Laura Calkins: This is Dr. Laura Calkins of the Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech University, beginning an oral history interview with Col. Ann Smith. Today’s date is the twenty-third of June 2004. I am in the interview room in the Special Collections building on the campus of Texas Tech in Lubbock and Colonel Smith is speaking to me by telephone from Jacksonville, Alabama. Good morning, ma’am.

Anne Smith: Good morning.

LC: First of all, I’d like to begin, if you agree, with some general biographical information. Ann, where were you born and when?

AS: I was born in Valdosta, Georgia on the nineteenth of December of 1930.

LC: Can you tell me a little bit about your parents? First of all, your mother—what was her name?

AS: Her maiden name was Irma, with an I, Mathis.

LC: Is that M-a-double t-h-i-s?

AS: No, M-a-t-h-i-s.

LC: Okay, one t. And what was her family background?

AS: My grandparents died really before I got to know them. Her mother was a homemaker. Her father was apparently a town wit and barber and had a book and music shop and he was a musician.

LC: Now is this in Georgia as well?

AS: This was in a little town called Quitman, Q-u-i-t-m-a-n, Georgia.
AS: Well, if you have a good tail wind you can spit to Florida. It’s just off I-75 about probably twelve to fifteen miles from the Florida border.

LC: Okay. And your grandfather then was you said a musician among so many other things. What did he play?

AS: Well, there was an old fiddle in the house so I guess he fiddled.

LC: Do you know more about him? What was his name and how long had the family been in Georgia?

AS: His name was Hiram Mathis.

LC: And was this an old Quitman family?

AS: No, I think he came there from Florida.

LC: Oh, okay.

AS: I really know very little about them.

LC: Your mother, was she brought up by them?

AS: Yes. She was born in Quitman in the house she grew up in.

LC: Is that house still there, Ann?

AS: Yes.

LC: Do you go down and visit much?

AS: Seldom. I was down for my fiftieth college reunion in ’01 and I haven’t been back since.

LC: But Quitman must be just a small place.

AS: It’s sort of a flyspeck on a map. It’s not gotten any bigger since I left.

(Laughs) It was a wonderful place to grow up.

LC: Right. My family comes from a little place like that but on both sides up in Michigan so I think I have a little bit of a fellow feeling about what you’re talking about, about two thousand people or so.

AS: Yeah.

LC: Maybe not even that many. Ann, your mother, did she ever work outside the home?

AS: Yes.

LC: What did she do?
AS: My father was ill and my mother did anything she could to make an honest living. She worked in an office in a cotton mill and then she worked in a hosiery mill, sort of running their little outlet store and then she worked as an inspector in the mill itself. She was a choir director in the local Methodist church and then she got a job working for a Presbyterian home in our hometown for senior citizens. So she was doing that when she died.

LC: How old was she when she died?

AS: Fifty-six. She was killed in an accident.

LC: Oh, what kind of accident?

AS: Car. She was taking one of the residents to the doctor and ran a stop sign and got hit.

LC: About what year would that have been?

AS: Sixty-three. No, I’m sorry, ’64.

LC: You said that your father had been ill. Had he had a career before he became ill?

AS: He was in the Navy in World War I and never got over it.

LC: Is that right? Where did he serve, do you know?

AS: He served on shipboard and he was on a troop ship as I recall between the United States and France. And during that time while on shipboard he had a kidney removed and after he got out of the Navy he taught at private schools. He only had two years of college and started to think a degree was important. So as I was growing up he did a lot of pick-up things. He was very frustrated because I think he was very smart but he couldn’t use his smarts and he certainly couldn’t help me with algebra. (Laughs)

LC: Did he make a valiant effort though?

AS: Oh yes.

LC: Okay. (Laughs)

AS: “Daddy, that’s not what they said I should do.” “Mumble, mumble.”

LC: Right.

AS: During the war he was head of the OPA (Office of Price Administration) office in my hometown and that really was the most productive work he ever had.

LC: Of course this is the Second World War.
AS: Yes. And he tried terribly to get back in the Navy and he was too old and
really was not well enough. He had heart trouble and with one kidney missing that didn’t
help. And he died in 1952. I think he was about fifty-eight.

LC: You said that he never pretty much got over World War I and his experience.
Do you mean physically?

AS: No, not traumatic. It was the accomplishment of it. (Laughs)

LC: Oh, is that right?

AS: Yeah, he was happy in the Navy.

LC: And when he ran the OPA office during the forties that was also sort of a
highlight for him?

AS: Well, it was the best paying job he ever had and it was of necessity that my
mother went to work and during my freshman year of college, they told me at the end of
that year they told me that they could not send me back to school. And I said, “I’m
going.” So I did.

LC: How did you plan to manage it?

AS: I didn’t know at the time.

LC: You just set your face toward doing it and thought that things would fall into
place?

AS: I applied for scholarships; I worked while I was in school. They didn’t pay
much but the best thing happened was when one of my former Sunday school teachers
stopped by my house one day and said, “I understand you’re having trouble. My sister
and I have some money that we are not using. Would you like to borrow it?”

LC: No kidding.

AS: “Repay it at your leisure with no interest.”

LC: Did this just come out of nowhere for you, Ann?

AS: Yes.

LC: You must have been extraordinarily moved.

AS: Oh, I was. See, some good things come from going to Sunday school.

(Laughs)

LC: Apparently they do.

AS: She had been my Sunday school teacher all through my high school years.
LC: Had she been friendly with your folks?
AS: In my town everybody knew everybody. She was a maiden lady who lived with her widowed sister in one of the nicest houses in town and she was totally unprepossessing.

LC: As you think back on it, Ann, why do you think she did that? Why do you think she and her sister decided to do that for you?
AS: Well, they knew me. They’d known me all along. She told me that I ought to be a lawyer because I’d argue with anybody on anything when she taught me in Sunday school. It was a small church family and they were good people and I needed something.

LC: Did you pay them back, Ann?
AS: Of course.

LC: How long did it take?
AS: I graduated from college in ’51 and I think I paid it back in ’55.

LC: No kidding.
AS: Now you must realize it cost absolutely almost nothing to go to a state school in south Georgia at that time but it was still a large amount of money for me.

LC: Yes, and cash. You had to have it up front.
AS: So I saved and saved so I could pay it off at one time.

LC: Let me ask you, Ann, a little bit about your youth because it seems in the material that you were quite an industrious gal as a youngster.
AS: I liked money.

LC: You liked money?
AS: And I wasn’t going to get it at home. I tell children now my first allowance was a dime.

LC: Right. And they’re going, “What?”
AS: “What is a dime?”

LC: Right. (Laughs) Yeah, you got to have at least a hundred dollars to go to the mall anymore.
AS: That’s right.
LC: What kinds of things did you do, Ann, and how did you get set up with this selling bottles to the drug store?

AS: Well the word was just out. At that time the drug store used reusable glass bottles that had ounces marked on them and so the neighbors would give them to me. They knew I wanted them so I would take them to the drugstore every now and then and get a penny each and then you could sell newspapers to the fish market and you could sell coat hangers to the laundry, to the drycleaners.

LC: So you would go around?

AS: And collect stuff.

LC: And where did you keep your inventory? Did you have a little place in the garage or in your room?

AS: Oh no. When I got some I took it in. (laughs)

LC: Oh, you didn’t wait?

AS: No, I didn’t. I didn’t amass a fortune that way.

LC: (laughs) You wanted to be liquid so you took those in right away and had cash.

AS: And then two of my friends and I that were a year ahead of me in school, and I guess this was probably when I was a freshman in high school or around that era, maybe a little younger, but on Saturday we would take our card table and go down to the part of town where people came in from the country. You remember how that happened?

LC: Sure, sure.

AS: And we would sell stuff.

LC: What kind of stuff?

AS: Clothes.

LC: Where did you get them?

AS: Begged them. (laughs) People gave them to us. Some of them were things I’d outgrown but in those days it was called a rummage sale, the forerunner of garage sales.

LC: And you were pioneering in this?

AS: Oh no, we had some competition across the street that we didn’t like at all.

(Laughs) We had one side of the street and they had the other side.
LC: Oh no. And were there price wars back and forth?
AS: No, we sort of had a different sort of stuff.
LC: Different lines.
AS: One day I was trying to haw my wares and this woman looked at me and said, “Us don’t buy rummage.”
LC: (Laughs) Is that right?
AS: A real put-down. (Laughs)
LC: Yes, that’s cold. That’s cold. (Laughs) But you persevered, it seems.
AS: Yes. And I would make a couple of dollars or so and then when I got a social security card I worked at the dime store for two dollars a Saturday.
LC: Now you were quite young when you took your social security card.
AS: I was twelve when I got a social security card.
LC: Which is amazing. That would have been 1942.
AS: Yeah. And then I got a better job slinging hamburgers in a local grocery store and my mother would not let me wear but one set of clothes because she didn’t want all of them smelling like grease.
LC: Yeah, she was a smart lady, too. (Laughs) Were your parents proud of you with all your endeavors?
AS: I think they were. They didn’t say much about it but usually when I came home from work I’d stop and pick something up for my mother. I made enough money one day to buy a pair of skates for me and that was—I used my money wisely.
LC: Was that something you had kind of had your eye on, those skates?
AS: Well, I’d always had skates. There wasn’t much to do in South Georgia but skate. And my mother, being a serious Christian—and I don’t mean that lightly—insisted that I tithed everything. So when she gave me my dime allowance I had to put a penny aside for church. That was instilled in me very early.
LC: And your father, he was from a different denomination?
AS: Yes, my mother was Presbyterian and my father was Methodist. His father was a Methodist preacher.
LC: Oh, is that right?
AS: Yes.
LC: Also down in Quitman?
AS: Granddaddy retired there. He had preached there twice but at that time in the Methodist church they moved preachers even more than they do today and he had been at one time a circuit rider. But pretty much all in South Georgia.

LC: Ann, tell me about yourself as a student. You mentioned the algebra before. Were there particular subjects that you did very well at? This is sometimes a tough one.
AS: I was quick. I did not know how to study until I was in graduate school. I didn’t have to because I could get by with a quick memory and so I missed out on learning a lot but I guess English and history.

LC: Those attracted you?
AS: Those were my best subjects. I took four years of math in high school and because I had done that, when I got to college I didn’t have to take freshman math. Enough had stuck that I could do well on the placement test.

LC: Was that unusual for the girls in high school to take all four years of math?
AS: My three best friends and I, we didn’t have an academic track but we were about as academic as you could get. I took a couple of years of Latin and then pretty much—we didn’t have very many electives. The only thing I really blew was chemistry and I have since realized I probably could have enjoyed it because I think it’s so well organized. I mean, chemistry makes sense if you can get the fundamentals.

LC: Right. You’ve got to get A before you can get to B, C, and D.
AS: Yes.

LC: Did you have any teachers that were particularly memorable, either in a good way or in a bad way or influential for you?
AS: Thinking back, probably the one I enjoyed most was the school librarian who taught English. I had the same teacher for English and Latin and I had a math teacher who I thought a great deal of at the time. But one time she accused me of something I did not do and would not believe me when I told her and had proof. And that just colored my attitude. (Laughs)

LC: Right, it soured things for you.
AS: Oh yes.
LC: Ann, let me ask you a little bit about what was going on in Quitman, just in terms of social relations. Can you tell me anything about how race played out there? Were African-Americans living in town?

AS: Oh yes, almost at the end of every street there would be African-Americans living there. We knew them pretty much as maids, nurses for children. My father, I think, was an un-reconstructed Confederate.

LC: Was he really?

AS: Yeah, of course he was not involved in the war, he wasn’t that old but he had, like many Southerners of that era; he was totally against African-Americans as a group and had wonderful friends as individuals. One time I came home from college and it was during bad times in Georgia when we had two governors and the school integration was beginning to be talked about and I said that I wouldn’t mind going to school with an African-American. And Daddy hit the roof.

LC: Did he really?

AS: And I said, “I think everybody has a right to an education.” So that sort of set some of the tone but he was a product of his time.

LC: What about your mom?

AS: My mother was more broad-minded I would say than Daddy and then the last job that she had, there were a number of African-Americans who worked there and obviously she treated them very well because when she died they went together and sent flowers to her funeral.

LC: So she had had some kind of pleasant or good, healthy interaction with them.

AS: My grandmother on my father’s side always had a cook so I had a very personal relationship with individuals by just being around her cook. But things were as they were then. You took for granted the way things were until you got older, I believe, and got away.

LC: And you went up to Valdosta to college. Was that your idea or were your folks—

AS: Well, it’s only eighteen miles from my hometown and it was a matter of go where I could go. I had no interest in going to a big school and I couldn’t have anyway.
At the time I started it was Georgia State College for Women and it was made co-ed my senior year.

LC: Now what did you intend to study?

AS: I first thought I wanted to study secretarial science and then I hit bookkeeping. That did that.

LC: So bookkeeping became a love?

AS: Oh no. (Laughs)

LC: Oh, I see. It was the problem. It was the roadblock.

AS: It was an anathema.

LC: Okay, I’ve got you now. (Laughs)

AS: Being a not very conscientious homeworker, I let myself get behind way too early and couldn’t catch up.

LC: So you shifted then to a different major?

AS: I took all of the courses to qualify for a teaching certificate. You know all the education and all that sort of stuff but I did not want a degree in education. I did not want that to be my major so I majored in English. I have a BS in English.

LC: Now why were you trying to avoid getting an education degree, per se?

AS: It just did not appeal to me. It seemed like—even at that time it did not seem a prestigious degree to me.

LC: And was it sort of that you didn’t see yourself being a teacher?

AS: Oh no. I saw myself being a teacher. I just didn’t want a degree in education. (Laughs)

LC: So you wanted a more traditional—

AS: A more liberal art. But I did not take any language because with the teaching you had to have a good bit of science so I was weighted that way so that’s why I have a BS.

LC: Okay, that’s why it’s a BS?

AS: Yeah.

LC: Okay. While you were there you indicated that in the first several years you were there, the first three years it was a women’s college.

AS: Yes.
LC: Okay. Tell me about the tenor of being on campus. What was it like? Was
the faculty both male and female?

AS: Oh yes. It was a very small school. I guess we had three hundred students.
I’m not sure of the mix of town students and dormitory. Our president was a man and I
had several male professors.

LC: Did you have any really good professors while you were there?

AS: The one who meant the most to me and did the most for me was a physical
education professor who taught dance. She broadened my horizons more than anyone.

LC: What was her name? Do you remember, Ann?

AS: Phyllis Valenti, V-a-l-e-n-t-i.

LC: Tell me about her.

AS: Well, she was fascinating because she had studied with Martha Graham and I
think she had graduated from LSU with a degree in English and had gone to the
Bennington Dance Era which doesn’t mean anything but it meant something. (Laughs)
And she introduced me to books like Thomas Wolfe and she was a crossword puzzle
worker, which I am also. I had never danced before and I found that that was my great
love.

LC: Is that right?

AS: One of my piano teacher said, “Well, you can’t play music but you can sure
move to it.” (Laughs)

LC: Is that right?

AS: Yeah. Modern dance.

LC: Describe if you can for somebody who wouldn’t be familiar with that period.
What was the sort of thinking behind modern dance at the time you were studying it?

AS: Well, it was a breakaway from the traditional ballet of course and it was not
necessarily pretty as ballet is. You’re usually barefooted and you’re offered angles and
use of the body in strange ways. I never could have been a ballet dancer because I’m so
long and gangly. (Laughs)

LC: Too tall.
AS: Everybody, I think, needs something at which he or she excels in his little pond and in my little pond at that time, I was the best there was—in that little pond at that thing. And it was sort of like finding yourself.

LC: And she took a particular interest in you, not just in terms of dance but also it seems in terms of what you were reading?

AS: Yes, and ideas.

LC: Ideas, exactly.

AS: She was a very smart woman and she wasn’t your average physical education teacher. She didn’t teach swimming or tennis or golf or anything else. She taught dance.

LC: She was a specialist.

AS: Yes.

LC: How did she come to be there? Did you ever find that out? How had she come to be at Valdosta?

AS: I have no idea. If I ever knew, I don’t remember. They probably advertised for somebody and she answered.

LC: Yeah. I wonder, what kind of things did you wear when you were dancing?

AS: Leotards.

LC: Did you wear black or whatever you could lay your hands on?

AS: Yeah.

LC: Really?

AS: Of course when we danced in public we had various costumes. They had never had a dance recital or a program there and during my sophomore year we did one and she choreographed it and she danced, too.

LC: No kidding?

AS: Yeah.

LC: That must have been a thrill.

AS: It was. The thrill was that she asked me to work with her the summer after my freshman year so she could have somebody to choreograph on.

LC: So you were sort of the model for her to work the movements out and sort of visualize it?
AS: Yes, to see how they looked on somebody else. As I progressed, if she was not there she would have me hold her classes but that was all freshmen and stuff.

LC: Which was no problem for you at that point.

AS: No.

LC: What kind of training did you do? You know, ballet people work many, many hours every day and they can’t eat certain things and there are all these regiments. Did you have anything like that?

AS: No. I probably was practicing every day. The school had a lot of various clubs and we had a dance club that met twice a week and so we got a lot of practice there. I must say, my studies probably suffered. (Laughs)

LC: Because you loved doing this.

AS: Yes. And I was also active in the drama club and one day I was going to be cast in a play and the drama professor said, “Well, you can dance if it doesn’t interfere with the play.” And the dance instructor said, “You can be in the play if it doesn’t interfere with your dance.” (Laughs)

LC: And I’m sure both of them were very keen that you choose their area.

AS: The drama professor was also one of my absolute favorites. She was dramatic and had been on Broadway and looked sort of like a taller version of the Duchess of Windsor.

LC: Do you remember her name at all, Ann?

AS: Louise Sawyer.

LC: Tell me a little bit about her. She sounds like quite an intriguing person.

AS: I don’t know how she got to South Georgia, either.

LC: That’s very interesting. Someone will have to look into this.

AS: After she retired she was living in Illinois, Monmouth, Illinois and I was stationed at Fort Sheridan, Illinois and I was having a party and I invited her to come and she couldn’t because she was in the hospital having her feet operated on so asked her what she drank and so I showed up at the hospital with her drink. (Laughs)

LC: What did she drink?

AS: Bourbon. (Laughs)

LC: There you go. (Laughs)
AS: And then years later, since I’ve been here and retired, a couple moved to our university. She’s in English. I call her Dr. Word and him Dr. Number and she mentioned one night that they had lived there when she taught at Monmouth and I said, “Did you know Louise Sawyer?” She said, “Yes.” Tremendous small world.

LC: Oh, things like that just give me the chills practically. How had she known her?

AS: Well, Miss Sawyer lived there and they were teaching there and their paths crossed some way.

LC: Did she give you kind of an update?

AS: Yes. I think she had died by then.

LC: Those professors sound extraordinarily influential and important. Were you sad to leave college? You graduated in what, 1951?

AS: Yes.

LC: Were you kind of saddened by having to leave or where you ready?

AS: Yes, yes, I was saddened because I knew—for one thing, I knew I was never going to be able to dance again, really dance as I had there. You have to realize, as I said, it was a small pond but I was in it and I didn’t really know what I was going to do. Now, I was delighted to get out of high school because I knew I was going to college and that makes a difference and I was determined I was going to live on campus because that was part of college to me. And I did. I never commuted. So yeah, I was sad to leave the college. I had good friends and a close-knit group.

LC: Had there been sororities on campus?

AS: No.

LC: Not at all?

AS: No.

LC: I wondered about that. Why were there no sororities?

AS: Well, probably—I don’t know. Really, I never thought about it but most of us probably couldn’t have afforded to be in sororities anyway if they had had them. And sometimes the poor can be awfully snobbish. (Laughs)

LC: Had the decision by the administration to take the college co-ed changed things substantially for you? You would have been a senior that year, I guess.
AS: They didn’t really change substantially but we had to make room for these young men who had not been part of the system before. One of them had to be “Who’s Who” just because one of them had to be. Some of were older. There were veterans going to school then. We adapted.

LC: Was that, do you think, part of why the administration decided to accept men, because there were guys with GI Bill money following them and they needed the money? Was that part of the discussion or do you remember at all?

AS: We weren’t privy to the decision-making discussions. (Laughs)

LC: And none of that sort of leaked out to—

AS: No. And they changed the name of the college while I was there. It was Georgia State Women’s College. It became Valdosta State College and now it’s Valdosta State University and it’s huge.

LC: Yeah, it’s huge now.

AS: They have football and all that and fraternities and sororities.

LC: They sure do, yes ma’am. Yeah, I used to live in Georgia so I know where—

AS: They have doctoral programs.

LC: Yes, it’s a doctoral-run research university now.

AS: Where did you live?

LC: I actually lived up in the Atlanta area.

AS: Well where else?

LC: Yeah, I know. But I taught at a very small private school up there in Atlanta and we were very aware of where our students, most of whom were from Georgia, were going to graduate school and a number of them from South Georgia went back to Valdosta State to graduate school.

AS: When I was growing up in South Georgia, I was convinced that when you died you went to Atlanta. And at that time in my life there was only one Rich’s. It was downtown and it was the store. And if you were really good you spent eternity in Rich’s.

LC: Had you had much opportunity to get up to Atlanta?

AS: Well, during the course of my checkered career I’ve lived there twice. My brother lives in Buckhead and I was there Monday and I’ll go back next Monday. My dentist has been in Atlanta and I just get there. I like Atlanta. I don’t want to live there.
LC: Yeah, it’s hard to live there.

AS: I like eating there and being there so I’m probably there on average of once
or twice a month for some reason. It’s only two hours.

LC: Yes, that’s right. It’s straight across I-20 there. Were you able to get up
there much when you were young, say before you graduated from college? Did you go to
Atlanta at all?

AS: No. I had an aunt and uncle who lived in Decatur and we got there every
now and then but the only reason I went to Atlanta, pretty much, my brother had a knee
problem and he was going to an orthopedic doctor up there and occasionally Daddy and I
would take him up. Atlanta was not—it was a two-day trip.

LC: Sure. Absolutely. Did your folks have a car most of the time?

