INTERVIEW II

DATE: December 19, 1984

INTERVIEWEE: SPURGEON H. NEEL, JR.

INTERVIEWER: Ted Gittinger

PLACE: General Neel's office, San Antonio, Texas

Tape 1 of 1

N: In 1951, I was surgeon of the 82nd Airborne Division as a major, and Lieutenant Colonel [William] Westmoreland was the chief of staff. We had a succession of commanding generals come through, but General Westmoreland even then was running the division. We just kept up our friendship, and then when Korea--when I got over there in 1952-1953, well, General Westmoreland had the 187th Airborne Combat Team as a brigadier, and I was a lieutenant colonel by then. So then when the Vietnam thing came along and he went over there with [Paul] Harkins and later inherited the COMUSMACV [Commander, U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam] job, I was a student at the Industrial College of the Armed Forces.

And I wanted to go to Vietnam then, because it's the only crap game in town; it may be crooked, but it's the only one. The timing was off, because the tour then was two years over there with dependents accompanying, so they put me on orders to Panama as chief surgeon of South Command, even had quarters assigned down there. Then when the President pulled all the dependents out in maybe February of 1965, they shortened the tour down to one year, and then they gave the incumbents credit proportional to what they had spent. So the surgeon was eligible to come home. So I was able to get the Surgeon General to change my orders to get over to Vietnam. I think General Westmoreland knew all this was taking place.

I got there and initially was put up in the Rex Hotel down right in the center of Saigon. Then one night I went over to have supper with General Westmoreland; he invited me over. Then toward the end of the meal he wanted to know if I would like to move in, and, of course, I was very pleased. We were upstairs at this 60 Tran Quy Cap, and we shared the top floor there. And we had [John Frederick] "Fritz" Freund--Brigadier General Freund was living there with us and Westmoreland, and I've got a block on Bill's name--he was the intelligence guy--was talking to [William H.] Crosson, Bill Crosson. It just struck me as not an intentional thing with General Westmoreland, but he surrounded himself not with the people that were going to win the war for him, but the ones that could potentially lose the war for him: the health of the command, the public image and the informal intelligence.

When he would try to tie me down on malaria, I would try to tell them that I need more time to get the end-of-the-month reports in, and he would remind me that he didn't have that kind of time. And the same thing with Bill Crosson. They'd be discussing whether or not some Viet Cong regiment was in position, and he said, "We need one more sighting before we confirm it," and he said again, "I don't have that kind of time." So he really wanted the horseback estimates from us. Then he would suggest to Freund, and Freund would go over and talk to the Joint General Staff. The Orientals, I think, even more than we like to, deal through an intermediary, so there won't be any confrontation or somebody saying no to somebody. Then he would go over and run it by them, and he would come back and give us his estimate of what the general officers felt.

G: What were your accommodations like? I presume it was comfortable. I can't see--

N: Very nice. We had a houseboy named Hai, which they tell me is the number two; he's the number-two son in his family. So he was named Hai. He did all the cooking and his family was there. And we finally got TV in country, and the kids used to come after dinner and sit around on the floor and watch television. Looked like our grandchildren.

The ceilings were real tall. They had the fans. Seems like there was always something over your head. In the daytime there was the helicopter, and at night it was the fan. It was always something spinning around. We kept the windows open very much. Things were sort of naturally air-conditioned over there, and it was interesting watching people come in from the States and want privacy. They'd want to partition off their office and they would destroy all the cross ventilation, and they'd complain about how hot it was. Ceilings must have been ten, twelve feet tall and had big walk-in, literally walk-in types of cabinets. Apparently some wealthy person had owned this.

Then later, when they built the little trailer camp outside of town, out by Tan Son Nhut, Admiral [Elmo] Zumwalt moved into the staff quarters. [Creighton] Abrams moved out into the Fort Apache-type arrangement we had with a high wall all around and [inaudible], and you'd have to identify yourself to get the gate open.

G: I was going to ask you about security in that Tran Quy Cap residence?

N: Well, it worried me, because it was right there about a block from the Cercle Sportif, Saigon, and there would be a guard, token guard, there at the front sort of porch, and he would identify people when they came and went, flag you on in. But the nearest reaction force was over in a, like a quartermaster or commissary area, which was right behind us, and there was a plan, but we never executed it. It used to worry me, because we would sit out on the porch, back porch is where we ate our meals, and we called it the gecko room, because of the lizards. You could hear them croaking around. And it was in complete view of this area I was telling you about, the commissary, the quartermaster, Saigon-area command, and anyone could have been up in any of those windows. Three or four of us would be sitting out there eating supper.

And there were two gates at 60 Tran Quy Cap, but General Westmoreland would always leave at the same time and always go through the same gate and the road was a one-way road. This was particularly obvious to me when he would invite me to ride in to

the office with him. But I would say, "I've heard you discipline commanders who are ambushed because they came back the same way they went up, and I've heard you tell them never come back the same way you go up, and here every morning at precisely the same time you go out the same gate and same route to the office." But he said, "If I start worrying about my own personal safety, I won't get anything else done."

And then I would invite him to come to church with me. We had services there in an old, I guess, French-type church. And about one Sunday out of the month he would accept the invitation and we would go to church together, and Cabot Lodge, Mr. Lodge, would be there. And you sit there--I told you this the other day--and just wondered if a grenade came rolling in the window there, what should I do? Here was the Ambassador and COMUSMACV, no security at all there. This was right across from the Joint General Staff Headquarters. But nothing ever happened.

G: Not even at Tet, I guess. Well, of course, you had come home by that time, hadn't you?

N: Yes. And I went back for the second tour after Tet. I went back over in 1968, but I wasn't there at Tet. I got there about July.

G: So you came back the second time. Had General Abrams taken over by that time?

N: Yes.

G: I see. Well, we can talk about that, too. I want to get your comments during that period, too.

Did General Westmoreland take his noon meals at his quarters?

N: No, he usually was out in the field. He liked to be home. He didn't like to stay at night out in the field. I think a lot of it was where do you draw the line, trying to be fair. If he started staying at the 4th Division and he never stayed at the 101st, you know, that sort of a thing.

G: Right.

N: He would eat out in the field, but he tried to eat breakfast and supper at home in Saigon.

G: Right. Did he have guests for dinner very often, other than you and--?

N: Yes, he would have them, and frequently he would excuse me for the evening, you know, and he would have some people coming in, and he needed the space. So that would be the night that I would go out with the medical staff there. We'd go to a Vietnamese cafeteria somewhere, a restaurant. But it was usually just the three or four of us [that] would eat there. He had a very strict rule about Vietnamese guests; he had no Vietnamese guests in there, and that was fair play again. Where do you draw the line: if you have this one, how do you turn this one down? And he asked us not to--he didn't want me to have the chief surgeon, General Wan [?], to come over and have lunch or supper or anything. But when I had people come in to help us with the malaria problem or anything like that, he always made it a point to invite them to lunch or supper, as sort of a protocol departure thing. He was very good about that.

