort of swayed to the other

side, if you recall. There was a person who stayed in Baghdad, the whole time the war was going on, and he never said anything bad about the Iraqis. Everything was good.

Interviewer: Peter Arnett.

SMA Gates: I'm just saying. Now he's a hero. He's a news media hero. He may be a turncoat. How come he was authorized to stay there when nobody else could? That's very interesting. So, that's all I'm saying. If the American people have a right to know, but the story needs to be told correctly, and the news media should not try to sway policies. Unfortunately, politicians don't have the intestinal fortitude to make policies. They don't have the intestinal fortitude to make international policy. They do have a tenancy to sway with the news media and the polls, whether it's right, wrong, or indifferent. If the polls come up against something, the politicians are going to vote against it. So, if it sounds like I'm down on politicians, you're damn right. Because, I think the average politicians doesn't don't know a bit more about the wellness, the goodness, and the patriotic sense of responsibilities of this country than that wall does.

Interviewer: Probably being Sergeant Major of the Army, you got to see that, first hand, in Washington, right?

SMA Gates: Absolutely. But I think that the news media did sway the public opinion of the United States. The other thing is, we were over there too long. But, having said that, there was something that happened during the Vietnam War, and the American people ought to put their head between their legs because of it. The average Americans now blindfolds themselves and say, "Hey, that's just water over the dam." But it's not water over the dam. One thing is, I don't care if you protest the war. You can do that all you want to. But don't protest the Americans who are over there fighting. Don't throw rotten eggs, and rotten tomatoes, and down grade me, or another soldier that's been over there fighting. A lot of those soldiers lost legs, and arms, and had

been through the hell of war. Don't down grade me, and don't down grade those other soldiers that went over there because the President of the United States told them that they were going. That's wrong. The other thing that's wrong, all these damn cowards that volunteered to go to Canada, Sweden, to South America, and everywhere else, while the rest of these great Americans were over there taking their fair share of the war, damn sure don't have the business being the President of the United States, or be in any other position of responsibility in the United States. Now, I just tell you right now. That is wrong, and that needs to be published in this report, because that is wrong. If you are a damn coward, and you're not going to do what the people of the United States tell you to do, and go to fight a war, and you elect to go to Canada, then stay up there. Don't come to my country and get rich off me. And damn sure don't take my tax payer's dollars that I have to work my ass off to pay. That isn't right. That is not right. If I had anything to do with that, Butch, I'll tell you right now, they wouldn't live in this country. They would be God damn traitors and they'd never, ever come back to this country. But Unfortunately, the news media makes those damn people, in some most cases, heroes. I bet you feel that way, too?

Interviewer: I sure do. One hundred percent. I think that most people that you and I are associated with feel that way.

SMA Gates: To me, I don't see how a person can run to Canada, and watch his fellow Americans be drafted into the Army, go over there and get killed, wounded, or whatever, and have a lifetime problem after the war, and then come back to this country and just because he can get into some type of money situation, run for public office, and all at once, now that person in the position to make the laws of the land. If the American people are that stupid in this country, we certainly have a problem. And I think we do have a problem. The problem centers around one word; values. We don't value nothing. We don't value a dollar. We

don't value human beings. We don't value God damn integrity. We don't value nothing. We have lost that. and that's unfortunate. That is unfortunate. And when those things happen, I won't see it, and you won't see it, but this country is going to go down. It may be all ready going down faster than we think it is. Rome is no longer a power.

Interviewer: We covered your two tours in Vietnam. Let me talk to you about your other overseas assignments. We covered the one in Berlin. You went to Bamberg, Germany. When were you over in Bamberg?

SMA Gates: '70 to '73. When I left Vietnam, after my second tour, we was assigned directly to Germany. I didn't volunteer, but we went directly to Germany.

Interviewer: How long were you in Bamberg?

SMA Gates: Three years, and I had the opportunity to take my family with me.

Interviewer: After Vietnam, that was a pleasure, right?

SMA Gates: I don't know, I don't know whether was Germany a pleasure or not, at that time.

Interviewer: Having your family there was.

SMA Gates: Right. Then having an opportunity to be with my family and to do some traveling in Europe, and we did have a good opportunity to do that.

Interviewer: What unit were you assigned to then?

SMA Gates: Originally, I was with the 2nd Battalion, 54th Infantry, 4th Armored Division. I guess, within two years, we changed divisions from the 4th to the 1st. And then the Battalion changed to the 52nd; 1st Battalion, 52nd Infantry. Today, that same battalion is 2nd Battalion, 52nd infantry. They are still located in the same barracks.

Interviewer: When you were the Sergeant Major of the Army, did you get a chance to visit Bamberg?

SMA Gates: Absolutely. I sure did. The battalion that I was in

is located in the same barracks. In fact the Operations NCO at that time for the Battalion, was the Battalion Command Sergeant Major.

Interviewer: So that was old home week?

SMA Gates: Right.

Interviewer: What was your rank and your duty assignment at that time?

SMA Gates: Let's see. I was still a sergeant first class, and when I reported into the battalion, they made me the S-2. I had never been in the S-2 before, because, I guess it was because I had that long range patrol experience in Vietnam, and I had an 11 Foxtrot (11F) secondary MOS. We had very few officer in the battalion, so the Battalion Commander made me the S-2. I didn't have an officer, so, a young PFC and I, ran the whole S-2 operation.

Interviewer: And then in 1980, you went back to Germany for your third tour. You were with the 2nd Battalion, 50th Infantry, 2nd Armored Division, Forward. Right?

SMA Gates: Right.

Interviewer: Where was the 2nd Armored, Forward, located?

SMA Gates: It's located in Northern Germany, near Bremerhaven. Garlstadt.

Interviewer: Garlstadt. Okay.

SMA Gates: G-A-R-L

Interviewer: S-T-A-D-T

SMA Gates: Right.

Interviewer: At that time you were the Battalion Sergeant Major. Correct?

SMA Gates: Right.

Interviewer: Then later on, you became the Division Forward Sergeant Major.

SMA Gates: Yeah, I was in the Battalion a little over a year; about a year and a half, and then I was selected as the Division,

Forward, Sergeant Major.

Interviewer: What was the mission of the Division, Forward?

SMA Gates: The Division, Forward, had two missions, technically. Of course, the other two brigade of the 2nd Armored Division was at For Hood, Texas. One mission was to prepare for, and accept the remainder of the Division in case war broke out in that part of the Country over there. To bring the rest of the Division into the European Theater. So, that was one of our missions. Of course, the second mission was to fight as a separate brigade, with the Allies. We had the British, and certainly the Germans, up in that part of Europe. So, we were also prepared to fight, primarily as a separate brigade. You looking at NORTHTAG (North Tactical Army Group). We wasn't in CENTAG (Central Tactical Army Group). That was NORTHTAG. I think the CINC (Commander in Chief) of the troops up there, was British. You know, the CINC USAREUR (United States Army Europe) was also the Central Army Group Commander, and we were NORTHTAG.

Interviewer: So if they deployed the 2nd Armored Division to Europe, you were in place so you...

SMA Gates: Could receive them. We had everything in place to bring those other two brigades in, and then we would fight as a division.

Interviewer: Did you have your POMCUS (Prepositioned Organization Materiel Configured in Unit Sets) stock up there, or was it further south?

SMA Gates: It was further south, but we still had the responsibility to assist those guys. We also had the responsibility to get them into assembly areas. We would secure their assembly areas as they were moving up. I guess our primary mission was to fight as a heavy separate brigade. That is really why they called it the 2nd Armored Division, Forward. We were a heavy brigade, and an independent brigade assigned to the NORTHTAG.

Interviewer: As a Battalion Sergeant Major, what occupied most of you time up there?

SMA Gates: There are a lot of things that you can let occupy your time, but the thing that occupied my time more than anything, was training the soldier. Doing what we could to influence the training. Conduct training. Ensure that the NCOs were trained as best we possibly could, and we trained some officers, too. To enforce the standards of the soldiers who served in the organization. There are a lot of ways that you can do all those things. And certainly taking care of the families and the soldiers, as best as you possible can.

Interviewer: You had a full brigade then, right?

SMA Gates: Yeah.

Interviewer: Plus you had all of your DISCOM (Division Support Command) elements.

SMA Gates: We had a DISCOM element there. Actually, it was a heavy support battalion in that brigade. Also, the CG (Commanding General) there was the Army Community Commander for all of Northern Germany. We had quite a few small artillery detachments spread out all over Northern Germany.

Interviewer: So they acted as you DIVARTY (Division Artillery) support.

SMA Gates: No, we had a battalion of artillery. We had two infantry battalions, a tank battalion, an artillery battalion, and a support battalion, within the brigade.

Interviewer: So the detachments were in addition to that.

SMA Gates: Yeah, but those guys were there for a different purpose, than artillery. They were there for the purpose of handling nuclear activities; that's about as much as I'm going to say about those guys. We also had small signal detachments all over Northern Germany.

(End of Tape OH 94.5-3, Side 2)

(Begin Tape OH 94.5-4, Side 1)

Interviewer: Before I started the tape you made the comment that you had a real enjoyable time as the Battalion Sergeant Major. You also said that during that period of time you had three different battalion commanders. Correct?

SMA Gates: Right.

Interviewer: Tell me about your time as the Battalion Sergeant Major.

SMA Gates: The 2nd Battalion, 50th Infantry, and the rest of the Division Forward Brigade was at Fort Hood, Texas, and they left Fort Hood, and came to different places in Europe. Like my battalion stayed in Hohenfeld for almost a year, while they completed the billets and everything for them to move into at Garlstadt, in northern Germany. They left their families back in Fort Hood, so those guys had been separated from their families for over a year. There were some very strange motivational feelings within the Battalion from most of the people who had come over with the original Division Forward; with the original. It appeared that they just put the battalion together 2nd Battalion, 50th Infantry at Fort Hood, while the tank battalion, the artillery battalion, and the support battalion was an organic part of the division back there. So, some of the people were not the best of soldiers in the world, and we spent a lot of time giving them additional love and care, than you would in a normal battalion. But the fact of the matter is, we enjoyed it. We had so much fun with that unit. I could go on and on about the good times that we had. I'm not saying that it wasn't a challenge; it was a challenge every day, including Sundays and holidays. We had the opportunity to train with a German unit. We had the opportunity to go to Denmark and train in Denmark. And certainly, we had the opportunity to go to Hohenfeld, Grafenwohr, and Wildflicker, to train. So, we had some fairly good training opportunities, We had the opportunity to go on REFORGER. When they had REFORGER, we would operate in northern Germany as a part of NORTHTAG. At

times, we would practice bringing in the remainder of the Division; securing the assembly areas and what not. We would do all those things. We had a fairly good training area there at the installation. We had the best billets and housing area in all of Europe. We had a school, --elementary through high school--right there near the kaserne. We had a small commissary and a fairly good size PX, you know, for the people who were stationed up there; the family members. Margaret was heavily involved with the family members there. She ran a good spouse/family program as best she could; her and Battalion Commander's wife. She had a couple of funny incidents happen to her. I'll relate to one of these, if you want me to.

Interviewer: Yeah. Go ahead.

SMA Gates: God, I had so much fun training. All three battalion commanders liked the PT test. Myself and the... I say myself, mainly I just put out the word to the first sergeants, and we would run that test. In individual training, my God, I can't remember the name of the little test we had to take every year, on individual training; but we did that. We just turned it over to the NCOs and they did it. For maintenance of vehicles and stuff like that, we had a maintenance technician, and a motor officer, and sergeant, that ran the motor pool down there. We just had a lot of fun. We'd get ready to move out to the field, the NCOs would get the tracks out and get them all lined up and get them ready to go and all that stuff, and load them on the train. Shoot man, we just had a lot of fun.

Interviewer: I guess you had good morale amongst your troops, didn't you?

SMA Gates: Well, it was bad, initially, until the original battalion DEROS'd from there. As you got new replacements in, the morale steadily increased; we just had a ball. The biggest problem I had... I said, that I had, but we had there, was first sergeants. We just couldn't get a master sergeant, at all, to be a first sergeant in

that organization. Out of the five companies, we had one master sergeant, and the rest of the people were sergeants first class. Now don't get me wrong, the Division Forward, at this time, was full of master sergeants. They had master sergeants coming out of their ears up there, but they just couldn't do the job, or didn't want to do the job as a first sergeant. It's ironic. The rumor started that they were going to start paying additional money for first sergeants. We had about ten people come up and volunteer to be first sergeant in the Battalion, when we had those four sergeants first class. I just couldn't accept that. Anyway, we had a lot of fun. One day, we did battalion PT, and the Battalion Commander let me run the battalion. Shoot, we run about five or six miles; most of the guys made it. We had high morale and esprit de corps. It was a mechanized infantry unit, and the maintenance was fairly good. You know, we didn't have a lot of vehicles parked along side of the road when we moved. So all those things, and the relationship we had with the Germans up there, worked out well. We just didn't have the problems that most of the units in the southern part of Germany had.

Interviewer: You were going to tell me about some of the things that Margaret did with the families.

SMA Gates: Oh yeah, I was fixing to. We would deploy. We would probably go three to four, maybe some times a month. I say deploy, we would go to the training center. We'd go to Hohenfeld and we would stay down there about a month and do gunnery and the live fire exercises and the other things we'd have to do. Normally, during that time, we would probably run the Battalion ARTEP (Army Readiness Training and Evaluation Program). We were still running the ARTEPs at that time, while we were at one of the major training centers. Like I said, we'd probably be gone for a month. The whole brigade went down there, and we also went through tank gunnery. We had a mini tank range at Garlstadt, but to shoot the main gun, we had to go to the South. To make a long story

short, in the Battalion, the Battalion Commander's wife and Margaret had a very strong relationship, and they had some fine programs for the spouses and the family members. You know, I have to brag on those two ladies. If any family had a problem, they knew about it; those girls knew about it. Sometimes we would assist them, and sometimes we didn't. We let them kind of work it out. We went to Hohenfeld, I guess, for the ARTEP and we were over there about a month. This one family in the housing area, somebody reported that the children in that family was sort of being mistreated. They could hear children crying in the quarters. So, Margaret goes over, and knocks on the door--she couldn't find the mother--one of the kids opened the door, and needless to say, the apartment was not the cleanest place in the world. They had a dog, and the dog had been inside for too long; they hadn't allowed the dog to go outside to relieve himself. So, she finally located the spouse, two or three doors up, playing cards and drinking coffee with her friends. Needless to say, she found her and brought her back home. I was so proud of her. She gave that young lady some mission-type orders, like, "You will clean up this house up. You will get in this car and we're over to AER (Army Emergency Relief) and we're going get you some money. You going to get some food, you're going to bring it back here, and you're going to feed those kids." You know, things like that, when she really didn't have the authority to give those mission-type orders. Then she called me that evening. She said, "Bill Gates, I just probably got us both in trouble, but I just couldn't stand that, when I seen the condition of that house, and especially those children. I'm going back over there tomorrow and I'm going to inspect that house." And they did. The Battalion Commander's wife, Mrs. Anderson, and her went over there and looked at the house, and the lady got back on track. So that was just one example; an extreme example. They had a network, and they would publish the thing for the family community. To show you how this thing worked, when we'd go to the field, we would bring all the family

members in, and the Battalion Commander, myself, and the staff would brief the family members. Now all of them didn't attend, but I would say a good ninety percent of them would attend, and we would explain to them what we were going to do, and then if they needed some assistance, who it is that they could contact. And then Margaret and the Battalion Commander's wife, Mrs. Anderson, at that time, would sort of give them a little briefing and tell them, "If you have a problem, give us a call." And Margaret would just lay it on the line. She said, "Don't you just sit there and starve to death, if your husband don't send you some money, you call me and we'll get you over to the AER. We've got a food locker and we can get you some food and things." She said, "I don't want to embarrass you, and you don't have to embarrass yourself. I can take care of that for you." You know, she did all of those things. At the same time, she participated in the school activities; the PTA and all these other things. My God, I tell you. These women are worth their weight in gold. We just can't realize what they do. At the same time, we were able to go down and do the training without any family problems accompanying us. I'm not saying that everything was perfect, but we were able to participate in the training, uninterrupted. Margaret, she's kind of a hero. If there ever was a Sergeant Major's spouse that tried to do the best she could, Margaret was one of them. She never stopped that either; that was the type of person she was. On the other hand, when we would come home, the women would be out there, with their cakes and cookies and stuff, in the motor pool. The guys would be up forty eight hours, trying to get those vehicles back in. The convoy and everything. Those ladies would be there, with their cakes and cookies. They always expected it. They didn't say anything about it, but they were glad to see those women out there. So, they did good.

Interviewer: After serving about a year as the Battalion Sergeant Major, you were selected as the Command Sergeant Major of the 2nd Armored Division, Forward. How long did you serve in that position?

SMA Gates: Let's see. Here again, probably a little over a year; about a year. Let's see. '82, '83. The latter part of '82 to '83. About a year.

Interviewer: Then from there you went to the 3rd Infantry Division.

SMA Gates: Right. Then we moved down South to Wurzburg, and the 3rd Infantry Division. There again, we still had a lot of fun. It was five times the size, and it was spread out, my God, over two hundred square miles. That was a very busy division, too.

Interviewer: Is there anything you'd like to tell me about your assignment as Command Sergeant Major of the 2nd Armored Division, Forward, before we talk about the 3rd Infantry Division? Did you had basically the same responsibilities?

SMA Gates: Yeah, just a little different. You know, you had to go about it a little different, because you're dealing with the battalions, each one of those battalions have a command sergeant major, so you have to do things a little different. You have to kind of keep quiet. Some times you had to voice a very strong opinion. But, here again, I think we had a fairly good relationship with the battalion sergeants major and the battalion commanders. We just basically did the same things as any other sergeant's job, it's just at a little higher level; you're dealing with the staff. At time, you're dealing with the general officers, so, it's a little different ball game. Since we were a separate unit, we dealt directly with Heidelberg. We didn't have a Corps or anything to go with, so we dealt directly with the Seventh Army Sergeant Major, Walt Krueger.

Interviewer: Who was the Commander of the Division Forward, then?

SMA Gates: A great American, by the name of General George Stoster.

Interviewer: What rank was he?

SMA Gates: Brigadier General. He retired as a three-star general.

In fact, he was the Fifth Army Commander. When he completed that tour, he retired.

Interviewer: When you went down to the 3rd Infantry Division, who was the Commanding General then?

SMA Gates: It's very ironic. The individual I had the interview with was General McAuliffe. General McAuliffe went on to become the DCSOPS (Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations) of the Army. He got promoted to lieutenant general. He probably would have made four stars, and may have been the Chief of Staff of the Army, but he developed a brain tumor, and eventually he passed away, unfortunately. General Harold C. Crow was the Division Commander. He came in about the same time I did. One of the things we did do in the 2nd Armored Division, Forward, we started an NCODP (Noncommissioned Officer Development Program) there. We institutionalized the NCODP within the Division, Forward. We commenced the quarterly training briefings, whereas the Sergeant Major had to do his briefings for the NCODP, and the individual training.

Interviewer: That NCO Development Program, that was the USAREUR model, right? Later on, Sergeant Major Connelly was given the mission to develop it for Armywide use.

SMA Gates: Technically, it became the Army NCODP. It was a little more advanced than that, because Connelly was the Sergeant Major of the Army at that time, so he had the NCODP institutionalized throughout the Army, but we had NCODP already going in Europe.

Interviewer: In fact, General Blanchard got that started in Europe, way before that was adopted Armywide.

SMA Gates: Oh yeah. Way, way before. Connelly sort of got a taste for it, because he was in Europe.

Interviewer: Right.

SMA Gates: The fact of the matter is, in that Division, Forward, for some reason, we never had that program going like it should have

been going. Now don't get me wrong, the companies and the battalions were doing some NCODP. But, hell, what we were looking for was something that was different than just going into a classroom and somebody getting up there giving a class for thirty minutes. What we wanted was performance oriented training, where you have a task, condition, and standard, and the sergeants don't just sit in the classroom and learn something.

Interviewer: Also, teach them what they need to know, and not all this off the wall stuff.

SMA Gates: Not just old redundant stuff that you already know. The other thing that we started up there, they had a courtesy patrol that would go down to the different places in Osterholz-Scharmbeck, and surrounding cities there. You know, we'd dress up two or three sergeants and put them in Class "A" uniforms, especially on the weekends, and they'd go around and do that. We stopped that. We changed that courtesy patrol to a "Sergeants Major Patrol" and a "First Sergeants Patrol." Even General Stoster had a "Commanders Patrol," every once in a while. He'd took his people where the officers went. Young officers go down town, too. Boy, you'd be surprised how the incidents stopped at those highly incident prone places. Because if we had an incident, and say the 250th Infantry soldiers called and said they had an incident. Guess who performed the courtesy patrol that weekend? The Sergeant Major and all his first sergeant. So that stopped. The great thing about that was, the NCOs got a sense of responsibility instead of the "Six to five syndrome." They got a sense of responsibility for seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day, and they really believed in it. I didn't do it; it wasn't my idea. One of the battalion sergeants major thought of it, or at least brought it to our attention. I always say, if somebody comes up with a good idea and you don't capitalize on it, there's something wrong with you. But the fact of the matter is, it worked. We got away with running a duty

roster and having this unit provide the patrol. Whoever caused the problem was the one that furnished the patrol, and it wasn't young sergeants getting it.

Interviewer: Did you carry that same thing on when you got to the 3rd infantry, or didn't you have the problems down there?

SMA Gates: No, I didn't do that down there because the brigades had their areas of responsibilities, and they had the communities. Some times they had a Community Sergeant Major, like Aschaffenburg; they had a brigade down there. They also had a community there and they ran those things. Now don't get me wrong, sometimes we would sort of energize the system, but we tried to make sure that they had a good program and try to support the program.

Interviewer: Was your headquarters at Kitzingen?

SMA Gates: No, my headquarters was Wurzburg.

Interviewer: What was the name of the barracks there?

SMA Gates: Leighton

Interviewer: It had the pretty colored buildings.

SMA Gates: Yeah, and they had the old runway in the middle.

Interviewer: Right.

SMA Gates: All that's gone now. By the way, they put a new commissary and PX complex out there.

Interviewer: Is the 3rd Infantry still over there/ As fast as they are down-sizing it's hard to keep up with what's going on.

SMA Gates: Yeah, the 3rd Infantry and the 1st Armored. Those are the two divisions there. Now it is spread. It is not still right there; it has moved. The units are spread out, but the Division is still there. The thing about the 3rd Infantry Division... Now it seemed like the 2nd Armored Division was a real tightly knitted group. It was the only combat unit in northern Germany. Like I was saying before, we were also responsible for the community. The CG was the Community Commander, and guess who was the Command Sergeant Major for all of northern Germany?

It was a lot of fun kind of getting involved with some of those organizations. There's some very strange things that goes on up there. You spend a lot of time on courts martial boards, and things like that. I really enjoyed northern Germany. The people up there were just a little different than the people in southern Germany, because they were not used to combat organizations.

Interviewer: Don't you think, also, the attitudes of the Germans toward the military, in northern Germany, was a different than the attitudes of those in southern Germany?

SMA Gates: Much, much different. That was the point that I was attempting to make. It's much, much different. One of the unique things that I seen up there was, believe it or not, there were some Communist sympathizers in that part of Germany. I'm trying to think of the name of the town there. Just out from Bremerhaven. Bremen. Bremen, Germany. In fact, I was told that Hitler, when he was in power, never went to that city. I don't know how true that is, but that is what I was told. He never went to that city to make one of his speeches about Nazism. But there were some strange things going on in that city. God bless the people that live there. There was some Communist sympathizers there. They would fly the Red flag in a minute, over their homes, and they would march up and down the streets and everything.

(NOTE: There was an interruption in the interview.)

Interviewer: We just had a brief pause in the interview while the Sergeant Major answered the telephone. Go ahead and continue telling me about the people up at Bremen.

SMA Gates: It was very interesting there. The cement walls along the roadway and everything always had some graffiti. You know, "Yankee Go Home," and all this stuff. Anyway, to make a long story short, we was having a parade down through the city of Osterholz-Scharmbeck, which was the major city there close to the kaserne; Garlstadt was just a small hamlet out there; it was kind of out in the country. The German

Army was the major unit that was going to parade down through the city. We had about, I guess, a battalion--probably about two hundred soldiers --that was marching in the parade. The Communist sympathizers was going to disrupt that parade. Not for the German soldiers, but they were going to throw paint and stuff like that on the American soldiers. So, General Stoster looked at me and said, "Well, Bill Gates, do you think we ought to let our soldiers march in the parade?" I said, "Why hell yeah, we ought to let the soldiers march in the parade." He said, "Well, I'm supposed to give a speech on the city square down there. Do you think I ought to make that speech." I said, Well, hell yeah, General. You ought to make that speech. If you don't, then you're showing these folks that they can do anything they want to. We're not here because we're protecting Americans. We're here to fight for the Germans. Yes, by all means, make that speech." He said, "Well, we'll have to figure it out. We'll figure out how we're going to run this parade." We had a plan of what we were going to do. We were going to let the parade start, and then let the band go down there, and then the Germans would march. We were going to hide the American soldiers up in an alley, and let them just march out and get in between two units of German soldiers, and let them march on down through the street; you know, they left a gap. We went down to the square and General Stoster got up and made his speech. They threw some paint at him and the mayor of the town there. He got a little paint on his greens. Hell, I was walking around and they didn't bother me. You know, I was an enlisted soldier. Hell, I wasn't important anyway. But anyway, they just started the parade, and boy, the people were just lined-up everywhere, and they were yelling for the Americans. "How come the Americans are not in the parade." And all at once, these soldiers come out of the side street, and got right in between those Germans. Nothing. All of those Communist sympathizers were up around the square, see. So, it worked perfect. We tricked those boys. They played American music and

everything. Jesus Christ. The other thing we did there, in the 2nd Armored Division, we didn't have a band; a division band. We had to go borrow one every time we had a parade. You know, all of the division bands were tied up. So, we formed a drum and bugle corps there. They were tankers, infantrymen, truck drivers, and we put all of those kids together and let them practice for about a month. When the Secretary of the Army--Secretary Marsh--came to visit the unit, that night we had a dinner in honor of Secretary Marsh, and we introduced that band. General Stoster knew about it, but he never seen these guys play. We pulled the curtain back and those kids were up there in place. Oh my God, it makes you want to cry. Those kids played the music from Star Wars, and God almighty, it was so dynamic. You know, they played their hearts out when they played that music. It was all military music; two or three marching songs. Those kids played those doggone trumpets, and that Star Wars was so beautiful. It makes you want to cry. Old General Stoster stood up and he said, "That was a surprise, but it is one of the best surprises I have ever heard." Secretary Marsh asked me, he said, "Sergeant Major, do you have any music?" I said, "No sir, we just scrounged this stuff." He sent me about ten volumes of music. I'm talking about the sheet music. You know, to show the guys when they play and when they don't. He sent me about ten volumes of music for them kids to use and practice by. They did well.

Interviewer: That's the kind of guy Secretary Marsh was.

SMA Gates: Yeah. That's the kind of person he was. You know, if he could do something like that, he would. He thought that was the greatest thing in the world. He asked me, "Where did those soldiers come from?" He said, "Are they on SD (Special Duty)?" I said, "No sir, they're not on SD, they just assemble when we're going to have a parade, and practice a little bit, and they go out and play for the parade. It's just an in-house thing." He thought that was the greatest thing he had ever seen. Old General Stoster, I thought he was going to get tears in

his eyes when those kids played Star Wars. It was so dynamic. Even the record that you hear, it was much, much better than that. They just played their hearts out. I thought the roof was going to come off that club. Everybody stood up and clapped and cheered. They really did good. What I'm saying is, soldiers can do anything, especially American soldiers with their "Yankee ingenuity."

Interviewer: That is a good morale booster, too.

SMA Gates: Oh, it is. Nobody appreciates the value of a band until you don't have one, then you really appreciate the value of one.

Interviewer: I guess that was a big change, going from the brigade up there where you were highly involved, down to the 3rd Infantry Division.

SMA Gates: Oh, God, it was a different world. At the 2nd Armored Division, Forward, everything was on one installation; everything was right there. We had five housing areas, so everything was, you know, within arm's reach. You could almost put your hand around everything that went on, and you knew everything that was going on in the Brigade. Now in the Division, you're looking at about fifteen thousand soldiers; at that time we had about seventeen thousand soldiers. If you include the communities, which the Division Commander had responsibility for, you're looking at about twenty-five thousand.

Interviewer: You probably always had one of those brigades in training somewhere; Grafenwohr, Hohenfeld, or Wildflicken.

SMA Gates: Forever! We had a brigade in the field, somewhere, all of the time. That was the busiest division I was even in. While we was there, we transitioned the M-1 tank and the Bradley fighting vehicle into the Division. We also transitioned the artillery TACFIRE (Tactical Artillery Controlled Fire) into the Division. We transitioned a new bridge for the Engineers into the Division. We transitioned all of that new equipment into the Division, in the short period of time we were there. And at the same time, we had a brigade at Hohnfeld or Graf, or

at the local training area preparing to go to Hohenfeld or Graf, all of the time.

Interviewer: You got to spend a lot of time in the helicopter, didn't you?

SMA Gates: A lot of time in the helicopter, a lot of time on the road, a lot of time at Hohenfeld, Wildflicken, Grafenwohr. In fact, we had a battalion that was stationed in Wildflicken. But it appeared to me about half of my home was in Hohenfeld, or Graf. I almost had a permanent room down there. The Division was spread out from Kitzingen to Aschaffenburg to Wurzburg. My God, it was just on, and on, and on. There were a lot of Corps units spread out through the Division area. Then, again, all of those guys were a part of the communities out there. The Division Commander was the Marne Land Community Commander. He got involved with the schools, the housing areas, and on, and on, and on. But, it was interesting. There was another thing about the 3rd Infantry Division. Believe it or not, and it sounds kind of stupid in the early '80s, but we started bringing in computers and we started computerizing the Division. I remember the first time I was listening to the Chief of Staff talk about "The Apple." The Apple One, the Apple Two. I said, "What in the hell is an apple?" It was a computer; an Apple computer. So, we started computerizing the Division Headquarters. The we started getting computers in the brigades. You talk about a very tough transition period, especially for senior NCOs. A lot of them just could not handle the computerized system, like TACFIRE. In fact, the DIVARTY Operations Sergeant Major retired. He just could not accept the computerized system. It was a very interesting period.

Interviewer: That TACFIRE really turned out to be a good system, once they got the bugs worked out of it.

SMA Gates: Absolutely. Sure it is. What, it used to take about three minutes, and they turned that down to about ten seconds to put a round on target. Shoot, you're in pretty good shape.

Interviewer: Preregister the hill. Then just call in the number, and the rounds is on the way.

SMA Gates: Exactly, it's on the way.

Interviewer: Between your assignment as Command Sergeant Major of the Sergeants Major Academy and your selection as Sergeant Major of the Army, you served as the Command Sergeant Major of U.S. Forces Korea and Eighth Army. When did you arrive in Korea?

SMA Gates: May of '85. I was better prepared for that position. With the short year-and-a-half or so in the 3rd Infantry Division, you know, it was spread out over many, many miles. I forget how many square miles the 3rd Infantry Division was spread out over. With all of the training that went on there, and the transition that went on in the 3rd Infantry Division, and then with all of the support units that were in the Division community area, I was much, much better prepared for Korea. In fact, if you take into consideration the approximately seventeen thousand five hundred soldiers within the 3rd Infantry Division, all the Corps support units, all the family members that were in the 3rd Infantry Division's area of responsibility, we probably had more people that we were responsible for in the 3rd Infantry Division than we did in all of Korea. So, I was much better prepared for Korea than I was for the 3rd Infantry Division.

Interviewer: How long were you in Korea before you were selection as Sergeant Major of the Army?

SMA Gates: About two years. The accompanied tour of duty over there was two years.

Interviewer: What occupied most of your time?

SMA Gates: Oh, my God. There were two basic things that occupied my time. Actually there were four things, but the fourth one was not as difficult as it might sound. One I thought was unique anyway. You wore about three hats over there. One was the United Nations Command. The CINC was the United Nations Commander. He had a small United Nations

Command over there, which was made up of American and British and Korean Forces. He also was the U.S. Forces Commander over there, so he was responsible for the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force. We had a small Navy detachment there. They always had Naval ships coming in and out. Plus, he was Eighth Army Commander, so, he wore about three or four different hats there. He also was what they called the "Combined Forces Commander." That meant that the Korean Armed Forces was under his command during wartime, so, he had some responsibilities toward the Korean Army. I say that. I think probably tactically and operational employment or something like that, making decisions when and where they would move large units. He certainly got involved with stuff like that. My responsibility was trying to convince the Korean Chain of Command that they needed to do something to develop their NCOs. We made a little money there, by the way. I had about five different opportunities with the Korean Army Chief of Staff. I had some were very frank discussions with him. Glen Morrell was the Sergeant Major of the Army and he made a trip over to Korea while we were there. He also had an office call with the Chief of Staff of the Korean Army, so, he assisted quite a bit. So, we got an NCO academy started in the Korean Army. Now, that thing has grown to an NCOES (Noncommissioned Officer Education System). It is nothing, compared to the United States Army, but they do have about three different schools they send NCOs to. Before, they sort of treated their NCOs like second class citizens over there. You know, if you wasn't an officer in the Korean Army, you wasn't anything. We also got the Korean Army to send some NCOs back to the Academy. They attended the Sergeants Major Academy. Those two things I was real proud of. But, like I said, I had a lot of assistance. The Sergeant Major of the Korean Army, if it hadn't been for him we couldn't have pulled any of this stuff off. He really assisted in that thing. We made a lot of trips to the Korean TRADOC (Training and Doctrine Command). They had a pretty good Commander there, and they had a great Sergeant Major in the

TRADOC and we had a lot of fun working with that General and that Sergeant Major, trying to get some type of school setup in the Korean Army. The other thing was, certainly we was interested in training the American Army and making sure that the soldiers were properly trained. The 2nd Infantry Division was the combat force there. We had the 19th Support Command that, here again, was spread out all over hell's half acre over there. They had units spread all over. We had an aviation brigade there and we had an engineer brigade, and all of those folks had to be trained, so, we put a lot of emphasis on training, quarterly training briefings, and spent a lot of time in the field with the individual units. Certainly, we put emphasis on individual training, plus, we had a lot of coordination and communication with the Department of the Army. We were going through some transition in the Army at that time. I think those two things occupied my time more than anything else. There was one problem we had in Korea that was unique, and that problem was un-sponsored family members. A soldier assigned to Korea, unless he or she had a command sponsored billet, if they brought their family over there they were not command sponsored, and the Command really was not prepared to support those un-sponsored family members. We had thousands of them over there. Some of the kids were going to Korean schools. They were going to schools where they had unqualified Americans teaching scholastic subjects; that part of it was a mess. We didn't have enough medical support to properly support the family members that were over there un-command sponsored. In some cases they had financial problems that were just humongous financial problems. The commissaries couldn't support them properly. So, that was a unique problem in Korea. The other problem over there was, and I'm going to say it, the damn Quonset huts the soldiers live in over there. I'm not the only one. Even as Sergeant Major of the Army, every time I addressed the Congress, I always talked about the damn Quonset huts. The soldiers had to walk about a hundred meters to use the bathroom, with snow on the

ground. I think that as long as soldiers have been in Korea, they could have been living in something other than Quonset huts.

Interviewer: I think Sergeant Major Connelly put it perfect when he said that we always put our money in Europe, but when it comes to Korea, it was nothing but a series of twenty-five one year tours.

SMA Gates: That's all it was. It was the God awfulest thing I had ever seen in my life. I never served in Korea, until I went there as the Eighth Army Sergeant Major. I'll just tell you, some of the shit that the soldiers live in over there, we wouldn't have dogs living in it. We started building decent barracks for the soldiers. I don't know what it's like now, but, I hopefully most of the people are out of Quonset huts, today.

Interviewer: For years, Camp Casey was just like it was just after the war.

SMA Gates: Yeah. So, those were the things that sort of occupied my time. You know, we interfaced with the Air Force and the Navy and the Marines, but those guys went on and did their thing the way they wanted to do it anyway. The same thing with the United Nations forces. Sometime we'd have parades, and functions, and speeches, and things like that, that we had to give to those guys. Here again, they kind of did their own thing.

Interviewer: What did you find most frustrating about that job?

SMA Gates: The most frustrating thing about having that job was not so much the Army, it was trying to communicate a message to the Korean Army.

(End of Tape 94.5-4, Side 1)

(Begin Tape 94.5-4, Side 2)

Interviewer: As the last tape ended, I had asked you what you found that was most frustrating, and you said one thing was trying to communicate a message, or get things across, to the Korean Army. Do you want to continue that?

SMA Gates: Yeah, I think if there ever was some hardheaded people, the Koreans are very, very hardheaded. I say hardheaded people, but they have hearts of gold, and they are some of the hardest working people in the world; I'm convinced of that. When you make a friend with a Korean, I think a Korean is a friend for life. They do things a little different over there, and it had a tendency to get soldiers in trouble. If a Korean does you a favor, he expects a favor in return, no matter what that favor is that he asks you. You know, black marketing was a problem. Americans would buy stuff out of the commissary and the PX and sell the stuff or give it to the Koreans, which is certainly against the laws of the Land. But that was not the frustration. The frustration in Korea was two other major things. One is, we had all of those dependent family members in Korea, knowing damn well we couldn't take care of them. Like ensuring that the kids went to school. I'm not saying that the individual is not responsible for that, but, somehow or another, I think, if we're going to have soldiers over there, they've going to bring the family members there. The Korean government allows them to bring their family members there and we accept that, instead of making them go back to the States, so, somehow or another we need to have facilities to accomodate them. Not so much housing, but certainly medical facilities, school facilities, and post exchange and commissary facilities. That was very frustrating; it was very difficult to accept. The second most frustrating thing, again, was the conditions that the soldiers lived in; the damn Quonset huts. I know everyone in the chain of command over there were concerned about the soldiers living in Quonset huts, but, I don't have a fuzzy feeling that everybody up the chain of command pushed to get out soldiers out of Quonset huts. The Korean Army, in most cases, lived in better conditions than the American Army did; especially the 2nd Infantry Division. The rest of the units lived pretty good.

