SM: This is Steve Maxner conducting an interview with Lieutenant General Harold Moore. It is the 25th of October the year 2000 at approximately 9:05 a.m. We are in the Special Collections Library interview room. General Moore, would you please being by telling us a little bit about growing up in Kentucky and what the town in Kentucky was like where you grew up.

HM: I was born in February 1922 in a small town in Kentucky, Bardstown, B-a-r-d-s-t-o-w-n; population in the 1920s was probably 1500 people. It’s in the rolling hills we call Knobs of Kentucky forty miles south of the Ohio River in central Kentucky. My father was an insurance agent. Neither my father nor my mother graduated from high school. They married early; my mother was twenty years old when she married. I was raised a Catholic, my mother is still a Methodist. She’s a hundred years old now and still living! Had four children in our family, three boys and a girl, I was the oldest. We were sent to Catholic schools as children, Sisters of Charity through the eighth grade. Then I was sent to a local preparatory school run by the Brothers of Saint Francis Xavier in Bardstown Kentucky in the thirties. The depression years did not affect our family to the point where we realized that we were undergoing a national depression. My father still made money as an insurance agent. We ate well and we lived in a nice little house, which was quite comfortable. As a youth I was primarily interested in the aspects of baseball, football, basketball and I spent a lot of time in the outdoors. A little town that
was surrounded by forests and streams and I spent many a happy hour out in those forests
setting snares and building huts and fishing…developed a good love of the outdoors. My
father was a great bass fishermen and he taught me at an early age how to cast with the
old time reel that we had in those days were you had to thumb the line to keep from
getting a back lash and I developed a love for bass fishing. I went fishing frequently with
or without my father. I learned a valuable lesson, which I have applied to my children
and grandchildren: Teach a kid to fish and he’ll never go wrong. Also another lesson is
that when you’re out in the boat with your father you’ve got to talk. When I wanted to
talk with my sons, and I have three sons and two daughters, in their teenage years when
sometimes they’re reluctant to talk I just went out fishing. When you’re in boat for three
or four hours with a young teenager they’ve got to talk. My father, when I was about
fourteen years old, suggested that I consider attempting to get into West Point U.S.
Military Academy. I had never given this a thought. I had seen a couple of movies on
West Point and was well aware that it was a tough school and they prepared men for
becoming an officer of the U.S. Army for a lifetime career. And that appealed to me
because of the outdoors that I love and I was a Boy Scout. We didn’t have a very active
troop, but I was a patrol leader and enjoyed scouting. So I began thinking seriously about
going to West Point. First you had to get an appointment from your senator or
congressmen. And I started really paying attention to my classes in mathematics, the
subject for which I was pretty dumb in really. One day when I was seventeen years old
in the winter, February I had a slight case of pneumonia and was sick in bed at home.
My father came home about four in the afternoon and he had a friend who was a local
supporter of Senator Happy Chandler who was a Senator from Kentucky at that time in
Washington. And this friend had helped put Senator Chandler into office and had been
contacted by Chandler’s office in Washington D.C. that Chandler had a job for a youth
under his patronage. Now each senator and congressmen in those days had jobs that they
could give to people back home and in Washington D.C. Like elevator operators or
capitol policemen and this job that was being offered to me was as a book wrapper and a
mailer of books and Senate hearings and Congressional hearings to constituents. In those
days each department, Agriculture, Treasury, so forth, put out a yearbook, congressional
yearbooks were put out. So I thought about this and I didn’t know what the job was, but
my dad said, ‘Senator Chandler’s got a job in Washington for you if you want to go. It will put you on the ground in Washington D.C. where appointments for West Point are given out. And you could possibly seek out and obtain an appointment to West Point.’

So I thought that was a pretty good idea and I said, ‘Yes. I’d like to go.’ I was in the middle of my last year in Saint Joseph’s Preparatory School in Bardstown Kentucky and would be dropping out of school. So I had my dad, (I was sick), dad called up the principal, told him the circumstances, the principal said, ‘When he gets to Washington if he can go to night school and get ‘X’ number of credits in algebra and English, that will suffice and he will be transferred to Saint Joe and he can graduate in June with his class.’

My class was small. It was an all boys’ school, probably about fifteen boys. So I said, ‘Well let’s go! When do we leave?’ He said, ‘Tomorrow morning at four o’clock.’ And my mother burst out crying, her oldest son was leaving home on a moments’ notice, sick…So we went to Washington D.C. leaving the next morning in an automobile driven by a black man, now called African Americans is an accepted term now. Colonel Hawk was his nickname. He was the driver for a lobbyist in Washington from Bardstown Kentucky in the tobacco industry and he was driving her car to Washington. So we went up there in his car overnight. Arrived sick and got a doctor, got some pills, got better.