Big events were when Bob Hope would be there, and we would bring people down from the FEBA [Forward Edge of the Battle Area], young line soldiers and officers to mix and mingle with the Bob Hope gang, Joey Heatherton and all that crowd. We could have as many as ten tables, about eight at a table, if we used the gecko room and the dining room and the--

G: How did he cope with feeding them? Did he take on more help or--?

N: Oh, yes. He had people come over from outside but Hai, the house lad, pretty well ran everything. Hai did the shopping, and we would get a bill at the end of the month as to what the pro-rated share was for the food.

G: You ate off the economy then more or less, is that right?

N: I think I got it at the commissary, this big building of us [?]. Later became the Navy Headquarters.

I remember one humorous incident. General Westmoreland's sense of humor is not one of his strong points, and he's funny trying to be funny. But he got up to introduce

Bob Hope to make some remarks, and Les Brown was there and Joey Heatherton, as I mentioned, and a lot of others. And Westy got up and went on with these accolades about what had been contributed to the morale of the troops and Mr. Clown Prince of the United States, and then he said, "I now give you Bing Crosby." And he did that for fun, but Bob Hope got up and said, "Well, it sounds like a good time to go to the men's room," and left Westy just standing there. (Laughter) Standing there and everybody tried to keep from breaking up. But that was his idea of humor, just to pretend to get the wrong name, and old Bob Hope, he--

G: Had the last laugh.

N: Yes, he said, "This would be a good time for me to go to the bathroom."

G: That's funny.

Can you paint a kind of a picture of a typical evening, or were there typical evenings? Were they all different?

N: Oh, it was pretty much the same. General Westmoreland would always have a Scotch and soda; he'd always have it, but he'd always have only the one. And he liked crackers and cheeses. He did a lot of eating, but he was on the move all the time, so he never did gain any weight. My in-laws sent me some special crackers for Christmas, and I tried to get them in there, but he didn't like them; he wanted just plain old saltines. He didn't like these Ritzes and all these other kinds. Then we would go out after we had that one drink to the gecko room usually and sit down at the table. He liked lamb chops and mashed potatoes and he loves desserts, ice cream with all kind of sundae topping. And I would decline, and he would fuss at me for not finishing my meal. And I said, "Well, I can't eat like you do, because I don't work like you do." He was real pleased; he said, "Doctor, I can still wear the same uniform that I wore when I was first captain of the Corps." And I thought I might as well get with it, so I said, "I can still wear the same scrub suit that I wore as an intern as a member of this hospital." And then instead of descending on me

like I expected, he said, "You know, I guess it does take two different kinds of officers in the army."

But he would really clean up this ice cream. He liked soft-boiled eggs in the morning; he always had a couple of those. The lunches, when we had those, it would be a sandwich-type thing with a tomato slice on the side and things that were fairly light that way, soup; he liked soup. And he would have his salad last; I know you're supposed to, but in my house we eat salad first and then we get with the regular food. But he would always wait and bring some salad around and do it in the right order.

G: I think the French do it that way.

N: Yes.

G: Did you know Dr. William McMillan? I understand that he shared quarters with General Westmoreland in that period.

N: At one time I heard of him. I think he was a scientific adviser, and when I left to come home, my replacement went over there and Westy invited him to continue to live there. So it wasn't purely the airborne. I think he got used to my being there, and then many of the questions when he would come back and he would ask me things, and I would research it, run it down for him.

We had a little bit of a problem because Westy was also the commander of U.S. Army, Vietnam as well as being the joint commander of the armed forces. So we had a surgeon named Sam Gallup for the U.S. Army, Vietnam, but I was the MACV [Military Assistance Command, Vietnam] surgeon, but I was the one that lived with Westmoreland. So usually when he came back with a problem, like somebody said that the x-ray equipment at the 93rd Evac [Evacuation Hospital] is the same equipment that we had in World War II, it was always army that had the problem. And General Westmoreland would ask me to run that down and brief him on what the status of the x-ray equipment was. Well, you don't tell him that you've got the wrong surgeon; you

know, you ought to talk to your army surgeon about army matters. So I would go ahead and do it, and then Gallup would get very upset. And I'd call the hospital commander, and then he'd find out that the MACV surgeon was calling the hospital commander without coming through him. I explained I didn't have that kind of time, and he said, "The system is phony, and if we try to jerry-rig it and make it work, it will never get changed to be the way it ought to be. Let the army run the army's problems." And he would say, "Do you get as involved in internal manners with the navy Vietnam and the air force Vietnam as you do the army Vietnam?" And I said, "No, he usually doesn't ask me questions," because at that time the navy didn't have a hospital ashore. They had this little AWOL [Absent Without Leave] hospital, that he called the hospital ship. But I finally had to tell Gallup, "Just forget I'm the MACV surgeon and just figure that I'm the senior aide to COMUSMACV, and I'm calling to get information for COMUSMACV. I'm not calling as a functioning surgeon. He asked me a question, and I'm getting him the answer." That seemed to please Gallup.

But it was a hard thing to do, and one day I asked General Westmoreland when the troop buildup continued, I said, "Now, are you going to put a lieutenant general in there as commander of army Vietnam?" He said, "No, this is a ground war, and the only way I can emphasize it to everybody day in and day out is to continue to command USARV [U.S. Army, Vietnam]." And I said, "It's really creating pandemonium among your staff," and then I told him what I just told you. He said, "Well, I'm sorry as hell that I'm causing you trouble." But he never wavered in that, and throughout the entire thing COMUSMACV commanded army Vietnam, and they always had a deputy CG three-star up at Long Binh that took care of the day-in and day-out. But to keep the relative roles functioning straight, COMUSMACV always commanded the army. And then the air force had their own commander and the navy had their own commander.

G: Right. I guess you knew General Palmer?

N: Yes. Bruce Palmer. He was good.

G: Did you have much contact with him?

N: Not as much as I had with [Frank T.] Mildren, who was there most of the time. Palmer had been there, and then I knew Palmer as vice chief of staff when I came back home as deputy surgeon general.

G: You mentioned the ARVN [Army of the Republic of Vietnam] surgeon a little bit ago? Did you have much to do with the ARVN medical service, or advising them on--

N: Well, my first tour over there I had quite a bit to do with it. That was sort of the main function of MACV, was the military assistance command. He was a colonel, and I was a colonel, and then when I came back over the second time he was a brigadier, and I was promoted the day after I got there. That's why I went back the second time. It came with a star. He and I became very fast friends. He was a neurosurgeon trained in Paris, married to a beautiful French lady, had three daughters with the best of both cultures, the cheek bones and the light *cafe au lait* skin. Went over to their house for Christmas.

I would go to the graduations of their--they call them aspirants, but they were cadets, and when they'd have a graduation, I would go and dance the waltzes. Vo Ngoc Hoan, his name was H-O-A-N, but it was pronounced like the Spanish "Juan." When I went back, he was very glad to see me, and his English, which had improved quite a bit during the two years that I was back home, he said, "We are glad to have General Neel back because he likes us; he came back." I guess others, you know, had their one year and they go home, home to greener pastures. But he sort of figured that I must have volunteered to come back, and I was the only one that came back again. He was an interesting fellow. He was a little aloof at these graduations. He would come in maybe an hour late for the social [inaudible]. I think the reason he was there was to see and be seen and to greet the proud parents of the aspirants that were graduating. I made it a point to always be there on time, but he would always come in late. I don't know whether it

was I just remember it that way or whether this was part of his manipulating of people waiting on him instead of him waiting on someone else.

