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The Vietnam Archive
Oral History Project
Interview with General Hal Moore, USA Ret.
Conducted by Steve Maxner
October 25, 2000
Transcribed by Christina Witt

NOTE: Text included in brackets [] is information that was added by the narrator after reviewing the original transcript. Therefore, this information is not included in the audio version of the interview.

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

6 HM: I was born in February 1922 in a small town in Kentucky, Bardstown, B-a-
7 r-d-s-t-o-w-n; population in the 1920s was probably 1500 people. It's in the rolling hills
8 we call Knobs of Kentucky forty miles south of the Ohio River in central Kentucky. My
9 father was an insurance agent. Neither my father nor my mother graduated from high
10 school. They married early; my mother was twenty years old when she married. I was
11 raised a Catholic, my mother is still a Methodist. She's a hundred years old now and still
12 living! Had four children in our family, three boys and a girl, I was the oldest. We were
13 sent to Catholic schools as children, Sisters of Charity through the eighth grade. Then I
14 was sent to a local preparatory school run by the Brothers of Saint Francis Xavier in
15 Bardstown Kentucky in the thirties. The depression years did not affect our family to the
16 point where we realized that we were undergoing a national depression. My father still
17 made money as an insurance agent. We ate well and we lived in a nice little house,
18 which was quite comfortable. As a youth I was primarily interested in the aspects of
19 baseball, football, basketball and I spent a lot of time in the outdoors. A little town that

1 was surrounded by forests and streams and I spent many a happy hour out in those forests
2 setting snares and building huts and fishing...developed a good love of the outdoors. My
3 father was a great bass fishermen and he taught me at an early age how to cast with the
4 old time reel that we had in those days were you had to thumb the line to keep from
5 getting a back lash and I developed a love for bass fishing. I went fishing frequently with
6 or without my father. I learned a valuable lesson, which I have applied to my children
7 and grandchildren: Teach a kid to fish and he'll never go wrong. Also another lesson is
8 that when you're out in the boat with your father you've got to talk. When I wanted to
9 talk with my sons, and I have three sons and two daughters, in their teenage years when
10 sometimes they're reluctant to talk I just went out fishing. When you're in boat for three
11 or four hours with a young teenager they've got to talk. My father, when I was about
12 fourteen years old, suggested that I consider attempting to get into West Point U.S.
13 Military Academy. I had never given this a thought. I had seen a couple of movies on
14 West Point and was well aware that it was a tough school and they prepared men for
15 becoming an officer of the U.S. Army for a lifetime career. And that appealed to me
16 because of the outdoors that I love and I was a Boy Scout. We didn't have a very active
17 troop, but I was a patrol leader and enjoyed scouting. So I began thinking seriously about
18 going to West Point. First you had to get an appointment from your senator or
19 congressmen. And I started really paying attention to my classes in mathematics, the
20 subject for which I was pretty dumb in really. One day when I was seventeen years old
21 in the winter, February I had a slight case of pneumonia and was sick in bed at home.
22 My father came home about four in the afternoon and he had a friend who was a local
23 supporter of Senator Happy Chandler who was a Senator from Kentucky at that time in
24 Washington. And this friend had helped put Senator Chandler into office and had been
25 contacted by Chandler's office in Washington D.C. that Chandler had a job for a youth
26 under his patronage. Now each senator and congressmen in those days had jobs that they
27 could give to people back home and in Washington D.C. Like elevator operators or
28 capitol policemen and this job that was being offered to me was as a book wrapper and a
29 mailer of books and Senate hearings and Congressional hearings to constituents. In those
30 days each department, Agriculture, Treasury, so forth, put out a yearbook, congressional
31 yearbooks were put out. So I thought about this and I didn't know what the job was, but

