

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

LIEUTENANT GENERAL EDWARD L. ROWNY

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INTERVIEW

Q: General, I understand that there is an extensive oral history that has been done on your military career deposited at the Corps of Engineers Oral History Program. Is that correct?

ROWNY: Yes. It’s not only the military but it extends into some of the work I did in the diplomatic field also.

Q: All right. We’ll skip right quickly to the diplomatic field. I wonder if you can start out by telling me where and when you were born and something about your family.

ROWNY: I was born in Baltimore, Maryland, on the 3rd of April 1917. My father was an immigrant from Poland who had come to this country in 1895, and he lived to be 97. He was quite a man. When he wanted to marry my mother, she wouldn’t marry a foreigner, so he had to get out and get his citizenship papers. He went to the judge, and the judge said, “Tell me about the separation of powers.” He said, “Well, there’s the executive, the legislative, and the judiciary,” and the judge said, “Oh, you know all that stuff. Tell me, what ship did you come over on?” My father saw that he was pretty sleepy, so he said, “I came over on the *Mayflower*.” So, we have this family story that my father came over on

the *Mayflower*.

He worked his way up from a laborer to a carpenter to a contractor. He was hit hard by the Depression and lost everything and then came back. He was a pretty successful builder in and around Baltimore. You see a lot of those form stone houses, the ugly things, and they were his. He didn't like them at all but he said that's what the customers wanted. He built and remodeled a lot of houses all around Baltimore and did a lot of building of small community shopping centers but not the big things that they have today. He built the six and ten little Mom and Pop stores in the neighborhood.

Q: What's your mother's background?

ROWNY: My mother was born to parents who came here from the Austrian part of Poland. Her father had come from the part that was occupied by Russia. I lived a lot of time with my grandmother because my mother became quite ill when I was five. I lived with my grandmother from the time I was five until I was seventeen. She had been a governess to a rich family, part of the Patocki family, in Poland. She spoke four languages, was a very dynamic and intelligent woman who raised five children and sent three to college even after she was widowed. I had a lot of respect for my grandmother. My grandfather died when he was 60, and she lived on to be 85. My mother was the youngest of that family of five.

Q: Did you live in a Polish neighborhood? I was thinking that Baltimore had a German neighborhood.

ROWNY: Yes, we lived in the southeastern part of Baltimore, which is variously known as Canton and Highland Town. It is quite fashionable now. It was a clean but poor section, which had some nine ethnic groups in it. They were ranked in a hierarchy: English were the top because they were old settlers; Germans were next because they were efficient; I don't know how the others ranked but the Poles were not at the bottom but they were not at the top either. There were Italians and Ukrainians and Finns and a few Irish families. It was a very ethnic neighborhood divided into small enclaves.

Q: Of course, Baltimore, particularly in those days, was a major port and also a fishing port. There was a lot of canning and things like that going on. I realize that your father was a contractor but did the Poles or your father fit into any of the sea-related businesses?

ROWNY: No, my father, when he came to this country, landed at Fells Point, which is now a more fashionable part of town, and he was indentured when he came over. He promised \$100 for his steerage passage, and he could pay it off at \$10 a month at 10 percent interest. He paid it off in three months. He wanted to enter into the war but at that time he was a carpenter in the Sun shipbuilding company, and the country needed shipbuilders as well as warriors. He always regretted that he couldn't go into the war. After the war, he founded a small company which remodeled stores. He became known as a saloon remodeler. Most of the saloons around Baltimore were rebuilt by him.

In 1929, when the Depression hit, he had his first big job. He was to do the woodwork of a Fischer body plant, which was moving to Baltimore. It was a huge job and much larger than his previous work but, unfortunately, several things happened. First, the banks closed. Second, the factory caught fire and burned to the ground. Third, the insurance company went bankrupt and didn't pay off. He had to sell his car and house and move into a couple of rooms. At that time my mother was quite ill, and I went to live with my grandmother. My mother with the help of a sister-in-law took care of my younger brother.

My father, after the Depression, picked himself up and very proudly paid off all his debts, which he didn't have to do. He could have declared bankruptcy himself. He got larger and larger remodeling jobs, including tearing down some old rows of houses in Baltimore and replacing them with new houses, what they call townhouses now.

At the end of World War II, he wanted my brother and me to go into business with him but I decided I wanted to stay in the army. My brother who was not a career officer left the army and came back from Germany, and they started a small company, which built shopping centers around Baltimore. My brother would pick out the areas and do all the research on what was going to succeed, and they would buy a piece of land and improve it. They had to take profits because in Baltimore they have a ground rent situation. If you own a piece of ground, you can charge 6 percent interest for 99 years. No one can buy the ground that you own. As soon as a lot they bought, say for \$1,000, was improved, they could assess it at \$10,000. They did not become enormously wealthy but quite well off. They broke up the business when my father reached the age of 75.

Q: Growing up, where did you go to school?

ROWNY: I went to public school number three, P.S. 3, which was only a couple of blocks away. From there I went to Baltimore Polytechnic Institute, a high school in Baltimore, which I now have learned was one of the best high schools in the country. It had highly motivated teachers and students. I still think my best teachers were those I had in high school. From there I got a scholarship to Johns Hopkins and went to university, starting at the age of 16.

Q: You had the same drive that your grandmother and father showed.

ROWNY: Well, I was always ambitious to get out of that economic situation, especially since we were hit so hard by the Depression. I started selling papers at nine and, then, I made root beer and bags of peanuts and take them to the airport where people would come out and watch the airplanes coming and landing. In those days, it was a curiosity. I worked summers in the years I went to college, and I paid off the other half of my scholarship and board by working as much as 40 hours per week. It was a pretty busy time.

Q: While you were growing up and before you went to college, from your perspective,

were you aware of the race problem in Baltimore or was it something that was over the horizon?

ROWNY: We had no consciousness of race. The Negroes were on the other side of town, and we had no contact with them. There was some rivalry among ethnic groups. The Poles looked up to the Germans, yet it was a hate-love relationship. They completely respected the old British ancestors of the British people who migrated there. There was friendly rivalry. There wasn't any real hatred among ethnic groups.

Q: Was Mencken a presence when you were there?

ROWNY: Oh, yes. He was quite a hero. I sold newspapers downtown, and I used to love to go by the saloon where he wrote. I didn't meet him but he was quite something that our teachers told us about and we learned about at an early age. I would say probably as a freshman or a junior in high school I read Mencken's books.

Q: When you were in high school at Polytechnic and before you went to Johns Hopkins, what were you pointed toward? Did you have something to point towards?

ROWNY: I thought that I would follow in my father's footsteps and maybe join the company. I followed the technical line. It was a technical school but not the vocational school you usually hear about. It had vocation but a very high standard of liberal arts. It wasn't right in our neighborhood but it was closer than the other high school. There were two high schools, Baltimore Poly and City High, so I just kind of naturally drifted toward geography into Baltimore Poly.

Q: At Baltimore Poly, you were facing things such as mechanical drawing and that sort of thing, which would essentially lead later to the engineering side.

ROWNY: Yes, they had mechanical drawing, some elementary architecture, and half a dozen different shops that I attended: among them, a foundry and a woodworking shop. I decided at an early age that those things would be blue collar, and I tried to get into a white collar environment. I always had an idea then that if I could ever have a chance to get into West Point, I'd like to go there, especially since my grandmother glamorized it. She had married a corporal who had been indentured into the Austrian army, and she sort of married beneath her stage although she wasn't higher class: she was a governess. In those days, the soldiers were lower class. If she had married an officer, that would have been different. But, she looked up to the military as did my grandfather, who I respected. He died when I was six. He was quite proud of his short military service in Poland.

