

Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
THOMAS H. BURKHALTER
Colonel, Army, Korean War and Vietnam War
1996

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Burkhalter, Thomas H., (b.1930). Oral History Interview, 1996.

User Copy: 5 sound cassettes (ca. 248 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy: 2 sound cassettes (ca. 248 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Transcript: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder)

Military Papers: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder)

Abstract:

Thomas H. Burkhalter, a Port Washington, Wisconsin resident, discusses his experiences as an officer in the Fifth Regimental Combat Team during the Korean War; with the Military Assistance Command, Thailand (MACTHAI) Support Group during the Vietnam War; and as the County Veterans Service Officer in Ozaukee County, Wisconsin. Burkhalter grew up in Madison, Wisconsin and participated in the ROTC at the University of Wisconsin where he studied engineering psychology. Burkhalter married his high school sweetheart right after college graduation, but he had to report to Fort Benning (Georgia) immediately after his honeymoon. He feels the basic infantry training he received at Fort Benning was the most important military training of his life. Burkhalter then went to Camp Atterbury (Indiana) as a lieutenant to lead basic training for the 31st Dixie Division of the National Guard, a unit that had previously refused to integrate. He discusses the integration of African American soldiers into the Army and touches upon regional differences among soldiers. Burkhalter describes the training he gave the Guardsmen, including: drills, use of the M-1 Rifle, map reading, and physical training. Burkhalter expresses mixed feelings about how successful the integration of black soldiers was. In 1952, Burkhalter was shipped to Korea via Alaska and Japan, where he took an intensive two-week course in Chemical, Biological, and Radiological Warfare in Iwo Jima (Japan). He characterizes the base in Pusan (South Korea) as disorganized, damaged, and overrun with refugees. He also characterizes the railroads in Korea as slow compared with Japan. Burkhalter was assigned to Yong Dong Po (South Korea) as a lieutenant in the Fifth Regimental Combat Team (RCT). Burkhalter tells an amazing story of meeting his commander on his first night in country at a formal dinner where C-rations were served on fine china and conversation was restricted to "equitation." Burkhalter provides an overview of the history of the Fifth RCT. The Fifth RCT had Korean Army trainees in their unit called Katusas. Burkhalter characterizes the Katusas as combat-experienced and very loyal to the U.S. Next, he details the two engagements he experienced in Korea. He vividly describes combat versus the Chinese at Outpost Harry, between the Chorwon and Kumwha valleys. His second engagement involved seizing a strategic "saddle" between two hills and creating a regimental combat outpost there. Before this operation, Burkhalter mailed his "last letter" to his brother because he was sure he would be killed. Burkhalter remarks upon the intimidation techniques used by the Chinese; they played Glen Miller tunes over loudspeakers and told the Americans "We know that you are there." Burkhalter was on the verge of attacking a Chinese post when the cease-fire negotiations interrupted. During the second engagement, Burkhalter was wounded in the shoulder and hip when a mortar went off in

a nearby tunnel. He tells how he was strapped to the hood of a jeep and driven to the MASH. Burkhalter also remarks that a young soldier in his platoon named Cross was the last American to be killed in the entire Korean War. He touches upon the sheer noise of battle and contrasts his experiences with depictions in Hollywood films. Burkhalter claims it was hard to convince Americans not to rush to the aid of a fallen buddy but to continue shooting. He also claims Chinese soldiers were given narcotics to relax them before battles. He spends a good deal of time talking about psychological warfare used by the Chinese and the devastating impact of *human wave attacks* on the U.S. soldier. Finally, Burkhalter compares the U.S., Chinese, North and South Korean Armies to each other. Burkhalter states he was the youngest company commander in the Fifth RCT when he arrived in Korea, but when he left two years later, he was one of the most seasoned veterans. After the Korean War, Burkhalter was transferred to the quartermaster corps in Fort Lee (Virginia) where he helped racially integrate a battalion. Burkhalter states he did so well converting his company into a patrolling supply battalion that he was promoted to Petroleum Supply Officer. The Army also financed his Masters in industrial psychology at the Ohio State University. Following graduate school, Burkhalter worked at Natick Laboratories (Massachusetts) in Research and Development for three years, using his psychology degree. After Natick, he attended Command and General Staff College and was promoted to Major. He then spent a few years as petroleum supply commander in rural France. Burkhalter discusses raising a family in the Army. He says the Department of Defense dependants schools lacked teachers and provided low quality education for Army children. Burkhalter mentions encountering Charles De Gaulle (who he characterizes as egomaniacal) at a ship christening. In 1967, Burkhalter's first marriage ended because his wife "had enough of the Army." He was called up to Vietnam shortly thereafter. Burkhalter spends much of the interview describing the Vietnam War and comparing it with the Korean War. He also compares the psychology of patrolling to that of being a racecar driver, stating the risk of getting killed becomes part of the work. Burkhalter believes soldiers were less invested in the Vietnam War than in the Korean War because of the rotation system. He maintains Vietnam was a civil war and the U.S. strategy was inappropriate for the political situation. Burkhalter calls Vietnam a "religious war" and discusses the ideology of anti-communist Catholics and Buddhists in Vietnam as well as a broader "fanatical" dislike of communism that Burkhalter feels blinded the U.S. to the realities on the ground. In addition, Burkhalter describes at length the equipment, uniforms, weapons, and radios used in Korea and Vietnam. He also speaks frankly about prostitution, alcohol consumption, and drug use. Burkhalter reveals that a company lost morale points if a soldier was discovered to have contracted a sexually transmitted disease while in Korea. Burkhalter notes that in Korea no hard liquor was allowed (only beer), which was not the case in Vietnam. He also touches upon heroin use in Vietnam. From his perspective as an officer, Burkhalter describes differences between draftees and enlistees in his unit. He portrays enlistees as more gung-ho but draftees as more intelligent problem-solvers. After his first tour in Vietnam, Burkhalter returned to the U.S. and worked at the Pentagon. His research and development work included evaluating software models and war games that simulated battle strategies. He reveals he was involved in planning and implementing the withdrawal from Vietnam, which put him in contact with General William C.