AS: Yeah. It didn’t always run. (Laughs)

LC: Yeah, I can believe that. I can absolutely believe that. But your dad was well
enough to have a car and use it?

AS: Yes. Before he died he was—I don’t know whether he might have had
what’s Alzheimer’s but he had hardening of the arteries and it just affected a lot of us. It
was very sad because Daddy was very smart, very quick, and I think that was one of his
frustrations. He couldn’t do what his mind wanted to do. I mean, even as a younger
man.

LC: You’ve mentioned your brother. He’s quite a bit younger than you.

AS: Nine years.

LC: Okay. Did you have to pretty much take care of him along the way or did
your mom handle that and you were free to—

AS: Well I thought I did inside.

LC: (Laughs) Did he go to college?

AS: Yes.

LC: Where did he go?

AS: Georgia State.

LC: Okay. Up in Atlanta?

AS: Yes.

LC: Okay. And has he lived there always?
AS: He left Quitman and moved to Atlanta.

LC: And that was the end of that?

AS: And that was that.

LC: Okay. (Laughs) I can see that. He lives in Buckhead now so he sounds quite firmly entrenched there.

AS: He worked for several years writing for Atlanta Magazine and then he got a job at Channel 5, WAGA in Atlanta and was there for eighteen years and then he worked for CNN.

LC: Is that right? Does he still work there?

AS: No. CNN—they had a reorganization.

LC: They sure did.

AS: Somebody didn’t like his boss, fired his boss and then it was obvious. He knew it was coming because he was very associated with her and it was sort of like a football coach. Somebody new that comes in wants his people. But he had a good run there. He was there almost ten years and in fact it happened this last year.

LC: Oh, is that right?

AS: Did you ever see “Talkback Live?”

LC: Yeah. It used to be on in the middle of the day.

AS: Yeah, he was the original producer of that. That’s the level at which he was working there. And every time his boss got a—he worked for a woman considerable younger than he and every time she got a promotion he wound up moving. (Laughs)

LC: So was fairly closely linked in the organization to her.

AS: Yes. And he has no bitterness about it.

LC: And is he then retired basically at this point?

AS: Yeah. He does some freelancing and he’s enjoying being able to travel and do what he wants to do.

LC: And as you say, Atlanta is a perfectly gorgeous place to be. A little hard, I think, to live there because of the crowds, but a beautiful place to be, certainly

AS: Well, they tried to get him to move to Washington one time and he said no. All his contacts are in Atlanta. Everybody he knows is in Atlanta.
LC: Sure. He’s been there so long. Ann, let me ask you a little bit more about your time as you were leaving college. And this would be in like 1951. What did you have in mind to do? Did you think that you were going to get a teaching position?

AS: I did.

LC: Where did you end up getting a job?

AS: Atlanta.

LC: No kidding. That was your first job? Whereabouts?

AS: It was a little school that was a county school and they brought it into the city system and it was off Bankhead Highway somewhere. It was a grammar school. It had probably two first, second, third and fourth grades. I’m not sure it had two of fifth and sixth. It was in a blue-collar area where a lot of the people worked in mills and had lost their jobs so—I had maybe one child whose father had something that remotely resembled a white-collar job.

LC: But those were some hard times for mill people.

AS: Yes they were. And I was twenty and I thought I knew more than the principal and I let her know it, which was not a smart thing to do. I was not nearly as smart as I thought I was.

LC: But were you still smarter than she was? I mean, looking back, were you still—

AS: Oh yes. Maybe not about her job but basically I thought I was smarter than she was. After one year they did not invite me back. They didn’t fire me mid-year.

LC: Right. They just didn’t renew your contract, as they say.

AS: Yes.

LC: Now this was her little kingdom then and she could pretty much control who worked there?

AS: Well, I don’t know that—I’m certain her recommendation mattered. So then I was at sort of loose ends and I worked at Davison’s a while. Macy’s now, and they had me working in middle-age women’s housedresses and I was not very successful.

LC: Now were you not successful because of where they placed you or was retail just not going to be your thing?
AS: Well, I should not at been—I, at twenty-one and skinny, ought not to have
been trying to sell housedresses. (Laughs)

LC: Were you on commission?

AS: Yes, and I didn’t make anything. Then they decided to put me on straight
salary and I worked in the shoe department selling handbags.

LC: How did that go?

AS: That was much better.

LC: That was better?

AS: Yeah, because I could see a pair of shoes and go down there and say, “Can I
find you a pocketbook to go with that?” And the head of that department asked me if I
would be interested in going into a retail training program and I said, “No, I want to be in
the Army.” I had already—as soon as I got out of college I tried to go in the Army but I
wasn’t old enough. You had to be twenty-one.

LC: Now, Ann, why were you pursuing that? How did that come up your head as
something that you could do?

AS: It started back in high school when I read a book about a woman who was in
the Navy and it fascinated me. It was the first I had seen. And then my senior year in
college the Army sent a recruiter to talk to college students. The Army decided they
were going to keep women then and they needed more officers and they were offering
direct commission to college graduates.

LC: So someone came to Valdosta?

AS: Somebody came to Valdosta. She was a woman from Georgia anyway and
she was a major. Her name was—why I remember this, I don’t know—Marion Rhine, R-
h-i-n-e and she fascinated me because one, she had been a dancer.

LC: No kidding?

AS: Yes. And two, she had these beautiful long, red fingernails.

LC: She sounds like a dreamboat.

AS: And what she had to say was interesting to me. So as soon as I graduated I
applied and they said, “You’ve got to wait until you’re twenty-one.” So I went off to
work.
LC: I see. So you weren’t then completely heartbroken when your position wasn’t renewed at the school there in Atlanta?

AS: No.

LC: Because you had this other plan kind of brewing in the background.

AS: And after I left Davison’s I was looking for something that I could make enough money to eat. And I called the phone company. Everybody worked at the phone company sooner or later and they would have hired me but they wanted me for a training program and I said, “That’s not fair. I don’t want to waste your money being trained when I want to go into the Army.” So then I went to everybody else’s place, Retail Credit Company, and worked there until the Army thing got straightened out.

LC: And that was—

AS: Fifty-three.

LC: Okay. And that was pending—by then of course you were twenty-one, twenty-two.

AS: As soon as I was twenty-one, this isn’t the grammar. As soon as I was twenty-one I re-applied and filled out all the paperwork and had a physical and didn’t hear anything and went back again and they said the physical was more—they’d lost my physical. It was more than a hundred and twenty days old so I had to have another one. It kept delaying and delaying.

LC: Right, paperwork problems.

AS: I called my mother one time and I said, “I bet if I tried to enlist they would take me tomorrow.” And she said, “Don’t you dare. You worked too hard to get through college not to take advantage of what college offers.” And then when I finally got the papers they had been dated months before. They just hadn’t mailed them to me.

LC: No kidding.

AS: And I called her and I said, “This is Lieutenant Smith if she wants to be.” “What do you mean, ‘If she wants to be?’” So I went off to the Army.

LC: Your first choice, though, had been the Navy.

AS: My first choice had been the Navy and I was living in Atlanta. The Navy recruiting office was in Macon and you had to pay your own way. And the Air Force and the Army were in Atlanta and the Navy required a four-year commitment and said, “You
may be promoted after two years.” The Air Force required three; the Army required two
and said, “You will be promoted.” I heard those nuances.

LC: Yes. And so you went for what looked like the best deal.

AS: Yes. And then this mental process said, “If you don’t do it and your life
doesn’t go well, you will always wonder. And if you do it and you don’t like it, it’s only
two years.”

LC: And you actually thought that out at the time?

AS: Oh yeah.

LC: Wow. So many people kind of stumble into things. It sounds like this was
very much a rational decision you had in front of you and you evaluated everything.

AS: Well I figured I’d been in college four years. That wasn’t long.

LC: Yeah, that went by pretty quickly. (Laughs) Do you remember your first
orders, getting your orders to report?

AS: Yeah. I didn’t know a thing they said. (Laughs) They had these strange
abbreviations and E-D-C-S-A and things like that. I couldn’t say them so I didn’t know
what they meant.

LC: Did you get the idea, though, that they wanted you to show up somewhere?

AS: Yes, Fort Lee.

LC: Okay, Fort Lee.

AS: And I had never been on an overnight train. I did not know what to wear and
so I got there dressed the way I’d dress to go somewhere in Atlanta and I was quite the
talk. I had on a black plain dress and a hat and I was known as, “the one in the hat.”

LC: There weren’t a lot of other incoming women that were dressing as nicely as
you did?

AS: Wearing a hat. It was a little pillbox, a black pillbox.

LC: Cute. (Laughs) Tell me about arriving at Fort Lee. How did you get from
the train station out to the post?

AS: A taxi.

LC: Do you remember those first few days, Ann?

AS: Oh yes. I definitely remember those first days.

LC: Can you tell me about them?
AS: Before uniforms, even?
LC: Yeah.
AS: Well, I remember one day I was out fully breathed by this orderly room when
the commander, who was a major, came out. That woman scared me to death for a while
and I didn’t know to get up and salute. I didn’t know how to do any of that and there
were—in my particular class we had several people who got direct commissions to be
NCOs (Non-Commissioned Officers) and then we had some like me who were just off
the street. At the same time there was an OCS (Officer Candidate School) class going
through with us and we had to be in two separate barracks and we weren’t supposed to
talk to each other because we were officers and they were enlisted people.
LC: No kidding. Even though they were in OCS?
AS: Yes. And finally it dawned on people that we were going to have to work
together two months from now so they better let us talk to each other.
LC: So they kind of broke the barrier a little bit?
AS: Yes. And the uniforms were dreadful tan chambray dresses that had to be
starched. The first time I put that thing on—and I’ve been reminded of this in since
years—I stood in the mirror and looked at myself in the mirror and admired myself and
said, “Look at me. I’m a soldier.” Now, based on old World War II movies, I had some
serious misconceptions about being in the Army. I thought everybody had a jeep sitting
outside the door and you just got in it and ran off somewhere. And our commander took
us in one of the first orientations we had. She said, “And you, ladies, can also wash out.”
That was the first time that I had heard that I could wash out and it hadn’t dawned on me
that I was going to go through twenty weeks of training. I thought I was just going to
walk in and walk out. (Laughs)
LC: And be there and be in it without kind of breaking—so you started to get the
sense of the structure that was going to be at the post?
AS: Yes. They had a course there called a WAC Company Officers Course and it
was designed for us to go out and learn how to work in a WAC (Women’s Army Corps)
detachment. We learned supply and personnel and all had to take a class in teaching and
public speaking and those types of things. The only thing we didn’t do that enlisted
people do was KP (Kitchen Police).
LC: Is that right?
AS: We picked up cigarette butts by flashlight. (Laughs)
LC: Did you really?
AS: Sure.
LC: Did you have weapons training at all?
AS: Not then.
LC: Later on?
AS: Yes. At one time it was voluntary and then when I commanded the training battalion it was mandatory. Everybody took weapons training.
LC: But when you first came in that wasn’t immediately on the agenda, the training agenda?
AS: I can’t remember whether we had a familiarization or not. Probably not. I can’t be definite about that.
LC: Now Ann, while you were in the basic training period, did you have any outdoor skills being taught to you like orientation, bivouac and all that?
AS: No. We studied map reading but it wasn’t practical. We learned how to read a map and all that sort of thing. We had physical training and we marched. We marched everywhere.
LC: I was going to say, how much marching did you do? A lot?
AS: Any time we went anywhere as a group we were marching. We could walk to the PX (Post Exchange) but every week the whole training center marched down the street in front of the commander. It was called march-out and so we did that. We had some swimming.
LC: Really?
AS: Yeah, it was a pool—well of course it was summer. I don’t recall there being an indoor pool there. Most people could swim but there were a few of them who had some instruction. The rest of us just swam.
LC: How big was the class?
AS: Twenty-three.
LC: No kidding. Did you make friends?
AS: Yeah.
LC: Do you remember any of those gals—where they were from or did you see them later on as your career went on?

AS: Well, we crossed paths a lot because we stayed in the WAC pond. We had a reunion here when the museum was here at Fort. McClellan. We had a big reunion and several of my classmates came back and I got to see them. One time I was in San Antonio and two of them were there and we had lunch together.

LC: Was that part of another reunion?

AS: No. I was out at a conference with a friend of mine.

LC: No kidding.

AS: Yeah.

LC: And you saw them?

AS: Well, one of them had been at the reunion and I told her I was coming and then she brought the other one. The other one was one who had not completed training. She had washed out.

LC: Washed out as they say

AS: She couldn’t march.

LC: No kidding.

AS: Yeah. She just could not stay in step. (Laughs) She just was, in essence, a motor moron. She couldn’t help it.

LC: And was that the basis of her—

AS: I think it was.

LC: No kidding.

AS: Marching was very important. If you were going to train troops, you had to be able to do the things that you were training the troops to do.

LC: Right and she couldn’t get a hold of that part.

AS: Uh-uh. We tried.

LC: You probably had absolutely no problem, though, with all the dance and all the discipline that you had from that.

AS: Marching was my best thing in the Army. (Laughs)

LC: For your whole career?

AS: For my whole career.
LC: I’m certain that we’re going to find evidence that there were other things you
were very good at, Ann.
AS: Well, it was probably my favorite thing. To get out on the parade grounds
and lead a parade is just great fun.
LC: You had a good time with that?
AS: Yes.
LC: Wow. When you would do the march-out, would different classes all march
together?
AS: No. The officers marched in one group and each company of basic trainees
marched together.
LC: How many WAC companies of trainees? Any idea?
AS: Three companies of basic trainees, I believe, and a leadership company. Who
were people who had been identified during basic training as potential leaders.
LC: How were they identified? Do you know or did you know at the time?
AS: By their trainers.
LC: Okay. So they just recognized something in the individual?
AS: Yes. It was somebody who obviously had leadership abilities and who stood
out for various reasons.
LC: Did you get picked for any of that, Ann?
AS: No, leaders were picked from the enlistees.
LC: Oh, I see. I’m sorry. And your experience then with basic was overall a
good one?
AS: Yeah. It was good.
LC: Did you have fun?
AS: Well, yes, in looking back on it.
LC: Right. But at the time?
AS: I didn’t hate it. There were very few days I was unhappy.
LC: Okay. So most of the time you thought, “Well, this isn’t too bad.”
AS: The only thing that really bothered me is they gave us a map reading test and
I was one of two people who passed it. And I made a ninety-eight and they made us
retake the test and they wouldn’t let my ninety-eight stand and I made a lower on the
second one than I did on the first one. (Laughs)

LC: That seems hardly fair.

AS: That’s right.

LC: There’s something a little wrong there.

AS: Who said the Army’s fair? (Laughs)

LC: That’s right, nobody. (Laughs) Well, did you learn a lesson from that, Ann, or did you just kind of think, “Well, that’s a little bump in the road?”

AS: It was a bump in the road. I couldn’t change it.

LC: No. How did you come out of basic? Were you, did you think, prepared for an assignment? Were you anxious to get on with it?

AS: Yes, I was, and I stayed at Fort Lee so you were in a very nurturing environment because I was second lieutenant in a world of second lieutenants and everybody there, almost all of them, had been through what we had been through. And all the time we were there we were seeing them around. Of course we were the pariahs of the bunch. (Laughs)

LC: Now why do you say that?

AS: Well, because we were students. When I moved into my first assignment which was training basic trainees, the people I had been seeing all the time were there as the other officers and they helped us.

LC: So it was, would you say, almost collegial in the sense that people were helping each other rather than adversarial?

AS: Yes. And the three companies of basic trainees were not particularly competitive with each other. We were all friends who knew each other.

LC: And your first assignment then was to join sort of the staff, if you will, of the training faculty?

AS: Well, each company had a company commander and several platoons. Each platoon had a platoon officer. That’s what I was. So I was responsible—I taught them a lot, went to drill with them, inspected them—they were mine.

LC: And how many classes did you have in that post, do you remember?
AS: Well, we probably had about twenty-five or thirty in a platoon. I don’t remember. But I taught them all their military courtesy and was always involved with drills. The enlisted people were the drill instructors at the time but they weren’t drill sergeants as we know them today. We were always with those trainees. If somebody else was teaching them, I was sitting in the back of the room.

LC: No kidding.

AS: Yes, I was the constant presence. (Laughs) Not I, all of us were.

LC: Sure. How many others had this kind of assignment that you worked with on a daily basis? Was it a group of four or five who would handle everything?

AS: Yeah. Three, four, or five. I don’t remember.

LC: And was this something you like doing? It sounds like you fit right into that.

AS: Yes, I liked it. I did it for a year and during that time we moved from Fort Lee to Fort McClellan and things just expanded at Fort McClellan. Many, many more people. By that time we had more troops coming in and it was a big thing. We got a new training center and they recruited a great number of people. So it was a big change.

LC: Now that change happened—am I right in thinking ’54?

AS: Yes, ’54.

LC: Okay. And what was driving that change in expansion? Was it because of the Korean involvement?

AS: No, Korea was over by then. I think all along the Army had looked at, “Can we use more women?” And I don’t remember—when you’re a second lieutenant you don’t know a lot about what’s going on. You see the end result and we just had a flood of trainees coming in.

LC: When you made that move from Virginia down to Alabama, did things change for you in terms of the assignment or were you still doing the same kind of work?

AS: I was doing the same kind of work in a different environment, a much, much different—we had open bay barracks, old World War II barracks at Fort Lee. We came down and had new barracks that had partitions in them and we had new buildings a big mess hall. So there were definite changes.

LC: And all to the good, it sounds.

AS: Yeah. Well, we didn’t think so at the time.
LC: Why was that?

AS: Well, because we couldn’t stand those partitions in the barracks because we
couldn’t go in and look and see everything at one time and we thought it would be
spoiling the trainees. (Laughs)

LC: Did it turn out that it softened them up too much or did it turn out to be okay?

AS: No, it was fine.

LC: Was that the only thing that was problematical for you in making that
transition down to Fort. McClellan?

AS: The worst thing that happened was that I was moved from my original
company to another company and that was not a happy time for me.

LC: Why was that?

AS: Well, I didn’t care for the commander. She had been the commander of the
leader’s company and now she was commanding a basic training company and it was
somewhat beneath her, I think.

LC: Did she act as if it was beneath her?

AS: I don’t know. I thought she did. You know, memories.

LC: Yeah, sometimes you just get the impression.

AS: And when I was first assigned—I had lived in the BOQ (Bachelor Officers’
Quarters) with her before and in the BOQ almost everybody was first name. She was
captain, I was still a second lieutenant I think, and she called me in and she said, “I hope
you won’t take advantage of having known me as Mary Ann.” And I wanted to throw
up. I knew I was supposed to call her ma’am, I knew she was a captain.

LC: But she was just kind of laying the wood to you a little bit there?

AS: I didn’t appreciate her assumption that I would.

LC: Right, and her correcting you in advance.

AS: Yes. Total pre-emptive strike.

LC: Exactly. I mean, after all, you had been teaching military courtesy. You
knew the regs. (Laughs) Well, other than that little rough patch with her, did you settle
into the new company all right?

AS: Oh yes. I settled into the new company and a great day happened when she
was replaced by my best friend.
LC: Oh, how did that happen? Who was your best friend?
AS: Her name’s Lorraine Rossi and she was my best friend in the company.
Sometimes best friends are situational. She is still a very good friend.
LC: Now, how do you spell her last name?
AS: R-o-s-s-i.
LC: And you had obviously already known her?
AS: We had been in the first company together. She was there when I got there and she stayed in the company. I was gone away to Atlanta for the weekend and when I came home somebody I knew said, “If you could pick your own company commander, who would it be?” I said, “Sissy.” And she said, “That’s who it is.” And I could not have been more delighted.
LC: And you thought, “Yes!” (Laughs)
AS: “Yes!” And the thing is that all of us knew her and knew her well, all of us in the company, and she did not have one minute’s problem. Some of the people—one of the other officers in the company was one of her truly best friends. They had gone to high school together and we were all so happy to have her.
LC: Now was she also given an advance in rank?
AS: No, she was a first lieutenant.
LC: Okay.
AS: She already was one.
LC: And at what point were you looking toward first lieutenant?
AS: Eighteen months after I went in the Army was the time limit.
LC: You would have been coming up on that.
AS: Yeah.
LC: And were you also giving thought to your two-year commitment and whether you would stay in?
AS: Oh, by that time I had already asked to be regular Army.
LC: You wanted to get off of this contract thing.
AS: And they had a system by which you had a year of probation before they would let you be regular Army so as soon as I could, I applied for it. I was happy in the Army.
LC: And you couldn’t think of anything that would suit you any better outside the Army?

AS: No. And in retrospect, I know it was the best thing for me. It gave me opportunities that no little girl from South Georgia would expect—for promotion, for education, for travel, for doing work.

LC: It fit you.

AS: Yes. And people who knew me said—well, at first people said, “What’s your mother say about your joining the Army?” I said, “She knows how she raised me.” She was very happy with my being in the Army.

LC: Was she really?

AS: Oh yes.

LC: Was she proud of you?

AS: Oh yes, very much.

LC: I’ll bet she was.

AS: She died just a few weeks before I found out I was being promoted to major. People said, “Well, she didn’t doubt it. She wouldn’t question it.” But one of the things I’ve found in the Army that suits me is you know your limits. It’s as if you’re in a box and you can ramble around in that box all you want to and when you run up against the edge, you know it. And if you go outside that box you know what’s going to happen to you. So there is a discipline I like but there is also freedom.

LC: But those defined parameters sort of help structure the way.

AS: Oh yes.

LC: Ann, let’s take a break.
Laura Calkins: This is Dr. Laura Calkins with the Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech University, continuing the oral history interview with Col. Ann B. Smith of the US Army. Today’s date is the twenty-ninth of June 2004. I am in the interview room of the Special Collections building on the campus of Texas Tech in Lubbock and I am speaking with Colonel Smith by telephone. She is in Alabama. Good morning.

Ann Smith: Good morning.

LC: I just want to resume with the place that we left off last session, which involves your posting as a recruiting officer in Virginia, in I think, 1954. Can you tell me how that came about?

AS: Well, at that time there were separate WAC recruiting offices and they had one of us at every one of the recruiting stations across the United States. And it was just a part of the assignment. Everybody did it.