Went to a Senator’s office and he directed me to the job site, which was a former streetcar barn for streetcars when they were pulled by horses, full of rats and fleas and stacks of books. The pay was thirty bucks a week and my working comrades were young men my age under patronage of a Senator of New Mexico and one from New Jersey and about five of us. We had a boss who was a nice guy. I went to night school and finished up my high school with cabdrivers and middle-aged government workers and transferred the credits back to Saint Joe, went back in June graduated with my class, came back to Washington and started seriously hunting for an appointment to West Point. Enrolled in George Washington University night school in September of 1940. Took a lot of courses at night, joined Kappa Sigma Fraternity, lived in the fraternity house. Until then I’d lived in a room in a private home with another guy, owned by a very nice elderly couple. I moved in the fraternity house, was initiated in Kappa Sigma in February of 1941 and still trying to find an appointment to West Point, in which every endeavor I was unsuccessful.

Senator Chandler had already committed his next appointment to another boy and until
his appointees graduated he would not have an opening and that’s the same for
congressmen as well. So every two weeks I got a list from the Department of the Army,
it was called War Department in those days, of appointments left unfilled. I would go up
from the warehouse, which was about two blocks away from the Senate office building
and the House office building and I would walk into offices after knocking on doors and
expressing my desire to get to West Point. I was unsuccessful. The war began, Pearl
Harbor, and some of my fraternity brothers voluntarily joined up. Early on in the war
there were not too many who were drafted, I signed up for the draft of course, but was not
drafted. In spring of ’42, now this is over two years after I left Kentucky and I’d gone to
night school. Congress passes a bill, which the President signed, authorizing each senator
and congressmen to have I believe it was one more appointment each to the academies,
Annapolis and West Point, and I hoped to get that appointment from my congressmen,
Congressmen Ed Creel. I went to his office and he said, ‘I cannot give you this
appointment, but I will appoint you to Annapolis.’ And I’ve always been of the opinion
that you’ve got to never quit so I said, ‘Well Mr. Creel I thank you very much, but I don’t
want to go to Annapolis. I want to be an Army Infantry Paratrooper Officer! And if I can
find another senator or congressmen who will swap a West Point appointment to you for
this Annapolis one, would you go along with it?’ Well he was taken a back and had not
heard of that before. But he mumbled and stumbled a little bit and said, ‘Yes.’ So I
began knocking on doors again and I found a congressmen who would appoint me
directly on the first alternate to West Point, which means if the principal appointee failed
you could get in. But I found a congressman from Georgia who would appoint me to
West Point, Congressmen Eugene E. Cox from the second district of Georgia. The main
reason why he needed this after a few days of talking with his staff. When I knocked on
the door to his office there was an ugly lady in there, I was kid twenty years old. This
lady was about thirty five-forty, just a nice southern lady and of course I’d been raised
right in the south, ‘Yes Ma’am, No Ma’ma, Yes Sir…’ and she was the first one I saw.
She said, ‘Well what can we do for you young man?’ and I told her what I was up to.
She took a liking to me! Her husband was the - they called it the secretary in those days -
to Congressmen Cox, which means Chief of Staff. And she said, ‘Well I’ll speak to my
husband about this, Mr. McCarthy.’ It turns out that her brother was the congressman!
So she said, ‘Come back in a couple, three days and we’ll see what happens.’ So I came back and I think primarily due to her, Mrs. Robinson - her husband was Mr. Robinson - that I was able to get that appointment. I was appointed to West Point from the second district of Georgia, Thomasville, Thomas County, Georgia…I never was in the state of Georgia until my third summer as a cadet at West Point. So that’s how I made it into West Point and the principle there is ‘Never Quit!’

SM: Yes sir.

HM: I showed up at West Point…oh also, I was pretty stupid in mathematics and to stack the deck there was a private West Point prep school in Washington D.C. called the Millard’s, which helped prepare young men to go to West Point, mostly for Army-brat boys sent there by their parents to live in the two or three houses this guy had right there up Connecticut Avenue in Washington D.C. Well, I submitted all of my credits from college to West Point with the request that they’d be considered so that I would go into West Point without having to take the mental examination in mathematics and English. At the same time I took a preliminary physical examination at Walter Reed Army Medical Center outside of Washington to determine if I had any disqualifying defects, which I could fix six weeks off. It turned out all I had to have was a couple of cavities filled up. I got back a letter from West Point saying, ‘You’re accepted without a mental examination’! We call that a ‘dog ticket’. So then I made arrangements to have my physical examination at Fort Knox, Kentucky there near my home. I quit my job in Washington the middle of June and took the train back to Kentucky. Took my examination at Fort Knox, passed the physical. In those days they sent you a telegram from the War Department saying, ‘So and so you have been accepted into West Point, you must report on such and such a date,’ and that was your pass to West Point. Well in all my efforts in Washington to get into West Point I had been to the War Department numerous times to get my list from this lady, of performance…and I knew her pretty well and her office phone number. I went home to Kentucky and I waited for this telegram and it didn’t come. Well the deployment date I had to be there was July 15th. Well it got to be around July 10th and I hadn’t heard. So I called her up and in those days telephones; you seen them in the telephone museums, it was a round stand with a big vertical holder and a speaker, and you’d pick it up and you had to dial the operator.
‘Long distance please. Give me long distance.’ So I call up long distance to her office in Washington, told her my problem and I said, ‘I need that telegram!’ It came within two days. So all of these circumstances seemed to be fated to occur, but the whole moral is never quit. Don’t take nothing for granted…always one more thing you can do and influence anything in your favor. So I hopped on a train and went to West Point and needless to say it was a culture shock and an environmental shock. I had never been in New York State. To be a plebe at West Point in 1942 was a very stressful experience.