Westmoreland. In 1971, and now a Colonel, Burkhalter went on his second tour of duty in Vietnam to begin implementing the withdrawal plan. He summarizes the plan and outlines how the U.S. military shut down operations in Vietnam. He addresses the challenge of not being able to share sensitive security intelligence with his troops. He feels draftees especially would have been more compliant and invested in their mission if they had been told how their duties fit into the overall withdrawal plan. Burkhalter addresses evacuation of American civilians as well as Cambodians and South Vietnamese who had fought with the Americans. He tells how ninety-two Cambodians chose to return home rather than be relocated as refugees; ninety of them were killed soon after crossing the border into Cambodia. Burkhalter's second wife was a Vietnamese woman. He describes his successful efforts to get his wife and eleven of her family members out of Vietnam. Directly after the Vietnam War, Burkhalter worked with Vietnam refugee groups in the U.S. He reflects on the displacement of the Montagnards and Cambodians to "places like Sheboygan" (Wisconsin) and touches upon culture clashes between Americans and the Montagnard immigrants. After the war, Burkhalter held many posts in the Army and as a private consultant. On a job involving logistics and readiness in Frankfurt (Germany), Burkhalter met Senator Orrin Hatch. He states that after listening to his suggestions, Hatch pushed through legislation funding equipment the Army needed. Burkhalter also describes President Jimmy Carter's visit to Frankfurt in the early 1980s and compares Carter's support of the Army to that of Ronald Reagan and Dwight D. Eisenhower. In 1982, Burkhalter retired from the Army and moved back to Wisconsin. He tells a humorous story about how his brother signed him up to take the civil servant exam the day they arrived in Wisconsin, after they had just spent three days driving cross-country. Burkhalter passed and became a County Veterans Service Officer (CVSO). He worked in Richland Center and later, after marrying his third wife, became the CVSO in Ozaukee County. Burkhalter describes his work as a CVSO and discusses Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) at length. He worked with World War II, Vietnam, and Desert Storm veterans suffering from PTSD. Throughout, Burkhalter repeatedly emphasizes that the biggest problem for soldiers in Vietnam was not knowing who the enemy was. He feels this ambiguity is the reason for higher rates of PTSD among Vietnam veterans than veterans of other wars. Burkhalter predicts that as female soldiers increasingly participate in wars like in Desert Storm, veterans will have more PTSD related to rape and sexual abuse--the beginnings of which he had already begun to witness. Finally, Burkhalter reflects on the psychological aspects of facing his own death, killing other people, and postwar guilt.

Biographical Sketch:

Burkhalter was born in Iron Mountain, Michigan, but grew up in Madison, Wisconsin. He attended the University of Wisconsin in the Advanced Army ROTC. He served in the Fifth Regimental Combat Team in Korea and served two tours in Vietnam. Burkhalter got a Masters in Industrial Psychology at Ohio State University. He married three times; his second wife was Vietnamese, and Burkhalter helped her family immigrate to the U.S at the conclusion of the war. Post-Vietnam, Burkhalter held various positions in Fort Lee (Virginia), Frankfurt (Germany), Utah, and at the Presidio (San Francisco). In 1982, he retired from the Army with the rank of Colonel and moved to Wisconsin where he became the Ozaukee County Veterans Service Officer, helping veterans cope with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and other issues. He has participated in numerous veterans associations and now lives in Port Washington, Wisconsin.

Interviewed by Mark Van Ells, 1996

Transcribed by Mary Lou Condon, ca. 2004.

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Interview Transcript:

Mark: Today's date is February 22, 1996. This is Mark Van Ells, Archivist, Wisconsin Veterans Museum doing an oral history interview this morning with Mr. Thomas Burkhalter of Port Washington, Wisconsin, a veteran of the Korean War and Vietnam War, and is presently a County Veteran Service Officer in Ozaukee County. Thanks for coming in this morning.

Burkhalter: Glad to be here.

Mark: I appreciate it. I suppose we should start from the top as they say. Why don't you tell me a bit about where you were born and raised and what you were doing prior to your entry into the military.

Burkhalter: Okay. I was born in Iron Mountain, Michigan in January of 1930. My mother's family was from the UP and we stayed up there until I about entered kindergarten. My father was transferred to Madison. So from kindergarten through my bachelor's degree, my family lived in Madison in three different locations. I went to the University of Wisconsin High School, the University of Wisconsin. I got my bachelor's degree from there, and I also was commissioned in the regular Army from there. The program had just opened up because we were in the middle of the Korean War.

Mark: Right. I suppose that we should take off from there. You were in college when the war started?

Burkhalter: Yes, I was.

Mark: Do you recall the incident? Like a lot of World War II veterans who remember Pearl Harbor and this sort of thing. Do you remember when that war started, and do you remember how you viewed your relationship to it being a young man?

Burkhalter: Yes, when it first started we didn't know whether they were going to allow us to stay in college or whether we'd be drafted right away. We were all, you know, registered for the draft and everything. About the time when school started again in the fall of '50 that was the beginning of my junior year. I thought I was going into the Air Force Senior ROTC in aircraft maintenance engineering because I was studying engineering psychology. I came back and registered in the fall and found out to my great shock that the Air Force had decided that you had to have an engineering degree. They didn't care if it was in agriculture engineering. The University of Wisconsin taught engineering psychology in the Psychology Department. So my senior instructor in the Air Force had looked out for me, and he had talked to a friend in the Army. So I ended up in Advanced Army ROTC in the Military

Police Corps and continued on in school. I must say about that time, one of the last things in mind was making a career in the Army.

Mark: I am curious about your attraction to the Air Force.

Burkhalter: Oh, it's because I was studying within the area of engineering psychology. I was studying aviation psychology. It was a career field the Air Force was looking for, but they made the decision that you had to have an engineering degree if you were at the University of Wisconsin.

Mark: Yeah, but the Air Force, I mean, you seemed to have had a preference for that over the other services.

Burkhalter: I did at that time, yeah.

Mark: Why was that?

Burkhalter: I liked airplanes. [laughs]

Mark: I see. So you were in ROTC before the war started?

Burkhalter: Yes, I was.

Mark: Was it required at UW at the time?

Burkhalter: Yes, it was. It was required at the UW at the time, and so you were signed up, but I had, I thought I had put in my papers to go right into Advanced ROTC before the Korean War started.

Mark: So, a lot of young guys on campus in ROTC while the war's going on. How were you viewing the war in Korea? Are you thinkin' "Gee, I want to get over there" or "Gee I don't want to get over there"?

Burkhalter: No just that it was distant, and if you remember, the history of the Korean War as it was reported in the United States, the popular press kept saying it was going to be over very shortly because of the leadership there kept saying it was going to be over with very shortly. We really thought the war would be over before we got there. Before I came on active duty, I thought the fighting in Korea would actually be over. Might go over there on some kind of occupation duty but that it would be over. It wasn't of course.

Mark: And you eventually did end up over there.

Burkhalter: Yes.

Mark: Why don't you walk me through the steps from graduation –

Burkhalter: Okay.