LC: Really?

AS: I can’t think of anybody I knew who didn’t have an assignment on recruiting. And so from Fort McClellan, Alabama I went to Roanoke, Virginia. It’s a beautiful area.

LC: Yes it is.

AS: But not the best recruiting area for young women, particularly at that time.

LC: Now, why do you say that, Ann?

AS: Well, the Army was not a job of choice for a lot of people then, especially for young women in a fairly conservative area. We were given a quota of women to recruit. I don’t think I ever made the quota and it wasn’t big but we were supposed to try to recruit that many.

LC: Now, how would you actually go about this? Would you rely on people, women, actually walking in to the office?

AS: Well, the majority of the contacts were made with the male recruiters. Back up a minute. There was one officer and one woman NCO assigned to every one—at least—assigned to every one of the major recruiting stations and so the major contacts were by the male recruiters who were out in the various regions. We covered the whole
western part of Virginia so it was set up into districts of sections with a male recruiter. They were the ones who went into the high schools and contacted the people and then frequently they would call and ask me to go somewhere and talk to a high school group. It was sort of interesting because at that time we were into the taupe uniforms. The young women were usually interested in what I wore underneath.

LC: No kidding.

AS: So I had a bright red slip with lace on the bottom and I would hike my skirt a little bit and show them what I wore underneath. (laughs)

LC: Now, this was part of your unique recruiting approach?

AS: Yes, that was part of it—my attention getter. (laughs)

LC: (laughs) Now how effective was this put together with the other things?

AS: It didn’t make any recruits but I got their interest. (laughs)

LC: So you never made your quota, Ann?

AS: Never. And I remember one time I was up really in the mountains of West Virginia in the coal mining area and I was talking to a young high school graduate that one of the recruiters had found and I asked, “If you don’t go in the Army, what will you do?” She said, “Oh, I’ll probably teach school.” So that says something at that time about the society. Plus, another was at that time the Army had higher enlistment standards for women than for men on the various placement tests and they had to be older. They couldn’t have any type of police records and it was hard for a lot of the young men and the young women to make the minimum score. And I frustrated the male sergeants because I wouldn’t give points. They would say, “Well, she doesn’t need but two points.” I said, “If she can’t make the minimum, I just can’t do it.” So that discouraged them. (laughs)

LC: Right. You weren’t fluffing up the numbers.

AS: No. If the minimum cut-off score was thirty-one and if it was twenty-nine or thirty, I just wouldn’t fudge it.

LC: Now, tell me a little bit about this differential in the standards for men and women. What did that arise from? What was the thinking behind it?

AS: Well, one, they needed more men than women.

LC: So the floodgates were opened a little bit wider for the guys.
AS: Yes. I can’t remember what the scores were but I know there was a decent
differential between the men and the women. I remember the women was thirty-one. So
that did make a difference and it depends on the education level of the people where you
were. Also the job market, even then, but the Army was not the most attractive thing to
young women then.

LC: Right, in terms of socially and in terms of—

AS: Well, it was such a foreign notion to them, I think. The publicity was not
what it is today, the gimmicks were not as good, there weren’t as many good things to
come like education and some of the enlistment commitments that they have now. It’s a
different world.

LC: Were there also some discrepancy between rural areas and the more urban
areas in terms of educational standards, that students broadly, both men and women were
expected to meet, such that that had some impact, too, on success in meeting that thirty-
one minimum standard?

AS: Yes. Well, it’s just quality. That’s not to say that rural schools are always
bad.

LC: True, very true.

AS: Because some of them are better than the city schools, at least today.

LC: Yes, absolutely that’s certainly the case and it always has been. I think there
are always exceptions to understood or observed results.

AS: Yes.

LC: Ann, did you have success with particular groups? Those women that you
were successful in recruiting—did you have, for example, more whites than blacks or
more older women in their early twenties?

AS: That escapes me.

LC: Okay. Did you have any success?

AS: Very little. (Laughs)

LC: Okay. (Laughs) Now, this posting did not lead to another recruiting
assignment for you?

AS: Definitely not.

LC: Okay, okay. (Laughs)
AS: And usually we didn’t get but one.
LC: Is that right?
AS: Yes, because there was always a new bunch coming in to do it.
LC: And everybody in the Corps pretty much had to do this at least once?
AS: Well, in my era. I don’t know—if you go back to the early days I doubt that that was so, and certainly it ceased later on. But it was pretty much just part of the career path. You train trainees and you went on recruiting and then you did something else.
LC: Okay. And was the Corps, at this point, after you’re having the recruiting assignment, beginning then to shape what area you had specialized in, since you had done the things that pretty much each junior officer had to do?
AS: Well, there were a lot of other steps that we had to take like serving in a WAC detachment. For a lot of us that was the next step.
LC: And that in fact is what happened with you, is that right?
AS: Yes.
LC: Okay. Tell me about that.
AS: Well, when I left recruiting I was sent to Fort Sheridan, Illinois to be the executive officer in a WAC detachment at Fort Sheridan. When the commander left, I became the commander. And that was a path, too. You served time as exec as sort of on-the-job training and then normally somewhere you were assigned as a WAC detachment commander.
LC: And you filled both of those roles, both XO (Executive Officer) and commander at Fort Sheridan?
AS: Yeah, and I was WAC detachment commander a couple of other places, too.
LC: And those would be which places, Ann?
AS: I left Sheridan and went to Fort Riley, Kansas for a short time and then went to Bremerhaven, Germany.
LC: Okay. Let’s talk first of all about Fort Sheridan. What was the personnel compliment of the WAC detachment? How big was it and what responsibilities did you have directly with them?
AS: I would guess—I don’t remember, but probably between sixty and eighty.
LC: Okay.
AS: As the exec, I did everything the commander didn’t want to do, that’s one thing. And we had people who worked in different areas of the post. We had a post hospital and there were enlisted women who worked there. We had a processing, I can’t remember the name of it, but a great number of women worked there. We had an air defense command on post so they were scattered all around. And my next-door neighbor was the male headquarters company and I ran their mess hall. Now why they set it up that way, I don’t know, but all the troops ate in that mess hall. All the cooks belonged to the male company commander but they worked for me. And at that time, women could not command men. They could only command women.

LC: Right. And so—

AS: I’m remembering things I thought I’d forgotten.

LC: (Laughs) But this exercise is explaining it to someone who may not have any reference points. It’s quite good because it lays things out in a very clean way. You had then women who were in the detachment who were serving all across the base.

AS: Yes.

LC: And in lots of different capacities.

AS: I was responsible for their discipline and upkeep. I housed them and fed them and I had some disciplinary authority over them.

LC: Now what kinds of disciplinary issues might come up?

AS: Oh, I’m trying to think of a good example.

LC: For example, were there hours that had to be observed and curfews?

AS: Well, they had to sign in and out, for example, and really, women were very little problem. Every now and then you might have somebody who might go AWOL (Absent Without Leave). The biggest problem probably at that time was pregnancy. That wasn’t a discipline problem, I don’t mean that, but it was an administrative problem because married or single, if you were pregnant you could not stay in the Army.

LC: Right. So you had to process those women out?

AS: Yeah. First we had to realize they were pregnant, then we had to get them to admit it. Then, if they were single, we worked very hard to find a place for them to go.

LC: Now by, “a place for them to go,” what do you mean?
AS: Like a shelter, like a home for unwed mothers so they could have the baby. And there was a lot of that sort of thing that went on that we were supposed to take care of.

LC: And did you, or when you were the detachment commander, your XO, have to have sort of networks in the communities around the post such that you knew where they would be say a Crittenden home or something like that?

AS: The Red Cross was a big help in that.

LC: Okay.

AS: We were, at that time, very close to Chicago so there were assets there. You made the initial contact and directed the people there. That was probably the biggest problem we had to deal with.

LC: Now, obviously the women who were in the Corps would know that if they became pregnant, that would be the end of their military career. And I don’t know whether you might know this or not, Ann, but were women seeking some other way to resolve the issue of their pregnancy before being “found out?” In other words, were they having abortions and things?

AS: Not that I know of.

LC: Okay. It probably was very difficult to sort of work with these women who were in a position that was very difficult in terms of continuing their career.

AS: It was. And several of them married and then got out but some of them just had no other recourse.

LC: Now were there any gals who had other disciplinary issues? You mentioned one or two times maybe finding women who were absent without leave.

AS: Well, not only did I house the women who were assigned to Fort McClellan, but if anybody got picked up in the Chicago area and was pending some type of disciplinary action or anything like that, I got them for them to sleep and stay in my place in my detachment. So I had one who would just go in to Waukegan and get drunk. The police would call me (laughs) and the MPs (Military Police) on post and the police in Waukegan learned the first thing I would say when they woke me up at night is, “What time is it?” So they would usually start off, “Lieutenant Smith, it’s two o’clock.”
(Laughs) Whatever. So several times I went in to Waukegan to get people out of jail because they would release them to me.

LC: I see.

AS: But they never were the women assigned to me, they were the ones who were already in trouble and were pending some type of either administrative discharge—they were just different but it was interesting.

LC: Yes, because you became sort of the troubleshooter then for other commanders whose people these actually were.

AS: These people could have been from Fort Hood, Texas, for all I knew. They just wound up in the Chicago area and we were the holding area.

LC: Now if you would get a woman out of jail under these kinds of circumstances, how would you pass her—how would she pass out of your authority or control?

AS: When she was discharged.

LC: So you would hold onto her until then?

AS: Yeah.

LC: Okay.

AS: But usually it was in the process to begin with.

LC: It was already in trained.

AS: Yes, because that’s the only reason I had her, was she was there to be put out of the Army.

LC: That sounds a little fraught with you getting up at two o’clock in the morning and driving in. Did you go alone on these missions?

AS: Sometimes I went alone. One time I took one of the male sergeants with me because—and when we got to the jail, I decided I never wanted to be in jail, looking at the conditions and I was about to get her out and take her back with me. And she told the sergeant he could go to hell so I told her could stay in jail and get herself out.

LC: Bad move.

AS: Uh-huh. (Laughs)

LC: That was a bad move. (Laughs) Any idea whatever happened with her?

AS: She got out.
LC: Eventually. (Laughs)

AS: I think she got bail some way. She got sober, too. I don’t make light of this, really.

LC: I know. I’m sure that each one of these was trying in some way. And Ann, I wonder if there were also circumstances where you had any lesbian activity inside either the detachment or up in Chicago that you had to handle that situation, too?

AS: Yes, but really, it was at that time, that was in the days of the witch hunts and the witch hunts were just terrible because anybody who got mad at somebody could make an accusation, like any witch hunt. I found that the best thing to do, and the woman who was the commander when I was exec gave me some good advice. She said, “Get to know the people in the CID (Criminal Investigation Division) because they can help because they have contacts and can say that this probably is going on.” But it wasn’t rampant the way people would think.

LC: And the CID people would be handling investigations that might be ongoing?

AS: Yes. And sometimes they were handling ones that we didn’t even know about and I would say, “Do you know anything about this?” And they would say, “Yes,” and then you knew it.

LC: So the advice that you had was to sort of work as a team with the CID people?

AS: Yes. It could make life a lot easier if they knew you and knew you would cooperate and weren’t fighting them all the way. One night a young woman woke up one morning and found herself in a car and she didn’t know how she’d gotten there and she didn’t know what had happened to her. And she had been out and she was really worried about it. She came in and talked to me about it and I went to see the people at the CID and I said, “Can you find out what happened?” And they came back and said, “Nothing happened. Tell her she’s okay.” So that sort of symbiotic relationship helped.

LC: Yeah. And was that something that you tried to cultivate in your other postings, too.

AS: Yeah. If I were commander of a WAC detachment, I did.

LC: Now, Ann, tell me about the hunts. You said that the witch hunts were terrible and that rumors could fly all around and would be one way that someone who
was disgruntled maybe might go after or cause trouble for someone else. Do you
remember any kinds of incidents where that sort of thing happened?

AS: It was particularly bad at the training center where all the women were.
There was always suspicion and you had to be exceedingly careful about your behavior.
I know of times that it happened but I can’t come up with specifics.

LC: And that suspicion that was around and just kind of in the air, that must have
created difficulties for commanders, for officers, junior officers to sort out.

AS: It made it difficult for anybody because it was just a bad time. And I imagine
anybody of my era would say that it was a bad time.

LC: Yes, I think that’s probably right. When you had orders to go to Germany,
do you remember that? Can you tell me about getting those orders?

AS: Well, I had left Fort Sheridan and gone to Fort Riley. A commander there
had been relieved and I was ready for transfer anyway so they sent me there to just hold
on until the new WAC detachment commander could come in. And I don’t remember
how long I was there, maybe five or six months. So that was just a holding pattern and it
was a different place entirely because it was combat arms post and there were a lot more
troops. It was fine bunch of women and so when I got orders to go—well, I remember
that they called and told me. It was always a they who called you and we had what was
called Career Management Branch and so they made all the assignments and it was done
in cooperation with the WAC director’s office.

LC: So this was just within the Women’s Army Corps?

AS: Just within the Women’s Army Corps. So she called and said, “We want you
to go to Okinawa to command a WAC detachment there.” And it was, “Please don’t
throw me in the briar patch,” time. I did not want to go to Okinawa.

LC: Why was that, Ann?

AS: Well, it was a hard assignment. The reputation was that it was a hard
assignment and so instead I went to Bremerhaven, Germany. And it proved that
sometimes you can control your fate a little bit.

LC: Had you informally or formally voiced your reluctance about the Okinawa
idea?
AS: Yes, I told them I didn’t want to go. “Please send me somewhere else.” I don’t remember my words exactly.

LC: What had you heard, do you remember, that turned you off of that?

AS: That it was a difficult detachment to command.

LC: That the detachment had problems?

AS: Yes. And I can’t remember what they were. I just knew I did not want to go.

LC: Okay. Did you know anything about Bremerhaven?

AS: No.

LC: Well that was good. So when that came up you thought, “Well, clean sheet.”

AS: And when I got there, one of the best things about it was that the first sergeant of the detachment was a woman I had worked with at Fort McClellan.

LC: Who was that?

AS: Her name was Eva Marashki. She was a German citizen and had come to the United States after World War II. She met a WAC officer who sponsored her to come to the United States.

LC: She sounds like an interesting gal.

AS: Oh, she was fascinating. She was a platoon sergeant, training basic trainees with me and she would get up in the morning and go out to drill and say, “All right vemen. This is Monday and on Mondays vee all start on our left foot.” (Laughs) And she was wonderful to have in Germany because she spoke the language, knew the way around, but she was on orders when I got there. She tried to extend and they wouldn’t extend her because they had her posted to somewhere in the United States. So she left.

LC: How long had she been in Germany? Any idea?

AS: Oh, she had been there probably two years on that tour. She was a good first sergeant and I enjoyed having her there.

LC: Do you remember much about her background in Germany, perhaps during the war or earlier?

AS: She talked about it.

LC: Did she?

AS: She said that she was in Hitler youth because that was the way you got to participate in sports activities. I think then later on she said she was in the entertainment
business. She was a dog trainer and they did shows and when they shut down
entertainment she was jobless and she worked in a munitions plant, as I recall. One of
the things they did was clean shell cases so they could be re-used. She said it was the
German equivalent of Russian prisoners of war there. The prisoners of war had to do by
hand what the Germans were doing by machine. And she said that when they could they
would take the prisoners’ shells and clean them for them.

LC: No kidding.
AS: Yeah.
LC: That’s really interesting.
AS: Hearing her, she apparently was in a dangerous part of Germany during the
war but I think she had no animosity towards the Americans.

LC: I’m sure if she was in a munitions factory that would have been a target for
bombing for certain.
AS: At one time—she bought a pineapple. We went to the commissary and she
bought a whole pineapple. I was getting to ragging her about it and she said, “I can have
it. I want it and I can have it.” She said, “When I was growing up in Germany, we were
lucky if we got one orange at Christmastime.”

LC: She sounds like a fascinating person. Was she someone that you kept up with
over the years?
AS: I have seen her once or twice at reunions and I have no idea if she is still with
us. She was living in Florida.

LC: She sure sounds like quite a gal.

AS: She was older than I by some years so I don’t know.
LC: Well, I’m glad you mentioned her. First of all, let me ask you about
Bremerhaven. Where did you actually live?

AS: I lived in the BOQ. The WAC detachment was in the staging area, which
was out in the port area where the ships came in and then we lived over in a series of
BOQs on the dry side. (Laughs)

LC: Okay. Now to clarify, you were the detachment commander?

AS: Yes.
LC: Okay. And what kinds of jobs and work did the women in the detachment do?

AS: Generally staff type jobs in the headquarters of the port.

LC: And how many under your command did you have?

AS: I can’t remember. We also, though—the Navy had a group of WAVES (Women Accepted for Voluntary Emergency Service) there and they lived in the WAC detachment.

LC: How many WAVES? A handful or quite a few?

AS: Yeah, a handful. And there was a naval officer, a woman officer who was sort of their Mother Superior.

LC: Sure. (Laughs) So was she kind of the analog to your position?

AS: Yes. But she did not have command but we worked together.

LC: What rank did she hold? Do you remember?

AS: I think she was a full lieutenant.

LC: And what was your rank at this point?

AS: First lieutenant.

LC: Okay.

AS: I was promoted to captain while I was there.

LC: Okay. So you’re moving up the food chain pretty well. Despite that little problem with the quota back in Roanoke, apparently you’d been doing well since then.

AS: Well I was first lieutenant when I got there, a fairly new first lieutenant.

LC: And what year did you actually get there, do you remember, Ann?

AS: Bremerhaven? Fifty-eight.

LC: Fifty-eight? And stayed until ’60?

AS: Sixty.

LC: Okay. And in general, were two-year assignments the rule?

AS: Yes. Except for the WAC center. They were usually about a year at the WAC center. Some people stayed longer.

LC: Did you enjoy being in Germany?

AS: Very much. And I enjoyed being in the northern part because—this is going to sound strange—there were not a lot of Americans there. The Americans were down in
the southern part of Germany and we were in the British zone. So there were fewer
Americans and I think we saw—well, that’s not true. We didn’t see more of the real
Germany but it was a different environment. And we were close to Holland and close to
Denmark.

LC: Did you go up to Denmark, say, for example?
AS: I was in Denmark twice. But at the time the Army wanted everybody to use
their leave time and I was one of these who wanted to hold on to my leave time.

LC: I can believe that.
AS: And we could not cross a national border without a leave paper or a passport.
We didn’t have passports. The military didn’t have them. So you could get a pass to go
up for a day so a lot of my trips were day trips.

LC: Okay. Because you weren’t spending your leave time.
AS: In addition, there were no other Army women officers there so when I left,
somebody had to be in command at the WAC detachment any time I was on leave.

LC: Did you have an XO?
AS: No, I didn’t have an XO.

LC: Oh, wow.
AS: The commander of the band always commanded the WAC detachment while
I was gone and I would be put in command of the band when he was gone.

LC: Okay, so you had a male commander who would step in for you when you
were away?
AS: Yeah. He would just be given the job during my absence.

LC: Right. If anything came up, he would be the one they would go to.
AS: And we had all services there so that was interesting.

LC: Sure, absolutely.
AS: On Armed Forces Day we would have a parade with the Americans and the
Germans and the British, an Armed Forces Day parade and that was always interesting.

LC: Did the German military at that point have a women’s corps of some kind?
AS: No.
LC: That’s what I thought. Can you describe, in general, the relationship between your personnel and the German civilians? Did anything come up there that was problematical or that you remember as being particularly a good relationship?

AS: There were some particularly fine German civilians who worked for the Army, I thought, and the relationships were generally quite good, I believe. I remember one time we had a bus that they went to work on—the women. To get from the staging area into the headquarters there was a bus for them and I heard one—and I’m not sure but I think the Germans were allowed to ride the bus and I heard one of the women refer to them as Krauts one day and I got my back up over that and told her that was not an appropriate way to talk about them. But the relationships were generally good.

LC: Did you see, either in your detachment or more broadly amongst the American service personnel over there, resentment towards the Germans?

AS: No.

LC: Not really, huh?

AS: Uh-uh.

LC: That’s interesting. Any signs while you were there—this was about thirteen years after the conclusion of the war—did you see signs of the destruction of the war still in evidence?

AS: Not a lot. The Germans were always working to repair things and it dawned on me that really it was such a short time after the war that I was there. But no, there was not—I went to Berlin and there were some things that were left standing in Berlin the way they were.

LC: Yes and still are there.

AS: Yeah. But I wasn’t conscious of it in the northern part.

LC: What took you to Berlin? Were you just wanting to see it?

AS: Yeah.

LC: Did you have business down there?

AS: I just went for an overnight trip.

LC: And what impression did you have of Berlin? Did you go to downtown, the Brandenburg area?

AS: Yeah, and took a tour of East Berlin.
LC: Now, the wall had not been put up yet.

AS: Oh heavens, no. The difference was night and day in East and West as far as
the life and the people you saw. When I was there, Germans were constantly out
walking. It was—speaking German—taking walks and nobody was on the street in East
Berlin. It just looked like sham town. It looked like a movie set with facades and
nothing behind. West Berlin was just alive with people.

LC: And a lot of military personnel there out on the streets as well—American?

AS: You couldn’t see them. We went in street clothes. When we crossed over
into the zone, they took my ID card and I felt almost naked without my ID card.

(Laughs)

LC: Because you’re in civilian clothes and no military ID or anything?

AS: Yeah. And they gave it back, but still.

LC: Are there other things that you recall about your time in Germany that you’d
like to include here? Was it a good assignment?

AS: Oh yes, it was a good assignment. I had Air Force friends who were in
England and I would go to visit them periodically and he was a pilot, an aviator, and
periodically—he had to fly so many hours to maintain his status so every now and then
he’d fly over and get me and I would pay the landing fee. It cost you fifty dollars to land
a plane in the German airport or something like that and he’d come and take me and I’d
go over to England and see them for a while. I went to Scotland, which I enjoyed very
much. Edinburgh is one of the places I want to go again.

LC: Yes, it’s a beautiful city.