SM: Yes sir. Before we talk about West Point, could I ask you a question or a couple of questions?

HM: Sure.

SM: That lesson, don’t quit, was that something instilled in you by your parents and by your grandparents?

HM: No I don’t think so. I can’t recall my father or mother ever giving me a philosophy like that. It was just my personal make-up I suppose. I played a little football for Saint Joe, I played end…wasn’t any good, but I could catch a pass. If it was anywhere within five-ten yards of me I’d catch it. We were very often behind in football games and I found that I could…in the words of the vernacular, kick some ass of my teammates and get things going. I learned never to quit in any endeavor. At West Point there were plenty of opportunities to quit, with the plebe system a harsh discipline, academics were very tough. I had no problem with the discipline; I had no problems with being treated rough by the plebe system in those days. The only problem I had was mathematics in my years at West Point.

SM: Do you think that your upbringing in going to Catholic schools and the strict disciplinary system that they employ usually, do you think that helped you?

HM: Oh absolutely. I hadn’t thought of that, but that’s true. Sisters, the nuns and the Brothers of Saint Joe Prep. Those were in the days where if a kid got out of line…now the Sisters, when we got out of line they would get out a long ruler and you’d put your hand out and they’d slap you with that ruler four or five times. Well it was demeaning and it hurt. But the brothers of Saint Francis Xavier the classes that I was in, probably no more then fifteen, twenty, twenty-five young boys in the class. If you didn’t pay attention and the room was twice the size of this room…if you didn’t pay attention, if
your attitude wasn’t right that brother would come WHACK! And damn near knock you right out of your seat! The worst thing was to be ordered to go see the boss and he was the principal, the top guy, Brother Liguori then Brother Calambierl or whoever it was at the time. Now he would not administer it physical punishment, but the tongue lashing that he would give was worse then that. Of course you didn’t dare go home and tell your mom and dad you got whacked by the brother because then they’d do you just some more of it at home. I think the upbringing of discipline it taught you self-discipline and to obey orders. But I played football in my first year at West Point on the plebe squad for about six weeks then I was kicked off because I was deficient in mathematics.

SM: Oh no!

HM: You had to be proficient to play on an athletic team at West Point in those days. Well that scared the hell out of me because I had spent a lot of time trying to get into West Point and I didn’t want to get kicked out because of being deficient in academics. So it took me probably from late October until mid-December to get proficient, in other words my grades. That scared me so much Steve that my life at West Point became unbalanced. I should have been counseled by one of the commissioned officers who were over us. But in those days there was no mentoring, there is no counseling…every kid was on his own. So all I did from then on at West Point I just made sure that I was going to go out that gate with a diploma and that I was not going to fail in any academic subjects! They were pretty strict. If you were below…3.0 was passing…if you’re overall grades at the end of a semester were below 3.0 in any subject you were so called ‘turned out’ to take special exam and if you failed the exam you were out the gate. In any one subject! So I became unbalanced. I went out for the plebe baseball team after I got proficient and I made that team. Then the following year I went out for B-Squad football again, but found that I couldn’t handle that because of time for studying. I quit baseball because I couldn’t hit a curve. I think I could’ve done other things at West Point like rifle team, I fired expert on the rifle…plebe summer. I was a good shot with the rifle, a skill which I put to use much later on other fields on other days. I graduated in the top, about the top seventy or so percent of my class, maybe the top eighty percent (in June 1945) and walked out that gate as an Infantry Officer. I went to the basic infantry course at Fort Benning for two months and then the war ended in
August. It was disappointing to us because we’d been trained hard for three years, they cut the course from four to three years in order to get us out faster and on the battlefields. So we really had compressed school years. Saturday mornings, Christmas leave was five days, the first year a plebe wasn’t given any leave at all, couldn’t go home.