Q: Of course, Johns Hopkins was the neighborhood school in a way, wasn't it?

ROWNY: It was the natural place to go to from Poly, particularly, if you tried to get a scholarship. Some of the people from Poly went to more prestigious places like Princeton and Cornell.

Q: Well, Princeton was the normal breeding ground of Maryland. This is where the gentlemen of Baltimore went.

ROWNY: That's right. If you did well at Poly and had some family connections behind you, then you went to Princeton, especially if you could play lacrosse.

Q: Did you ever play lacrosse?

ROWNY: No, I didn't. The story of that is, when I finally got to West Point, they stuck out a lacrosse stick, saying, "Here, you're on the team." I said, "Look, I have never played lacrosse, I'm from Poly and Maryland." I finally got kicked off the team and became the undergraduate manager of lacrosse to stay with the crowd.

Q: At Johns Hopkins, what courses were you taking?

ROWNY: I took the normal engineering courses. They were pretty heavy in math, sciences, and civil engineering, constructing buildings and bridges, and the rudimentary elements of those. I thought it was pretty high on the liberal arts side. When I branched out, I found out they really slighted history and English and favored engineering.

Q: In your reading, I assume there was probably a Carnegie Free Library when you were there.

ROWNY: Oh, yes. There was the Enoch Pratt Library, and I had a special relationship with the librarian, a Mrs. Wrigley. Instead of the usual two books that you could take out a week, she would let me take out six. She'd even suggest books and lead me into new fields, mostly biographies.

Q: One of the most wonderful things that you can have is a mentor who can lead you into this.

ROWNY: I was fortunate there. I had my grandmother who spoke four languages and could recite long epic poems by heart in several languages, the librarian, and the teachers. There were a few teachers in the P.S. number 3 in elementary school but, particularly in high school, I still remember the teachers I had there in French, English, history, math, and chemistry.

Q: Were you getting any feeling for foreign affairs while you were in high school or from your family? Were they looking at events because we are talking about, as you move up, both the Depression and the rise of Hitler?

ROWNY: I did a little but I had joined a Saturday night Polish student association, or social club, wherein high school boys and girls would usually go to the center of east Baltimore. It was through that association that I learned something about foreign affairs and learned that there was such a thing as a Kuscuszk Foundation where I applied and got a scholarship to Europe at the Kuscuszk Institute in Krak_w, Poland.

Q: When did you go there?

ROWNY: It was in the summer and the first half of the third year of college when I went to Krak_w. They had a very liberal attitude about studying. You could go to class or not as you saw fit. They would give you a dollar a day for food. They had a voucher system that allowed you to travel anywhere around Europe by rail. I spent most of my time traveling. I went to Venice. I went to Rome. I went to London. I went to Paris and, on one of my trips, I went to Berlin and saw the Olympics.

Q: Oh, this was 1936.

ROWNY: Yes, it was the 1936 Olympics. I saw Jesse Owens win his four gold medals. I became so impressed with the efficiency and the terror of the goose-stepping Nazis that I decided there was going to be a war and I would get into the army as quickly as I could.

Q: While you were in Poland, had you been filled with the Polish movement, or did your mother's and grandmother's coming from the Austrian part of Poland influence you? What was your feeling towards Poland as a nation that you were getting from family and your association?

ROWNY: Well, they were proud Poles, and there was a hierarchy among the Poles. They were divided up. The Austrians, at least in my family, looked down on the Germans, and looked way down on the Russian side so that the Russians were the peasants, except for my father whom my grandmother thought was an exception.

Q: He was an honorary Austrian.

ROWNY: Yes, he was an honorary Austrian, so she took him in. I'd had a fair amount of coaching on what a bad thing it was that Poland was broken up so many times, how much they loved freedom, and the fact that they had the second constitution in the world right after the American constitution. Freedom really was its undoing because they were so democratic under their *liberum vito* idea.

Q: You had an explosion of one vote.

ROWNY: Well, you had to have one hundred percent. One vote could defeat any law that was proposed. I've learned a lot about Polish history and Jan Sobieski. When I was in Poland, a big monument was built in Krakow to Pilsudski and what they call in Polish circles, the 21st great battle of the world when the Polish stopped the Russians on the outside of Warsaw.

Q: But you must have absorbed it because this would come out later in a certain amount of antipathy towards the Russians/Soviets.

ROWNY: I think deep back in my psyche there must have been a feeling that the Poles

were unjustly treated, particularly by the Russians. I would say that that didn't manifest itself in any particular hatred or anything but I think that deep down inside there must have been that. I must say there was an even greater resentment against the Germans. The Germans marched into Poland on the 1st of September 1939 and destroyed Poland. I would say the Germans were enemy number one and the Russians were enemy number two.

Q: What was your impression of Poland in 1936 and 1937 while you were there on scholarship?

ROWNY: They were poor, proud, and weak. I went to see where my father was born, which was only about 40 kilometers north of Warsaw. It was primitive. There was a dirt road leading to the place when I visited them in 1936. They still had the oil lamps and outside privies. The farms were small. It was a poor establishment but immediately on entering the hierarchy in places like the Jagiellonian Institute in Krakow, you got the feeling of great pride in their intellectual and cultural prowess. They looked down on a lot of other countries from those vantage points. There was a great divide between the upper class and the lower class. It was definitely a Third World country.

Q: What was your impression particularly of Italy and Germany?

ROWNY: I thought that they were somewhat higher in their energy and organization. Of course, after I got to Rome and Florence, I found that they were the real centers of Western civilization. As for Germany, I had a great feeling of efficiency and authoritarianism. It was cleaner than some of the other countries. They were more militaristic than others.

Q: Did this change your reading habits when you came back? Were you more interested in world affairs?

ROWNY: Not immediately but I did begin to feel that I had chosen the wrong path going into engineering. If I was going to do anything, it had to be something more akin to foreign affairs, history, or literature. Since I spent so much time overseas, I was somewhat behind, so my last year at Hopkins was a very busy year. I had to work, so that took some time. Then, I became president of the American Society of Civil Engineering junior chapter. That took some time. I became president of the Scabbard and Blade, which is an ROTC unit. That took some time. I got into a few other things, too. So, it was hard. I was constantly running. I was constantly trying to catch a few hours sleep and lost quite a lot of weight. I went down about 20 pounds. I was pretty thin at the time of graduation.

Q: What kind of work were you doing?

ROWNY: In the summers, I worked at the Crosse and Blackwell factory, which is a higher class British food chain establishment. I had various jobs there, starting out as the weigh boy that would weigh in the tomato trucks. Later, I was the spice boy that would

weigh spices. That was the summer job. In winter, I had various jobs for professors. Professor Medaugh wrote a book on hydraulic engineering and had me put together the charts and the logarithm charts that went in the back of the books. I worked for Professor Thompson who became the first highway commissioner of the United States. He had me trace sketches of highways and highway facilities. There was tremendous pay, you know; it was 50 cents an hour. When I worked at Crosse and Blackwell, I was so delighted that the minimum wage was raised from 21 cents to 25 cents. This meant that I made \$25 a week, working 100 hours a week. There was a big difference. Money was pretty hard to come by but adequate.

Q: You graduated from high school at the age of 16, so you would have been how old when you graduated from college?

ROWNY: I entered Hopkins at 16 and graduated at 20. I was in the class of 1937, so I was exactly 20 years old. When I finished Hopkins, I got my reserve commission in the Corps of Engineers. I was in the engineering part of the ROTC course. I resigned my commission in the reserves to go to West Point on the first of July.

Q: That's quite unusual, isn't it?