AS: I traveled in Spain, which Bob, my friend, had to take a plane back to the
United States so his wife said, “Get a leave.” And I said, “Where am I going?” And she
said, “Well, put everything on your leave papers—you know, Spain and Italy.” She and
their son and I took off in the car and we flipped a coin to see whether we were going to
Spain or Italy and we went to Spain. Unfortunately I hadn’t put Portugal on my leave so
I couldn’t get to Portugal.

LC: Where did you go in Spain?

AS: We went down the Costa Brava and then back over to Madrid.

LC: It sounds wonderful. It sounds like a great time.
AS: Not if nobody speaks Spanish. (Laughs)

LC: How long were you there?

AS: Oh, probably a week.

LC: Oh, okay. But were you being a tourist most of that time?

AS: Oh yes. Went to lie in the sun.

LC: Right, bake out the chill a little bit, as they say.

AS: She had been in England for two years and still had moss, I think.

LC: Oh, I can well believe it, having lived over there. I can well believe it.

(Laughs)

AS: I enjoyed going to England. I never got to London because they were stationed at Burtonwood in Lancaster.

LC: So they were up north?

AS: Yes.

LC: Where it’s, as you say, very cold.

AS: But I really had never seen bird pulling worms out of the ground and I sat one time in an officer’s club and looked out the window and the birds were just after the worms. It’s too dry—even when it rains here, birds don’t get worms. (Laughs)

LC: That’s right.

AS: And everything was so green.

LC: Yes, it is. It’s remarkable. It’s a beautiful country. So you really took advantage of being in Europe.

AS: To the extent that I could.

LC: Sure. Was it slightly difficult for you to get orders back to the States after that?

AS: No.

LC: No?

AS: An aside from my being in Europe, early one morning I was changing the train in Paris and had time to go walk around and I was standing there, just looking all around me, saying, “Ann Smith from Quitman, Georgia, on the (speaks French).” The last place I had expected to be growing up was in Paris. That’s one of the wonderful things about the Army, the opportunities it gave me to do things like that. I was thinking
at the time, if I had taught school I would have spent twenty years to go to Europe for two
weeks, making enough money, and there I was for two years, compliments of the Army.
LC: And you were appreciating it at the time.
AS: Oh yes.
LC: Not just in retrospect, but while you were actually there you were thinking,
“Wow.”
AS: “Here I am. Me.”
LC: Yeah, little small-town Ann.
AS: And I had recounted that story to my brother and I said he did the same thing
the first time he went to Paris, many years later.
LC: Absolutely. I know that feeling. You can’t hardly—you need to pinch
yourself or something in order to believe it. Ann, you were assigned back to Fort
Eustace.
AS: Yes.
LC: How did that come about and was this a good posting for you?
AS: When I was told I was going to Fort Eustace, I was not happy at all.
LC: Why was that?
AS: Because I had been to Fort Eustace one time and seen it and I did not think it
was a nice place to be.
LC: Based on—?
AS: Because it just wasn’t—it wasn’t an elegant post like Fort Benning or
something like that. It was just over there and the WAC staff advisor—every command
had a WAC staff advisor. The WAC staff advisor said to me when I was complaining,
she said, “Which is more important, the place or the assignment?” Because it was going
to be my first staff assignment. And she got my attention and I said, “The assignment is
far more important.” So I went to Fort Eustace as a personnel staff officer and had a
wonderful time. Enjoyed the post. It’s very close to Williamsburg and at that time
Williamsburg was still a tourist attraction but not the way it is now. That’s where we
went to shop. Williamsburg was just a special place but not the way it would be now.
And I had a good job, I worked with really good people, they gave me an opportunity to
learn, it was my first experience with working with civilians and I learned to respect them very much. So it was a very rewarding assignment.

LC: Now when you say that it was your first staff assignment, for someone that didn’t understand the importance of that, can you just outline that?

AS: Let me think. It is—that gets you into, for lack of anything better, a career path. “Let me start learning to work in personnel and be an administrative officer.” There comes a point where we had to get out of that WAC track of doing nothing but WAC duty and a good staff assignment was just an open door to bigger and better jobs and it was a wonderful background.

LC: Now you were, if I understand correct me and please correct me, you were working on the staff of the post with male officers.

AS: Yes, I was working on the staff of the G1, the personnel officer of the post. The boss was a colonel; there was a lieutenant colonel, Betsy Duke, and a captain and a bunch of civilians. And we worked in the same headquarters with the commanding general and it turned out to my advantage that I turned out to be the writer for the G1 and I wrote a lot of stuff, correspondence with the general’s signature, and so I got good experience that way.

LC: Now how did the men treat you, Ann?

AS: Quite well.

LC: Any stuff around the edge that made you feel less than?

AS: No.

LC: Okay. So quite collegial, then?

AS: Yes.

LC: I mean within the command structure, obviously.

AS: I think that any discrimination that I ever felt was institutional discrimination. It was not personal.

LC: Okay. Can you explain that a little bit?

AS: Well, there was a limit on how many women could be regular Army. That was one thing. But in law, the law prescribe that there could be one woman colonel in the Army and she was the director of WAC and if she ceased to be director of WAC and
reverted, she reverted back to being lieutenant colonel. That stopped promotion
tremendously.

LC: Oh sure, right.

AS: So, getting to be a captain was a pretty good career at that time. Majors were
rare and lieutenant colonels were just very rare. So during President Johnson’s term the
legislation was changed. The restriction was taken off. It didn’t say, “There will be
women generals,” it said, “There may be women generals.” So on one day, six women
were promoted to colonel, which opened it for everybody. So that discrimination was
against all of us and it was in the system. One time when I was—single people weren’t
allowed to go to the commissary. Only families could go to the commissary. That’s
another type of discrimination. But the pay was always the same.

LC: The pay was not based on—

AS: Pay was based on your rank and grade and that was it. A captain is a captain.

LC: Okay, so pay across—for male—

AS: Of course except for the allowances for families. There was discrimination
there. For example, a male officer could have a wife who was a millionaire and still draw
her dependency allowance. A woman couldn’t. Her husband could be completely
dependent on her and she couldn’t claim him and a dependent. So those types of things
were what I consider institutional. But I never felt belittled because I was a woman. I
used to raise Cain when anybody would call me a girl. “I’m not a girl.” (Laughs)

LC: “Already been through that. Now I’m done with that.”

AS: Yes. Basically I was an old girl.

LC: (Laughs) So if that came up you would kind of hand that back to whoever
gave it to you?

AS: Yes. But I was truly fortunate in that first staff job because they let me learn
and they helped me to learn.

LC: And would you say that there was some mentoring going on as well?

AS: Oh yes, there was.

LC: And were you liking the idea of staying with personnel?

AS: Yes.

LC: Why was that?
AS: It was more administrative, I think. I could have been—I was a personnel staff officer as opposed to a personnel operating officer and that distinction is probably too close but it made a difference to me.

LC: Because you felt like you were more at decision-making level rather than implementation or something like that?

AS: I guess.

LC: You mentioned in the material that you provided Ann, that your time at Fort Eustace coincided with the time of the Cuban Missile Crisis.

AS: Yes.

LC: Did that have any effect on the work that was happening at that base?

AS: Oh yes. Fort Eustace is a transportation command and in addition to all the trucks and airplanes we had a boat company and they ran tugs. We had people there who were qualified ocean-going tug captains so before the Cuban Missile Crisis started they had all taken off and gone somewhere out in the Atlantic for a training exercise and they just stayed there. They didn’t come home for a long time. (Laughs) I was leaving—someone was bringing a foot locker into the BOQ and the people living next door, her husband was off on the exercise and when she saw that foot locker walking in, she thought that they had made a mistake and they were supposed to be bringing it to her house to back up his things to send away. But it was an interesting time.

LC: Was it a frightening time as you remember it?

AS: It was a tense time, I think, more than frightening. We had to make a report to the chief of transportation in Washington every night and I wound up being the one who knew more about the figures than anybody so I made the report every night. It was the first time, the only time I’ve ever worked on a shift and worked the four to midnight shift and I liked it because I was usually up around midnight anyway so I’d just go home and go to bed and then get up and have the whole day to do things.

LC: Right and then go to work at four.

AS: And then go to work at four.

LC: Can you, if you remember, describe that report, what it was that you had to provide each evening during this time period?
AS: We had to keep up with—it was very complicated as to what category troops were in as far as readiness was concerned and we had to keep up with the strength in each group. I could not come up with a good explanation but it was whether they were immediately deployable, what their training status was, and it was an everyday thing to report.

LC: And that persisted for the length of the crisis?

AS: I can’t remember how long it was.

LC: Okay. Did you pay much attention to, say, the president’s televised statements and the newspaper and everything that was going on that was in the public record? Were you aware and paying attention to that, reading the newspaper and so on?

AS: I don’t recall taking the newspaper then (laughs) but I remember keeping up.

LC: Was there other unusual activity on the base that you remember?

AS: Not now. One of the things in my personal life was we had a very active little theater group there.

LC: Oh really?

AS: Yes. And we had a lot of well-educated young men who had been drafted. The director had a drama degree from Yale or someplace and they were just fine young people. So I got to be in several plays. But that was true in Bremerhaven, too. It was a very active little theater.

LC: Now this was sort of an unofficial activity, I’m sure.

AS: Yes.

LC: How did enlisted people and other officers who might have been interested in this kind of find each other? Was it just kind of on the grapevine?

AS: Well, it was a part of special services. One of the interesting things to me was I was one of the few officers who did that and most of the other people were young enlisted men and there was no problem of dealing with his being the boss at night and my being an officer in the daytime. If they saw me in the rehearsal, I was Ann. Outside I was captain.

LC: Right. So rank never got kind of boiled up.

AS: No. It wasn’t in the way but it was always there.
LC: Do you remember some of the productions you might have put on? Were they things that were written on the base?

AS: Oh, no.

LC: They were actual plays? Like, would you do Tennessee Williams or something?

AS: We didn’t do Tennessee Williams but we did do *The Crucible*.

LC: No kidding.

AS: Yeah.

LC: That’s interesting.

AS: That was in Germany. One of the interesting things about that was the dress rehearsal, we invited the German Navy and they came. They were fascinated with the plot.

LC: I’ll bet. Arthur Miller would love to hear this story; I’m sure. (Laughs)

AS: I got to play the part of Elizabeth Proctor and it was the only time I played someone who wasn’t just another version of Ann Smith. That was very rewarding, being in that. We did *Once Upon A Mattress* and *Matchmaker* and just—stuff.

LC: It sounds like a great thing to be doing outside of work.

AS: It was. And it was quite popular.

LC: Oh I’m sure it was.

AS: On the post because it was someplace to go and it was free.

LC: And it was entertainment. And in general, people do like live entertainment and people they knew, too. That’s the other thing. Now were you able to continue with that kind of work as your career went on?

AS: No.

LC: So Fort Eustace was the last time really that you were able to do that?

AS: Yeah, it’s the last time I did it.

LC: Upon the end of this particular tour you were assigned back to Fort McClellan, is that right?

AS: Yeah. It was interesting—you asked if I were mentored in that job. When my boss, the colonel, found out that I would be going to McClellan to go to the advanced course, he said, “Well, you’re going to have to write a staff study when you get there.”
And he assigned me the job of writing a staff study. Now that type of mentoring—and it
was a practical problem but he wanted me to see how a staff study works and what you
have to do.

LC: So you would know. You would have some—
AS: So I would have had some experience. You appreciate things like that.
LC: Yes, absolutely, a heads up, as it were. What did you actually work on as
your subject?
AS: I don’t remember. What he told me to.
LC: Whatever he told you to, okay. Now, the school at Fort McClellan lasted for
approximately how long?
AS: Six months.
LC: And what was the content? What were you supposed to be getting out of it?
AS: Well, it was the WAC officer advanced course and it was to train us more in
staff type assignments.
LC: Was it a lot of classroom work, then?
AS: Oh yes, all classroom work.
LC: And who were the instructors? Were they both men and women?
AS: Occasionally we would have an instructor come over from the chemical
school to teach something but generally it was all women.
LC: And these would be women of what sort of rank?
AS: Majors.
LC: Majors and above?
AS: Well, occasionally lieutenant colonel but most of them were majors.
LC: Were any of them—go ahead, Ann.
AS: Captains, too.
LC: Okay. I wondered if any of the instructors that you had there stand out in
your mind.
AS: Well, yeah. One of the ones who was one of the best Army instructors I ever
had was a woman named Ruth King. She was a major and she taught us nuclear weapons
employment and she was an outstanding instructor. Most of them were very good. There
were one or two who weren’t as effective as others but it was a fairly difficult course and
we were all captains and majors in the course.

LC: Is there anything you can recall about the content of that particular course?
Was it an unclassified presentation?
AS: Yes, it was unclassified but in order to teach it you had to have gone through
the classified training. It was interesting because you were trying to forget everything
you had learned.

LC: Okay, right. Did you get some physics in with this as well as some Army
protocol?
AS: Only to understand maybe what an atom is and the difference between fission
and fusion and what the effects are of that and the effects of the weapons. There were
problems in figuring how the weapon would affect an area based on theoretical
weapons—a half-kiloton or something like that did not have the characteristics of the real
half-kiloton.

LC: So you were seeing some of those theoretical problems as well?
AS: Yes, you were seeing how much the area of blast would be and how far it
would reach and those types of things.

LC: And did you also study the actual drops that had been made in Japan at the
end of the war?
AS: Not specifically.

LC: Did you see films?
AS: We saw some films of course.

LC: What was it about Major King that made her particularly special?
AS: She was enthusiastic. She knew the subject, she could teach, she could
explain the concepts well.

LC: Did you have occasion to work with her as your career went along or was this
your only interface with her?
AS: The only time I ever was with her was when she taught me.

LC: And overall, Ann, was this a useful way to spend some time for you as a
captain?
AS: The whole course?
LC: Yes.

AS: Yes. The people in the class—there were probably thirty of us in the class—and they were people that I would know for the rest of the Army.

LC: People that you would come across?

AS: Yes, and whom I would work with or who would in some way influence my career. One of my classmates later became the head of the career management branch.

LC: Now who was that, Ann? What was her name?

AS: Maida Lambath.

LC: M-e-h?

AS: M-a-i-d-a.

LC: Okay. And she became head of career management?

AS: Uh-huh.

LC: Was she someone who you worked for later on?

AS: No, I never worked for her.

LC: You said that there were about thirty in the class.

AS: I think about thirty.

LC: Now, you gals lived on post, I’m sure.

AS: Yes.

LC: Did you socialize outside of class?

AS: With each other?

LC: Yes.

AS: Oh sure.

LC: Yeah, so you were sort of more or less kind of becoming acquainted in addition to—

AS: Well, we lived next—my suitemate was a major and she had a bedroom and a living room and my bedroom connected to her living room so eventually became my living room, too. (Laughs) When we started, it wasn’t. I was a captain and she was a major and it was her living room. (Laughs)

LC: But as time went on—

AS: And we were up and down the halls together and that was good, too, because also there were young lieutenants living in the building and they got to see some of the
more senior officers and realized that we were having to work hard to get through that
course. It was not easy.

LC: It wasn’t escape.

AS: No.

LC: Did you have work that you had to do in the evenings to prepare and so
forth?

AS: Oh yes.

LC: And were there tests?

AS: Oh yes, were there tests.

LC: Okay. So this wasn’t just a “sit back and let it soak in.”

AS: It was not a ladies course.

LC: Okay, you had to engage.

AS: Yes.

LC: And was there any competition set up there?

AS: Yes. Well, there was going to be someone who was the top student in the
class and it was based on test grades, scores, and other intangible things.

LC: Did you sort of get engaged and wrapped up in the competition or were you
pretty much angling to do the best you could and however it came out is how it came out?
Or neither of those?

AS: Well, like most people I would have like to have been first but it was a matter
of doing it the best you could do. I think we had four major tests during the course and
then we had to be studying something that was reasonably geopolitical and we had to
make a major report on some area of the world and then we had to write a staff study and
we had to speak and teach. All of those things worked into the overall class standing.

LC: So this was a multi-faceted program that kept you running, I would say.

AS: Yes.

LC: Did you graduate? Was there any kind of ceremony?

AS: Oh heavens, you can’t graduate without a ceremony.

LC: I wondered. (Laughs) Do you remember that? What was it like?

AS: Well, we always graduated in the chapel because that was where we had the
best seats and it was more appropriate and the band played and we had a speaker and we
were granted our certificate and the top student was honored and friends and families all came. So it was marked as an important part.

LC: Now did family members of yours attend, Ann?

AS: My mother and my brother came.

LC: Is that right?

AS: Yeah.

LC: How was your mother doing at this point?

AS: Oh, she was fine.

LC: Was she terribly proud of you at this point?

AS: Always.

LC: I would think, yeah. And because it was in Alabama, this was not such an extended trip for her.

AS: No, it wasn’t bad. From South Georgia it was not really a bad trip.

LC: And she was in good health until her accident in 1964?

AS: Yes.

LC: Okay. I’m sure that this was an extremely—she was probably very, very proud of you, I imagine. Ann, from the school, what happened in terms of your next posting?

AS: I stayed as an instructor.

LC: And was that kind of a plum position?

AS: I asked for it.

LC: Did you?

AS: Uh-huh. I liked to teach and I thought it would be a good assignment and two of my good friends from the class stayed so there were three of us. So that was—I wanted to do it. The next thing we do, as soon as we were assigned we were sent to Fort Benning to go to instructor training. You can’t teach in the Army until they send you to instructor training somewhere. I’ve been through it three times. (Laughs)

LC: And this would have been the second time, am I right?

AS: Yes, I went through it in a sense. The first time I was at McClellan and then this time and then in a later time when I was instructing again.

LC: And how long were you down at Fort Benning?
AS: I was down—I can’t remember. The instructor training course is probably a
couple of weeks and then I stayed to go to nuclear weapons deployment course, the
classified portion of it, because that’s what I was going to teach.

LC: You were going to teach the nuclear weapons deployment?
AS: Yes.

LC: So you, like Major King, had to take the classified—
AS: Yes.

LC: Can you tell me anything about that course or how it went and what the
distinctions were?
AS: Well, you were in a locked building all the time. You couldn’t study when
you went home because you couldn’t take anything with you and it was all done in that
building. There were two of us women and the rest men. All the instructors were men,
of course, and the other woman was one of my classmates from the WAC advanced
course.

LC: Now who was that?
AS: Her name was Betty Fraser, F-r-a-s-e-r.

LC: Was she a captain as well?
AS: She was a major. She was the one with whom I shared the living room.

(Laughs)

LC: Oh, I see. So the two of your gals went and took it. Okay, I see.
AS: The other one went through the instructors training and came back and we
did share a little motel suite while we were there.

LC: Now you said you took the courses in a locked building and couldn’t take
anything off site.
AS: Yes.

LC: What kinds of things were they teaching you about, the types of weapons that
were in the arsenal and that sort of thing?
AS: The types of weapons in the arsenal but mostly the effects of them; how do
you determine what the effects may be; how you aim them; how you figure their
accuracy and that sort of stuff.

LC: So was there a lot of math in there?
AS: Not a lot of math. It was a lot of logic, I think. You had to learn the various
terms like error in range and error of deflection and circular error probable and how those	hree worked with each other and I’m talking with my hands. (Laughs)

LC: Okay, you’re illustrating. (Laughs)

AS: The thing I am most proud of is that I finished second in the class.

LC: That’s not too bad. How big was the class?

AS: I don’t know. There were probably twenty of us.

LC: So you cottoned on to this?

AS: Oh yeah, I liked it. I thought it was fun. The man who came out and taught
was, I think, a field artilleryman who had every right to be tough.

LC: Absolutely. He’d been through some of this stuff before only probably
without conventional weapons anyway. Ann, upon returning to Fort McClellan then, you
began as an instructor. Was there a set course that would start at a particular time that
you then became part of the delivery of the curriculum?

AS: We had two basic officers/OCS (Officer Candidate School) classes a year and
one advanced officer class. So we taught both of them.

LC: And, for example, how many lectures would you be given? How long would
you have in each class, that their attention was devoted to what you were teaching?

AS: Well the curriculum is set up—the program and the instruction/curriculum
was set up so they had a given number of hours of military customs and courtesy or a
given number of hours of methods of instructions or whatever. So you were assigned a
course to teach and so you taught all of it but certainly you were assigned more than one
course at the same time. So you would be teaching one thing to the basic officers and
another thing to the advanced officers.

LC: And you would be delivering these simultaneously or in time?

AS: Well, it’s not exactly simultaneously. (Laughs)

LC: But over the course, say from January to June, you might be teaching in both
of the schools. You would be delivering different content in both of the schools.

AS: And the classes were sometimes three hours long, three-hour blocks. That
was particularly true in nuclear weapons because there’s a lot of practical stuff and so
you would go in and do the whole course for three hours.
LC: That’s a lot of teaching time.

AS: I happened to like to teach early in the morning because you get it over with. That was fine because a lot people didn’t want to. So often I was able to do most of my teaching in the morning. One of the difficulties was when you had a class of lieutenants; every one of them had to teach a class that you had to prepare that person for. You taught them how to do it then you watched them dry run it and tell them what they could do better and then you went and graded them at the actual instruction. That was time consuming.

LC: Absolutely, yes, because there’s both the hours spent watching delivery and then there’s the advising element of it, too. Did you like doing this, Ann?

AS: Yeah. I didn’t like that a lot, that particular aspect of it. As far as teaching is concerned, I liked it and I liked to teach adults.

LC: And did you have it in mind that you might try to extend this particular assignment that you had?

AS: No.

LC: No? You wanted something—

AS: Yeah.

LC: Ready for a change?

AS: You do that then it’s time for something else.

LC: Okay. And your next assignment was with G3, is that right?

AS: Yes, at Third Army Headquarters at Fort McPherson, Georgia.

LC: Now am I right in thinking that Fort McPherson is south of Atlanta somewhere?

AS: Yes.

LC: Okay. That’s also the headquarters of the Third Army?

AS: Yes.

LC: Okay. What were you supposed to be doing with G3 there?