We traveled a lot together. We would get in the airplane or the helicopter, sort of like the odd couple, and then when things turned out real bad there, we had some trouble getting him out. I think he finally got out. He wanted to get his daughters out when things came unglued. But the last I heard he is back in Paris, back in--

G: What kind of special problems were the ARVN having then in the field of medical service?

N: Well, the biggest problem they had was lack of support. They had some pretty highly-trained physicians, trained in the States and England and in France. But they [had] absolutely no--what we would call recovery room capability, intensive care, surgical intensive care. And it was very frustrating to these fellows. They'd go off and get all this training. And they used this as the reason they didn't want to go home. In other words, I've learned all this pediatric technique, but I'm unable to practice this back in Vietnam, because I don't have the support personnel. So they want to stay in Kansas City, you know, wherever they trained. The veterinarians were a little smarter. When they sent people out of country to update in veterinary medicine, they sent them to Thailand, and Thailand was just enough better than Vietnam to be a bootstrap. But it wasn't another world like Paris or Washington, D.C.

G: Right.

N: And you train these people and then they don't go back, because they just get frustrated. The nursing problem--it's funny how much you can learn in a couple of years of just incubating, thinking about it. They had no nursing service, and then they have internal traffic control problem of patients' families coming in with them. Those were the two biggest problems in the hospitals. And then I realized that the two problems were related. The reason they didn't have any nursing set-up was that the families did all the nursing;

they fed them, they cleaned them, they brought clean clothes, they turned them in the bed and all like that. And here we hire all these expensive nurses, and then they have visiting hours; they won't let the family come in. So the family would like to come in, I think, here and feed the patient and do a lot of that, but the nurses won't let them, whereas over there the families took care of them, and they couldn't understand why we wanted nurses.

G: It makes sense. In a culture where the family has time.

N: Another thing they couldn't understand was the worship of feces and urine; they couldn't understand why we're so hung up about not letting any of it get away, making sure it's all accounted for. And they think anything that's that bad, the more you scatter it around, the better off you are. I mean, why pile it all up in one place? And we were in there trying to help them with their sanitation. We were trying to get them good water supplies, and then we realized they don't drink water; they drink soup, they drink tea, but it's all boiled. And so we come in there and try to remake them in our own image, and I've seen that happen over and over. I saw it happen down in Panama, where we think we're helping people out, and we're really screwing things up. I would go through a hospital, these little province hospitals that the USAID [United States Agency for International Development] people put in there, and we would provide some military cadre to help staff them. So I'd have to go through and inspect. When I would come in, the air conditioning would be on, and the windows would be done, and there would be one person in each bed like you're supposed to. But then if I made a wrong turn and came back, or forgot my hat and came back, as soon as the General and his party has gone through, up goes the windows, off goes the air conditioning, and they all get down on the floor, on the tile floor where it's cool. But to please us, they get in the bed. And we insisted--Kennedy got in on a lot of this; he'd come over there.

G: This was Ted Kennedy?

N: Yes. He wanted us to put in hospitals at least equally good as what we were providing with our own troops. Then our commander said, "But not one whit better. We don't want the Vietnamese to have better hospitals than we have."

So we put mattresses in there, no laundry facilities at all, and you know what happens to a mattress in a hospital with the blood and the urine and the vomitus. And they would rather have a straw mat; that's what they liked to sleep on. They don't like mattresses. We were criticized about two and three patients in one bed, but that's their culture again. If you have in a PW [prisoner of war?] hospital, if you had twenty beds on a ward, probably twenty patients would all be in about three beds. They just like to sleep that way. They get all twined in like a bunch of snakes. It's their culture. But we want one bed for one man, air conditioning. So these things now are all over the countryside, these little province hospitals, just like monuments.

G: I hope they're getting good use.

Did General Westmoreland ever use you and his other compatriots in that quarters to sound off about problems, or did he ever use you as a sounding board to tell you about things that were bothering him or things he was having to decide?

N: No, usually the conversation, except for malaria and things like that, was around who's coming next and who was there next week. It was not shop talk at all.

G: Oh, I see.

N: He didn't talk shop all that much.

G: He did try to relax then at mealtimes in the evening?

N: And did I tell you about his wrist?

G: About breaking his wrist?

N: Yes.

G: Yes. Playing tennis, yes.

N: Yes, and I tried to come up with the proper press release, and he would have none of it, because he said, "It's not true. I was playing tennis." I said, "You can't tell people that." But he got by with it.

G: Was that the only health problem of any consequence that he had that you know of?

N: That's the only one.

G: Didn't come down with any of the endemic--?

N: It's real interesting. When he came back to the States after his long sojourn over there, he came up with the--well, as I was getting ready to go back over there with General Abrams. And I told Westy that if you were a private soldier and you had just gotten into Saigon, I would say you had combat exhaustion. He was having a diarrhea, was intractable, and the lab results all came back normal. People in the Pentagon would ask me, "When are you all going to get rid of that bug that Westy's got?" I said, "We have no intention of getting rid of that bug that Westy's got. That's just him."

And he was no longer in complete control. He spent all of his time in the Pentagon trying to answer dumb questions asked by the civilian secretariat, whereas in Vietnam he was in charge, in control. But he was unable for about two months there to make the transition to try to answer these--I call them dumb questions, and trying to explain things to people that really don't have the background to understand. I mean, there's no question about the control. It's just a question of how technically should they get involved. But he was pretty sick, and Kitsy [Westmoreland's wife] spent a lot of time out there. He was in Ward 8 at Walter Reed [Army Medical Center], in the old Walter Reed. And about that time, her brother, [Frederick] Van Deusen, was shot down. He was making a body count. And this all just culminated there. Here I'm going back, and Kitsy's very upset about men and implying, you know, you all just keep at it till it happens. And her brother had just been zapped.

G: He didn't survive?

N: No, he was out making the body count. That's what makes it so bad, because that is always associated with General Westmoreland. So here's a lieutenant colonel battalion commander out there counting, you know. If he'd been shooting at something, you know out there doing something, but--

G: Will you spell that name for us, Van Deusen?

N: V-A-N D-U-E-S-E-N [*sic*].

G: It's not D-E-U-S? We can look it up; I just wanted to make sure.

N: Well, she's a Van Deusen; her father was a colonel. Then General Westmoreland courted her relatively late in life. She was in a girls' college down somewhere, and I think maybe there's fourteen years difference in their age. I saw this young man; he was an aide to the chief of staff of the army before Westy; I guess that was [Harold K.] Johnson. And I said, "That's an unusual name there." And he said, "That's the name, is Van Deusen." And he went on over and got his battalion command. And here's Westy with the intractable diarrhea, but he got over it, but it wasn't amoebic dysentery, wasn't any of the--typhoid or anything like that; it was just an organ language. I told--

G: Stress.