SM: Was that difficult? Did that make it difficult that first year?
HM: Oh you just got used to it. I was in the Catholic choir, I was in the ski club and I was an acolyte in the Catholic Church. In the summer we had cadet military field training. After being at West Point for a year I think I got ten days leave and came back for hard summer training and then more academics. But I was an absolute ‘goat’. If any subject had a number in it I never could break the code on the cryptic, abstruse mysteries of engineering, mechanical engineering, fluid engineering, mechanics. I had to study in the toilets at the end of the hall at night under a 40 watt bulb sitting on the toilet until one thirty-two in the morning. And then we got up at reveille at six o’clock. So at West Point I learned how to sleep fast and I believe that. I learned that I could get by physically and mentally on five hours of sleep and I did that all my active duty career.

As I was going up in rank and responsibility I had to take a lot of unclassified work home with me at night, particularly when serving in the Pentagon. After I did my work at around eleven or twelve o’clock I started reading. I read until one or one thirty then go to bed. Get up at five maybe take a run. When I was on troop duty I’d run with the troops. You get your mind and your body into that regimen and then you can do it. So after the Fort Benning course in the summer of 1945, I graduated in ’45, I was sent to Japan through the Philippines. Sent to the Philippines first to a replacement depot and then we were sent to Japan where I learned that I could volunteer to go to jump school and be in the 11th Airborne Division, which I did and was in the 11th Airborne Division from October ’45 to April ’48 when I returned to the U.S.A. I was a bachelor…I was a platoon leader for a while. Then I was detailed ironically to, given my deficiencies in various types of engineering, I was detailed to supervise Japanese contractors building a new camp to house 2500 to 3000 soldiers. With a headquarters, an officer’s club, an NCO club, a gym, a swimming pool, a sewage plant, a water plant, seven boiler plants… and I was supervising all of this. I hardly remembered the Bernoulli theorem! I learned that I could supervise all of these activities pretty well in demanding good products. In the
process I learned some Japanese, picked up what they were talking about. I was not fluent, but I was able to get along in Japanese with the Japanese people, which was a great, great thing. I traveled when I could around the Island of Hokkaido, which I was on the northern Island of Hokkaido, which was untouched by the war. It was beautiful up there, great snow conditions. In the winter the 1976 Olympics were held up there in the winter. I did a lot of running, I had a horse, I found a Japanese guy with a couple of German Shepherd war dogs from Germany and he and I started up a kennel. I had sixteen German Shepherds. I’d give them away to my friends and I brought one back to the United States. After supervising contractors for six or seven months and we built all this stuff…oh also I had to supervise the building of 210 private residences for officers and their families, and also fifteen miles of asphalt roads. So I learned all of that stuff.

SM: Do you think that what training you did receive at West Point did help you?
HM: Oh yeah, sure did, right! I could supervise. I knew the standards and all that studying in the toilets at night maybe helped.

SM: How much leadership training did you receive at West Point?
HM: We had classes in military leadership, academic classes, great captains, we had films of actual wartime activities of World War II. I studied Napoleon, I studied the Revolutionary War, studied the American Civil War. I still have my MAP books and textbooks. We had a lot of training on military history and leadership. That was a subject that fascinated me along with psychology, individual and group psychology. I discovered the West Point Library and I would draw out books on individual and group psychology in which subjects we had no classes. I read those avidly. If you can call all that leadership training and that’s what it was I reckon. But there was no leadership counseling, I never received any leadership counseling or mentoring from any commissioned officer. All they did was inspect us and write us up for demerits, inspect our rooms, our rifles, personal appearance, bearing, so forth. I never was a ranking cadet officer with the stripes up and down the sleeves, but I did make lieutenant my first summer for a couple of months. Most the rest of the time I was a buck private down in ranks. I’m going to cut it off right here for a minute and come back to it…

SM: Oh yes sir…Take your comments about attrition in particular rather while revealing in a number of ways first of all as an infantry commander, as an infantry
commander in Vietnam and your perspective from the ground and the heavy emphasis that was placed on attrition as a part of the strategy employed by the MAVC commander General Westmoreland, I thought that was a rather significant statement. For my own research interests one day perhaps we can sit down and talk about… I look at the attrition strategy as employed in Vietnam as more of an indication about what you could call the strategy of defeat from our perspective you know. How would we measure us losing and I think in a number of ways it was the body count. If we were sustaining too much causalities then we would view that as losing versus what was really a strategy of defeat for the enemy. It wasn’t killing people it was other factors perhaps, winning the hearts of minds for some people. Depending upon what part of the war you wanted to focus on some strategists think it could have been won by pacification other political activities coupled with military activity. But as far as my own research I thought that that was a rather significant statement. I assume from that that you did not agree with the strategy employed?

HM: Well it was quite clear to me that it wasn’t working in the example that I gave.

SM: Yes sir.