1 my dad said, 'Senator Chandler's got a job in Washington for you if you want to go. It
2 will put you on the ground in Washington D.C. where appointments for West Point are
3 given out. And you could possibly seek out and obtain an appointment to West Point.'
4 So I thought that was a pretty good idea and I said, 'Yes. I'd like to go.' I was in the
5 middle of my last year in Saint Joseph's Preparatory School in Bardstown Kentucky and
6 would be dropping out of school. So I had my dad, (I was sick), dad called up the
7 principal, told him the circumstances, the principal said, 'When he gets to Washington if
8 he can go to night school and get 'X' number of credits in algebra and English, that will
9 suffice and he will be transferred to Saint Joe and he can graduate in June with his class.'
10 My class was small. It was an all boys' school, probably about fifteen boys. So I said,
11 'Well let's go! When do we leave?' He said, 'Tomorrow morning at four o'clock.' And
12 my mother burst out crying, her oldest son was leaving home on a moments' notice,
13 sick...So we went to Washington D.C. leaving the next morning in an automobile driven
14 by a black man, now called African Americans is an accepted term now. Colonel Hawk
15 was his nickname. He was the driver for a lobbyist in Washington from Bardstown
16 Kentucky in the tobacco industry and he was driving her car to Washington. So we went
17 up there in his car overnight. Arrived sick and got a doctor, got some pills, got better.
18 Went to a Senator's office and he directed me to the job site, which was a former
19 streetcar barn for streetcars when they were pulled by horses, full of rats and fleas and
20 stacks of books. The pay was thirty bucks a week and my working comrades were young
21 men my age under patronage of a Senator of New Mexico and one from New Jersey and
22 about five of us. We had a boss who was a nice guy. I went to night school and finished
23 up my high school with cabdrivers and middle-aged government workers and transferred
24 the credits back to Saint Joe, went back in June graduated with my class, came back to
25 Washington and started seriously hunting for an appointment to West Point. Enrolled in
26 George Washington University night school in September of 1940. Took a lot of courses
27 at night, joined Kappa Sigma Fraternity, lived in the fraternity house. Until then I'd lived
28 in a room in a private home with another guy, owned by a very nice elderly couple. I
29 moved in the fraternity house, was initiated in Kappa Sigma in February of 1941 and still
30 trying to find an appointment to West Point, in which every endeavor I was unsuccessful.
31 Senator Chandler had already committed his next appointment to another boy and until

1 his appointees graduated he would not have an opening and that's the same for
2 congressmen as well. So every two weeks I got a list from the Department of the Army,
3 it was called War Department in those days, of appointments left unfilled. I would go up
4 from the warehouse, which was about two blocks away from the Senate office building
5 and the House office building and I would walk into offices after knocking on doors and
6 expressing my desire to get to West Point. I was unsuccessful. The war began, Pearl
7 Harbor, and some of my fraternity brothers voluntarily joined up. Early on in the war
8 there were not too many who were drafted, I signed up for the draft of course, but was not
9 drafted. In spring of '42, now this is over two years after I left Kentucky and I'd gone to
10 night school. Congress passes a bill, which the President signed, authorizing each senator
11 and congressmen to have I believe it was one more appointment each to the academies,
12 Annapolis and West Point, and I hoped to get that appointment from my congressmen,
13 Congressmen Ed Creel. I went to his office and he said, 'I cannot give you this
14 appointment, but I will appoint you to Annapolis.' And I've always been of the opinion
15 that you've got to never quit so I said, 'Well Mr. Creel I thank you very much, but I don't
16 want to go to Annapolis. I want to be an Army Infantry Paratrooper Officer! And if I can
17 find another senator or congressmen who will swap a West Point appointment to you for
18 this Annapolis one, would you go along with it?' Well he was taken a back and had not
19 heard of that before. But he mumbled and stumbled a little bit and said, 'Yes.' So I
20 began knocking on doors again and I found a congressmen who would appoint me
21 directly on the first alternate to West Point, which means if the principal appointee failed
22 you could get in. But I found a congressman from Georgia who would appoint me to
23 West Point, Congressmen Eugene E. Cox from the second district of Georgia. The main
24 reason why he needed this after a few days of talking with his staff. When I knocked on
25 the door to his office there was an ugly lady in there, I was kid twenty years old. This
26 lady was about thirty five-forty, just a nice southern lady and of course I'd been raised
27 right in the south, 'Yes Ma'am, No Ma'ma, Yes Sir...' and she was the first one I saw.
28 She said, 'Well what can we do for you young man?' and I told her what I was up to.
29 She took a liking to me! Her husband was the - they called it the secretary in those days -
30 to Congressmen Cox, which means Chief of Staff. And she said, 'Well I'll speak to my
31 husband about this, Mr. McCarthy.' It turns out that her brother was the congressman!

1 So she said, 'Come back in a couple, three days and we'll see what happens.' So I came
2 back and I think primarily due to her, Mrs. Robinson - her husband was Mr. Robinson -
3 that I was able to get that appointment. I was appointed to West Point from the second
4 district of Georgia, Thomasville, Thomas County, Georgia...I never was in the state of
5 Georgia until my third summer as a cadet at West Point. So that's how I made it into
6 West Point and the principle there is 'Never Quit!'