Interviewer: When you take a look at the 2nd Infantry Division,

particularly with the mission they have right up there on the DMZ (Demilitarized Zone) and all the hard work they have to put forth when they're out in the field, and then when they come back to Camp Casey, they don't have much better conditions.

SMA Gates: Right, they almost lived in field conditions, especially in the wintertime; they almost lived in field conditions. They just slept inside a Quonset hut, and in most cases the thing was heated, but, that was just about it. It certainly wasn't cool in the summer.

Interviewer: What did you find to be the most rewarding, beside helping the Korean Army getting their NCO academy established?

SMA Gates: I think the most rewarding thing, we got a couple of things going over there. We got some service clubs built. We got some pretty good sports programs going for soldiers. We had one of the best "Soldier of the Quarter" programs in the world, in Korea. The AUSA (Association of the United States Army) Chapter totally supported that awards program. The NCO and the soldier that won the Soldier of the Quarter for the Eighth Army, received a trip to Hawaii with all expenses paid. And every soldier who competed received something, if it wasn't nothing more than a plaque. So, every last soldier that competed in that got something. The other thing was, the old NCO Academy there was in terrible condition. We got the NCO Academy totally reconditioned.

Interviewer: Was that the one at Camp Jackson?

SMA Gates: Yeah, the one at Jackson got totally reconditioned. We weren't totally out of Quonset huts, but, certainly the plans were to build buildings there for the soldiers to live in. All that was started and we were able to see some of that materialize before I left the Army. If I can back up a minute.

Interviewer: Yeah.

SMA Gates: We had a terrible condition in the 3rd Infantry Division NCO Academy, and that thing was completely refurbished.

Interviewer: Command Sergeant Major Kaiser was the Commandant at that time, wasn't he?

SMA Gates: He was.

Interviewer: In fact, when I visited the 3rd Division's PLDC (Primary Leadership Development Course), at Kitzingen, that's when they had the streets dug up and putting in new sewer lines, and reworking all of the barracks.

SMA Gates: Right. We got those things done, but it wasn't easy. I had to take the damn Chief of Staff, the two ADCs (Assistant Division Commanders), and the Division Commander there and take them through that stuff and say, "Look here, ass holes, this is what we have for an NCO Academy. These are the men and women who are going to lead your soldiers in war. We need to have some conditions here that are conducive to learning." We got it!

Interviewer: When I visited the NCO Academy at Camp Jackson, in Korea, that place definitely needed some work.

SMA Gates: Yeah, we got it. I would suspect now there should not be a Quonset hut on Camp Jackson. I bet they still have them there. You know, it's like the old World War II barracks. Nobody will tear the things down; they keep the damn things. When they build a new building, they're supposed to tear one down. I think that is the most rewarding thing that we seen accomplished over there. We got something done with the NCO Academy. Margaret had a very rewarding experience over there. She was involved with an orphanage; Asian-American kids that were orphans. They had, I guess, a hundred kids that lived in a room about the size of that den there (Approximately 12' X 18') and they just slept on the floor side-by-side. They had one small bathroom. They had one sink in that orphanage. You know, I can't say enough about Margaret Gates. That girl went up to that orphanage and she came back boo hoo'ing and mad as hell. She got Art Garcia, who at that time was Commandant of the NCO Academy--Art is a great American, too--and he went

up there and looked at it; it's right up the road from Camp Jackson. So, he took over the job as sponsor of the orphanage. They rebuilt the entire thing. Art must have put ten thousand dollars of his own money in there. Margaret and the NCO wives, and everybody else she could beg money out of, contributed to that orphanage. They ran all kind of things; some of the were authorized and some were not to well authorized. They did get enough money to rebuild the orphanage and give the kids enough room to sleep. They built a nice kitchen facility there, and a great bath facility for the kids. I have some pictures, outside in the garage there, of her and the kids. That is the thing that Margaret loved in Korea; that orphanage.

Interviewer: Did you live at Yong Son?

SMA Gates: Yeah.

Interviewer: Your headquarters was right there at Yong Son.

SMA Gates: Yeah, right down the road.

from where we lived at.

Interviewer: Having served as the Command Sergeant Major of U.S. Forces Korea and Eight Army, I'm sure you're aware of the current tensions between North Korea and the Free World concerning the nuclear weapons issue. I know that particularly interests you. Tell me your feeling about the current tensions with North Korea concerning nuclear weapons.

SMA Gates: While we were there we had sort of a similar incident. It didn't have anything to do with nuclear weapons, but, at that time we were involved with the tunnels under the DMZ. The North Koreans dug tunnels under the DMZ, and we located three or four. I guess they still try to locate some more tunnels that the North Koreans dug under the DMZ. They were large enough to take a fairly good size vehicle through; I had an opportunity to see one of those tunnels. So, the North Koreans have always been doing some strange things. I think we have to be very careful, and ensure that we understand the North Koreans a little better

than what we have. Let me make sure I'm saying this right. We have to make sure that we understand the North Koreans a little better than what it appears from the mass news media. You're not going to force those guys into doing anything. They'll go to war. I'm convinced of that. You're just not going to force North Korea into something that they just feel that they are not going to do. Do we have the capabilities of fighting the North Koreans, and winning. Certainly. I don't think you need a hell of a lot of American soldiers. You need a lot of American support, but, you don't need a lot of American soldiers. The South Korean Army is fairly well trained, well equipped, and a fairly good size organization. So, I don't think you need a lot of American troops over there. Probably, you've got to have American equipment and American support. So, having said that, we've got to be very careful. Politically, they need to do some negotiating; the right type of negotiation. You can't threaten an Asian. It just like trying to flow water up a rope; that don't work. Could that possibly expand into a war? You're damn right; very easily. At one time the tensions were sort of low key over there. There's always been tensions along the border, but the tensions were at a controllable point. I think we have to be very careful how we proceed in things like that. I don't think we need to be doing anything dumb. We don't need to start buildups over there, because what you're doing is sort of threatening the North Koreans and they may feel like they're backed into a corner and they have no choice but to fight. I think they look at things a little different. They believe they won the Korean War. At least they got a compromise from us. The United Nations didn't have guts enough to fight the Koreans and the Chinese, so, it stopped at the 38th Parallel. I don't think they have forgotten that; Kimyehlsun is still there. He has the total support of the Peoples Republic of Chinese. I don't think he's worried about anything. So, we have to be very careful how we rattle sabers. If you're going to rattle sabers, you better be ready to

completely rattle the things. You need to be prepared to send in the cavalry. If you rattle the sabers, you should be prepared to send in the cavalry. I don't think the people of the United States are prepared to send in the cavalry, over North Korea. I don't know. Maybe they are, but, I don't think so.

Interviewer: Is there anything else you would like to say about your assignment to Eighth Army?

SMA Gates: Here again, it was a great tour. That was our second opportunity to have directly input into the Army's policies. There were a lot of times we had the opportunities; like the NCOER (Noncommissioned Officer Evaluation Report). We had the opportunity to have a large input into the development of the new NCOER, as we know it today. The same thing with family support. We had a great opportunity to have input into those policies and things. So, there was a great opportunity to at least have a liaison with the Department of the Army. It was a very interesting tour. I think the most interesting part of it was the soldiers in the Eighth Army, 2nd Infantry Division, the 19th Support Command. The morale and esprit de corps was just fabulous over there. Here again, you didn't have a lot of problems with the soldiers. Not a lot of incidents. We had the opportunity to work with the Allied armies over there, to some degree. We just had a lot of fun.

Interviewer: We have talked about most of your assignments. In 1978, you were assigned to ROTC (Reserve Officer Training Corps) duty at the Virginia Military Institute, in Lexington, Virginia. How long were you assigned to VMI?

SMA Gates: We were there for almost two years.

Interviewer: What rank were you when you were assigned there?

SMA Gates: Sergeant Major.

Interviewer: What were your primary duties during that assignment?

SMA Gates: The official title was "Chief Instructor," for the Army ROTC Detachment at the Virginia Military Institute. But, in

reality, we were also the ROTC Sergeant Major, because you have all four services there, and the senior person there is an Army colonel, who is also the Commandant of Cadets. You work for him. He wears two hats. He was the Commandant of Cadets and he was the... Oh my God, I should know what they called him.

Interviewer: The Professor of Military Science.

SMA Gates: Yeah. He was also the Professor of Military Science. The tour of duty there was a little different from most ROTC assignments; we interfaced quite a bit with the cadets. We interfaced, certainly, with the other services while we were there. We had the opportunity to do some fairly unique training with the cadets. We had a Ranger platoon there. We had some tankers; we had about five M-48 tanks. They were old tanks, but, at least the cadets got the opportunity to go out and drive those things around, and act like they were shooting. We had the opportunity to take the VMI students to Camp A.P. Hill and they had the opportunity to work with an APC (armored personnel carrier). So, the VMI experience is a little different. We have about five duce and a half trucks there. We had a motor pool we had to run. We didn't run the arms room, but we had our own arms there at VMI. The Institute maintained the arms in their own arms room there. If we needed machine guns and stuff like that, we would go pick those up at a place there in Virginia; an Army depot. We would get the machine guns from there and we would store them in the arms room, and the Institute took care of them for us. Plus, I taught a couple of classes.

Interviewer: I guess since everybody there was military oriented, the atmosphere at VMI was a little bit different than most colleges that have ROTC.

SMA Gates: Right.

Interviewer: What do you remember most about that assignment?

SMA Gates: I did not enjoy ROTC duty. Now don't get me wrong. We had a great relationship with the cadets there. My God, we just had so

many cadets that we worked with on a daily basis. Sometimes it became too much of a work load. But, here again, to me that is not the real Army. That is another side of the Army that is oriented more to the officer than it is the enlisted soldier. Don't get me wrong. I think you need people out there, good NCOs in the ROTC assignments. Here again, it's not like being a platoon sergeant or a first sergeant or a sergeant major of a battalion. Whether you want to believe it, even though it's a military institute, you're still in a college atmosphere. Those kids going to school there are college students; it's a little different world. Did I enjoy being there? It is not anything I want to brag about. Did we have fun working with the cadets? Well, hell yeah. We would administer physical fitness tests. Prepare the kids to go to summer camp, and we went to a summer camp. We participated in summer camp. I was a sergeant major down there of a huge organization there; a battalion at summer camp, down at Fort Bragg. So, we had a lot of fun doing that thing. ROTC to me is not something I would want to do ever again. I don't know, you just don't have a sense of accomplishment there, that you do in a regular Army unit.

Interviewer: Particularly after you spent so much time with the Ranger Department, at Fort Benning, and then go to an assignment like that.

SMA Gates: Or out of the 1st Ranger Battalion. After the 1st Ranger Battalion, we worked at the NCO Academy at Fort Stewart. Then we came to VMI. I don't know. The pace slowed down and the pace was very difficult for me to adjust to. Now it was something that we needed, at that time, because we had been going balls to the wall, for years. All at once we probably needed to slow down. I appreciated the opportunity to be able to see that. I appreciated the opportunity to see that part of the Army, and to get the experience. But, it wasn't the most enjoyable tour of duty that we had.

Interviewer: In 1967, you were assigned as an instructor to the

Ranger Department, there at Fort Benning. While you were assigned there, what was your duty position?

SMA Gates: I was an instructor with the Benning Ranger Committee. We taught the Ranger students the basics during the first three weeks of Ranger School.

Interviewer: What rank were you at that time?

SMA Gates: Sergeant first class.

Interviewer: Tell me about some of the training that you were responsible for there.

SMA Gates: Hand-to-hand combat, bayonet training. In fact, I was the senior instructor for bayonet training. We taught land navigation. I was what they call the API, assistant principle instructor, for the land navigation training that the students received at Ranger School. Then we got up in the morning and gave the guys a little PT. We ran them up and down the road. We took them on forced marches. We were responsible for all of the forced marches. From there they go out to Camp Darby. They're out there about a week or so and they learn basic patrolling there. And of course, from there they went on up to Dahlongega Camp.

Interviewer: How long were you there Benning before you went up to Dahlongega? You went up to Dahlongega after this. Right?

SMA Gates: No. After that first tour at Fort Benning, I went to Vietnam for my second tour.

Interviewer: But when you were there in '67, How long were you there before you went to Vietnam?

SMA Gates: About two years. '67 to '69.

Interviewer: The next time you were assigned to the Department, you were up at the Mountain Ranger Camp at Dahlongega.

SMA Gates: In '73, when we returned from Bamberg, Germany, we went to the Mountain Ranger Camp in Dahlongega.

Interviewer: How big is that camp up there.

SMA Gates: Oh, it real small. The camp itself is probably about fifty to seventy-five acres, but it's right in the middle of a National Forest. All of the National Forest there was a training ground for the Mountain Ranger Camp.

Interviewer: Did you have your family up there at that time?

SMA Gates: Uh huh.

Interviewer: Where did they live? In the town of Dahlonega?

SMA Gates: Up there the dependents lived wherever you could get a house. We moved while we were there. Initially, we rented a home on the Mountain Ranger Camp road, which was about five miles from the camp. The individual was up somewhere in Chicago, and he rented his house. So, he decided he was going to move back into his house, so, we moved. We moved out on Siloam Church Road.

Interviewer: Dahlonega isn't far from the Tennessee line, is it?

SMA Gates: The Tennessee line divides, you know, on the top of the mountain from the camp. You're supposed to be able to see, I think, seven states from certain points up there on that mountain top.

Interviewer: How long were you up at Dahlonega?

SMA Gates: Here again, a year.

Interviewer: What was your primary duty assignment?

SMA Gates: I was a chief instructor for the patrolling phase. We taught the Ranger students patrolling in the mountain phase. You know, there are certain techniques you need to learn in the mountains phase. We also controlled the patrols. We had aggressors. So, all of the patrolling that took place up there, we were responsible for. I not saying we didn't assist with the mountaineering, the repelling, the climbing, and things like that. Basically, we were responsible for the operation that the Ranger students went through.

Interviewer: What do you remember the most about that assignment up there?

SMA Gates: The people that we worked with there were probably

some of the some of finest people that we'll ever have the opportunity to work with. Of course, I say that about every unit, you know. Here again, it was a very small camp. We were a real tightly knitted group of NCOs and officers and young soldiers. Everybody there was sort of like a family. That was the unique part of it too. Serving at the Mountain Ranger Camp was not easy; hell, it was tough. You were forever going on patrols. I was also a lane instructor there. So, you would accompany the patrols, on the patrols as an evaluator and an instructor. You had to teach while you were on the patrol. Going up and down the mountains in Dahlonega, Georgia is not the easiest thing in the world. Here again, you go through all types of weather. Even if there's damn snow on the ground, you still go. If it rains, you still go. You don't stop. So, with those things, it wasn't an easy assignment. Being assigned there was very tough. But, it was a pleasure. It is probably some of the most beautiful country in the world, in my opinion; Northern Georgia, South Carolina, Tennessee, around there. There was another aspect of Dahlonega, Georgia. The North Georgia College was there and we interfaced quite a bit with the college students there. We would teach them some Ranger techniques and Ranger training. We had a lot of fun doing that. The people in northern Georgia--the civilian population there--were just great people. They had a great elementary school there. My oldest daughter was still in elementary school, and she really enjoyed that school. We enjoyed the school, and the PTA. The people in Dahlonega, Georgia were just great. It's sort of funny. They looked at you two different ways. They either accepted you as a member of their community, or they didn't. For some reason we were kind of accepted. I guess because I had grown up on the farm, and I was probably speaking some of the same language. By the way, Dahlonega, Georgia is the place of the first gold strike in the United States. Most people don't know that. One of the first mints build in the United States, guess where it was built at?

Interviewer: Dahlonega.

SMA Gates: Yeah, in Dahlonega, Georgia. I'm serious. The first gold rush in the United States was in Dahlonega, Georgia; the first major gold rush. So, there's a lot of historical perspective up there. A lot of people don't realize that, but they are not alone. We had a great relationship with the National Park Service; the Park Rangers. They were just a great bunch of people. We had a good opportunity to interface with that group, that is another part of the Federal System. Shoot, they were almost like soldiers. If they had a forest fire or anything we would assist them. In fact, we were designated to fight forest fires, too. That was one of our missions, and we did that two or three times while we were there. But the civilian population in North Georgia are very peculiar, but, great people. Just to give you an example of the type people that were there, if I may. They has a small Western Auto store in the city of Dahlonega. I went in there one day. It doesn't get that hot up there, but still, in July and August it is still hot enough for some type of air conditioning in your house. So, Margaret wanted a small window air conditioning unit. I went in there and I was looking at this window air conditioner. I said, "Man, I sure wish I had the money to buy this thing." The individual that owned the store said, "You're assigned to this Ranger camp up here, aren't you?" I said, "Yes, sir." He said, "Well, go ahead and take it. When you get the money, come in and pay me." I said, "Sir, I don't have two hundred dollars to buy that." I think it was about two hundred, maybe it was all of three hundred and fifty dollars. He said, "Well, you know, you pay me a little bit every month until you get the thing paid for. Just come in every payday and pay what you can." I thought, "My God, I can't believe this. He don't know who in the hell I am, and he's trusting me with one of his air conditioners." But that is the type people they were. So, I took the air conditioner, and payday I went down and paid it off. That was the point I was making. I'm not saying everybody up

there was that way. The average citizen in North Georgia, again, if they accept you, they accept you as to what you are. They will do anything in the world they can for you. The family that owned the property and the house that we rented up there--the second house--shoot, that woman adopted Margaret as one of her daughters. You know, she just loved Margaret and the two girls. In fact, she wanted to give Margaret an acre of land to build a house on, and just stay up there. They got to be real good friends. That was a very pleasurable tour of duty. We had a lot of fun, but, like I say, the tour was not easy.

Interviewer: Every time you went through a cycle, it was just like starting Ranger School all over again.

SMA Gates: Yeah, you're going through Ranger School again. The only difference is you were not evaluated. You didn't go on all of the patrols, but, you certainly went on a couple while you were there. The last long patrol up there was a week, and we would take the students to the field for a week. We had to jump in and, shoot, we were in the field for a week; that was for every cycle. We would have a base camp setup out in the field, in a small Quonset hut, and we'd spend a week out in the field. It wasn't easy in the wintertime up there; it gets a little chilly. We were out on what they call "an extended patrol." It's for a week. The students would jump in and then they'd run an extended patrol for a week. It's not easy. You know, the legs between the objectives there are three or four thousand meters. They run up and down mountainous terrain. Those guys are tired after that patrol, and that's not counting all of the repelling, and the rope bridges, and mountaineering techniques that they have to learn while they're there. They don't spend much time inside the barracks, and they only had little hooches up there. I think they have barracks built there now. In fact, I know they do. We just had small hooches. To make a long story short, we were out on that extended patrol, out in the field CP (Command Post) out there. There were civilians who followed the Ranger students around

and they would police the brass. Every time they would shoot the machine gun, there was always civilians there to police that brass. Brass brings a pretty good return. You know, they would take that stuff and sell it. Of course, we would prevent it whenever we could, but, sometimes you couldn't police all of the brass. But anyway, one night, about one o'clock, this civilian truck pulls into the CP area; we're out in the middle of the National Forest. A man jumped out of that thing and he had a pistol stuck down in his belt. He just busted into the CP like he owned the place and he starts cussing everybody out. "God damn Ranger students are out there shooting on my land. You people don't have any business doing that." It was cold; it was in the wintertime. I had a poker for the fire, so, I kind of got that poker, and worked my way around. He was fussing at the Captain. We had a captain, and he just happened to be there. The guy kept pointing his finger at the Captain, and he got right up in his face. I worked my way around there and I was fixing to frail him with that damn poker, and knock the guy out, because I really thought he was going to pull that pistol out and start shooting, because he was in such an irate condition. He kept pointing his finger in the Captain's face, and Captain Rogers took everything he could. He said, "Sir, if you don't get your damn finger out of my face, I'm going to bite the son of a bitch off." He said, "Ass hole, I want you to turn around and look at that bad son of a bitch standing behind you with that fire poker. He fixing to knock your head clean off your shoulders. Now if you've got something that you want to say, say it to me in a civil tone and I will listen to you." The guy just stopped, you know. He was completely paralyzed. He said, "The guys are down on my land shooting their blanks and everything. They're scaring my cows." Then he starts getting upset. I told him, "Sir, let me tell you something. There's no way in hell those guys are on your land. They're in the National Forest. Now they may be shooting and the blanks that they're shooting may very well be scaring the cows." I

said, "Hell, we can fix that. All we have to do is change the objective. All you had to do is come in here and tell us that it's making your cows run. But there ain't no way in hell that they're down there on your land, because, ass hole, I know where all of these damn objectives are at, because I was the son of a bitch that put them out there." He started explaining, and I said, "Yes sir, that thing is about four hundred meters up the mountainside. They may sound like they're down on your property, but they're not." He said, "Well, you may be right." I said, "Well, how come you didn't come in here and say that?" But, the funny part was when Captain Rogers said, "I'll bite that God damn finger off if you don't get it out of my face." He said, "Turn around and look at that ass hole behind you. He's getting ready to wrap that damn"... He said something like that, but he said, "If you touch me, he's going to wrap that God damn poker around your neck." And that's what it was; we were going to do that. We did all kinds of crazy things. I won't go into all of that stuff. There were some funny things that happened there.

Interviewer: In '74, you left Dahlonga, and went back down to the Ranger Department, at Fort Benning.

SMA Gates: I went down there as the 3rd Ranger Company First Sergeant. Yeah, I got promoted to master sergeant and went down there. I was on the promotion list when I returned from Europe.

Interviewer: That was your first time as a first sergeant, wasn't it?

SMA Gates: Yeah. Well, I had a short period in Vietnam, in "K" Company of the 75th, but that was only for about two months; the last two months over there.

Interviewer: How long did you serve down there?

SMA Gates: Until '75. Again about a year as Company First Sergeant. Then I left there and went to BNCOC (Basic Noncommissioned Officer Course). I was the BNCOC Company Commander, as a first sergeant.

That's when all of the BNCOCs were consolidated at the Branches of the Army, like the Infantry. They had one BNCOC, and it was at Fort Benning. Certainly, the Armor School had a BNCOC over at Fort Knox; at least I think they did.

Interviewer: So, your 11 Bravos (11B), 11 Charlies (11C) and 11 Foxtrots (11F) all went to one school.

SMA Gates: They all went to one school, at Fort Benning. I was the Enlisted Company Commander there, for about a year. From there I went to the Academy.

Interviewer: When you were the First Sergeant there at the Ranger Department, what occupied most of your time?

SMA Gates: Probably what occupied most of my time was, we were in the transition stage of moving from the old handwritten morning report to the SIDPERS (Standard Input Data Processing Entry Record System). Transitioning from that morning report to the SIDPERS system was what occupied my time more than anything else. Notwithstanding the fact that we were also responsible for the health and welfare of about a hundred soldiers, maybe a hundred and fifty soldiers, cadre, officers and NCOs. We had some young enlisted soldiers assigned to the 3rd Ranger Company. Certainly all of the mess personnel. All of the support personnel were assigned to us. So, we certainly had all of those responsibilities, too. You know, Ranger students have accidents. Any student that had an accident, we were responsible for making damn sure that student was properly taken care of, and put in the right place. Maybe we would have to recycle him, and things like that. Those things occupied all of my time, plus, I went to college.

Interviewer: Is that right.

SMA Gates: Uh huh.

Interviewer: Which college did you go to?

SMA Gates: We got serious about an associate degree while I was at Fort Benning; in the 3rd Ranger Company and in the Infantry BNCOC.

So, we attended Columbus Community College. My God, there was another college out of Alabama.

Interviewer: Troy State?

SMA Gates: Troy State College. We took some back-to-back courses and tried to rush those things because I knew I was on the list for the Sergeants Major Academy and I wanted to, not so much me, but Margaret was active in this more so than me. She was saying that you probably need to be prepared to have your associates degree whenever you complete the Academy, and we did. When we completed the Academy we had the equivalent of an associate degree. As far as the Army was concerned, we had an associate degree

(End of Tape OH 94.5-4, Side 2)

(Begin Tape OH 94.5-5, Side 1)

Interviewer: This is March 25, 1994. This is continuation of the oral history interview with Sergeant Major Army, retired, Julius W. Gates. Yesterday, when we ended the interview, we finished talking about your assignments. I think the last one we talked about was the one that you had with the Ranger Department. What I would like to do is ask you about your other Ranger assignment, then, we'll talk about the 101st, and the family and, then, we'll start into your tenure as Sergeant Major of the Army. We discussed your Ranger assignment at Fort Benning and also at Dahlongega, Georgia. Now, I'd like to ask you about your other CONUS Ranger assignment. In 1977, after your graduation from Class 8 of the Sergeants Major Academy, you were assigned to the 1st Ranger Battalion, at Fort Stewart, Georgia. What company were you assigned to in the 1st Ranger Battalion, at Fort Stewart?

SMA Gates: I was assigned as the Unit First Sergeant for "A" Company, 75th Infantry.

Interviewer: This was your second time as a First Sergeant. Is that correct?

SMA Gates: Technically, the third time.

Interviewer: That one time you had a short...

SMA Gates: Yes, 3rd Ranger Company, as a First Sergeant, then, they called it the Company Commander of BNCOC but, we were still doing the job of a First Sergeant, plus the other things that you had to do.

Interviewer: While you were a First Sergeant, what occupied most of your time?

SMA Gates: A First Sergeant in the Ranger Battalion, ninety percent of your time is training in the field, operations, emergency deployment operations. At that particular time, the 1st Ranger Battalion, was training for anti-terrorist activities; mainly, hijacking of aircraft outside of the Continental United States. In addition to that, we had deployments to Panama, Alaska, and emergency deployment practices about every month or so.

Interviewer: Tell me about...

SMA Gates: Training. Training was the thing in the 1st Ranger Battalion. Like I say, ninety percent of your time was in the field.

Interviewer: Tell me about some of the training exercises that they conducted?

SMA Gates: We had an emergency deployment, and it was to a rescue an aircraft that had been hijacked by terrorists. This was before we had DELTA Force at a Special Operations Center, and before we had JSOC (Joint Special Operations Command) down at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. I'm not so sure whether the Rangers could accomplish all these tasks or not, you know. But anyway, it was an interesting deployment. It was a company-sized operation, and we deployed and went to Nevada and jumped in at night--a company--and then we moved from the drop zone to the airfield where they had the hijacked aircraft--all this was training, of course--and rescued the hostages from the aircraft. Then we went on into the main part of the airfield and were picked up by C-141's. Actually, we planned for it about twenty-four hours, and within twenty-four hours, that entire operation was executed. The great thing about

that operation was that we executed the operation without a hitch. It went off as well as anyone could expect the operation to be executed. We had about six soldiers that were injured on the drop zone. Unfortunately, the Air Force don't always drop you directly on the drop zone that you have planned to be dropped on. Then, you have wind currents and everything else. Most of our soldiers landed, not in the desert part or the flat part of the drop zone, but at the very beginning of the mountain range there, in the rocks. So, we had about six soldiers that had fractured ankles and legs, and a couple of them had even broken ankles. The thing about it is, not one of those soldiers complained or had any type of medical assistance until that operation was complete.

Interviewer: They did it just like on combat operations, then.

SMA Gates: I think the quality of the soldiers in the 1st Ranger Battalion, at that time, was probably the best soldiers in the world. There's no doubt about it; they were the best soldiers in the world. We had very high standards; not only physical, mentally, but emotionally. They also were required to have very high standards of personal appearance and high standards of personal conduct. An example of that was. When a soldier was in the Post Exchange and a lady came to the counter. In most cases, that soldier would move out of the way and let the lady go ahead of him, or an elderly person. We didn't have any disciplinary problems at all. None. Zero.

Interviewer: I guess you had good NCO leadership too, didn't you?

SMA Gates: We had some of the finest noncommissioned officers that the Army could produce at that time. Many of those noncommissioned officers went on to assume higher levels of responsibility. One is Command Sergeant Major Cayton, who is the Forces Command Sergeant Major today. He was a Staff Sergeant in one of the companies then. The same thing with the officers. Most of the officers have went on to higher levels of responsibility and been promoted up all over through the field

grades. Some of them, in fact, were promoted to fairly high levels in the general officer ranks. But, the purpose of the 1st Ranger Battalion was to do the things that we were required to do for combat operations, but also to set a very high standard for the rest of the Army, and that was the initial purpose of establishing the Ranger Battalion, and then from there, the other two battalions grew into a regiment. Now the mission is a little different today. The initial guidance from General Abrams, the Chief of Staff of the Army, was the 1st Ranger Battalion would set a high standard for the rest of the Army to emulate.

Interviewer: Is 75th still down at Stewart?

SMA Gates: Absolutely. Well, it's not at Fort Stewart; it has been relocated to . . .

Interviewer: They didn't go to Lewis.

SMA Gates: No. They're still in the Fort Stewart area, but they relocated to the airfield.

Interviewer: Hunter?

SMA Gates: Hunter Army Airfield, in Savannah, Georgia.

Interviewer: You served with the 101st Airborne Division in Fort Campbell from '61 to '66. When you re-enlisted in '61, you re-enlisted for the 101st. Did you serve your entire tour with the 101st at Fort Campbell in "A" Company of the 187th, or did you serve in some other company?

SMA Gates: I my entire tour at Fort Campbell with the "A" Company 187th. Now, I did perform about six months worth of temporary duty with the Recondo school. I was an instructor with the Divisional Recondo School, and that was primarily preparing for and training West Point cadets, during the summer training phase at West Point.

Interviewer: What type of training did the 101st have in order to maintain its combat readiness?

SMA Gates: Of course, if you serving in that division, you seem to think that it is the best division in the world, but, I am convinced

beyond a shadow of a doubt that the 101st was the best trained, most combat ready unit in the United States Army. About '62, we were fortunate enough to be issued the M-14 rifles, the M-60 machine guns, the 90mm recoilless rifle, and some other equipment. We were the first division to be issued the new LBE (load bearing equipment); the new packs. All those things had a bearing on the morale and esprit de corps and the efficiency of the Division, but, I think it was the leadership, from the Division Commander all the way down to the squad leader and to fire team leader, and the section sergeant. They were the most professional noncommissioned officers that I ever have the opportunity to work with them. Having said all that; the training was tough. We jumped quite often. We had tough realistic tactical road marches that were certainly a physical task to complete and, in many cases, instead of having payday activities, we were in the field on road marches; thirty and fifty mile road marches. We did all the training that was required, yearly. We had squad ATTs (Annual Training Test) and platoon ATTs, and then you had a company, and even a battle group ATT, at that time. We had a lot of live firing exercises, but we also did emergency deployment operations. We spent a lot of time restricted to the barracks preparing for quick moves. We had 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th stages of readiness at Fort Campbell, and each battle group rotated through those phases. And, certainly, if you were on the first or second ready alert, you were restricted to the barracks to the point where they disconnected all of the telephones in the barracks. You were not allowed to go anywhere unless you marched in a formation, like to the Post Exchange or the movie. We were required to march in formation and have one hundred percent accountability. An example of the readiness of that Division was when Meredith went to college at Old Miss, and when they had all of the problems at Old Miss. They alerted "A" Company of 187th, to prepare to move. When they called, I was on CQ (charge of quarters). They alerted the Company to move. We received

the call at 4:00 o'clock. It was payday, and we were preparing for a Class "A" payday activities. Of course, when you receive a call like that to alert the Unit, you call the Company Commander, so, I called the company commander, and within ten minutes, he returned the call and instructed me to alert the Company. About 7:00 p.m., and I'm not joking now, but by 7:00 p.m., that Company was on a C-130s, flying to Memphis, Tennessee.

Interviewer: That's when James Meredith went to the University of Mississippi, wasn't it?

SMA Gates: Right. We did not proceed any farther than Memphis, Tennessee, at the Memphis Naval Air Station. They have a name for it, and I forget the name of it, but the Memphis Naval Air Station. We marshalled them for the possibility of intervention into Mississippi to ensure that the President's orders, or requests, or whatever, was carried out. But, having said that, in the early '60's, we started seeing the activities in Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia, so the Division started preparing for, what was called at that time, "counterinsurgency operations." So, we spent an enormous amount of time training at the squad or platoon, and company level, and the battle group level in preparation for counterinsurgency operations. An example is that we went to Natchez Trace, here in Tennessee, and we were there almost a month. We went from there to Florida and we trained in a sort of a jungle environment in Florida. Then, we went to Monogahelia, West Virginia, and trained in the mountainous terrain up there. All of these things were in preparation for the wartime operations in Vietnam, so the Division was well trained in counterinsurgency operations, before a brigade was committed. At the same time, we changed from what we called the Pentomic concept ("Pent" means "five," and "omic" means the units are equipped with atomic weapons.), where we had the battle groups, into the ROAD (Reorganization of Army Divisions) concept, where we abolished the battle groups and established brigades and maneuvered battalions

within the Division.

Interviewer: Did you have a pretty high reenlistment rate?

SMA Gates: Here again, that is a tough one for me to answer at that time, because we met our reenlistment quotas. We didn't have a lot of problems in reenlisting soldiers, but the majority of our soldiers were draftees, and a majority of the soldiers would leave the Army.

Interviewer: What leadership position did you hold while you were there?

SMA Gates: From Fire Team Leader through Platoon Sergeant.

Interviewer: During your career, how many jumps did you have?

SMA Gates: Oh, God! I think after a hundred, I lost count. I had over a hundred jumps when I left Fort Campbell, so, from then on, in the Ranger Battalion and Fort Benning and all the other places that we made jumps at, I would suspect two or three hundred jumps. I quit keeping a log after the Century Wings. In fact, I made a couple of jumps as the Sergeant Major of the Army.

Interviewer: In 1968, while you were assigned to the Ranger Department at Fort Benning, you attended the tactical course with the British Army. How were you selected for that training?

SMA Gates: I have absolutely no idea how I was selected for that training. The OIC (officer in charge) of the Benning Ranger Committee, which I was a part of, called me and explained to me that the Department Director, who was Colonel Edwards at the time, and the Sergeant Major of the Department was Sergeant Major Mixon, who later on became the XVIII Airborne Corps Sergeant Major, and the Fort Benning Sergeant Major. M-I-X-O-N. Anyway, they called me and explained to me that the British Army wanted an American NCO to attend a British tactics course, and it was the first request that they had made. They really didn't ask me, they told me that I had to be selected to attend the course.

Interviewer: Where was it conducted?

SMA Gates: In Bracken, South Wales, and then at Warminster, but

the majority of the course was at Bracken, South Wales. We did go to Warminster and operate with some armored personnel carrier then and did some combat in cities while we were at Warminster, but the majority of it was at Bracken, South Wales. It's a very mountainous terrain, open terrain, and the course itself was very intense from "day one." I think the British have a unique system. The first couple of weeks that you're in a course, before you really start the course, they have an assessment exercise for the first two weeks and see how much you know. Of course, if you are not qualified after the first two weeks, you don't attend the remainder of the course. Then, they adjust the instructions to meet the needs of the class. The American Army could learn something from that.

Interviewer: That's right.

SMA Gates: So, they have that assessment exercise, and, my God, we started out early morning, and went until late at night, executing the assessment exercise, and a lot of that was road marches. They classified those things as forced marches, where you had to double-time down the hill, and speed march, up. It was a commando march, in other words. We cover a lot of ground in a hurry. But I had a lot of fun. We had a lot of fun working with the British. On one of the road marches, I can recall, there were a couple of people who fell out, but, I honestly felt that I would die before I would fall out of one of those road marches. We had to do that with machine guns and heavy equipment, mortars. We took all of that equipment to the field with us. In fact, I went to the point of when somebody looked like they were tired, I would take the machine gun, or the mortar and continue to march with it. Of course, at that time, I was a Sergeant First Class, in top physical shape, probably the best shape I've ever been in my life, and all the physical activities we had to do when training the Ranger students; we were in top physical shape. But, anyway, we were going on this forced march and there is a Colonel, a Lieutenant Colonel, was marching with us. So, he looked at me and he said, "Yank, I guess you're sort of tired. It looks

like that you're about to give out on gas." I looked at him, I said, "Colonel, before I fall out of this boot march, every last one of you Brits will be laying on the ground." He threw his hands up. He says, "That's like a Damn Yankee." But, it was very interesting. I did not receive a standing or anything from the course. We received the graduation certificate and some plaques and some very strong letters of how great the "Yank" was. But, there were two other things that is probably worthwhile mentioning, when you work with the British. First of all, they do things very meticulous; very detailed planning. Each phase of their tactical operation is very detail planned. Everything is done to an identifiable standard, such as crawling, firing a machine gun at a target, and they do that well. It's probably one of the best small-unit trained armies in the world. At least, I had that impression when I left from there. And they train their recruits the same way. That area there was an area for the airborne. They call it the Para Regiment. The Para Regiment did their initial entry training at Bracken. There was nothing. I'm talking about way out in the middle of nowhere. There were corporals who had squads of young recruits training them on the do's and don'ts of being an infantry soldier. It was very interesting. The sergeants in the British Army do all the training at the smaller unit level. Very seldom do you see an officer. But anyway, there were a couple funny incidents that took place there. They were very inquisitive of the activities and how we were performing in Vietnam. Of course, all the news media and everything was covering Vietnam, you know, and news about Vietnam was totally occupying all the time on the international news networks. They wanted first hand information about some of the things that we were doing in Vietnam, and how we were conducting operations over there, because the British was very heavily involved in Borneo, and they sort of bragged about winning the counterinsurgency operations in Borneo; which they didn't, by the way. I think the individual who had the highest reward on his head,

later on became the president or the leader of that particular country. My opinion is, I've never seen anyone win a guerrilla war, actually. To me, its a civil war, and it's very difficult to determine who wins those wars. But, the fact of the matter is, probably no one. But, anyway, back to the British. We had what we called escaped evasion. The British don't used those strong words. They use land navigation problem, and we had to travel about thirty or forty miles, after digging holes in a defensive position for five days. I'm talking about, we were digging a hole or we were on a patrol. So, when they started that land navigation course, everyone was totally exhausted. We didn't know that we were going to have the escape and evasion problem. They had some money put on the "Yank's head." I'm not bragging, but, I did some of it on purpose. I did, in fact, try to set a good example for the American NCOs by being physically fit and answering questions direct and up front. You know, sort of be out front. But, anyway, the Regimental Sergeant Major of that school, he had 20 pounds on my head to be captured. They broke us down into 4-man teams, and we had to infiltrate. It was about thirty miles, not kilometers; thirty miles across that open terrain and mountainous terrain. So, we did. There was two teams that didn't get captured, out of that class of about sixty people; the Yank's team and one other team. What we did, when they dropped us off on a truck, we ran. We ran for almost two hours, and we were ahead of the aggressors. Then, we spent a night in a small village out in the middle of the area there, in the cellar behind the house. The lady who owned the house even fed us, you know. She gave us some tea and some food. That night we just ran about half the night, and we did that for almost four days and four nights, and we were ahead of the aggressors, so, they didn't catch us at all.