HM: At my low level it was not up to me to devise a strategy for the campaign in Vietnam. I did what I was told to do.

SM: That’s right.

HM: I was going to get out there and kill that enemy. We did it as best we could. I left the political aspects in. I was a battlefield commander not involved with the politics of it all. Well, shall we proceed?

SM: Absolutely. Okay now I did have a couple of quick follow-up questions I wanted to ask you briefly about West Point. You mentioned that you left as an infantry officer, was that your expectation you wanted to be an infantry officer, but of course West Point was founded under the principal of hopefully developing civil engineers when it was founded back in the early nineteenth century by Jefferson. So I was wondering if you had every thought of perhaps engineering or did you really want to focus on infantry and get that infantry slot?
HM: West Point began in 1802 as a school to develop officers, primarily engineers, but then over the decades it evolved into a school to produce officers who would pursue a lifetime career as a regular Army officer. By the 1900’s possibly before then, I haven’t researched this, but…everybody had a pecking order and it is classic West Point, based on his academic record, maybe a bit of his demerits record, but mainly academics. When I was a cadet in our last year called First Class year, the first class to graduate. A big gathering in one of the auditoriums and starting out with the guy who was then number one in the class, it was maybe January or February. He could choose into what ever branch he wanted to choose into and it had to be in the combat arms, engineers, infantry, field artillery then coast artillery, armor…unless you were disabled physically it was required that you graduate into a combat arms branch, not the adjutant general corps or quartermaster corps or the transportation corps or the medical corps like it is today. And I was pretty low on the picking order and when it got down to me all I was really interested in was being an infantry officer. Back in those days the top men chose into the engineer corps and then usually it went field artillery and then armor and interspersed a few infantry selections. By the time it got down to me there were a few openings left as infantry officers or coast artillery. Now this 1945 and I didn’t want to be in the coast artillery, never did want to be in coast artillery defending the coastline of the United States. So I choose in the infantry and was commissioned infantry out of West Point, which is what I’d wanted all along.

SM: You mentioned that you never received any kind of mentoring or counseling, professional counseling by officers. How about by upperclassmen? What was the relationship like as you evolved out of that lowest level being a first year plebe up into a first year?

HM: Well your status as a plebe was the lowest of the low and upperclassmen you were called Mr. So and So… Mr. Frank, Mr. Dumbeloy, or Dumbsquat, Mr. Dumbjohn, and if you got out of line you’d have to show up before reveille in the upperclassmen’s room and do push-ups and other hazing, physical hazing activities. We often had hazing activities where you’d run up four flights of stairs back and forth with a full pack with a gas mask on, have to change uniforms into a variety of uniforms…your room became a mess. Then once you…in June after graduation parade there was a
recognition formation and the upperclassmen were always pleased to be following ranks
and in a big brace they’d all come by and shake your hand. The minute if they shook
your hand you were ‘recognized’. During the year some upperclassmen would recognize
maybe one or two of the plebes for personal reasons, they came from the same town
or…with that upperclassman you could converse naturally. As a plebe I never received
any mentoring from upperclassmen nor as an upperclassmen did I receive any mentoring
from an upperclassmen above me or from a commissioned officer. The only such type
instruction was classroom.

SM: How about field training? Did you ever go out and conduct field training
exercises like the military does today in terms of going out on patrol?

HM: Oh yes! During plebe year we had a couple of days a week we would have
truly military training not in a classroom. Sometimes in a room if we were in field
artillery training we’d have marbles and sand table adjusting fire with noncommissioned
officers teaching us. I learned how to ride a horse at West Point through Cavalry
troopers. I learned how to clean a horse, take care of a horse; I could draw out a horse
and go camping for the weekend out in the forest. In the summer of my second year all
my class went off the post to a summer camp and we did nothing but field training all
daylong and into the night…night and day. Engineer training, bridge building, patrolling,
compass work, map reading, firing various weapons, mortars, artillery fire, rifles,
carbines, machine guns. In the summer of my first class year, of course in the academic
year this military instruction was conducted maybe two-three times a week in the
afternoon after three o’clock. We’d have drill and ceremonies and first class year we
were taken by train to Ft. Benning Georgia where we were down there several days
infantry training. We were taken to Camp Croft, South Carolina for training, Camp
Davis, South Carolina for coast artillery training. We did receive a lot of field training as
tactics and patrolling and fire and movement and so forth.

SM: Would you be rotated through leadership positions so that each of you could
get experience say as a squad leader or a platoon leader, company commander and what
not?

HM: Yeah that occurred.
SM: In terms of your West Point training, what did you find to be most useful for you when you became a combat infantrymen and when you actually found yourself facing the enemy?