7 SM: Yes sir.

8 HM: I showed up at West Point...oh also, I was pretty stupid in mathematics and
9 to stack the deck there was a private West Point prep school in Washington D.C. called
10 the Millard's, which helped prepare young men to go to West Point, mostly for Army-
11 brat boys sent there by their parents to live in the two or three houses this guy had right
12 there up Connecticut Avenue in Washington D.C. Well, I submitted all of my credits
13 from college to West Point with the request that they'd be considered so that I would go
14 into West Point without having to take the mental examination in mathematics and
15 English. At the same time I took a preliminary physical examination at Walter Reed
16 Army Medical Center outside of Washington to determine if I had any disqualifying
17 defects, which I could fix six weeks off. It turned out all I had to have was a couple of
18 cavities filled up. I got back a letter from West Point saying, 'You're accepted without a
19 mental examination'! We call that a 'dog ticket'. So then I made arrangements to have
20 my physical examination at Fort Knox, Kentucky there near my home. I quit my job in
21 Washington the middle of June and took the train back to Kentucky. Took my
22 examination at Fort Knox, passed the physical. In those days they sent you a telegram
23 from the War Department saying, 'So and so you have been accepted into West Point,
24 you must report on such and such a date,' and that was your pass to West Point. Well in
25 all my efforts in Washington to get into West Point I had been to the War Department
26 numerous times to get my list from this lady, of performance...and I knew her pretty well
27 and her office phone number. I went home to Kentucky and I waited for this telegram
28 and it didn't come. Well the deployment date I had to be there was July 15th. Well it got
29 to be around July 10th and I hadn't heard. So I called her up and in those days
30 telephones; you seen them in the telephone museums, it was a round stand with a big
31 vertical holder and a speaker, and you'd pick it up and you had to dial the operator.

1 'Long distance please. Give me long distance.' So I call up long distance to her office in
2 Washington, told her my problem and I said, 'I need that telegram!' It came within two
3 days. So all of these circumstances seemed to be fated to occur, but the whole moral is
4 never quit. Don't take nothing for granted...always one more thing you can do and
5 influence anything in your favor. So I hopped on a train and went to West Point and
6 needless to say it was a culture shock and an environmental shock. I had never been in
7 New York State. To be a plebe at West Point in 1942 was a very stressful experience.

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

10 HM: Sure.

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

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

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

25 HM: Oh absolutely. I hadn't thought of that, but that's true. Sisters, the nuns
26 and the Brothers of Saint Joe Prep. Those were in the days where if a kid got out of
27 line...now the Sisters, when we got out of line they would get out a long ruler and you'd
28 put your hand out and they'd slap you with that ruler four or five times. Well it was
29 demeaning and it hurt. But the brothers of Saint Francis Xavier the classes that I was in,
30 probably no more than fifteen, twenty, twenty-five young boys in the class. If you didn't
31 pay attention and the room was twice the size of this room...if you didn't pay attention, if

1 your attitude wasn't right that brother would come WHACK! And damn near knock you
2 right out of your seat! The worst thing was to be ordered to go see the boss and he was
3 the principal, the top guy, Brother Liguori then Brother Calambierl or whoever it was at
4 the time. Now he would not administer it physical punishment, but the tongue lashing
5 that he would give was worse then that. Of course you didn't dare go home and tell your
6 mom and dad you got whacked by the brother because then they'd do you just some more
7 of it at home. I think the upbringing of discipline it taught you self-discipline and to obey
8 orders. But I played football in my first year at West Point on the plebe squad for about
9 six weeks then I was kicked off because I was deficient in mathematics.