ROWNY: Yes. It was a godsend because I got to do what I wanted to do, read and join the military. I coasted through all the science courses. I was able to really loaf through those without much trouble and spent a lot of time reading. I began the old *Great Books* program and really enjoyed the academic side of it.

Q: This would have been 1937 to 1941. From your instructors, was there a sense of urgency, saying, "We really are going to have a big war?"

ROWNY: Oh yes, very much so, particularly in the political science department. We had a man who was head of that department who was quite an able and broad minded individual, a Captain George Lincoln who, when the War broke out, came down to the Pentagon and became General Marshall's planner. Lincoln had what you would call his brigade, "his fair-haired boys," that he liked in his political science course who would be invited to his home. He guided our careers for the next 20 years. Lincoln at the end of World War II was promoted from brigadier general to major general. But he said he would rather be reduced to colonel and go back to West Point to teach again, which he did until he died. He was quite an outstanding man. I owe a lot to him in more ways than one.

In my senior year at West Point, my eyes suddenly deteriorated from 20-20 to 20-200. West Point was tightening up on eye qualifications in those days. Ten of us were put on probation. Lincoln, at his own expense, sent me to an ophthalmologist in New York City who worked very hard with me on exercises. My grades dropped sharply because I wasn't allowed to read except in Lincoln's department. Even when I felt I made mistakes, I got perfect grades. Of the ten, I was the only one to squeak through and get my commission. The others were graduated but not commissioned. Then, after Pearl Harbor,

all nine were called back into the military.

Q: Eyes are very important. As a kid, my brother was in the class of 1940 at the Naval Academy, and eyes were such an important item.

ROWNY: They put them high on the list.

Q: You look at it today, and one would be somewhat dubious about that. Of course, this really wouldn't be appropriate for young cadets but were you thinking about new forms of war, or was it pretty much looking at World War I?

ROWNY: There were several instructors who were thinking of new forms of war. One we liked particularly became a general in World War II, Gavin.

Q: Was it James Gavin?

ROWNY: Yes, James Gavin. He introduced us to the idea of jumping out of airplanes, which the United States had not done. He'd heard that the Russians had done this. I was very impressed because Gavin would work 10 to 15 hours in preparation for every hour of instruction that he gave the cadets. He clearly researched everything he did and dramatized it and did everything so beautifully. Also, Lincoln, although he was more on the political side, was very much interested in the *blitzkrieg* and, somehow, got an early contact with Colonel Wedemeyer who had been our military attaché to Germany. Wedemeyer sent letters back to Lincoln at West Point about the coming new warfare *blitzkrieg*. It stressed getting away from trench warfare by using armor and aircraft. These instructors were not instructors in the regular class work. They were what we call tactical officers. They looked after the discipline of the corps but had school's courses on the side in military tactics. Another, Waters, became a four-star general.

Q: Do you mean William Waters?

ROWNY: No, no. I knew him, by the way, but this was John K. Waters. He was a son-in-law of Patton's. He and Lincoln on the academic side teamed up on the *blitzkrieg*, and we followed the war pretty closely.

Q: Of course, the War really hadn't started by the time you graduated.

ROWNY: It started September 1, 1939, as far as Europe was concerned.

Q: Things were perking up but there was also a war going on in China at that time. One has to think hard to think of any military innovations that came out of that. I mean, were we looking at it?

ROWNY: Yes, we were looking at it but not from any point of view of the military innovations. It was part of Lincoln's course in teaching contemporary events. We followed China and Japan, so we were exposed to a lot of Far Eastern history. I would say much more, probably, than other contemporary schools in the country at that time

because of our interest in the military.

Q: As a kid, I lived in Annapolis. My brother was there, and I was 10 years old—I was born in 1928 and I was 10 years younger than my brother - but, you know, practically into chapel at the end of “God bless America,” they’d say, “Beat Army.” I am sure you were given the same thing at West Point, yet we were getting ready for a war that was going to require great cooperation. Did you see any signs of people at West Point at that time saying, “Hey, you know there is another branch?” At that time, there was the Army and the Navy.

ROWNY: Yes, I did but only peripherally. Fortunately, there was a course where they exchanged students. The cadets went on a midshipman cruise, and it was highly competitive. I didn’t make it but one of the people in Lincoln’s brigade, Andrew Goodpaster, a man two years ahead of me, did. He was quite impressed with his 30 days on the cruise, which took him to Europe. Through him, more than anybody else, I learned there should be more cooperation and we should break down the barriers. The barriers weren’t great where we were; they were just rivalry in sports. But, we could sense that there was a great difference, almost cultural background. Andy Goodpaster was one of the first men I met at West Point, and he became a lifelong friend. We talked weekly and would see each other quite frequently. He had a particular part to play in my career. When Lincoln was the Army planner, I learned later that he’d asked for me to come back and join the planning staff at the Pentagon. There was a small 12-man establishment known as OPD in the War Department, the Operations Department.

Q: This was when?

ROWNY: This was 1945. On D-Day, I had finished the War in Italy. My commanding general went to the safe and brought out a letter dated a year earlier that said that I should report to the Pentagon. But he had said that I was essential to the war effort, so he kept me in Europe until the end of the War. Two days later I was in the Pentagon, and I wanted very much to get into OPD, which was very prestigious and had Dean Rusk in it, James Matthews, who later became president of M.I.T., and Hank Byroade, who was the general who became ambassador to Egypt. They had eleven people on that team pretty well established...

Q: ...entrenched...

ROWNY: The 12th had rotated. A man would go in there and spend a couple of months and then find himself assigned somewhere else. They put me on probation. After a week or so, I was assigned to write a part of the final invasion of Japan, which never took place.

So I worked on this for about a week. When it was finished, I went to the fellow on the desk next to me who was Andy Goodpaster. I said, “Andy, I want this job pretty badly. What do you think of my plan?” He said, “Your idea’s all right but you surely don’t know how to write to please General Marshall.” He stayed after hours from five or six

o'clock until midnight, re-dictated the plan, then the girl had to type it out twice with four or five carbon copies and met the deadline of eight o'clock the next morning. By ten o'clock, General Marshall called me in and said, "Colonel Rowny, we have been trying for years to fill this 12th place and," he said, "The job is yours." I said, "Well, General, the ideas are mine but I've got to tell you that this plan was written by Colonel Goodpaster." He said, "Young man, I wasn't born yesterday. Of course, it was written by Goodpaster but anybody who can get Goodpaster to work for him is good enough for me." So that's how I got into OPD.

Q: I'd like to go back to the question of your eyes. When you graduated from Hopkins in 1937, were your eyes a problem?

ROWNY: No, they were perfect. They were 20-20. They were 20-20 until the fall of 1940 when suddenly I got up one day and couldn't see the eye charts and couldn't see the details anymore. My eyes had shifted to 20-200.

Q: What branch of the service did you go into?

ROWNY: I went into the Corps of Engineers. I didn't go into it as high ranking as I would have liked because my grades dropped quite precipitously after my eyes went bad because I couldn't read. I was getting some poorer grades except in economics, which was the course Abe Lincoln was teaching. You could choose by order of rank, and the Corps of Engineers always went out first.

Q: This is something I've always wondered about West Point. The Corps of Engineers, particularly, has always been extremely controversial because there are really two corps of engineers. Please correct me but, if I understand it, there is the Civilian Corps of Engineers which does public works and then there's the combat corps. So when you go into the Corps of Engineers, at that point do they decide which one of those or does it remain the Corps of Engineers and you switch back and forth?