HM: Fire and movement, fire and maneuver tactics. When I was a First classmen I was sent out to Camp Buckner to train new yearlings in field training. One of the subjects that I was responsible for was rock climbing and rappelling, which I enjoy very much. You do a lot of that in the military, of course. (I also was on various weapons training groups).

SM: Now you’re first encounter with actual combat was in Korea correct?

HM: Korean War, yeah.

SM: Korean War. When you found yourself as a commander of troops in Korea was there anything that you look back on and thought ‘Oh, I wish they had covered this at West Point’ or ‘I wish they’d covered this better in my training in IOBC’ or other schools that you’ve received in the military?

HM: No. Before going to Korea I was sent to the advanced infantry course for nine months at Fort Benning Georgia, which was really that, advanced infantry training. It all came together in the Korean War being very helpful to me. In the Korean War my first duty was commanding a heavy mortar company. I did that for over a month, almost two months and then I was suddenly moved to regimental operations officer, which is a very plans operations officer. Have you served in the military?

SM: Yes sir I have.

HM: In what duty?

SM: I was in the Army for two years as an officer, mechanized infantry and before that I was enlisted for three and a half years.

HM: Okay well then you know what I’m talking about?

SM: Yes sir.

HM: I was operations officer of the 17th regiment as a captain. I did that for several months and then…I’d never commanded a rifle company so I wanted to do that. So I commanded a rifle for a month on land patrolling activities and so. Then against my will I was selected to be the assistant G-3, division plans and operations officer. I was a Captain and I wanted to stay with my company, so I expressed my disappointment and
regret and objections, but you know how it goes. I was sent back to division and I served
under two different lieutenant colonels and one major…two lieutenant colonels and one
major G-3 and in effect I was the continuity. In that duty the first attack on Porkchop
Hill took place in April of 1953 and the division commander sent me up to Porkchop Hill
to find out what was going on. I got up there and got caught up in the fight for six hours.
I sure as hell saw what was going on. When I got out of there I came back and told the
general, he wasn’t getting the complete reports and he was very grateful for that. Then I
got promoted to Major due to being in a promotable positions for several months. Then I
was in the Battle at old Baldy reconnoitering and finding out what was going on for the
general. Then in the Pork Chop fight of July ’53, once again I went out and got involved
in that action for several hours finding out the truth about what was going on for the
general.

SM: Can we step back real quick and go ahead and talk about your first
encounters on Pork Chop Hill. What did you experience? What did you see? How did
that conflict with the reports going up to the general?

HM: Well, the general’s sitting back in division headquarters fifteen miles behind
the lines and depending on reports from the start out. In a big battle like Pork Chop the
company commander would make a radio call if the radio still works…of course all the
land lines were knocked out immediately by the Chinese artillery. They’d report back to
the battalion then the battalion would make a sit rep to the regimen and by the time the
word got back to the division ops officer logging it in. It might be embellished, it might
be not the same report it started out with from the guy in the trench. In these Pork Chop
fights. You should read a book called Porkchop Hill (by S.L.A. Marshall). Have you
read that book?

SM: Yes sir I have.