N: --him that his gut was saying what he refused to say. And it's about that simple. It's just like General Patton and that soldier down in Italy. They both had the same disease, combat exhaustion, but one of them manifested it by the passive crying and the other one by the violent explosion of his temper. But Patton was just as sick as that kid was, but he just reacted a different way.

Well, General Westmoreland is a somatization. Some people get headaches, some people get stiff necks, some people get diarrhea. But in country nothing bothered him. He was in control. He was invited back to speak to the Congress, and he said, "The only thing I hate about going back is I'll be the prey of the press." He said, "Out here I can do as I please, but when I get back there I won't have any control at all." Then when

he went back as chief of staff of the army, that's what happened. And then, I guess, as he got his defense mechanisms rearranged and everything, the diarrhea went away. But he was losing weight. He was pretty sick.

G: I didn't know that. Was that public knowledge?

N: No.

G: Did you have a lot of contact with him after he became chief of staff?

N: No. The biggest contact I had with him, and the most unpleasant, was at Walter Reed. We had the integration problems out there. We didn't talk about this the other day, did we? You know, Walter Reed Hospital or Medical Center is about the only industry out in northwest Washington. It's the job place. And so there was a whole lot of people trying to prove all kind of points back in there, [during the] sixties and early seventies. The countdown would go during the week, and they had a Blacks United Against Discrimination [United Blacks Against Discrimination], U-BAD, U-B-A-D. And they would blow it with a big news conference on Friday afternoon, and you know who watches the six o'clock news and the ten o'clock news in Washington. So then we would have to spend the whole weekend preparing position papers and answers. And we'd have four- and five-hour discussions there with the DCSPER [Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel] and the commander of Walter Reed and Nell Pendleton, who was the president of UBAD, very attractive girl. And she was the only hero in this whole scenario. She had us jumping through hoops and we had something called U-GOOD, which was the United Government Operators on the Defense. UGOOD against UBAD.

But Nell would come up with some unnegotiable demand. I'd say, "Look, now, Miss Pendleton, the facts in the case are as follows." She said, "General, I'm not interested in the facts in the case. I'm interested in the perceptions of the blacks in Walter Reed." And Westy would have me in periodically. General [Hal?] Jennings stayed gone quite a bit. And Westy said, "I never thought I would have to run Walter Reed as chief of

staff of the army, but if I'm going to have to do it, I'm not going to need Jennings and I'm not going to need you." So a couple of major generals retired early out at Walter Reed, and it was just bad. We had the WRAIN bow [?], the Walter Reed Army Institute of Nursing, called "WRAIN dears." And Nell Pendleton says, "When those buses come in here with those pretty little faces, there better be some black pretty little faces on that bus, or that bus ain't going to get through here." You know, they are threatening to burn things down and getting by with it. The army staff was really running scared of them.

But when I would meet Jennings out at the [Fort?] Belvoir Airport, I would tell him what General Westmoreland had just told me, and I said, "Now, that's my buddy. I'm sure glad he's my friend." But he couldn't understand why--

And then we had a lot of people in the Pentagon that really, I think, didn't want the problem solved. And anytime you get the responsible problem solvers--or people that don't really want the problem solved. These were people whose whole career and jobs depended on these issues staying alive, and they would just--they really weren't interested. It's like I've always felt putting the air force in charge of the missile program. I mean, why would a rated aviator want to develop a system that will eliminate the requirement for him? It's like doctors doing away with disease; you aren't motivated that way, you don't think that way.

G: That's interesting.

Did General Westmoreland talk about people who he was particularly exercised about or particularly pleased with? Anybody that comes to mind that was a burr under his saddle consistently? Who might that be?

N: Ralph Haines.

G: Ralph Haines. Why was that?

N: I think it was the religious thing. You know, I would rather be a private in the Lord's army than a four-star general. General Westmoreland came down here when he wrote his

book. He was going around and autographing the book. So I had him out for a meal at my quarters over at Fort Sam [Houston in San Antonio] on Dickman Road, the Medical Commander's home. And I asked him who would he like to invite to come, so we would have a table of ten or twelve people. And he said, "Well, who have you got around there?" I said, "Ralph Haines." He said, "I refuse to be under the same roof with him."

G: Goodness.

N: I hadn't realized that. He wanted the retired chief of staff of the air force who died recently.

G: Not McConnell, was it?

N: No, it was--and Don Fulton, the one that's running the army retirement residence foundation out at SA. I got a real kick, because this is the night that they had the big debate between the presidential candidates. I had half of the JCS [joint chiefs of staff] sitting in my television room, had the former chief of staff of the air force and the former chief of staff of the army there commenting on these two yo-yos up there debating, [Gerald] Ford and, I guess, [Jimmy] Carter.

G: Carter, yes.

N: Old John, a big air force general named John [John Ryan]. He was on the board of directors of the Fort Sam bank. It'll come. But that was the strongest I've heard him talk about an individual.

G: Did he ever talk about President Johnson at all?

N: He was a great admirer. When the war was popular and Westy was picked by *Time* to be the man of the year and all like that, we used to sit out on the gecko porch and talk about "what are you going to be when you grow up, where do you go from being COMUSMACV?" I said, "How about CINCPAC [Commander in Chief, Pacific Command]?" He said, "I would have nothing to do with that bungling, unnecessary, intermediate headquarters." That was not about Admiral [U. S. Grant] Sharp, but that

was just about having to go through there when the shots were all being called in the operation center at the Pentagon. So he--I lost my train of thought there--

G: "What do you do when you grow up?"

N: I said, "How about commander in chief?" He said, "Oh, no, I couldn`t do that." Then he would come back to it, you know, maybe fifteen or twenty minutes later, and he said, "Were you serious about that?" And I said, "Sure, my biggest problem is do I want to be secretary of HEW [Health, Education, and Welfare] or do I want to be head of the Public Health Service. I've got to stay on the team." And he said, "I don't think they're ready for a military man." I said, "Well, [George] Washington made it; [Dwight] Eisenhower made it." He said, "Yes, but they won their wars, and we're not sure about this one." At that time we just didn't know. Then he said he would never run against the incumbent, the President. As a general, he would not run against the commander in chief. And then when Johnson announced spontaneously that he was not going to seek reelection, I thought, well, "This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased." They were that close.

G: Really?

N: And I thought that would do it, but about that time the war begin to get sour. But I think if the mood of the nation had not deteriorated there that he might well have run.

G: Well, if he could have come home in June of 1968 with that coonskin on the wall and said, "The war is over, and we--" that might have been a little different.

N: But he didn't dismiss it.

I'd go back to Hawaii on planning conferences. That's when we had the big buildup and we were bringing hospitals across the beach. Usually when I went back, I got [to] go by and see Kitsy, whom I remembered from Bragg, and she always had something for me to take to him; usually, it was a new pair of tennis shoes or something. So I would bring it back, and when I'd get off the airplane and come in, he would want to know if I

brought him anything. And Kitsy was back there, and there was a little bit of a problem. He never did verbalize it, but I think that he felt that people in Honolulu didn't give her proper attention, because she was a war widow living there. Later, after I came home, she moved over to Clark area, the Philippines, and apparently they took real good care of her there. But there was some hinting around that people back in Hawaii, the army people as well as the joint people, were not really looking after them.