ROWNY: It remains the Corps of Engineers, and you switch back and forth but early on you get a leaning for one way or the other. Usually, it's a selection by the civilian side into their highly prestigious branch. It was highly sought after for two reasons: one, it is traditional for the Robert E. Lees and Douglas MacArthurs. The second reason was the engineers got to build dams and bridges and an officer could stay busy during peacetime. When I entered the engineering career and thought I had done a pretty good job on the combat side, the chief of the Corps of Engineers visited and said, "You've done such a good job, I want you to know I'll give you a job in rivers and harbors." It didn't sit too well with me.

Q: This is the thing that has always bothered me. It's prestigious and all that but at the same time, it is sort of like graduating high in a medical school and then being put into tonsillectomy or something like that.

ROWNY: Well, I followed Goodpaster, and when he transferred to the infantry, I did, too.

Q: So, in 1937 you graduated. I was just a kid in Annapolis but the young professional things talked about a war coming, and you're going to fight. Of course, the Navy was looking at the Japanese and the Germans but where did you want to go and where did you go?

ROWNY: Well, feeling was not high at Hopkins that there was a war coming. This was a more personal feeling. When I decided to go to West Point, the feeling was not high that there was going to be a war. Of course, we heard more and more about the coming war at West Point, and I must say that up to the time we graduated, the focus was all on Europe. We'd learn what was going on in the Far East but we didn't get the feeling that we'd get involved there but that we would in Europe. Everything pointed towards Europe, particularly after September 1939.

Q: Of course, in the Navy, we knew the Brits and the Germans both had navies and would take care of each other. So the Navy was looking at the Japanese. It was a much bigger ocean to play around in. What was your first assignment?

ROWNY: My first assignment was to an engineer regiment in North Carolina, the 41st Engineers. The old cadre came from the 10th cavalry. It was a combat engineering regiment, which had an unusual commander, eccentric almost, a colonel who commanded the 41st engineers. We had black troopers and white officers.

Q: How was your commanding officer eccentric?

ROWNY: His name was John Wood, and he was very innovative and ahead of the times. First, on the political side, his brother, Stewart Wood, had been a Japanese language student and corresponded quite a bit with John Wood whose nickname was Joe. In August 1941, I joined the 41st engineers. Joe was training his people very hard, much harder than the other units, and talking a lot about the coming war with Japan. He was known as very unusual. It was an unusually oddball outfit because others did their job from reveille to recall, but we trained weekends on maneuvers.

Joe had a number of highly - even today - unusual ideas. For example, he thought that soldiering was an honorary and elevated position and soldiers should not do any policing up or any menial work. Regiments were allowed a training fund, and he would use his training funds to hire women from the town to come do KP in the kitchen and clean up the barracks so that the soldiers could spend some time training. For Negro soldiers to have white women come in and do cooking and cleaning for them was quite something. It was a very proud outfit. He was very proud. That was one of the innovative ideas he had, which has still not really caught on. The army still does a lot of menial and routine work. He considered himself the best trainer in the army. Ordered to provide cadres for new units, he would always send out his best and keep the worst. After about six or seven cadres of sending out people to form new units, we had the usual number of replacements but we were highly loaded with the lower end of the spectrum, the class 5s. They had scores of AGCTs in the '50s and '60s.

Q: You are talking about the draft at this time, too?

ROWNY: Yes, I'm talking about the draft. He'd take normal replacements on the draft but, since he would send all the best people out, they would send out a cross-section. This was very unpopular with his subordinates, his company commanders. They'd say, "Why do we have to spend 90 percent of our time on these duds and rejects?" So, on one occasion, they were complaining very loudly about the sixth or seventh cadre, and he would trick them. He had his own way of finding out who the better people were, and he would overrule the company commanders and send all the best people out.

They were complaining one Saturday morning at an officers' called meeting about the terrible injustice he was doing to the unit and to them. He asked, "Do you know who these people are?" They replied, "Oh, yes, we know who they are." He said, "I want each of you 12 company commanders to write the names of 10 of your worst soldiers, the 10 people you hope never to see again." Then, he turned around to me, and I collected the names and put them in front of him. He said, "No, no, they are yours. That's your company. On Monday morning, they will assemble out in the field, and that will be J Company."

There had been no "J" companies in the army since the Civil War. I commanded "J" Company for the next two or three months. I followed a lot of Wood's techniques and ideas, so that with this company of 120 of the worst people in the regiment, we won a major share of competitions in the various competitive events. He maneuvered it so that we would be the first unit to go overseas. He said that we had trained harder and were ready, and he had friends and got us assigned to Africa. We got on board ship with secret orders, and we had a letter of instructions of about 10 to 12 pages and then reams and reams of blueprints and papers and ideas and details of what we were supposed to do in Africa. He again turned to me and said, "Lieutenant Rowny, open up the portholes and throw away all those plans. We'll make up our own plans. We know more about what we are going to do than they do." So, we spent our time going to Africa writing up our own detailed plans of what to do. I could write a book about Joe. He was so unusual.

Q: Let's talk a bit about race relations. I think it is important to understand about race relations at that time, particularly in North Carolina. You lived in Baltimore but you said this hadn't been part of your society in a way. On both sides, how did you and the other white officers relate and how were they received by the army?

ROWNY: This was the rosy side of the picture. Joe Wood who was from Virginia, a Southerner, considered himself a northerner in many ways. He had a gentleman farmer approach to things. He always told the blacks how good they were and how they could be better than anyone else. He built up their pride.

He was not a West Pointer but he managed to have more West Pointers assigned to his unit than anyone else. Joe was very careful about the officers he accepted. He had great

friends and was able to get officers assigned. If he found that someone had what he thought was a bias or had any difficulty, he'd quietly transfer him out of the outfit.

We had, I would say, an almost ideal relationship with the blacks and the white officers. The blacks were drafted. Most of them came from the South, and were now well above their financial and cultural station. Because they were treated as proud people and, especially, with this cadre from the old black soldiers and black army, the 41st was *the* elite outfit for blacks. On Sunday afternoons, people would come from miles around to watch the parades where we not only did the normal parading but the trick elaborate parading. Joe was quite a showman, and the soldiers loved this. He was a great believer in competitions. He was competitive, and everybody got a prize. Some were better than others but we had good relations. Of course, we did not have the element of combat in it. Even though they were combat engineers, they maneuvered like infantry. Joe insisted that we do most of our training as infantry and, even in Africa, we got to know combat. That made quite a difference.

Q: How did you find the non-commissioned officers? You are talking about a pretty technical thing, in terms of combat engineers.

ROWNY: They were splendid. Of course, we were fortunate in getting the cream of the crop of the old 9th and 10th cavalry. When I had my "J" company, I was the only officer, and I had four non-coms with a total of 100 years service, who were very highly dedicated and professional. I remained friends with these non-commissioned officers until they died. That completely changed later when we were finishing up our work in Liberia. We were sent there for three reasons: (1) to save the rubber; rubber is essential and Firestone had its rubber plantations there; (2) to keep the Liberians neutral; in World War I, the Germans had bombarded Liberia, and the Liberians were neutral and we wanted to keep them on our side as a possible springing off point; and, (3) Liberia had both a port, Fisherman's Lake near Monrovia, and an airfield so that planes could take off from Liberia up to Khartoum.

Q: It was a very important link at that time.

ROWNY: Yes, it was for the whole African campaign. It was important for the supply of the Russian lend-lease. The airlift part of it went up from Miami to Belize to Monrovia to Khartoum and, then, on up to the Black Sea.

Q: Did you go out there before the African landings?

ROWNY: We were there in February or March of 1942, before the African landings in October 1942.

Q: So, you weren't feeling that you were out of it because there was combat elsewhere in that area?

ROWNY: No, of course, there wasn't any yet. There wasn't any combat that we were in.

I guess we'd had some combat in the Philippines, and I'm sure army units were shipped overseas but I don't think they had gotten into combat.