HM: The Chinese had terrific artillery and they used it like they taught General
Giap how to use it at Dien Bien Phu later. They would dig caves in the sides of these hills
and put their artillery in the caves, roll it out, fire some rounds and then roll it back in.
The counter battery would maybe get a fix on the location and fire at it, but it’d be
ineffective. That of course is what happened later at Dien Bien Phu. It happened at Pork
Chop Hill. All of these fortified positions was like a moonscape on the main line of
resistance in 1952-53. The main line of resistance had been constructed starting the
summer of ’51 when the peace talks began. The MLR, the main line of resistance,
became just that, a static position. Both sides would send out patrols every night and
every day and every now and then…I fought the Chinese…the Chinese, or we, would
conduct an attack on an outpost held by the other side and they would be bloodbaths.
The Chinese positions were heavily fortified, deeply trenched, deeply caved. One action
I remember particularly on T-bone Hill the armored personal carriers, which had sand
bags on top of them, which limited their speed and maneuverability and mobility greatly,
unfortunately. The troops got right underneath this fortified hill, called in air strikes and I
was watching from an OP 200-300 yards away. The air strikes were lifted and the sky
was black with Chi Com stick grenades and these guys would be back up on firing steps
and totally operational after all those air strikes. When they hit Pork Chop they plastered
Pork Chop Hill! 122 mm rifles, artillery, captured 105s, and 155s, and their prep fires
would go on for thirty-forty minutes. Our positions were built with landscape ties,
railroad ties, and having been in position for months in those firing steps. The trenches
were deep, we called them commo trenches and they had duckboards on the bottom. The
first thing to go out would be the landlines, and we had the PR-6 radio in those days and
it wasn’t worth a damn. Usually it would go out and it’d be dark, pitch dark and here you
are in a trench or a bunker, in the dark, voices of hundreds of Chinese speaking Chinese,
heavy firing with small arms and you didn’t know what you were shooting at. Men
would get trapped in bunkers, trapped underneath the railroad ties that were blown up.
So I got caught up in all of this! Not in the initial prep fires, but when I went up, got out
of my jeep, walked around this trail and went up into these trenches…and I was there in
the daylight. But I got a comprehensive report put together in my head of what these
guys were up against and I gave that to the general. We won the fight in April ’53. The
Chinese withdrew. In July ’53 they attacked again and due to the peace talks being
almost to a close…the reason the Chinese attacked was to gain more positions to the
south so as to influence the location of the demilitarized zone. This was the worst fight in
March. It’s almost indescribable the damage and a lot of Americans missing in action
and they were missing because they were blown to pieces. In the April fight it turned out
to be, my memory fails me, I know there were at least six maybe seven different rifle
companies on that hill and not one field grade officer went up there to take command. Of course I went back and told the general all this stuff. We had a defensive technique called flash fires and every one of those outposts had flash fires plotted in, ‘Flash Porkchop’. When Flash Porkchop or Flash Baldy or Flash T-bone was called for all the artillery and mortars in the region…they all just, WOW! Right on top of the hill and if the radio was out you’d step out of the bunker and fire a flare. So the reports that I would give to the general would, you know like I’m talking to you, face-to-face. They didn’t have to go through three different chains of command. The last fight on Porkchop General Taylor came up, he was commanding General, 8th Army, the corps commander came up and they decided to abandon Porkchop after all of those deaths…it was July. Then about two weeks later there was the cease-fire…but on Baldy, old Baldy was a disputed outpost as well, on which we had very many troops. And you ask me if I learned anything at Benning that I applied in a battle later on…I learned a very important lesson at Fort Benning and that’s on operations journals. I learned that in operations journal, which is maintained in the S-2, S-3 shop at battalion, brigade, division level and on up…whatever is written down can never be erased or changed. The time it’s written down, the time, the date, and the message received or the message that was put out. And I was a nut on absolutely professional journal keeping. During the old Baldy fight in March of ’53 the way that occurred was we had an American company on the hill, we had a Colombian battalion attached to the division, we had an Ethiopian battalion attached to the division as well. The Ethiopian battalion was absolutely superb! The Colombian battalion was not worth a plug nickel, poor leaders, poor soldiers. Well the order went out for this Colombian battalion to take over the responsibility for old Baldy, which was just a bit to the northwest of Pork Chop. If you own Baldy you had a good handle on getting on to Porkchop. So the order went out from the G-3 section of division to conduct a daylight relief by infiltration of the American company on Baldy with a Colombian company of this battalion. Well it was poorly carried out and as you know the commander on the hill and his commander above him is totally responsible for everything that happens on that hill until he is relieved of the responsibility by an incoming commander. Well the Colombians dragged their feet and dragged their feet all day long and still had not taken over Baldy after it got dark. The orders were that they
would be on Baldy and in control of Baldy I think by 1500 hours in the afternoon, which
would give the troops time to familiarize themselves with the terrain out front, to register
the artillery, to check the concentrations, and all that, but they didn’t do it and when dark
came they were still moving troops on the hill. The Chinese attacked! The Chinese
attacked and they had that hill in a couple of hours. Well the next day I went up to the
road leading up on the east western side of Pork Chop and I got out of my jeep and
walked up. I was by myself on this road and I looked out toward Baldy and the Chinese
were on the hill, but there on Baldy, the backside of Baldy, were several Columbian
soldiers and some of them wounded trying to get out of there. So I ran down through this
minefield…dumb as hell…and collared a tank and we got those guys out. I went back
and told the boss everything that had happened and he was furious and he said, ‘Well
we’ve got to get that hill back!’ ‘Yes sir,’ and started working on the plan because that
hill was a key hill. Then the corps commander showed up the next day, this is back to the
journal, and I sat in the conference period with General Trudeau the new division
commander, corps commander, and his G-3 and our G-3 and I took notes. Eventually the
corps commander in that meeting, it was all verbal, there was no one taking dictation, I
was just writing notes. He decided that he would abandon that hill to the enemy and
General Trudeau said, ‘You don’t want me to take it back?’ ‘No. We’re losing too many
men.’ I took all of this down…Took it all down, entered it in the journal: who was there,
who said what. About two weeks later the commanding general, General Trudeau, came
under heavy flak from the 8th Army commander for giving up Baldy. Of course I heard
all of this and went to the Chief of Staff with the journal and said, ‘Sir, here’s the journal.
General Trudeau didn’t give anything up, the corps commander told him to do so.’ And I
saved his ass!

SM: Wow!

HM: You asked about lessons learned at Benning that helped me in combat. That
was one of the most valuable lessons that I ever learned.