AS: Well, I was a plans and training officer and at the time we were having a huge buildup for Vietnam and that got to be a major part of my concern. Where are we going to put them; how are we going to get clothes on them; how are we going to train them? We had troops living in tents because there was just not enough barrack space
because they were expanding the Army so much then. We had post commanders buying
some more troops because the more troops you have, the bigger your mission and the
more money you can get. It was, in a way, a difficult time.

LC: You arrived there at what point? Do you remember the date?
AS: No.
LC: Nineteen sixty-five, sometime.
AS: Probably the summer of ’65.
LC: Okay, so the big deployments of ground forces had already begun.
AS: Yes.
LC: It was a difficult time because there was so much going on?
AS: That’s one thing and then another thing was—I just remembered—there was
a project going on called Project 100,000. Anyway, they were experimenting with
bringing in many more lesser-qualified soldiers and training them and that was difficult
because you were having to develop programs for people who weren’t as capable of
learning. I think it was a social experiment. “Let’s see if the Army can instill ambition in
people who may not have had it before and give them skills they didn’t have before.”
And on top of everything else, I think it was a difficult time for a social experiment but
probably a good idea.

LC: Now when you say, less qualified soldiers, how do you mean?
AS: Academically.
LC: Okay. So not high school graduates?
AS: Maybe not high school graduates and maybe with lower test scores.
LC: Were these people ones who had been in effect rejected by earlier drafts?
AS: I don’t know.
LC: Okay. But your sort of end of this project was to try to develop—
AS: Our end was watching this and reporting on it and keeping up with how it
was going on.
LC: And so how would you do that, establish some kind of markers?
AS: Recording systems and there were all sorts of experimental things that were
going on. In the early stages of the Halo program they were jumping out of airplanes.
You would jump out high and open low. It was interesting, too, because there were a lot
of coordination with the G1, the personnel people, and most of the people in G3 don’t
have—because they’re plans and operations—don’t have a lot of brief for the personnel
people. So I was the go-between because I could talk to both of them.

LC: And you’d had experience in G1.

AS: Yeah, I could talk personnel. (Laughs)

LC: And so did you find yourself trying to explain the apples to the oranges and
vice versa?

AS: Well, sometimes just trying to make them understand each other’s problems
or concerns.

LC: Now where did you live while you were working at Fort McPherson? Did
you have a BOQ there as well?

AS: No, no. I had an apartment.

LC: Okay, so you were off base?

AS: Yes.

LC: How did you locate the apartment? Was it somewhere that a lot of officers
had stayed?

AS: No, I think I probably got an apartment finder, a brochure or something. I
don’t remember.

LC: Where was it? Do you recall? How far from the base?

AS: It was about two miles from the post.

LC: Did you enjoy living back in the more or less Atlanta area? I know it’s a
ways south but was it nice to be back there?

AS: Oh yes. Very nice. My brother was living there at the time as he always is.

LC: As he always is, right.

AS: In fact, the day my household goods were delivered, he went to the apartment
and accepted them for me because I was still in Alabama. I enjoyed being there.

LC: Ann, thinking back to that time when you were living off base, can you
describe what race relations were like in this time period in south of Atlanta and in that
area?

AS: Well, where I lived was strictly a white area and apartment. I was sort of a
strange thing to most of the people in the apartment because they saw me coming and
going in uniform and most of them hadn’t seen that a lot. The race relations when I was
at McClellan the last time in the advanced course, that was when things were bad because
all of the bad things were happening in Birmingham and we had a bus burning in
Aniston. I recall that we were specifically told not to go off post.

LC: This was while you were in the school?

AS: This was while I was in the school. I have seen, over my years of being in
this area, I have seen such changes. I have to go way back. When I was a lieutenant, if
we had an enlisted women who perhaps needed to go into Aniston to get shoes because
the Army couldn’t fit her, I would not take one of the African American troops to town.
We would get an African American NCO to take the person to town because we didn’t
want to stir up confrontations. And how things have changed in these fifty years. People
who think there is no change are wrong. There’s been a lot of change. When I was
living in Atlanta, I was not conscious of it then.

LC: Did it come up again later? Did you see much later when you were in
Washington?

AS: No. Oh, I was in Washington when Martin Luther King was killed.

LC: Yes, do you remember that?

AS: Oh, do I really remember that.

LC: Tell me everything you can recall about that. Where were you?

AS: I was in the Pentagon. The week before—I think—I had driven through the
grounds of the National Cathedral and Martin Luther King was speaking. It was being
broadcast and you could hear it outside. So very shortly after that he was killed and I
went out to the river entrance to the Pentagon and looked over towards the district and
one of the saddest things I have ever seen was black smoke rising over the Capitol. That
was so sad. The next day I went over to Fort Meyer to pick up some laundry and the lady
who worked there was an African American woman and I knew she lived in the district
and I asked her, I said, “How was it yesterday?” And she told me about having to walk
home because she couldn’t get any public transportation and the difficulty of it. I was
there during the march on the Pentagon. The things that were going on during my
various tours in Washington were just historic.

LC: Absolutely, yes, and that’s something that we’ll include as we go forward.
AS: One day in my second tour in Washington I was going to work one morning. I worked in the building with the energy department in the district and there were some protestors standing out there giving out anti-nuclear stuff and blocking my getting to work and making me use the wrong steps—you know, those sort of annoying things. I refused to take his little brochure and he said, “Well don’t I have a right to express my opinion?” And I said, “Yes, and I have a right not to take it.”

LC: Did he have a comeback or was he kind of surprised?

AS: No. (Laughs)

LC: I thought not. That would be when you were working—that would be in the late seventies?

AS: Yes. The Pope came then and I was working across the street from the Smithsonian so I got to see his throne and then we had a big march of Christians going on and then we had the tractors. It was an exciting time to be in Washington.

LC: Absolutely. I mean there really isn’t a time that’s dull to be in Washington but the things that you recount are extremely interesting. When Dr. King spoke at the National Cathedral did you hear him, Ann?

AS: No, I could only hear him outside because I had some friends visiting and I was showing them the Cathedral and we just rode past.

LC: And it happened to be going on as you came by. What did you make of Dr. King? Did you have an opinion about what he was doing?

AS: Yes. I think I might not have agreed with him all the time but he was going about something that needed to be done in a better way than most people.

LC: Now by that are you talking about his—

AS: The non-violence, even though there was violence. I was there on one of my tours when Resurrection City was in meeting, when he was there. That was the “I Have a Dream” speech, I guess—around that period. So there had to be someone, I think, to do the sorts of things and it had to be someone with charisma and that could get things done. I read the full speech “Letter from a Birmingham Jail.” And it was fairly recently. I was so impressed with how he put it together from his head while he was in jail.

LC: Have you been to the King Center there in Atlanta?

AS: No.
LC: It’s worth going to.

AS: Well, I haven’t been to the Carter Center either. (Laughs)

LC: Well, there you go. That’s a good one, too. (Laughs)

AS: There’s a lot I haven’t seen in Atlanta.

LC: Well, I recommend both of those when next you’re in Atlanta with time on your hands and nothing to do.

AS: That’s the problem.

LC: I know it is. (Laugh) Let’s talk a little bit more about Fort McPherson. Your work there lasted for the regular two year period?

AS: I wasn’t there the full two years.

LC: Why was that?

AS: Because the director of the Women’s Army Corps retired and Elizabeth Hoisington became the director and she asked me to go to Washington and work for her.

LC: How did she know you?

AS: She had known me at Fort McClellan.

LC: Under what circumstances, at the school?

AS: She came in as the WAC center commander when I was there teaching.

LC: Okay. So she had seen you in action, as it were.

AS: Well, she had seen me around.

LC: What kind of relationship did you have with her, just a kind of nodding acquaintance?

AS: No, it was closer than that. She knew me well enough to know my name and I knew her well enough to call her colonel.

LC: Ann, effectively, she pulled you up to be on her staff, is that right?

AS: Yes.

LC: Okay. What position did you take in Washington with her?

AS: It was called plans and operations officer, I think. There was the director, the deputy director, the executive officer, and the junior officer. I was it—and sergeant major. That was the office.

LC: So she had a staff of what? Five or six?

AS: No, she had a staff of four.
LC: Four. Okay. That’s incredible. That’s amazing. For someone in her position that’s just amazing. How did you get along her?

AS: I enjoyed her. I did not—I was not as efficient and as good as she would have liked me to have been.

LC: What does that mean, Ann?

AS: That means—it’s hard to describe it. She, as a young officer had had the same job that I now had and I could not live up to what she had done or her expectations. Not that I could not, I did not.

LC: What was she looking for that you didn’t do, as you think back now? What do you think?

AS: Probably more ambition and more efficiency.

LC: What was a day like for you?

AS: Well, first you had to get to the Pentagon. (Laughs)

LC: Right, which wasn’t always easy, is that right?

AS: Well, frequently I took the bus. It was easier than driving. And we started each day with a staff meeting and then the day was full of—one of the things I was responsible for was uniform programs, as in garments and uniform programs and there are always meetings about something, about changing the uniform and doing something and the other Army women’s services were involved, like the Army Nurse Corps and the Army Medical Specialist Corps. If somebody wanted to do something to the uniform, like get a new sweater, we would have meetings to discuss that. At the time, women were going to Vietnam and we were having a hard time getting enough uniforms for them. More and more women were coming in the Army and it was just an effort to get uniforms. We were tracking them by ones and twos. “Where are the overcoats that we can issue to the troops?” And the women going to Vietnam had an increased allowance of uniforms because of the weather conditions. So I was involved with that a good bit. We also, at the time, had a fitting unit that traveled the country. An officer, her name was Bailey, who later became Director of the Women’s Army Corps, she had a group of young enlisted women and they traveled the country doing fashion shows. It was a recruiting thing so periodically they would come back into the Washington area and have
to get re-outfitted with uniforms and that sort of thing. So I’d get involved in that. I
enjoyed my life in the Pentagon.

LC: Where were you living, Ann?
AS: I was living in Arlington.

LC: In an apartment?
AS: Yes.

LC: Whereabouts in Arlington, just for those who might know the city?
AS: Off of Columbia Pike.

LC: Okay. And you had not lived in Washington before.
AS: No.

LC: Was this quite exciting to be in the capitol area at the Pentagon each day?
AS: It was. Looking back on it, Washington changed so much between the two
times I was there. I enjoyed it more the first time because it was easier to get around.
You could go to Georgetown and find a place to park and wander or you could go to
Alexandria Old Town and it was just not nearly as congested as it is now.

LC: Yeah. When you said, “Go to Georgetown and find somewhere to park,” I
just thought, “Oh, no.” And did you have a car during this time period?
AS: Yes.

LC: Okay. So you were able to get around on the weekends and evenings by
yourself.

AS: My first chore was finding how to get into the parking lot at the Pentagon.

LC: How did they restrict that then? Did they have it controlled?
AS: No—just finding it. My parking place was in the south parking lot and the
only way I could to the south parking lot was to go through the north parking lot and I
knew there had to be a better way. And one Sunday I just went out and rode around until
I could find it.

LC: Did you locate the way in?
AS: Yes. And frequently I did drive a good bit and during that assignment there
was a woman attacked in one of the stairwells at the Pentagon. And after that they had a
shuttle that would pick up women at the doors at night and in the afternoon and take them
to their cars. It was a soldier with a shotgun rider and they would wait until you got in
your car and pulled out.

LC: Did they, to your knowledge, solve the crime of the assault?
AS: I don’t know.

LC: But it changed things?
AS: Yes, it changed things and it made them conscious of security. The big
mystery was remembering where your car was.

LC: Right, I’m sure. It’s a massive, massive parking lot.
AS: And then when it was so hot and you had on your greens and having to walk
out to the car and find it and get in the hot car was miserable.

LC: Yes. What kind of building security was there at the Pentagon? Did you
have to wear a badge or something to get in?
AS: Not then.

LC: You just walked in and out?
AS: Walked in and out.

LC: Nobody at the door? No metal detectors?
AS: The busses came in under the Pentagon; you got out and walked up.

LC: Wow, that’s extraordinary too, to think of that. Ann, if you don’t mind, let’s
take a break here.

AS: All right.
LC: This is Dr. Laura Calkins at the Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech University,
continuing the oral history interview with Col. Ann Smith. Today’s date is the thirty-first
of March, 2005. I am on the campus of Texas Tech in Lubbock, Texas, and I’m speaking
to Ann by telephone. She is at her home in Alabama. Ann, you and I have been speaking
but I want to say again, good morning and thank you for resuming our interview. Let’s
start, if you don’t mind, by exploring how it was that you were assigned to the US Army
Command and Staff—Command and General Staff College in 1968.

AS: I was working for the director of the Women’s Army Corps and was selected.

LC: Did you sort of make friends with the other women who were in your year?

AS: I’d known them all.

LC: You had already known them all?

AS: Oh yeah. Small world.

LC: Can you recall for us their names? It would be interesting to have that kind
of class composite.

AS: Oh, Joanalys Bizelle. J-o-a-n-a-l-y-s B-i-z-e-l-l-e. Colleen Brooks. I’m
drawing a blank on the other one.

LC: That’s all right, you did great. (Laughs) And did they have specializations
within the women’s Army Corps or did they have specializations that were different from
yours?

AS: In general, no, because early on we all did the same thing. We trained
trainees, we went and recruited, we eventually got a staff type assignment and all of us
had staff assignments because that was part of the name of the college—Command and
General Staff.

LC: Well, Ann, can you tell me a little bit about the curriculum? What was the
intention behind the courses that we taught and what exactly you studied?

AS: Well, it was to prepare you as majors—well, senior captains, majors, and
lieutenant colonels—all the women who went were lieutenant colonels—for higher staff
positions and command. They would be going into the battalion command and higher
demand and to the DA (Department of the Army) staff and general staffs on larger
commands like divisions and brigades and it was very heavily weighted of course
towards the combat arms function and the support of the combat arms. If we did a big
class project it might be set in a brigade but it might concentrate on the logistics part or
perhaps on the personal management aspect but command was the heart of the course and
it was during Vietnam so of course it was so much related to Vietnam and all the tactics
of—I felt, since I know so much about tactics—all of the tactics were based on Vietnam.
It was interesting, to me, an interesting story. I had gone to nuclear weapons employment
school at Fort Bennett before I was assigned as a WAC student to McClelland so I was
qualified to be a nuclear weapons specialist, employment specialist—one of the few in
my particular section of course, so not everybody went. So one day one of the teachers
was instructing a young major who stood up and said, “Major Smith, as an outsider”—I
hadn’t been promoted then—“as an outsider, how do you feel about the future of nuclear
war?” And most of the men knew—I was the only woman in this group—they knew my
background and I stood up and took off on him (laughs) because I said, “We are using the
most impractical version of nuclear war.” I said, “You’d think they were spray tanks on a
cargo plane and you spray the world and you’re still ninety percent effective in your
mission.” He never asked me another question.

LC: Now, you were sort of, as it were, armed and ready for that.

AS: I wasn’t expecting it, of course, but I had the background to make a comment
and he did know it.

LC: What was his intention there? Was he kind of trying to lure you into a trap or
what do you think was going on?
AS: Well, in that situation, he was such a rare breed that they frequently would do something like that, maybe to get a different view, maybe to be funny, but they always—they used to have a chaplain in each section, maybe a woman, but they always said, “Excuse me, chaplain, excuse me, Major Smith.” And one day I said, “If you have to excuse yourself for saying it, you shouldn’t be saying it.” And the chaplain didn’t like being singled out either.

LC: That was interesting. Did that kind of create a sort of harmony between the chaplain and maybe the female lieutenant colonel or the female majors?

AS: Oh, we all liked each other. (Laughs)

LC: I’ll bet.

AS: If you didn’t like somebody it was certainly on the ground. We were suffering together, all of us.

LC: Now by suffering, I wonder if you’re being facetious or if you’re talking about the workload.

AS: Oh, just going through it. On one occasion while I was a student we changed groups. We went through three different groups during the course, about fifty or fifty-five. Norman Schwarzkopf got sat right behind me.

LC: No kidding?

AS: Yep. He was my section leader.

LC: Now, if you gave him a phone call now, would he remember that?

AS: I don’t know. The last time I saw him (laughs) was on Fort Mayer or Fort Meyer and he was a major general and he was mowing his yard. I was just driving by and stopped and spoke to him. I doubt that he would remember me now.

LC: That’s interesting. He was mowing his own yard. That’s probably a good sign, I think. He’s a heck of a guy. It’s worth, since we’re talking about him, to just ask you, can you give any kind of review of his performance in the Gulf War conflict? I mean, did you pay much attention him specifically?

AS: Of course I paid attention because I have known him. Not intimately and certainly not in the biblical sense but of course I was interested and I have great respect for him. Even when he was a lieutenant colonel he was considered, in military parlance, a comer.
LC: Really?

AS: He was highly regarded, he had been in Vietnam, he had commanded there and people deferred to his judgment.

LC: Now, at the time that he’s sitting behind you in class, he had already commanded troops in Vietnam?

AS: I’m certain he had.

LC: I think so, too.

AS: I’ve sort of lost track of the sequence of things but he had been in Vietnam and if he had been in Vietnam as an infantryman he had certainly commanded something.

LC: Can you tell me much about the tactics that you did study? Was it air mobility and those kinds of things that defined the Vietnam conflict as different from previous American engagements?

AS: Yes, it did, but it struck me at the time that all the tactics were Vietnam and that was not all the world of the Army. We were learning to be active in Vietnam but look what’s happened since.

LC: Was there much attention being paid to, for example, a potential land war with Soviet tanks coming across German or had that kind of thing backed away into the shadows?

AS: Some of the technical program lessons and exercises of course involved that. In fact, one time I remembered in one of the class program exercises they had tanks come in across the Tiber Pass and I thought that was highly impractical.

LC: Yeah, that’s not exactly tank territory over there. (Laughs)

AS: And then another time we had an exercise and it was based on terrain. They needed to have a certain type of terrain and they put it in the Gulf and terrain actually was Israel and Egypt to get water rights. And all of us knew that at that time it was totally not going to happen but some general came and saw it and they had to change the whole exercise because he didn’t approve of using that particular scenario with that land because it wasn’t possible at that time.

LC: It didn’t add up.

AS: To him. We were smart enough to understand.
LC: That’s very interesting. You suggested just briefly that there wasn’t a great deal of consideration of Middle Eastern problems. Is that—does that sound right? Is that fair?

AS: Let’s see. What all had happened by then? (Laughs) I don’t remember.

LC: Okay.

AS: I remember though – this is one of the interesting things. We had students from all over the place. I mean, we had Yugoslavians, and Israelis and Egyptians and Africans and a lot of Vietnamese of course and Parisians and they were scattered out among us and they did have a plan that they did not put warring factions in the same room.

LC: Is that right?

AS: Um-hm.

LC: I was going to ask you about the social atmosphere. That’s an interesting insight.

AS: The social atmosphere there was when you were in school, it was very important. I went to a party one night that the Allies were giving and they had a good time. Now you would not find a Pakistani doing anything with Indians probably but each country did a presentation during the course of the training that was “Know Your World,” I think they called it. So the Columbians would do their presentation and one day India was doing its presentation and my buddy from Pakistan was there checking out the enemy. (Laughs)

LC: (Laughs) Is that right? Well, did the Americans who were attending classes have kind of a dicey situation once in a while?

AS: No, I don’t think so.

LC: Okay.

AS: They took the—the Allied students went on a lot of trips and one time they were in Washington DC and a couple of the South Americans who insisted, “We’re Americans.” You know when you talk about Americans you talk about us. And they said, “We are Americans.” So they were somewhere—Rock Creek Park or someplace—and somebody decided to rob them and they’re standing there saying, “We’re not Americans, we’re not Americans.” (Laughs) One time somebody was being critical of
Venezuela for its oil policy and this Venezuelan stood up and said, “We are not trying to
escrew the Americans.”

LC: “We’re not trying to escrew them?”

AS: Escrew. (Laughs) Which has become a standard for me. “I’m not trying to
escrew you.” (Laughs)

LC: Well, so you got a chuckle out of this as well as I’m sure you got a broader
view of both the international situation and the work of command.

AS: It was a very great learning experience because we were exposed to so many
cultures if we chose to be exposed.

LC: Right. So you could kind of make it what you would as an individual. You
could engage or just not?

AS: Surely. When you’re in a room with fifty or fifty-five people or so and
you’re sitting next to one person—we were at big tables, two-person tables—and you
were assigned the person with whom you sat so you could talk to people or not.

LC: And I guess, Ann, that these interviews will display that you kind of wanted
to get to know them or find out a little bit more rather than sit there and bit quiet, I’m
sure.

AS: Oh, I enjoyed being invited to have dinner with the Danes or to play liar’s
dice with the Swiss officer who could not understand why we would lie and I was trying
to show him how to play. “But you lie.” “Yes, it’s the object of the game.” (Laughs)

LC: About how big was the class?

AS: Eleven hundred?

LC: Really?

AS: It’s one of the biggest classes they ever had and it may have been not quite
that many but it was big.

LC: And any guess as to the percentage of international folks who were enrolled?

Was it ten percent?

AS: If I had my yearbook I could tell you.

LC: Really?

AS: (Laughs) Yeah, because it was in the yearbook. There was sort of a
breakdown of how many countries and how many people.
LC: Well where is the yearbook?
AS: In the other room. (Laughs)
LC: Oh, okay.
AS: I didn’t know I might need it. (Laughs)
LC: Well we don’t want to send you to the other room. Let’s keep you right where you are. Were you promoted during that year?
AS: Yes.
LC: And how did that come through? How did you find out about it?
AS: By happenstance. Promotions were held secret. “Don’t tell until the commander calls you in and tells you,” and that sort of thing. And this was at a time when promotions had just opened up. They had promoted six women from lieutenant colonel to colonel and it had just opened standings so there was a backlog of majors who had not been selected because they couldn’t be. There was nothing wrong with them but they just couldn’t be selected.
LC: Because there was that numerical cap?
AS: Yeah.
LC: And had the cap been essentially removed?
AS: What happened was during President Johnson’s presidency they didn’t say, “You can have a general or generals.” They would just remove the grade restrictions because the original grade restriction was, “There will be one colonel and she will be director of the Women’s Army Corp.” By taking that restriction out it just opened everything. It did not say, “You will have a general,” but it meant you could. So at one fell swoop people were promoted so there was this backlog of majors. The woman who was senior on that list had been a major for about twenty years, I think, and they started working through it. And so I had been not selected the year before and this year was selected. And I went and talked to somebody and I knew who had been promoted that day. There were promotions every day coming out almost and she knew that I was on the list so she had not told me and nobody was supposed to tell me and she did. (Laughs) Unwittingly, because I said something about the other person who was a friend of mine. But that’s very convoluted. Anyway, I found out.
LC: And how long had you been at the rank of major? How many years had you had that rank?