G: So, is it fair to say that he admired LBJ? Did he never complain, abort any directive, or--

N: No, he seemed to think the world of him and he had a lot of respect for [Robert] McNamara. That's why I'm glad that McNamara came out of the closet and said some words for him.

G: What about Admiral Sharp? You mentioned him. Didn't they have some disagreements over the air war and who should be controlling that? Did he ever talk about that?

N: No.

G: Kept that under his hat.

N: I used to sit in, because about the second or third question that anybody would ask was about the malaria. And I would sit in on these briefings. And then Mendel Rivers would come in, and the three-star air guy would start with his charts there about the air war, and Rivers would say, "General, let's save both of us a lot of time now. Don't give me all this balderdash." And then Rivers would say, "Isn't it true that the people in the Pentagon decide what targets are going to be hit, and isn't it true that they decide what ordnance the aircraft is going to carry? And don't they even tell you the route to come in and the evasive action to come out?" And, of course, the answer to all these things was affirmative, yes. He said, "Well, General, don't you feel kind of useless out here?" They were trying to get the people in country to be critical of the people in the Pentagon.

G: Of course, Rivers was a hawk and he wanted more freedom for the commander. Did General Westmoreland ever complain about restrictions about not being allowed to go into Laos and clean out the sanctuaries or cut the trail?

N: I don't recall him. I'm sure he would have liked that freedom, but I was present at another briefing where [John?] Vessey--this was back in the Pentagon--and Vessey was a commander out in Korea. He wanted to have the warheads placed a little bit closer than wherever they are. And the SECDEF [Secretary of Defense]--man, I'm tough on names today--the guy that later became secretary of energy.

G: [James] Schlesinger.

N: Schlesinger. He says, "Why do you want to fool with those things? They are a big security risk, and you are not going to make that decision, and I'm not going to make that decision. My boss will make that decision. And while we're deciding, we can move the warheads wherever you want. But you don't need them up there. You're not going to strike." Schlesinger, yes. He was a bright one.

McNamara used to come in, and we had a neat way to brief these guys. We'd start up in Da Nang, and whoever was around Nha Trang would go to Da Nang and get on the "White Whale", the VC 123. And then McNamara and his crew would be briefed, or Mendel Rivers, as they traveled from the last place they were to the place they were going to go to. Then you didn't waste any time at the airfield there with briefings. You went right ahead and looked at what you want to look at. So I'd always get the malaria part, and I'd usually get on the plane in Nha Trang and then brief on malaria from Nha Trang back on down to Saigon.

McNamara wanted to know what the rate looked like. This was November, and that's the bad month. I told him I didn't have the numbers, and he said, "Okay, this is the twenty-third. How many cases have you had as of now?" Well, I knew how many cases we'd had. And he said, "Okay, your rate's going to run about forty-eight per thousand per

year." And at the end of the month it was right there, but this guy, without calculator or anything--and he knew what the troop strength was, and he knew from that, and if you assume it's a straight line, and he was able to come up a week ahead of time with what the rate [would be]. He was within one percentage point.

G: That's remarkable.

N: Smart.

G: Yes.

What about General Westmoreland's favorite people? Did he have favorites? Did he have commanders that he especially liked or staff people that he was especially fond of? Obviously, he was fond of you; he asked you to live with him, but--

N: Bill Rosson was a favorite of his. He was the chief of staff there as a major general at the time I'm talking about, and then later he was back in there with the four stars. I had--my wife and daughter came around the world, and I met them in Thailand. And they came on into Vietnam the second time I came home, and Rosson was there. He sat down and talked about the importance of a family, and about the wife and the key role the wife plays in the accomplishments of the husband. So as we left, walked out of the office, Alice said, "God, I wonder where he'd be today if he had gotten married."

G: (Laughter)

N: He was a confirmed bachelor, talking about--real sincere about the wife.

G: Well, maybe he had the objectivity of the priest. You know, if you've never participated, maybe you're uniquely qualified to comment on it; I don't know.

N: DePuy was one of his favorites. Bill DePuy was a J-3. The J-4 he didn't think too highly of; he was a transportation brigadier and I think that's about as far as he went. [Ben] Sternberg was his J-1, and he seemed to like him all right, but I think Bill Rosson and Bill DePuy.

G: Did you know General DePuy very well?

N: I knew him more after we came home, because he was head of the SELCOM, the Select Committee which did the final budget work. Then when we reorganized the army, he went to TRADOC [Training and Doctrine Command] and I came to HS-C [?], and then we had several studies, a WARSAM [?] study, and we call it TOMS, theater of operations of medical support system. He had the responsibility for studies, but we had the talent down here in San Antonio. So he had a policy that the SAG, the Study Advisory Group, chairman would always be a general officer from TRADOC, but when we got into the TOMS study and the WARSAMS study, well, he made me the SAG adviser and then took the guy from Indianapolis and made him the deputy SAG. And I had to go to him on several issues, like should the medical field service school remain under health services command, or should it, like all the other schools, go under training and doctrine command. I was able to get in to General DePuy, and he sided with us. What we did was, we redesignated the school from the Medical Field Service School to the Academy of Health Sciences. So the TRADOC commander could say, "I have all of the army schools." However, there's two academies, West Point and the Academy of Health Sciences. So now it's back to the Medical Field Service School. And we changed the commandant to the superintendent to follow. And we got our school exempted for the same reason that West Point's exempted. And it's sort of directly under the chief of staff and surgeon general. But Bill was smart--he's a--and Max Thurman, he was just like him. The present vice chief of staff of the army. I used to go to these in-process reviews on artillery or aviation, and I would go as the doctor and talk about noise. And Thurman was a colonel then. I was having a beer with him one night, and I told him how much he reminded me of Bill DePuy, and he was pretty flattered. Now the guy's got four stars, and he's vice chief of staff of the army.

G: Well, it was a good thing to have said.

Let's see--

N: An interesting thing happened to me coming home. I said my goodbyes to General Westmoreland and I went out to the airport and the airman behind the counter said, "I'm sorry, but you've been scrubbed." I said, "Why?" And he said they had an emergency leave come in here and they have the top priority. And I said, "Now, wait just a minute. I'm the MACV surgeon." And he said, "I know who you are, but you've got the lowest priority of anybody in this terminal. Your tour's completed. Even the TDY [temporary duty?] people have got a priority higher than you, because they've got to get back, get over to wherever they're going and get back." So that night when General Westmoreland came in--it was usually about seven o'clock when he'd come in--he said, "You still here?" And I said, "Yes." And he said, "I hope you're not drawing hostile fire pay." So I came back, and the next morning they got me out all right.

G: (Laughter) Well, at least you got out, but that day's delay is--

N: Well, I just hadn't heard of such a thing, because I thought I'd done my thing and--

G: Well, that's a funny story now, but I guess it wasn't funny at the time.