10 SM: Oh no!

11 HM: You had to be proficient to play on an athletic team at West Point in those
12 days. Well that scared the hell out of me because I had spent a lot of time trying to get
13 into West Point and I didn't want to get kicked out because of being deficient in
14 academics. So it took me probably from late October until mid-December to get
15 proficient, in other words my grades. That scared me so much Steve that my life at West
16 Point became unbalanced. I should have been counseled by one of the commissioned
17 officers who were over us. But in those days there was no mentoring, there is no
18 counseling...every kid was on his own. So all I did from then on at West Point I just
19 made sure that I was going to go out that gate with a diploma and that I was not going to
20 fail in any academic subjects! They were pretty strict. If you were below...3.0 was
21 passing...if you're overall grades at the end of a semester were below 3.0 in any subject
22 you were so called 'turned out' to take special exam and if you failed the exam you were
23 out the gate. In any one subject! So I became unbalanced. I went out for the plebe
24 baseball team after I got proficient and I made that team. Then the following year I went
25 out for B-Squad football again, but found that I couldn't handle that because of time for
26 studying. I quit baseball because I couldn't hit a curve. I think I could've done other
27 things at West Point like rifle team, I fired expert on the rifle...plebe summer. I was a
28 good shot with the rifle, a skill which I put to use much later on other fields on other
29 days. I graduated in the top, about the top seventy or so percent of my class, maybe the
30 top eighty percent (in June 1945) and walked out that gate as an Infantry Officer. I went
31 to the basic infantry course at Fort Benning for two months and then the war ended in

1 August. It was disappointing to us because we'd been trained hard for three years, they
2 cut the course from four to three years in order to get us out faster and on the battlefields.
3 So we really had compressed school years. Saturday mornings, Christmas leave was five
4 days, the first year a plebe wasn't given any leave at all, couldn't go home.

5 SM: Was that difficult? Did that make it difficult that first year?

6 HM: Oh you just got used to it. I was in the Catholic choir, I was in the ski club
7 and I was an acolyte in the Catholic Church. In the summer we had cadet military field
8 training. After being at West Point for a year I think I got ten days leave and came back
9 for hard summer training and then more academics. But I was an absolute 'goat'. If any
10 subject had a number in it I never could break the code on the cryptic, abstruse mysteries
11 of engineering, mechanical engineering, fluid engineering, mechanics. I had to study in
12 the toilets at the end of the hall at night under a 40 watt bulb sitting on the toilet until one
13 thirty- two in the morning. And then we got up at reveille at six o'clock. So at West
14 Point I learned how to sleep fast and I believe that. I learned that I could get by
15 physically and mentally on five hours of sleep and I did that all my active duty career.
16 As I was going up in rank and responsibility I had to take a lot of unclassified work home
17 with me at night, particularly when serving in the Pentagon. After I did my work at
18 around eleven or twelve o'clock I started reading. I read until one or one thirty then go to
19 bed. Get up at five maybe take a run. When I was on troop duty I'd run with the troops.
20 You get your mind and your body into that regimen and then you can do it. So after the
21 Fort Benning course in the summer of 1945, I graduated in '45, I was sent to Japan
22 through the Philippines. Sent to the Philippines first to a replacement depot and then we
23 were sent to Japan where I learned that I could volunteer to go to jump school and be in
24 the 11th Airborne Division, which I did and was in the 11th Airborne Division from
25 October '45 to April '48 when I returned to the U.S.A. I was a bachelor...I was a platoon
26 leader for a while. Then I was detailed ironically to, given my deficiencies in various
27 types of engineering, I was detailed to supervise Japanese contractors building a new
28 camp to house 2500 to 3000 soldiers. With a headquarters, an officer's club, an NCO
29 club, a gym, a swimming pool, a sewage plant, a water plant, seven boiler plants... and I
30 was supervising all of this. I hardly remembered the Bernoulli theorem! I learned that I
31 could supervise all of these activities pretty well in demanding good products. In the

1 process I learned some Japanese, picked up what they were talking about. I was not
2 fluent, but I was able to get along in Japanese with the Japanese people, which was a
3 great, great thing. I traveled when I could around the Island of Hokkaido, which I was on
4 the northern Island of Hokkaido, which was untouched by the war. It was beautiful up
5 there, great snow conditions. In the winter the 1976 Olympics were held up there in the
6 winter. I did a lot of running, I had a horse, I found a Japanese guy with a couple of
7 German Shepherd war dogs from Germany and he and I started up a kennel. I had
8 sixteen German Shepherds. I'd give them away to my friends and I brought one back to
9 the United States. After supervising contractors for six or seven months and we built all
10 this stuff...oh also I had to supervise the building of 210 private residences for officers
11 and their families, and also fifteen miles of asphalt roads. So I learned all of that stuff.

12 SM: Do you think that what training you did receive at West Point did help you?

13 HM: Oh yeah, sure did, right! I could supervise. I knew the standards and all
14 that studying in the toilets at night maybe helped.