Interviewer: I guess it was pretty enjoyable for you dealing with them, being the only American.

SMA Gates: It was. One time, we were doing a night attack. The

British officers always set the example in the field. In garrison, you don't see the British officer too much. But, in the field, like the night attack where, in the American Army, we rely on the leaders. The squad leader will be behind his squad, and then, the platoon leader is behind the platoon, and then you go ahead and move toward the objective like that. Not in the British Army. The lieutenant was out in front and the sergeant is out in front. So, they were explaining to me the difference between the American tactics and the British tactics. I said, "Hell, that's fine, but what happens when all of your leadership gets killed. It doesn't make sense." So, it didn't melt any ice, but the fact of the matter is, they still could not understand why the lieutenant was behind the platoon. There's a very comical personal thing. We made a lot of friends. This one sergeant had a beard and a big handle-bar mustache, and we were just sitting around one day and they were comparing girlfriends and wives. They were all talking about girlfriends and wives. After about three or four weeks, people do have a tendency to do that. I had a picture. I had pictures of my wife Margaret in my wallet, of course, but, the picture that circulated at Fort Benning and probably went all over the Army was the ugliest woman that you ever seen in your life. She had a face worse than any bulldog you've ever seen, and she had a T-shirt on that was way down like that, down on the chest, and then it had blue and red circles around the T-shirt. It was a picture of the ugliest woman you've ever seen, and I had that in my wallet, and we joked about it quite a bit. But, anyway, all these guys, they're pulling out pictures of their girlfriends and wives, and they were talking, "Oh, she's beautiful, she's nice." They'd show me and say, "This is my wife.", and I'd say, "Oh, man, she is beautiful. She's a very attractive lady." So, I pulled this picture of this ugly beast and showed it to George Alkiline. His name was Alkiline. You know, the British didn't want to embarrass me, you know. George looked at it, you know, and his mustache was wiggled, and he kept

wiggling his nose and his mouth. He said, "Hmmm, very nice. Quite nice." I said, "George, you know, she's not much to look at, but she's a damn good cook." He said, "Yeah, she must be." We really had a lot of fun. One of those guys did something that probably you shouldn't publicize on this tape of this interview. We were...

(NOTE: The interview was briefly interrupted .)

Interviewer: We had a short pause in the interview here. Sergeant Major, how long was that course there in Britain?

SMA Gates: That course was ten weeks long. It was actually twelve weeks, but two of those twelve weeks were for the assessment exercises.

Interviewer: So, that was almost as bad as your Ranger training, huh?

SMA Gates: Well, the thing of it is, now, the British Army, unless there is something very, very important ongoing, about 3:00 o'clock on Friday, you're off until 9:00 o'clock on Monday. The installation just closes. Nothing runs, except the officers mess and the sergeants mess. Everything else is closed, including the dining facilities. So, it's very interesting.

Interviewer: Were there any other allied students, or were you the only one that was there?

SMA Gates: I was the only allied student there. I believe they just wanted to see if it would work, and from what I could gather, it worked very well.

Interviewer: Before I ask you about your promotion to E9 and about your family; in 1984, you were selected as the Command Sergeant Major of the Sergeants Major Academy. Tell me about that selection to that position?

SMA Gates: I'm not sure exactly the process that the Sergeant Major of the Army and the Chief of Staff and a the TRADOC Sergeant Major went through in the selection process for me. I can relate to the selection process that we went through during my tenure as the Sergeant

Major of the Army. I was called at the 3rd Infantry Headquarters, one evening, and asked did I mind being at least considered for the Sergeant Major of the Sergeants Major Academy. You know, being a good NCO, I said, "Certainly." I never had any inclinations at all that I would be selected for the job, because we had just moved from Northern Germany down to Wurzburg, to the 3rd Infantry Division, about somewhere in the neighborhood about 18 months before that. Two days later, I was called by the Sergeant Major of the Army and he said, "Congratulations, you have the job." We had to move in a hurry. We had to leave Europe, and I think we had to leave within about two weeks, and report in at El Paso. All that moving didn't help the family.

Interviewer: What Command Sergeant Major did you replace?

SMA Gates: Tom Shoemaker.

Interviewer: How long were you at the Academy?

SMA Gates: Really, less than a year.

Interviewer: Then you were selected to go to Eighth Army?

SMA Gates: Eighth Army.

Interviewer: Who was the commandant during that period of time?

SMA Gates: Colonel Chandler was the commandant at the Academy.

When we reported in at the Academy, there was an atmosphere at the Academy that probably was not conducive to good learning of the students, and a critical task for the Academy. It appeared to me that the atmosphere was very tense between the Commandant and the Sergeant Major. The Sergeant Major had moved his office down to the far end of the building. He wasn't close to the Commander. The relationship between the two was unsuitable for that environment. Let's just say that between the Commandant and the Sergeant Major, there was an unpleasant atmosphere. The relationship between the two evidently was not conducive to that environment out there. Who's fault that was, I can't, and will never comment on that, because if you sit around and blame people forever, that don't help the situation. Colonel Chandler,

he and I sort of grew up in the same environment. But during my initial interview with him, he indicated to me that he had had some problems communicating with the Sergeant Major. I explained to him that wouldn't be a problem during my watch, because he was the Commandant and I was a Sergeant Major, and I understood that. The only thing was that we needed to ensure that we maintained an NCO atmosphere at the Academy. Although he is the Commandant, he needs to sign the paperwork and let the Sergeant do the work. We didn't accomplish all that, but, at least we kind of got Colonel Chandler out of the business there, to some degree, anyway. Not saying he didn't approve everything that took place up there, but, certainly, he sort of got out of the business of the day-to-day running of the Academy.

Interviewer: Colonel Chandler would let you know what he thought, wouldn't he?

SMA Gates: Absolutely, Colonel Chandler would tell you in a minute. There was another side of this thing. You had a Sergeant Major who would do the same thing. Everything wasn't always pleasant between Colonel Chandler and I, but, the fact of the matter is, we had some fairly good discussions behind closed doors, but when we left those closed doors, we understood that he was the Commandant, I was the Sergeant Major, and what we were supposed to be doing.

Interviewer: Tell me about some of the trips you took as the Sergeant Major of the Academy?

SMA Gates: Now don't get me wrong, we did take trips. Like we went to TRADOC when they had the Major Command Command Sergeants Major meetings. We attended those with the Sergeant Major of the Army. We would make numerous trips to Fort Leavenworth, and a couple of other trips to different installations. But, I looked at my job at the Sergeants Major Academy as not someone who traveled all over the country trying to sell the Academy, or trying to get people to do things, or to influence individuals about the activities at the Academy. We had other

people that done that at the Academy. In fact, you did a lot of traveling. You were head of the PLDC, and we had somebody who was responsible for the BNCOC. At that time, we were establishing a common core for the BNCOC's, and it was very difficult to get the Army to approve a common core for all the BNCOC's, so, the common core at least would be the same at all NCO academies.

Interviewer: What did you find was most rewarding about that assignment?

SMA Gates: Let me talk about this traveling. I think traveling is necessary, if there is a necessary reason for you to travel. But, there were so many things that went on at the Academy, I really think that the Sergeant Major's primary job is to stay at the Academy and see to the day-to-day operations of the Academy; not to travel all over the country to the different NCO academies and try to influence those. Like I said, we had people who did that. We had course developers for the BNCOC, the PLDC, the common core for the ANCO (Advanced Noncommissioned Officer Course), and we had individuals who went around and assisted with the validation of the NCO academies and the different ANCOs, so Bill Gates didn't need to get involved.

Interviewer: I think we had a lot of Sergeants Major before that who did more traveling than they really needed to.

SMA Gates: Right. So, like I was saying, all these great sergeants major that were assigned to the Academy, my God, all of them had over twenty years of experience, so, why should I run around and try to do the things that they were supposed to be doing. They all came back after trips and certainly kept me informed, so, I could fuss at TRADOC or the Department of the Army, for the things that we needed. I looked at my job as being at the Academy, and staying involved in the day-to-day operations of the Academy, and influencing the Fort Bliss chain in command to support the Academy with administration and logistics, more so than traveling to different installations.

(End of Tape OH 94.5-5, Side 1)

(Begin Tape OH 94.5-5, Side 2)

Interviewer: Sergeant Major, do you have anything more to say about the traveling?

SMA Gates: That's not saying that we didn't travel. We did travel to a certain degree. We went to the Army War College at Carlisle Barracks and made some presentations up there, and sat in on some of the classes that they were teaching the field grade officers, who were attending the War College. And definitely, we made numerous trips to Fort Leavenworth, because they were our next higher headquarters in the chain of command. We interfaced quite a bit with the Office of the Sergeant Major of the Army, and all of these individuals, including the social activities that went on with each class, and the requirement for the support of the Academy. At the same time, we were deeply involved with planning for, and convincing of the chain of command that we needed a new academic building. So, most of our time was spent doing those things. I think the Academy was unique, because of the spouse activities at the Academy. Margaret spent an inordinate amount of time working with and assisting the spouses of the students. In fact, I believe she spent more time than I did, working with the students. It was absolutely nothing for her to start early in the morning, and late at night, she was working with the spouses there. Her and Betty Kelly, and some of the other ladies there. And, certainly, a lot of her weekends, which should have been free time, was used running the spouses' programs; they did a lot of good work. In fact, she had an open door with the Commandant, and it was much easier for Margaret to receive support for those ladies than it was for me to get additional support for the students of the classes. If she needed something, she would just walk in and see Colonel Chandler, and, to the best of my knowledge, she was never turned down. She had a way of convincing him very clearly that whatever it was that those spouses needed, they

received, to the point to where the building that they had, they tried to increase the size of the building because of the activities. They needed additional space for the activities. They had a small building there. It never did materialize, because the building that we moved down to, in order to increase the size, had asbestos and it was very difficult to remove that asbestos. Eventually, we moved the spouses' programs into the old dining facility there.

Interviewer: What did you find most rewarding about that assignment?

SMA Gates: No doubt about it, you had an opportunity to have input into the training of all the noncommissioned officers in the Army, and that in itself was an honor and a pleasure to be able to influence, to a small degree, the Program of Instructions for the entire Noncommissioned Officer Education System. We were also able to see the First Sergeant Course materialize. We received a couple of new buildings for the First Sergeant Course, and we started at least the planning phase for the Battle Staff NCO Course. It really didn't get off the ground until a couple of years down the road, but we certainly started the planning. The other thing, and probably the most important, is that the funds for the new Academy building sort of got the approval, because that sort of got bogged down while we were there, and we were able to assist in getting the approval and the funds for the new Academy building, moving in the right direction.

Interviewer: What did you find that was most frustrating?

SMA Gates: I think the most frustrating part of the Academy was not the cadre; it was the students in the Sergeants Major Academy. I could never understand why a person, or persons, would attend that course of instruction out there who really didn't want to be there. Some of the individuals were not qualified to attend that course of instruction. Not saying that they hadn't been in the Army long enough, and they didn't have the right rank, and the background and experiences,

but they didn't try, when they arrived at the Academy. I guess some of the individuals just felt, when they reported there, they also received a diploma saying that they were a graduate of the Academy. Here again, the only place that "success" comes before "work" is in the dictionary. You have to work at everything that you get. So, that was the most frustrating part of the Academy; the Sergeants Major Course students. I'm just saying about ten percent. Ninety percent of the students were fabulous NCO's, but I think that also frustrated the Faculty Group Members too, more so than anything else. It wasn't all of the social activities, it wasn't extracurricular activities, it wasn't the continuous battle of getting funds and equipment and things for the Academy, it was just the Sergeants Major Academy students. When the NCOs arrive up there, about ten percent of them really didn't have any business being there.

Interviewer: Not only academically, but they had problems . . .

SMA Gates: Physically.

Interviewer: . . . physically.

SMA Gates: Physically, and personal problems, and on, and on, and on. You would ask yourself, "How in the world could a person take care of soldier problems when they can't even take care of his own personal problems." Those are the type things that were very frustrating out there. I know Margaret went through just hours and days of frustrations with the spouses over these same problems that I'm talking about. There is nothing difficult about the Sergeant Major's Course. You just have to apply yourself, especially for the first month or so, and after that, it sort of comes natural.

Interviewer: I guess Margaret could easily tell which students were having attitude problem by the attitude of the wives, couldn't she?

SMA Gates: She certainly could. It blossomed. In fact, we had many discussions over certain individuals not doing well in the course and, at the same time, they had personal problems at home with their

family members, and it sort of blossomed. But Margaret spent an inordinate amount of time trying to assist the spouses. Subsequently, that sort of rubbed off onto the students. I think that contributed. Of course, she wouldn't by herself; a whole bunch of other faculty member wives assisted with that program. So, I think the two together is just a great team to run that course of instruction out there, and you need to continue to build on that atmosphere, if you will.

Interviewer: What impact has the Sergeants Major Academy had on the Army?

SMA Gates: I think the Sergeants Major Academy touches every soldier in the United States Army. Whether or not that soldier is an NCO, a young soldier, or an officer, a junior officer, or company grade, field grade, or general officer. I think that Academy has touched everyone in the Army, subsequently. I am convinced that the results of the Sergeants Major Academy is the one thing that has caused the NCO Corps to rebuild out of the Vietnam War.

Interviewer: Do you think that the Academy graduates have influenced the NCO Corps in such a manner that now the Officers Corps kind of looks at the NCO Corps in a little different light than they did years ago?

SMA Gates: Oh absolutely. Now, you have officers looking at NCOs and saying, "Hey, they are not just 'Yes, sir. Yes, sir. Three bags full' individuals." They can think on their own and we can give them additional responsibilities and duties; they can execute these duties and responsibilities very, very well. You have more NCOs serving in positions throughout the Army, and in some positions within the Department of Defense. Twenty years ago, you would never think that an NCO would have these duties and responsibilities. I think, maybe, the officer today asks the advise and recommendations from NCOs more readily than they would in the past, and in most cases, that advise and those recommendations are very sound.

Interviewer: You know, in the early years of the Academy, we had a lot of senior officers who were pretty much against the education of the NCO's. Do you think most of that has disappeared now?

SMA Gates: We'll always have that. You still have some elements in the Army are totally against NCO education. I'm talking about officers at a very higher level, but I think that is slowly but surely beginning to go away. In some cases, I think there's a little jealousy involved there. I never could understand that, because it just doesn't make sense at all. And officers should know what their duties and responsibilities are, and the same thing with the NCOs. If an officer doesn't know the capabilities, limitations, and the duties and responsibilities of an NCO, he's got a problem. I think that's really where the problem comes in there. The Command Sergeant Major is not the Commander of the Battalion; the Lieutenant Colonel is. But if he don't understand that, he's got a problem, and that really is where these articles that we read years ago--four or five years ago--materialized from. Then you have some command sergeants major that don't understand where their duties and responsibilities stop. You know, if they get out of hand, the a colonel, or the general, or captain, whoever it is, should say, "Whoa, wait a minute." Some of those individuals don't have the intestinal fortitude to do that. Most do, but there's some that don't.

Interviewer: Since senior enlisted personnel from other services attend the Academy, how has the Academy impacted on the other services?

SMA Gates: I think the Air Force has started something very similar to our Sergeants Major Academy. They call it a Senior NCO Course. In fact, the Navy has, too. It has impacted to the point to where the other services are beginning to see the fruits that our NCOES (Noncommissioned Officer Education System), and certainly the Sergeants Major Academy, has borne and the effect it has had on the Army NCO Corps. So, they are slowly, but surely coming around to developing some

kind of NCOES for their branch of service.

Interviewer: Also, now, we're having foreign student attend the classes. What is your opinion on that?

SMA Gates: Well, I hate to take credit for that, but we were instrumental in causing that aspect of the Academy to materialize. I say we were instrumental; we didn't approve it; the Chief of Staff of the Army approved it. He alone wanted and conveyed to other foreign armies--to their senior officer leadership--that they should send some NCOs out to the Academy. So, he was very instrumental in convincing them, like the Chief of Staff of the Korean Army; he convinced that Chief of Staff that he should send a couple of NCOs to the course. The Canadian Army is an example. The German Army is another example, and we've had . . .

Interviewer: Italian.

SMA Gates: Italian. The most unique thing I've seen was the Chief of Staff of the Philippine Army. He made a visit to the United States, and he visited the Academy, and then he came to the Pentagon and we gave him a briefing on the NCO Corps in the U.S. Army. He made a point very clearly, he said, "I have a sergeant major I'm sending out to the Academy, and he's coming back to the Philippines, and he'll be the Sergeant Major of the Philippine Army"; and he is by the way, today. Now, that Chief of Staff has changed, but he's still the Sergeant Major of the Philippine Army, today.

Interviewer: I think one of the unique things too, was when we had the British Regimental Sergeant Major on the staff out there.

SMA Gates: Yeah, that was unique; that was unique. I don't know how well it's going now, but, during my tenure as the Sergeant Major of the Army, it was fairly active with foreign students attending the course. I think it puts a little more flavor into the course of instruction. Here again, I would like to elaborate a bit on the Philippine Chief of Staff. He said the reason he wanted the NCOs to get

more involved in the Army over there was because they were not politically associated with any political group in the Philippines. All they cared about was being in the Army. That is very unique.

Interviewer: That's right. Do you have anything else you'd like to add about your tenure as Sergeant Major of the Academy?

SMA Gates: There were a couple of other things that materialized while we were there. One was, we started the work on the gym, because the gym that we had was an old World War II gym. That gym finally materialized. They have a brand new gym, and I'll have to take a little credit for that; not much, but a little credit. All of the chain of command didn't believe we needed a gym. But, anyway, we were able to convince the Commander of the Command General Staff College that we needed a gym. Certainly, he went ahead and pushed it up the ladder. Eventually, the gym did materialize. And the second thing was the housing area. I'm not so sure whether building the housing area--the apartments for the Academy students--off the installation was a smart thing to do, but that was the best course of action we could take at that time. I think that's changed now, and they're trying to move it back to Biggs Field, but, the fact of the matter, that was better than the houses that they were living in at Biggs Field, because TRADOC just would not supply the money to renovate those quarters at Biggs Field. At that time they didn't have the money, and they just refused to put additional money into those old buildings at Biggs Field. So, the best alternative to that was the housing area. So, we started those things and we were able to see some of them materialize, later on down the road.

Interviewer: What date were you promoted to the grade of E9?

SMA Gates: Let's see. It was '78. I'm not exactly sure of the date. I've got it written down.

Interviewer: How much service did you have when you were promoted?

SMA Gates: Right at 20 years.

Interviewer: And where were you assigned when you were promoted?

SMA Gates: I was assigned to the NCO Academy at Fort Stewart, Georgia. We were only there for about three or four months. We established that Academy, and built the Academy, and got the first classes through BNCOC and PNCOC (Primary Noncommissioned Officer Course) at that time. We got those two classes through, and then we left and went to the Virginia Military Institute.

Interviewer: That was the area out in the north part of Fort Stewart, right?

SMA Gates: Tac X.

Interviewer: Tac X

SMA Gates: You visited there.

Interviewer: Right, I've been out there. How long after you were promoted to the grade of E9 were you selected as a CSM (Command Sergeant Major)?

SMA Gates: We were selected at the next board. The year next, but it was almost two years before we got an assignment as a command sergeant major. Needless to say, I was biting at the bit there.

Interviewer: When you were promoted, you weren't selected on the same list, you came out on the next one, right?

SMA Gates: No, I was selected on the same list, but it was about two years later before they allowed me to go to a battalion.

Interviewer: What type of ceremony did you have when you were promoted to Command Sergeant Major?

SMA Gates: It was at the Virginia Military Institute, and we had a luncheon and they promoted me at that luncheon. You know, we didn't stand out in formation or anything, but it was sort of a private ceremony during that luncheon. All the cadre was there, and the . . . what did they call him . . .

Interviewer: Are you talking about the Colonel?

SMA Gates: The Colonel.

Interviewer: The Chief of the Military Science.

SMA Gates: Chief of Military Science. Colonel Edgar. He promoted. By the way, he was promoted to a Major General and was a Deputy Chief of the Corps of Engineers. He retired about a year ago.

Interviewer: What is the date of your marriage?

SMA Gates: 13 June 1964. Not in front of Margaret, but that really is the best thing that ever happened to me.

Interviewer: And what was Margaret's maiden name?

SMA Gates: Margaret's maiden name was Wilson.

Interviewer: And where was she born?

SMA Gates: In Mississippi. Pontotoc, Mississippi.

Interviewer: How do you spell that?

SMA Gates: P-O-N-T-O-T-O-C.

Interviewer: What was the occupation of Margaret's parents?

SMA Gates: Initially, they were farmers, about the same as my family. When I met Margaret, they owned and operated a service station/grocery store at the county line--the Gibson and Carroll County line, here in Tennessee.

Interviewer: How did you meet her?

SMA Gates: That was almost like a fairy tale. It was Springtime and the trees just started to blossom and to blooming and the leaves started coming out. A friend of mine and I, drove from Fort Campbell to Paris Landing. That's a huge recreational area on the Tennessee River, at Paris, Tennessee. There was a small pavilion--and its still there--so we drove down to the pavilion, and below that is a small beach. It had a bathroom and some coke machines at the pavilion there. We walked around a little bit, and this car drove up. There was a couple of real nice looking ladies in that car, with a couple of young children. They attempted to work the coke machine, and it wouldn't work. So, we went up and tried to make the coke machine work, but evidently, it was broke. We invited the ladies to a little restaurant up the road there for a

coke. That was a great day. Margaret just completely stole me that day, and we walked around the park, and she sat on a swing, and I swung her in that swing. She said, "Well, we have to go home." I told her, "Well, I'll see you tomorrow night." That was Sunday, so, "I'll see you Monday." Of course, she didn't believe that. On Monday, just as soon as I was off duty at Fort Campbell, I drove one hundred miles to Milam, Tennessee, here, to see her Monday night. So, we continued to do that for two and a half years. Either I would come to see her, or Margaret would come to Fort Campbell to see me. I'm not saying we didn't have our ups and downs during that courtship, but for two and a half years, I was either here every second of my spare time, or she would come down to Fort Campbell to see me.

Interviewer: What were the first quarters you and Margaret lived in? Were they located on post or off post?

SMA Gates: Oh my, God, it was a small trailer in a trailer park at the Tennessee/Kentucky State Line near Fort Campbell, and it was off post.

Interviewer: What were the best quarters that you lived in?

SMA Gates: Oh, Margaret, what do you think?

Margaret Gates: (From the next room.) Probably the quarters we lived in, in Bamberg.

SMA Gates: In Bamberg?

Margaret Gates: Yeah. They didn't require a lot of maintenance.

SMA Gates: Probably, the quarters that we lived in Bamberg, Germany. Even though they were stairwells and the apartments were old, they were well taken care of, and well maintained.

Margaret Gates: They were large.

SMA Gates: They were large, compared to other government quarters. We enjoyed the three years that we served in Bamberg. It appeared to me that everything worked well in the quarters, and if something would break or not work correctly, the engineers would be there to fix it. I'm

not saying we didn't have problems living in a stairwell.

Interviewer: Which ones do you think were the worst.

Margaret Gates: The Sergeant Major of the Army's quarters at Fort Myer, Virginia. (After a loud laugh by Sergeant Major Gates.) They were.

SMA Gates: Probably, the Sergeant Major of the Army's quarters at Fort Myer. There was always something wrong with those quarters, and the engineers were very lax to make the repairs, and the quarters had been renovated time and time again. The air conditioning didn't always work correctly, and the same thing with the heat. Pardon me, Margaret?

Margaret Gates: They were not large enough.

SMA Gates: And for what we had to do and, of course, our daughters was at home and with the entertainment and the social activities we had, they just were inadequate.

Interviewer: All those buildings were historical buildings, weren't they.

SMA Gates: They were, and it was very difficult to get any additions. We always tried to leave something behind to better the individual that replaced us, and, in most cases, we did succeed at that. In this particular case, we had three different plans for the incoming Sergeant Major of the Army. One was, to build an addition onto that set of quarters and, of course, the National Historical Society disapproved that, and all the plans and the money was available to do that. So, the second plan was to go down near where the Chief of Staff's quarters number 1 was at Fort Myer, and build a completely new house. They were going to destroy one of the old sets of rundown aide quarters that was near his house. The National Historical Society wouldn't allow them to tear that building down. So, the third option was, there was a larger set of quarters across the street from 28 Lee Avenue where the Chief of the General Staff lived. He had the quarters across the street, and the plans were for him to eventually relocate to Fort McNair, and that set of quarters would become vacant and eventually be designated as the

Sergeant Major of the Army's quarters. That really was the plan that was adopted and about a year later, they had materialized, after we left.

Interviewer: Is that where Sergeant Major of the Army Kidd lives now?

SMA Gates: Right. I think it is 3 Lee Avenue now.

Margaret Gates: 17.

SMA Gates: Yeah, 17 Lee Avenue.

Interviewer: How many children do you have?

SMA Gates: We have two wonderful daughters.

Interviewer: Were they born in a military hospital or a civilian hospital?

SMA Gates: Both were born in a military hospital. Melissa, our oldest daughter, was born in the hospital at Fort Campbell, and Laura was born in the Nurnberg Army hospital, in Germany. She wasn't born an American citizen, so she's a naturalized citizen.

Interviewer: Where is Melissa now?

SMA Gates: Melissa has completed her college degree; she received a college degree in public affairs and mass news media systems, and she's presently married to a young Air Force Captain, and they are living in Shreveport, Louisiana, at Barstow, Air Force Base.

Margaret Gates: Barksdale.

Interviewer: Barksdale, isn't it?

SMA Gates: Barksdale. Barksdale, Air Force Base.

Interviewer: What about Laura?

SMA Gates: Laura is a junior in college at East Carolina University, up in North Carolina.

Interviewer: What is she majoring in?

SMA Gates: I don't really know what Laura's majoring in. I think she is majoring in college. Initially, she was majoring in education. Now, she's majoring in what, Margaret?

Margaret Gates: Graphic Arts.

SMA Gates: Graphic Arts. So, hopefully, Laura will eventually become of age to graduate from college. I think she is. To be more serious, Laura has now approached herself on completing her college degree.

Interviewer: How well did your children adjust to the frequent moves, such as, leaving their friends, changing schools, and the different climates, etc.?

SMA Gates: Margaret could probably tell you better than I can, because she did all the moving.

Margaret Gates: They handled it real well.

SMA Gates: They handled it extremely well. The same thing with Margaret. We're not saying that they didn't dislike picking up their bags and moving as often as we moved, and going to the different schools, especially, when they get into high schools; when they had to attend high schools. But they handled it very well.

Margaret Gates: When Melissa was a senior in high school, she refused to move with us. She wanted to stay and finish her senior year.

SMA Gates: We did move in the middle of Melissa's senior year, and that was the only time that she just flat refused to move. She was the president of her class, so, she wanted to stay in that school, and she did. Margaret made many trips from Wurzburg up to northern Germany to visit her and to assist her and do all the things that a mother and father is supposed to do.

Interviewer: In other words, she was up there when you were was with the 2nd Division Forward, and then you moved to 3rd Division . . .

SMA Gates: She remained up there with a friend, and, of course, Margaret would drive up and back quite often.

Margaret Gates: The military had some weird rules in Germany, too. You couldn't leave the children with someone on post.

SMA Gates: Yeah, you couldn't leave them with someone on post;

off post was okay. So, we had a friend to look . . .

Margaret Gates: (Inaudible)

Interviewer: Margaret made the remark that they had to make arrangements for her to stay with a civilian family, because of the rules over there in Germany. They couldn't stay with somebody on post. They had to stay with somebody off post. Other than that, they would have to pay a lot of money for board. Correct, Margaret?

Margaret Gates: That's right. For school, not for board, but for tuition.

SMA Gates: And the civilians do pay tuition for the kids to go to school. You know, civilian employees live off the installation. They pay a tuition for their kids to go to school. A lot of Army people don't understand that, but for civilians to live in Germany and work for the Government over there, they have a lot of additional expenses. I think that was the worst adjustment, then the adjustment of Melissa, of us being safe and in Germany and her coming back to CONUS to attend school, was a tough adjustment, too, because not only did we miss her, she missed her family. The expense of bringing her back during the summer was very tough. The same thing in Korea, she was still in college when we went to Korea. We left Germany, of course, and we went to El Paso, and that's half way across the world. So, he came home for summer vacation while we were in El Paso, and in Korea, too. So, the expense that you have to incur for that traveling is tremendous.

Interviewer: What positive affect do you think growing up in the military environment has had on your children?

SMA Gates: I think they have a lot of self confidence. They have knowledge and experiences from around the world, not only in Germany, but in Korea too, and different installations here within the United States. So, those experience factors and the self confidence that they have, I think, has really helped them interact with all types of people. Like Melissa, she had to learn to speak Spanish, she had to learn to

speak German. Laura learned to speak German and a little Spanish, and she could speak Korean fairly good, so, interacting with all of those different types of people. Even, in Germany, Melissa made American tapes that the German schools, in northern Germany, used in teaching their kids English, and some of the English slang. Laura did that in Korea for the Korean schools over there. So, they had all this experience and interaction with other people, and we got to visit some of the countries in Europe that the average American doesn't have the opportunity to visit. I think all those things have added to their abilities to sort of be away from home and go their own route a little easier than other kids.

Interviewer: Whenever you deployed and your family couldn't go with you, where did they stay?

SMA Gates: They stayed at the military installation or close to where we were at. Like, when I went to Vietnam, the two tours, Margaret remained at Fort Campbell the first tour; the second tour, she remained in Columbus, Georgia. We lived in a trailer in Columbus, Georgia, while we were stationed at Fort Benning, so she remained there.

Interviewer: As you reflect back over your military career, what do you think was the most trying time for you and your family?

SMA Gates: This is strictly coming from me. We haven't talked about that too much. The separations, I think, has been the worst thing for me; being separated so much. My children grew up without me really knowing who they were. I had a wife for twenty years, almost twenty-five years, and I didn't spend a lot of time with her. She had to do all these things of completely raising the family and maintaining a household and doing all the things that she did do when she was as an NCO's wife, and all the involvement she had in the community and in the Army activities on the installations, and, she had to do all these things by herself. In most cases, I was so engrossed with the Army, I didn't get too much involved with the civic activities, like visits to

the school and interacting with the PTA. She had to do all these things. You know, she had to take care of the children when they were sick. She didn't have a husband, in most cases, to assist her. Even when she was sick, and many times, I was gone somewhere, and she had to take care of herself. She didn't have any family. The only family she had was a local Army family or friends in the neighborhood that would assist her.

Interviewer: Is there anything else you would like to say about the family life while you were in the military? I think we talked pretty much about Margaret's involvement with Eighth Army, with the orphanage, and her involvement when you were at the Academy.

SMA Gates: She was highly involved even when I was a First Sergeant. She was involved with the families, especially, in the 1st Ranger Battalion. She was heavily involved with the things that went on there with the families. Margaret had a way of getting answers to problems that I'm not so sure that the military could handle. She sort of has a uniqueness about her that she can get information and answers for problems that is very difficult for you and I. But, I don't whether we give enough credit to the things that our wives and children do while we are out having fun with the Army.

Interviewer: It seems like Margaret adapted real well to military life right after you got married, didn't she?

SMA Gates: I think Margaret really enjoyed the military life. We made some great friends. We were able to do some things that we wouldn't have had the opportunity to do. We visited places and interacted with people of different nationalities that we probably wouldn't have had that opportunity if we hadn't been in the Army. By having said all that, being an Army family is not easy. There were many, many times, we had to be very careful how to make ends meet, on the very small pay that we received each month, and we had to be very, very careful, especially, when Melissa was attending college, and the same thing, even today.

Everybody else has the same problem with Laura attending college, and with the pay that we received, you just don't have a lot of money for other things. So, we had to be very careful, and we had to count our pennies most every month to make the ends meet, and we didn't have the opportunities to buy new cars every year, and the big stereo sets like some people have money to buy. Then, when you travel all over the world, you never have the furniture or the houses that you would like to live in, so, all those things are very difficult for families to grow up in. I not saying, that they're necessary, but it is very difficult, and it sort of makes the military unique. If you can do all those things, and, at the end, look back and say we were fairly successful in some measurement of success.

(End of Tape OH 94.5-5, Side 2)

(Begin Tape OH 94.5-6, Side 1)

Interviewer: Sergeant Major, do you have any other comments you'd like to make concerning the family?

SMA Gates: Yeah. I do think we were fortunate because of Margaret's very strong influence with our two daughters as they were growing up and becoming adults. We didn't have a lot of problems with our daughters. They didn't get involved with some of the things that their peers were involved in, and you have to contribute that to the background of Margaret and all the time and effort she put into taking care of the family, like I say, while we were out having fun with the Army. So, I think she done a good job raising the family. And, having said that, there are a lot of family issues that are ongoing. I'll just tell you up front, I don't feel sorry for the people who can't properly raise a family in the military, or in the civilian community. I'm not saying that I don't feel sorry for the kids, but I certainly don't feel sorry for the parents, because they didn't have it and rougher than we had.

Interviewer: In fact, during our time, we probably had it rougher

than they did.

SMA Gates: At least, I think so. We lived in some terrible quarters. Again, there were a lot of times when we were trying to figure on how we were going to make ends meet, toward the end of the month. Like I said, we didn't buy a new car every year, and we didn't try to buy \$200,000 homes and things like that. So, I don't really feel sorry for people who don't take care of their own personal problems. I'm not saying I don't have compassion for the kids, who are the individuals who suffer from these things, but it can be done, and our family is a good example of it. Here, again, I'm not bragging, I'm just stating a fact. Our family is not the only one. There's hundreds of thousands of them out there, who made as many moves that we did, and did things that were probably more difficult than we did, and their families were raised with family values. A lot of folks don't have to do that, and they still don't have any family values. Our kids had the proper discipline, and they had to do the right things in the home. My God, if it hadn't been for those two girls, when I was the Sergeant Major of the Army, we probably couldn't have made it, because Margaret had some medical problems, and with all the social activities that went on in the home there, without those two girls, we probably couldn't have survived.

Interviewer: How have the government quarters improved over the years?

SMA Gates: I think we've seen a mark improvement, and they continue to improve. They will probably never be what we want, and things, because I think we should have quarters for every soldier that needs quarters, and not only married soldiers, but we have single soldiers who need to have a decent place to live. They certainly don't have to have a hotel, like the Sheridan Hotel, or something like that, but they certainly should have quarters that are equal to the society for who they took an oath to defend. I think you continue to see improvements in the quarters, such as, Fort Drum. I don't about today,

but, initially, there are enough quarters there for all the families to occupy; to have government quarters at Fort Drum. Those are the type things that I think that needs to be done throughout the Army. If you have soldiers stationed somewhere, then, they should have on-post housing for the families.

Margaret Gates: (From the other room) There's too much emphasis on the officers quarters and not enough on the people who need them.

SMA Gates: There's too much emphasis on the high ranking quarters and not enough emphasis on the lower ranking enlisted soldiers. A PFC needs quarters worse than a general officer does. A general officer and a colonel can afford to buy a house downtown, or, maybe even a sergeant major can buy a house on the civilian economy. PFC's and young sergeants can't do that; neither can the Second Lieutenants. So, I think there's too much emphasis on the higher level, high ranking individuals in the military, and not enough on the junior enlisted and the junior officers. I don't know how we'll ever turn that around, but it needs to be turned around. We do some dumb things in the Army. We move units to installations without proper housing or proper facilities for those soldiers and the family members. A good example of that was Fort Stewart, Georgia. We moved the 24th Division in there, and we even moved the 1st Ranger Battalion in there, and we didn't have proper quarters there. We didn't even have billets for the soldiers to live in. The soldiers lived in National Guard summer training billets down there for about three years, before they built enough billets. Even today, they don't have enough housing for the soldiers there. When we moved to Fort Stewart, Margaret and the two girls had to live in a camper for about six months. She had to drive Melissa to school every day, and pick her up at the end of the school day, and bring back that damn camper, and we had a dog in the camper, too. Can you imagine four people and a dog trying to live in a small camper--a 20-foot camper--for about six months, because there wasn't any housing. You couldn't rent a

house there. Then, when we did rent a house, the mayor owned the thing, and it was a pile of junk. The water from the bathroom would leak down through the kitchen, and when it became springtime, the termites came out of the wall and into the floor and probably got all in the furniture and everything. So, those are the dumb things that we do. If we're going to build a unit, we should build an installation and move the unit into the facilities on the installation, instead of camping soldiers out and letting them live in garbage pits until we, finally, five years later, build some facilities for them; and we never build enough. I think it's better to have more than it is to have less, because you can always fill the quarters, one way or another.