N: No, it was just kind of deflating to realize that I'm finished, I'm not contributing any more to that war, and they're not going to worry about me.

G: How would you compare General Westmoreland with General Abrams? Their style and their personalities and--

N: Well, they're completely--they're both very effective, but they were completely different. Abe says that "the kindest thing a reporter once said about me was that I looked like an unmade bed smoking a cigar."

G: (Laughter)

N: And Westy was so immaculate about everything. Everything had to be in its place, and he would change uniforms in the middle of the day if there was some reason to have a fresh one. I've told you the story about lacing his boots up for him. He would always wait until the last thing so he wouldn't wrinkle up his pants, whereas Abe he just went

rocking along and had an entirely different style of leadership. He was full of saying the right things.

I remember when we had the Brown board, which was a look at the logistic system of the army, when I was the operations chief of the surgeon general then, and Abe was vice chief of staff. This was between the Vietnam tours. So they were trying to get concurrences from people, and they went to the DCSPER representative, and he didn't want to go along with something. The issue is not all that important, but he thought that DCSPER would not concur until the subject had received further study. So Abe turned his chair around to General Brown and said, "How long have you all been on this study?" And he said, "Fifteen months, sir." And he said, "How many people did you have involved in it?" He said, "Well, at one time it was over four hundred." And he turned back around to the DCSPER and said, "What did you have in mind by further study?" He just shot the whole thing down. He'd say the further you get up the flagpole, the more your butt shows, that's another one of his. The hearts and minds of the people, grab them by the ying yang, and their hearts and minds will follow. That's another General Abrams. Then when he came back as chief of staff, he said, "The only way we're going to reduce the size of the army staff is to put them all out on the mall, and then when I need you, one by one I'll call you back in. And it will be interesting in a year to see how many of you are still out there."

He felt that there is no way a commander in the field could accomplish all these good things that the bright, young lieutenant colonels think up in the Pentagon. He thought that they were counterproductive. He thought there were too many of us there, and we kept coming up with these bright projects. And the poor commander out in the field, the only choice he has is what he's going to get chewed out for; he can't do all those programs. And then he got sick. Brought back from Europe with pneumonia, which was a malignancy. He didn't live very long.

G: Was it stomach that got him?

N: Lung.

G: Oh, I see. Too many cigars.

N: Yes. And his wife Julia is still up in--well, I don't know where she is now, but she stayed around the Washington area. I used to see her when the Major Commander's Conference--the chief of staff, he's always have a party for us and invite her along.

G: Was there any truth to the rumor that he didn't like paratroopers?

N: No. He's an armored guy and he was in favor of heavy forces contrasted to light forces. But I've never heard him say anything.

G: Perhaps he wouldn't have said it to you, since you are a paratrooper.

N: Mildren used to get upset. He was the deputy army commander up in Long Binh. Every time he'd get briefed on the officer strength, they'd have the rated and the non-rated, and he never did like that term "non-rated." He said, "It sounds like something's deficient or missing." But they never could come up with an acceptable other term. But he would make a comment every time they would brief on the rated and the non-rated officer. So General Abrams may have felt that way. They get prejudiced. I remember we had one that commanded in staff college that stated that Patton said you never should go into war with your cannons pointed to the rear. You know, he was talking about towed artillery. They have tracks. And the artillery people got all upset about it, and there had to be some public apologies, and this guy happened to be a doctor, Randy Hall. And they had an armored major that taught medical support, and then Randy Hall--they were trying to get someone that was not parochial. But he made the wrong remark there when he quoted General Patton, going to war with the cannons pointing to the rear.

G: Yes, the redlegs wouldn't sit still for that very long.

How do you account, if you've got any insight into this, for the change in the press that the two generals had? Westmoreland clearly did not have the kind of relationship

with the press that General Abrams was able to have. I wonder if that was a function of the men or the change in policy or strategy in the war or what.

N: I don't know, I think that General Abrams felt more at home with the press. General Westmoreland never did, really. He liked the visibility with the troops, and he made all the formations on Vietnam Independence Day and all like that, but he was always ill at ease with the press, where General Abrams would come on with his folksy sayings and analogies and everything, and the press really liked him. But it was almost as if General Westmoreland would be vying with the press. And he just felt uncomfortable, about like the statement, the only thing he dreaded about going home to see the Congress was to be the prey of the press.

G: Speaking of the press, did you have much contact with the press? Did reporters ever come to talk to you and interview you?

N: They did, and particularly they wanted to know about malaria. I was about as naive as General Westmoreland was, and you know this background briefing is in giving them all the information. I worried about it because the enemy didn't provide us with the data on their statistics, and I didn't see why we should share ours with them. But one of them was a guy from the *Baltimore Sun*, and he impressed me, and I gave him a real good story. Then the public affairs people sent it over--the thing that actually came out--for an explanation, and this thing had been all turned around about blood destroyed, making their analogy with the bubonic plague, and it's real frightening. And my whole pitch was reassurance, "Sure, we've got malaria over here, but for four thousand years we've had malaria, and we've got the treatment for it. I wish we didn't have it, but we do and we're on top of it." But the thing that came out was terrible.

I challenged the reporter--he was still there--and I said, "No more news stories from me." And he was very upset about it, and he showed me what he put on the wire, and he said, "I've got copy people back in Baltimore, and they're the ones that pick the

headings and the bold face and all like that." So the guy that I thought had betrayed me, he just filed his story and the people back there figured how much of it to put in and what headlines to use.

General Westmoreland used to worry about the doctors talking too much. He said, "Your doctors are not busy enough. They write too many letters, and people are used to believing what doctors say." So it turns out a guy would write to his mother, that, "I am here, and, if I had more equipment, there's so many things that I could be doing, but up here in the clearing company I don't have this and that and the other." So she takes it down and gives it to the newspaper, and the newspaper comes out with this, and the next thing you know they're all over the Pentagon. And the guy, when I call him in to counsel him, had no idea his mother--"I'm trying to impress her how important I am out here, and I could be doing even more. I didn't know she was going to give that to the newspaper."

G: I think General Westmoreland refers to a press conference--not a press conference, but an interview--that a disgruntled doctor gave because, according to General Westmoreland, he wasn't busy enough.

N: Well, this is something you might be interested in. One of the reasons we had the MEDCAP program, the Medical Civil Assistance Program, was to keep the technical people busy. The doctors and nurses know only one thing, and if they aren't being engaged in that one thing, they have a tendency to try to dream up different things to do. So whenever in a given area the casualty flow of our own troops would fall off, we would intensify the civic action programs to try to help the people but also to get our doctors and nurses busy again. And interestingly enough, the civic action programs were under the staff supervision of the J-3, DePuy, and the care that we gave to our own troops is properly under J-4. It gives you an idea, one, is logistical, medical service support to your own troops, and the other is the hearts and minds of the people, which is you might even say a tactical employment of medical in order to win over people.