15 SM: How much leadership training did you receive at West Point?

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

30 SM: Oh yes sir...Take your comments about attrition in particular rather while
31 revealing in a number of ways first of all as an infantry commander, as an infantry

1 commander in Vietnam and your perspective from the ground and the heavy emphasis
2 that was placed on attrition as a part of the strategy employed by the MAVC commander
3 General Westmoreland, I thought that was a rather significant statement. For my own
4 research interests one day perhaps we can sit down and talk about... I look at the attrition
5 strategy as employed in Vietnam as more of an indication about what you could call the
6 strategy of defeat from our perspective you know. How would we measure us losing and
7 I think in a number of ways it was the body count. If we were sustaining too much
8 casualties then we would view that as losing versus what was really a strategy of defeat
9 for the enemy. It wasn't killing people it was other factors perhaps, winning the hearts of
10 minds for some people. Depending upon what part of the war you wanted to focus on
11 some strategists think it could have been won by pacification other political activities
12 coupled with military activity. But as far as my own research I thought that that was a
13 rather significant statement. I assume from that that you did not agree with the strategy
14 employed?

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

17 SM: Yes sir.

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

20 SM: That's right.

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

24 SM: Absolutely. Okay now I did have a couple of quick follow-up questions I
25 wanted to ask you briefly about West Point. You mentioned that you left as an infantry
26 officer, was that your expectation you wanted to be an infantry officer, but of course
27 West Point was founded under the principal of hopefully developing civil engineers when
28 it was founded back in the early nineteenth century by Jefferson. So I was wondering if
29 you had every thought of perhaps engineering or did you really want to focus on infantry
30 and get that infantry slot?

1 HM: West Point began in 1802 as a school to develop officers, primarily
2 engineers, but then over the decades it evolved into a school to produce officers who
3 would pursue a lifetime career as a regular Army officer. By the 1900's possibly before
4 then, I haven't researched this, but...everybody had a pecking order and it is classic West
5 Point, based on his academic record, maybe a bit of his demerits record, but mainly
6 academics. When I was a cadet in our last year called First Class year, the first class to
7 graduate. A big gathering in one of the auditoriums and starting out with the guy who
8 was then number one in the class, it was maybe January or February. He could choose
9 into what ever branch he wanted to choose into and it had to be in the combat arms,
10 engineers, infantry, field artillery then coast artillery, armor...unless you were disabled
11 physically it was required that you graduate into a combat arms branch, not the adjutant
12 general corps or quartermaster corps or the transportation corps or the medical corps like
13 it is today. And I was pretty low on the picking order and when it got down to me all I
14 was really interested in was being an infantry officer. Back in those days the top men
15 chose into the engineer corps and then usually it went field artillery and then armor and
16 interspersed a few infantry selections. By the time it got down to me there were a few
17 openings left as infantry officers or coast artillery. Now this 1945 and I didn't want to be
18 in the coast artillery, never did want to be in coast artillery defending the coastline of the
19 United States. So I choose in the infantry and was commissioned infantry out of West
20 Point, which is what I'd wanted all along.

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

25 HM: Well your status as a plebe was the lowest of the low and upperclassmen
26 you were called Mr. So and So... Mr. Frank, Mr. Dumbeloy, or Dumbsquat, Mr.
27 Dumbjohn, and if you got out of line you'd have to show up before reveille in the
28 upperclassmen's room and do push-ups and other hazing, physical hazing activities. We
29 often had hazing activities where you'd run up four flights of stairs back and forth with a
30 full pack with a gas mask on, have to change uniforms into a variety of uniforms...your
31 room became a mess. Then once you...in June after graduation parade there was a

1 recognition formation and the upperclassmen were always pleased to be following ranks
2 and in a big brace they'd all come by and shake your hand. The minute if they shook
3 your hand you were 'recognized'. During the year some upperclassmen would recognize
4 maybe one or two of the plebes for personal reasons, they came from the same town
5 or...with that upperclassman you could converse naturally. As a plebe I never received
6 any mentoring from upperclassmen nor as an upperclassmen did I receive any mentoring
7 from an upperclassmen above me or from a commissioned officer. The only such type
8 instruction was classroom.