Mark: To your commissioning and going [unintelligible] into the Armed services?

Burkhalter: When I graduated the first thing I did is marry my childhood sweetheart from high school who was a year behind me in the University of Wisconsin. We went on a short honeymoon and came back and found orders to report immediately to Fort Benning, Georgia in the infantry in the mailbox the day we got home. So we packed up and it indicated we should have been there already. Hindsight I know that they did this because somebody had goofed up [laughs]. In fact, they goofed up in more ways than one, but anyhow went on down to Georgia and we went out into an area known as Harmony Church where they trained newly commissioned officers and also had the Officer Candidates School for infantry. There would always be two companies in most of our classes, one of second lieutenants and one of OCS candidates. The difference was the OCS candidates, when we were in stands would go in first and have to remain standing until we came in and were seated. In our barracks every two bunks we had a piece of plywood that was put up, and that made it into a room. So we had to pay our quarters allowance for our BOQ and we had to pay for maid service. I think that was sweeping the porch because we still had to clean them. So it really wasn't very different, but as I look back at it over a lifetime, the infantry training I got was probably the most important military training that I ever received in my life.

Mark: Why was that?

Burkhalter: It was most relevant to what went on in the Army both in peacetime and in wartime. It was very, it was the basics particularly in the area of leadership and responsibility. When I finished there I came up to Camp Atterbury, Indiana, where the 31st Dixie Division, the Alabama and Mississippi National Guard, was running a basic training camp, and they had refused to integrate. So I came in with a large group of officers, but very few NCOs to take over the program and discharge the people back to the National Guard, although the colored stayed on active duty, so that we could run an integrated basic training camp. Really what I was doing was a basic three months of troop duty, which was required before you went into combat. I did that mostly in George Company the 167th Infantry and when I completed that I had a short leave at home and went on to Korea. Do you want me to tell you about how I got to Korea, or is that not important?

Mark: No, that's very important. I want to go back a little bit to your trip to Indiana. Now these were people who had been to Korea and came back or were they [unintelligible]?

Burkhalter: Very few of them. My Company Commander had. He was the First Lieutenant who had. I can't remember his name. I tried to remember it on the way down; I just couldn't. We had almost no NCOs. Our First Sergeant was actually a PFC who had been busted from a sergeant first class for being late to something. I don't even remember what that was, but he was very good, but he was about the only noncommissioned officer we had. So we had to do a lot of the things that noncoms had to do. We had to go out and dump people out of bed in the morning and so forth to get them going. Most of the company that I was training were people that had been in the United States Army Reserves in Brooklyn, New York, and had failed to come to drill so they had called them to active duty and were giving them basic training before sending them to Korea. They weren't the most highly motivated group I had ever run into. But we were giving the ordinary first eight and second weeks, the second eight weeks of basic training and infantry.

Mark: Which consisted of what?

Burkhalter: Oh, everything from close ordered drill to small unit actions, you know, and everything in between. Rifle marksmanship, familiarization and marksmanship for some of them with the Browning automatic rifle. Some of them the light and heavy machine-gun. Our company wasn't into the heavy machineguns and mortars which were in weapons companies as I recall, but we went back to the range many times to try to qualify everybody in the M-1 Rifle which was the left over from World War II but the basic infantry weapon at that time, and compass range; map reading, physical training, that type of thing.

Mark: How did the integration process go?

Burkhalter: Pretty well. Once the guardsmen went home. We didn't get too many of those guys in the 167th. I don't know why. They brought people in particularly that were attuned to this into the 200th Infantry and did most of it there. I do not look back on these days with happiness. It was a very unusual unit as I look back at it in the Army, although I think the troops that were trained there got a fairly decent basic training.

Mark: Okay, So your trip to Korea. That's half way around the world.

Burkhalter: Oh, yeah. I came home. I remember one thing I ran over our cat the night before I left so I wasn't too popular. My folks lived in Madison but I was

staying with my wife and her folks. My folks lived out in the Village of Maple Bluff and her folks lived in Shorewood Hills. So I was spending a lot of time going back and forth seeing everyone. They took me out to the airport in Madison and I got on a DC-3 and flew up to the Twin Cities. And there I got on an airplane that was known as the Strato-cruiser that Northwest Airlines had. It was the civilianization of the B-50 bomber. You might remember something in the history books of it. It was one of the first airplanes that had a separate deck. This time it was below with a little bar in it. We took off and flew non-stop.

Mark: To where? Korea?

Burkhalter: To, no, to Seattle, and at Seattle – Tacoma we were bused down to Fort Lewis and to a replacement depot situation, and I ran into a lot of fellows that I hadn't seen since Fort Benning and we were there a matter of days. I know when I came in I got weighed with my baggage. We had to send hold baggage in those days, all the required uniforms and everything in the event peace came and we had to be properly attired and so forth. I'll jump ahead and say the next time I saw that was when it was returned to the continental United States from Pusan, but I had one B 4 bag and myself and I had become quite ill in the basic training camp. I weighed a hundred and twelve pounds, my bag weighed twenty-five. I was an infantry lieutenant at a hundred and thirty-seven pounds bag and baggage, and I was a shoo-in because they were filling Canadian Pacific Airways DC-6's flying to Japan with second lieutenants of the infantry by weight. So about the third day we got in buses with the windows all covered over and drove up to Vancouver, British Columbia and we weren't allowed to talk to anybody. Of course we were all in uniform. We were joined by some Canadians mostly doctors and dentists. Flew to Shemya in the Aleutians. Had some problem with the aircraft. Stayed at Shemya in Aleutians for about eleven to twelve hours. Horrible place.

Mark: How is that? Just desolate?

Burkhalter: Desolate. Absolutely desolate. The highest thing was the telephone pole. Quonset huts, bereft of anything growing. Sad place. I took off and landed in Japan. I'll never forget. I thought I was on Mars. In those days the homogenization of the world had not occurred yet and Japan was still a much more traditional looking place. Went out to Camp Drake, Japan and was put on a roster to go Chemical Biological Radiological Warfare School, which was down near Hiroshima at the sight of the old Japanese Naval Academy on the Island of Iwo Jima. It was a two-week very intensive course and in those days regulation said you had to have an officer trained in this in every infantry company. So that's where, all of them were rather small fellows because we had all been shipped over by weight and the other

fellows had come over by ship and through chance, because I don't think they ever could have organized anything that well. We met the other fellows who came by ship in Pusan when we finished. We went down to Kyushu by train and took the Pusan ferry over. We met in Pusan and then proceeded by train from there up to near Seoul.