Interviewer: I like what Sergeant Major Bainbridge said. He said, "When I was at the Platoon, I thought the Company screwed up; when I was at the Company, I thought the Battalion was screwed up; when I was at Battalion, I thought the Brigade was screwed." He said, "When I got to II Field Force, I thought the Army was screwed up, and when I became the Sergeant Major of the Army, I found out we were screwed up."

SMA Gates: But, he's exactly right. We don't... Well, we'll get into that when we get into the next segment here, but I think we try to get things, whenever it is convenient to get those things, for the soldiers, and, in most cases, too much time has gone by. A good example is, soldiers still having to live in Quonset huts, and still living in World War II barracks; that's asinine. There's nobody in the Air Force living in World War II barracks. I don't know about the Navy; the Navy is a weird outfit. There's nobody in Marine Corps live in World War II barracks. So, why in the hell does the Army have to have soldiers living in World War II barracks, or Quonset huts? It just don't make sense. The Navy is a different animal. You know, they're not a member of the military services, in my opinion. They are something strange or foreign; the Navy is.

Interviewer: Let me ask you about you're tenure as the Sergeant

Major of the Army. When did you serve as the Sergeant Major of the Army.

SMA Gates: 1 July 1987, to the end of June of '91.

Interviewer: And who was the Chief of Staff at that time?

SMA Gates: John Carl Vuono.

Interviewer: Where were you assigned when you were selected as the Sergeant Major of the Army?

SMA Gates: We were stationed in Korea, as the Eighth Army Sergeant Major.

Interviewer: What were the circumstances behind you being chosen as the Sergeant Major of the Army?

SMA Gates: I really don't know the circumstances behind the selection. But our tour of duty... When I say this, probably, the average person who listens to this, won't believe it. But Margaret and I were not all fired up about being selected as the Sergeant Major of the Army and the spouse of the Sergeant Major of the Army. We had a two-year tour in Korea, and we had asked for, and received, an assignment to the Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Chaffee, Arkansas. That really is where we were looking forward to going, because that probably would have been our terminal assignment out there anyway, and it sort of got us back in this section of the United States. We were looking forward to that assignment. Here again, I'm not bragging or anything, but it didn't bother us to go from working for a 4-star general, down to a full colonel, or maybe a brigadier general, but that really was what we wanted to do. I really felt that we could contribute to the Joint Readiness Training Center, at Fort Chaffee. Somehow, my name got submitted, and I think that General Livesay had a lot to do with that. We had a personal meeting, on Saturday mornings, when we were stationed in Korea. I guess that we're getting about ready to start the initial screening process for Glen Morrell's replacement. One of the Saturday mornings, General Livesay mentioned the fact that he was recommending me to replace Sergeant Major of the Army Morrell. Being up

front with him, I explained to the General that I had a good assignment, and an assignment that we were looking forward to going to, and I really didn't think that I was that well qualified to be the Sergeant Major of the Army. General Livesay hit the ceiling. He said, "God damn it! Before I defend you, you're going to have to go up there and do the best you possibly can, to be the next Sergeant Major of the Army." That was the type of individual he was. Like I said, it was a great honor and a pleasure to serve with that general. We had so much fun together in Korea. Even though he was a very busy man with all the hats he wore over there, we had a lot of fun, and we had a very good relationship with he and Bennie Sue; General Livesay's wife. We had a great relationship. They were good friends, they still are good friends. But, anyway, that conversation led to a series of interviews, and, fortunately, or unfortunately, we were selected.

Interviewer: Of the final five, do you remember the names of the other command sergeants major who were considered with you?

SMA Gates: Let me sort of back up to the initial interview there. For the initial interview, there were about thirty or forty people. I guess they screened those records and, then that process was brought down to about ten, or maybe fifteen; I don't know exactly how many it was. Then, from there, the screening process goes down to five. We did the same thing for the individual who was my replacement up there; the same process, if you will. But, let's see if I can remember right. There was Sergeant Major Harrell, of the Health Services Command, was being considered. I believe Sergeant Major Peters, the TRADOC Sergeant Major, was being considered. The Forces Command Sergeant Major, at that time, was being considered. Damn, what was his name? You know who I'm talking about? What was his name, Margaret? The Forces Command Sergeant Major. He works for the NCOA (Noncommissioned Officers Association) now?

Margaret Gates: (From the other room.) I have no idea. George...

Interviewer: George Horvath?

Margaret Gates: Yeah.

SMA Gates: Not George Horvath. He wasn't even in the running.

Interviewer: We'll look that name . . .

SMA Gates: I'll look his name up. Let's see, how many is that?

Interviewer: That's Three. Harrell, Peters and, then, FORSCOM (Forces Command).

SMA Gates: Okay. Then, the... No, strike the Forces Command Sergeant Major; he was not in the running. The USAREUR (United States Army, Europe) Sergeant Major was in the running. What was his name, Margaret? God! Who was it? Damn!

Margaret Gates: No, I don't remember. It was a black guy up there at Fort Myers.

SMA Gates: No. USAREUR.

Margaret Gates: I know that's him.

SMA Gates: He's a white guy.

Margaret Gates: I know that's him, but I don't remember his name.

SMA Gates: And then, Sergeant Major Tapp, for the Army Materiel Command, AMC, was in the running. And then, of course, myself.

Interviewer: Describe your appearance before the Board. Who were the members of the Board?

SMA Gates: There was a 3-star general, who was the president of the Board, and then there were four 2-star generals, and then, the Sergeant Major of the Army. So, there were a total of six people on the selection Board.

Interviewer: Sergeant Major Morrell was on the Board then too, right?

SMA Gates: Right.

Interviewer: What type questions did they ask you?

SMA Gates: They asked... Some of the questions were, you know, "What do you think the Army priorities should be?" That was one of the

questions. They asked you family questions. "Would your family, your wife, be willing to do the things that are required of her as the Sergeant Major of the Army's wife?" You know, "Do you have any family problems?" Then, they asked you just some general knowledge questions. It wasn't anything detailed that you had to answer black and white. Like, for instance, they asked you, "What do you feel about the women in the Army?" "What was your opinion about the women in the Army?" Those are the type questions that was asked by the members of that Board. Sergeant Major of the Army Morrell asked a question about NCOES. What was my strong opinion about the NCOS? Those were the type questions they asked. And then, they had some type of scoring system where they selected the best person or, at least, placed those individuals in a numerical order.

Interviewer: Down to the final Five, right?

SMA Gates: Yeah.

Interviewer: Did they also do a background check on you and Margaret?

SMA Gates: When they selected the final five, they did a background check, and that took a little while.

Interviewer: Tell me about your pre-selection interview with General Vuono?

SMA Gates: It took place at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, believe it or not. He was there undergoing some medical examinations, or he had a slight medical problem. He conducted the interview while he was there at the Medical Center. We chatted for a while, and then General Vuono asked me, up front, what do I really think that the top priority of the Army should be. I explained to him that the purpose of the Army was, to prepare to fight. I said, "The only you can prepare, is to train, and that means everybody training, regardless of what their MOS is, or where they were stationed at, or where you live, they should be training for their wartime mission," and I says, "Sir, my opinion is

that training should be the top priority in the Army. There are other things that interfere with that priority, but it should never take preference over it." Common sense, you know... Hell, if we didn't have a well trained Army, and we didn't expect the Army to have to go to war, then, why do we need an Army? I didn't tell him this, but I was thinking all of the these things. It was unique though, because he made training the top priority in the Army; about a month later. Evidently, we were sort of thinking along the same line, because that was his top priority in the Army; was training. And, then, he asked me a couple of questions about NCO training, and, then, he asked me what did I believe the duties and responsibilities were for the Sergeant Major of the Army. I said, "Sir, I really don't know, but I would suspect that the duties and responsibilities of the Sergeant Major of the Army are the same as any other NCO in the Army. It's just at a different level, and you have to do business a little different in order to make sure that you train, take care of soldiers and their families. Train soldiers, and take care of their families. The important thing is, that my commander, if I am selected to be the Sergeant Major of the Army, is the Chief of Staff, and he's the guy who makes the policies. I'm not saying I wouldn't ever make recommendations or, in a very unique manner, disagree with some things that goes on ; that we have to fully understand that. The Chief of Staff is the senior officer of the United States Army, so he's the boss, and we execute his programs, whatever they are, to the best of our ability. Having said that, I think the majority of the Sergeant Major of the Army's job is to keep the Chief of Staff informed about the enlisted perspective of the Army, and let him know what soldiers feel, or believe, or how they perceive different programs and policies that we make, and the needs of the soldiers who serve it at canteen cup levels, not the soldiers who have all the rank in the Army, but the young soldiers and their families. To do that, it's going to require a lot of traveling. We understand that, and it would be unique if the Chief of

Staff and the Sergeant Major of the Army could do some traveling together. And we, believe it or not, we also have a job to educate the general public, as much as we possibly can. There's a number of ways of doing that." So, after this conversation, that was about the end of it. He said, "Well, we have three more people to interview." He said, "We'll let you know as soon as we can, how you came out." I said, "Well, Sir, you know, I'm due to go back to Korea tomorrow. The telephone line are open." So, went back to Korea.

Interviewer: What was the length of time between your pre-selection interview with General Vuono, and the time that you were notified that you had been selected as the Sergeant Major of the Army?

SMA Gates: About... Pardon me, Margaret?

Margaret Gates: Forever.

Interviewer: Margaret said, "Forever."

SMA Gates: It was about 4 days. About 4 days.

Interviewer: What was your reaction when you received the notification that you had been selected?

SMA Gates: Well, the notification came about 2:00 in the morning. We received the call--not supposed to have--but we received a call from the Sergeant Major of the Army Glen Morrell, telling us that we had been selected for the position. And, then, the next morning, General Livesay informed us. I think we did a lot of smiling, but we also did a lot of frowning, because we realized that we had really been selected for a very high visibility four years, and, all at once the realities started setting in. Not to say that we were not totally delighted, and elated, and sort of overcome with being selected; we certainly were. But, when the realities started setting in, we started pressing ourselves with the really of what in the hell we wanted to do, the last four years we was in the Army.

Interviewer: What was General Livesay's reaction?

SMA Gates: Oh, General Livesay was happy. Oh, my God, he...

Unless you serve close to General Livesay, you can't visualize the type of person that he was, and the way he would inform you. In fact, he informed Margaret before he informed me, and how did he do that, Margaret? How did . . .

Margaret Gates: I don't remember.

SMA Gates: But, he told Margaret that she was moving to Washington D.C. She was going to be living up there, in that crazy city, you know. And, then, he called me in his office, and delivered the message; but he had already informed her. I had went to work, you know. He came down and called her up and explained it to her, and he said, "Pack your bags, girl. You're moving."

Interviewer: So, how long after you received the notification did you leave Korea?

SMA Gates: I think that was May. April or May, Margaret?.

Margaret Gates: We had about 2 weeks.

SMA Gates: We had about two weeks. Maybe it was around the 1st of June. I thought it was the end of May, because we had about two weeks, No, it WAS June. It was June. I'm sorry. Sometime in June, because we wanted to take a little leave before we report to Washington D.C.; and we did. We took about a fifteen day leave, and we were able to visit Margaret's family, and my family over in North Carolina.

Interviewer: Did you have a transition period with Sergeant Major of the Army Morrell, before you assume the duties of the Sergeant Major of the Army? If so, what type of a transition period did you have?

SMA Gates: He remained there about two weeks, and he and Karen both talked to us quite extensively. Not only in the quarters, but in the office. Glen Morrell is sort of like myself. You have to find out what it is you've got to do, so, he didn't give me a lot of advice. In fact, I think I gave Sergeant Major of the Army Kidd the same advice that Glen Morrell gave me. It was very clear to the point. Just remember who you are, what you are, where you came from, and who and

what you represent; that was my advice. I don't know how well he accepted that. To me, it's rather simple.

Interviewer: Do you believe that the best you can do is say, "The four years that I had is going to be different, because you're facing four different years, ahead."?

SMA Gates: And that was exactly the bit of advice that I gave him. I said, "No matter what took place yesterday, it is not going to be the same tomorrow, so, you've got four years, and during that four years, you will go through some events that will be entirely different than the four years that we had. I hope to hell that your four years are a little less intense than ours was, but that really is what you get paid to do." And, the other thing that I gave him some very strong advice about was, you do have lobbyists right in this building here, and you have lobbyists in the field, who really try to attempt to get things for their self interest, or for that particular installation's, so, you've got to be very careful how you sort all those things out, and take those messages into the Chief of Staff. That was the information that I gave him, and I spent about a week or so in the office with him then. Of course, at that time, he was almost a new Sergeant Major of the Army and there just thousands of things to do. First, you've got to find out where the bathroom is located. You know, where to get food. He's trying to move his family. He's taking pictures, and having interviews, and things. So, there's a thousand things going on there, so, he don't have a hell of a lot of time to sit down and talk to anyone, and make sense out of it. He was just going crazy.

(NOTE: The interview was briefly interrupted.)

Interviewer: We had a short pause in the interview here, and we'll continue now. What were your priorities when you assumed the Office as the Sergeant Major of the Army? Did you have any priorities that you envisioned you should do during that tenure?

SMA Gates: Our priorities were really the Chief of Staff's

priorities. There were some things that I would have liked to have seen accomplished. One is, we had started to work on the new NCOER, and we wanted to materialize and institutionalize the new NCOER. The SQT (Skill Qualification Test) had been around for a long time and, in my opinion and the opinion of a lot of other people, the SQT has sort of outlived its purpose.

Interviewer: For the record, why don't you identify what NCOER stands for.

SMA Gates: Noncommissioned Officer Evaluation Report.

Interviewer: Okay, go ahead and continue.

SMA Gates: And then the SQT is the "Skilled Qualification Test." The Skilled Qualification Test has sort of outlived its purpose, and we wanted to either eliminate it from the system, or come up with a different system for evaluating self-development for an individual. So, that was another thing that we were very concerned about at the individual level; we're talking about individual level. We needed to materialize the Noncommissioned Officers Battle Staff Course at the Academy, and bring it on board and institutionalize that course of instruction. In my opinion, we have made great strides in recognizing and trying to do things to increase the care for families, throughout the Army and every major command. But, we had not forgotten about, but we hadn't given enough attention to the single soldiers who live in the barracks and, in some cases, very, very old facilities, such as World War II barracks in CONUS (Continental United States), and certainly, the rundown Quonset huts in Korea, which, in my opinion, should have been torn down as soon as the war was over with over there. We should have never kept the things up. But, those were some of the things that we were certainly concerned about. My first priority was just to find out where in the hell the Sergeant Major of the Army's office was at, and trying to figure out the layout of the Pentagon, so, I could get from home to the office. It took us almost a month to determine how to get

to the E-ring in the Pentagon there, and to sort of find out who did what, and establish some points of contact, not so much with the Army in the field, but in the Pentagon, because it is such a huge place. If you are not familiar with the Pentagon, it is very confusing. Those were some of the things that we were concerned about, and if we had an opportunity, we certainly would make those things materialize.

Interviewer: What guidance did the Chief of Staff of the Army give you, and was it written down?

SMA Gates: When General Vuono was sworn as the Chief of Staff of the Army, that afternoon, he and I had almost a three-hour, two-way conversation in his office. Certainly, he gave me some guidance--very broad guidance--as to what he desired for me to do, as the Sergeant Major of the Army. But, no, there were not any written guidance. There wasn't any A, B, C, D, E, F. These are the things that I feel that you're totally responsible for. His theory was, as the old cliché, "The noncommissioned officers run the Army. The officers commanded it." He told me that he wanted me to ensure that I maintained a very close relationship with him, and that his door was always open, and that I was to sit to his right whenever he had the General Staff in--during the General Staff's weekly meeting--and if I was available to those meetings, he expected me to attend, and to always try to bring out the soldier perspectives in those meetings, and any other meeting that we had in the Pentagon, or anywhere else.

Interviewer: What was your perception about what you would do and, then, how did you decide you'd go about it? Of course, as your tenure progressed, I'm sure that changed. But when you walked out of that office, what was your perceptions?

SMA Gates: First of all, I was... I say, I was. We were very blessed with some good people that were brought in to assist in us getting settled in that office. There was an outstanding Admin NCO there. We called him the staff coordinator; he sort of coordinate with

the staff. And, we had a good Admin NCO, Sergeant First Class Cooley, and then we had a secretary that had been there through, I think, maybe, she was brought on board during Sergeant Major Connelly's tour as the Sergeant Major of the Army. I know she was there for the entire tour for Sergeant Major of the Army Glen Morrell.

Interviewer: What was her name?

SMA Gates: Geez, why did you ask me that? What was the name? Her first name was Bernice. Maybe we'll try to recognize her. So, we had a lot of good people to assist us. Then, the Public Affairs officer there offered us a good noncommissioned officer that would assist us with the public affairs, and getting into the systems, and how you get into the mass news media, and how you work with the mass news media, that we were certainly subject to as we made the trips around the Army. So, to start with, we had a series of briefings. We went to all the different major staffs, and had a series of briefings. They all explained to us what they did and how they inner phased with the Office of the Sergeant Major of the Army. We also had office calls from the Secretary, and all of the civilian leadership of the Army; the different Assistant Secretaries of the Army; We had office calls to them; that lasted about a month or so. So, we finished all of that. At the same time, we interfaced with the senior enlisted of the other services. So, when we kind of finished that in-processing, or initial briefings, we sort of had a picture of what was going on at the Department of the Army level. And, then, from there, we started branching out and making field trips to receive input from the field, so, that we could keep the Staff informed of the concerns of the soldiers in the field. That is the way we did it. We sort of took it one day at a time, and tried to find out where everything was, and make some contacts in the Staff Directorates, and where we could get information when we were asked questions. Sergeant Edwards, who was the individual who worked with us from the Office of the Public Affairs, he was very instrumental in assisting us

to get us, not comfortable, but a little more familiar with the way interviews should be conducted and, some of the individual mannerisms that you should have or should use, when you are being interviewed on the radio, the television, and, certainly, the newspaper interviews. So, all those people that were there to assist us, gave us the briefings, assisted us in putting sort of a little plan together, and, then, we went out and started executing that plan.

Interviewer: What were the greatest challenges given you by the Chief of Staff?

SMA Gates: The greatest challenge, and the one that took the most time, and the most effort, was being able to provide him with real world feedback from the soldiers who served in the ranks of the Army.

Interviewer: And how did you do that?

SMA Gates: That would cost you about 300,000 miles a year, traveling all over the Army, to different Army installations, major installations. One of the things that he did ask me to do was, to visit the small units as much as possible. What I mean by that, the small installations, and even if you go to places like Germany, you visit the small radio communication sites located throughout Germany. The same thing in the Pacific; so we did do that.

Interviewer: When you came back off the trip, how did you keep them informed of the result of your trip? Do you have any formal or informal trip reports, or how did you personally keep him informed?

SMA Gates: The combination of the above. I always tried to go in person to see the Chief of Staff after each trip. And, here again, he may be gone; he may be on a trip of his own. But, I always tried to go in and sort of give him a back briefing of the result of the trip. I didn't try to go into the Chief of Staff and explain to him that a certain installation or a certain unit had problems. What we did was identify Army problems; not the installation's problem out there. That was that commander's problem, and we didn't try to identify this, but if

it was a problem that the Army needed to look at, then, certainly, we would bring it to his attention, or the appropriate staff's attention. In most cases, the Staff pretty well took care of every last one of them. When we presented them with something that made sense, they certainly would react and try to do what they could to assist that installation in taking care of that problem. So, a lot of times, I didn't burden the Chief of Staff with the nickel and dime things. But, if it was something that was an Army policy that needed to be looked at, then, we would certainly... You need to do your homework first. You shouldn't just run into a Chief of Staff and say, "This uniform policy needs to be changed." You know, you have a DCSPER and a DCSLOG that you would go to, and coordinated with those people, and explain to them what is going on. Then, you go in and see the Chief of Staff. So, if you do your homework, when you go in there, you pretty well have got all of your stuff in one sock, and you packed it real tight. When you go into the Chief of Staff, you get credibility with the Chief of Staff, and anyone else that you work with. That's really how we tried to operate. We didn't go on an installation without seeing the Commander; we just didn't do that. Certainly, we worked with the NCO support channel out there, as much as we possibly could, but we would not go to an installation unless we coordinated directly with the Commander. A lot of times, we were invited, you know. There are just thousands and thousands of invitations to different functions, and different installations, and for different reasons. Some of them you could accept, and some of them you couldn't.

Interviewer: How did you plan where you would go and when you would go?

SMA Gates: We attempted to--now this isn't always true--to visit each Army division annually, and we attempted to visit each major Army command annually. Now, in between there, we certainly visited other installations and whatnot, such as, the different training centers; the

Infantry Training Center, the Armor Training Center. We always planned for at least one trip to the Sergeants Major Academy, per class, and addressed a class, and spent a day or so out there with the Academy. That was another priority the Chief of Staff gave me. Not to oversee, but always be attuned to the things that were going on at the Sergeants Major Academy, and throughout the NCOES, and ensured that I kept him informed. So, we had a plan, but we weren't always able to stick to it. There were some items, trip wise, that you could sort of plan a year in advance, but, certainly, we tried to maintain a quarterly calendar. And as the time ticked off, the calendar always became so crowded that you just had to eliminate some of the things. We had a yearly calendar, a quarterly calendar, and, certainly, a monthly, and then a weekly calendar that we maintained.

Interviewer: Approximately what percentage of the time did you spend in your office there in the Pentagon?

SMA Gates: I would say about twenty percent; eighty percent was in the field, or traveling to and from.

(End of Tape OH 94.5-6, Side 1)

(Begin Tape OH 94.4-6, Side 2)

Interviewer: Go on and continue talking about the amount of time that you traveled.

SMA Gates: The travel time and the time outside the office increased. The percentage increased during the years of '90 and '91, because of the activities that were going on for, you know, Desert Storm/Desert Shield, and Just Cause. Those things caused me to be outside the office more so than in the Pentagon. There's another part to this; the duties that the Sergeant Major of the Army performed. He is on twenty-seven boards and commissions. So, there's a hell of a lot of time spent in these meetings, such as, the Soldier's and Airmen's Home. He's a member of the Board of Commissioners out there. He's on the Board of Commissioners for AAFES; he's on the Army Clothing and

Equipment Board; and it just goes on, and on, and on. For every centralized promotion board, they ask you to come out and address the board members. We also had quarterly training sessions--commander's training sessions--where the major commander's in that part of the World would sit down with the Chief of Staff and go over training initiatives that were ongoing; so, we, certainly, had to attend those. Each class of new battalion commanders that went through the Commanders Orientation Course, at the Commander and General Staff College, we would address those individuals. So, you spent a hell of a lot of time either traveling, or, away from the office. The people who ran the office was not me; it was the staff coordinator, the admin coordinator, and, certainly, the secretary up there.

Interviewer: How many members did you have on your staff?

SMA Gates: We had four. We had a young soldier who assisted with the admin and telephone calls, and doing some typing, and answering . . . the inquiries, or, at least, taking the message. Then, Sergeant Major Adriance, he was the staff coordinator, and he would take care of answering the inquiries. We averaged about one hundred and fifty to two hundred inquiries a week; that increased about five hundred, during Desert Storm/Desert Shield. The inquiries was from everywhere in the Army, retirees, civilians, military organizations, the Veterans Administration, disabled veterans, family members would call, irate family members would call. So, all of these were inquiries, and we answered every one of those. I say "we." That small four-person staff, answered all of those inquiries, with an answer; I'm talking about, an Army answer. My, God, the workload there was tremendous, plus, all the coordination that has to be made for trips. Sergeant First Class Cooley, she, normally, handled the majority of that. The secretary, Bernice, would handle the scheduling, and, certainly, filing and things like that.

Interviewer: That large number of inquiries, did that occur during

the time of Desert Shield/Desert Storm, or was it the same way before and after?

SMA Gates: No, the inquiries almost triple, during Desert Shield and Desert Storm; and even for Just Cause. Even with a short operation like Just Cause, the inquiries increased. It got to the point, in the office, we almost had to run two shifts during Desert Storm/Desert Shield; more so during Desert Shield than Desert Storm.

Interviewer: Prior to Desert Storm/Desert Shield, what was the bulk of the inquiries about?

SMA Gates: Some personal issue. How come my husband is not sending me enough money to take care of my family, while he is in Korea? How come I can't join my husband, who's in Korea? When will I get promoted? The Veterans Administration has failed to send my check this month, so, how can I get paid. Some soldier having a problem with an assignment, either trying to go somewhere, or not go somewhere. It just went on, and on, and on.

Interviewer: How many of those could have been handled in the command?

SMA Gates: Every last one of them.

Interviewer: How did you handle those? Did you send a letter out and, then, also talk to the command about it?

SMA Gates: We answered all of them. If they wrote down the inquiry--we didn't--the staff would answer those inquiries. And, sometimes, it would just say, "See your First Sergeant." That would be the answer. But, we always tried to give an answer, because, I think that was my job; to represent enlisted soldiers. We didn't only get inquiries from enlisted soldiers. We had many officers and civilian employees who called the office. There's another thing that we did there, too, that took a lot of time. When any visitor came to the Pentagon, the office was open. If I was there, we took time to speak to them, especially, enlisted soldiers. When they had guided tours

throughout the Pentagon--they have about ten a day--if there was enlisted soldiers in those guided tours, they would always want to stop by and see the office of the Sergeant Major of the Army; which is nothing but a hole in the wall over there. But, the fact of the matter is, they always wanted to stop by, and we took time to speak to them. If I wasn't there, the people who were in the office would always take them on a little tour of the office, and let them see where I sit, and where my desk was at; that took a lot of time. If I had a sergeant major come in, I would always try to escort those individuals myself. All those things were the things that really took your time. There was enough to go around for everyone, including Margaret. Margaret spent an inordinate amount of time with the Family Support Center, working with the families. Each year, they had a huge meeting and had representatives from all over the Army. She always participated in those meetings, and the thing lasted about a month. She participated in the AAFES meeting, so that the AAFES Board of Directors could receive input from the family members. She did all those things. When she could, she would accompany me on trips. She accompanied me not only to the active Army, but Reserve Components to; she accompanied me on two or three trips to the Reserve Components.

Interviewer: She's kind of an extension of your Office, when you're out on that road, right?

SMA Gates: Who, Margaret?

Interviewer: Yeah.

SMA Gates: Absolutely, she was an extension of the Office at home to, because the phone rang there quite often, too.

Interviewer: Sergeant Major Dunaway got authorization for travel for the spouse, and then General Abrahms, the Chief of Staff, decided the Sergeant Major of the Army should be married. Why do you think that these two requirements are so important?

SMA Gates: Well, we do have families in the Army. As you earlier

stated; You enlist a soldier, but you reenlist a family. The number of families in the Army has increased, drastically, since 1958. So, the families are an extended part of the Army's responsibilities. We have to do what we can to take care of families. What better spokesman for the families than the Chief of Staff's, or the Sergeant Major of the Army's wife, or spouse. When we would go on trips, Margaret spent a lot of time with small groups of family members, and, some of those family members might very well be soldiers, but they weren't in uniform. She would spend a lot of time in small group discussions with those family members. Then, she kind of put all this together and we would present that to the appropriate people back at the Department of Army level.

Interviewer: How much input did she have on matters involving the military families, either to you, or, to the different committees that she worked with?

SMA Gates: Let's just put it this way. Each time Margaret spoke, it was like E.F. Hutton. Do you remember the old E.F. Hutton television advertisement? When Margaret spoke, everybody listened; they just stop what they're doing. I remember one time we were having the Family Symposium. That's when they have all these recommendations, and everybody puts in recommendations, and they get representation from all the commands throughout the Army, and they bring all those individuals into the Washington D.C. area, and somewhere there, they'd have a meeting with individuals. I forget what they were talking about, but Margaret said, "That don't make a lot of sense". Everybody stopped talking; you could hear a pin drop. Then, she put her recommendation in. She said, "That isn't what the people are telling me out there, and that isn't the way I lived in Korea or Germany." So, they changed the entire policy. I forget now what it was about. So, she had a lot of input. She spent an inordinate amount of time working with the families. She had a close relationship with the family liaison, there in the Pentagon, too.

Interviewer: A little later on, I'm going to ask you about your normal routine when you made a visit. But what was her normal routine when you went out on a visit?

SMA Gates: Well, one of the things that we were able to accomplish. I say "we." I think Mrs. Vuono assisted Margaret. When we assumed the duties, at the Army level, the wife could accompany, if she had permissive travel orders. Which means that you pay for the travel and the hotel. Not the hotel, just the travel, So, in other words, she could get a plane ticket to fly from point "A" to point "B", and back, but, there was not any per diem at all authorized. There was no moneys allocated for her food, for anything type of hotel accommodations. So, through Mrs. Vuono, that was changed; during the time we were in office. I'm sure it's still the same way. The wife of the Sergeant Major of the Army also receives some per diem, while she's out traveling. In some cases, she made trips on her own; she went by herself. A couple of times she went down to the Commander and General Staff College, and to the Air Force Commander and General Staff College, down in Alabama, and to the Academy; she went out to the Academy, I think, a couple times.

Interviewer: When she's out on the road, do they take her to ACS (Army Community Service), and AER (Army Emergency Relief), and to the hospitals, and everything?

SMA Gates: Absolutely. We made sure that, when we Sergeant Cooley coordinated the trips to a particular installation, and if Margaret was going to accompany us, there were certain things that she would desire to be a part of, when she was at that installation. Child care centers was a big thing. Certainly, the hospitals. Margaret was primary concerned about, how does young soldiers, when they have a family member in the hospital, or, if a young soldier is in the hospital, and the family members are from a distant installation, and they're at the hospital trying to stay with their husband while they're there, what kind of conditions they were living under. I'll just tell you right

now, it was very difficult for families that come from Germany, to the States, while the soldier was being operated on at Walter Reed, if that family lived in the Washington D.C. area, temporarily. Her and Mrs. Vuono, and some other people, did a lot of work in that area there. But, that was one of the things. She wasn't so concerned about the hospital, or the running of the hospital. she, certainly, would visit some of the people in the hospital. The ACS; she's always interested in that. Also, the schools.

Interviewer: I'll tell you another thing Margaret mentioned, and that was that the Child Care Centers, too.

SMA Gates: Absolutely. Margaret had something to do with the Child Care Centers being developed into the Army communities. She worked on the Child Care Centers, every since we attended the Sergeants Major Academy, as a student out there. Since then, she's been concerned with the thing.

Interviewer: Let me ask you about your normal routine, when you went out on a visit. Tell me about what the normal routine would be when you went to an installation?

SMA Gates: First of all, it wasn't just a spur of the moment thing. It was a plan. We had sort of a systematic way of coordinating a visit, whether or not we were requested. About ninety percent of the time, we were asked to come to that particular installation, or camp, post, or, station. Like the Mississippi National Guard. They asked us to come to the Mississippi National Guard. We visited about ten different National Guard units, Margaret and I both, in Ohio, and, they asked us to come; that was a tough trip, by the way. It was snowing. They had worse weather conditions up there. But, anyway, we would do prior coordination; maybe two to three months in advance. Then, as the time got nearer, and nearer, and nearer, it would take additional coordination. In most cases, we would have some type of itinerary. It wasn't a policy, but it was a strong recommendation that we didn't need

a lot of briefings, and whitewash-type dog and pony shows. We didn't want to visit an installation and sit in the office, and receive a briefing for two or three days. In fact, we didn't attend very many of those; at least, I didn't. We got a quick orientation, and, then, out to the installation. I also requested individuals to make sure that . . . we didn't go in barracks, and inspect the barracks. You know, I wasn't into barracks cleaning, at that level of business. But, if they wanted to show me the barracks, and if there was something wrong with it, I'd sure tell them what it was; we did that two or three times. People sort of got the information, that we really don't need to go in and inspect barracks. And the other thing, you know, if you've got something bad that we need to see, and if we can assist you with it, we'll try to do that. You know, if it assists the Army and, on the other hand, if you've got something good you kind of want to show off, shoot, yeah, I'll wave that flag for you, to the Chief of Staff of the Army and anybody else that will listen up there. If you want to get a little publicity on it, we'll certainly do that. But my primary job was just NCO's and soldiers; young soldiers. When we visit the installations, we'd get those individuals together, in small groups, and I would not interfere with training. I'm not saying we didn't; we did quite often. But, the recommendation was, "don't gather five hundred soldiers, at 9:00 o'clock in the morning, and take them out training, to come to the post theater, and let the Sergeant Major of the Army talk with them."

Interviewer: When you first got to an installation, did you stop by and see the Commander?

SMA Gates: Absolutely.

Interviewer: That would be the last time you saw him, right?

SMA Gates: No, it sort of depended on who the Commander was. Did we have prior communications with the Commander? In a lot of cases, a lot of the commanders, we knew. We didn't know them personally, but had some type of dealings or, at least, knew them by name. They, certainly,

knew me from the prior assignments that we'd had. So, in most cases, it was a quick, you know, down and dirty. Sometimes it was a lengthy office call with the Commander; always with the Commander. If he wasn't there, we would have an office call with his second in command, whoever that might be. We would even try to stop by and say "hi" to the Chief of Staff. And, then, we'd leave. If there was anything that needed to be brought to his attention, that I was able to see--you know, a new pair of eyes--then certainly, I would stop by and see the Commander on the way out.

Interviewer: Do you think that sometimes a Commander may be more inclined to tell you some of his problems than to get a hold of the Chief of Staff?

SMA Gates: Oh, yes, sure they did. Every last one of them.

Interviewer: Bend your ear, right?

SMA Gates: That's what I was telling you about. Those people who lobby. Not so much the Commander, but he has all kinds of people, all over in the installation, that lobby things that they need for that installation: there's nothing wrong with that. You have to kind of sort through the apples and oranges, and then, pull the peach out from all of those apples and oranges. Somewhere in there, there's a peach. If you like peaches. I happen to like peaches.

Interviewer: Yeah, that's right. What were the reactions of young soldiers? Did they like to spend some time with you?

SMA Gates: It was almost the most fantastic thing you've ever seen in your life. They really enjoyed having an opportunity to shake your hand, or, for you to autograph a piece of paper, or, a picture, or, something; especially, the young soldiers, and the young sergeants. They really thought that was great. I think it raised their morale and they esprit a little bit, for the Sergeant Major of the Army to take the time. You know, even at night, sometimes, we'd go into the barracks in civilian clothes, and chat with the soldiers. Some soldier said, "Damn,

did you know that was the Sergeant Major of the Army that goofing around these barracks last night?" They really thought that was amazing. When they was in the field--when they're field training--I always tried to stay overnight in the field, and sleep in the same place they did. If they slept with a poncho, then, I'd sleep with a poncho. Now, I'd done it all my life. I was too old for it, but we tried to that, Butch.

Interviewer: Did you find that they were always looking forward to an opportunity to tell you about their job?

SMA Gates: Always. It is very difficult to put into words, how proud the soldiers were of the job that they were doing. Well, I knew that before, because of being in a division, and the Eighth Army Sergeant Major, but, they're still proud to do it. But, these soldiers, everyone of them felt like they were important; and they are. Every once in a while, you'd get somebody who had a problem, you know. Instead of making it a personal issue, they would try to make it a group issue, and it wasn't. You know, you always have that ten percent, and we're old enough and experienced enough to know how to handle those folks. Sometimes, "sit down," was a good answer. That was another thing. We always took the time, Butch, during an address--if we addressed soldiers in an audience--we'd say if any of you have any personal thing that needs the attention of the Sergeant Major of the Army, then, you need to see us afterward. After this thing is over with." And they would always line up. Some of them, I could take care of; but, some I couldn't. But, whatever member of the staff was with me, they would write all those things down. Sometime, they would sit there for a couple of hours. We would, certainly, answer them. I think the soldiers appreciated that. I really do. I think they really appreciated that. I'll never forget, one time we were in Europe for REFORGER. We went on all of the REFORGERS, and Team Spirit, in Korea. The one time that I got to visit in Korea, was during Team Spirit. We had an opportunity to talk to the soldiers down there. Back to REFORGER. We went into a

communications van, and it was s Corps level communications van, and it had the most sophisticated communications. In fact, they even have satellite hook ups inside of the van. There was a specialist, a female specialist, who was just about running that thing by herself. We just walked up to the van, open the door, and walked in, and it kind of shocked her. So, I said, "You know, the war is way over there, and they're doing all the fighting, and here you are way back here in this van, doing all this communicating. How do you feel about that? How do you feel about your contribution to the Army? You know, you can't even see the fighting out there." She looked at me, and she said, "Sergeant Major, I'm real important, because, without me, those commanders could not communicate, and a lot of soldiers would die out there.", and she looked right in the eye, and she said, "I'm going to make damn sure that none of those soldiers die because of me." You tell me that is not focused.

Interviewer: That's right.