And right now there's a lot being written on the ethics of this. Should you take something like medicine and use it as an international tool of national policy, or should we do it by food? Should we withhold food from people? They can withhold oil from us, but we're not supposed to withhold food from them, sort of thing. But we did it, and it was kind of hard on the division surgeon because he had to--this army surgeon I mentioned, Colonel Gallup, the reports on the care of the 4th Division personnel would come to the army surgeon. And the reports, though, of what they did in MEDCAP would come directly to me, MACV surgeon, because this is the tactics. So that created a problem there, and you could see where somebody would get confused about a double set of books, because it depended on the basic purpose. And even the funding for MEDCAP was handled different from the program aid funding for care of our own troops. The same people, and in the morning they'll be doing program-aid type things and in the afternoon psychological-warfare type things. Now, I don't think the people that we're talking about, the do-gooders, realized what we were doing, but this was thought out this way. So the division surgeon works for MACV as far as MEDCAP, but he works for the surgeon of the U.S. Army Vietnam as far as taking care of his troops, hospitalization, evacuation, supply, that stuff.

G: Yes, here is the passage I was referring to out of General Westmoreland's memoirs. He talks about one doctor from Third MASH [Mobile Army Surgical Hospital], vented his upset in a provocative television interview. That's all he says; he doesn't say anything about what the man said or what happened to him. That may not have happened when you were there, I'm not sure.

Do you remember any special visitors to the Tran Quy Cap #60? You mentioned Bob Hope coming and so on.

N: Yes, and when I was over there with General Abrams, Graham, the minister was there.

G: Billy Graham?

N: Yes. He came, but we hosted him up at Long Binh there, General Officers' Mess. Then Jimmy--

G: Let me interrupt you. Something just rang a bell. You hosted Billy Graham at the General Officers' Mess. Did that create a problem with alcohol?

N: No, this was at noon, and we didn't have the bar open at noon. I was very impressed with him, and he was in there all by himself. He didn't have the dancing girls and Les Brown and all like that. But he was equally as effective as Bob Hope. And very charming to have lunch with.

And Jimmy Stewart and his wife came through, and I think the reason they visited us--they had a kid up in one of the divisions, and they were really there to see the child. But her hair needed doing, and this was on Sunday, and I had to call down to the Third Field and get them to open up the beauty parlor to take care of Mrs. Stewart's hair. But he was very nice. You know, that voice he's got, that accent.

G: And he was a veteran of a lot of bombing missions himself. Had some feel for it, I guess.

N: Yes. But they were glad to do this. I was briefing Vice President Humphrey on dapsone, on the new drug we were using to go along with our chloroquine-primaquine, and he started pinning me down on the pharmacology. I had forgotten he was a pharmacist. See, I hadn't done my homework. I thought I was just talking to the Vice President (Laughter), you know, about the big picture. But he wanted to know the chemical composition and what does the "D" mean and the "D" in DS. I had to look it up for him.

G: Well, that's interesting. I had forgotten it, too. Was he a pharmacist or doing something around a drug store?

N: No, he was a pharmacist, because when he talked to us at the Industrial College, somebody out in the crowd there asked him a question, and the President led off the opening day. Then, later on, the Vice President talked, said that someone that you know very well stood on that same platform and promised us that we were no longer going to

treated as second-rate citizens, so what do you have to say about that. And so I just jumped right in with him about his own experiences, and he knew exactly how much an economy airplane ticket cost to get back to Minnesota, and he says, "And my brother is making four times as much money as I am, running the drugstore, and I'm a pharmacist." His point was that just as, "I, as vice president, have to give up some creature comforts in order to serve my country. Surely Colonel, you shouldn't object to--" Then he won us over, and so we were all pointing at this guy over here, our own classmate.

G: Dissident, huh?

N: Oh, yes, troublemaker. But he did say, "And I'm the pharmacist." His brother must have been the businessman that was running the family drugstore.

G: Right. And hired another pharmacist, I guess.

When you went back the second time then, that was in 1968, had General Westmoreland already left?

N: Yes. He had come back as chief of staff of the army, and that's when he was sick at Walter Reed, and I went out to say goodbye to him. That's when I [got into] that discussion with Kitsy about her brother. And that all happened, and after about a couple of months there, he was able to do it. In the meanwhile, Bruce Palmer was holding things pretty well together.

G: Did the change in the tactical situation in late 1968 affect the medical service, or did you have to do any reorganization, or I should say relocating, [of] hospitals?

N: No, the rubber band, the helicopter, everybody knows it's a good way to move patients, but not as many patients know what a tool of management is. Because with the helicopter there, we can afford to let the combat units get further and further away from the base areas, because we know that a guy dies in so many minutes; he doesn't die in so many miles. And so, we could have the relatively secure base area where the hospital was and where the airfield was, and then we could have this 110-, 120-mile string with the

battalions on the end and we swing those around as long as you could respond in, say, thirty or thirty-five minutes. So we didn't have to move ours. Hospitals became stabile, fixed. The evac hospitals functioned as small general hospitals and the MASHes functioned as evac hospitals. Everybody was upgraded one notch, but there was none of this [inaudible] moving up. So we didn't have to do anything, and we were able to use all our hospitals all the time.

Previous wars that I went to, the hospital supporting Division One is inundated, and the hospital supporting Division Five is [inaudible], playing bridge or something. Whereas this way, when the surgical lag gets beyond an acceptable point, that's the time it takes to get your turn on the operating table. We just divert the stream to another hospital, so we can use them all, all the time. In the old days we had to try to shotgun our specialty capability in each hospital, whereas in Vietnam, with helicopters again, and the peninsula nature of the war, we were able to have a neuropsychiatric center, neurosurgery center, cardiothoracic center. We didn't have to scatter these people through all hospitals. And we would just get an inbound from the pilot, what he had on board, and the regulator would tell him which hospital to go to. And then notify the hospital what type blood to have ready, because we had to use single sideband radios, and then helicopters had their radios. So I don't think any staff surgeon has ever had the control that I had of the resources that were there, because of this dedicated system.

G: What did you intern in when you were--?

N: Well, I took a rotating internship, which was very popular back in my day, in 1942. Now they want you to go right directly--if you are going to be pathologist or an opthalmologist, well, just go right on in to that, and they have don't have the internship. They have professional level one, two, three. It's supposed to save time. Then when I got in the old army air corps and went out to Roswell, the policy was they would give you six months of training to make you a specialist. So they asked me what I wanted to be, and I said

radiology. So then they sent me on to Santa Ana [Army Air Base] and I had six months, because the specialty training hadn't caught on really in the United States. But they realized that we were going to need people a little bit more than general practice. So I did that and then took no further training. I was always in the field.

Then, when aviation medicine became a specialty, I was interested, because I've always been interested in mission medicine. I'm interested in taking care of units performing a military mission more than clinical medicine, which is the next guy that walks through the door here with a tummy ache or something. So aviation medicine didn't appear to me to be a waste of time, but until then, I didn't want to take three years out of my life and go train in something just to get a certificate on a wall. But this is mission medicine, so I went ahead and took my training. I went a year to Harvard, Master of Public Health, then I went to Randolph [Air Force Base], where the School of Aviation Medicine was located then, the second year there. Then we moved the School of Aviation Medicine out to Brooks and I moved with them, and I took my third year at Brooks [Air Force Base]. Then I went to Fort Rucker and replicated what I had seen that the air force was doing, so established aero-medical center.