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

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

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

30 HM: Yeah that occurred.

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

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

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

10 HM: Korean War, yeah.

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

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

21 SM: Yes sir I have.

22 HM: In what duty?

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

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

26 SM: Yes sir.

27 HM: I was operations officer of the 17th regiment as a captain. I did that for
28 several months and then...I'd never commanded a rifle company so I wanted to do that.
29 So I commanded a rifle for a month on land patrolling activities and so. Then against my
30 will I was selected to be the assistant G-3, division plans and operations officer. I was a
31 Captain and I wanted to stay with my company, so I expressed my disappointment and

1 regret and objections, but you know how it goes. I was sent back to division and I served
2 under two different lieutenant colonels and one major...two lieutenant colonels and one
3 major G-3 and in effect I was the continuity. In that duty the first attack on Porkchop
4 Hill took place in April of 1953 and the division commander sent me up to Porkchop Hill
5 to find out what was going on. I got up there and got caught up in the fight for six hours.
6 I sure as hell saw what was going on. When I got out of there I came back and told the
7 general, he wasn't getting the complete reports and he was very grateful for that. Then I
8 got promoted to Major due to being in a promotable positions for several months. Then I
9 was in the Battle at old Baldy reconnoitering and finding out what was going on for the
10 general. Then in the Pork Chop fight of July '53, once again I went out and got involved
11 in that action for several hours finding out the truth about what was going on for the
12 general.

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

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

25 SM: Yes sir I have.

26 HM: The Chinese had terrific artillery and they used it like they taught General
27 Giap howtouseit at Dien Bien Phu later. They would dig caves in the sides of these hills
28 and put their artillery in the caves, roll it out, fire some rounds and then roll it back in.
29 The counter battery would maybe get a fix on the location and fire at it, but it'd be
30 ineffective. That of course is what happened later at Dien Bien Phu. It happened at Pork
31 Chop Hill. All of these fortified positions was like a moonscape on the main line of

1 resistance in 1952-53. The main line of resistance had been constructed starting the
2 summer of '51 when the peace talks began. The MLR, the main line of resistance,
3 became just that, a static position. Both sides would send out patrols every night and
4 every day and every now and then...I fought the Chinese...the Chinese, or we, would
5 conduct an attack on an outpost held by the other side and they would be bloodbaths.
6 The Chinese positions were heavily fortified, deeply trenched, deeply caved. One action
7 I remember particularly on T-bone Hill the armored personal carriers, which had sand
8 bags on top of them, which limited their speed and maneuverability and mobility greatly,
9 unfortunately. The troops got right underneath this fortified hill, called in air strikes and I
10 was watching from an OP 200-300 yards away. The air strikes were lifted and the sky
11 was black with Chi Com stick grenades and these guys would be back up on firing steps
12 and totally operational after all those air strikes. When they hit Pork Chop they plastered
13 Pork Chop Hill! 122 mm rifles, artillery, captured 105s, and 155s, and their prep fires
14 would go on for thirty-forty minutes. Our positions were built with landscape ties,
15 railroad ties, and having been in position for months in those firing steps. The trenches
16 were deep, we called them commo trenches and they had duckboards on the bottom. The
17 first thing to go out would be the landlines, and we had the PR-6 radio in those days and
18 it wasn't worth a damn. Usually it would go out and it'd be dark, pitch dark and here you
19 are in a trench or a bunker, in the dark, voices of hundreds of Chinese speaking Chinese,
20 heavy firing with small arms and you didn't know what you were shooting at. Men
21 would get trapped in bunkers, trapped underneath the railroad ties that were blown up.
22 So I got caught up in all of this! Not in the initial prep fires, but when I went up, got out
23 of my jeep, walked around this trail and went up into these trenches...and I was there in
24 the daylight. But I got a comprehensive report put together in my head of what these
25 guys were up against and I gave that to the general. We won the fight in April '53. The
26 Chinese withdrew. In July '53 they attacked again and due to the peace talks being
27 almost to a close...the reason the Chinese attacked was to gain more positions to the
28 south so as to influence the location of the demilitarized zone. This was the worst fight in
29 March. It's almost indescribable the damage and a lot of Americans missing in action
30 and they were missing because they were blown to pieces. In the April fight it turned out
31 to be, my memory fails me, I know there were at least six maybe seven different rifle