Q: Nothing started, I guess, until October of 1942.

ROWNY: That was the North African campaign.

Q: I was talking about the European theater.

ROWNY: You are right. By October of 1942, Joe Wood had made brigadier general and was known for his reputation with Negro troops. He was sent back home to put together the 92nd black division. The Army placed a major general over him: Edward (Ned) Almond. I went back to organize and train the 92nd Division.

Q: In Liberia, how were these black troops received in Liberia, which always had these close ties to the United States?

ROWNY: It was a very difficult relationship. There is a hierarchy in Liberia, a small group, which is very imperialistic or authoritarian. The rest were slaves and very poor. Our black troops saw the great injustice that was being done to the Liberians and felt that they were much better off in the United States than ordinary Liberians unless they happened to be in the ruling class. There were very few of those at the top, so it was very repressive.

Q: It didn't arouse any ethnic ties?

ROWNY: No, no. Black soldiers had nothing to do with the natives there except that the men paid for the sexual favors. Otherwise, there was no contact of any kind. Our officers had some contact with the Firestone Rubber people and just one or two members of the Liberian government. Even then the Liberian government was highly corrupt.

Q: We'll pick it up when you were called back in October of 1942 to train the 92nd division.

ROWNY: I joined the headquarters at Fort McClellan, Alabama. They put the headquarters, the artillery, and the special troops in Alabama. The Army put each of the regiments in a different state. The fear was that, if they had the entire 15,000 troops in one state, there'd be too much of a chance of race riots and difficulties, so they broke this up into four states.

Q: That's interesting.

Q: This is the interview with General Rowny. I will put in here that I have just finished reading an oral history that was done with General Rowny called Engineer Memoirs, and it was done by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and published in 1995. It covers many of the things that I would be asking, and I thought that rather than duplicate, I will see if

I can get the Memoir included in this oral history with credit to the Army Corps of Engineers. I am going to be asking some foreign affairs type questions of General Rowny, and we'll start at that point.

Q: General, you were obviously not a straight line soldier. You started out as an engineer, and you had a distinguished military career and combat with infantry. How many silver stars did you get?

ROWNY: I believe it was three.

Q: Were the stars awarded in World War II, in the Korean War, and in the Vietnam War?

ROWNY: No, in Vietnam I got the Distinguished Service Medal.

Q: You were in Vietnam when you got shot down.

ROWNY: Yes, but I didn't get any combat awards.

Q: Well, I mean you were there, and you were doing things. At the same time while you were doing this, you were obviously somebody who was tapped as a planner and a military thinker. I noted that you felt that your ideas of using helicopter troops during the Vietnam War was a bit ahead of the game. What's your impression of how this army handled people who were thinkers and advanced planners?

ROWNY: I think they handled them very well. They looked for people and put them in key positions. Of course, my number one star here is Colonel George A. (Abe) Lincoln, who became the army planner. Also, I think that the plan section was always put in one of the most prestigious spots, a staff job among the G-1 through 3 and 4, and I've been both a G-3 and a G-4. The G-3 always has a higher prestige, and within the G-3, plans and operations sections had their hierarchy with planners coming out on top.

Q: Well, Eisenhower came out through there at the beginning of World War II. Wasn't he brought back to the Philippines and put into planes?

ROWNY: He later became the OPD.

Q: Was there a conscious effort on the part of army leaders to take people they thought would be planners, or forward-lookers, and move them through good positions both with command and then staff positions to bring them up and to give them a feeling that someone was looking out for them?

ROWNY: There definitely was a guardian angel looking out for me in the person of George Lincoln. There were several others later along the way. Yes, I think that personal contacts were promoted. I was the first in my class to become a captain, the first major, the first lieutenant colonel, the first colonel, and the first brigadier general. We got early

promotions and, at least from my point of view, choice assignments.

Q: I am just picking up little bits and pieces but, when Truman announced the integration of the armed forces, what was your experience? You had already been with a black engineering unit. What was your impression of the attitude of the professional soldiers on this integration?

ROWNY: I think that the majority of them were in favor of integration. A minority, whom I supposed were mostly people born in the South, thought this would not work, was not a good idea. A majority believed that this was the way to go.

Q: Did you get involved in it in that early period? What were you doing at that point?

ROWNY: I was in Korea at the time that the integration took place, and there was a battalion of Negroes, the second division, which then was later broken up and the blacks were distributed among the white units. By the time I got my infantry regiment in Korea, I inherited a regiment, which had blacks integrated along with the whites. Before then when I was a corps engineer, the units under me were white, and I didn't have much contact with the blacks. Later in Korea, I got an infantry regiment, and that regiment was integrated.

Q: Within the enlisted ranks, did that seem to work fairly well?

ROWNY: Oh, yes, I think that, as far as I could tell, it was far superior to what we had experienced in World War II when we had the all-black units with some white officers at the top.

Q: In general terms, as the Cold War developed, you were with the staff officer of the general staff from 1945 to 1947. Is it a natural thing for planners to look around for a potential enemy? Was the Soviet Union coming out pretty quickly as a possible enemy?

ROWNY: We didn't have to look too far. The evidence was coming in fast and furious. First, General Lincoln had us read Kennan's cables and study those. We had that background. Then, we had the cables coming in from Lucius Clay who was the U.S. member of the High Commission in Berlin. He had a devastating set of events to report, and he was trying to work things out. Also, at the time I remember, the original thought was that Soviet Union would take part in the occupation of Japan. There were two groups that fought about that. Generally, the Pentagon was saying, "No way," and the State Department was saying, "Oh, yes, you have to do this," because the Soviet Union had declared war or at least declared they were going to put troops into battle just about two days before the atom bombs were dropped. Fortunately, the ideas were cabled out to MacArthur who was very strong in saying that he opposed any idea of the Soviets having a part in the occupation of Japan. He insisted that he would retire or resign. He would not wish to be a member of that group. We had all these signals coming in as to what was going to be the future of our relationship with the rest of the world and, particularly, with the Soviet Union. There was the idea of the Soviets allowing elections in Poland.

However, they put in their own puppet so that the Poles in London had a government in exile. That played into all this, so the Soviet Union was very much a pariah.

Q: Were you getting reports back from officers who had served in Moscow or elsewhere during the war about the attitude of the Soviets towards America or giving a great deal of aid and all that?

ROWNY: No, I don't remember getting that kind of report. I did have some reports from my next door neighbor in Alexandria who was a White House press correspondent, Merriman Smith. He had gone over to Berlin, and he told us about the pillage and raping that was going on in Berlin. I heard a lot more about all this after I went to Yale in 1947.

Q: Within the Foreign Service - certainly not at the top but within the Foreign Service - we had people who served in Moscow and Vladivostok and all, and they came away with a very jaundiced view of this. This was during the height of our aid to them in the war, and the Americans were treated like the enemy.

ROWNY: Exactly, and we had the cables back from General Dean who was the head of our Lend-Lease; he later put these into a book called *Strange Alliance*, which is my number one book on negotiating with the Soviets. He told about how difficult they were to deal with. Even though we were giving them Jeeps and ammunition and all kinds of other equipment, they were making life difficult for us. For example, when U.S. pilots were shot down over Poland or Eastern Europe, the Soviets put these pilots into prison camps. They were only released after the war. It was outrageous.

Q: It was pretty easy to figure out what the future might portend, wasn't it?

ROWNY: Yes, we formed our ideas early on that the Soviet Union was on the march ideologically and was not going to cooperate with the West. They were more interested in promoting their ideology than in moving on with the occupation policy.

Q: It must have been very difficult to be a planner during the 1945 to 1947 period and to look at how we had taken this magnificent fighting force we had and had broken it down. The Soviets had all these divisions. Was there any plan, other than if they came with atom bombs, at the time?