SMA Gates: That is focused. And when all these ass holes of the World talk about our female soldiers, they need to look a female soldier like that, in the eye, and listen to them; and that's a fact. I'm not saying all. I'm not saying I agree with pregnant female soldiers. I have a little heartburn with that. But, the fact of the matter is, there's nothing wrong with good female soldiers; nothing. In fact, they miss less duty time than men soldiers do. So, in my experiences--the traveling--the soldiers appeared that they were always glad to see you, especially, when you could put them in a relaxed atmosphere, and we did. We tried to, anyway. I'm not saying that we were Mr. Nice Guy. We were a noncommissioned officer. We maintained that image, but we were sort of trying to put the individuals at ease; and I tried to make that a habit. And, Rich Kidd, Sergeant Major of the Army Kidd, has sort of taken on the same sort of the same concept, if you will. I didn't try to address the soldiers from a speaker's stand on a stage, using a mic.

I always tried to get down and mingle in with them, and even sit down, because, I like being with them. I like to, you know, put your arm around a soldier, pat the soldier on the back, or something like that. Most of the time, when they asked a question, they answered the thing themselves, because we would keep messing with them, and we would stay with them as long as we possibly could.

Interviewer: You said earlier about a member of your staff when you went out on the road. Did you take a staff member with you on all your trips?

SMA Gates: Every trip. Well, I'll take that back. Not on some trips, like running out to Fort Benjamin Harrison, in Indianapolis, and addressing the members of the Sergeant Major Promotion Board. There were times when I would just run out, stay overnight, and come back the next morning, so, I didn't take a staff member with me. But, in most cases, there was a member of the staff that went. Normally, it was the admin coordinator; Sergeant First Class Cooley. I had a young specialist there, and he liked to travel to, so, he took about fifty percent of the traveling trips with me.

Interviewer: What was their job on the road?

SMA Gates: Primarily, to take notes and to ensure that we did, in fact, receive the real-time perceptions, and the real-time soldier problems, and that we wrote those things down exactly the way the soldiers presented the problem, with some manner of adjustments. Then, when we brought those problems back to the Army Staff, it might be something that was already in the works, or already done. But, at least, we could re-emphasize how we were supposed to be doing or taking care of that particular problem. Again, it was coordination of the trips. My, God, you had so many things to do at the installation, and, a lot of times, you didn't time to go pay the hotel bill, or billet bill, or something like that, or to call and make sure that your airline was going to fly, and things like that. So, she or he did things like

that to. No, they didn't carry my bags; I don't allow. Nor do I allow the soldiers or the staff to carry my bags at all. Other people did, but Bill Gates wouldn't do that.

Interviewer: Did you try to sometimes, in the evening, get together and just kind of go over what happened during the day?

SMA Gates: About 11:00 o'clock or 12:00 o'clock at night, but because, the plate was always full. We would start out, at least, breakfast. Breakfast is 6:00 o'clock in the morning, or 6:30. Then we would go through to dinner, in the evening, or even some night training, or night visits to a club, or, an ACS, or, a service center, or something like that. We always tried to maximize the time that we had at that installation. And there was always something at night. Virtually, in most cases, we had to take three or four different uniforms on a trip; civilian clothes, Class A's, battle dress uniform, and maybe even dress blues. So, all those things were planned, especially, when we went to Europe. We spent a couple weeks in Europe, visiting the units. And, in the Pacific, we would spend a couple of weeks over there, visiting different units. So, you would have a couple of bags with all different uniforms in those bags. In the mornings, we would always go out and take PT with the troops; run with them, visit the PT. The soldiers really thought that was fantastic. We did it every morning.

Interviewer: Did your admin assistant contact your office every day?

SMA Gates: Every day. At least three or four times a day. He or she almost had to, because sometimes there were priority things that the Chief of Staff had to have an answer on, or he wanted an answer on, or something, somewhere was an emergency that we had to take care of right away.

Interviewer: I think I have a note right here. You say he and she. Sergeant Cooley, that was your female admin assistant, right?

SMA Gates: Right.

Interviewer: I think during the break, you were telling me about what a great person she was on details and everything in the office. Is that correct?

SMA Gates: Not only that, I believe she could type about a hundred and thirty or a hundred and fifty words a minute, perfect, you know, with zero errors. Sergeant Cooley, she just had a knack for that. She could type about a hundred and fifty words a minute, without any mistakes. She knew that administration of the Army real well, and she'd work in PERSCOM (Personnel Command) for a while. She was married to a master sergeant, who was in the Personnel Command. Later on, he was promoted to sergeant major, and she was promoted to master sergeant. She was a super soldier. All business. Totally, all business. Very much so.

Interviewer: What did you say were the names of the other two that worked in the office?

SMA Gates: Sergeant Major Adriance. . A life saver.

Interviewer: What was his name?

SMA Gates: It's A-D-R-I... A-D-R-I-A-N-C-E.

Interviewer: Okay.

SMA Gates: As I was saying, we had a lot of help, Specialist Kirby Olsen, Specialist Mike O'Rouke, Master Sergeant Richardson, Sergeant Major Adriance, and Sergeant Cooley. All of those individuals, plus a secretary, all of those individuals assisted me. Now, we didn't have that many in the office at one time. People kind of rotated in and out of there, because it was just a very difficult job, answering all those inquiries, and doing the traveling, plus, working with the Staff, because the Staff had a lot of inquiries too.

(NOTE: The interview was briefly interrupted.)

Interviewer: We had a brief interruption in the interview. When we took that break, you said Richardson was there when you first got

there, right.

SMA Gates: Yeah. Master Sergeant Richardson came from Europe, and he was about a year into the tour, and his wife developed complications, so, he just couldn't stay in that job.

Interviewer: We were talking about traveling. How often did you travel with the Chief of Staff?

SMA Gates: On the average, about one trip per month. Maybe, even less than that. Maybe, one trip every other month. If there was a major activity, like the Sergeants Major Class--he addressed every Sergeants Major Class--we would always travel to that class. The commander's training sessions. We always traveled together for that. We had a joint address to the graduating class, at West Point. We had a lot of fun doing that. We were both on stage at the same time, and sort of had a Huntley-Brinkley presentation. A lot of fun. General Vuono has a way of making you look good, although you're not. We made a trip together, to the Command and General Staff College, quite often, and addressed the class, especially, the new commanders orientation. When they had the new commander's orientation, General Vuono addressed each one of those classes down there. The same thing with the War College; he was always up there. The Industrial War College. I addressed those classes sometimes. And, sometimes we didn't.

Interviewer: Where was the Industrial War College at?

SMA Gates: Fort McNair. So, we would address that. You know, there's a lot more to it than that, too. Before we'd go on a trip, we did a lot of research to ensure that we knew what the problems were at the installation, or that unit, and what the major issues were. We tried to work with those issues and problems, whenever we went out to the installation. Now having said that, there was another part to it and, that was the news media. You were just always in the limelight for the news media, whether it was the local post media or, normally, it was the news media somewhere from the civilian community. Either the

publication type media or mass television. Two or three times we were even on national television. I didn't intend to do that. But, you know, an ABC affiliate picked it up at Killeen, Texas, and it was on the nightly news, two days later, so, that was interesting. And, we had to address Congress. About three different committees and subcommittees of the Congress of the United States. We had two Senate subcommittees that we addressed, annually; that took a lot of research time and effort. We would get the issues from the field, sort of work those issues through the Army Staff, and, certainly, coordinate with the Chief of Staff, and make those realistic presentations to the members of our national leadership. We interfaced with the Secretary of the Army, and the Under Secretary. We had a great relationship with the Under Secretary of the Army. And then, certainly, the Department of Defense. So, our time was well spent. We didn't have any free time. And, with all of that stuck in there, we also had a hilarious social calendar. Every night, if we wanted to, we could have attended a social event. Each year, we had the Army/Navy football game. The Chief of Staff and I always traveled to the football game. We had, of course, the Army Birthday. We always tried to have a joint appearance at the Army Birthday. We had the "Spirit of America," that the Military District of Washington put on every year, and we always attended that, jointly. But, the high point of my tenure as a Sergeant Major of the Army, and trips with the Chief of Staff, was--actually, there was three high points--was the trip to the Middle East before, Desert Shield/Desert Storm; a year before then. We traveled to Egypt, Israel, Jordan. We did not go to Iraq. But, we did go to because we did go to... Let's see. Egypt, Jordan, Israel. There was one other country there. Syria. We went to Syria. And, then, the last country we visited there was, Lebanon. While we were over there, we were able to visit the battalion that was pulling the U.N. security mission in the Sinai Desert; we were able to visit our light infantry battalion over there. It was a great visit, because

General Vuono did take his major right-hand-person, and the way was, his major right-hand-person was the Sergeant Major of the Army. So, he didn't have any generals following him there. Now, don't get me wrong. His aide was with us, and he had a couple of colonels to take notes. And that was it; that was his party. There was about six of us. Well, probably, about eight, because he had his driver and somebody from admin would certainly accompany us, and then his communications people, because he had to maintain communications, twenty-fours hours a day, seven days a week. But the person who sat to his right was, Bill Gates.

Interviewer: When you visit those countries, what was your objective?

SMA Gates: Primarily, the objective was to get a feel... Of course, we had soldiers in all these countries. We had soldiers working in the embasseys, communication sites, the whole nine yards. There were more soldiers there than I thought there was. We had the Corps of Engineers in Egypt, and other countries throughout the Middle East. A lot of Corps of Engineers civilian employees there. But, the Army has something to do, like upgrading the tanks for the Egyptian Army. I say upgrading the tanks, but remodeling tanks. They were building an M-60 tank factor there, and the Chief of Staff of the Army has something to do with that. I'm not really clear on exactly what it is, but we supply some countries with a hell of a lot of equipment and material, and we, certainly, wanted to make sure that we maintained a good relationship with those countries, certainly, in the Middle East. So, in case we did have an armed confrontation, which we did a couple years later, we had a place that we could assemble our people and equipment and, then move into the war zone. And we were able to do that.

(End of Tape OH 94.5-6, Side 2)

(Begin Tape OH 94.5-7, Side 1)

Interviewer: We were talking about your visit to the Middle East when the last tape ended. Would you continue?

SMA Gates: Saudi Arabia was another country we visited during that Middle East trip. We do supply many of those countries over there with military equipment. We have advisors, in some cases, who are in those countries, advising the people on the proper use and maintenance of that equipment. So, we do have a great interest over there. The Chief of Staff's primary task was just to maintain a friendly atmosphere and to have a friendly relationship with their armed forces. And thirdly, to ensure that in case we did have to deploy to that part of the world that we had sufficient support from the host countries, so, we could move in rapidly.

Interviewer: How was your reception in each of those countries?

SMA Gates: I'm not so sure that they... Those countries, they have Sergeants Major. Their armies, for the most part, are mirrored after the British. Now Egypt is a little different, because they went through a Communistic regime. They had a Communistic society there for a while, and they had all of the Soviet advisors in there, so, a lot of it is still prevalent. They have an abundance of Soviet equipment in the Egyptian Army, from what I was able to see. The Jordanian Army had all American equipment. They pretty well mirrored themselves after the British, and certainly, after the American Army. It was fairly easy to understand. The Israeli Army, of course, is an all together different army than the American Army. Most of their equipment was American made, but revamped to fit the needs of the Israeli Army. Of course, they have their own equipment, too; but the bulk of it is American.

Interviewer: You were also able to visit the troops of Desert Shield and Desert Storm. I think you said you made four trips over there. Is that correct?

SMA Gates: Three. There was three trips over there.

Interviewer: Tell me about those trips.

SMA Gates: Two of those trips was with the Chief of Staff, and one was with the Secretary of the Army. My focus was at the same level.

Trying to identify some of the things that we could assist with, back at the Department of the Army level, or, the installation level, back in the States. We would take that information, first hand, back to the installation, or, back to the Department of the Army, and try to solve the problem. The mail situation was a big problem. Initially, telephonic communications was a big problem, until we finally got AT&T to set up some telephone booths, even out in the desert where the soldiers were bivouacked, so they could, in fact, call back to CONUS. They did that very well. They had telephone banks all over the desert out there. There were all kinds of problems to identify. One of the problems we identified was the CONUS replacement stations, where soldiers would process through the replacement station and then go on to the Middle East. One of the things, they were arriving in country without all of their NBC equipment. So, we fixed that. I'll have to take a little credit for that one. We fixed that one. It took about two weeks, but we fixed that. It was kind of the dumbest thing I had ever seen in my life. A soldier going to Saudi Arabia without NBC equipment. So, we got that one fixed. Initially, they were even going over there without weapons, but that was taken care of. That was one thing I was very proud of. Another thing was try to get some type of recreation into that part of the World over there, where soldiers could have something to do. You know, they were there a year, in the desert, before the war actually started. Most of them were there for almost a year, before the war actually started. So, we had to get some type of recreation geared up and over there, so, the soldiers could come out of the desert and relax for a day or two. We were able to do that. We were able to facilitate the movement of the PX system into Saudi Arabia, not in its entirety, so the soldiers could use the PX system. We did that pretty good. Then of course, visiting units, talking to soldiers and listening to them. That was a great morale booster for all of the soldiers over there. When they saw the Sergeant Major of the Army and

the Chief of Staff, they thought that was the greatest thing in the world.

Interviewer: How was their morale?

SMA Gates: Their morale was sky high. During Desert Shield it wasn't so high. You know, you go to that part of the world and you're out in the middle of the desert. All of our maneuver units were out in the desert. They were not in the containment areas. A lot of our support units were in the containment areas, but the divisions were out in the desert. You could fly two or three hours across nothing except some damn camels out there, and scorpions. Then here you are, there's a thousand tents, and that's where our soldiers were at. After about six months in that environment, they said, "Either let us fight, or take us home. That's it." The troops will tell you that in a minute. "Hey, let's go whip their ass or fight them, or, get the hell out of here." I thought it was very interesting. But, their morale was sky high. The confidence level was the highest I have ever seen it in the Army; in any unit that I have ever been in. I talking about in every unit I visited over there. The confidence level of the soldiers to be able to do their job, to fight supposedly the fourth largest army in the world, and win. It was the damnest thing you have ever seen in your life. It made you feel good, because of all the hard training we had done to rebuild an army after Vietnam. We were at our lowest point in the early 70's, and probably in the history of the Army, with all of the racial problems, the drug problems, and personal problems, and all of the turmoil we had in the early '70s, and then to see that Army materialize in the desert of the Middle East. One thing I do want to mention. The 1st Cavalry Division gave me two good examples of NCO's that worked hard. The 1st Cavalry Division, we swapped out their tanks. We should have done it at Fort Hood, but we waited until we moved over there. We had some of the M1A3's in POMCUS stock in Europe. General Saint, United States Army, Europe, CINCPAC, he immediately moved those tanks over there when the Chief

of Staff asked him to. That division changed out their tanks, and the 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment changed their tanks over there. There were about three master gunners--one master sergeant and two sergeants first class--that set up that entire gunnery training program for that division. There's no doubt about it, it was one of the finest training programs I've ever seen in my military career. Every damn tank that was changed out in that division went through that gunnery program, and every last one of them qualified. The Commanding General had other things to do. He had to worry about war plans. So, he kind of turned that training over to the NCO's and they damn well did a good job. Another example was: the 101st Division. The Division Commander said, "Hey, Sergeant Major, there's the area that I want the division base camp set up in, so you and the sergeants major plan it, lay it out, and set it up." They did it. The officers had to go plan for war. They were, you know, planning some training, and getting ready for war, and what in the hell they were going to do when they had to go and fight the Iraqi. The 82nd Airborne Division was the first unit on the ground over there, and they had just got out of "Just Cause." They had just got out of Panama and went straight over to the Middle East. The fact of the matter, the 82nd had a fabulous training program ongoing, clearing mine fields. You know, the mine fields were special, where they had to use special techniques in order to clear the mine fields. They went on, and on, and on. Every soldier in that division understood how to get through a mine field. Sergeant Major McBride, the Division Sergeant Major, he fixed the mail problem in the 82nd Airborne Division. He took the people who were on light duty, throughout the division. He took the people who were on light duty, and what not, throughout the Division, and took them down to the APO, and at night, they spent all damn night long sorting out mail. They didn't have any problems with mail. We had a field hospital over there. We visited those. It was a new field hospital. The new equipment was in the hospital there. It appeared

that it worked out real well. In fact, in the middle of the desert, you had an air conditioned hospital there, with all of the systems in that hospital to be able to diagnose the patient and to do lab work; they had a complete lab in the hospital. All of those things worked out well. Even the ammunition handlers. God Damn, can you imagine the thousands, and thousands, and thousands, rounds of ammunition that were off loaded from ships, and moved into ammunition storage dumps and then distributed to the troops. You can't visualize the magnitude of that until you kind of fly over it. There was just miles of nothing but ammunition stacked out there. Some soldier caused that to happen; not some civilian. It was a soldier. Probably some young specialist stacked most of it himself, or herself. The other thing is, we were able to spend Christmas on the ground with the troops in Saudi Arabia. I think the troops really got a big surprise out of that. I was there with the Chief of Staff. General Vuono and I, we spent Christmas with the troops. We tried to eat a little at ten different dining facilities there.

Interviewer: I think all of the civilians, and I'm sure all of the military were kind of surprised how fast the ground war went. What was the feeling in the Pentagon about how that went?

SMA Gates: I wasn't surprised. I say I wasn't surprised, I think the majority of the people were surprised at how fast the ground war went. It didn't surprise the old sergeant major, because those soldiers were so fired up over there. The confidence levels were so high. The trust and confidence in their leaders and in their equipment was at the highest point, probably in the history of the United States Army. It appeared to me that the leadership was trying to do everything they possibly could to ensure the soldiers had the equipment they needed to fight the war with. They had been sitting in that desert for a while, so, when we turned the soldiers loose, they were damn ready to do something, and they did that job well. They did that job well.

Interviewer: What role do you think the National Training Center

play in the ability of the soldiers to fight over there?

SMA Gates: I was going to say that. I think our Leader Development Program, the NCOES, and the Officer Education Program, certainly, prepared the leaders to do the great job they did in the Middle East. I believe the Chief of Staff was right by making training the top priority in the Army. It placed the primary focus on training. Not only NCOs, but officers, and then unit training. The National Training Center was exactly what we needed to prepare our soldiers for that type of war. The majority of the people who served in the Middle East, in the combat maneuver units, had rotated through the National Training Center, maybe not with the unit they were with then, but they had rotated through there, so they got a taste of that desert and the stringent environment out at Fort Irwin, California, and that through OPFOR (Opposing Forces) unit we have out there. The soldiers indicated to me, after the war, after the shooting slowed down and stopped, that, hell, it was more difficult going through the National Training Center than it was the actual shooting war in the Middle East. The only difference was, that live bullets were coming in the Middle East. The after effects of that war were astounding. I had never envisioned the after effects of the war. After the shooting war was over with, I returned on the second trip with the Chief of Staff to the Middle East. At that time, we were talking about withdrawing troops and getting them the hell out of there. He wanted to do some first hand coordination with the commanders on the ground. We flew into Kuwait City, and we spent a night in Kuwait City. Seeing those just hundreds, and hundreds, and hundreds of oil wells on fire; they still hadn't put those things out. The sky was just black with smoke coming from those things. There were just hundreds of those. Of course, we had troops in Kuwait City, and they had surrounded, actually the country of Kuwait, sort of in a semi-circle; they were still in position there. The 1st Armored Division, especially, was still in position there. But, then we flew

across the rest of Kuwait, in a Blackhawk helicopter, and then into Iraq, because we did take a section of Iraq. We still had soldiers occupying some of the positions there. Butch, there was just hundreds, and hundreds, and hundreds, I should say thousands of vehicles; tanks, trucks, small vehicles of all sorts, destroyed. They were laying all over that desert. I suspect that some were destroyed from the air, from the aircraft. But, there were a hell of a lot of the things that were destroyed by direct hits from multi-rockets, tank's TOW (tube launched, optical tracked, wire guided) missiles, and anti-tank guns, because the turrets, in a lot of cases, were knocked back from the damn tanks, instead of a hole down from the top. You can tell when an aircraft hit it. There were holes in the front and sides of those things. And, in most cases, in the rear; the holes were knocked in them and damn turret was knocked down to the front. You could see where those M1 tanks and those Bradley fighting vehicles maneuvered. You could the tracks; they were still there. They had maneuvered around, and came in behind, and hit those ass holes, just like you're supposed to. Of course, they were all dug in, and facing one direction. Those guys made hugh sweeps around and came in form the rear, and hit those guys. I'm not throwing rocks at the great Marine Corps, but the Marine Corps couldn't move up along the coast line there, until a brigade of Army armor moved over and assisted them. They got bogged down. That brigade of M1 tanks went over there, opened the road up, and zipped on in to Kuwait City. The first vehicle into Kuwait City was an M1 tank; not an M-60 tank from the Marine Corps. I'm not bragging or anything. Yes I am, too, because I think we need to brag.

Interviewer: A fact is a fact.

SMA Gates: That is the Army that the people who are in it today, and the people who served in it yesterday, has built. At that time, there was no doubt about it, it was the greatest army in the World. I don't know what the capabilities are today. I would like to think we

are trying to maintain the greatest army in the World.

Interviewer: While we're talking about visits. During your tenure the Berlin Wall went down, and the first Chief of Staff of the Army, I don't know if it was "ever", but, at least in our lifetime, visited the Soviet Union. You had a chance to go with General Vuono. Tell me about your trip to the Soviet Union.

SMA Gates: As you well know, and everyone knows, before the Berlin Wall went down... Let me first give you one story, before we get into this.

Interviewer: Okay.

SMA Gates: There was a group of East German people who were trying to get out of East Germany. There was turmoil going on in East Germany, and they were trying to get to the West side. They were on a train. There's a long story behind this thing. But, they kept trying to get out of there, because the Communist regime was in the process of disintegrating and there was a hell of a lot of turmoil going on in there. But, what really rose this thing and made it go faster, was the people who were trying to leave East Germany. You remember that?

Interviewer: Yeah.

SMA Gates: But, there was a train load of East German citizens, who were trying to get out of there and get to the West. They traveled four or five days on the train. Normally, it would take about a half of a day, or a day, to travel across the country by train. They really didn't know exactly where they were at. But, they finally came up to the Western border there. One of the people asked where were they at, and they looked out the window and seen an American soldier out there, in a Humvee vehicle. And, then, the whole train load just went into hysterics. They said, "We're safe at last, because there is an American." Somebody captured that on canvas, by the way.

Interviewer: Is that right?

SMA Gates: Right. That was a real story. That really happened.

That was something that people like you and I, and old soldiers that served in Germany during the 50's and the 60's and the 70's and the early 80's, never expected to happen, but it did. From then, things continued to go down hill for East Germany anyway. Then the Wall started coming down, and then, everything else sort of fell into chaos, and then they reunited Germany.

Interviewer: Before we talk about your trip to the Soviet Union, I think you told me, during one of the breaks, about the reaction around the Pentagon, particular amongst some of the civilians, the day the Wall went down. Tell me about that.

SMA Gates: You know, you could hear people hollering, in jubilation, in the halls of the Pentagon, especially, the older soldiers and many, many of the civilians, who served in Germany. Some of those were World War II veterans, who served in Germany. Of course, you always have individuals who have a pessimistic outlook on life, and always will have that I just think, that for a while--about two weeks there--the Pentagon was smiling, and that's very unusual to see. I think that is probably the best way to describe it. I think the whole building has a smile, even though it is a dearly looking place. I think the building itself was smiling.

Interviewer: Now, go ahead and tell me about your trip to the Soviet Union. First of all, when did you go over there?

SMA Gates: It was during the Fall of '89.

Interviewer: Had the Soviet Union started to collapse yet?

SMA Gates: No. I think it probably started to move in the direction. Gorbachev was still in power in the Soviet Union, and the Communist government was still in place. Again, that trip was almost a year in the making, with planning, briefings, and updates. We attended many, many meetings and conferences with supposedly Soviet experts from different federal agencies, and you probably know who they are. They explained to us what we would probably be seeing, and some of the things

we should not be doing while we were over there. So, the ground rules were laid in concrete before we made the visit. But, it still was a communist regime. But, prior to that, I know of two separate visits of high level Soviet generals to the Pentagon, and, they visited the United States, and the United States Army, and some of the other military services. One asked for a briefing on the American Army NCO, so I was selected to give that briefing. Myself, and another sergeant gave that briefing to this general officer, who was one of the field marshals. His name doesn't light up in my brain, at this time and I probably couldn't pronounce it if it did. But anyway, we did give him a briefing. We went over a small historical background of the Army NCO. We sort of brought him up-to-date, and explained to him some of the duties and responsibilities of the Noncommissioned Officers Corps in the United States Army. We explained the NCOES, and some of the things we had planned to build on the present day NCOES. I honestly feel that he was impressed with that. He just couldn't ask enough questions. He must have asked twenty or twenty-five questions. We had an interpreter present for the briefing. With all of the explanation that went on, I don't think he left there with a complete fuzzy feeling of understanding of the role the NCO has in the American Army, and the authority, duties, and responsibilities the NCO has to accomplish the mission. One of the things he never could understand. He asked me did the NCO trained officers. I said, "Certainly they do. They train at West Point; we train the cadets. We train ROTC cadets. We train at OCS." They all have NCO's giving training." I said, "Don't get me wrong, they have officers out there giving the training too, but who and the hell do you think teaches those guys how to shoot? It's the sergeants. They also teach them how to march, and things like that. Teaching individual tasks, that's what sergeants do best. Don't get me wrong, they also run squads or platoons, being first sergeants, sergeants major, and we've even got a Sergeant Major of the Army. But, the primary duties and

responsibilities of the sergeant is to teach individual tasks and collective tasks for the unit. That responsibility never changes. They take care of soldiers, and enforce discipline, and kind of run the Army, so, the officers can plan." He said, "Do you mean to say you run the Army?" I said, "Yes sir, not entirely, because you've got a chain of command, but on a day-to-day operation, there's no officer that comes around and gives details out and send them somewhere, or run a duty roster for guard; that's the sergeant's job." He never could understand that. I don't think it ever got through to him. With all of that planning, and sort of that as a backdrop, we went to Helsinki, Finland. We remained in Helsinki for two days, to sort of get acclimated. We did receive some updates, and we visited some of the Finnish Army Units there, and some of the historical perspectives of Finland, while we were there. There was a reason for that, because the Soviet Union allowed us to fly into their country in an American aircraft--a C-141-- but, they had to have Soviet pilots on board. They didn't fly the aircraft, but, they were on board, along with a Soviet navigator. And, the same thing coming out of the Soviet Union; they wanted to do that. We left in sort of a hurry, when we left the Soviet Union, because of Panama. Actually, we left there about three days earlier than what we had originally planned. The President called the Chief of Staff back to Washington, D.C. and he had to go back. But, anyway, after those two days, we sort of got acclimated to the weather. It was cold as hell. It was cold in the Soviet Union, when we arrived in Moscow. We were met by an honor guard. We took an interpreter, but here again, he didn't take any generals with him. I always sat beside the Chief of Staff, and he always introduced me to whoever he talked to, to all of the officers that he had a discussion with in the Soviet Union. After we arrived in Moscow, they took us to our quarters that evening. You know, they always have a function in the evening. We were allowed an opportunity to visit the Guards; they call it "The Guards." We visited their

training center, and their facility, right outside of Moscow. These were the people who had the primary responsibility of guarding the high level communist regime in Moscow, and the Kremlin. They had the most modern equipment, and they probably had the best soldiers; hand-picked soldiers, I would suspect. We were able to observe tank firing, and some--I call it combat in the cities--urban warfare demonstrations. What a phoney demonstration. You could tell it was very phoney. It was strictly a show, where the soldiers jumped through windows, with fire burning, and everything. Myself, I sort of snickered. Anyway, they put it on, and we watched it. Then we watched the tanks firing. They had a battalion of tanks. I think it was T-80 tanks; their most modern tank. There was a battalion of tanks firing, on the tank range there. It was very interesting. In a stable posture, I believe they hit every target, but when they were on the move, they didn't hit too many targets.

Interviewer: In other words, it wasn't like our M1's. Right?

SMA Gates: No, even though it was supposed to be. It has a self-loading capability, so, they had taken one person off of the crew. They don't have a four-person crew like we do; they have a three man crew. They can get by with two. That's some of the things we can probably look at, in the American Army; how we can take a person out of the tank, or something like that, to have the same capabilities, but, with less people. But, anyway, we were able to watch that. Of course, we had protocol with the Embassy there, and we had protocol with the high level Army in Moscow. The Chief of Staff addressed their War College; that is something very similar to our War College. We was taken on a tour of the War College, and then something very similar to our Command and General Staff College, that they had ongoing in Moscow. And, again, he always introduced the Sergeant Major of the Army to that group.

Interviewer: What were their reactions when, here's the Chief of Staff of the American Army, introducing a sergeant?

SMA Gates: They never could understand that. I'm convinced that the Soviets never did, in my opinion, I don't think they ever fully understood what the sergeant was supposed to be doing. Like, one general asked General Vuono, "What do the sergeants do in your army?" General Vuono said, "They run the Army." So the general said, "What in the hell do you do?" He said, "I command the Army." The general said, "What is the difference?" He said, "There's a whole lot of difference. I don't waste my time refueling vehicles. I don't have a damn officer out there watching, or trying to teach soldiers how to do drill and ceremony, or shoot weapons. We have a sergeant that does all of that. We inspect. We go look at them and see that it's being done right. If it's not, then we fuss at them." He said, "Hell, I command the Army. I make plans, training plans, combat orders. We spend a hell of a lot of time on that. We train our officers and commanders. I spend all of my time on that." He said, "Hell, I don't worry about somebody out there washing the vehicles; that's the Sergeant's job."

Interviewer: They could never understand that.

SMA Gates: They never understood that, because their officers do that. You see, they don't have a professional army NCO Corps. They have some old warrant officers, who, in most cases, are the guys who are crooks. They sell things and beat soldiers out of stuff. The officers will tell you. Those guys are just crooks. But, they don't have a professional NCO Corps. They take the smartest recruits, the best Communists, who have been the best communist in the Communist Youth League, during his days when he was going through school. Every man over there is drafted into the Army; every last man. They're drafted into the Army, and they serve eighteen months, and then they get out. But, they take the smartest, sharpest recruit, and they send him to Sergeants School. Then, they make him a sergeant and send him out to the unit; wherever he is needed. A soldier that has been in the Army for fifteen months, will probably tell that guy to "go to hell," because

he is just a new recruit to them.

Interviewer: How long were you over there?

SMA Gates: About two weeks.

Interviewer: Where did you stay while you were over there?

SMA Gates: We stayed in different places. In Moscow, the Soviet Army had billets. They were sort of like an Officers BOQ, that we stayed in. The Chief of Staff, now he stayed kind of in almost like a villa, or a mess; the Field Marshal of the Army's mess. He had quarters in that mess, where we did have the meals there in that mess.

Interviewer: How was the chow?

SMA Gates: Oh, it was great. They really put on a show for us. In the evenings, we would have caviar and wine, and all that stuff. They had hundreds of young soldiers, as waiters and everything, taking care of the mess. The only thing about it is, I was watching these soldiers and they would save all of the left over bread. Evidently, bread was very difficult to get or come by over there. Anything else that was left, instead of throwing it in the garbage, they would save it. And then, at other places, like in St. Petersburg--or Leningrad at that time--we stayed in a hotel. We stayed in a Soviet type hotel, and that was sort of interesting, too. An observation in Moscow. I don't think they intended for us to see this, but there were lines. When I say this, Butch, it is very difficult to envision, but we were watching people standing in lines, just to get bread, and we're talking about five or six blocks long. We're talking about almost two or three miles long. Just as far as you could see, people were standing in line, just for the purpose of getting a loaf of bread. The average citizen in Russia has a hell of a life to live. Now the high level politicians have everything. But, the average Russians, they have a rough life to live, from what I was able to see. The Communist had their own special stores that they were able to shop in. They had everything in those stores, you know, that they needed, but the rest of the citizens had to shop in the State

owned stores. They just didn't have a lot of stuff.

Interviewer: Did you get a chance to talk to any of the Soviet NCO's?

SMA Gates: Yeah. Yeah, we had a opportunity to talk to them. They were not very open at all. The enlisted soldiers were not very open. Again, the sergeants that I had an opportunity to talk to, had been in the army less than eighteen months. The old guys that I was telling you about before, we didn't see any of those. They hid those people. The officers run the show there. We went to Kiev, and while we were there, we were able to see what they call an NCO School, where they train their new recruit to be an NCO. Officers were teaching those young soldiers how to do drill and ceremony. The Chief of Staff looked at me, and then the general that was General Vuono's escort, asked, "What do you think of this?" And again, General Vuono said, "Officers wouldn't waste their time training soldiers how to do drill and ceremony. That's a sergeant's job." He looked at me and said, "Right Sergeant Major?" I said, "Absolutely sir, we even teach the officer that." He said, "That's right, they even teach our officer candidates that." But, that's really the difference. Their officers there run the Army. They really don't have a noncommissioned officer's corps, so, they really didn't know how to perceive me. I think some of them thought I was a spy working for the CIA, because here again, I was fairly stern, while the rest of the people were fairly relaxed; I didn't relax at all. Like in the evenings, they would drink vodka. I hate the taste of vodka, so I don't drink it, and I wouldn't drink it over there. I would just taste it and set the little shot glass down. The KGB agent, that was assigned to me, was a major. He wore civilian clothes. He spoke perfect English, by the way. He knew everything about me and my family--he certainly did--so he had done his homework well. He had a couple of dates missing or wrong. He was assigned as my escort. He made sure I got in the room and everything, and that I was woke up in the

morning, and that my bags were put in the right place at the right time. He sat right beside me wherever I went; like a little watch dog. The Chief of Staff laid a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, outside of the Kremlin. We left from there and went over into the crowd of civilians. He started shaking their hands and they were hugging him and everything.

Interviewer: Is that right?

SMA Gates: Yeah. If you thought about it, it was just crazy. I couldn't believe it. I said, "I just don't believe that all of these civilians are coming up and shaking our hands." They were. They were hugging and saying, "American. American. American soldier." They could say that, and that's about all I could understand. But, they were hugging him. That evening he said, "I just never witnessed anything like that in my life. I'm not a hero. Not to the Russian People." But he was.

(End of Tape OH 94.5-7, Side 1)

(Begin Tape OH 94.5-7, Side 2)

Interviewer: Sergeant Major, go ahead and continue.

SMA Gates: We visited the Kremlin, and they did take us on a guided tour of the historical perspectives of the Kremlin, which was very, very interesting. And one particular place, of course, was Lenin's Tomb. Watching the Soviet Russian guards perform, changing of the guard at Lenin's Tomb was very interesting. And they have a couple of museums located in the Kremlin. The Chief of Staff also had an office call; not necessarily an office call, but, he had a conversation in a small room in the Kremlin, with one of the new governmental agencies there, who was supposed to have been the... I don't know what they call it. The terminology may be not exactly right, but he was sort of like the Secretary of Interior here in the United States. He was in charge, supposedly in charge, of the state police and the interior of the Soviet Union. But, he also was more of a Democratic minded person. So, I

don't know whether the meeting was entirely... it wasn't publicized. It wasn't a secret meeting, because everybody was seeing us going in there, and knew that we were in his office for that meeting. But, the fact of the matter, it was not publicized. It was sort of low key, if you will. Because he was kind of unsure exactly what his position was going to be in the future. We were out in the courtyard, and the individual who was the Soviet major in civilian clothes, who was my escort, asked me what did I think about the visit so far. Did I ever believe I would be inside the Kremlin, seeing the things that we were able to see. I said, "No sir. I really thought that some day that I may be inside the Kremlin. But, not under these circumstances. I really thought I would fall from a parachute inside the Kremlin courtyard or driving through the gates in a tank or an APC." And he looked at me like I some kind of war monger. He said, "What do you mean by that Bill Gates?" And he called me Bill Gates. I said, "Well, all my life I have trained and prepared to fight the Soviet Union. And I'm sure you people have done the same thing, so, I know damn well you're not going to roll through the gates of the White House in a tank. So, we anticipated coming here." So, the conversation stopped there, but, he certainly got the message. From Moscow, we went to Kiev, and that was a little different, because each part of the Soviet Union had a military government. And certainly, we interfaced with the military government in Kiev. He was very, very pro-western, at least he indicated that he was. But, events later on, it showed very clearly this guy was a damn, very strong communist general. So, we had a good briefing there. We got to see some soldier training. We visited some billets that the Soviet soldiers live in. The Soviet soldiers' beds are very small beds, to start off with. Probably, about, four foot wide, five or six foot long, and the only furniture they had was a small night stand. They don't have footlockers and wall lockers. They do have a room in one section of the building where they can hang their uniforms and their equipment. And that's it.

Absolutely zero frills.

Interviewer: Did you visit their mess hall?