Mark: So as you are on the ship going to Korea, perhaps you see land. What are your impressions –

Burkhalter: Oh, it was before we got on. I have to tell you, I was separated from some of my personal goods through marital problems for many, many years. Daughter-in-law of mine got them and presented them to me when I went to the Korean War Memorial dedication. One of the slides in there is a bunch of the lads that I had known for some time waiting to get on the Pusan ferry to leave Japan, and all you have to do is look at the faces. I mean nobody was very happy with this. Even though this particular group going over, they were almost all regular officers, because of "packeted," kind of rejoined together. They were from all over the country. They were either graduates of the Military Academy – we had a couple of Naval Academy graduates 'cause people used to be allowed to cross over, and other than that distinguished military graduates from colleges from all over the country. They were a very serious group of young men because that was the shortest-lived occupation in country during the Korea War was an infantry platoon leader, and that's what the great majority of us were destined to become. So, yes it was very serious. The thing that you say what happened when we landed in Korea. The first thing was the smell came out to greet you and you experienced that smell until you left. Korea used human feces for fertilization and the smell permeated the entire country. That and the fermenting of Kimchi made it an olfactory experience. [laughs] I can remember leaving and having the experience in reverse as I also left from Pusan and after we stood several miles out to sea everybody was saying "What is that strange smell?" Finally somebody said "Fresh air." [laughs] So, when we got off in Pusan the fact that how disorganizing was is hit you right in the face, because --

Mark: How so?

Burkhalter: Well, everything was very disorganized. Not necessarily what we were doing, but the entire Korean community, which you could see, it was all around you and so forth, was very disorganized. The place was filled with refugees. Very shortly after we got out and got beyond the perimeter there was a lot of physical damage and stuff like that.

Mark: More damage. You landed in Pusan as you said.

Burkhalter: Yes, and then the train to Yong Dong Po. They called it the “Vomit Comet” in those days. It isn’t that long a trip and as I recall it took two days. They had a commander for each car, a job that I was elected to I guess by someone, and we were told what to do in the event that the train was attacked. Out in the vestibule there was a sealed amount of ammunition and they said there better be an attack if that seal is broken. So you couldn’t break the seal to get at the ammunition unless there was an attack and then the first thing you did of course is break the seal and pass out the ammunition and then start to try to defend yourself. I always thought that was kind of unusual but, these were steam driven trains, what was left over from the Japanese occupation and then the war which really got at their rolling stock. After I’d been there for awhile, we had diesel engines and brought in some additional rolling stock and so forth. So, the railroads became more effective, but not when I first came. They were not that effective.

Mark: So, as you’re going through the countryside of Korea, what are your impressions? How was it different than the US and how did it seem different from Japan?

Burkhalter: Well, it was we’ve come to say very much a third world country at that time where Japan was an industrialized modern, country, Particularly by Asian standards and not all that far way back. By the time in my life I had been to Mexico once, and it was more organized than Mexico was. The only really disorganized places I saw in Japan, Tokyo had been rebuilt pretty well, but Hiroshima had not. I’d been to Hiroshima, and it had not been rebuilt very well. But Korea, very little had been done since the breakout from Pusan perimeter in terms of getting it back. The people lived under very primitive conditions. The real eye opener was when we got off the train at Yong Dong Po. That’s a city just south of Seoul and there was an enormous amount of damage there. I think every bridge had, at least part of it, was an army type of repair, a Bailey type thing replacing at least several spans and so forth. I don’t recall anything that was in original like condition. We went to a replacement depot at Yong Dong Po. They lined everybody up and called you by name and handed you a set of orders to your unit. Most of us were expecting to go to a division. One of the divisions that was in Korea - I always had the feeling I was going to the 7th Division. Just kind of a gut feeling, but when I got my orders that said I was going to the Fifth Regimental Combat Team, and I have to be frank with you, I had never heard of it. It was an independent combat team. More often than not when it was employed either the whole combat team or an element thereof was attached to a division. It was independently controlled when it was in reserve. And they finished off and then they told everybody that they were going to get a chance to sleep overnight except the officers going to the Fifth Regimental Combat Team, and they told us to go over and wait in an area

and a guy in a jeep would come pick us up. And he did in a very beat-up jeep and drove us up through Seoul, and I have to tell you that was really the eye-opener 'cause Seoul was a mess. I can't recall seeing a building that wasn't significantly damaged with the exception of the old Gates. When I went up through Seoul, and we went up to a place called Uijongbu and we were in the Third Division rear. We went to get our issue of combat gear, you know, helmets, flak vests, weapons, what have you, and I remember each of us was standing in front of a counter and these supply guys were pulling all this stuff out in front of us. It was all nice new gear, and some guy stuck his head in the door and said "Hey, these guys are going to the Fifth RCT." They pulled all that off. I got a helmet you could put your fist through. [laughs] It was junk that they issued to us, you know, we weren't really part of their team. Well, it was an introduction to the kind of unit that I was going to, but we got our stuff. It was still that day, because we had started that morning. We'd come into Yong Dong Po, and the driver hustled us back in. There were three officers and we had our gear in a quarter ton trailer and we were sitting in a jeep. The driver was very taciturn. He didn't say anything except "Yes, Sir, No Sir" in a kind of mumbly voice and "I don't know Sir." Mostly it was "I don't know Sir." He didn't know anything. He knew what he was supposed to do, and he drove us up a road and we came to an intersection and it was a "y" in the road and we were coming down one of the branches of the "y". He just pulled over to the side of the road and stopped. We couldn't get much out of him. In a little while came a rag taggy band down the road. When it got by us he just started up and pulled in to the end of it. It was the Headquarter of the Fifth RCT on the move. It stopped, and they set up some tents. We were told to clean up. We came into a little CP tent and we met our commander. There was a table set there for about eighty-five others and the three of us. It had a white tablecloth on. It had had dishes that had the crest of our organization on it. A gentleman introduced himself as the executive officer said "Other than the subjects the commander will introduce, we will confine ourselves to equitation [horseback riding] this evening." That was to be the topic at the dinner table. We were eating C rations that had been taken out of the can and warmed up, [laughs] but here we were eating it on this china with silverware. The commander came in and greeted us and we all met him. He wanted to know a little about us. We had been given a pamphlet to study about the history, primarily of the 5th Infantry Regiment. He asked us questions, kind of as an oral examination, while we were eating. Other than that, they talked about equitation, which, although I'd spent a summer as a cowboy, I didn't know much about formal equitation so I didn't have much to say. As we finished dinner, he said "Of course you are free to remain at the headquarters a few days until you get your bearings, but each of your battalion commanders had expressed an interest in you getting there right away because you are gravely needed." Well, we didn't even stay overnight, and I went to my battalion from there. That's how I got to Korea.