1 companies on that hill and not one field grade officer went up there to take command. Of
2 course I went back and told the general all this stuff. We had a defensive technique
3 called flash fires and every one of those outposts had flash fires plotted in, 'Flash
4 Porkchop'. When Flash Porkchop or Flash Baldy or Flash T-bone was called for all the
5 artillery and mortars in the region...they all just, WOW! Right on top of the hill and if
6 the radio was out you'd step out of the bunker and fire a flare. So the reports that I would
7 give to the general would, you know like I'm talking to you, face-to-face. They didn't
8 have to go through three different chains of command. The last fight on Porkchop
9 General Taylor came up, he was commanding General, 8th Army, the corps commander
10 came up and they decided to abandon Porkchop after all of those deaths...it was July.
11 Then about two weeks later there was the cease-fire...but on Baldy, old Baldy was a
12 disputed outpost as well, on which we had very many troops. And you ask me if I
13 learned anything at Benning that I applied in a battle later on...I learned a very important
14 lesson at Fort Benning and that's on operations journals. I learned that in operations
15 journal, which is maintained in the S-2, S-3 shop at battalion, brigade, division level and
16 on up...whatever is written down can never be erased or changed. The time it's written
17 down, the time, the date, and the message received or the message that was put out. And
18 I was a nut on absolutely professional journal keeping. During the old Baldy fight in
19 March of '53 the way that occurred was we had an American company on the hill, we
20 had a Colombian battalion attached to the division, we had an Ethiopian battalion
21 attached to the division as well. The Ethiopian battalion was absolutely superb! The
22 Colombian battalion was not worth a plug nickel, poor leaders, poor soldiers. Well the
23 order went out for this Colombian battalion to take over the responsibility for old Baldy,
24 which was just a bit to the northwest of Pork Chop. If you own Baldy you had a good
25 handle on getting on to Porkchop. So the order went out from the G-3 section of division
26 to conduct a daylight relief by infiltration of the American company on Baldy with a
27 Colombian company of this battalion. Well it was poorly carried out and as you know
28 the commander on the hill and his commander above him is totally responsible for
29 everything that happens on that hill until he is relieved of the responsibility by an
30 incoming commander. Well the Colombians dragged their feet and dragged their feet all
31 day long and still had not taken over Baldy after it got dark. The orders were that they

1 would be on Baldy and in control of Baldy I think by 1500 hours in the afternoon, which
2 would give the troops time to familiarize themselves with the terrain out front, to register
3 the artillery, to check the concentrations, and all that, but they didn't do it and when dark
4 came they were still moving troops on the hill. The Chinese attacked! The Chinese
5 attacked and they had that hill in a couple of hours. Well the next day I went up to the
6 road leading up on the east western side of Pork Chop and I got out of my jeep and
7 walked up. I was by myself on this road and I looked out toward Baldy and the Chinese
8 were on the hill, but there on Baldy, the backside of Baldy, were several Columbian
9 soldiers and some of them wounded trying to get out of there. So I ran down through this
10 minefield...dumb as hell...and collared a tank and we got those guys out. I went back
11 and told the boss everything that had happened and he was furious and he said, 'Well
12 we've got to get that hill back!' 'Yes sir,' and started working on the plan because that
13 hill was a key hill. Then the corps commander showed up the next day, this is back to the
14 journal, and I sat in the conference period with General Trudeau the new division
15 commander, corps commander, and his G-3 and our G-3 and I took notes. Eventually the
16 corps commander in that meeting, it was all verbal, there was no one taking dictation, I
17 was just writing notes. He decided that he would abandon that hill to the enemy and
18 General Trudeau said, 'You don't want me to take it back?' 'No. We're losing too many
19 men.' I took all of this down...Took it all down, entered it in the journal: who was there,
20 who said what. About two weeks later the commanding general, General Trudeau, came
21 under heavy flak from the 8th Army commander for giving up Baldy. Of course I heard
22 all of this and went to the Chief of Staff with the journal and said, 'Sir, here's the journal.
23 General Trudeau didn't give anything up, the corps commander told him to do so.' And I
24 saved his ass!