AS: Let’s see. I was promoted in ’68 and I think I was major in ’64.

LC: Okay, so you’d only been a major four years.

AS: Yeah, but I had already been considered once. I was promoted in ’69.

LC: In ’69, okay. So four and a half years or something on that order.

AS: Yes.

LC: Wow. That twenty years in rank at major, that’s really something.

AS: And they stayed.

LC: Yeah.

AS: And one of these women I remember was a logistician and people she had trained kept getting promoted and she just was stuck. But it cleared out a list.

LC: Absolutely. And as you say, there were then many promotions in that period of time. A lot of them.

AS: Yeah. I can’t guess how many but I’m glad I was one of them.

LC: Now, as you came to the end of the nine month course, did you know what your next assignment was going to be? How did you find out?

AS: Well, the career management branch told me.

LC: And did they do that when you had just a little time left at Fort Leavenworth or was it arranged earlier? Do you remember?

AS: I can’t remember how long it was but I had—there was a six month lag between the time my predecessor left and I went so I stayed at Leavenworth as a—you know what a snowbird is?

LC: I think that’s someone who comes from up North, isn’t it, to get away?

AS: No, it’s someone who goes to an Army school before it starts and maybe has to hang around for three months doing something. If you have to hang around after school you’re a blackbird. So I was a blackbird.

LC: You were a blackbird.

AS: Yeah. And at Leavenworth I had to wait for a Vietnamese language class to start so I could go to it before I went to Vietnam.
LC: And how long did that language class—
AS: The whole process was about six months.
LC: Okay.
AS: I went to Vietnam in January on New Year’s Day.
LC: Of 1970?
AS: Um-hm.
LC: Okay. Where did the Vietnamese language class that you attended take place?
AS: El Paso.
LC: And was it an Army class?
AS: It was Defense Language Institute.
LC: How long did that class go?
AS: It was an introductory course and it seems to me maybe six weeks. I can remember. They had various courses. They had long courses for people who were going to be linguists and that sort of thing and then they have the course that taught you to say, “Hello.”
LC: And that was yours?
AS: That was it. I was in a class full of young lieutenants who were going over to work with the Vietnamese. It was less than effective. (Laughs)
LC: Really? Who was the instructor?
AS: Vietnamese.
LC: Was this someone who was not necessarily skilled at teaching or was it the curriculum or the pace? Why didn’t it work very well?
AS: Because it is a difficult language. It’s a tonal language and it you get the wrong tone you’ve said something entirely different and it’s very hard to get.
LC: Now, Ann, let me ask you about the reaction of the young lieutenants to having a lieutenant colonel in their class who is a female who is going to Vietnam.
AS: It didn’t bother them.
LC: It didn’t at all?
AS: Not that I was aware of.
LC: Did they make friends and kind of make you part of the group and make you part of the crowd?
AS: Yes.
LC: Good. Do you remember any incidents during that language training time that are worth sharing?
AS: Well, one of the instructors invited me to dinner one night and I enjoyed that. It was the first time I ever had nuoc mam. And then when I went to Vietnam her husband invited me to dinner in Vietnam.
LC: Oh really?
AS: She liked me a lot.
LC: Okay. So she had arranged that with him, I’m sure.
AS: Yeah.
LC: What did you know about the position that you were going to take up in Vietnam before you got there?
AS: Well, having worked in the WAC director’s office, I was aware of the advisors to the Vietnamese Women Young Forces Corps and I didn’t know a lot about it but I knew the first advisor who went there. In fact, I knew all of them one way or another and I was replacing one of my best friends. And the reason I had to wait to go was because she extended.
LC: Ann, it would be helpful, to the extent that you can, to tell us who those predecessors in that position had been, including you mentioned the first one.
AS: Kathleen Wilkes.
LC: Any idea what year she went over or when that would have been? Would it have been before—?
AS: Well, by big Tet and that would have been ’68. I think the third one was there. I’m not really sure of the dates. The second one was Judy Dennet, Judith Dennet, then Virginia Chaffen. I replaced Lorraine Rossi. Joyce Eastlick replaced me and I’ve got a gap. And the early ones, there were two, one who was advisor to the director and one who was advisor to the training center commander. And so there were usually two of us there plus an NCO to the training center.
LC: Were there two American women assigned there when you were there, Ann, as well as an NCO?

AS: I don’t remember.


AS: There were a lot of American women in Vietnam but there were a few assigned to headquarters MACV (Military Assistance Command Vietnam). Two at least—one colonel and one lieutenant colonel during my time there.

LC: Do you remember who they were?

AS: Alice Long was one of them.

LC: She was at MACV?

AS: Yeah, Elizabeth Branch.

LC: Any idea what they were doing?

AS: Alice was the administrative assistant in the office of the J-1 and Betty Branch, after she finally got there, her background was in operations but she wound up being the chief of history for MACV.

LC: I thought that name sounded a little familiar to me.

AS: She lives in Washington now. Alice Long died several years ago.

LC: But Betty Branch is still with us?

AS: Yes, she’s on the foundation board.

LC: Okay. That’s interesting.

AS: (Laughs) Small corps.

LC: It is, and your recall of who was where and when is terrific. I mean this is exactly the kind of stuff that’s so helpful in mapping out the situation that you enter in January.

AS: Kathleen Wilkes died several years ago but her sergeant is still alive. Her name was Betty Adams and she lives here.

LC: Oh yes, and I’ve had a little bit of correspondence with Betty.

AS: Okay.

LC: Your trip over to Vietnam, do you remember it?

AS: (Laughs) Do I ever! (Laughs) I left around midnight, I guess. It was dark when I left Atlanta and I went to California and I sat next to two flight nurses who went
to sleep every time the plane took off. I had no one to talk to. (Laughs) I was going out
into this unknown and found how big the Pacific is and how long it takes to get across it.
I got there and it was January in Georgia when I left and it’s not bad cold but at least it’s
cool and my predecessor, Lorraine Rossi, and one of the men—small world—the man
who met me was a colonel who was the husband of the women who had been the
secretary in the WAC director’s office.
LC: Oh, no kidding?
AS: Yes.
LC: Well, that’s interesting.
AS: And so they met me at Tan Son Nhut—muggy, miserable and it looked like
the grimmest, darkest place I had been in. I wasn’t afraid. That wasn’t it, but it just was
uninviting. And when I left I realized it was so much brighter. Well, it wasn’t. I was
just used to it. (Laughs)
LC: Just used to it, that’s interesting.
AS: We went to the BOQ and I said, “Oh, well, I can go to sleep.” I had not
really been very familiar with jet lag (laughs) and I was accustomed to having helicopters
flying over all the time. (Laughs) My room, which was the room assigned to the advisor
to the women, had been a closet. It had room for me and a single bed, a chair, a little
desk, and a cabinet, which was a closet-type thing, and it had a bathroom and it was fine.
(Laughs)
LC: Now this was your office?
AS: That was my bedroom.
LC: Oh, that was your bedroom, okay.
AS: My office was in the Vietnamese complex in the same building as the
director and then my American office was in MACV headquarters.
LC: And how much time did you spend between them? Can you give the
distribution between the two? How did you spend your time, mostly at MACV or—?
AS: I spent all the morning with Vietnamese and if I traveled with them it was a
whole day thing or some such but there wasn’t that much to do for me. Most of it had
already been done. They had gotten all the equipment and if they needed something—
they needed a jeep one time, a good example—they had to go to a board made up of
Americans and Vietnamese and justify it. So that was interesting, helping them do that.
But part of the time we didn’t have an administrative officer in MACV headquarters.
That was before Alice Long got there and I filled in doing that in the afternoon for a
while.

LC: Let me ask a little bit about the Vietnamese Women’s Armed Forces Corps
itself. Can you sketch out what kind of an entity we’re talking about in terms of size and
structure and mission?

AS: I don’t know how many there were. They were all in one corps but they had
a group with the Air Force, the Army, and the Navy, who had their own structure. I think
one of the worst things we did for the Vietnamese was saddle them with our personnel
system.

LC: Really? Why do you say that?

AS: Well, because it was inefficient because a mechanic is a mechanic in many
ways. You can do it in the Army. They were not interchangeable because their MOS
(Military Occupational Specialty) were strictly service-related and a lot of things were
common. Their personnel system was just like ours, the personnel management system.
Their MOS system was just a carbon copy of ours. They had a personnel manual that
didn’t have an index in it and I set about one day to index that thing, cross reference
index it, and that’s when I realized how inefficient it was. (Laughs)

LC: Because you were really getting to grips with the structure and sort of seeing
it?

AS: Well, if you cross-index something you learn a lot about it.

LC: You get the idea, uh-huh. You get it deep.

AS: Now, a mechanic, an automobile mechanic is an automobile mechanic. The
ones in the Army could do Air Force automobiles just as well as anybody else and they
could have been interchangeable but no, they had to have our system. I don’t know, it
was a minor point but I just thought it was inefficient.

LC: Yeah, so the segmentation—

AS: We always do it better, you know. We know how to do it.

LC: So you were saying that within the Corps they had units assigned to each of
the service branches of the South Vietnamese army.
AS: Well, no, they had people in the Army—
LC: I’m sorry, yes, right.
AS: —with the Army and with the Air Force and they had parachute riggers and used a lot of clerical type things. They had all had gorgeous handwriting. (Laughs) I can’t remember their using computers but I’m certain they did. You know, data input and things like that.
LC: And can you have at a guess at the strength, the womanpower strength, if you will, of the Corps?
AS: No. I probably knew but it’s long gone.
LC: Oh, okay. Who were the people that you were working directly with? Do you remember their names and their ranks?
AS: Yes. Well, the first director was a lieutenant colonel who was later promoted colonel and her name was Hoang, H-o-a-n-g. I can’t remember what—the Vietnamese last name is the family name and Hoang was truly her first name but she was Colonel Hoang. And the deputy was a lieutenant colonel name Hang, H-a-n-g.
LC: Did you develop a relationship with either of them or both of them? I mean kind of beyond your professional interaction?
AS: It was hard to do in some ways because they couldn’t socialize. They couldn’t afford to socialize.
LC: What do you mean by that, Ann?
AS: Money.
LC: Okay.
AS: Colonel Hoang invited me to dinner at her home one time and I met her parents. Her father had been a government official and she told me that in the early days in the war when the advisors first came in they did a lot together but the cost of rice and those types of things just made it impossible. And I tried several times to get her to come have dinner with me at our officer’s club and she kept turning me down. But one night she agreed to come and she came and we had dinner. We traveled together occasionally and then we would always eat together. She liked things American. She spoke beautiful English, Chinese, and French.
LC: No kidding?
And I was invited to things with them. One night there was a big party that one of the Vietnamese generals was putting on at one of the hotels and it was a very nice party. I didn’t find out until later that he got credit for the party. My counterpart had to pay a lot for that party, probably more than a month’s salary and I just thought it was so unfair.

LC: Now how did that—what was behind that? Why was that the case?

AS: Well, I don’t remember what the party was but there were a lot of Americans there and she was just—

LC: By virtue of her position having to—

AS: Yes. She was there so I was there. It was just—she had to help pay for it.

LC: And would you say that her salary was probably substantially less than her equal in rank who was a man within the South Vietnamese—

AS: Well, the man was a general.

LC: Okay, uh-huh.

AS: I imagine they did not want for money. I don’t know that.

LC: But you suspect.

AS: And I suspect that he could have had entertainment funds and it was well after the fact that I realized what had happened. But I enjoyed being with them.

LC: You mentioned meeting Lieutenant Colonel Hoang’s family.

AS: Yeah.

LC: Can you describe the house or anything about that evening? Who was there?

AS: Well, she was a widow—at least, there wasn’t a husband—and she had at least one son. Lorraine Rossi got to know them a lot better because—I’m not sure. There was more socialization, I think. All I remember is a very pleasant evening and the best crab asparagus soup you could—I mean, yeah, crab asparagus soup—you could possibly ever want.

LC: That sounds gorgeous.

AS: And you know, rice and meat, and just pleasant. Her parents didn’t speak English but she interpreted for me.

LC: Let me ask about the—

AS: And I was pretty good with chopsticks.
LC: You were pretty mean with the chopsticks. (Laughs)

AS: Yeah. Before I went to Vietnam I mentioned I was going and a waiter in a Chinese restaurant in Kansas City taught me how to use them. (laughs)

LC: There you go. (laughs) That was good.

AS: And now that I have arthritis I can not use them at all.

LC: Oh, that’s sad. But in your day you were pretty mean with those.

AS: Oh yeah. One day I was eating in a Vietnamese mess hall and this young man sitting across the hall from me never stopped eating and he never took his eyes off me.

LC: No kidding.

AS: Just shoveled it in. (laughs)

LC: (laughs) Well, did Lieutenant Colonel Hoang and the women who were serving under her; did they appear in uniform all the time?

AS: Yeah, they had a uniform and they always looked neat and clean. Now they might have on flip-flops with their uniform. I saw Colonel Hoang in stockings one time and that’s—they had—it was a little building next to our office that was their barracks and the way they lived—I don’t know how they looked so neat and clean all the time.

LC: Now was that because the barracks were in pretty bad shape?

AS: It was just a little building and the most they had for looking at themselves was a hand mirror.

LC: Wow.

AS: And I got the notion that they needed a full-length mirror so I went to one of the Americans who was in the supply and asked her if she’d get me a mirror and it was a standard door-sized mirror and I took it in one day. Colonel Hoang was away at the staff college then and I gave it to Colonel Hung and it was in my office. I said, “I have something for you.” And she came in and oh, she was just so excited and it stayed in my office for a month and I thought, “What is she going to do with it?” Well, she did something that I would never have thought of doing. She cut it in half and put half in the barracks and half in the office.

LC: Smart girl.

AS: Yeah.
LC: She’s a smart cookie.

AS: And they had what looked like an old towel to clean their feet at the front of
the office so I went and got a raffia door mat. I don’t know where. I conned somebody
out of theirs (laughs) and I took it in and just put it in front of the door one day. Colonel
Hoang came up and she said, “Oh, I have dreamed of having one of these.” (Laughs)
And you realize how little things matter.

LC: And in this context, how they make such a big difference.

AS: Yes.

LC: That’s very telling. Let me just clarify where their offices were located.

AS: On the Vietnamese compound adjacent to Tan Son Nhut Air Force Base.

LC: And what was—you’ve mentioned the two lieutenant colonels. How much
did they have in the way of staff personnel there at that location?

AS: I don’t remember. They had a driver.

LC: Oh yes.

AS: And a car. No, a jeep. They had a jeep. And they had clerks in the office
but I don’t remember how many.

LC: Okay. And was this a kind of bustling office? Was there a sense of things
being done and attended to or was it more laid back and less pressure?

AS: It did not seem to be very pressable. This is an interesting story to me. Well,
all my stories are interesting.

LC: I know they are. (Laughs) You’re right.

AS: But just before I left, Colonel Hoang wanted a new jeep and she had to go
before a committee of Americans and Vietnamese to justify the jeep. And I had been to
too many briefings with the Vietnamese where they sit, sat, and stood, and read every
word on the charts in Vietnamese and it was just deadly. So I talked to her about it. I
said, “Don’t read it to them. Let them read it. You don’t need to read it.” She said,
“Well, how will I know when they’ve finished?” I said, “They’ll stop looking at the chart
and look at you.” She did, it did, it worked, and she was so surprised. Sure enough, they
quit looking at that and looked at her and she went on. And somebody told me later,
“That’s the best briefing I ever heard a Vietnamese give.”

LC: (Laughs) It’s very diagnostic of the atmosphere there.
AS: Yeah.

LC: Did things change at all for you in terms of the workload or the kinds of activities that either the Armed Forces Corps or you were involved in when the US and the South Vietnamese troops entered Cambodia in May of 1970?

AS: I wasn’t aware of it. I was aware of the restrictions that were being placed on going there because I wanted to go into the area they called Parrot’s Beak to visit someone and I had to get special permission from my general to go.

LC: Now, who was your general?

AS: Oh, shoot. I can’t remember his name. This is the general who was the J-1.

LC: Oh, okay.

AS: I’ve lost his name right now.

LC: And you wanted to go up to Parrot’s Beak for what purpose?

AS: A birthday party.

LC: (Laughs) And whose party was it going to be?

AS: Lieutenant Colonel Patton who I had known in the Pentagon. His troops called me and said, “We’re having a surprise birthday party for the colonel. If we come get you, will you come?” I had been there once before. He had invited me to a party to christen their new swimming pool over Valentine’s Day so the men knew me and we were friends. That’s all we were. (Laughs)

LC: Right. And they wanted you to come to the party.

AS: Yes.

LC: And did it work out?

AS: Sure.

LC: So you got permission?

AS: Yeah. The first time I went up he had them put a bed, an extra bed, in his hooch in a little room and he made sure that I locked the door when we went to bed and the second occasion he said, “I knew something was happening because they put another bed (laughs) or cot.”

LC: So he had a suspicion something was happening but he couldn’t think—

AS: Something was happening. (Laughs)

LC: Now you said his name was Lieutenant Colonel Patton.
AS: Yeah.  Not kin to the general.

LC: But spelled the same way?

AS: Yeah.

LC: Okay.  And that must have been—I mean, did you know him very well, then?

AS: Well, we worked across the hall from each other in the Pentagon for probably all the time I was there so it was a Pentagon hall.  I had a window and they used to come to my office to look out the window to see if it was raining.

LC: (Laughs) Okay.  And so from that little acorn great things grew, including your trip to the Parrot’s Beak.  Now what was he doing up there?

AS: Commanding a helicopter.

LC: Oh, okay.  So, helicopter units?

AS: Um-hm.

LC: So this second trip that you made up there was around the time of the incursion or afterwards?

AS: It was while we were—it was during because there were restrictions on going there.

LC: You have eluded a couple of times to different trips that you made around Vietnam.  Were there others that you remember that you could tell us about and what the purposes of them were and where you went?

AS: I went most of the time with Colonel Hoang.  She would be going to visit a unit somewhere and I would go with her.  I had—there was a beautiful beach that I went into that area one time.  She arranged for me to have a flight around a Buddha that was very well known and I flew with a Vietnamese Air Force pilot in a little plane.  A delightful trip, taking pictures all the time and there wasn’t any film in my camera.

LC: Oh no.

AS: But for the life of me—Vung Tau, I think is where it was.  And that’s when I realized probably how gorgeous Vietnam is from the air.  The shoreline just looks like someone took a piece of chalk and drew it down and everything is green and lush and pretty.

LC: Where else might you have gone on these inspection trips or visits around?

AS: I didn’t keep a diary.  I should have but I didn’t.
LC: Well you’ve got it all in your head.
AS: But I don’t. (Laughs)
LC: (Laughs) You’ve got quite a bit of it. Did you ever get up into, say, the Central Highlands? For example, Dalat or Pleiku, Kontum, or anywhere?
AS: I did but I don’t remember.
LC: Okay. What about further north or to main American bases like Cam Ranh Bay?
AS: Oh yeah, I was in Cam Ranh Bay. I had friends who were there.
LC: You—I’m sorry, what?
AS: I had friends who were stationed there.
LC: Right. And so you probably went up to visit them at some point.
AS: Yeah, I was there at some point. (Laughs)
LC: (Laughs) Well, did you ever go further south down into the deep delta?
AS: I don’t recall.
LC: What was an average day like, a day that you weren’t traveling? You said you spent part of the time, part of the afternoons over at the MACV complex.
AS: I’d get up, have some coffee, drive my buddies over to MACV. I had a car. My job had a car and I had four men who rode with me everyday and I’d put them off and then I would go over to the Vietnamese compound and do—make work frequently because she didn’t need me, truly. They had already built up everything they needed and they had everything going. And to me it was a be-there job oftentimes. And I, in the afternoon, usually would go over the MACV. I had to check my mail and see what sort of porn I’d gotten from Denmark.
LC: Okay, uh-huh. (Laughs)
AS: And when you’re in Vietnam you want any piece of mail you can possibly get. (Laughs)
LC: Right.
AS: Just something to open.
LC: Just anything.
AS: Yeah.
LC: Would you say that the position was one that didn’t necessarily need to exist?
Was it more pro forma?
AS: I think so, in the later days. I’m certain when it first started it really needed to exist if they were going to establish something because they had established a training center, a structure, and WAC detachments all over the place.
LC: And you mentioned the equipment issues but most of that had already been resolved.
AS: Yes.
LC: Were you thinking much about the progress of the war? Did you ever feel insecure when you were driving back and forth around Tan Son Nhut?
AS: No.
LC: No mortar attacks?
AS: The closest thing I came to anything unpleasant was I was in downtown Saigon one time and a grenade when off by the USO (United Service Organizations). And I don’t know why it did. We had a curfew. We had to be in at ten o’clock unless we had special permission to be out and oftentimes if we would go into Saigon to have dinner, then we would go up to one of the hotels and sit on the roof and have a cup of coffee it was just unreal to be doing that in such a really civilized way watching mortar rounds going off on the horizon.
LC: And do you have a distinct memory of that?
AS: Sure. I also have a memory of the roach that walked across my coffee cup.
(Laughs)
LC: And was this a monster-sized roach?
AS: Pretty good-sized.
LC: I’m thinking it might have been. (Laughs)
AS: The most monstrous one I ever saw—my bathroom had a john and a lavatory with a shower and a curtain over it. It had a curtain on it and one day I was taking a shower and all of the sudden the largest roach in creation landed on my bony chest. He had come off the shower rod. That’s the biggest one I ever saw. (Laughs)
LC: (Laughs) And that was way too close. (Laughs)
AS: I also had a gecko in my room and that was good because they ate mosquitoes.