Mark: That's a fairly usual story. How did this Fifth Regimental Combat Team—why was it separated?

Burkhalter: Okay, it had been organized in Korea during the occupation right after World War II. I believe in late 1948 it was returned to Hawaii. We had a larger than normal number of Pacific islanders, soldiers and officers in that organization. They had stayed there beyond—they were just starting to rotate in '52. They'd been at it for awhile, but a lot of people had elected to stay with the unit and so forth. When I joined the Fifth RCT it had almost no draftees in it. The Fifth Infantry Regiment is a very old line regiment that had fought in China and in World War II. And what have you. Had a long record. It had been brought in during the days of the Pusan perimeter and started fighting with the Twenty-fourth Division. Didn't do that exclusively but during the early days spent quite a bit of time with the Twenty-fourth. Which is odd because we ended the war with the 24th, and I was there at that time. When I joined them they were not attached to anybody. They were the reserve of the Ninth US Corps. They had been all over the peninsula, and doing almost everything. They had one difference as far as infantry units were concerned from the divisional units. All of us by that time had Korean Soldiers, which we called Katusas. Korean-Army Trainees with the United States Army. They were hardly trainees. I mean these guys had been there since when I joined 'em in '52. They'd been there since '51, early '51. They were very combat experienced people. In the divisions they had them in place of about a third of the privates and junior NCOs and we had them in addition so that our units were bigger. Later on, I became a rifle company commander. I recall I had a little over two hundred and twenty people. That's a large rifle company, it really is. The Chinese used to refuse to believe that we were a regiment. They always carried us as the Fifth Independent Brigade because we were, we could, particularly initially muscle up more, and they operated a little bit different. The divisions would take replacements when they were on line; Fifth RCT hardly ever did. They would try to hold them until they came off line and integrate 'em when we were off line. We also didn't occupy quiet pieces of sector for long periods of time. Now, quiet piece of sector doesn't mean that it isn't dangerous. This was in the latter stages like World War I trench warfare. So that your biggest danger was to-whom-it-may-concern coming in by artillery. Just *bap* and you're gone, and the casualties were heavy. The rate of casualties during the Korean War was heavier than the rate of casualties in Vietnam. It is primarily because both sides had access to heavy supporting weapons and it was not near the end of war of mobility, therefore you knew where the other guy was. You could shoot at them from a map and have a pretty good chance of getting somebody. So that tended to make it rather hazardous. But we didn't very often do that. We usually moved in when something had

happened. Either our side wanted to attack or they had attacked and we were going into restore.

Mark: So you were kind of in reserve?

Burkhalter: When I joined them they were in reserve. We were building the famous Kansas Line. We were building big bunkers, and I am glad because I can remember the first day following out the lieutenant I was replacing. I had an overpowering urge to kill him because he didn't stop, and climbing those hills. Nobody can tell you until they had done it. You were climbing those hills, carrying your pack, your weapons, and your ammunition just how horrendous [End of Tape 1, Side A] that was. They're very steep, they're old mountains with concave slopes and as you get near the top you were going about straight up. People that were there for awhile learned you don't stop because if you stop you probably never get started again. You just keep going, keep going. We were building big log reinforced underground bunkers for firing positions when I first came there, and we did that for about two weeks when I arrived before we went into action the first time.

Mark: I was about to ask you, you met your unit and you're the new lieutenant, how do you establish authority, and how long was it until you got into combat? You already said two weeks, describe the process of taking charge of the unit as a young officer.

Burkhalter: Well, I came in, there was an officer there. Everybody doesn't have that. It was a guy named Kelly. He became our Exec Officer for a very short period of time and then went home. He'd done a full tour. He was a big, quiet fellow, as I recall from someplace in New England. You know I followed him, and I went out with him for two days and the next day he said 'cause we were setting a lot of charges, he said "Do you smoke?" and I said "Yes." He said take out a fresh pack and take out every other cigarette. I said "Why?" "Well, just do it." And I did. He said "Here are your blasting caps." We don't have enough blasting cap boxes so we put them in with these cigarettes. For God's sake now don't take them out and think you're going to light something up. We put 'em in there," he said, "cause you've noticed" he said "that I set all the charges. These are not engineer troops. So the officers will set all the charges." I knew that already. He was just reiterating again, and he said "I am not going out with you today. It's all yours." By that time, going around with him, I had met all these guys. They knew who I was. They knew I was coming in and what have you. I hear a lot of stories from people, but my experience was, later on I'll jump ahead again, later on I was wounded and I remember the looks on people's faces because we were on a combat outpost, and it was "Who's going to run the tactics and stuff?" you know. I mean, what, are they gonna shoot lieutenant and stuff like that. I didn't find that to ever be a problem not just with myself but with others.

Everybody I ran into that was wearing a lieutenant's bar wasn't a natural charismatic leader. In many cases wasn't even a very nice guy, but I didn't run into that because people felt this was an important part between them and coming home in a body bag. Now I didn't find that to be universally true in Vietnam for very different reasons, but in Korea I never ran into it for a minute, and I never remember-- the thing that I can recall is that, particularly early on, the kind of troops that were in the Fifth RCT were such tough guys I was more than a little afraid of them. I tried not to show it, but I was afraid of them because I thought they're so damn gung-ho that "Am I going to be able to stay with them and lead them?" Because they were so gung-ho. And even if, you know, say, well, they weren't interested in sacrificing themselves. That isn't what gung-ho is, but if something is needed to be done they were going to do it. There was no two ways about it. When I first went into combat with them I found that to be very true. The other thing is if you were coming down and you've got orders that don't make sense to an American soldier in combat, if there is time at all, they will question. They won't come up and say "Well, I'm not going to do that crap," although they did that in Vietnam, I'm sorry to say, but again I think, for very different reasons. They would say "Well, why are we doing it this way?" and if you said "Well, because..." Like one of the things that didn't make sense to my troops when we were in the first action we went into, I said "Because we're the last unit in the core." They weren't sure they could believe me, and a helicopter came in with a brigadier general came down and wanted to see where I had my last machine gun because it was the last automatic weapon in the corps, and he wanted to see what his sector of fire was and he wrote down the coordinates and the azimuth of the coordinates-- and then he got back in his helicopter and left. Then they believed me. That we were the actual left unit in Ninth Corps and that's what this guy was doing. What was he in the Corps? I don't know. Maybe, he could have been anything, but I didn't ask him.

Mark: Yeah.