SMA Gates: Yes. We visited their mess hall, and about the same thing. They don't eat a hell of a lot of meat. And bread was very limited in the dining facility, too. They didn't want us to visit the mess hall, but we asked to visit. The best room in the barracks was the political indoctrination room. Each company has a political officer assigned, and he explained that, that individual had the responsibility if a soldier had a problem, that he would take care of it. But, anyway, that room was well maintained. There was a couple of other things that I thought was kind of unique. They had a sewing machine in a room where they sewed their own uniforms and maintained their own uniforms. They also had laundry facilities. They didn't have washing machines, but they had sinks where they washed their clothes and maintained their clothes. It was very austere. Nothing. Zero. Not any frills at all. Radios and televisions were non-existent. Non-existent. We went to a factory. It was a tank rebuilding factory. You know, we're not dumb Americans. But, our escorts told us it was a factory where they would rebuild military equipment to fit the needs of the civilian society. They had rebuilt a couple of engineer earth movers into fire fighting vehicles. They had a couple of the BMPs that were converted. And, all these things were on display. Well, well displayed. But, they also were rebuilding tanks. They had an assembly line behind there that was going full blast. The unique thing about that factory was, the entrance way was all communist propoganda; all over the walls. Pictures of Lenin, and on, and on, of all the communist heros. There was a woman, who was a very sharp spoken individual, who gave us a pitch about the factories; and the workers; and the workers of the factory; and how well they were taken care of; and all of the production that they made; and the factory; and how great that particular factory was. It probably was one of the better ones that they had. But that woman; I understand that

she was sort of the communist representative for the factory. No one told me that, but it was very easy to see that. But, I didn't get the impression that they had an assembly line revamping the military hardware into civilian use, although they had this propaganda campaign on going. They even showed some of the pictures of the stuff here on television. That part of the country was occupied by the Nazis, during the second World War. It's in the Ukraine, and the Ukraine people are much, much different from the people who live in Moscow. The Ukraine sort of feels like--and they are today --a different country from the Soviet Union. They sort of felt like they were their own bosses, so to speak. At least you got that impression. Everywhere you went in Russia, there were huge monuments about the heroes of the Second World War. Just everywhere. Everywhere. The most impressive thing about the country was the vastness of it. You could just fly for hours, and hours, and hours, and see nothing but countryside, and then small villages. My God. Just on, and on, and on. But, the Ukraine is the bread basket for the Soviet Union. It was at that time and I'm sure it still is today. But, the military leader, or the military governor of the Ukraine, he also, if you can recall, was the last person out of Afghanistan. He was the Soviet General that stood on a bridge and made the speech, when the Soviet Union pulled out of Afghanistan. And his son was killed in Afghanistan, so, he had a little different perspective what goes on, than some of the high level generals do. It was very interesting. Again, jumping back to their War College. They were teaching some of their students, some of the systems that we have in the United States Army. They had a war game there that covered all of Europe. All of Europe. Bamberg, Germany was on there. Stuttgart was on there. Frankfurt was on there. The Rhine River was on there. Even all the way over into France and Great Britain. They war gamed that entire thing. They had light; a computerized system. Oh, the computers they were using were American computers. How the hell they got them, I don't

know. But, they were American computers. Epsos. They were Epsos computers; I kind of noticed that. But, anyway, they were war gaming, and they were working the computers; the students were working the computers and war gaming. But, that map was huge. It covered; oh my God; it covered, what, maybe a hundred meters square. It took up an entire auditorium. I thought that was sort of interesting, too. Then from there we went to Leningrad. We arrived in Leningrad. In all of these places that we went to they had honor guards to meet the Chief of Staff. We flew into Leningrad and we went straight over to the War Memorial that was built there. It was a huge, huge war memorial, in honor of the people who defended Leningrad, or St. Petersburg, during the Second World War. My God, it was just huge. In fact, there's a basement; about three different stories. We were honored with the opportunity to lay a wreath at the War Memorial. The Chief of Staff and I, as a team, laid that wreath; he held one side and I held the other side. That was quite an honor. We lived in a hotel; that was the first civilian hotel that we lived in. Very austere conditions. They had televisions in all of the rooms we stayed in, but, the damn things didn't work; they had lines in it. Most of the stuff that I heard on the television was the President or the Premier. They were talking, and of course, all of it was in the Russian language, and I could understand some of it. Some of it you could understand. So, I guess they were politicking, or at least, putting out propaganda to the people. There was one station that had some English, and of course, it was a Soviet that was doing the talking; but, it was spoken in English. We visited the American Embassy, like I said. We visited the American Consulate, in Leningrad; they had one in Leningrad.

Interviewer: Didn't it kind of make you feel good to step back on, what is considered American soil?

SMA Gates: Yeah. As I was saying, the hotel in Leningrad, or St. Petersburg today, was probably the best hotel that they had there, and

it was about a fifth class hotel when compared to the hotels and motels we have in the United States. The bath towels were just cloths; bath cloths. The toilet paper was very rough. I'm not so sure whether they cleaned the rooms exactly the way they ought to or not. That is just an impression. The thing that sort of stuck with me, in Leningrad, was that that hotel was full of people trying to black market items. Anything from Marlboro cigarettes to Nike tennis shoes. All of those things they were selling on the black market, inside of that hotel. It just went on for ever, and ever, and ever. Hell, there was an individual dressed up like a priest, that was trying to sell Nike shoes. They were selling anything to get American dollars. They wanted American dollars, not Soviet rubles, but the American dollars. Stuff on the economy there is fairly expensive. We purchased a few things as souvenirs, and brought them back with us, but, they were fairly expensive. The next day, we went on a tour of Leningrad. Of course, we had an in brief with the military governor. We had a long discussion with him. I was so proud of General Vuono, during this particular briefing. They had a long table, and there were Soviets on one side, and we had the Americans and some of the Soviet officers on the other side. Of course, you had people in civilian clothes--KGB agents was what they were--all around the place. Of course, they had tape recorders and everything else going. One of those individuals asked General Vuono how come we maintained an Army presence in Europe. He said, "The same reason you maintain a Soviet presence in Cuba." They went on to say, "Well, you've got all of those soldiers in West Germany." He said, "Yeah, you have all of those soldiers that are ninety miles from the coast of Florida." So, that conversation sort of ceased. But, that was the way he answered their questions. General Vuono didn't pull any punches at all; none. He was very up front, but, I also think he established a real good relationship with the Deputy Chief of Staff of the Soviet Army; he was a four-star general. The fact

of the matter is, I think they sort of established a fairly good rapport. I know General Vuono was calling him by his first name, when we left from over there, and he was certainly calling General Vuono by his first name. We went on a tour of all of the historical things in Leningrad. There were just museums upon museums, and they were beautiful buildings. You know, the pictures you see of Leningrad are certainly true; the churches, the museums, the buildings where the Czar lived, and some of the building that the Czars built over the years. It was the same thing in Moscow, and everywhere we went. There are just some beautiful historical buildings, and they are immaculately maintained. Everything appeared to be just perfectly maintained. I know how in the hell they had enough money to do all of those things. You didn't see any of that, that was run down, in the apartment buildings that the Communists lived in. But, the apartment buildings that the commoners lived in, and out in the countryside, there were some fairly significant renovations that should have been done. Those museums we went to, there was just gold, and gold, and gold, that the czars had. There were beautiful dresses, and suits and things that the czars had, and the ladies of the czars. All of those things in those museums went on, and on, and on. There were just thousands of dresses, and suits, and bracelets, and gold watches, and crowns. All of that stuff is there, or was there. I don't know whether it is now. The other part, we went to a military museum there, and I thought it was very interesting. I sort of got tired of looking at dresses and gold watches, and things like that. So, we went over to a military museum. Toward the end of the tour, someone had presented that museum with a case of Army medals; from the Medal of Honor, all the way down to the Army Commendation Medal. I thought that was quite unique. They had the Combat Infantryman's Badge, the Aviation Wings, the Jump Wings, and all of the medals. They were very proud of that. Somebody presented that museum with that. The next day, we rode for about two hours, out to an

airfield, and we boarded a helicopter; a Hound helicopter. That helicopter was a VIP helicopter; they had it fixed up for VIPs. We flew, I guess, about two hours, near the border with Finland, to a training site, and there we watched a combined arms division in the attack. We were able to see the equipment, like the T-80 tank, their newest armored personnel carrier, and some of the weapons; they had all of that equipment on display. Then, we went up into a building, that was above the ground. It was sort of an observation tower, but, it was more of a house than it was a tower. It would accommodate about twenty-five or fifty people. And from there, we watched that unit in the attack. They had artillery, and even air strikes. And, they had the attack helicopters. They even had smoke. It looked to me like they did a pretty good job, overall. They were well camouflaged. There was snow on the ground, and they had snow sheets. The troops on the ground had snow suits on. The tanks and everything were even painted white. So, it appeared to me that, that was a well executed mission. They got a little mis-coordinated there. They were supposed to make the attack, go so far, and then withdraw. And half of the unit didn't withdraw, so, they kind of got left behind, and there was a lot of artillery being shot over there. So, the old general there, he got upset. General Vuono tried to calm him down. He said, "Hell, those things happen. No matter how much you plan, they happen." So, they finally stopped the artillery from going in over there. And then, they made a counterattack. So, they had three phases of it. Actually, they had four phases; the defense, an offense, withdrawal, and the counterattack. You know, it looked like to me that they hit their targets well. From there, we went back to St. Petersburg; back to Leningrad. It was late that night by the time we got in. Each night they had some type of function. They always had breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Of course, even at breakfast they started drinking their vodka. Again, I can't stand the taste and smell of vodka, so, I would just wet my lips. And, here again, the KGB

agent that was my escort, the last night, asked me, "Well, Sergeant Major. How come you don't drink the vodka, and let your hair down a little tonight." I said, "In all due respect, I'm on duty." He said, "Well, about the Major, and the Colonel, and your Chief of Staff? They're having vodka." I said, "They're not on duty." He looked at me, and he still couldn't understand where I was coming from. He said, "What do you mean, you're on duty?" I said, "I am a sergeant. I'm on duty twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. So, I will not indulge in any alcoholic beverages, while I am on duty. Now, the General, the Colonel, and the Major, can drink all of the vodka they want. But, I will make damn sure that when this thing is over, they get back to their rooms." He said, "Is that part of your job?" I said, "Absolutely." (The final remark was followed by a considerable amount of laughter.) We were supposed to go to a couple of other places, but we had a priority from the President of the United States. We were supposed to go visit another training site, the following day, and that evening we were going to the opera. I had never been to an opera before, but, we were going to an opera. I was sort of looking forward to it. I understand that the Russian operas are some of the best in the World, and it is a once in a life time opportunity to see something like that, especially the one they had there in Leningrad. We had to cut the visit short and come back. Mrs. Vuono, she accompanied us. Medically, Margaret couldn't make the trip. Mrs. Vuono did visit some hospitals and medical facilities. She said they were very austere. You know, those things are operating, equal to back in the late '40s and early '50s; the technology that they were using in the hospitals.

Interviewer: What was their reaction when you had to leave early?

SMA Gates: Well, it wasn't an over reaction. They understood that the President of the United States had called the Chief of Staff, and told him that he needed to return to the United States; just cut his trip early and return to the United States.

(NOTE: The interview was briefly interrupted.)

Interviewer: We had a brief pause, while the Sergeant Major answered the telephone. Do you have anything else you would like to say about your trip to the Soviet Union?

SMA Gates: Sort of a lasting impression. They presented us with some gifts. They gave the Chief of Staff a rifle, and they presented me with a pistol; a target pistol. We had a couple of other gifts that they presented us, along the route, as we progressed through the visit or the tour. Sort of a lasting impression. They never did fully understand, especially the Sergeant Major of the Army, or the sergeant major in the American Army. What their roles were, and what it was that they were supposed do. Because, everywhere we went, they were very inquisitive about it. Every time we stopped, they continued to ask questions about NCOs; what NCOs did in the American Army. They even got to the point where they were discussing a possible all-volunteer army for the Soviet Union, and that they wanted to build an NCO Corps like the American Army. For some reason, someone had told them that one of the great strengths of the American Army was the NCO Corps. They knew that. They knew that well. There's no doubt about it, they knew that, Butch. They knew that the NCO Corps did, in fact, strengthen the United States Army, by enforcing the standards, and training soldiers, and trying to take care of soldiers. They knew the NCOs were combat leaders, and not just administrators. So, they knew that. And, they knew that one of the strengths that the American Army had, that they didn't have, was an NCO Corps. But, they still didn't understand exactly how they fit in. When we were getting ready to leave, the four-star general that was General Vuono's escort, made almost the last comment before we got on the plane. He could speak good English. I think that is why their Chief of Staff of the Army was not General Vuono's escort. In fact, I know that was the reason why. But, anyway, he said, "You know, your sergeant major is a tough man." Now, this

makes you feel good. He said, "The reason the American Army is a great army is because of the tough NCOs, like Sergeant Major of the Army Gates." I don't think I smiled the whole time I was over there. I kind of did that on purpose. I don't think I smiled. I was not that type of individual to smile in something like that, because I was very serious about trying to learn as much as I could while I was there. General Vuono said, "You're absolutely right. That man right there, and the thousands, and tens of thousands like him are the reason our Army is as good as it is." So, those things sort of make you feel good. The other part was, we watched a hand-to-hand demonstration, in a gym. The young soldiers just worked so hard, and beat the hell out of each other so well during that demonstration. I asked General Vuono to present them some of his coins, and I had a couple of the Sergeant Major of the Army coins, and a couple of little knives and key chains. So, we presented those soldiers with those things. You know, I think that left an ever lasting impression, because, General Vuono put his arm around the shoulder of one of those soldiers, and we took pictures with them. Those soldiers were just smiling from ear to ear. I remember that. And the last impression I got from the Soviet Union was the common people. The common people in the Soviet Union are probably just as good as any other people of the World. The politics is what makes the difference. They are hard working people. They don't have a hell of a lot. Anybody that stands in a bread line that is four or five miles long, just to get one loaf of bread a day, must be in dire need of something other than politics. That is my impression. I think they have a good army, but, I don't think they have a great army. They have a lot of people, and a lot of equipment, but, I'm not so sure it is as great as everyone says it is. A year later, we kind of proved that it wasn't.

Interviewer: Although the Soviets have a lot of divisions, a lot of their equipment is obsolete.

SMA Gates: It is. From the Second World War. They still have old

tanks. You're absolutely right. The only unit we seen that was well equipped was the Guards; they call it the "Guards Division." They had the most up-to-date T-80s, and the APCs, and modern equipment. The rest of the units we seen over there, and some of them we weren't supposed to see, we seen, they are not well equipped.

Interviewer: Isn't their theory sort of, like in the case of the American Army, we would keep tanks and equipment from the Korean War, so if we recalled Korean War veterans, they would be familiar with the equipment. But that doesn't have any value at all.

SMA Gates: Absolutely. Their philosophy is a little different from ours. Of course, they have a hell of a lot more people to worry about, and to throw into the battle, than we do. They just throw thousands and thousands of people, and thousands and thousands of pieces equipment into a particular point, and try to break through. Our tactics are a little different than theirs. We have the capability to go way behind those guys, and doing a lot of damage, and probably get them from the rear.

Interviewer: Did you get a chance to see their airborne?

SMA Gates: They did show us a small segment of their airborne, and something like their commandos. We did see a demonstration. They didn't want us to associate with those soldiers very much. But, we did have an opportunity to see a demonstration.

Interviewer: Aren't they considered the elite forces?

SMA Gates: They are. The airborne is the elite of the Soviet Army, or it was then.

Interviewer: When you came back, you cut your trip short because of Operation Just Cause. Right?

SMA Gates: Right.

Interviewer: You didn't find out what it was all about until you got back to the Pentagon. Is that correct?

SMA Gates: Well, we knew there was some tensions ongoing. I think

that the Chief of Staff knew basically what was ongoing, but, we didn't. The only thing he told me was that the President of the United States asked him could he cut his trip short about three days. You know, what do you tell the President. "Yes, sir."

Interviewer: What was your involvement, leading up to Just Cause, as the Sergeant Major of the Army?

SMA Gates: When we got back to the States, we started planning and putting together a task force. I was in on the planning to try to determine what type of task force to put together to go down and execute Operation Just Cause. At that stage, it was just planning. So, they started putting together the XVIII Airborne Corps and the pieces that the XVIII Airborne Corps needed. Here again, the philosophy at that time in the Army was, if we went into a combat situation, we would go in with a force large enough to do the job: number one. Number two. We would be a mix of light, heavy, and special operations. That is exactly what we went in with. The same philosophy prevailed in the Middle East. It had nothing to do with the CINC over there. The people that did the ground fighting in the Middle East, was the Army. The corps commanders executed the battle plan over there. The Third Army Commander was the tactical commander on the ground. Of course, you had a CINC over there; General Schwarzkopf. But, he didn't do any fighting. The Third Army Commander executed the battle, and then you had the VII Corps and the XVIII Corps that executed the ground combat. Those are the guys that put together the mix of forces, to do their mission. So, anyway, the big problem was what kind of damn tanks do we put in Panama. The only tank we had available, that was air dropable, was the old Sheridan. It went down there, and it did a pretty good job. But, we found out, very quickly, during Just Cause, that there was a need for a tank that could be air transportable and air dropable. You know, there have been plans, all along, to develop a tank to replace the Sheridan, but, we just hadn't allocated the funds; we didn't have the money to do that.

Interviewer: For the record. Why don't you give me the definition of the CINC.

SMA Gates: He's the Commander in Chief.

Interviewer: Of that area. Right?

SMA Gates: Of all forces in that area.

Interviewer: How many times did you visit Panama, during Operation Just Cause?

SMA Gates: We went to Panama, twice. The Chief of Staff was going to Panama around New Years, or a little later on, sometime in January. But, the Secretary of Defense, Secretary Cheney, called the Chief of Staff and indicated that he wanted me to accompany him on the trip to Panama, over the Christmas holidays. So, we went down. Hell, the war was still hot. There was still a lot of shooting down there, when we got there on Christmas eve. We spent Christmas eve, and Christmas Day, and another day; we were in Panama three days. Of course, Noriega was still being sought. They had the building that he was in, surrounded. But, he still hadn't come out yet.

Interviewer: How was the morale of the troops at that time?

SMA Gates: Oh, it was sky high. You can't describe the morale of the troops. The SOUTHCOM (Southern Command) CINC--at that time was General Thurman--did all of the planning and coordination. He flew into Washington, D.C. two or three times, and briefed the President, and all of the high level national leadership. But, he allowed the XVIII Airborne Corps Commander to execute the ground combat. And, that's exactly what was done. While most of us were getting ready for Christmas at home, during the holidays, those soldiers of the XVIII Airborne Corps, the Rangers, and Special Forces were freezing to death at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and Fort Stewart, Georgia, loading up on airplanes to fly to Panama. When they jumped in there, it was the Christmas holiday season. You know, really, within twenty-four hours they liberated that country. The execution phase of it, from the plans

that I seen in the Pentagon, was executed almost to the letter. You know, you always have to make changes, and changes were made, because, nothing is never the same on the ground. But, that was a tough damn operation, for soldiers to fly that far, in flight rig, and jump. You know, leave Fort Bragg, where there's ice and go to Panama where it was eighty or ninety degrees in those jungles, and then jump into those DZs (landing zones) at night, under fire. That wasn't easy.

Interviewer: And then immediately begin executing the mission, following that.

SMA Gates: Right. Yeah, those soldiers had to go for about forty-eight hours straight, with no rest at all. Technically, within forty-eight hours, that whole operation was a success. They still had sporadic fighting going on, and they had some groups that were isolated; groups that were still shooting. For all practical purposes, it was over in forty-eight hours.

Interviewer: That was...

(End of Tape OH 94.5-7, Side 2)

(Begin Tape OH 94.5-8, Side 1)

Interviewer: Today, is March 26, 1994. This is a continuation of the interview with Sergeant Major of the Army, retired, Julius W. Gates. As we ended up yesterday, we were talking about your tour in Panama. You said today, that you would like to make a couple of comments about Sergeant Major Garcia, who gave you a real nice tour, etc., while you were down in Panama. You want to tell about Art?

SMA Gates: Yeah, it was a visit to Panama, during the Christmas holidays of '89. We had the opportunity to see, first hand, many of the things that the soldiers of our Army have accomplished, while they were there. We had the opportunity to visit in the inner-city, the road blocks, and where the soldiers setup perimeters, and what not, to secure the area. We also had an opportunity to fly to the east side of the Isthmus and visit a Special Forces camp over there where, at that time,

they had, I guess, about five hundred detainee's in the small installation on the east side of the Isthmus. And there was still some sporadic firing going, but Art Garcia--Sergeant Major Garcia--felt that it was important for the Sergeant Major of the Army see all this shit'in stuff, so, we were able to do it. We visited MPs, Special Ops, soldiers of a Ranger Regiment that was part of that operation. We even went out to the International airfield, and we were able to observed, first hand, the results of an operation in the taking and securing of the International airfield, there in Panama. But probably the fun part about that trip, turned out it wasn't any fun, and it may have been something that we should have not been doing. But anyway, we were afforded an opportunity to fly in a helicopter, from the west side to the east side of the Isthmus. As we were flying up the Panama Canal, we ran into a storm. It was just one of these small tropical thunder storms; thunder and lighting. It got so damn bad, we flew down as close as we could to the canal; to the water. And, then it got so bad we had to land the helicopter out in the middle of the jungle there, away from any built-up areas. We stayed about a half-hour, until the storm blew over, and then we went ahead. But the thought didn't entered our minds until we left from there, that it was kind of dumb to be out there, because that area is definitely not secure. It would been awfully embarrassing, not only to me, but to the U.S. Army if a group of armed bandits would have come out and captured the helicopter. It wasn't so much us, but that helicopter was what was important. They would probably have used that helicopter for something that wasn't conducive to what we were supposed to be doing over there. It wasn't funny while it was on-going, but after we left, I thought it was fairly funny. But the soldiers who participated in that operation were very well motivated, and they did a great job. They were in the process of feeding people. When we arrived there, they had mobile kitchens setup in two or three key locations, and they were also in the process of

issuing field rations to the Panamanian people. So, there was a lot of things on-going in Panama, other than just the shooting war. There was a lot of, what they called "nation building," but in my opinion, it was just soldiers understanding human beings, and they were trying to do what they could to assist hungry adults and children; especially the children.

Interviewer: We've covered your trip to the Soviet Union, and the one over to Operation Shield/Desert Storm, and then finally Operation Just Cause. Let me return back to some of your jobs as the Sergeant Major of the Army. What was your working relations with General Vuono?

SMA Gates: We had a very strong professional working relationship. I strongly believe that General Vuono respected my experience. I'm not so sure about the individual. I'm not going to get into the individual so much, but my experience and certainly that had something to do with the selection process. But we had a very close professional working relationship. His door was totally open to me, one hundred percent of the time, and many times interruptions did have to take place with him in order for me to get him messages from the soldiers in the field. That was absolutely no problem at all, but this irritated a lot of people in the Pentagon, because they are very protective of the Chief of Staff. A lot of the high level, high ranking officers, even probably today, but at that time, they still didn't totally believe the input from the Sergeant Major of the Army was all that important to the Chief of Staff. But we had an open door. The very first day, after he assumed the duties of the Chief of Staff of the Army, the first person to have an office call with him was me. For about two to three hours, we discussed the Army and the first ninety days of the new leadership for the Army. I never could understand how he fit that in his calendar, but he certainly did. He made me a member of the General Staff, and I participated in all of the General Staff meetings. When he brought his commanders in, we always had an opportunity to address the Commanders of the Major

Commands, and even the retired four-star generals. We always had an opportunity to address those individuals. So, there was a very close relationship, professional relationship, and the same things with the important functions at his quarters, at Fort Myer. We were always invited to some of the important functions that went on at his quarters. There was always something, but the fact of the matter, we were always invited.

Interviewer: How often did he have his General Staff meeting?

SMA Gates: Tuesday. Every Tuesday.

Interviewer: If you was in town, you always attended.

SMA Gates: Yes, I always attended. In fact, I sat to his right in a specified chair. No, I'm serious. There was a chair that was designated for him, and a chair that was designated for the Sergeant Major of the Army. The rest of them sort of set where they could. The thing that I appreciate about General Vuono, more so, than most people I had opportunity to serve with and serve for, was he always sought your advice and your opinion. A good example was very clearly, uniform changes. He approved, and we implemented about one hundred and fifty uniform changes, during our tenure. He would always seek my opinion, and in some cases, we would take the uniform items to the field and allow soldiers would wear the shirts or the jackets, for a period of time, and then bring that input back to the Chief of Staff, before he would make a decision. We were concerned about the quality of the uniform, we didn't want to change the colors or anything, but we were concerned about the quality of the material that the Class "A" and even the battle dress uniform was made out of. We even modeled a blouse with a belt. One of the things that I was very proud of, was the raincoat. The raincoat we had didn't have a belt with it. Neither did it have the military appearance, so, we did change the raincoat. We put a belt with it, we put epaulets on the shoulders, and then on the back, there was an opening in the back that had some historical significance to it. We

reestablished that. We made some changes with the basic green Class "A" uniform. We changed the material, and a cut, some degree, and the same thing with the Class "A" shirts. We made some drastic changes with the design and just the cuts. The way the thing was cut, so, it would better fit the soldier. We made some drastic changes. The same thing with the battle dress uniform. We made some drastic changes with the battle dress uniform; the length of the shirt, and boots. We worked extensively with boots, trying to get a boot that was conducive to the soldiers in all parts of the world. In fact, we adopted a new desert boot, and that was issued to the troops, by the way, in some cases when they were deployed to the middle east. There were many, many uniform changes made. But anyway, General Vuono instituted "The Installation of Excellence," and that program was a fantastic program, in my opinion. What it was designed to do was not spend millions, and millions, and billions of dollars at the installation level, building new buildings, new highways, and things like that, but the key to "The Installation of Excellence" was for the installation to do as much as they could to improve the living conditions at that installation. An example was, "Why do we paint rocks?" "Why do we paint sidewalks?" It doesn't make sense. Another is parking signs. You know, you go on an installation and you see the signs. Every unit has a different colored sign, and they have difference designs and everything. It really looks like a trash can, when you look at the total picture. Not only that, but self help was a big part of "The Installation of Excellence," where soldiers, family members, and civilian employees on an installation would do what they could to rebuild or remodel a building that would fit their needs. There were many, many good examples of that. Fort Jackson, South Carolina, comes to mind. The Family Support Center at Fort Jackson, South Carolina was completely remodeled inside, by family members, soldiers and Department of Army civilians. The Engineers couldn't do it because they didn't have the money to do it. It is a fantastic building,

and it is right there today, and it serves a great purpose. You could see it everywhere. Just changing the way a room at an Inprocessing Center was setup, made a world of difference. Those are the type of things you talk about, when you talk about "The Installation of Excellence." There were some reward for installations that did well. But anyway, this one particular incident, there was a round table discussion in his office about "The Installation of Excellence," and the kick-off for that. About ten or fifteen very high ranking officers were around the table, and everybody had an opportunity to say something. We were really talking about some grand slam things that should be done for this program, which was fantastic, but again, where do you get the money to accomplish all these grand plans. So, I was the last person to comment. He asked me. He said, "Sergeant Major, what do you think about all of this?" My comment was, "Sir, if we could just get the damn washers and dryers fixed in the barracks, we would be doing something right for the soldiers." Then all at once, washer and dryers become a priority. I'm serious. You know, if the washers and dryers in the barracks doesn't work, and we've always had problems with the things, the soldiers can't wash their clothes. Those are the type things, and that was the level that I tries to ensure that those type of soldier issues was brought before the senior leadership of the Army.

Interviewer: There was also another very important program that took place during that time, and that was the "Year of the NCO." Tell me how that came about?

SMA Gates: That was very, very interesting. The year before, was "The Year of Training." We did some fantastic... I say, fantastic, we didn't do anything extravagant. We did not even attempt to change the way we conducted training. The emphasis was that we would refine our methodology for training. So that really was what took place, during "The Year of Training." Again, we started rewriting and reemphasizing the doctrine during "The Year of Training." So, to me, that particular

year, that theme for "The Year of Training," was sort of a jump-off for the "Year of the NCO." The Secretary of the Army, Secretary Marsh, was really was the person who institutionalized these yearly themes. That was one of the things that I think Secretary of the Army Marsh will be remembered for, because I believe it did cause us to focus on some important issues, whether they were historical, or issues for the future, or issues for the present. It did cause us to focus. You know, not totally focus, but put some emphasis on those important issues. But Secretary of the Army Marsh, General Vuono, and I, were going down the hallway in the Pentagon. Secretary Marsh said he thought that "The Year of Training" was very successful. In fact, we were going to a meeting to sort of wind that year up. He said he thought it was very successful, and that we had some great programs that we had initiated, and we refined some programs. One was training session, that was conducted quarterly, and attended by the high ranking officers and NCOs of the Army. I think a lot of good came out of that. During "The Year of Training," we started establishing the Training Center in Europe, at Hohenfeld, and we refined the Joint Readiness Training Center, Fort Chaffee, Arkansas. Since then, it has moved to Fort Polk, Louisiana. We knew it was moving, but at least we wanted to refined the concept of the Joint Readiness Training Center, for the light units. At the same time, we did deploy mixed units--heavy, light, and Special Ops units--to the National Training Center, out in California, as a test bed to see if it would work, and it worked fine for all those units to work together in a tough environment, such as Fort Irwin has. So, we were proceeding down the hallway and the conversation came up, "Well, what will we use as the next theme?" Secretary Marsh asked General Vuono, and he said, "Well, you know, I'll have to think about it a little bit." He looked at me, and I said, "Sir, you know, we have just completed 'The Year of Training,' and what better way to continue the emphasis on training than make this the year of the first line trainer. 'The Year of the NCO'."

He said, "Bill Gates, you're always talking about NCOs and soldiers." I'm serious. That kind of made me feel good, you know. He said, "I don't care what," he said, "that is always your interest. You don't never say anything about anything else, except soldiers and NCO." I said, "Every once in a while I talk about officers and civilians too." But that was the type of relationship we had. You kind of said what you wanted to, or you could say things very openly with Secretary Marsh and General Vuono. He said, "Well, let me think about it." Shoot, about two days later--I think it was about 9 o'clock at night--he calls me at home. I was at home. He said, "Next year, the theme will be 'The Year of the NCO'." Of course, General Vuono stamped his approval on it, because the Chief of Staff was very forward in stressing the importance of the Noncommissioned Officers Corps in the United States Army, He always, ever since I've been knowing General Vuono, he pushed the Noncommissioned Officers Corps. He said, "If you have a strong NCO Corps, we will have a strong Army, because they're the people out doing the first line of training, enforcing standards and discipline, and really taking care of soldiers, and really making the Army policies work. So, he certainly wholeheartedly agreed with the theme.

Interviewer: Evidently you had a good working relationship with Secretary of the Army Marsh. Right?

SMA Gates: We really did have. I guess that it just sort of fell together, because Secretary Marsh, in my opinion, was just a great, and he still is, a great American. He would include the Sergeant Major of the Army into many, many of his activities, which put additional responsibilities in time that you had to allocate to the Secretary of the Army. One example was, I guess about every quarter, or, maybe twice a year--and he institutionalized this throughout the Army--he caused the Army Staff to go on, what he referred to as a "staff ride." They would go to historical sites. For the most part, they were Civil War and Revolutionary War locations, and there plenty of those in Virginia and

in Maryland. They would take a staff ride and go to the battlefields, where battles took place many, many years ago. Then they would discuss the good and bad things, and what it is they could do to improve it, and how does that sort of relate to the Army of today. Secretary Marsh included the Sergeant Major of the Army, for the first time I understand, on those staff rides. They were very, very interesting, especially to be able to listen to him, because he was a historian. He really tried to preach the history, and how the history plays a role in the Army of today, and the Army of tomorrow. That was one of the one of the things, and certainly he had an open-door-policy. He was forever asking... He didn't really ask, he would just tell you to come in and he received your opinion on certain things. The Secretary of the Army was also the representative who had the responsibility to oversee the Soldiers' and Airmen's Home, located there in Washington, D.C. Since I was on the Board of Commissioners, we had an interface with that, and many others aspects of the Army. But one of the things, a highlight of my tour as Sergeant Major of the Army, was a trip to Normandy, France. It was the 45th Anniversary of Normandy Invasion. Secretary Marsh was the lead person for that anniversary celebration, so, I had the opportunity to go. We had an entire C-141 aircraft, and we put together a team of Air Force, Navy, a couple of Marines, and Army NCOs, who were color bearers for all the units that participated in the Normandy Invasion. We had all the unit colors for a ceremony at the cemetery, located on the cliffs above the Normandy Beach. I had an opportunity to take that group to France, to practice and to prepare them for the ceremony, and then to participate in the ceremony, and actually give a speech, with just hundred of people who were there for that anniversary, and assist in planting a tree at the cemetery; we called it "The Freedom Tree." That was very, very interesting. Secretary Marsh certainly was the key person in making all of those things happen

Interviewer: What about your working relation with Secretary of

Defense Cheney?

SMA Gates: Secretary Cheney, of course, he comes into the Pentagon as Secretary of Defense, and he was sort of new to that environment. But believe it or not, Secretary Cheney, quarterly, not just quarterly but sometimes less than that, he would have all the senior enlisted in his office for some briefing and he asked us some of the things that he needed to be doing for the young soldiers and NCOs, and the officers too, and for the military services. It really was a pleasure to work with Secretary Cheney, too. But Secretary Cheney had a little bit different personality. He was very quiet. He didn't say a lot, but when he said something, people had to listen.

Interviewer: But he was open for suggestions?

SMA Gates: He was open for suggestions. One of the things I thought was unique about Secretary Cheney. Secretary Cheney was not a person who knew everything. It may appear that he thought that he knew everything, but he would seek advise. It didn't bother him at all to ask for advice. Like he asked me, "Whenever I go out and visit the Army what are some of the things that I should be looking at out there? Who are the groups of people that I should try to talk to?" You know, I thought that was unique. I said, "You know, you need to go in a dining facility, and sit down and eat lunch with the soldiers." You seen him on television, and he did that quite often. I said, "When go to a unit, go out and talk to the soldiers. Get right in the middle of them." And he did that. So, I thought it was very interesting. He also asked me to go to Panama with him, during Operation Just Cause, or, just right it, for the same reason. So, he could sort of get comfortable in some of the things he needed to be doing. So, the young soldiers appreciated the Secretary of Defense. But, we had input to the Department of Defense on a regular basis. It was anything from installations to, oh my God, it just went on, and on, and on, to budgets, to personnel. In all of those things, we had input to the SECDEF (Secretary of Defense),

or a member of his staff.

Interviewer: Describe your interaction with the National Guard Bureau and the Office, Chief of Army Reserve, or OCAR?

SMA Gates: Again, we did have a close relationship. Especially a close relationship with the Sergeants Major who represented those two parts of the Army. We tried to visit as many Reserve and National Guard organizations as we possibly could, when we made our field trips. In some cases the trips were totally dedicated to the National Guard and Reserve. I'm not going to sit here or stand here and say that I agree on everything the Reserve Components did, or, didn't do, but I'll say that I think, overall, the majority of the people who are members of the Reserve Components are very dedicated and are very patriotic. They work many, many more hours than are required of them. They're very dedicated to what it is they are trying to do. For some reason, we just don't have, and I don't think we have it today. I don't think we have the proper organization for our Reserve Components, and we might expect too much from our Reserve Components. A couple weeks a year, and no more than three weeks a year, you can't expect the Reserve Components to be prepared to fight, as you would expect the active component. Anyone that believes that is drinking something other than coffee.

Interviewer: During Operation Desert Storm, we found out there were a lot of Reserve Component units that were not really prepared to perform their mission. Do you think, because of that, the Army is maybe taking another look at the way we train the Reserve Components?

SMA Gates: Oh, absolutely, and many, many of those changes were made during Desert Shield/Desert Storm. But I still feel that we're not there, and we won't get there. Here again, we've got to be very careful how we make broad statements. This is strictly Bill Gates' opinion. I don't think we will ever get to where we need to go, unless we get rid of the politics that's in the Reserve Component. I don't know how you can do that. If I did, I would have made that suggestion to the

leadership of the Army, and maybe something could have been done. But there's just too many people involved in our Reserve Components, who make decisions that affect those units. It's not the individual soldiers and it's not the units. It is the other people involved, who have different agendas for the Reserve Components

Interviewer: Most of that's on the Guard side of the house. Right?

SMA Gates: We have it in the Reserve, too.

Interviewer: Is that right?