ROWNY: There are two aspects of that. On the demobilization, as much as I admired Marshall, I was part of a small group that felt that we demobilized too rapidly. We had torn down our magnificent fighting force, and gutted it. That was one side of the question, just our own doing. As far as the atom bomb was concerned, you called it the major influence in Washington at that time. This came from Morgenthau who was very much in favor of using the atom bomb in any tense situation. It was later our plan to make a new war department, and Washington's idea was to use the atom bomb only if our national survival was actually at stake. A lot of this developed after I left the Pentagon and was developing during the time I was at Yale. That's another chapter of this story.

In the 1945 to 1947 period, we were occupied with working out plans and implementing them for the occupation of Japan and Germany, and the restructuring of the Army and the birth of the United States Air Force, which was a major problem. We worked on the future structure of our armed forces.

Q: Was the army, as a planner, concerned that the birth of the Air Force would have Mike Norstad's Seventh Air Force? You knew that you would lose this very strong supporting strategic air fighter to fighter, a ground support outfit, and that sort of thing.

ROWNY: There wasn't much thought then that the Air Force would give close air support for ground troops. All the talk was about the strategic bombing. You remember these were the days when a number of army air corps officers and others were promoting the Douhet theory, that air power could win wars by itself. The Navy was very much opposed. One of Eisenhower's astute moves was to go to Hap Arnold, who was the number one man in the Army Air Corps, and ask that his best younger officer, Lauris Norstad, be assigned to the War Department. He became our new boss, the head of OPD, as a major general and, later, a lieutenant general in the Army Air Corps. He promoted the idea of a separate air force. This idea of a man within the War Department being in charge of War Department plans and operations, being an Army Air Corps man, was really a brilliant move and helped bring about the creation of the Army Air Force against the objection of the Navy.

Q: Later we had the Admirals' Revolt. That was in the 1950s or 1960s, I can't remember.

ROWNY: Yes, I wasn't around then. I think it was fortunate that there was this close affinity between George Lincoln and Norstad, Lincoln being the army planner who stayed on. He and Norstad had very high respect for each other.

Norstad replaced the Army general as our chief of OPD. Norstad, having great prestige with his old Army Air Corps buddies, was able to sit on a lot of super ambitious plans that the future Air Force officers had for the battle for resources. They said, "We don't need all these armed ground troops anymore. We don't need so much navy. We are going to do it all with air power." Norstad was able to dampen that.

Q: This keeps cropping up. It hasn't died yet. After Kosova, it is still there.

ROWNY: Also, Billy Mitchell's battle over whether an airplane could sink a battleship or not entered into this argument. It was a very tense time. The original plan that was submitted by the newly formed Air Force for what they wanted was just outrageous, it was so high. They wanted about half of all the resources and, then, the other half could be divided between the Navy and the Army. Whittled down over the years, I guess it's roughly one-third, one-third, for each service.

Q: You were at Yale from 1947 to 1949. How did you find the intellectual range at Yale as far as the people who were looking at the East-West confrontation?

ROWNY: I was fortunate at Yale in terms of both civilian instructors and those who were in the military field. The people on the civilian side were really broad thinkers, like Arnold Wolfers; Heil Holborn, who had been the first historian for the Weimar Republic; and, W. T. R. Fox, who was a broad-gauge historian. We were getting a broad-gauge idea of how the future of international relations would be conducted with a heavy academic overload of United Nations and overall government. The other half of the instructors we had were the best academic thinkers on military matters in the country. The leader of the group was Bernard Brodie, who was backed by Klaus Knorr and Bill Kaufman. Bernard Brodie began writing his seminal work, *The Absolute Weapon*. There were great debates within the academic community at Yale about which way U.S. policy should go on the atom bomb but Bernard Brodie won out in the end with his book.

Q: What was the thrust of this book?

ROWNY: The thrust of this book was that we would not rely on atomic weapons in ordinary situations, that it was the ultimate arbitrator and that it would prove strategic bombing to be a success. There was some controversy about strategic bombing and surveys were made about how much damage the regular bombing campaigns had done. Now, this was the absolute weapon, and it was to be used only in the extreme case of national survival being at stake. Brodie and Kaufman made frequent trips back to the Pentagon and talked to Lincoln and Norstad. While they were developing their theories, I think the U.S. followed the lead of what had been developed there at Yale.

Q: As a military planner and army officer, I would think right from the beginning any look at this nuclear weapon that was called the atomic bomb in those days would be just absolutely repugnant. I mean, one, it messed up the battlefield and, two, it threatened, you know. At that time we weren't thinking about full destruction of civilization but, I mean, it was almost an impossible weapon to plan around, wasn't it?

ROWNY: It was very difficult to deal with and especially in a charged atmosphere of the newly formed Air Force, which would take over and control this weapon. There was a great deal of anxiety about how all this would work out. I think with this charged atmosphere in the Pentagon and preoccupation with redesigning the new forces and with the occupation problems facing us, it took an outside agency, like academia, to lead the way on thinking. A part of Lincoln's program was to bring us back, the four of us that were sent to different universities to study international relations. We sat in on the seminars we had with the strategic planning section in the Pentagon. Some general said that he would rather go back to West Point.

Q: In the academic world in the planning, were we going on the assumption that within a relatively short period of time the Soviet Union would probably have the weapon, too?

ROWNY: We thought that they would eventually, but that we were far ahead. We had a monopoly for a long period of time. I don't think anybody predicted that the Soviets would advance as rapidly as they did in this field. The one exception was the Yale historian Fred Barghoorn, who wrote about the Soviet Union.

Q: Well, when you got out of Yale, you were sent as plans officer to the Far Eastern Command.

ROWNY: Yes, I was.

Q: The Far Eastern Command was based in Tokyo, wasn't it?

ROWNY: Yes, it was.

Q: Now, what was your impression and what was the reputation that you'd gotten inside the military of Douglas MacArthur at this point?

ROWNY: Oh, he had a very high reputation. Of course, when I was in the Pentagon, in addition to my other duties, I had been the MacArthur desk officer, so I got to read his cables. Of course, MacArthur was a legend. He had been a division commander in World War I and earned a Medal of Honor and had a distinguished career throughout the years. Except for overzealous lobbying for more forces in the Pacific, he conducted himself quite admirably during the war and with his island hopping ideas avoided a large number of casualties. I was delighted to be assigned out to his command.

Q: Well, how did you find the atmosphere on his staff? One always thinks of this "coterie," a term that might be used to describe the people and atmosphere that surrounded MacArthur. They were extreme loyalists, and I would think that, as a plans officer, it'd be difficult. I'm talking about just before the Korean War. How did you find this?

ROWNY: It was a difficult situation. Sometimes we envied the civilian side, which was redesigning the entire Japanese government. Their relations were quite smooth. On the military side, we found that there was some tension among officers and, generally, it was caused by the simple fact that you were either an old friend of MacArthur's and part of his personal entourage or you weren't. If you were, you could do no wrong. If you weren't, you'd have to fight for your positions. We'd find that atmosphere in the staff. There wasn't an open revolt or anything but it was there nevertheless.

Q: When you arrived as plans officer, this was November 1949.

ROWNY: Yes, it was.

Q: How did you view the potential military situation in your part of the world? What were the threats and what would be our responses?

ROWNY: We were really preoccupied with the Soviet Union and China and, particularly, what would happen if the two combined forces against us. For the first 30 days I was there, I traveled around Japan accompanied by one of the members on the civilian staff, a professor, Edward Morrow, who was both a Japanese historian and an anthropologist. I had a wonderful tour and first hand look at what was going on in Japan. I wrote a trip

report that we were wasting our assets by having troops out in so many villages and provinces. That view was not original with me. It was a view that was held principally by the people who were not among MacArthur's selected few. This idea of withdrawing and pulling back our troops into central training camps was opposed by people like Willoughby, MacArthur's G-2.