25 SM: Wow!

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

28 SM: Yes sir.

29 HM: Then when we gave up Pork Chop I made sure all of that was...that General
30 Taylor personally made that decision so that General Trudeau wouldn't be hurt and he
31 was not hurt. Then the cease-fire came down I think it was August 3, 1953. I had all of

1 my points and the war was over. So I told the chief of staff, I said, 'Well I've got my
2 points. I'd just like to get out of here.' So I packed up my duffle bag and almost
3 ceremonially I got into a jeep with one of my classmates from West Point who was
4 rotating at the same time and we got in the jeep and we drove to Seoul. I had a buddy
5 down there that I served with at Fort Bragg and he had an extra room... and me and Joe
6 Hoffman...we ate dinner and crashed and we didn't wake up until twelve noon the next
7 day! But I went from 11th Airborne division to the 82nd Airborne division at Fort Bragg,
8 which was in 1948. Fort Bragg was still phasing down from World War II. The 82nd
9 Airborne had military training going on, I was an E Company 505 platoon leader first
10 lieutenant (unmarried). Morale was pretty low, we weren't doing any training. A lot of
11 police calls, police activities, special duty, and several of us officers were put on special
12 duty to Memphis, Tennessee to escort home for burial the remains from World War II,
13 which I did for about a month. I wasn't happy doing that. When I got back to Fort Bragg
14 from Memphis I was a bachelor. I had a new car a two-door Buick Super! I got back to
15 Bragg and was serving in the continental who did a page up every now and then. I heard
16 about this outfit on the main post called the Airborne Test Section, which tested
17 parachutes and related equipment for the Army and the Air Force and CIA. So I went to
18 the regimental adjutant and told him I'd like to go up and volunteer to be in that outfit.
19 So he checked it out with the Regimental commander and he said, 'Okay!' So I went up
20 and talked to the commanding officer of the Airborne Test Section, which tested
21 parachutes and individual equipment for parachutists like Griswold bags, GP bags, new
22 static line snap fasteners, new parachutes...jumping out of (C-46s, C-47s, C-82s) the
23 back of a C-82, jumping out of helicopters. I reported in up there...I reported up there
24 and said, 'I'd like to work for you!' And the lieutenant colonel in command was
25 Lieutenant Colonel Harry Kimmel. I was in good shape, kept sharp, jump boots
26 shined...and he said to me, 'Well, where did you graduate in your class at West Point in
27 English?' 'Well English and Spanish were my best subjects, I was in the first section'
28 because I read, I could read...if you read a lot you learn how to write. So he said, 'Yeah
29 I'll take you on.' So I reported in, in a couple three days and reported in that morning
30 and my boss was a lieutenant colonel from the 101st Airborne Division, Colonel Kimmel
31 was from the 101st Airborne Division...they all had combat jumps and there were about

1 six or eight officers in the Airborne Test Section. Captain Turbiville was ex-101st
2 Airborne division, he was in charge of heavy drop testing. Another lieutenant colonel,
3 Charlie Shettle was in charge, ex-101st, was in charge of coordinating with the Air Force
4 on requirements for Army requirements to be built in to Air Force aircraft. Another
5 lieutenant colonel was in charge of engineer equipment to be dropped. But I was under a
6 guy in charge of individual parachute gear and parachutes. So I checked in with him and
7 he said, 'Well we've got a jump this morning. We're going to jump the Hart,' H-a-r-t,
8 'the Hart parachute packed in a bag.' And the Hart parachute was the first shaped
9 parachute that a jumper could guide was primitive. He said, 'Would you like to go out?'
10 I said, 'Sure! That's why I'm here to test it out.' So me, Sergeant Murray, and two
11 others, we went down to the rigging shop and got the parachutes, went down to Pope
12 Field and loaded up in a C-46 airplane. We got over DZ Sicily north and I was the first
13 man to jump...I had never jumped a parachute packed in a bag. I only had about thirty to
14 thirty-five jumps. I jumped and the bag went over the tail of the airplane...the airplane's
15 going like this (showing with hands)...the tail's here, my bag's over here, and I'm down
16 here! And Sergeant Murray was the next guy out and when he jumped he hollered,
17 'Pull!' I'd looked up and I wasn't about to pull my reserve. That airplane is flying 110
18 knots to the east and I'm dragging underneath the tail and the bag is caught on the tail.
19 So I waited until it tore off and used my reserve. That was my first jump with the Test
20 Section. I got back to the headquarters, Colonel Kimmel had found out about this and all
21 he said was, 'Hello Lucky!' He later turned out to be the commanding general of the 11th
22 Air Assault Division. When I graduated from the Navy War College in 1964, this was
23 already fourteen years later. When I graduated I showed up to go for duty in the
24 Pentagon to which I'd been ordered and I got to the Pentagon and they said, 'Your orders
25 have been changed. You're going to be a battalion commander under General Kimmel at
26 Fort Benning, Georgia.' So Kismet.

27 SM: Yes sir.

28 HM: I think we got a quick.

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