SMA Gates: Yeah, we had a lot of politics in the Reserve. The question is, why do you have a Chief of Army Reserve? How come they just can't be part of active duty units; assigned to active duty units? To me, that's a simple way of fixing it, but we don't do that; they're a separate entity. Then you have combat, combat support, combat service support in the Reserve, and you have the same thing in the Guard. So, why not make one the combat unit, which we're trying to do now, and the other the combat support and combat service support. The question is, do you even need a National Guard? I don't know. Those are the questions that people have to ask and answer, if that makes any sense. But, I did have an opportunity to visit the Reserve Components. I'll just tell you. There are some fine National Guard and Reserve units, that could very closely compare to active duty units. I visited and observed tank firing in Mississippi, with the Mississippi National Guard, and also at Fort Polk, Louisiana, with the Louisiana National Guard. I'll just tell you, those guys can fire some tanks, and they do it well. I visited, many, many Reserve Component combat service support units, and one that stands out was a laundry unit, that was out in the field. You know, the sergeant in charge of that laundry unit, do you know what his job was in civilian life? He owned a laundry and dry cleaning business. Now his equipment was sort of obsolete, and old, but he knew how to operate that laundry and dry cleaning, you see, and they were doing a fantastic job. When you received your clothes back from that laundry, they were clean,

even to the point of pressing the fatigues, out in the woods now, Butch. I guess the message I'm giving is, the soldiers in the units, they do the best they possibly can. Somewhere along the line, up the ladder, the bureaucracy, as much as possible, needs to be taken out the Reserve Components. Then I think it would work well, but we can't expect the Reserve Components to move into combat within twenty-four hours. They just can't do that. We had a lot of problems with employers, when employees had to leave. They tried to do everything in the world to hinder their job, you know their National Guard or Reserve jobs. You still have that stigmatism out there. Some people are even fired, but you know that's against the law, so, they can't do it, but they were. So, there are still many, many problems relating to the Reserve Components. I think there's a lot of people we were able to identify. I think those problems were identified, and there's a lot of emphasis being put on trying to do something to change that, because we are going to rely on the Reserve Components quite heavily, in the future. There were a couple of incidents that I thought were unique, when I visited a Reserve unit. I believe it was in Louisiana, at that time. We were in a jeep and we drove up to the field site, and they had a female guard on the entrance way into the area in which they were setup in. You know, like a perimeter guard. They had defensive positions dug. But this female soldier, a young specialist, she was guard at the main entrance into the CP (command post) area there, or that outer perimeter. So, we stopped there, and I got out of the vehicle, and I explained to her who I was. You know, she challenged, and we gave her the pass-word and everything. So, she looked at me just as hard. You know, she kept looking at me really funny. I said, "What seems to be your problem there, soldier?" She said, "You know something, Sergeant Major? You're the first Sergeant Major of the Army I've ever seen and had an opportunity to talk to. But I didn't realize you are as small as you really are. And to tell you the truth," she said, "I bet I could whip

you, if I really tried." She was about six foot tall. I thought to myself, "She probably could." But I had to give her an answer, so, I said, "Young soldier, don't you ever forget that dynamite comes in small packages." But I thought that was certainly was comical. We were observing some tank firing in Mississippi. It probably was some of the better tank gunnery that you possibly could perform. It was well organized. The ranges were well organized and the soldiers were doing what it is they were supposed to be doing, but they had M-60 tanks. So, I asked one crew member, I said, "What do you think about that tank?" He said, "Well, I'll tell you." It was sort of funny. In that Mississippi speech, he said, "Well, I'll tell you. This is probably the best tank in the State of Mississippi, but it damn well ain't the best tank in the World. When are you ass holes going to get us some M-1 tank?" I thought that was one the greatest things I ever heard in my life. The people that were with me, and the Mississippi National Guard Sergeant Major, he liked to had a heart attack, but I thought it was funny. If you don't want to hear stuff like that, don't talk to soldiers. Because they'll damn sure tell you and they'll tell you like it is. Maybe not initially, but after they see they can sort of get you attention, they'll tell you just like it is.

Interviewer: And that's what you want to hear. You want to hear the truth.

SMA Gates: Exactly right. I think they do have M-1 tanks, but now not through an effort of my own. Yeah. "This is probably the best tank in the State of Mississippi, but it damn well ain't the best tank in the World."

Interviewer: Other than Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm and Operation Just Cause, what were they major problems within the Army, during you tenure as Sergeant Major of the Army?

SMA Gates: Oh, when I say this, it's very difficult to sort of put everything into perspective. When we assumed the duties and

responsibilities in the Pentagon, you know, we had fantastic great equipment, that we had fielded, and we were still in the process of issuing and fielding this equipment. We had a good leader development program for NCOs and officers. We had good family programs; fantastic family program. We had moved so far with families, that it was just a pleasure to be able to see some of the things that we had accomplished for families, which are a very vital part of United States Army. We finally got around to the point of understanding that families were important. It's not like it was in 1958, when a sergeant would tell you, "If I wanted you to have a wife, I would have issued you one." But we just didn't do that. We had a good training program. Our initial job was to was to focus the Army. To try to bring all this together, and then focus the Army on the purpose, the underlined purpose, for the United States having a standing army, both the Active, Reserve, and Civilian Component. The whole nine yards, because we had all the stones. All we had to do was supply all the mortar mix to hold those stones together, and to make it a very tightly built structure. So, making training the number one priority in the Army, I think, had a lot to do with pulling the Army together, and causing us to focus on our wartime tasks

(End of Tape OH 94.5-8, Side 1)

(Begin Tape OH 94.5-8, Side 2)

Interviewer: Sergeant Major, when the last tape ended you were talking about the effectiveness of the Army training. Go ahead and continue.

SMA Gates: What I was say is, that mix or that philosophy sort of brought all of these systems together, and caused the Army to move in the direction that would support the war fighting ability of the Army. I think that was very significant, But, in the process of fielding new equipment, emphasizing families, training, and all of these other things, we didn't totally overlook, but, we certainly did not emphasize

single soldiers like we should have. So, we tried to institutionalize the program for single soldiers; those great soldiers that live in the barracks and don't have a family readily available for all of the support activities. We did institutionalize a program of single soldier initiatives, and that program is still in the process of working today. I think that reaped some great benefits for the Army. The major issue was the down-sizing of the Army. The major of the national leadership strongly believed that the military was too large, so, in order to down-size the military, they started reducing the budget. So, we either had slow down training and the flow of new technology and equipment into the hands of the soldier, or you had to reduce the size of the military. So, that was a major, major issue during my tenure as the Sergeant Major of the Army, was making plans to reduce the size of the Army, and still maintain an Army that could fight on two different fronts at the same time. That's a very high level speech, or talk, but, the fact of the matter is, we commenced down-sizing the Army during my tenure as the Sergeant Major of the Army. The 9th Infantry Division was taken out of the Army's inventory, and technically, we changed the two Corps in Europe; we combined some soldiers and we reduced Europe, by two divisions over there. There were other units throughout the Army that were taken out of the inventory, or at least plans were laid to take those units out of the inventory. So, with all of the positive things we were doing, the down-sizing and building the Army of the 21st Century was on top of the list, for the majority of the Army Staff, and the Army, especially during the last three years of our tenure. It was very difficult. I know one of the programs that Sergeant Major Akins and I spent many, many hours with was the Army Alumni Program, where, as we down-sized the Army, we had some type of system that if we did have to release soldiers before they were eligible to retire, that they would have a means of seeking employment. I think that the group that established the Army Alumni Program really did a fantastic job. I know

Sergeant Major Akins spent many, many hours, and days, working with that small group, who came up with the recommendation to the Secretary of the Army; at that time it was Secretary of the Army Stone. He certainly approved it, and later on the Department of Defense adopted a program very similar to ACAP (Army Career and Alumni Program). Today, ACAP is institutionalized throughout the military services, as I understand; I know it is in the Army.

Interviewer: What does ACAP stand for?

SMA Gates: That's exactly what it is. Army Career and Alumni Program. That means that you have active duty soldiers who are careerist, and then you have retirees, and the whole nine yards. Somehow or another you pull all of that together and you establish a program that makes the Army much, much stronger.

Interviewer: From what you see today, how do you think the down-sizing of the military will affect the Army in its recruiting, retention, and its ability to perform its worldwide mission?

SMA Gates: I think if we look very close, we will see some of the results of the down-sizing. Here again, we should never criticize anybody, and that isn't the purpose of what I'm about to say. The intentions were to build the Army of the Future, not down-size the Army. Taking units out and having less people, certainly was one of the things that had to be done, because of the budget constraints, and because of guidance given by the national leadership of the Country. Down-sizing the Army certainly had to be done. But, the philosophy was, we would build the Army, not down-size it. If that makes sense. Now, those are very fancy words, but, the fact of the matter is, it makes sense, if you think about it for a minute. We wanted to build the Army of the Future, and make it a smaller more deployable, more lethal, better trained, and better equipped army. But, it would be smaller. That was the philosophy. And to do that, we anticipated, certainly, technology would increase the effectiveness of the soldier on the

battlefield. But, we had to continue to recruit high quality soldiers into the Army, and we had to continue to build a strong corps of leaders; officers and NCOs. That was the philosophy. Now, whether or not that has changed, I don't know. I do know that we are having some problems in recruiting. I know that we are having some problems of retention, retaining quality NCOs. I'm not saying we're not reenlisting quality NCOs, but, the question is, are some of the good NCOs that we really desire to keep in the Army, are they leaving because they can't see down the road and see a future in the Army? "I have ten years now, and if I stay fifteen years, I'll probably be kicked out anyway. So, why in the hell don't I get out now, and at least get a jump start on another career." Maybe some of those programs sort of got off track as we transitioned into this rapid down-sizing of the Army. We may be down-sizing too rapidly. Instead of building, we may just be drawing units. Here again, you have to do what it is the national leadership tells you. But, you've got to be very careful that you don't create a "hollow army." Everybody continues to talk about the "hollow army." We just don't need an army that can't execute an operation, such as Desert Storm.

Interviewer: We talk about the Cold War being over. I think a lot of us say, apparently the Cold War is over. What changes do you see in the global role of the Army?

SMA Gates: Hell, very clearly, I don't believe the Cold War is over. Everybody seems to say it is, but, the World is in a much more de-stabilized position, today, than it was five years ago, when we did have the Berlin Wall. You have wars ongoing all throughout the Eastern Block of Europe. My God, look what is going on in the former Yugoslavia Republic; it's a killing field over there. You have all of the problems, even a short distance from our border here, in Haiti. Now you have the North Koreans, who are rattling their sabers up there. Of course, politics plays a big role in all of this. Even when we went into

Somalia, and, here again, we didn't have the national will to sort of get rid of the war lords over there, and give the people the opportunity to live in peace, even though I don't believe that was our mission over there. Those are the type things that we have to be very careful with. I think the World is very, very much less stabilized world, today, than it was during the time when they had the Communist rule. At least, you knew where you stood; now, you don't know. You have an individual in Russia that portrays the traits of a complete fanatic. He made the statement that he wanted to retake Alaska. Those are the type people that you have out there, that may very well, some day, rule that entire nation over there. I think that the World is not stabilized; I think it has gotten worst, since the so-called "fall of communism." Nobody is really sure. Communism hasn't fallen. Hell, China is still communist. North Korea is still communist. I suspect that the majority of the former Soviet Union is still communist. I'm sure there are still former East Germans that are communists, and they never will change. Cuba is still communist; ninety miles off the coast of Florida. All I'm saying is, I don't know how much all of this stuff has changed; and that is strictly an opinion of the things I am able to see and hear. The role of the Army, I think, remains the same. All this garbage about nation building. The Army never could build a nation. It doesn't have any damn business trying to build a nation. The United States Army should go fight a war, or a battle, and then get the hell out of there. We don't have any business trying to build nations. Why in the hell do we want to build a nation anyway? We can assist, certainly, but, we're not in the nation building business. We can stabilize that nation. It's up to the damn people in that nation to build their own nation. That's me talking. You can't train soldiers in the United States Army to go fight on the battlefield, and kill, and at the same damn time, try to build a nation; it can't be done. We do have units that are specially designed, in the special operations arena, that can move into

a zone and do what they can to stabilize the local government, and things like that. But, I don't believe that is the role of a combat units in the Army. My feathers get a little ruffled here. That is just some dumb thinking, in my opinion, as a private citizen of the United States. We've always had involvement in assisting people, throughout the World. I don't think that role will ever change. The question is, should we ever get involved in a civil war? The answer is, hell no. I don't think so. Certainly, the European nation had enough sense not to get involved in our Civil War, unless they could make a little money by selling a few arms and supplies, but, they didn't commit any troops. So, that's a good lesson. You know, when the French had their civil war over there, we didn't see the British going over and helping one side or the other; neither did we see the Germans go over there. People were smart enough not to do that.

Interviewer: That's a no win situation.

SMA Gates: If that's what you want to call it. It's a dumb situation to get involved with. We tried that, and we got our hands slapped; we seen that in Somalia. If we want to go over to Somalia and completely conquer that country, send the damn Army in and we'll do that. If that is the mission, then let's go do it. If our mission is to go over there and feed the hungry, feed the hungry, and then get the hell out of there, and then turn it over to somebody else. I think the American people still have a shade pulled over their eyes, and they don't fully understand what goes on at times. To me, that is not a role for the Army. The role for the Army is to fight and win, and to protect the national interests of this Country, whatever it might be. And certainly, some of that has to do with politics. Some damn politician trying to raise his or her positive results in the polls. It just don't work. You get people killed; you have a lot of suffering; and you waste a lot of money that could be spent on other things. We just don't understand that.

Interviewer: Yesterday, we were talking about Margaret's involvement, and I noticed that there are a couple of questions that I didn't ask, at that time. Was Margaret included in the official government and military functions that were held there in Washington, D.C?

SMA Gates: Absolutely. And she attended as many of those as her health would allow her to attend functions. In most cases, we were invited to these functions as a team. One of the unique invitations was from the White House. President Bush invited us for dinner, at the White House, in honor of the Queen of Denmark. Margaret had the opportunity to personally meet the President of the United States--which she had before--and Mrs. Bush. She had an opportunity to meet the Queen of Denmark; I think her name was Queen Ann. We have some photos of that. That was very unique. She had dinner at the same table with Vice President Quayle.

Interviewer: I guess it was pretty interesting meeting President and Mrs. Bush.

SMA Gates: It was, but, I had met him a few times in the past. In one incident, I had the opportunity to meet Mrs. Bush at General Vuono's quarters, where they were emphasizing the continuation of the building of the Ronald McDonald Houses, for families, who had family members in hospitals throughout the United States. We got heavily involved in the Ronald McDonald House that was in Washington, D.C. We were even to the point where we had people volunteering to go over and help maintain the yard, and do some of the cleanup for the families, who had a place to live, while they had a family member in the hospitals, that were located throughout Washington, D.C. Margaret was heavily involved in that. She participated in many, many functions. Even retreat ceremonies, promotion ceremonies, parades, and even the Fourth of July fireworks. She participated in the "Spirit of America." She also participated in the yearly conferences that we held. She certainly was a part of those

conferences. When the spouses were invited, whether it was the Major Command Sergeants Major spouses, or, the Major Commanders would come in with their spouses, Margaret was always invited and she participated in those activities, to the ability of her health limitations. The last couple of years--'90 and '91--she could not participate very much, but, she tried.

Interviewer: What did you find most rewarding about being the Sergeant Major of the Army?

SMA Gates: The most rewarding thing was, soldiers; that one word. It's very clear. The most rewarding experience and the most rewarding thing that I received, while I was the Sergeant Major of the Army, were the soldiers that I had the opportunity to serve with, and to serve for. In my opinion, they were just some of the finest people that this Country has ever, ever born, were, and still are, in the Army. That covers the entire Army; the Reserve Components, the family members, the Civilian Component, and, certainly, the active duty soldiers. I was never, ever, stopped being amazed at the abilities of the soldiers.

Interviewer: What is the American soldier? Tell me who the American soldier is.

SMA Gates: The American soldier is just a person from Hometown, U.S.A., who has volunteered to lay his or her life on the line for the United States. They are all creeds, all colors, all genders, they're rich, they're poor, they're from the inter cities, they're from the suburbs, and they're from the farms. The American soldier is the representation of the United States, and that needs to be quoted. "The American soldier is the representation of the United States." Wherever he or she is, they always get attention. I don't care where they are at, somebody will turn and look at an American soldier.

Interviewer: Over the years, they have done a pretty good job. Haven't they?

SMA Gates: They have done a fantastic job. Shoot, I'll sit here

and get tears in my eyes if I'm not careful. God, you've seen soldiers in Vietnam, giving their C-rations to the hungry kids. You've seen soldiers working in the orphanages over there. You've seen soldiers delivering babies. We had a platoon medic who delivered a baby, out in the field, in a hooch. The woman was probably a VC, but, he still delivered that baby. It was the damnest thing I have very seen in my life. Those are the type kinds of things that kind of stick with us, Butch, more so than maneuvering armies across the battlefield. The individual personalities of soldiers stand out. It doesn't make any difference who they are, or what color they are, or their background. God Almighty, when they put the uniform on, there is something unique about that individual. I think the uniqueness is that they have a title. They have a title at that time. They are no longer just Bill Gates, from Chapel Hill, North Carolina. When I left the Army, I had a title. I am now Sergeant Major, retired, Bill Gates. When I completed basic training, I was Private Bill Gates. So, you have a title, and that is something everybody should be proud of.

Interviewer: The soldiers will bitch, moan, and complain, but, when it comes to doing the job, they will do it, and they will do it well.

SMA Gates: They do it well, and the ingenuity that soldiers have is totally unlimited; they can do anything. The damnest army in the World, is the United States Army. There is not another army in the World that can take a unit from a place like Fort Bragg, when its almost zero degrees, move it to Panama, where it is almost a hundred degrees, those soldiers jump in there and not even miss a beat, and fight a war. The same thing applied in the Middle East. You take the soldiers from the United States--who are used to this temperature zone--and you move them halfway around the World, and throw them in the damn desert out there--where the only people who can really survive are the Nomads--and the American soldier can fight and survive. You can take that same

soldiers and put them in the snow banks in Alaska, and they survive there. We're the only army in the World that can do that.

Interviewer: What did you find most frustrating about your job as the Sergeant Major of the Army?

SMA Gates: One word. "Bureaucracy." The damn bureaucracy, and, it's everywhere. The second most frustrating thing is, we always wanted to say that everything was good; everything can't always be good. There are some things that are not good. We have to identify those things that are not good, and go about our business of trying to fix those things. So, taking a hammer and chisel, and chiseling your way through that bureaucracy there, was the most difficult task. It starts from the national leadership, and goes all the way down the chain. The damn soldier is just trying to get paid; he's just trying to get the money that he is due. But, he has to go through ten levels of bureaucracy. He has to even ask ten or fifteen people "Please pay me the money that I earned six months ago."

Interviewer: Throughout my interviews, one of the things all of the former Sergeants Major of the Army have emphasize is "I don't want to say I did this, and I did that." It has always been a collective effort of what was begun before, and what was started during someone's tenure, and continued after that person left the Office. But there are some things that each individual Sergeant Major of the Army has been able to accomplish, and affect things to happen, during his tenure. What do you feel was your greatest accomplishments, while you were the Sergeant Major of the Army?

SMA Gates: I have to certain echo what my colleagues have stated, because I don't do a damn thing in the Army; it's we. A lot of times I say "I did this." It is "We did this." "I" just don't do a damn thing; it is a "we" effort. You can give an order all you want to, but, if soldiers don't react to that order, it's nothing. You can recommend a particular solution for a problem, but, if that recommendation is not

sound and if it is not used, then I haven't done anything. Even if it is used, somebody else has to do the work. In my opinion, there is not such a thing as "I"; it's a "we." But, having said that, we were very fortunate to be able to institutionalized some programs that, I believe, have, and will continue to have, a positive affect on the Army. First of all, I am very proud to say we institutionalized the Noncommissioned Officer Evaluation System. I think that was one of the things that we were able to do, and we spent an inordinate amount of time working with the NCOER. We replaced the old skill qualification tests with an individual self-development test. The rationale behind that was, that there are four aspects of leader development. One is, certainly, the different levels of schools we have in the NCOES, for leader development. Then, we have institutional training. And then, we have unit experience, where the person serves in different types of units at, different levels, to get that leader development by serving in that particular unit. The last part of leader development is, self-development. Now, we had means of assessing the first two, but we didn't have a good means of assessing the third level, and motivating soldiers to do something to develop themselves. We were sort of in a "what's in it for me syndrome." You know, "My name is Jimmy, I'll take all you give me." "Oh, yeah. I want to go to school, because, if I go to school, I'll get promoted." But, what in the hell is it you do to develop yourself? What do you do on your time, to make yourself a better leader? How can we institutionalize a way of assessing Bill Gates, and see if, in fact, Bill Gates is doing some self-study? Is he reading the manuals, studying his job. Everybody else does it. Every other profession does that. Why not the Army? So, we institutionalized the self-development test, where an individual would read the field manual, study their profession, and then be assessed every couple of years. It would have a bearing on whether they were promoted, and on assignments. So, that I feel very proud of. Probably, we were able to,

during, "The Year of the NCO," develop and institutionalize about fourteen different recommendations. They're still ongoing, or, they have been accomplished, so far, and NCOs did have about ninety percent input to those recommendations. During "The Year of the NCO," we published an NCO historical volume. It might not be the best in the World, but, at least we have some historical recordings now, that's in a historical volume that is centered on the noncommissioned officer.

Interviewer: That thing had been on the back burner for years.

SMA Gates: Yeah, years, and years, and years. But, we were able to push that through, during "The Year of the NCO." We were able to materialize the Battle Staff NCO Course, at Fort Bliss, and we were able to institutionalize that course of instruction. It was something that was sort of missing out of our leader development for NCOs. So, we were able to pull that one off. I am probably more proud of the single soldier initiatives, than any other single program that we got started, and got into the Army's system. Now it has spread over the entire Army; the single soldier initiatives. Those were some of the things we were able to accomplish. (**SPECIAL NOTE:** During a post-interview discussion, two other important accomplishments surfaced, that are worthy of being included. FM 21-101 was adopted. For the first time, the NCOs role in training was identified in doctrine. Also, the Command Sergeants Major Designee Course was created.)

Interviewer: Did you have any personal goals that you failed to accomplish, during your tenure?

SMA Gates: Probably the most frustrating part of the Army, to me, and always has been, was the personnel system. Now, I'm not throwing rocks at the people who work in the personnel system. All I'm saying is, the personnel system was never able to respond to a soldier's need in a manner that was not only timely, but, provided some satisfaction to the soldier, whether or not the soldier received what it is he or she had requested. But, to be able to respond in a timely manner, to me,

was always something that we never tackled like we should. And, with the technology that we have today, there's no reason why soldiers shouldn't be able to go into a PAC (Personnel Action Center) and request some type of personnel action, and they have a computer there that is plugged straight into the Personnel Command, and they could get an answer right then. You know, a real timely answer--yes, no, maybe, or, whatever it might be--instead of going through the Battalion and the damn Brigade--which is nothing more than a tactical headquarters--the Division, the Corps, the Field Army, the major command out there, and then, finally, three months later, it gets to the Personnel Command. It just don't make sense. The same thing with the finance. If a person has a pay problem, they should be able to put that on a computer, and in a snap, it comes back, "Yeah, we owe Bill Gates ten dollars." You give him some type of slip--of course, it's got to be controlled--and he goes down to the bank, cashes that, and gets his ten dollars. What's wrong with that, with the technology we have? We can do that. The soldier can have a hand-held machine in his hand, and figure out a ten-digit grid coordinate, without a map, then we certainly have the technology to upgrade the personnel system. I feel that we failed. We probably didn't fail, but, the fact of the matter is, I don't think we did much about that. The same thing with the casualty report. We just didn't put the right emphasis on reporting casualties; battlefield casualties. Then, the third thing, we did put a lot of emphasis on it, but, it just didn't materialize. It sounds very basic, and a lot of people don't even know about it. But, when a soldier is medically evacuated from an overseas command, or within CONUS, the soldier normally leaves his or her family behind. I'm not saying that the command don't take care of that family, but, in a lot of cases, the soldiers are single, and their damn equipment lays back there in that organization, for months, and months, and months, and it is not properly inventories, and sometimes it's even lost. Even if the family does accompany the soldier to the

medical center, here in CONUS, there is very little compensation that we have. There is a system that they can use, which provides some compensation, but, it's very difficult, especially the young soldiers, to maintain two households; one overseas and one here in the States. We did not fix that problem. The third thing deals with the medical arena, and that is the medical holding units. I don't know what in the hell we have medical holding units for. If a soldier is sick, he should be in the hospital. When he gets well, he should go back to his unit. Here we have soldiers sitting around, and staying in medical holding units, all over the United States Army. Now, we've cleared some of that out, but, we still have hundreds of soldiers in medical holding units. Those were some of the things we failed to do. We didn't probably put enough emphasis on them. The other thing was the ACAP; the ACAP program. We are very proud of that. As I say, there are some things that I don't do. In fact, I don't do anything; we have to accomplish all of that. Everything we did accomplish, I feel very strongly, that real small staff that we had in the office, and certainly the support the Chief of Staff of the Army, and all of the Army Staff, and the major commanders out there, all of those folks caused those programs to materialize.

Interviewer: In my research, the question of a formal rating of the Sergeant Major of the Army was settled, prior to your tenure, and it was decided that the Sergeant Major of the Army should not be rated. Did that decision hold true during your tenure?

SMA Gates: Even though it had been settled in the past, the problem did crop up every year. I had to sign a form, and the Chief of Staff had to sign a form saying that there was no need for a formal rating of the Sergeant Major of the Army. I don't what they wanted it for, because they're weren't going to promote me. I was not going to do me any good. I would have got me more pay when I retired. I kind of makes sense to me, not to have one.

Interviewer: It seem like during each tenure, someone always tries

to resurface that.

SMA Gates: Always. They always do. They resurface the issue. Here again, it is the personnel pukes of the world. As I say. I'm not reflecting on them, as a whole. There is just a level of bureaucracy in the personnel arena, that sorts of separates the personnel functions from the rest of the Army. If there was one area we should have paid attention to, it should have been the personnel arena, because everything they do, or don't do, has an affect on the soldier, and the Army.

Interviewer: In retrospect, is there anything that you would have done differently? And if so, what would you have done differently?

SMA Gates: One of the things I think that I should have prepared for, was... I don't know whether I was just a victim of circumstances. Maybe I was. As I previously stated, we did have a Public Affairs individual assigned to us, on an as needed basis. Sergeant Edwards accompanied me on many, many trips. I think maybe hind sight is the best type of sight in the world. But, I think maybe Sergeant Edwards did kind of pushed those public affairs appearances. I should have prepared myself better for the mass news media, and that could have very easily been done, because, I had an opportunity in Korea, with the Armed Forces Network; we had the opportunity to do that. We had a lot of Public Affairs people in Korea, that could have assisted, and I probably could have taken some courses, and what not. Realistically, I was not prepared for the magnitude of the media that we were exposed to. Having said all of that, I not so damn sure whether I would have accepted the job--in retrospect--if I was asked.

Interviewer: What changes have you seen in the race relations, during your time in the Army?

SMA Gates: What we, as Americans, and as soldiers, and former soldiers, have to fully understand is that the United States Army is a representation of society. Whatever changes are taking shape in the

society of the United States, you have that representation in the Army. When we had racial problems--and we still have some racial problems--in our society, those same racial problems were in the military forces. We had demonstrations in the Army. In Bamberg, Germany, we had many, many demonstrations. It is very easy to say "I wouldn't allow those." The military might not be the right place to have demonstrations, but the fact of the matter is, we did. Also, there was the drug problem. That drug problem from society rubbed off on the military. We had soldiers that entered the Army--even career soldiers--who, in fact, were addicted to the use of drugs, to include alcohol. I think the Army was able to recognize these social problems, and to deal with those problems in a very direct manner. It bothered me, when I was talking to a black sergeant major, and he indicated to me that when he got promoted to sergeant first class, he was assigned to an all-white unit. It was the first all-white unit he had ever been assigned to. He was the Motor Sergeant, and the Company Commander wouldn't even speak to him, and he tried to do everything in his power to get him in trouble. This, to me, is a bad situation, because, the First Sergeant was white, and he did everything he could to help the Sergeant. So, they had a little friction between the Company Commander and the First Sergeant. He did succeed, but the only reason he succeeded was because the First Sergeant assisted. That is not the way to run a railroad. But, I think we have made some great strides in race relations and equal opportunity. We have allowed women to assume tremendous roles in the Army or today, as compared to the Army of yesterday. I think the ethnic groups in the Army have a equal opportunity, more so today, than they did in years past. We're not there yet, and we certainly have a ways to go. I think the Army has sort of led the Nation in developing the Affirmative Action Plan, that was adopted throughout the United States; that was first adopted by the Army. The Army developed the Affirmative Action Plan. Whether or not that is the way to go. We need to progress from there,

but, certainly that was a start.

Interviewer: You mentioned how the roles of women in the Army have changed over the years. How have those roles changed?

SMA Gates: When I first entered the Army, we had the Women's Army Corps detachments, and they were in the medical field, too. In most cases, the women were...

(End of Tape OH 94.5-8, Side 2)

(Begin Tape OH 94.5-9, Side 1)

Interviewer: Sergeant Major, when the last tape ended you were talking about WAC detachments, and the jobs of the female soldiers in those detachments; what they did, etc. Do you want to continue with that thought?

SMA Gates: That was the role of the women when I first entered the Army. They were totally separated from the men, and, for the most part, they were performing medical duties in hospitals, and performing administrative duties. Over the years, we have progressed and totally integrated the women into the United States Army. It was a hell of a change for the Army, when we started moving women into the same barracks that men lived in, and, vice versa, even to the point of having a female soldier, or a group of female soldiers, living next door to a males. We have a lot of units that are like that, today. That was a wide awakening for all of us. No one ever thought that would work. The only people who have a problem, are the people with gray hair, and old soldiers. It didn't bother the young soldiers too much. I'm not saying that it didn't consume additional time for the leadership, because, it did. When I entered the Army, I didn't know what a pregnant female soldier was; I didn't know what a pregnant soldier was. We weren't exposed to it. I'm sure they had a few. Today, that's common; quite common. When I first entered the Army, if a female soldier became pregnant, she had to leave the Army. The social changes have occurred, and I believe the female soldiers have the opportunity to serve in the majority of the MOSs; they

don't serve in all MOSs, but they serve in a majority of the MOSs. The only MOSs that are not open to female soldiers, today, are the maneuver units; ground combat maneuver units, such as the armor. Even in the armor brigade, I understand that they can probably serve at brigade level, but, not below brigade level.

Interviewer: What affect do you think the increasing number of women in the military has had on the Army?

SMA Gates: Whether anyone wants to accept it or not, the role of the female, in the United States has changed, and it continues to change. You see more female senators and members of the House of Representatives, than you did, ten years ago. And certainly, we'll have a female President some day. We had a female run for vice president. The roles of the females have changed, so we have to accept that. As I previously stated. Whatever is going on in society in the United States, must go on in the military. But, the role of the female soldier has tremendously changed, since 1958. As I was saying, they are serving on every installation in the United States, and they're not in some small detachment that is sort of hid from the rest of the Army. I honestly feel that female soldiers are doing a fantastic job, in every endeavor.

Interviewer: During Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm, you had a chance to observe the females in action, over in the Middle East. Tell me about that.

SMA Gates: They did a damn great job. They did a great job in Just Cause. There were female soldiers who drove trucks for days, and days, and days, through that desert over there. I'm talking about large trucks, and in some cases it was very difficult for them to reach the brakes, and clutches, and gas pedals; but, they did it. They endured the hardships of that environment over there as well as men did. I'm not saying that female soldiers don't have different needs than men; they certainly do. We have to recognize that, and we have to know how

to take care of those needs. One example of a female soldier during Desert Storm, she was a truck driver. For the most part, she moved soldiers for great distances, in Saudi Arabia, over difficult terrain and in difficult weather conditions. At that time it was cold in the desert, and raining like hell. They were having sand storms and everything. This female soldier was able to haul those soldiers. She drove almost twenty-fours a day, and for almost two weeks she did that. I said, almost twenty-four a day, but, at least twelve or sixteen hours a day, and she was hauling combat troops. I asked her, I said, "You know, I just don't understand how you can drive this truck, with all of those combat soldiers from the 82nd Airborne Division and 101st Airborne Division, across this desert, for days and days, and hours and hours. How in the world do you ever use the bathroom?" She looked at just as clear--and I think it sort of sums up the role of the female soldier in the Army--and she said, "Sergeant Major. All I do is move to one side of the truck, and pull my pants down and use the bathroom." That sort of startled me. I said, "Well, did any of the male soldiers try to watch you?" She said, "They don't watch me. Some of them stood guard for me." The purpose of this comment of that experience was that the male soldiers accepted her as a soldier; not as a female or someone with hair longer than their's. She was a soldier in a combat situation, and she would take care of the male soldiers, and the male soldiers would take care of her. I think that is exactly how we have to look at things.

Interviewer: You feel that some changes still should be made concerning the use of the women in the Army?

SMA Gates: Well, I think we have to be careful how we progress along these lines. We were working the female soldier issue, throughout my tenure as the Sergeant Major of the Army. You seen very clearly some of the duty positions did open for female soldiers. But, it was not because of any outside pressure. It was because the leadership of the

Army thought it was the right thing to do. We have to got be very careful how we just go balls to the wall, and make decisions that may not benefit the Army and the Country. We had an opportunity to visit the Israeli Army. Everybody in the United States think that the Israeli Army, today, has women in their first line combat units. That is a lie! It is totally false; they don't have them there. They found out, during all of the wars that they had, that they can't have female soldiers serving in the front line combat units, because, when one of them is wounded or killed, the males stop and try to do something for her, where they wouldn't for the male soldier. It's common sense, and it's a common occurrence, that things like that--I'm just using this as an example--just don't work. It don't work mixing male and female soldiers in tanks. It didn't work for the Israelis, and if we listen to the Israelis, we'll understand why it won't work for the United States. They do have a lot of female soldiers in the Israeli Army. You go to an installation, that really is about you see. Because, do you know where the males are at? Out patrolling the border. I'm not saying that they don't protect their hometown, sort of like a national guard, or a militia; they do that Everybody has to do that. But the fact of the matter is, they don't serve in a combat maneuver unit. They did, initially, but then they found out they just couldn't. They would get entire units put in Harm's Way, because of those assignments. How they have some fairly unique things, and maybe we could do that in the United States Army, too. There are women there who train soldiers how to shoot tanks; they're good tankers, but on the training side. That relieves the men to man the tanks on the front line. They're even instructors in the infantry training, and they're good at it. You know, they can teach tactics as good as a man can, and go out and run all over the hills, and everything. But, then it relieves the men to man the tanks, the armored personnel carriers, and the foxholes, out on the front line. That kind of makes sense to me.

Interviewer: It sure does. You were talking about the female soldier transporting the troops, there in Saudi. What changes have you seen in the attitudes of the soldiers, over the years, and how have those attitudes changed?

SMA Gates: Three decades ago, when we entered the Army, it was a very disciplined army. It did not have a lot of contact with the civilian communities that you lived around. If those contacts were present, the average soldier certainly didn't know about those contacts. In many cases, there were conflicts between the civilian community and the local military installation. The military was sort of isolated in the local community; that has changed. It's a combined effort today. The civilian communities certainly support the installations, and the installations certainly support the civilian communities. In most cases, they have great relationships, all over the world. That had been a drastic change, I believe.

Interviewer: Do you believe it's because of the individual attitude of the soldier, now?

SMA Gates: I think so. You know, you can't have one without the other. The taxpayers of the United States are the people who pay the money--and all soldiers are taxpayers, by the way--to maintain an Army. We are all taxpayers, so it's sort of a team effort. That has been a drastic change. You don't see too many restricted installations, today; most of the installations are open. Hell, the people of the United States own every installation there is, regardless of where it is, they still own it. It don't belong to me; it belongs to us. A lot of folks don't understand that, but it's the truth. But that has changed, and I think that has changed for the better. So, the relationship between the citizens of the United States and the military certainly has changed; that's number one. Number two. The leadership of the Army has changed, drastically. We treat individuals as human beings, instead of numbers. Don't get me wrong, there are a lot of people who are still playing

number games. But, we treat soldiers as individuals. When I first came into the Army, they even had the squad members numbered. I was the "number ten man" in the squad. We don't have that anymore. It's kind of stupid to put a number on an individual. Hell, I'm not a prisoner, so, I don't need a number. The same thing applies to any other soldier. We don't need numbers. In a tank, you don't have number one man, number two man, three man, four man. It's the gunner, the assistant gunner, the loader, or the Tank Commander. The same thing with the machine gun crew. You don't have one, two, three, four. And the way we go about disciplining soldiers has changed, drastically. It used to be, hell, the old sergeant would take you out behind the barracks and beat you, or kick you, or treat you like something other than a human being. Most of that has gone away, in the military. Now having said that, there's a lot of military discipline that takes place, that probably shouldn't take place. You know, the Article 15 is not the answer to discipline. The answer to discipline is proper training, supervision, leadership. That answers the disciplinary problems in the Army. Of course, you're going to always have gangsters, and when they do that, they need to go to jail. But, the fact of the matter is, minor disciplinary problems shouldn't be taken care of with an Article 15. I never have recommended a soldier for an Article 15. I didn't have to do that. I not saying that I went out and kicked soldiers, or beat soldiers. Now, I did use some harsh words at times, and there were times when you did have to kick soldiers in the butt to get them to move, but it was under extreme circumstances; somebody was trying to kill those soldiers. My job was to take care of them. So, that has drastically changed. The conditions in the barracks have changed. We started the volunteer Army and, you know, my God, we put beer machines in the barracks; that was the end of the world. As we found out, the average soldiers doesn't drink beer anyway; they drink Coke. I'm not saying some soldiers don't still get drunk, and come in and tear the place up; they still do that. But, the

average soldiers drink more Cokes than they do, beer. That is true. When I said that, everybody looked at me, you know, with the drinking problem that we have, everyone seems to think most soldiers drink beer, beer, beer, beer. No, that ain't true. We ran a survey in the Army. God damnit, the major beverage is a Coca-Cola. So, more of them drink Coke than they do, beer. When I first came in, yeah, I think we drank more beer. But, those times have changed. The largest change is that technology coming to the Army. We have to have soldiers better trained. We've been able to recruit high quality people, from Hometown, U.S.A. So, that technology has caused us to train soldiers better. It caused us to have to have a higher quality soldier. I'm not saying there isn't a place for the high school dropout in the Army; there certainly is. But, we've got to make sure we train that soldier right, first. But, so we don't endanger lives of other people, that is the rationale for it. Nobody says a high school dropout, or a Cat (Category) 4 soldier can't be in the military, just because they're a high school dropout or a Cat 4. There might be a place for those type individuals in the Army. If there hadn't been, I would have never came in. But, the fact of the matter is, you can't endanger lives of the soldiers. That's a No, No. That's against all of the principles of the Army.

Interviewer: A high tech Army makes it more difficult to have those type soldiers; the Cat 4s and the dropouts.

SMA Gates: It does, but, in some cases, if those soldiers receive the proper training, the proper instruction, and the proper leadership, they can develop into class A soldiers. I'm convinced of that.

Interviewer: You know, we've had a change in the demography in our Country. We had socioeconomic changes. We have changes in the number of minorities. What affect do you think the change in demography of the United States will have on the Army?