Q: In a way, it was still an occupation, which no longer needed to be an occupation, wasn't it? Was it the idea of local uprisings, or was it just more for comfort?

ROWNY: The traditional view, or fear, was that there would be uprisings and, perhaps, difficulty in these various places; therefore, we needed American presence in large numbers but that proved not to be not the case. The emperor had good control of the situation but we did need some armed forces because there was no such thing as a Red Cross over there to handle disasters and fires and maybe even riots. The building of a Japanese self-defense force was essential to replace the U.S. Army, which was being pulled back. I wrote the first outline plan for the self-defense forces for the Japanese army.

Q: While we are looking at this, did Korea fall within your bailiwick?

ROWNY: Yes, but there wasn't a great deal of thought given to Korea. It was a minor worry. We followed it and some of us were very much opposed to the idea of holding back our military support to Syngman Rhee. If you remember, the Soviet Union was backing Kim Il Song and giving him their weapons. We were withholding weaponry from South Korea, believing, or at least the State Department did, that Syngman Rhee would use these forces to attack the North. The North Koreans used this as a propaganda ploy to say that they had to build up because the South was going to attack and reoccupy the North.

At Yale it was one of our courses under Gabriel Almond on decision making. There were 10 of us in the class and the professor gave each of us some incident which had gone wrong because of bad decisions. We selected 10 periodicals and magazines. The object was to study what these magazines and periodicals had said about the mistakes that had occurred. I recall that of all the periodicals, I think the *Sunday New York Times* and the *Herald Tribune* each had one out of 10. *The Baltimore Sun* and the *Atlantic Constitution* had two out of 10, and one periodical had four out of 10. If you had read that periodical for a year before, you would have been able to predict what would happen, and that was *The Economist*.

I became an avid reader of the *Economist* and had it air mailed to me in Tokyo. Sometime early in 1950, there was a report in the *Economist*, saying keep your eye on North Korea; it might attack. I flagged this and sent it in to the chief of staff for General MacArthur. Again, we got a blast from Willoughby, saying, "Look, I'm the chief here and if any information is going to be given of an intelligence nature, I'll forward it." So, I gained somewhat of a reputation as being a seer of what was to happen, which I wasn't. I was just reporting what I read in the London *Economist*.

Q: The initial attack came June 25, 1950, a date which I think all of us of a certain generation or two will remember very well. How well did you respond at that point?

ROWNY: I think MacArthur's response was rapid and correct. He immediately talked to people in Washington and was directing attention to the need for troops and also for an international group. MacArthur put his whole staff to work on how we were going to cope with the situation in Korea. We were fortunate at that time to have a wonderful ambassador to South Korea, John Muccio, who did a first-class job in his cables and phone calls to MacArthur. It had a lot to do with formulating MacArthur's ideas of what he sent back. The military was preoccupied with fighting the onslaught of the North Koreans, and Muccio was a very courageous and cool-headed ambassador deserving much credit for our initial response to North Korea.

Q: Had there been any talks between our military and what passed for the South Korean military before this happened?

ROWNY: We had a training force in South Korea but it wasn't very strong or large. We didn't equip the South Korean army very well. There was close talk and integration between the two but it didn't amount to much because of the small size of our military training force and its lack of resources to support them.

Q: Was there a concern when this thing happened that, for some reason, the Japanese might rise?

ROWNY: No, not at all. The Japanese were very much behind MacArthur's idea of calling for an international force, which worked out very well because the Soviet ambassador to the U.N. was absent. They had said they'd veto our plans. I might mention one thing in passing. I think it's on the 5th of January 1950 that Churchill met with Truman and we got a cable in which Churchill said that he had held Truman in low regard until he had met him personally and that, now, he regretted that and felt that Truman was a good president. I've never seen that in print anywhere. I don't know if you've come across it.

Q: No, I haven't. I know obviously that Truman rose in many people's estimation over the years. What about the attitude towards Marshall, the chief of staff, and Truman and all? Was there a tendency on MacArthur's staff to be somewhat dismissive, "We'll do this thing, and don't tell us what to do?" I'm talking about prior to the actual attack and shortly afterwards.

ROWNY: Well, it wasn't so much the staff. There was this tendency on the part of MacArthur to, with the help of a few of these sycophants on his staff who had been giving him bad advice, look down his nose at Truman as just an underling who had only risen to be a captain in the Army. We were happy when the cable came giving Churchill's high regard for Truman and circulated that among the staff so that we would influence people around MacArthur and MacArthur himself to have a higher regard for

Truman. Truman was gaining in stature all through that time.

Q: You've already covered it thoroughly and very well. You were with the planning of Inchon, but what was your impression after you became a field officer in Korea of your Korean counterparts? Did you see them as having a long way to go to learn how to be military officers?

ROWNY: Yes. They had a very long way to go. They had not been trained well, and there was not a professional officer corps. Some of the soldiers, individually, were brave and fought well but, in general, it was not what we would consider a first-class military force. It was second or third class. Particularly, one can contrast it to the North Korean forces who were well trained and well equipped and came down in force with great capabilities, much more than the South Koreans then.

I changed that idea later when I went back in 1967 and 1968 and commanded the First Corps. I saw how the Koreans had built an academy modeled after West Point. They had built a first-class officer corps. There originally were six Korean divisions and two U.S. divisions under my command on the DMZ. It later became seven Korean divisions and one U.S. division. Those divisions, I considered, were as good as our U.S. division. To answer your question, initially, we had a low opinion of their ability.

Q: You were going to be more and more involved in working in solely-American organizations. For you and maybe for others who were making the plans, let's say we've got to start building up really professional armies on the part of Vietnam and other places. Did the lesson get to some of your political masters?

ROWNY: It's hard to say on the civilian side but I know that it was very much on our mind when the Vietnam War began. In the early days of that war, the Vietnamese followed our experience of building an officer corps, including the establishment of a military academy.

Q: We had - what was the term? - KATUSAs, the Korean soldiers integrated into our divisions. Was that ever contemplated in Vietnam?

ROWNY: I wasn't in that element of the battle enough to know. In the time that I used KATUSAs in the second year of the Korean War, I used them largely in my engineer outfits. I don't remember integrating them into our fighting outfits that early but maybe they did. We did use thousands of them as laborers and truck drivers and, in some cases, equipment operators on our engineering equipment. They did quite well.

Q: Let's move ahead. When you were in NATO, this goes into the 1960s. In particular when you were in the 24th division from 1965 to 1966, how did we view the Soviet threat? We knew they had a lot of forces there but, one, did we see war as being able to happen on a hair trigger and how effective did we think the Soviets would be?

ROWNY: It was always a great worry because the Soviets outnumbered our divisions by

at least two or three to one. The question was, could we hold them off if they attacked without our resorting to use of the atomic bomb? How would we contain the Soviets if they moved across Germany through the Fulda Gap against our inferior forces? Twelve years earlier when I was secretary of the General Staff at SHAPE, it was already apparent that we faced a threat from the Soviet Union. As you may recall, in 1956, the Soviets moved into Hungary. The worry was, who would be next? These concerns never faded. The original plans made in the Pentagon for the number of troops the U.S. had to be pared back again and again. The first plans called for 60 U.S. divisions. That was cut in half and then in half again. Even with the buildup of the Allies, the question was whether we would have time to mobilize or would have to resort to the nuclear weapon.