LC: Yeah, geckos are friendly and good to have around.

AS: One day I opened the cabinet and a gecko fell off and landed on me. I don’t know who was more surprised, he or I. I didn’t mind him though. (Laughs)

LC: Did you have a sense of being in a war zone? It almost sounds surreal, sitting at the top on the outside café area of a hotel and watching a war.

AS: Yeah, there’s surrealism about it because of the way life went on. We worked until x o’clock—whatever it was, I don’t remember—whether there was work or not. You know, work expands to fill the time available and that was certainly true in Vietnam. We couldn’t have a shorter day because the people in the field were working.

LC: So you would keep on.

AS: Yeah. You’d be there. Now some of the people—one of my good friends worked in the assignment business there and he had to go in every night to call Washington because of the time difference. You’d go to town and go to Saigon and here was this bustling city. You walk down the street—I had a picture taken in front of one of the buildings that a lot of newscasts were made from. I think it was the old opera house and I deliberately had a picture take there so I’d know I’d been there.

LC: Really?

AS: Because it was an unreal time for me.

LC: You know that grenade going off that you mentioned—that didn’t rattle you or kind of bring the conflict pretty close to you?

AS: I thought about it but—one time I was on a ferry. I don’t know where I was going but I was on a ferry and there were these bodies floating by and all the people were, “VC! VC!” I don’t know whether it was VC (Viet Cong) or not.

LC: Was there sort of jubilation?

AS: Yeah they were real—

LC: “Got ’em?”

AS: Yeah, “Got one.”

LC: “Got one.” That’s very strange.
AS: One of my memorable experiences—we were walking down the street one day in Saigon in my little green cord uniform. Here came two young men, obviously having a good time in from the field after being thirsty, walking toward me and I wondered, “What is going to happen?” Well, they saluted and the senior one said, “Good afternoon, cutest ma’am.”

LC: What did you think?

AS: It made my day.

LC: I was going to say. (Laughs) That’s interesting. In general, did you find that the American men over there were willing to accept that you were a lieutenant colonel?

AS: Sure.

LC: Any incidents that seemed to undermine your authority as a senior officer? I mean, you’re a senior officer at this point.

AS: No.

LC: Nothing like that?

AS: Uh-uh.

LC: That’s remarkable.

AS: There were two young men who were MPs, a young black man and a young white man and they were out on the street all the time and I frequently passed them and we had this—I never talked to them—but we had this thing. We’d give each other the peace sign as I went past.

LC: How did that start?

AS: I don’t know. I started it probably one day. (Laughs)

LC: (Laughs) That’s interesting and leads me to ask about your sort of broader sense of the American investment in Vietnam. And of course you’re keenly aware that in the States the upset, the temperature is rising in opposition to American involvement. What did you feel in your own mind? Not as an officer but in your own mind, what were you thinking about this whole epic in which you had this little role?

AS: Hmm. I’m trying to remember what I thought.

LC: Did you think we should get the hell out of there?

AS: I didn’t think we were accomplishing a lot. I thought we were putting too good a face on what we were doing. I never went to the five o’clock follies but hearing
the stories of the five o’clock follies and the body count—I guess the body count was the
thing that got to me the most because it just was—I can’t describe it, I’m sorry. I’m not
emotional; I just can’t find a word. (Laughs)
LC: That’s okay. I mean, it was certainly a frustrating situation for many, many
Americans, both those who were in Asia and those who were in America to get to grips
with.
AS: When I came home, I didn’t have any sense of resentment towards it but most
people don’t expect a woman to have been there.
LC: That’s right.
AS: But I went out to lunch one day in Atlanta and it was in January and the
waiter looked at me and he said, “You have a beautiful tan. Have you been to the
beach?” I said, “No, Vietnam.” (Laughs)
LC: What was his response?
AS: Nothing. I did have a beautiful tan. (Laughs)
LC: (Laughs) He was absolutely right.
AS: Sure.
LC: Were you aware or did you see evidence of others who, having served in
Vietnam, were kind of taking it on the chin at all?
AS: No, I didn’t see it because I came from Vietnam and went to an assignment at
Richmond Arsenal. The military was pretty well accepted in Alabama.
LC: That’s right, it’s not uphill there.
AS: I lived in an apartment complex where nobody paid me any attention. As far
as my being different, I put on my little green suit and went to work every day.
LC: And this was beginning in early 1971.
AS: Yeah.
LC: And what was your job there?
AS: I was the secretary of the Missile Ammunitions Center and School. Are you
familiar with a secretary of a school?
LC: No, that’s what I wanted to ask you about.
AS: It’s the administrative officer.
LC: Okay, so the chief administrative officer, essentially?
AS: Yeah. I was in charge of personnel, civilian personnel, security, the library—
let’s see if there’s anything else. All schools have one and they’re just the administrative
person.

LC: Was this a good posting for you?
AS: It was until we got a new commander who did not like me.

LC: Now when did that happen?
AS: That happened probably—I stayed there till ’73 so it probably happened in
’72. The commandant retired and we got a new commandant and he just—he was the
only person I ever worked for that I neither liked nor respected.

LC: How did you guys get off to a bad foot? Had you known him before?
AS: Never.

LC: How did it—what started it going south?
AS: One of my other jobs was overseeing the bookstore. Almost every school has
a bookstore and he had—and there are limits on what you can sell in a bookstore, things
related to the training mission of the school. And he got this notion that he was going to
run it as a small business. And I guess he used his idea of how you ought to run a small
business and he was doing things that were crooked. He was stocking things that should
not be in there and the young lieutenant that was running it technically answered to me
but this man was—they finally closed it. They had a closeout sale and closed it and he
didn’t like my bucking him. He didn’t like me. (Laughs)

LC: It sounds as if this was less about you than about anybody in that position, the
position you held, who was doing their job.

AS: Yeah, I think so. He went so far as to ask the IG (Inspector General) to find
something bad about me. The IG told me.

LC: Really?

AS: Later. And I asked him one day, the colonel, if I could talk to him and he
told me, “No, I don’t have time to talk to you.” And you don’t do that to your staff
members. I was one of his immediate staff.

LC: You reported directly to him.

AS: Yes.
LC: Was this—do you think there was some gender issue going on here or was this guy wired for conflict?

AS: I don’t know. I don’t know how I got crossways of him. The assistant commandant for the whole time I was there, he had I had locked horns one time over something and I said—I went in and I said, “I have three things I would like to say to you. I want to do a good job here. I can’t do it without your support and if I was wrong, I apologize.” And we never had another moment’s problem.

LC: That was a very reasonable set of things to say and I’m sure that you were, just having spoken with you, Ann, I’m sure you were equally reasonable with the other fellow, just something—

AS: Well, it was obvious I didn’t like him.

LC: Well and clearly he was —

AS: And I called my career manager and I said, “I am not doing myself any good here, I am not doing women in the Army any good here. Please get me out.”

LC: And how long did it take before you got a response?

AS: Very quickly?

LC: Really?

AS: She had talked to me before and asked if I might be interested in going to Leavenworth to teach because they finally were willing to have a woman instructor. And I didn’t hear anymore about it and when I called her I said, “Is that still a possibility?”

And that’s where I went.

LC: This was in 1973.

AS: Yeah.

LC: Were you the first or among the first women instructors?

AS: I was the first after World War II.

LC: No kidding.

AS: Yeah.

LC: Okay. Well, Ann, let’s take a break right there.

LC: Well tell me about that. This is Thanksgiving Day, what? Nineteen seventy?

AS: Yeah. And they were having a service and it was Christian chapel. I didn’t understand a word that they said. (Laughs)
LC: And they were having a Christian Thanksgiving, which is obviously an American holiday.

AS: It was also interesting to go occasionally to a Buddhist temple.

LC: And you did that, too?

AS: Yeah. And then there’s this strange little religious sect called the Cao Dai that’s a mixture of Buddhist, Roman Catholic, who knows what else (laughs) and I went to their temple one time.

LC: You know, Winston Churchill was here yesterday and commenting that his grandfather, the prime minister, was one of their patron saints, one of the patron saints of the Cao Dai sect.

AS: Really?

LC: Um-hm, which of course he thought absolutely hilarious because it’s just his grandpa, or as he called him, grandpapa. Did you go out to Tay Ninh and to their big temple out there?

AS: Yeah.

LC: What was that like?

AS: Fascinating!

LC: I’ll bet it was.

AS: And there was a monk who took me around, spoke very good English. One of their emblems, as I recall it was just a huge globe and I don’t think it was the globe of the world, I think it was the globe of the globe. And I took off my little shoes and trooped around in there and their theology just seemed to be such a combination of stuff.

LC: Something from everywhere.

AS: And then one time I went out on a little platform out in the water to see this wizened old man who was some sort of oracle. Not understanding a word that was going on but being duly respectful. (Laughs)

LC: Absolutely. (Laughs)

AS: I went with my counterpart.

LC: And what did she make of it? Did she have any comment?

AS: She wanted to go herself and took me. I don’t know what she made of it.

LC: But you trooped along?
AS: Oh sure. Never miss an opportunity.
LC: Well, absolutely.
LC: This is Dr. Laura Calkins of the Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech University, continuing the oral history interview with Col. Ann B. Smith. Today’s date is the twenty-first of June, 2005. I am in the upstairs offices of the Special Collections Building on the campus of Texas Tech and the colonel is speaking to me by telephone from her home in Alabama. Good morning again, Ann. We’ve been speaking for a little while but I want to thank you again for your time today.

AS: It’s nice talking to you again.

LC: Ann, let’s start where we left off, which is in 1973, your assignment to teach and the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth. Can you tell me how that posting came about and certainly there were some special things about that posting.

AS: Some time before that my assignment officer called and asked if I would be interested in going to teach at Leavenworth. They had finally decided that they wanted to have a woman on the faculty. I said yes and it never went anywhere. And so as time passed I realized that my boss and I were never going to get along with each other and I needed to get out of that assignment because I was not doing myself any good and I certainly wasn’t doing Army women any good because his opinion of them was based on our not getting along. Now, I realize that it was my responsibility to get along with him, not his to get along with me, and when that happens you do your best to get away from it to make it better for everybody. So I called Col. Shirley Hines and said, “I need to get out of here and is there any chance that opportunity at Leavenworth is still open?” And she checked and called back and said yes. And so that’s now I wound up on my way to Leavenworth.

LC: Now, correct me if I’m wrong, as the first women instructor after World War II?

AS: Yes. There had been one during World War II and that was the situation, I was the first since then.

LC: And did any other women join the faculty while you were there?
AS: Yes. Now, there were women on the support staff, quite a few of them. A logistician came in while I was there.

LC: Do you remember her name?

AS: Charlotte Phillips.

LC: And what can you tell me about her? Did you two kind of club up?

AS: No.

LC: She was in a different area?

AS: I was in the Department of Command and she was in the Department of Logistics. I knew she was there. I can’t remember how far it was into my tour that she came but we didn’t have a large overlap. And of course there were always women students at the college.

LC: What was your relationship with the women students who might have come through your classes? Did they kind of look up to you, do you think?

AS: No, we’d all known each other before. (Laughs)

LC: Oh, okay, so there was no—

AS: I was a lieutenant colonel, they were majors and lieutenant colonels and our paths had crossed considerable.

LC: Oh, okay, so there was no danger of them holding you up—putting you up on a pedestal.

AS: No.

LC: (Laughs) What about the male students? Of course there were hundreds and hundreds of men, I would think, in each class. Is that accurate?

AS: Of course they had mixed feelings about me but I taught in an area that—it wasn’t like sending me in to teach tactics. I felt generally well received. I did not feel any animosity from the students. I was there and a part of the system.

LC: What about other instructors in the department? How did you kind of mesh with them?

SM: I had a grand time with them. It happened that one of the men who had taught me when I was a student was on the faculty with me and he had sort of made the path comfortable for me because he thought a lot of me. And I had a sponsor and a supporter on my way in and so the people in the—the Department of Command was an
odd mix of people. The chaplain, who was always assigned to Leavenworth, was in that
department and we taught things like leadership and personnel management and things
like that so it was the soft skills and not the hard ones. So that made a difference.

LC: Was the curriculum already set for you when you arrived?

AS: Oh yes.

LC: And how did you familiarize yourself to the point where you felt comfortable
teaching or did you already have everything you needed in terms of expertise and
background?

AS: No, I didn’t have everything I needed but they had very comprehensive
lesson plans already prepared and I was told that under a previous commandant, that if he
opened three doors he expected everybody to be saying exactly the same thing. I could
not have taught under those conditions. I don’t memorize, I teach from cards, and it’s not
my style to do rote stuff.

LC: And who was the commandant at this time?

AS: Right this minute he is completely lost. I’ll come up with it.

LC: Oh that’s okay.

AS: (Laughs) He was a major general.

LC: You mentioned that there was this one fellow who had been an instructor
when you were a student there who made things a little bit easier. Can you tell me
anything more about him?

AS: Well, specifically, nothing unusual and he left shortly after I got there but the
group in that department was very welcoming and I made friends with a lot of people in
the other departments, too because I’m gregarious—also garrulous.

LC: Garrulous, yes. You mentioned to me last year, in fact, that there was
some—

AS: The general’s name was Cushman.

LC: There you go. See, you knew it would come to you. You mentioned last
year, when we were talking about some of these things that there was at least some
undercurrent every once in a while, a suggestion that you were some kind of token.
AS: One of the women on the staff told me one day some man had said that—
token—up in command. And I said, “Well, I am. I’m the only one here so certainly I’m
a token. You don’t have to take it pejoratively”

LC: She was upset because she had taken it pejoratively.

AS: Yes. She thought I was being criticized. Well, maybe I was but I wasn’t
going to take it that way.

LC: And you mentioned to me that you had coined a term around this experience.

AS: Yeah, minority paranoia.

LC: Yeah. Can you explain what you mean by that?

AS: I think that people who are put in that position can let themselves feel that
they’re carrying the weight of their kind on their shoulders.

LC: In other words, you are the representative of this group and you bear
responsibility?

AS: Yes. And the men, I don’t think, suffered that. If there were an infantryman
there who was not a good instructor, he’d just be a poor instructor. But if I had not been
reasonably good, all women would have been judged by me. I believe that.

LC: And is that because you were sort of the first one to hold this job? Is that an
essential to it or is it more because the Army itself is obviously structured in such a way
as to have a greater representation of men than women?

AS: No, it wasn’t that. I put myself in the position of any minority who is sort of
carrying the flag. In any endeavor, if you are the first—this may not be a general
conception. It may be a personal thing that I came up with but I did—I always want to do
a good job but I did want to do a good job so that other women would not be judged by
me as being bad because I was a woman. And it wasn’t the system that did it to me. This
is internal.

LC: I’m sensing, Ann, that you felt this way at the time. This isn’t a retrospective
thing.

AS: No, I felt that way at the time.

LC: And of course you know 1973 was really kind of the spiking point for the
beginnings of what we now call the women’s movement in this country. Did you feel
any extra burden because of that?
AS: Unh-uh.

LC: No?

AS: No. One advantage I had was that I had been to Vietnam.

LC: Why was that an advantage?

AS: Because it was a mark of belonging, in a sense. You’d been to Vietnam.

LC: So you had some credibility as a result?

AS: I think so.

LC: Okay. People, students and faculty members, sort of had to take you with a little more grit, a little more substance?

AS: I think, because that was the card everybody needed to get punched and not a lot of women were there.

LC: That’s right.

AS: And I had the ribbons to prove it. (Laughs)

LC: Tell me a little bit more about the curriculum. Were you teaching a particular class or more than one class?

AS: I taught everything—if I can recall, I taught everything that our department taught. But more than anything I taught in the personnel management and in those leadership things like motivation and discipline. We taught the drug and alcohol stuff.

LC: How important was, for example, that element in the curriculum as you encountered it?

AS: Oh, I think it was considered—sometimes the people in command called us the Red Stain upstairs because we had all the touchy-feely things.

LC: They called you the Red Stain?

AS: As in Communists. (Laughs)

LC: (Laughs) Absolutely. So that would have all been in jest, I’m sure.

AS: Yes. As I said, we had the chaplain, we had the lawyer, we had all of the—and we had a lot of combat arms and my boss was an infantryman but still we were—the AG (Adjutant General), officer and all the non-combat arms and logistics was just full of logisticians and those sorts of things.

LC: Let me ask if—you mentioned drug and alcohol issues were part of what you had to teach. Was there also a component that dealt with race differences?
AS: Oh yes. It was an interesting thing. The classrooms had fifty or so people in
them and for a lot of the work we divided them into about fifteen-person work groups.
And when we were teaching racial harmony, for the lack of a better word, and awareness
and sensitivity we were divided into different categories, at least the instructors were, by
ethnic groups or different groups and my particular group was the Appalachians and how
a people from Appalachia and people who think like that, how you have to deal with
them in a structured environment. Because when fishing season starts they’re ready to go
fishing. It’s a different lifestyle completely. So we had African-Americans,
Appalachians, American Indians—I can’t remember all of the groups but it was
interesting because of the readings we did that gave us a different slant of how people
think and how you have to deal with them in a controlled environment.

LC: Overall, do you think that the way the curriculum was structured on that issue
was a helpful approach? Do you think it accomplished the purpose?

AS: Well, I think it might have made us think a little bit.

LC: Okay. And that’s probably a pretty good outcome, actually, rather than just
blowing through and not taking it in at all.

AS: In one group we had a Catholic priest and we were talking about ways of
changing behavior and I was talking about aversion therapy and so we kept talking about
it and talking about it and all of the sudden he had an absolutely, ah ha experience
because what he had heard me saying was virgin therapy.

LC: (laughs) So clarity broke through.

AS: And we looked at the Milgram tape and those types of things. It was during
an era of being more—I don’t know how to describe it.

LC: It was a time different than this one, that’s certain.

AS: Yeah. At the time I could have told you the differences but we were into
motivation and trying to understand why, which was probably needed coming down from
Vietnam.

LC: Let me ask you a little bit about that because your station, your duty at Fort
Leavenworth actually encompassed a time period where everything in Vietnam changed.
You started there in 1973 and were there until ’75. I wonder if, for example, you
remember the release of the POWs (Prisoner of War) and the conclusion of the Paris Peace talks and then the release of the American POWs.

AS: Specifically I can’t say. Sometimes I get my student year mixed up with my being there, my two and a half years as faculty. Back to being, if you will, the token, it was really interesting that frequently the commanding general would put me on a committee. Invariably he had me and the Marines represented. There was a Marine colonel. I think he wanted a more forthright opinion than he would get from some people. I made him very mad one day. (Laughs)

LC: What did you do?

AS: He asked something and I gave him my honest answer and he just thought I was wrong. I mean he couldn’t accept what I told him that I thought I saw because he didn’t want to believe it.

LC: Do you remember what the circumstances were?

AS: Nah. Don’t remember.

LC: But he just was shocked probably.

AS: Yeah. But it was a very interesting sort of relationship.

LC: Well in some way he probably had a somewhat difficult, slightly complicated duty to discharge, too, which was to oversee the work of the first woman on the faculty.

AS: Well, I was so far removed from him. Truly, I wasn’t on his screen at all, other than when he wanted some different people to look at an issue.

LC: And then you were drafted into that.

AS: He made drastic changes in the way the school operated and it was very resented by the students often, and the faculty.

LC: What kinds of changes?

AS: Well, he decided that the Army had too much grade distortion. Everybody expected to have an A and he decided that we weren’t going to award but x percent of As and that means you’ve got to make a hard decision and the students resented that highly because they’d been told they’re the top fifty percent of the Army and they believed it. So to have someone come in when everybody was used to getting As on an assignment and for us to be told we couldn’t give but one and for them to be told only one was going to get it, now that’s cutthroat.
LC: Yeah, it sets up some very difficult dynamics.

AS: And we’d get students who didn’t do too well going and complaining to their faculty advisor who were then going to the instructors—we were all in the same boat but it was difficult.

LC: How did you feel when your tour there came to its end? Were you glad you’d had the opportunity?

AS: Oh yes. And I had intended to retire from there.

LC: In 1975?

AS: Around there.

LC: What was your thinking about retirement?

AS: Well, I was a lieutenant colonel. I didn’t have any hope of getting to be a colonel and I had, by that time, over twenty years of service. Thinking back, I probably couldn’t get a better assignment than that.

LC: And what changed your mind?

AS: I got a better assignment.

LC: At this point, as a lieutenant colonel, were you speaking with people in personnel about what might be available or were you kind of sailing on your own, thinking, “Yes, I’ll retire,” and then something kind of cropped up?

AS: Yeah.

LC: Okay.

AS: And at the time when it popped up I was talking to the deputy commandant at a party and he said, “Oh, you should definitely take the assignment.” At the time, and it’s still going on now, we had a command selection process and I had not been selected for command. And so that tells you something. If you’re not selected for command you’re probably not going any further. It doesn’t assure that you’re going any further but it opens the door for it. And somebody who had been selected to command one of the training battalions at Fort McClellan turned it down and they offered it to me. That made perfect sense to me, that at least it was an opportunity plus I thought of it as a challenge and a good assignment because I enjoyed training troops.

LC: So you left Fort Leavenworth for McClellan in 1975. Do you know roughly when you arrived there at McClellan?
AS: In the summer.

LC: And how long did you expect you would be there? A year?

AS: I didn’t have any anticipation of how long I would be there. That’s where I was going and that’s what I was going to do.

LC: Now did consideration for promotion accompany the command post?

AS: Well, I would be considered at the normal time for consideration. It didn’t give me any leg up on early consideration. It was just at the time that I should be considered. But I knew—and everybody in the Army knows that command is greatly to be desired.

LC: Yes. Crucial for getting on up the line. Tell me about your year then at Fort McClelland as commander of the First Women’s Army Corps Training Battalion.

AS: It was a grand year. (Laughs) I had a good time. I enjoyed training troops, I worked with good people, I had good people in the battalion, the company commanders and first sergeants and my boss. It was just a good time. It was fun. I mean there were some rough spots.

LC: Who was your commanding officer?


LC: And what was your position?