SMA Gates: We've got to be very careful, in the Army, that we continue to have the proper representation of people in the Army. That

is very difficult to do, at least for the short term. Eventually, it probably won't make any difference. The fact of the matter is, we can't recruit all of our soldiers of one race, or of one gender. We have to have a mix, and really, the United States is not a melting pot. I'm convinced of that now. I used to think it was. It is not a melting pot. All races in the United States have their own values, and what not. You're not going to change the values of a white man, or a black man, or a red man, or a yellow man. You're not going to do that. The basic values will remain the same. You can put them in environments and cause them to work as a team, and that's okay; they do that well. But, you're not going to change the values, so, there's no such thing as a melting pot. It is not strictly my opinion, but a whole bunch of other folks' opinion. People come from all different ethnic backgrounds, religious backgrounds, and the whole nine yards. I think that with the demography changes that we're seeing occur, we're certainly going to have to work those issues, and if we're not careful, it will cause problems. We have to continue, also, to keep in mind that we need a good mix in the Army, otherwise, we will portray an Army that is discriminating against certain races. So, we have to be very careful how we do that. It's not going to be easy. The demography is changing very rapidly, by the way. It's a problem that has to be faces, and you have to come up with solutions. I'm not saying that we can't do that, and we will. It has to be done. I don't think that is an issue that we need to be overly concerned with, because, I think all races can perform if we bring that soldier into the Army, right, and we train that soldier right, regardless of what race or gender they are, they will be able to perform their job well. You know, all of the evidence that I've seen, so far, proves that. Some great general made the remark that a black soldier couldn't shoot well. Well, that is totally, totally bull shit. Black soldiers can shoot well. There have been millions of black soldiers who fired expert with weapons. There are a lot of white

soldiers that can't fire expert, but, there are a hell of a lot of white soldiers who can fire expert, too. So, those type of comments are dumb, in my opinion. It depends on how well you train the soldier. If you train soldiers to be soldiers, instead of being individuals, you're not going to have any problems with discrimination because of race or gender.

Interviewer: We have been talking about training, for the last couple of days. In particular, we have talked about the NCOES. What affect do you think the structured education system, under NCOES, has had on the Army?

SMA Gates: I think, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that the structured NCOES has caused a complete turnaround from the NCO Corps that we had at the end of the Vietnam era. I has caused us to build a professional NCO Corps; a better informed NCO Corps; an NCO Corps that can look at problems, analyze problems, and take proper action without a lot of assistance. Of course, you still have an officer chain of command, that approves and disapproves policies. But, I think the NCO Corps has grown tremendously over the last ten or twenty years. And it is primarily because of the NCOES. That is one of the reasons why we should always protect that system. I'm not saying we shouldn't improve it, but, we should protect it. That bring to mind one thing that we need to do, in my opinion. It is time for us to kind of re-look at the NCOES and see if we have the standards high enough in those courses of instruction, and do we have the right subjects being taught at the different levels. It is kind of dumb and stupid to me, to have to send a soldier to Fort Benning, Georgia, from Germany, for the Bradley Fighting Vehicle Master Gunner's Course. Why not train that soldier to be a Master Gunner when he graduates from ANCOG? Every one of the ANCOG graduates should be a Master Gunner. The same thing with the Master Fitness Trainer. Why and the hell should you have to send someone off to Fort Benjamin Harrison--and some time in the future, Fort Jackson,

South Carolina--to the Master Fitness Training School, when you should train that soldier through the NCOES; when he graduated from ANCOE. I was a Master Fitness Trainer when I graduated from the first NCO academy. I could give PT to my squad, or the platoon, or the company; it made no difference. Why in the hell can't a sergeant first class do that?

Interviewer: We also came up with the EPMS; the Enlisted Personnel Management System. I think we have talked about some of the weaknesses, but, what were some of the strong points about that the EPMS?

SMA Gates: Well, the Enlisted Personnel Management System established Branch Managers for each MOS in the Army. That was a part of it. It included a promotion system and an assignment system, to whereas, if it was time for Bill Gates to attend a particular course of instruction, then the flag kind of went up from that branch, down to the unit, to let them know that it was time for me to attend a particular course of instruction, or, in some cases, I was required to attend a course of instruction. But, I think the branch management of that career field, was one of the major things that EPMS did for the Army. The other thing was the promotion system. We established a promotion system that was the same throughout the Army. I think that was very helpful. The major thing that EPMS did for the Army, and a lot of people don't realize this, it allowed a soldier to be promoted without occupying a slot; a position. I know I was denied promotion to staff sergeant, for over a year. I couldn't even compete, because an individual was on SD, working at the Officer's Club as a cook, with my MOS and he was occupying my slot in the unit, as a squad leader. I was doing the job, but, I wasn't carried in the staff sergeant position, because, he was a staff sergeant. So, I think that is one of the great things it did, and done away with.

Interviewer: It did away with that "Right time, right place."

SMA Gates: Right. The right time and the right place.

(NOTE: The interview was briefly interrupted.)

Interviewer: We had a short break in the interview. I think we pretty well covered the EPMS. During the break we were talking about the NCO Journal, that is put together out at the Sergeants Major Academy. You said you would like to make some comments about the NCO Journal. Why don't you go ahead and make those comments.

SMA Gates: The NCO Journal is something that I am very proud of, during my tenure as the Sergeant Major of the Army. It is a publication that can touch every noncommissioned officer in the United States Army, certainly, with pertinent information, not only with issues that are primarily an NCOs concern, but an Army concern. The need for the NCO Journal did come up during "The Year of the NCO" as one of the strong recommendations, because we have all kinds of journals. We have the Officers Journal, you have the Reserve Officers Journal, and you have all kinds of journals dedicated to different segments of the Army, but, we didn't have an NCO Journal, that was strictly a publication to represent the noncommissioned officers. For about six months, we worked with the Journal. In my opinion, the home for the Journal should have been at the Sergeants Major Academy. The articles in the Journal should be written by NCOs from around, and throughout the Army, and not by civilians and not by officers, who have all kinds of opinions on what NCOs should be doing. It should be experiences, recommendations, and comments, by noncommissioned officers; the things they have to do in order to make the Army function. But, it should be headquartered at the Sergeants Major Academy, because, I believe everything for NCOs, training wise, starts at the Academy. We needed about twenty-six thousand dollars to finance the magazine. To get it off the ground, get people together at the Academy, and make it a class magazine instead of a two-page black and white news release article. We ran into roadblocks with the DA (Department of the Army) Public Affairs Office, TRADOC, and even the Academy. DA Public Affairs Office wanted to publish the thing,

and then it would have turned into just another Public Affairs publication. The same thing with TRADOC. It would have turned into a TRADOC publication. For some reason, the Sergeants Major Academy felt that they could not handle that additional responsibility. So, it was a total roadblock. We just couldn't get the thing off the ground. I had lost about all of the patience that I had with the NCO Journal, so, one Friday evening, I went in to see the Chief of Staff, General Vuono. Of course, it was about 1830 in the evening, and he was ready to retire, for at least the evening, and so was I. But, I had an opportunity to talk with him, and I laid it down to him. I said, "Sir, we ought to just do away with this damn magazine. The Public Affairs Office just will not release the magazine to be published by some other headquarters or some other component of the Army. TRADOC doesn't want to support the damn thing, and even the Sergeants Major Academy strongly believes that they don't have the capability to publish the Journal, such as what we believe that the Journal should be. By the way, we have a deficit of about twenty-six thousand God damn dollars, that nobody seem they can find, throughout this Army establishment. So recommendation fourteen, we ought to just throw it in the damn trash." Being a pretty smart old sergeant, I knew I had backed myself into the corner, and all he would had to say is, "Throw it in the trash." But, knowing General Vuono's personality and his desire to see NCOs continue to grow and being capable of performing the job that he expected NCOs to perform,... I'll tell you, that job is not easy. He was one of the toughest officers I have ever seen in my life, on an NCO. Yeah, he'd pat you on the back, but, he damn well expects you to do your job. If you didn't, General Vuono would deal with you. But, anyway, he looked at me, and his eyes got big. He didn't smile at all. He hit his desk, and said, "Damn it! Do you want a Journal?" I said, "Yes, sir. I want a Journal." He said, "Then why in the hell can't you get it?" I said, "I just got through tell you the reason why I couldn't get it. Everybody and his brother

don't want it. The only people that wants the damn Journal is you and all of the NCOs in the Army." He said, "Well, you tell General Woods to come in and see me, and you have twenty-six thousand dollars. And the God damn Journal is going to the Sergeants Major Academy. Colonel Van Horn will be responsible for publishing that Journal." I said, "Thank you, sir." He said, "Now, what the hell else do you want?" I said, "Sir, I would like to go home." That's really how we got the NCO Journal.

Interviewer: We were talking about "The Year of Training." How has individual training and unit training changes over the years?

SMA Gates: The largest change in training was when we stopped the old classroom instruction, and went to Performance Oriented Training. That was the biggest change, and the most positive change in the training. It was revolutionary, in my opinion. We changed from the old classroom syndrome, where you gave an introduction, an objective, a reason, and then you went through a two-hour speel, and put every damn body to sleep. Then you asked questions. You had a conference after you asked a question, for the people that didn't know the answer. So, we went to Performance Oriented Training, where you have a task, condition, and standard. For the first time in the history of the Army, you could measure training. Not only individual training, but, collective training. To me, that was the most significant change in the training that our Army has seen since the very, very early stages of our Army. Performance Oriented Training; you have a task, condition, and standard. You tell soldiers what it is they have to do. You explain to them the conditions. The conditions always change. It may be raining, or, it may not be. It may be the environment that you are in. It may be inside, outside. The conditions may change, but the task and the standard does not change. You have a measurable standard that every soldier should be able to reach. So, the soldiers know exactly when they perform to the standard, and everybody else does, too. To me,

that is the most significant change. The other great things that happened during my tenure in the Army, were the establishment of training centers--the Joint Readiness Training Center, the National Training Center, and the training center at Hohenfeld, Germany--where we could rotate units in and out of those training centers, and put them in a very tough simulated combat environment, that may very well be tougher than real combat, at least the soldiers told me that after Desert Storm. I think, that in itself, has really changed the readiness of the Army. And last, but not least, are the techniques for leader development, such as institutional training, NCOES, and the Officer Education System. And then the unit assignments, where an individual works in a unit, is assigned to a unit, performs duties in different positions in different type units, to gain unit experience. And then, certainly, we are just now beginning to institutionalize self-development, where a soldier has to do something to develop himself/herself in order to progress through the ranks.

Interviewer: How have the NCO academies changed over the years?

SMA Gates: Oh, my God. Drastic! Today, NCO academies teach soldiers leadership, training, discipline. They teach soldiers how to lead other soldiers. The initial NCO academy I went to, the only damn thing we learned there was how to shine the brass in the latrine, and how to spit shine the floors, and how to properly line our boots up. I'm not saying those things are not important. I don't think that Brasso'ing the brass in the latrine is probably not too important. It wasn't designed to be Brasso'ed. But, you know, lining up equipment so you know where everything is at, isn't such a bad idea. We always have had SOPs (Standing Operating Procedure) for doing things like that. But, that is about all we learned. Today, soldiers learn specific tasks, that are oriented toward their duties and responsibilities in a unit, whether it be in PLDC or the Sergeants Major Academy. Those specific tasks must be performed, and performed to standards. Otherwise,

the soldier doesn't progress through that level of education. It changed from four to six weeks of pure harassment, to four to six weeks of learning.

Interviewer: What affect do you think allowing gays in the military will have on the Army?

SMA Gates: Boy, you sure know how to ask a loaded question. I strongly believe that... First of all. I just don't believe that is, or was... I guess it is still ongoing, and it will be ongoing for years in the courts, sitting in the court system. I don't believe the issue of gays in the military should have ever been raised to a National issue. We have regulations. We have a Uniform Code of Military Justice. We have policies that cover gays in the military. Again, I am totally against any form, whatsoever, of open homosexuality in the military. And, if you allow it, even though you say that gays cannot openly display their sexual preference, it damn sure will happen. I just don't believe, from people that I have been able to soldier with, in combat and in peace time. I just don't believe that you could have a person who is a gay leader--a person who has stripes, or bars, or stars--and stand in front of a group of soldiers who were not gay, and say, "I am gay. I am your leader." I'd be damn if I would follow him. I don't think a lot of soldiers would follow him or her either. The same thing in a small unit, such as a tank crew. What happens to a tank crew, if the Tank Commander says, "Hey, I gay." And if he's gay, and it is something that is authorized, does he go around putting his hands on other soldiers? I don't know; I can't answer that. But, we should not allowing that to infiltrate into the military ranks. We have always had gays. We've had heroes that were gays. That's okay, as long as you don't practice it in uniform. While you are in the military service, I don't care what your sexual preference is, if you condone it, then it will be practiced in any form or fashion, if you condone it. I don't think that is healthy for the Army. I certainly don't appreciate any

politician, any damn where, that has never served a day in the military, and never will, of ever advocating that the military needs that type of garbage. My blood pressure has risen about ten points. My feathers are standing on end. That is the stupidest thing I have ever seen the national leadership of this Country ever try to impose on the military. It is just something that should not be done. The only damn reason it is being done is because somebody paid a person who was aspiring to be elected to a very high office in the United States; paid him some money to assist him with the damn election campaign. That's all it is; Payback. That garbage there will tie up the chain of command, the damn court system, and the military justice system, for years, and years, and years to come. We'll spend millions of taxpayers' dollars on shit that has absolutely zero bearing on the United States Army. If you want to be a gay, gay all the hell you want to, but don't do it in while you're in uniform. I don't care what you do in your bedroom, but don't impose that garbage on me. And don't impose it on the soldiers. Don't do that. And that's exactly what will happen when you have that gay society inside the military.

Interviewer: This may seem like an usual question, but how important is it that an NCO have a sense of humor?

SMA Gates: Here again, I believe I have a reputation, or had the reputation, of being a very serious minded person. Maybe not. But, at least that was sort of the impression I got from most of the folks who has talked to me after Iretired. They told me that I was a very serious person, and I didn't laugh as much as I should. But, I think any leader has to have a sense of humor. There are so damn many times when Murphy's Law is always standing by to get into the way. No matter what you do, somewhere along the line, Murphy's Law will intervene. I don't care what it is. Even if you have a formation, something will be wrong with that formation, and, of course, it may very well ruffle your feathers, or raise your blood pressure at times. But, you need to stand back and

laugh at it. Even when soldiers say the things they say at times, if you take it in the right light, it really is comical, in some cases. I'm serious.

(End of Tape OH 94.5-9, Side 1)

(Begin Tape OH 94.5-9, Side 2)

Interviewer: Do you want to continue talking about the sense of humor?

SMA Gates: I think you have to have a sense of humor. You take everything too seriously. And I'm not saying you can't, because there are some things you take very seriously; soldiers lives, doing you job and doing it well, accident prevention. But, you also need to have some fun. I don't care what type of hardship you endure during your military tenure, you can look back on those hardships, and really they're were times when you had a lot of fun. But, there are moments that you have to take things seriously. My God, if I had laughed, instead of gotten mad and upset over a number of things, and the circumstances, and the situations that we were in, I would probably be a complete maniac, today. I think there are a lot of things that are sort of comical in the Army. Even inspections are comical, if you look at them in the right light. Some of the funny dumb things that we do for inspections. A couple of things come to mind, that had a lot of humor. Of course, here again, it's not funny to the person who is receiving. And it may not have been funny to me, at the time. We had an IG (Inspector General) inspection, when I was stationed in Bamberg, Germany. We didn't pass it the first time. In fact, they probably couldn't inspect us, because, our equipment was in such bad shape, but, there was a reason for it; we was only about fifty-three percent strength in the unit. We didn't have any supplies. We didn't have the spare parts to maintain the vehicles. We didn't have the technicians to maintain the vehicles. We didn't have the leadership to maintain the vehicles. Here, I'm laughing at that, but, that really is not very funny. If the Soviet

Union wanted to attack Western Europe, they should have done it in the early '70s. But anyway, I don't know why in the hell the IG wanted to inspect us for; I never did know what for. I'm serious. So, anyway, we had the IG inspection, and the second time they came down, the soldiers were really irritated about having to go out and spend hours, and hours, and hours, and hours, spit shining this and spit shining that. If would have been okay if they took the vehicles and see if it would run down the road, and shoot; that's okay. They didn't mind that. But, looking to see if everything was spit shined and everything was dress right, dress, and covered down, that is kind of asinine; it's something we probably shouldn't be doing. Anyway, the soldiers were sort of upset about it. We went into the motor pool, and the same sergeant and the same warrant officer were inspecting the tracks. They went through the APCs, and when they went down to the third vehicle, and raised the hood, one of those soldiers had setup a booby trap; an artillery simulator. You know, he had the hood popped, but he didn't raise it all the way. If was one of the few that wasn't all the way up. When that ass hole raised the hood of that damn APC, that artillery simulator went off, and smoke and everything was going everywhere. The people jumped down on the motor pool floor, and thought that something was really bad. You know, when I seen that, the thing that went through my mind was, "These soldiers are so tired of this bull shit, no wonder they tried to booby trap it." At that time, I thought that was the funniest thing in the World, but the ADC for the Division, didn't. A lot of us had our heels locked all day, that day. We never did pass that IG inspection. But, looking back on it, it was funny. I had a soldier in my squad, at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, by the name of Private Tortarski; a potato farmer from Idaho. His parents owned, maybe, a thousand acres of land, and they raised potatoes. Tortarski was a good soldier, but, he was just one-half step behind the rest of the soldiers, and he never could catch up. He was a draftee and he volunteered for airborne. Not because he

wanted money, I think, just because he wanted the excitement of jumping out of airplanes. We had a road march one time. We was on the rifle range, and the Company Commander called me up and said, "Hey, Sergeant Gates, I want your squad to be the point squad for this company, and I damn well want the company to go back to the barracks in a hurry, when we finish the firing on the range. So, you will be the point squad, and I want you to force march the company back to the cantonment area." I said, "Okay." Hell, this was an honor. He selected me over all of the sergeants, and my squad out of all the squads in the company. I got my men together, and I said, "Okay, you know, when we do this march, we're going to march as fast as we possibly can. We're going to show the rest of the company how tough it is to march with the 3rd Squad, 3rd Platoon." The squad called themselves "Hell's Marauders." They didn't write any signs or anything, but they called themselves that. Anyway, you know, we wanted to maintain the proper dispersion of ten meters; approximately ten meters. It was about three miles into the cantonment area, so, we cut out. Tortarski fell back; he couldn't keep up. He fell back, probably about ten meters. He just embarrassed the hell out of me, as the squad leader, and the rest of the squad, too. They kind of hollered at him some. So, we got back to the barracks, and I was fairly upset with Tortarski. We finally got released, and I went up into the platoon area. I was a bachelor, living in the barracks. I called old Tortarski in my room. Needless to say, I laid the law down to Tortarski, and it wasn't very nice. Tortarski was over six foot tall. The soldier's arms were as big as my legs. I was telling him how sorry and how bad of a soldier he really was, and how he let the squad down. And in so many words, using a few words, other than those found in the dictionary, I was really dressing him down. Tortarski got so mad that tears come in his eyes. I'm telling you the truth; the God's honest truth. On my wall locker--a metal wall locker--there was a combination lock. Instead of hitting me, Tortarski just reached over, and just twisted that lock,

and broke that damn lock apart. I said, "God bless America." When he done that, the funniest damn thought that I have ever thought in my life, when through my mind. Here old Tortarski could have broke my neck. But, instead of hurting me, he took it out on that damn wall locker. Then he looked at me, just as serious, and said, "Sergeant Gates, I'll buy you a new lock." I said, "Get the hell out of here." There are some characters in the Army.

Interviewer: Did you ever have any trouble with him falling out again?

SMA Gates: Never. Absolutely not. And no one else. We had a first sergeant; Matthew Jones. Matthew Jones was the toughest first sergeant you have ever seen in your life. The rumors were that Matthew, or First Sergeant Jones. Nobody called him Matthew. I don't even think his good friends called him Matthew; his fellow first sergeants. You know, when he became the First Sergeant of the Company, he stood up in front of the Company and said, "The best man is the First Sergeant. And anyone that don't believe that, take one step forward." And nobody moved. First Sergeant Jones could not read and write well. In fact, he couldn't maintain the duty roster. He had to have a PFC maintain the duty roster. But, anyway, he single. And here again, the rumor was that he had a girlfriend in Atlanta, Georgia. It was just rumors. We were on first and second ready alert, and in the 101st, at that time, you were restricted to the barracks; you couldn't go anywhere. On the third, fourth, and fifth ready alert, you could go to the local towns, which was Hopkinsville and Clarksville; within twenty-five miles. Nashville was where all of the guys wanted to go to. There were a lot of activities that went on in Nashville. Most of women, you know, and the Grand Ole Opera, and all of these things were in Nashville. There were a lot of places where you could dance and have fun. It was forty-six miles from Fort Campbell. If the Division was on alert, and you were on either one of these numerical number alerts, you weren't allowed

to go to Nashville. There were two soldiers that took a trip up to Nashville, on a Saturday. You know, we didn't have cars and things like that. We couldn't afford cars; you rode the bus to Nashville. When they got off the bus, guess who was standing on the top steps, going into the bus station? The First Sergeant. So, the First Sergeant said, "Hey, you two guys just enjoy yourself, but, you come see me at 6:00 o'clock Monday morning." But, they didn't enjoy themselves. They got on the next damn bus and went back to Fort Campbell. Now, here again, the rumors were that he had a girlfriend in Atlanta, Georgia. So they reported to the First Sergeant Jones, at 6:00 o'clock Monday morning. He asked the two soldiers, "What in the hell were you doing in Nashville, off limits, when you're on third ready alert" One of the soldiers sort of got brave and said, "Well, First Sergeant, you was up there." He said, "Yeah, you little SOB, but I didn't get caught; you did, and you're going to pay for it." And they did pay for it.

Interviewer: I think we've got about two more questions here. In contrast to the present day Army, what do you see as the future of the United States Army?

SMA Gates: That is a loaded question. Again, it is very difficult to envision what the future Army will be like. But, I hope the leadership of the Army, and the national leadership of our Country, don't take actions that will totally destroy the concept that we have in the Army of today. I think that we'll have a smaller army, and I'm sure we will have a more rigorous, more difficult tasks and missions for the Reserve Components. Common sense sort of tells you that. But, I hope the hell the leadership of our Country has enough sense, common canteen cup level sense, to not destroy the Army, and make it into something that can't deploy, and an army that is not versatile, and an army that is not lethal. If we build the Army of the Future, and we just don't down-size the Army, we'll have a better Army. I think there is a hell of an opportunity to build the Army that we've always wanted. We'll

have the great Army that can move anywhere, anytime, and fight; and that we have the technology that we need; and that we have all high quality soldiers; and that we have high quality training; and we have outstanding leaders, if we build the Army of the Future. But, if we just down-size the Army, and take stuff out of it, and piecemeal the building of the Army of the Future, then we'll have some trouble. We'll have an army that can't get outside the kaserne, or the installation, like we had in the early '70s, in Europe. Personally, I envision the Army of the Future of being small. We will have smaller divisions, and that kind of makes sense to me. If we can develop a division that is smaller--with less people--but more lethal, then that is really what we need to be looking at to develop. So, there's a little hesitancy in me of looking at the Army of the Future, and saying it is going to be better than the Army that we had that came out of Desert Storm. But, I don't know. With the current trend that we see and hear, that might not be proper. But, somewhere along the line, the great thing about the United States is that the American people will continue to take things that are not conducive to the needs of the American people, for a long period of time. Eventually, they become fed up with those things, and they have a tendency to change. Unfortunately, in the past, with the Army, what has caused us to change is, we put an Army in the field that couldn't fight and it costs us a hell of a lot of lives. To me, that is not the way to go.

Interviewer: We found that out in Korea and Vietnam.

SMA Gates: We found that out in Vietnam. We found that out in Korea. We found that out in World War II. We found that out in the First World War. We found that out in the Civil War. We even did that during the revolutionary War. Our Army was not trained, and we knew that at Valley Forge. When we went into Valley Forge, we were getting our ass whipped. We came out of there with a pretty good army.

Interviewer: How has the role of the Sergeant Major of the Army

changed over the years? And, why do you think those changes have come about?

SMA Gates: The basic duties and responsibilities of the Sergeant Major of the Army, I don't think has changed drastically. We should never confuse the basic duties and responsibilities with every Sergeant Major of the Army. And the same thing with every NCO in the United States Army. And that is, to train, take care of, ensure that our soldiers are properly disciplined, properly taken care of, and enforce the standards of the Army. And, do as much as you can to take care of the family members that we have in the Army. Those are the basic duties and responsibilities of a noncommissioned officer. It doesn't make a difference what level you are assigned to. If you ever lose sight of the soldier who drinks coffee out of a canteen cup, early in the morning in the field, then you've got a damn problem. You shouldn't do that as the Sergeant Major of the Army, and, I don't think any of them have. At least in the association I have with the former Sergeants Major of the Army, they have always maintained their emphasis on the canteen cup level soldier. What I mean is, somebody that has to use a canteen cup in their day-to-day duties, at some time or another during their tour in the Army, and not just during initial entry training. So, the duties and responsibilities of an NCO, regardless at what level of command you serve, are the same, in my humble opinion. But I think what we've seen over the years is certainly the increase in the ability of the media communications; the speed of communications has increased over the years. The means of communications certainly has increased over the number of years. The soldiers are more open today, than they were yesterday. So, I think, the task of the Sergeant Major of the Army has increased, tremendously, over the years. Like I stated before, we received approximately a hundred to a hundred and fifty inquiries a week, and during Desert Storm, that increased five times; we received about five hundred inquiries per week. It got to the point where I

almost had to have people working twenty-four hours a day. So, the media has caused the Office of the Sergeant Major of the Army to be more publicized, throughout the United States Army, and in the civilian communities, among the Department of the Army civilians. So, more people are aware that there is such a thing as the Sergeant Major of the Army.

Interviewer: Do you also think the people on Capitol Hill, and the senior Army leadership view the Sergeant Major of the Army differently, now, than they did years ago?

SMA Gates: Absolutely. I was going to get into that. I believe that the Office of the Sergeant Major of the Army, and not so much the individual, but the person who occupies that position there, is a person who would be able to, who can, and does speak in behalf of the soldiers who serve in the ranks of the Army, and for the family members of those soldiers. And, that they speak up front, without any clouds at all, and they are authorized and can say things, probably to the national leadership, that commissioned officers can't, or should not say openly and up front and to the point. A good of example of that. We were testifying to the Senate Armed Services Committee, one time, and they were talking about down-sizing the military, and some of the programs that had cropped up, and some of the programs that they wanted to implement, throughout the military. Senator Nunn, from Georgia, was the head of that committee. I told them. I said, "Senator Nunn, the thing that you mentioned, and talk about, are great. Those are the things that we really need if we are going to decrease the size of the Army. But, by the way, Senator. There are two things that you and your colleges need to ensure. If you approve this plan, then you damn well need to appropriate the money to finance that plan." I said, "That is one of the things that the great Congress of the United States does. It will approve a plan, or anything, but, it cannot, and will not appropriate the money to institute that plan." See, the DCSPER couldn't

do that, but, I could.

Interviewer: What was his reaction?

SMA Gates: He looked at me, and said, "We will do that." I said, "Okay, sir. We're going to hold you to that." I looked around, and said, "Everybody heard that. We're going to hold you to that, sir. Okay?" You know, everybody got a kick out of that. There was a little sense of humor in that thing. But, at least, he received the message. God, it's great. We're going to do this, this, and this. You know, three bags full, but somebody has got to pay for that, and the taxpayers of the United States has to pay for it. So, if your going to do all of these grandiose schemes that you talk about, appropriate the money. It's okay to approve the budget, the nest step is what? Appropriating the money to make that budget a reality. A lot of times the national leadership, they don't do that to look good in the face of the voters out there, if they approve all of the programs. But, when they start taking additional tax dollars, they get fussed at. But, I think you're right. The other thing is, I think that the services interface a lot more today, than they did yesterday; especially, the senior enlisted. There is a lot on interaction with the Senior Enlisted Members of the services. Not only do they prepare, and even to the point of rehearsing, and the whole nine yards, when the four individuals went up and testified before the Congress of the United States. So, we covered all of the points that were sort of unique to all services, instead of something just for the Army, or something for the Marine Corps, for the Navy, or for the Air Force. So, there's more interaction, and more togetherness, if you will, that has been imbedded inside the Offices of the Senior Enlisted Members of all services.

Interviewer: Did you get along real well with the Senior Enlisted Members of the other services?

SMA Gates: Oh, great. Now I'm not saying that we always agreed, but, the fact of the matter, we had a great relationship. Even to the

point of social activities. When the opportunities permitted, we would socialize. Here again, you could talk very freely and get information from one of your fellow Senior Enlisted and kind of ask them how they were doing things. Shoot, you got some good clear ideas from them. But, the interaction there was certainly more open today, than I think it was, yesterday. And I think we really pushed that, during my tenure. I not saying that it wasn't there, but, we pushed that. Unfortunately, I was elected as the Senior of all of the services, so we had the opportunity to speak first. That was okay, but, a little more of a burden, but we did okay. We really had a lot of fun together, and I think we really did some good for the military.

Interviewer: During the last three days, we've had a little over thirteen hours of interview, here. Do you have any final thoughts?

SMA Gates: When we first went to the Pentagon, and assumed the duties and responsibilities as the Sergeant Major of the Army, we made a change in the office, but, we didn't do it for show. But, most of the individuals in the Pentagon all have fancy China and fancy cups, with their rank insignias on it. But, in the office of the Sergeant Major of the Army, we changed all of that and we put canteen cups in there. Anyone that came in the office, got coffee, or something cool, either in a canteen cup or a styrofoam cup. This news reporter elaborated on that quite a bit. He talked about it and that, initially, he thought it was just a show. But, after the interview concluded, he sincerely believed that Bill Gates represented the soldiers at the "canteen cup level." We tried to do that. Whether or not we succeeded, whether or not we represented the soldiers well, or whether or not we executed the duties and responsibilities of the Sergeant Major of the Army up to the expectations, I don't know. I can't answer that. Someone else will have to answer that, and say "yes" or "no." I think we, and here again it's "we" accomplished some major accomplishments, during my tenure. And again, you can't do anything by yourself. You're not a policy maker.

The Chief of Staff makes the policy for the Army. You don't spend money. Someone else allocates that money to you, and then you can spend it. I think, during my tenure, that we seen the Army grow into the best army in the World. And no doubt about it, we just didn't prove it during peacetime, we proved it to the World, when we moved almost five hundred thousand soldiers and millions of tons of equipment and materiel, halfway around the World, and those soldiers went into ground combat against the fourth largest army in the World, so to speak. Technically, within a week, the ground phase of the war was over with. That is the type of army we all sort of dreamed about. I think we laid the foundations for an army that probably could win that war, if we build it right, and we just don't down-size the Army. If we build the Army of the Future right, the Army of the Future probably could face that same enemy and overcome their resistance within twenty-four or forty-eight hours; so, you could cut that time down in half, but, not without tragedies. You always have soldiers who are injured, soldiers who lose limbs, and soldiers who give their life for their Country. And that's really is the bad part. It's very sad to see a soldier in a hospital that will never walk again. One last war story, then I think we can close this interview. There are always two things that have always stuck in my mind. If Bill Gates had any success at all, as the Sergeant Major of the Army, I was sort of guided by these two things. You got all kinds of advice from a whole bunch of people, who prepare you to do all of these great things, and to be a leader in the military. The chain of command prepares you; your fellow noncommissioned officers prepare you; and soldiers prepare you, because, if you are successful it's because of the great soldiers out there, that you're charged to train and lead in wartime, and protect their lives. But there are two things that sort of stuck with me; actually three things. One is, even as a youngster, playing at night, back on the farm with my friends, I always wanted to be a soldier. This great Country gave me that

opportunity. They took an old high school dropout that was probably headed toward another type of institution, and gave me an opportunity. Nothing is free; you have to work for everything you get. A lot of people assisted me, and gave me different opportunity throughout my career, any we didn't let those people down. We tried out best to fulfil the obligations of those opportunities. That is the way it works. Then, the good thing about it is, instead of a high school dropout, and someone that probably would still be working at the Ford Motor Company, in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, not saying that isn't all bad, or being a farmer, I now have a title that I can take to my grave. I am a soldier and I an a sergeant. I'm very proud of that. Some people aren't, but I am very proud of that. That's something that nobody can ever take away from me. The other thing is, I had an opportunity to visit many of our National Cemeteries. At one of our National Cemeteries, there was a young soldier, in Europe, on foreign soil. I had an opportunity to visit that cemetery. It was a cemetery sort of out of the way at Morgotten, Holland. It's a beautiful place. Everything is well maintained. There are extraordinary buildings and memorials. Not many Americans visit that cemetery. But, anyway, as we went into the cemetery there. You know, in that cemetery there were six unknown soldiers laid to rest, there on foreign soil. As a young soldier, I thought to myself, "I don't know how in the hell a person could possibly give their life for their country, and for nobody to know who they are." I just could not visualize that. That morning it really bothered me. So, I wanted to do something, or say something, just to get that thought out of my mind. So I looked up on a little hill there, and there was the Flag of the United States--Old Glory--flying. Hell, I stood there bawling, and I saluted the flag, and I said the Pledge of Allegiance. I may lose soldiers in war, but I made a promise that I would never have a soldier missing in action, and never would one of my soldiers be an unknown. I just wouldn't do that. The other thing that

stuck with me, was many, many years later, when I visited Walter Reed Medical Center, as the Sergeant Major of the Army. A young PFC, as a result of having to serve in war, was in the hospital and he was wounded to the point that they had to amputate his legs, and he was missing his right arm. I was speaking to the soldier, which we did when we visited the wounded soldiers. Myself and General Vuono went all over the Country, wherever they were at, to visit the soldiers and visit the veterans in veterans hospitals, and things like that. But, what that soldier said to me, stuck with me and it will probably stick with me for the rest of my life. It sort of, in a nutshell, tells you the type of soldier that we have, and the type of Army that we have. I asked the soldier, "Is there anything the Sergeant Major of the Army can do for you?" He said, "No, Sergeant Major, these people are taking good care of me. I don't have any pain." This soldier was missing both of his legs, and his right arm. He even had some bandages on his face. I thought, "My God, I just ain't getting through to this guy." You would expect for him to say "Call my family.", or something. So, I asked him, "Is your family here?" He said, "Yeah, they're here. Yeah, my mom and dad are staying in a hotel, and everything is okay." His name was Young. I said, "God, PFC Young, isn't there something I can do for you?" The little shit looked up at me, and said, "Sergeant Major, after I get well, and they fit me with a new set of legs, I want to stay in the Army."

Interviewer: Now I would like to ask you about the first day, when you were sworn-in, and then about your retirement ceremony. Tell me about when you were sworn-in as the Sergeant Major of the Army. What type ceremony you had, etc.

SMA Gates: It's a very solemn ceremony, and the ceremony was conducted in the Chief of Staff's office. The Army Assistant SJA (Staff Judge Advocate) did the swearing-in ceremony, and you do take an oath, by placing your hand on the Bible. I wondered what an atheist would do.

That's a crazy thought to have run through your mind, with all the things that were going on. But, anyway, you did place your hand on the Bible, and swear an oath to the Office of the Sergeant Major of the Army. There is an oath that you are required to take. In that office, of course, were family members. My dad was there, by the way. He was still alive, and he attended. He didn't understand what was going on, but, he knew something was going on for his son, and that was what was important, I guess. Of course, my immediate family; Margaret and the two girls--Melissa and Laura--they were there. It was a very simple, but, a very solemn ceremony. It lasted about ten minutes, and then it was over.

Interviewer: What about your retirement?

SMA Gates: My retirement was a little different. It took place at Fort Myer, Virginia. The Old Guard, of the 3rd Infantry, was the unit that performed the troop formation. It took some planning, and lot of people were invited to the ceremony. You know, you go out and do the troop review, and then have the retirement ceremony. The Chief of Staff says a few words, and you have the opportunity to say a few words, and then it's over. It was fairly simple, but, fairly lengthy, and it took a lot of planning and effort to execute the retirement ceremony. I guess you are never satisfied, but, the only dissatisfaction that I had with it is that, I wanted my retirement ceremony to be in the battle dress uniform. The Old Guard just couldn't, for some reason, perform in a battle dress uniform, on the parade field out there, in front of all those people, so we sort of had to change it.

Interviewer: Was it an all-NCO parade?

SMA Gates: All NCOs. Of course, there were a lot of officers present, watching the parade, but the Commander of Troops was the Old Guard Sergeant Major.

Interviewer: I think that pretty well covers everything. I would like to make a couple of final statements here. On behalf of General

Nelson, Major Kelly, Dr. Dray, and all of the people with the Center of Military History, I would like to express their appreciation for your participation in this very important project. Also, on behalf of Colonel Van Horn and Command Sergeant Major Strahan, at the Academy, and Larry Arms, who is the Director of the NCO Museum, I would like to express their sincere appreciation. Finally, on behalf of myself, and also the Noncommissioned Officers Corps, I would like you for over thirty years of distinguished to your Country, to the Army, and also to the NCO Corps.

SMA Gates: I really appreciate that. I'll tell you, this is, beyond a shadow of a doubt, the most professional interview that I've had, and I've had two or three of them. I certainly am appreciative of all of the people at the Center of Military History, and all of the great Americans down at the Sergeants Major Academy. But, more so, your participation, Butch. Not only are you a fellow sergeant major, a fellow NCO, but I consider you a damn good friend.

Interviewer: Thank you.

(End of Interview) .