Burkhalter: He just came in and he was wearing a corps patch and a single star. I didn't ask him a lot of questions. [laughs]

Mark: Probably wise.

Burkhalter: Probably wise.

Mark: Why don't you describe this first action?

Burkhalter: Okay.

Mark: Tell me what was it.

Burkhalter: Starting at about the 12th of June 1952, the Third Division had three outposts that were on the left side of the Ninth Corps just north of the confluence of the Chorwon and Kumwha Valleys. The one that became, and they were called Tom, Dick and Harry, and the one critical was outpost Harry. The Chinese was who we were facing, not North Koreans. They probably had the idea that if they could kick us off Harry they could kick us off all three of 'em because the way that the terrain lay and get us off the terrain feature that was just south of that that was popularly called "The Boomerang" and then the Kumwha Valley, the entire Kumwha Valley, could fall and demilitarize. We wanted to keep Outpost Harry because, one, it gave us observation into the reverse slopes of several hills that they would launch a sneak attack from, and, two, by being that far to the north kept the demilitarized zone so that when it came in we would have some high ground on the north side of the Kiawah Valley. The battle for Outpost Harry took place on four nights. The first three nights there were American troops and then after that they kind of thought it was over. There was a break. We put the Greeks up there and they came one more time after the Greeks. Outpost Harry was a company sized outpost. That does not mean there was just a company of infantry up there because they had some engineers up there. They had some additional medics. Of course they had their artillery, four observers, and what have you up there. My job in my battalion was that we were holding the "Boomerang" right behind it and our main job was if the outpost fell, we were to swing down off the "Boomerang" to the left and counterattack and be covered. In those four nights the Chinese expended an entire division-- and I mean they expended it. The after action reports, and I belong to an organization called "The Survivors of Outpost Harry," but the guys said about it and so forth... we used to be up and watch in the following mornings the amount of bodies being taken out that were Chinese. Each of these companies was pretty well—I was amazed. I didn't think they were going to last the night. From darkness till dawn you couldn't hear an individual round of artillery go off. It was just a constant roar. And you say, "Well, gee, why didn't you hear about this?" Well, the size of the operation was small. You know, it isn't the Battle of the Bulge involving two or three divisions, but I submit if you were in the company that was involved, you really didn't care. It was at least as intense as that, if not more so. I stayed up there through that. It never did fall. The only thing I did have to do is: I don't know whether they were asleep at the switch or whatever, a minor outpost to the right of that called Easy suddenly reported that they were down in their bunkers and the Chinese were on the hill on top of them. My platoon got called out to counterattack to get them off of there. I made the decision to go just as fast as I could and not give them a chance to zero in and shoot at us very much. Which luckily turned out to be the right thing and we surprised them and they left in a big hurry, those that got out of there. That was the only time we got physical proximity to the Chinese because Outpost Harry

was quite a ways from us. We took some incoming artillery but not very much. Most of the artillery was centered on Outpost Harry, and so I kind of had a grandstand seat for this. Every night we got up and got ready and got into position to counterattack, but the final word wasn't given. They held up until daylight, and it was over. There was RA Company from the Fifth RCT; two companies from the Fifteenth Infantry and P Company from the Greek Force were the ones that were on the hill. Each of 'em went up there with around two hundred. The smallest group to walk off there as I recall was fourteen. They weren't all dead, but everybody else that was still alive had to come off on a litter. So you know it got pretty close but those guys stayed at it through that, and so yet today it had made a difference in where the DMZ is and how viable the DMZ is to the South Koreans and quote "United Nation Forces" end of quote. When that was over we came back from there. We were up there three weeks to a month.

Mark: So, this was your first real exposure to combat?

Burkhalter: Yes, Uh huh. It started interestingly enough. There'd been some infiltration, what they called "Chinese Skunk Teams" into the "Boomerang" cause we weren't occupying that when we came back. So we didn't just go up to our forward positions. We came on the back of the "Boomerang" and swept it, and I will never forget. I got up there and I was checking out some old bunkers and a self-propelled 105 outfit was down below us and they didn't meet their mass clearance. They had one of their rounds go off on our hill outgoing, and the force of it knocked me right into this bunker. I must tell you, it scared the dickens out of me. I came back on my radio and called to my Company Commander to report what happened. He said, "What do you want me to do? Give you the Purple Heart and the Cit.? Get back to work." [laughs] It was a one-time learning experience of what was expected of me. I went over there, I was twenty-two. I told you I got married just before I went. Before I went to Korea, even with ID, would have trouble buying a drink 'cause I was twenty-two. When I came back I was twenty-four, and I couldn't get people to believe I was less than thirty. So, it changes you indeed, very much in appearance and everything else.

Mark: Now, when you went there of course you were green --

Burkhalter: Yeah.

Mark: How did that first engagement affect you as a commander and as a combat soldier?

Burkhalter: Well I learned that, you know, in a football game you come up with a plan. Then you leave things to chance. As a combat leader you keep working to the very last minute to absolutely minimize the amount of things you are

leaving to chance. You leave much to chance and it's going to be your last crack at it. I would say that was it. The other thing that amazed me is that when you got under that kind of stress, how much every little bit of your training came back. You were able to recall it and you were able to use it and so forth. Did everybody function? Well, no. I had some contemporaries that hit the bottle and stuff like that. Some of 'em it destroyed. Some of them function, but in the long term-- I have heard in the last five years-- some of 'em it took them that long to get over being alcoholics. I was, when I got to be a company commander, I was the youngest company commander, in the Fifth RCT. But I must say that my thoughts on it were run it by the book, at least the way I interpreted the book to be. I found that the people I thought weren't successful were the people that improvised because they really didn't know and weren't building on the experience of others which is what doctrine was. Can you come in where doctrine doesn't fit? That was one thing that was wrong with Vietnam. The doctrine didn't fit what was going on because it was essentially a civil war.

Mark: Now you spent how long in Korea overall?

Burkhalter Overall, I arrived at the end of April in 1953 and I left at the end of June in 1954. So I had one other major engagement during which I was wounded and then there was the cease-fire.

Mark: Okay that's what I was wondering then. Describe, if there's just the two engagements, describe the second one.