AS: She was the WAC center commander.

LC: And how many training battalions were there?

AS: When I first got there, there were three and then one of them closed out and we had two. Back in the olden days, when I was first assigned there as a lieutenant we only had one training battalion and it was the one I was commanding so I went home.

LC: Yeah, it sounds like it. It sounds like it must have been in some way kind of feeling a little bit of a full circle that you were back at McClelland. How had it changed?

AS: We had so many more troops undergoing training. The curriculum was different. When I was a student officer we got to fire a Carbine for familiarization. When I was there as the battalion commander they were firing the M-1 for qualification.

LC: Wow.
AS: And the commanding general of the post had somehow staked his reputation on how well the women did on the range. He was determined, no matter how long you had to stay out there; you would have a large number of women qualified. There was pressure.

LC: This was his thing, his emphasis? What was his name? This was the commander of Fort McClelland?

AS: Kingston. There were two Kingstons in the Army, brothers. He was one of them.

LC: And these were both very senior people.

AS: He was a brigadier general.

LC: You said that there were some rough patches, too. Do you remember any of those that you can share or what the circumstances were?

AS: Well, he threatened to court martial me one time. (Laughs)

LC: Okay, well that’s pretty rough.

AS: That’s rough.

LC: That qualifies. What was going on with that?

AS: We were having probably a reunion, a WAC reunion or something that was a big do and the Fourteenth Army Band, which was the only all-women’s band—I guess in the world, military band—at that time was being disbanded and they were going to play a final concert. They had a male warrant officer as their commander. Well, always before there had been a woman commanding the band. So they were scheduled for the performance to start at eight o’clock. I was standing out back waiting for General Kingston to come. He was never on time for anything. So at eight o’clock the band started because nobody was there. I was out back. Oh, I was the officer in charge of this whole circus so I was out waiting for the general and the band started and he was furious and I made the serious mistake—this was a Friday night—of saying to his aide, “Well, the general’s always late.” It was bad enough that they had started without him because that was my fault, too, of course, but then saying something like that. And Saturday morning Shirley Hines called me and said, “What did you do to the general? He wants to see you first thing Monday morning.” So first thing Monday morning I was in his office and the aide and the secretary had disappeared. They had left.
LC: It was just you and him?

AS: Yes. And thank goodness he had practiced what he wanted to say to me and he knew it real well and it didn’t take but about five minutes. He had been known to speak off the cuff for a lot longer than that and when it happened to me, everybody said, “Don’t worry, it’s happened to all of us.” That’s a personality quirk of his. And they had just sent in a special efficiency report on me that was going before the promotion board and he threatened me with withdrawing that efficiency report and he said he ought to court-martial me for disloyalty.

LC: For disloyalty to him?

AS: Yeah. And when he finished I said, “Is that all, sir? Thank you, sir.” Saluted, about faced, and got out of there as fast as I possibly could.

LC: Did you think there would be serious repercussions?

AS: I didn’t know. It would have surprised me if he had withdrawn that efficiency report and if he had, that was the only report I had for command and so yes, it could have been very—I didn’t know I was going to get promoted. It surprised me when I did but I certainly wouldn’t have if he had withdrawn that efficiency report.

LC: In hindsight do you see that as an important turning point or he just gave you a kick in the pants and that’s about it?

AS: Well, he didn’t carry through on it. It would have been a very important turning point if he had carried through on it.

LC: When were you actually promoted to colonel?

AS: Seventy-six. And that’s why I had to leave First Battalion, because it was a lieutenant colonel slot so I couldn’t stay. I asked to stay but they said, “No, you can’t.”

LC: What did they have in the way of possibilities for you as a newly minted colonel?

AS: I stayed on post.

LC: To do what?

AS: There was a group called the Headquarters Command that had the MPs and the support troops and we had a supply and transportation battalion on post at times and they were all part of Headquarters Command and I was commander of it.
LC: So approximately how many personnel were you responsible for in this new position?

AS: We had one MP company and a headquarters company and the battalion, which was—I have no idea how many people were in it. We had two MPs companies, I’m sorry. So it was a nice little bunch of people.

LC: And you got to stay at McClelland, as you’ve said.

AS: Yes.

LC: Was that important to you, to be able to stay there?

AS: I was glad to stay. They didn’t have any place for me at the time to put me so it was fortuitous that that position was available.

LC: Were there issues that came up that kind of tested your abilities in that position? Any difficulties arise that you can tell us about or command decisions that you had to take?

AS: Only one big one and I don’t want to talk about it.

LC: Okay, sure. You were there from 1976 to 1978.

AS: Yeah.

LC: Were you again giving thought to possibly retiring at this point?

AS: Well, you’re always sort of thinking about it but the coloneligng branch called me one day and offered me the chance to go to—I’ve forgotten where—Germany, I think, and I said, “I really don’t want to go.” They called me back one day and said, “We want you to go to Bayonne, New Jersey.” I said, “I surely do not want to go to Bayonne, New Jersey.”

LC: That just wasn’t very appealing at all.

AS: Well, the third time he said, “We have an assignment for you in Washington.” “I don’t want to go to Washington.” He said, “Well, the packaderms have decided. Either you go or you retire.” I said, “I’ll go.”

LC: Now when he said the packaderms, for someone who doesn’t get that reference, what did you understand that to mean?

AS: The big boys.

LC: The big boys. (Laughs) So they had decided this was your third pitch and you could swing and hit it or not.
AS: And it was an assignment that was open and that I fit the qualification for, at least on paper.

LC: And this position—I’m looking at the notes you provided—was Director of Casualty and Memorial Affairs for the Army.

AS: Yeah, in the office of the Adjutant General.

LC: Okay. Where were you stationed?

AS: In the Forstall Building.

LC: Which is?

AS: It’s right across the street from the mall and the Smithsonian. Out of my window I could see the Friar Gallery and what’s more, I had windows on two sides.

LC: That sounds okay.

AS: I mean, that is something! (Laughs) People would come to my office and say, “How did you get this?” I’d say, “It came with the job.”

LC: Well tell me about the work there as the director of this office. What things did you have within your responsibility area?

AS: One of the first responsibilities that we had at that time, we were the office of records of all of the prisoners of war and mission in action. Their personnel records were in my office as opposed to the normal place you would have them. And at the time we were still having hearings on determination on missing in action, whether to declare them as dead or continue them on the Army roles. During Korea, when you were captured your life stopped. If you were captured as a captain you came out as captain with no accumulated time. In Vietnam, if you were captured or MIA (Missing in Action) your whole career continued.

LC: Your career clock, essentially.

AS: You continued to gain longevity, you got raises as your cohort got raises and that was a big consideration because many of the families—well, there were several reasons. Some of them were monetary. Others were just absolute family ties. They wanted an answer. “Is my son dead? Are you still looking for him?” Those types of things. Particularly some of the wives, they wanted to get on with their lives but there were people who were shot down or captured as captains and then by the time Vietnam was over they had been promoted to colonel because all of their contemporaries had
been. So it was interesting. We were having hearings and they were in my office complex.

LC: Now were these public hearings? Could anyone attend or family members?

AS: Family members if they wanted to and we had a hearing officer. But the problem is, all of this was on the family to prove that person was alive and that’s hard to do.

LC: Impossible.

AS: Yeah. But that was one of the important things that we did. Probably the most important thing that we did was take care of soldiers who died or who were seriously ill. All of the death reports came into our office and we had sergeants who maintained contact with the families. We were in contact with them on getting the remains home. And if somebody was seriously ill, I mean the doctors determined he was seriously ill, we would bring the family daily reports. It was hard work but it was rewarding work because the people were doing something and doing something that was important to somebody. That, I think, was one of the most important things that office did.

LC: Would you speak with family members when they were in the building on various kinds of business?

AS: They didn’t come in to the building very much. We also oversaw Arlington Cemetery and the others. There were three cemeteries that did not revert to the VA when the VA took over most of the cemeteries: Arlington National Cemetery, the cemetery at the soldier’s home, and the cemetery at West Point. And we had a shared responsibility with the Corps of Engineers for the maintenance and upkeep of all of that at those three cemeteries. So that was a fascinating part of the job.

LC: Yeah, tell me about what kind of things you had to oversee as far as, for example, Arlington affairs.

AS: Well, the adjutant general’s office was responsible for the budget so that was probably one of the more important things because it had to be defended before Congress. And it took me a little while to learn that when you’re presenting the president’s budget, you must present it as if you like it.

LC: As if it is your own.
AS: Yes. And you’re not permitted to say, “But we really need a million dollars for roads.” Which I did one day, in essence.

LC: Did you?

AS: Yeah. I had not understood the rules and I got sort of sandbagged. But be that as it may I told them what I thought.

LC: Now was this up on the hill somewhere?

AS: Yes.

LC: So you were actually up there testifying?

AS: Yeah, to a committee.

LC: And you told them that maybe there were some repairs that needed to be done?

AS: Yeah. (Laughs)

LC: Oops. (Laughs)

AS: Yeah I planned out how much a mile of roads cost when I was in that job and the superintendent of the cemetery let me think he worked for me. It’s such a prestige place and I learned a good bit. One of the things I did that I was proud of, most of the people who worked for me were civilians and most of them had never seen a military funeral so I arranged to have some training time for them. I called it training. And the cemetery sent its bus over and we let them see a funeral because that’s what they were dealing with.

LC: Did you yourself go over on any regular basis over to Arlington?

AS: Fairly regular. I had a permanent visitor’s pass so I didn’t have to worry about getting in and finding a place to park. But a lot of people want to go to Arlington and so frequently on the weekends if somebody was visiting and had never seen it we’d go over. But I went over on a fairly regular basis just to talk to them and see what was going on. Like, when the president would lay a wreath I would certainly be there. I had a fleeting thought and it fled.

LC: That’s all right. Maybe we’ll get that one back. Can you describe the protocols for actually being able to be buried at Arlington, at least what they were when you were there? Do you remember those?
AS: Generally, anybody who honorably retired could be buried there and people, veterans, who had a Purple Heart or a Silver Star or higher could be buried. Spouses, adult dependent children, and then other people as determined by the president.

LC: Where there any particular burials that you remember during that period that you attended?

AS: The chief of cemeteries for the VA (Department of Veteran Affairs) died and I went to his funeral because there were close ties between us and them. We worked together a good bit.

LC: Oh sure.

AS: It was the prettiest casket I have ever seen. I would have loved to have had it in my living room as an end table (laughs) or a coffee table. It was mahogany. It was gorgeous.

LC: (laughs) Of course Arlington is a hugely moving place in the American mind, I think. Did you feel a special sense of responsibility, some kind of important feeling?

AS: Oh certainly. It’s a national monument for sure. And one day I was on a committee with a general who had never been to Arlington. So I asked him if he would like to tour and one Sunday I picked him up and took him over and we were on one of those high spots where you look out and see these markers and he said, “All those graves.” And it was just—it really hit him. It’s a wonderful thing to go out to Arlington. The superintendent used to have a picnic on the Fourth of July and you would go out in front of Lee Custer’s house and watch the fireworks. My fleeting thought was when President Carter was president and they had a memorial service for some group, and I cannot remember which one it was, but it was an amphitheater and everybody was there—the Supreme Court, a bunch of senators, and all that sort of stuff. But my memories of it, my greatest memory, there was an Air Force, I think, quartet who sang, “Precious Lord, Hold My Hand,” and it was absolutely—and they were singing a capella. And all of the sudden while they were singing a bird started chirping along with them and at the end the president said, “All I can think of to say is, Amen.” And it was such a touching event. General Marshal died just as I was retiring and I was on leave and I was
really sorry because I never saw a big funeral and that’s probably the last truly big one
there will be.

LC: General Marshall, Secretary of State?
LC: Omar Bradley, okay.
AS: Yes. And my office had the funeral plans and about once a year you pulled
out the plans and reviewed them to be sure that they were correct.

LC: And that you were ready.
AS: Yeah, and that the Army was ready. The military in Washington was very
much involved in things at Arlington because the troops belonged to them, the old guard.
LC: Absolutely. Last year you mentioned when we were talking that on occasion
when you were going to work you encountered protestors. Do you remember that?
AS: (Laughs) Oh good grief, yes. (Laughs)
LC: What can you tell me about that?
AS: Well, they were frequently around the Pentagon and it made it hard to get
into the Pentagon. I was in the same office as the nuclear energy people so the people
decided they didn’t like them and so they blocked our doors and we had to go in
roundabout. We couldn’t go in the front door, we had to go in roundabout and they were
standing out there trying to give us things and I didn’t take it. And one of them said,
“Don’t you think I have a right to say what I believe?” I said, “Yeah, and I have a right
not to read it.” The big thing was the year the farmers came to Washington on all their
tractors.

LC: Nineteen-eighty, I think.
AS: And they blocked out driveways so we couldn’t take our cars in and so
people parked on the street and then the police towed them away or gave them tickets.
That was fun. (Laughs)

LC: Did you just kind of take these things in stride?
AS: You didn’t have much choice.

LC: Did you ever feel threatened?
AS: No. There was an entrance to the parking that was outside one of my
windows and I could watch what was going on a lot of times and we would—one time, I
don’t know which group it was but they were all lying down in the driveway. So the
police would come and pick them up by their feet and pull them off and they’d come
back and lie down again. The police would pull them off. So they were persistent. I was
also there when the Christians came and it was one of the first big gatherings of
fundamentalist Christians and they were over on the mall. And the lieutenant colonel
who worked with me and I were walking around watching all of them and observing and
this woman came up to us because we were the only thing in uniform I guess. She said,
“I can’t find my group.” We said, “Well, what group were you with?” “I was with the
New York group and I can’t find them.” We said, “Why don’t you look for banners and
see if you can find them.” (Laughs)

LC: That was helpful. (Laughs)

AS: And then I was there when the Pope came.

LC: Yeah, tell me about that experience.

AS: Well, he was on the mall or he was going to appear on the mall and we went
over during the week and watched them put up the platform and all that sort of thing. I
asked a good Roman Catholic friend of mine if she was going down to see the Pope. She
said, “No, I’m going to watch it on television. I can see better.” So I decided that’s what
I’d do, too.

LC: But certainly his arrival there had to have been a huge event.

AS: Oh, it was. And I was there during Reagan’s first inauguration. It was a
gorgeous day. It was warm and sunny and so this same friend and I caught the Metro and
went in to see that and we perched on a lamppost along the parade route. It was funny
because they had some little fancy designs that we could stand on.

LC: So you just climbed up?

AS: Yeah. Stood on them and watched the parade. (Laughs)

LC: Do you know about where you were on Pennsylvania Avenue?

AS: Probably not far from the Martyr Station, if there is one. I really don’t know,
but it was right on the parade route.

LC: So I take it you had no official duties that day. You were on your own.
AS: I was on my own. I thought later, “I wish I had volunteered to march in the parade.” It would have been a long walk but it would have been a memorable experience.

LC: You were there nonetheless.

AS: Yeah, I was there.

LC: You stayed until—well, the president was inaugurated in January of ’81 so soon after that did you come to the point where you decided that you were in fact going to retire?

AS: I had been in that job for two and a half years so there was somebody else waiting in the wings for it. I could have stayed two more years but I didn’t want to be somebody for whom they had to find a make-work job. So that was a good indication to me it was time to retire.

LC: Did you have some mixed feelings about going toward the end of your military career? I mean you say you could have easily stayed in that position for another couple of years if circumstances had allowed.

AS: Well, I wouldn’t have been in that position and I didn’t really want anything else. There are a lot of jobs you could just sort of fill time in and I didn’t want one of those because I had had a very rewarding time in that job. Interesting things happened and it was a challenging job, and enjoyable. It sounds awful to say you enjoyed dealing with the things we did but it was. It was a good time. A good friend of mine said, when she retired she said, “I want to do it on my terms.” And I agreed with her. I don’t want them to tell me I have to retire. And it was a good time.

LC: And certainly a high point. I mean, you’ve indicated how important you felt this work was and that you had a hand in really important things—the POW/MIA resolution issues. During that time did anything come up with regard to relations with Vietnam, with Hanoi, the government in Hanoi?

AS: Not for me. Now, we had—the Central Identification Laboratory in Hawaii, where all the identifications were made, was a part of my office and we had the mortuary in Dover, Delaware and in Oakland that were also a part of the activities of my office so that was an interesting part, too. You asked me if I ever talked to parents. Every now and then some irate mother would call and I would get her. One day Mrs. Smith called
and Mrs. Smith was very unhappy because some of her son’s possessions had not been
sent home. Among them were illegal weapons but I specifically remember that his dingo
boots did not come home with his possessions. I don’t remember how he had died but
she was very irate and just berating me. And I was not being mad at her, I was just,
“Mrs. Smith, I understand.” And finally she said to me, “Nobody gives a shit about my
son and nobody cares.” I said, “I care, Mrs. Smith, and I am listening to you.” (Laughs)
And then another retired mess sergeant called and the Army had turned down—his son
had shot himself in the head playing Russian roulette. His son was an MP and the Army
had ruled that his injury was due to his own misconduct. He should have known enough
not to hold a weapon to his head, especially as an MP. But he was permanently
handicapped and disabled. The sergeant thought the Army ought to reverse the findings
and it had been reviewed by everybody but he was one I talked to. Sometimes I’d be in
the office late and I’d pick up the phone but anyway, he threatened to go to “60 Minutes”
and all the things to get attention for his son’s case. I told him about the Army Board for
Correction of Military Records and I said, “That is your only recourse because they can
change anything.” He had never heard of it.

LC: Really?

AS: As much as he didn’t like what we were doing, he would call me every now
and then to ask me advice. And that was an interesting turn on things, I thought. Mostly
I dealt with people on paper but it was still dealing with human lives.

LC: You know, in crucial national issues that obviously continue even down to
the present day—

AS: Well, there was a fire in the embassy in Pakistan during that time and an
Army warrant officer was killed and that was very difficult because all of his records
were in the same building with him. So it was almost impossible to do an identification.
The only thing we had—we couldn’t find his dental records, we couldn’t find his civilian
dentist—nothing. But he had very crooked teeth and when they would describe to his
wife she said that she identified him from that, she accepted the identification from that.
That was one of those cases that got all sorts of interest from the packaderms.

LC: These are difficult issues for you to negotiate, too.
AS: Well, the sergeants who worked for me worked with that sort of stuff all the
time but that one got high-level interest.

LC: Was that because—what was the reason?

AS: Because it was in Pakistan and because it was a military man and there was a
fire and the generals decided that they had to manage it.

LC: They had to get involved in that one.

AS: Uh-huh. And the sergeant would have done it a lot more efficiently.

(Laughs)

LC: Ann, as you think back on your career and this has come up a couple of
times, but I wonder how you feel about your service in Vietnam. In the context of
everything else that you did was it something that you still think was an important part of
your career path?

AS: Yes, I think it was because at the time it was where the action was. It was a
strange time and you don’t go out and drink coffee on the top of one of the biggest hotels
in Saigon and watch the artillery flares from beyond. It was an unreal sort of life. War
was all around but it wasn’t there. I never felt particularly frightened. It was not the
most rewarding assignment I ever had but I’m glad I had it.

LC: How do you view the Vietnam conflict generally? I mean, is this something
you’ve given much thought to, whether the United States—

AS: You can’t help but think of it now.

LC: Because of Iraq?

AS: Yeah. And because of how we don’t learn.

LC: Can you say a little more about that? What do you mean?

AS: There are different wars. There are totally different wars but we still seem to
fail to think of the consequences. It seemed to me, since I’m such a tactician and
strategist—

LC: You are, actually.

AS: —that it was ridiculous to think that they were going to welcome us with
open arms in Iraq and be so glad to have us and that we didn’t plan for anything that
happened after got there and won. For example, having no security for such things as
their treasures, their museums, and we are, it seems to me, totally oblivious to other
people’s cultures. Ours is so good we have to give it to everybody. (Laughs) And I’m
not being un-American or un-patriotic. I just think we’re not realistic.

LC: About our planning for another nation and its development?

AS: By assuming that because we have it they want it. They may want some of
us but they don’t want us superimposed upon them. I just finished reading a book called
The Battle for God, and it’s about fundamentalism in Protestant Christianity, Islam, and
among the Jews and the roots of fundamentalism. And a lot of it is peoples not
understanding other cultures. Fascinating book.

LC: And so by this lack of understanding they then become intolerant and then
have to do something about the culture they can’t tolerate? Something like that?

AS: Yeah. And that a lot of fundamentalism—and this isn’t just in religion, I
think—is because people can’t deal with change. They don’t adjust to it well and they
want to hold onto what was and modernization is an anathema. So there. That’s my big
word for the day, and that’s off the track.

LC: Well, but it’s an interesting sort of commentary because it does have to do
with why there’s so much, for example, public support for the American mission Iraq,
Operation Iraqi Freedom.

AS: I think everybody, almost without exception, would support the soldiers and
want them success. But the policy is another thing and I think the policy was forced upon
us and we may have become a little bit more jaded about it. I may be speaking only for
myself. I have become more jaded but I never was very un-jaded.

LC: And you know, I wonder if you can kind of draw parallels between the fact
that you were in Vietnam in 1970, which many historians and command personnel who
were there think was a turning point year when the United States had sort of won part of
the war but couldn’t figure out how to meet the needs of domestic complaints about the
length of the war and couldn’t figure out how to, essentially, get out of South Vietnam
and leave it as a functional and secure entity. And I wonder if you see that we’re having
sort of some of the same problems in Iraq. We can’t really figure out how to get out,
leaving a functional and secure political entity behind us.
AS: Well, I think in both cases we certainly underestimated our enemy and helped create some of our enemies but I’m not a deep enough thinking to draw large conclusions.

LC: I think you’ve done pretty well. Ann is there anything I haven’t asked you about in the course of the interview that you’ve been thinking, “Gosh, I hope she asks me something on that topic?”

AS: You’ve been ahead of me all the way.

LC: (Laughs) Well, Ann, I want to thank you very much for the time that you’ve taken and that you’ve invested in this oral history interview and all the insights that you’ve contributed and you’ve done so very freely and I want to thank you for that.

AS: Well, you’re welcome. I’ve enjoyed it.