But this is preventive medicine. It's a lot of human engineering of trying to select people for special types of assignments for flying, making judgments, medical judgments, about the fitness of people to continue to fly, and how long should you keep them on the ground after they've had a bleeding ulcer before you let them fly again. This sort of stuff intrigues me, and that's sort of what I'm doing over at USAA. Insurability of people and just something, cosmetic surgery, or it's reconstruct, too, and whether we're going to pay for it or not. But it's been a real good field to be in. But it's interesting that as soon as we take our uniforms off, we become occupational medicine specialists, because they don't really need flight surgeons. But in uniform it's as simple as the wings and the pay. So all

these military flights, as soon as they take off their unforms, they become occupational medicine specialists.

G: Which, I suppose, relates people to their working lives.

N: Yes, it's people that work around hazardous machinery called airplanes, but it's occupational medicine. You take care of the injuries, you take care of the illnesses, you try to shorten their disability period, you try to rehabilitate to get the maximum residual function. But we do that at Alamo Iron Works and Reliable Battery where I work.

G: I guess you had mentioned you were going to be out there.

N: Saw twenty of them today. The law requires that if you have more than a certain number of micrograms of lead in your blood when the lab runs it that you've got to see a physician at least once a month until it gets down below forty. And then I have certain things I look for, the stigma of red intoxication, but none of them have it. Standards are very conservative.

G: What haven't we said here that we ought to talk about [regarding] Vietnam? Do you have any anecdotes about dinner at #60 Tran Quy Cap, unusual things, funny things?

N: Yes, the President-General of the Daughters of the American Revolution came over there. They wanted to make a big donation or recognition to General Westmoreland. And he liked that; he liked anything that would be a display of national resolve supporting the effort there. He was very interested in that. So I told you he gets home about seven o'clock. Well, this lady and her adjutant lady came about six, and my task was to come home early and entertain these ladies until COMUSMACV got there. I thought it would be a good idea to have some gin-and-tonics. Westy was about thirty or forty minutes late that night and we had about an hour and a half of drinking gin and tonic, me and these two little old ladies, and we had spareribs that night, you know the greasy thing. And one of them became sick. She was fatigued and she'd just come over from Thailand and everything, and she got woozy and was going to faint, and I got over on the couch, the

house boy and I were working on. And Westy would come over, and he would have his spareribs in his hand with the gravy running down here, and this woman would look at him and then she'd, you know, get sicker and sicker and sicker. But he was trying to help, he was showing an interest.

G: That's funny.

N: Christmas came, like it does every year, the year I was there with him, and we were concerned about all of the packages that people in the United States would send to the soldiers over in Vietnam. Westy thought it was great. He said, "Let's provide the warehouse space, and let's provide the troops to handle it." So when the J-1 reminded him that about half of the stuff was going to be addressed to you by name, and he said, "Well, I'll never get my personal Christmas stuff from Kitsy and the children." Because you have to unwrap every one of them, because you don't know who sent it. So he was sensitive to that. Then he told me that they were able to get the free mail privilege because of the tropical humidity, that they wanted the soldiers to write home to their loved ones, but they can't carry stamps around in their paddies. So he was able to persuade somebody that they ought to have free mail.

G: How did they solve the mail problem for General Westmoreland? Did he get in fact a lot of that?

N: Yes, he went ahead and told them to do it this way, and I think he had his family send the stuff to a different mailing that was coded somehow. They had a bunch of Christmas cards for him and he looked at all of them, looked at the addresses, signed them all. I remember a big stack on the table there.

He decided that we ought not to get involved with Christmas gifts for the family of Hai, the people that lived there in the compound. So none of the rest of us, the other three of us, did anything about it, and at the last minute he changed his mind, and we all

stood out there and watched him give the light shirts here and the toys here, and we had nothing. You couldn't just run down to Albertson's.

He was very concerned about people. I remember once he went down into the Delta somewhere in his chase helicopters. A rocket misfired and hit a house and killed a woman and burned pretty badly a kid. It upset him very much. He called me and wanted me to come up to the office and he wanted me immediately to get a helicopter and go down there with the people that give the reparation and the money. And then he wanted anything that that child that was burned needed, to go ahead and do it. So that was just an example of how he was concerned. He had nothing to do with it, but he was there and saw it happen, and he just felt bad about the whole thing.

G: What was General Westmoreland's--if he had a weakness, what was it? We know his strengths. We talked about his strengths, his dedication, his ability, so on and so forth, strength of character.

N: I think it was his political naiveté. He's an Eagle Scout, really, that went to war. I think today he can't understand why they didn't play by the rules. You know, you're supposed to play by the rules. And they didn't. He got caught up in all these things, the issues other than military. It's kind of hard to say that's a weakness, but his point of greatest vulnerability. I think the thing that's in the news now, even after all of this other exposure, he sat down and talked to a guy that he thought was going to present a straightforward, integrated, as-it-was-told picture. He didn't realize the cutting-room floor and the editing. I notice now that they're looking as part of the inquiry to see what was not shown, to see if there was any subjective or selective illuminating of favorable things to strengthen the unfavorable.

G: When was the last time you saw him? Was it out at Fort Sam, or have you seen him since?

N: Yes, he came to Rotary one day; he was coming through town. They asked me to introduce him, the program chairman, not knowing what we had been talking about. They just wanted to get a general to introduce the retired general. So the night before, I think the reason he was in town was his class reunion, so he invited Alice, my wife, and me to join some people to go out and eat Mexican food after the class reunion cocktail party. So we went on down to the St. Anthony [Hotel], and we showed up and got a big kick out of all the people wondering who we were. You know, the husband would ask the wife, and "I don't remember them," you know. So we did that, and then we went over to Mi Tierra, the tourist-type Mexican restaurant. And you know how they are about plastic payments. So General Westmoreland had about twenty of us there, Don Bolton again and a lot of people. And then he went to pay and he flashed his American Express and they wouldn't take it. And he explained who he was, and they explained they didn't care who he was. (Laughter) So Don Bolton picked up the tab and Westy paid him back later. But here was COMUSMACV there trying to tell them, the people down there, who he was.

G: That's good. It's interesting that you went to Mi Tierra. I'll share a story about that after--

W: Well, he invited us, and we just went down there and married up with him and then drove over there and had a real good meal. Kitsy kept calling the guacamole salad Guatemala salad. She's a real pleasant person.

G: Well, that's not as bad as Gerald Ford trying to eat a tamale without shucking it. (Laughter)

N: I guess the last time I saw him was he came to a DUSTOFF [Dedicated Unhesitating Service to Our Fighting Forces] meeting. We have a convention every year. The first one we had was in Atlanta, and he came down and was speaker for that one. I've seen him within the year, but I'm trying to remember the circumstance.

Ryan was that air force chief of staff, John Ryan.

G: John Ryan.

N: And I just noticed half of the JCS sitting there and watching the presidential debate.

G: Yes.

End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview II

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