Burkhalter: Okay, yeah, the second one --

Mark: Then I'll get into --

Burkhalter: Okay, we went back in the reserve in Ninth Corps again. We got our replacements, what have you, first thing is just sleep. All the guys that had been on some kind of detached duty and worked with us formed a guard force and the rest of us slept for about twenty-four hours. Then we got the replacements and we started a training cycle again and what have you and working over the equipment. A couple of weeks, I guess, they told us that we were going over to Tenth Corps. And we went over to Tenth Corps; I remember my platoon was being moved in engineer dump trucks. Very uncomfortable way to travel, [laughs] because the way we went was I suppose a hundred miles but, [as] the crow flies, it wasn't that far, but the roads didn't go exactly where we wanted to go, down to Chungcheong and across and back up again. Little aside: kid was driving the truck I met the first time I went out to Washington to beat the drum for the Korean War Memorial. He recognized me. I was in the uniform, and he recognized me. He had only been in country three days. He couldn't keep his eyes open, so I

him put in the back, and I drove his truck, and he said he never forgot that. But we got over into the Tenth Corps and we started drilling as a regiment in the point of an attack for the corps because if they didn't sign this time, we were going to go north. The main attack was going to be on the East Coast with the Tenth Corps. I didn't know that at the time. I just knew we were drilling this. We went over some very realistic terrain because-- at one of mine I even I found the skeletal remains of a Chinese machine gun crew and their machine gun at the objective we had picked for one of our attacks out on the flank of the main force coming up the road. So, you know the ground had been fought over before, and we really thought that's what was gonna happen. Early one morning they fell us out, and they said that the Chinese had attacked just to our west. Our regimental combat artillery battalion had been over run, the "Triple Nickel." It was the third time in their career it had happened. It never happened when they were with their own regiment, but artillery seldom comes off the line. They go in general support or they support somebody else. This whole Korean division had let go, and we were going to come behind the Forty-fifth Division. Excuse me, it was the Forty-fifth at the end of the war, and we came up behind the Forty-fifth Division in the vicinity of Christmas Hill then turned and attacked to the west and then turned and came back up to the north to try to restore the shoulder of the core position. The Ninth Corps was doing it from the other side to restore the line. We went up, we started doing this. I was the acting executive officer of my company at that time. The Company Commander was, I think, in Japan at some kind of a course or something, and the "XO" went up with the advance party to get all the orders and all that, and I brought up the troops up. It was murder. We were advancing over this very rough countryside in the middle of the night. We finally got up there and we got them down. Jack Stinson who was the guy that was a year later the Company Commander, but he was the "XO" at that time for me. I was to go up to these coordinates and meet my Battalion Commander. When I went up there, my Battalion Commander and Regimental Commander were there, and he said, the Regimental Commander said, "Well, Burkhalter, it seems like just days ago that you were coming in and you were new." I said "Yes Sir." He said "You're now one of the senior platoon leaders in the regiment." That was the kind of turn-over we had, and he came up to the top of the hill and we peeked over. He said "You see that saddle between those two hills?" I said "Yes." He said "That is where I want the regimental combat outpost, and you're going to put it there." He told me what kind of support I would get going out there, what have you. My Battalion Commander told me what kind of attachments I would have and then they said they were leaving and I could stay up there a little bit more time to make my plans and then go back and get my people. I took that time among other things to write my older brother a letter to tell him where I had died in Korea. I really didn't think I could even get there, talk about, stay there.

Mark: Did you mail this letter?

Burkhalter: Oh yeah, yup, you bet [laughs]. There was little doubt in my mind, but I did get out there and we did secure this saddle, what appeared to be a saddle was two fingers that came close to each other like that and was a road that went right between the two of them. Then we went out there and took our side of this thing. The Chinese were very close to us and we were trying to consolidate in the middle of the night. There had been Koreans in that area and they had the Koreans on the run. So we were there by daylight and had this thing done and had gotten the Koreans, whatever Koreans were in that area, South Koreans, out of our position. We spent that day consolidating. I remember that I was up on my feet and going for seventy-two hours there which gives you an unusual feeling. You get to where you really don't care if you die. It feels awful. But I mean, I hadn't sat down more than very briefly in that time, and that night, when it got dark they started playing Korean music. They were Chinese, but they were playing Korean music over loudspeakers to us. About ten o'clock they played Glen Miller's "String of Pearls," and a voice, an oriental voice, came on and said "Welcome friends from Fifth RCT. You didn't know that we knew that you were there but we know that you are there. We are gonna come get you." And they started to attack, one of their classical attacks. That was the 2nd or 3rd of July and we held it. Two nights later a buddy of mine on the next finger over-- I didn't know it was him at the time. I found it out later-- got attacked, George Company of the 180th Infantry and the 45th Division, and he only had twenty-eight people left in his company when theirs was over. They came in absolutely the wrong place for me, the only place in Korea that ever got grazing machine gun fire and that was a terribly bad thing for the Chinese. I was just lucky. We stayed out there, along about the 20th, I called my Battalion Commander on the phone. I got him on the phone and my company commander, and I said, "I've been watching this Hill 9-4-1 in front of us. I said "They are asleep in the day time. I think I can walk right up and take it." So the Battalion Commander Officer said he would get back to me. He came back and he said "Okay, you know we don't have much artillery support." We had almost no artillery support. They couldn't reach us. We had very little between 4.2 mortars and naval gunfire. So he said "Give it a try." So I started the attack, and during the attack he called me on the radio and said "Come back. They are not going to shoot at you." And he almost got court-martialed. Well, he didn't know either. We weren't supposed to go ahead of that because we were jeopardizing the peace negotiations [laughs]. So we came back, and nobody did shoot at us when we came back. But the next day they shot at us something fierce, and that's the day I got wounded. I was out trying to do counter mortar fire from the front of my position. My platoon leader called me and said he was having trouble with some of the troops. They had been up there so long they were getting flak vestige. Flak vests are nice to keep you alive, but you sweat under them and you really

develop terrible eczema. And they were taking them off to get sun and what have you on the skin. And mortars one of 'em had finished their mission and the other had given me a wait. So, I said "Okay, I'll be back there." I swung over this hill into the deepest trench line that I had in the area. And there were two guys that had come out of tunnels and they saw me and one of them was kind of scooting back into his tunnel this way and the other one was turning this way. There was one of my squad leaders, a Hawaiian guy by the name of George Koa Kai behind me, and a 4.2 mortar came in and the end of that trench line with us. It went off right next to my head. It took-- made the arm unusable on the guy that was turning and lost a leg on the guy that was scooting backwards. And Koa Kai was paralyzed from the waist down. The four of us met up again in a MASH. Hardly the humorous place, but it was a MASH in Korea, and then they all continued, and with the cease-fire coming up I actually was the least wounded of the bunch. They sent me back to the Forty-fifth clearing for a little minor surgery. I left there the last day of the war. I didn't say I was discharged [laughs]. Left there, wanted to get back to my unit, but my executive officer wouldn't let me go up the hill. And then I had a very sad thing happen. I had a young fellow that had just come into my unit by the name of Cross who was the last guy killed in the Korean War. He was in my platoon.