SM: Yes sir.

HM: Then when we gave up Pork Chop I made sure all of that was…that General
Taylor personally made that decision so that General Trudeau wouldn’t be hurt and he
was not hurt. Then the cease-fire came down I think it was August 3, 1953. I had all of
my points and the war was over. So I told the chief of staff, I said, ‘Well I’ve got my
points. I’d just like to get out of here.’ So I packed up my duffle bag and almost
ceremonially I got into a jeep with one of my classmates from West Point who was
rotating at the same time and we got in the jeep and we drove to Seoul. I had a buddy
down there that I served with at Fort Bragg and he had an extra room… and me and Joe
Hoffman…we ate dinner and crashed and we didn’t wake up until twelve noon the next
day! But I went from 11th Airborne division to the 82nd Airborne division at Fort Bragg,
which was in 1948. Fort Bragg was still phasing down from World War II. The 82nd
Airborne had military training going on, I was an E Company 505 platoon leader first
lieutenant (unmarried). Morale was pretty low, we weren’t doing any training. A lot of
police calls, police activities, special duty, and several of us officers were put on special
duty to Memphis, Tennessee to escort home for burial the remains from World War II,
which I did for about a month. I wasn’t happy doing that. When I got back to Fort Bragg
from Memphis I was a bachelor. I had a new car a two-door Buick Super! I got back to
Bragg and was serving in the continental who did a page up every now and then. I heard
about this outfit on the main post called the Airborne Test Section, which tested
parachutes and related equipment for the Army and the Air Force and CIA. So I went to
the regimental adjutant and told him I’d like to go up and volunteer to be in that outfit.
So he checked it out with the Regimental commander and he said, ‘Okay!’ So I went up
and talked to the commanding officer of the Airborne Test Section, which tested
parachutes and individual equipment for parachutists like Griswold bags, GP bags, new
static line snap fasteners, new parachutes…jumping out of (C-46s, C-47s, C-82s) the
back of a C-82, jumping out of helicopters. I reported in up there…I reported up there
and said, ‘I’d like to work for you!’ And the lieutenant colonel in command was
Lieutenant Colonel Harry Kimmel. I was in good shape, kept sharp, jump boots
shined…and he said to me, ‘Well, where did you graduate in your class at West Point in
English?’ ‘Well English and Spanish were my best subjects, I was in the first section’
because I read, I could read…if you read a lot you learn how to write. So he said, ‘Yeah
I’ll take you on.’ So I reported in, in a couple three days and reported in that morning
and my boss was a lieutenant colonel from the 101st Airborne Division, Colonel Kimmel
was from the 101st Airborne Division…they all had combat jumps and there were about
six or eight officers in the Airborne Test Section. Captain Turbiville was ex-101st Airborne division, he was in charge of heavy drop testing. Another lieutenant colonel, Charlie Shettle was in charge, ex-101st, was in charge of coordinating with the Air Force on requirements for Army requirements to be built in to Air Force aircraft. Another lieutenant colonel was in charge of engineer equipment to be dropped. But I was under a guy in charge of individual parachute gear and parachutes. So I checked in with him and he said, ‘Well we’ve got a jump this morning. We’re going to jump the Hart,’ H-a-r-t, ‘the Hart parachute packed in a bag.’ And the Hart parachute was the first shaped parachute that a jumper could guide was primitive. He said, ‘Would you like to go out?’ I said, ‘Sure! That’s why I’m here to test it out.’ So me, Sergeant Murray, and two others, we went down to the rigging shop and got the parachutes, went down to Pope Field and loaded up in a C-46 airplane. We got over DZ Sicily north and I was the first man to jump…I had never jumped a parachute packed in a bag. I only had about thirty to thirty-five jumps. I jumped and the bag went over the tail of the airplane…the airplane’s going like this (showing with hands)...the tail’s here, my bag’s over here, and I’m down here! And Sergeant Murray was the next guy out and when he jumped he hollered, ‘Pull!’ I’d looked up and I wasn’t about to pull my reserve. That airplane is flying 110 knots to the east and I’m dragging underneath the tail and the bag is caught on the tail. So I waited until it tore off and used my reserve. That was my first jump with the Test Section. I got back to the headquarters, Colonel Kimmel had found out about this and all he said was, ‘Hello Lucky!’ He later turned out to be the commanding general of the 11th Air Assault Division. When I graduated from the Navy War College in 1964, this was already fourteen years later. When I graduated I showed up to go for duty in the Pentagon to which I’d been ordered and I got to the Pentagon and they said, ‘Your orders have been changed. You’re going to be a battalion commander under General Kimmel at Fort Benning, Georgia.’ So Kismet.

SM: Yes sir.

HM: I think we got a quick.

SM: I think our time is up. Well thank you very much. This will end the first interview with General Moore.