Q: I was in Germany in the middle fifties as an enlisted man in the Air Force at Darmstadt near Lendenfels and, then, later as a vice counsel in Frankfurt. I used to see this huge atomic cannon driving around, tactical weapons. Was this a bluff as far as the use of this?

ROWNY: No. It was not a bluff, nor was resorting to atomic weapons. Rather, it was what we called a measured response. We would move by degrees. If we couldn't contain the forces with our ground troops, we would use the 280 millimeter atomic cannon to try to stop the onslaught. If that failed, we would resort to strategic bombing from the air. We always had the feeling that we were very much behind and we were in a vulnerable position all through the years.

Q: In a way it is very dangerous to be involved in that, but also the fact that if you are looking at it from the Soviet side, you don't want your opponent to be so weak as to have the massive weapons used. They are almost automatically going to have to use it. When you were with NATO, you got involved very much in the logistics of the withdrawal of our forces from France. That was a very difficult time. What was your impression of the French military reaction? Their leader, General De Gaulle, had made the decision but how did the military respond?

ROWNY: Our contacts with the French military were first rate and, while the French were loyal to De Gaulle, a lot of them expressed privately their unhappiness with what was going on. We had a good relationship with the French military at our level, our opposite numbers, but at the top there was this great division. De Gaulle said he would support NATO politically but not militarily and gave the U.S. a year to move its troops and supplies out of France.

Q: Did this cause any rifts with the French military?

ROWNY: I don't know what the internal politics were and what happened. I was not in a position to see any higher traffic. I only saw people at my own level. They were friendly and apologetic for what was going on. Whether there was a rift with DeGaulle, I just don't know.

Q: Back to Vietnam, early on you got involved with that from 1962 and variously

involved up to 1965. Were you getting reports back of disquiet about our involvement there?

ROWNY: I didn't in the early days. There was what we considered a one-sided view of the press. Halberstam and others were writing from Saigon that the Vietnamese and Diem would never be able to succeed, and we shouldn't be backing him. After the assassination of Diem in 1963, everything went downhill. We never recovered from that. Once he was gone, there was no one to rally around.

Some of us who had been in Korea thought it was similar to the events that happened there. Syngman Rhee was unpopular in some circles in the U.S. but America backed him. Our original thought in Vietnam was that we'd better work with Diem. There was, even in those early days, what turned out later to be a very great opposition to our involvement in Vietnam.

Q: It wasn't felt very greatly in those early days.

ROWNY: No, it wasn't.

Q: Getting back to Korea where you were serving in 1971, you were commanding general of I CORPS. How did you see the military situation at that time?

ROWNY: We were quite confident that, despite the larger North Korean forces, we could hold them off. We believed we had trained our forces well enough so there would be enough time to decide whether we had to resort to nuclear weapons. There was a stockpile of nuclear weapons in Korea, which could be used by U.S. Air Force. What we didn't know is what might happen if the Soviets moved in Germany. That was another problem.

Q: When you were commanding general of the I CORPS, did you ever have any dealings with Park Chung Hee?

ROWNY: Not that I remember.

Q: How about the embassy? Were you involved with the embassy at all?

ROWNY: I just made courtesy calls and social visits. I worked for the Eighth Army commander who did all the liaison with the embassy and the Korean government. I did keep contact with some of the younger officers that we had known, particularly on the East Coast of Korea in the Korean War in 1950-51. They had risen to high positions, including the defense minister.

Q: Let's move on to the deputy chairman of the NATO Military Committee in 1971 to 1973. What was your impression about the capabilities of the French and the Germans and the Italians and the British?

ROWNY: We had very high respect for the Germans as a military force, which we felt

was superbly trained and entirely reliable. We had close relations with our British allies who were having economic troubles back home, and we always felt they were doing the very best they could with the limited resources they had. The French, we felt, would come back into NATO if there was a real attack, and would reopen the line of communications back to the Atlantic. This would be better than turning the line of communications north to the Baltic. We felt the Italians would do a credible job but had limited resources.

Q: Did the perennial Greek-Turkish problems affect you at all?

ROWNY: There were always problems occurring at the political level. My boss, General Steinhof, chairman of the NATO Military Committee, made great efforts to smooth relations at the military level between the Greeks and the Turks. He was very successful at building mutual respect at the military level. It would never happen at the political level. At the political meetings that I attended, there was always animosity and almost open warfare between the Greeks and Turks.

Q: It's really sad that this continues. I think actually there have been real efforts recently to do better but relations between the Greeks and the United States aren't very good. You then became a representative of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks from 1973 to 1979. What was the thinking on the part of the Pentagon about nuclear war at this particular time?

ROWNY: The feeling was that we had to negotiate with the Soviets quite carefully. We had to be careful because of their strong ground superiority. They were now becoming superior in numbers of strategic weapons. As a result, we were quite apprehensive. We always felt we would be able to absorb the first nuclear blow and have enough weapons left to completely obliterate the Soviet Union. We were quite confident that if they ever started a war we would be the ultimate winners. Nevertheless, we didn't relish the idea of ever getting into a nuclear war.

I joined right after the SALT I and the ABM Treaty were signed. There was a great deal of skepticism on the part of the chairman and the Joint Chiefs of Staff about whether or not the Soviets would curtail their buildup. Their original promise was that, if we signed the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, they would not increase their forces over ours. That didn't happen. They built and built and built until by the time SALT II was signed, they had twice our number of weapons and about six times as much throw weight or total nuclear power. We thought this might embolden them to feel they could make such a devastating attack on us that we could not retaliate. We knew that that was not true because we always had the submarines at sea. Even if they could neutralize our strategic bombers and our Minute Men, the submarines would always save us. It was a tense time.

Q: Around this time I heard about these irritants at the Pentagon who were talking and saying, "If we lose 20 million or 40 million people and all this." As a military man dealing with this thing, did these people get in the way in their theoretical basis, or were they helpful?

ROWNY: I would say they were unhelpful because our feeling was that these computations were not meaningful. If we lost a million or two at Washington and New York, the question was, would we have the heart to continue to fight and sacrifice even more people or would we sue for peace? Our thought was to try to play down any of these calculations, "Well, we'll take 10 million casualties and take 20 million casualties." We all thought that was taking a negative approach. Our objective was to be sure that a nuclear war would never occur. We could not allow the Soviets to believe we would succumb to their threats without a fight or, nor could we permit them to feel that in any situation they would employ nuclear weapons. If it came to that, the game was over.

Q: What was your view of the Nixon-Kissinger approach to the SALT talks in 1973?

ROWNY: Kissinger was very much in charge, and we were disappointed that Nixon didn't assert himself more strongly. Nixon was Kissinger's intellectual equal, but he didn't harness or hold him in and allowed him to become both the Security Advisor and the Secretary of State. We found that Kissinger was very much in charge. Outwardly, when they went to meetings, Kissinger always deferred to Nixon. For example, at Moscow summit meetings, Nixon was clearly in charge and Kissinger never challenged him. However, back home we always felt that Kissinger had the upper hand and dictated what was going on.

Q: Were you concerned about Kissinger going for a treaty - this was before the Ford Administration - rather than to be willing to walk away if we couldn't get what we really needed?

ROWNY: No, I didn't think Kissinger was trying to give away the store, nor did Nixon cave.

Several months before Nixon resigned, there was a summit in Moscow, and the high-level gossip was that Nixon might want to make a deal in order to save himself from Watergate but that didn't happen. When the chips were down, Nixon didn't give any indication that he was ready to succumb or give in.

I think this is a pretty good time to stop. I'd like to have one more session, and I'd like to pick it up talking about the arrival of the Carter Administration and the SALT talks. On the SALT talks we need to talk about the issues that particularly concerned you.

End of interview