Mark: In the whole war, for the Americans?

Burkhalter: Yeah, there were other people that died of wounds afterwards, but I mean this guy was killed like about three minutes before the cease-fire. It's just a sad thing. It bothered me for an awful long time. I had to go back to the medics one more time, and then for almost the next year, I was a rifle company commander and staff member and various positions on a battalion staff. We never knew when the war was going to start up again the spring of '54.

Mark: It was at that point you were pretty sure that --

Burkhalter: Yeah, that it wasn't gonna start again. The Chinese started going home, and it was during that period of time, remember, that they let all these Chinese prisoners out in the South. Well, we went south because these guys, the Koreans said they're Communists. They weren't. They were just bandits. They didn't have any way of making a living so they were stealing stuff. So we went down there and went on exercises around South Korea rounding these guys up. I don't know what they did with them. I think they send a lot of them to Hong Kong. They didn't want to talk much about what they were doing with them. They put them on boats for some place.

Mark: I got a couple of questions about --

Burkhalter: Go.

Mark: --Actual combat, and then I want to talk about some of the non-combat life of the GI in Korea.

Burkhalter: Sure.

Mark: First of all, in terms of the quality of combat, I guess, people, most people have seen war movies and that sort of thing. Veterans will tell you almost to the man that those movies can't convey what actually happens. What actually does, what is it about combat that is not in the movies or that people don't understand? Or, what is it that struck you in particular?

Burkhalter: Well, in movies people go from a security kind of thing where everybody is sitting there and talking about their girlfriend, mom, and the home to a hell of a firefight and then it's all over and they're secure. That isn't what happens. When you are back in a rear area and so forth you are very secure, but you spend a lot of time in a situation in which you are not secure at all. You don't know what's going to happen next. It is kind of like being on a patrol. You don't know whether you are stepping into an ambush, on a mine, or what have you. It is all quiet and nobody is shooting at you at that moment. Or, you are in a position at nights and it is all quiet, but you don't know whether somebody is just about ready to sneak up on you. You don't know whether there's a round coming down on you, what have you. So, there is a lot of time that an infantry man spends in combat where he is under threat of immediate violence, but the violence isn't happening at that time. The other thing that happens are brief periods of violence in that period, but the hardest thing of all is the long periods of violence. I am talking about six, to eight to ten hours of constantly trying to either assault something to get it, although an assault usually doesn't last that long 'cause if it lasts that long you've failed usually. But in the defense, having three or four waves of assault come on you constantly like that. In the situation where you are being pretty much assaulted you have to go back to the individual training of people in what they're doing because under those circumstances, very frequently communications go out. So it's people acting in concert but acting on individual initiative where the brief things that happens immediately, thereafter, you can usually get communication of some kind and the cooperative kinds of behavior to coalesce your defensive position or try to carry on your attack or what have you. The other thing that happens in the movies that unfortunately happens in combat and you have a hard time convincing Americans not to do it is: your buddy Joey goes down on your right, so you stop to get Joey's dying words. So, the enemy has killed two guys with one bullet. The name of the game is, you know, if Joey is going to make it the best chance he's got is for you to continue on without a pause to take the objectives so that the area where Joey is secure and

somebody can go get him and give him medical care if he is. If he isn't at least cover his remains. Very hard to convince Americans of that, very hard. Combat soldiers are concerned, however, about leaving remains a lot more than civilians think they are **[End of Tape 1, Side B]** themselves, and they don't want to leave behind people in their unit. They want them accounted for. They don't like to come back off of patrol and say -- in the Fifth RCT if you came back from a patrol a body short they would probably send you right back out. Say bring them back, dead or alive or don't come back.

Mark: Why is that do you think? What's the --

Burkhalter: They want people to feel confident that they are regarded that highly as an individual and they're not being thrown away. And they want the group feeling to be that way. It is a very important part of combat morale, I think. And that's one thing that in most units in Vietnam wasn't lost. A lot of things were lost. That wasn't. People would make a great deal of effort to go back and bring out a dead body to the pickup zone and get them on a helicopter if the helicopter was gonna be able to get out. Didn't want to leave them unless the pilot said "We absolutely can't. We can't get you out of here if you throw 'em on." Did that happen sometimes? Sure, but usually every effort was made to get them out.

Mark: In terms of the noise and that sort of thing I had a Vietnam vet in here recently who said the one thing that people don't understand is how noisy it is.

Burkhalter: Yes.

Mark: That's true?

Burkhalter: Very true, very true. I can remember I organized a battalion and took it to Vietnam on my first tour. I didn't want to jump ahead too much, but a Vietnam vet told you this. In one of the companies I had that didn't fit the rest of my battalion at all in the States was a big personnel services company. The young man that commanded that really thought I was being too hard on him in training. He threw away all the SOPs and so forth from my battalion when he left to go overseas. Telephone service was pretty good in Vietnam. I got a telephone call from him in three weeks, and he said: "We are going to have a command inspection, and I have thrown away all that stuff. Can you come down with some people and get me ready for it?" Well, he was down near Long Binh and he was on the same compound with 105 Long Toms that were firing interdiction fire all night. You know it just shakes the ground. Every couple of minutes one of these things is outgoing. The average civilian has no idea how much racket that makes. I told you at Outpost Harry you couldn't hear an individual **[Approx. 5 sec. gap in tape]**

Mark: I do.

Burkhalter: So, yes, very, very noisy. The things that will strike you is when it gets quiet. The sizzle that a flare makes when it is coming down it suddenly brings it to you that nobody is firing right then. In Korea when you were on the line you could almost hear the rumble of artillery some place. It wasn't always right on top of you. When it was right on top of you it was really loud, really loud. Air strikes are very loud, extremely loud. They make an awful lot of noise, and of course, when you are in a firefight a lot of small arms going off do that. One of the things that they did in Korea is if the intelligence people told you the Chinese had brought up a new unit, which they frequently did to attack because they didn't want people that were up there that had some idea of how strong the enemy was to be doing the attack. They wanted somebody full of "P and V" from back in the rear to come up and do it. If you could find that out, then early in the night everybody would move from their main position off a little bit and we would have saved strings of tracer bullets and so forth. We would have a mad minute just firing tracers so that the guy on the other side could see what he was coming into. That made a lot of noise. Kind of I think it worked, although I know for a fact the Chinese gave their soldiers lots of dope before attacks. The people that attacked me just before the 4th of July in '53. We recovered one of their medics. He was dead and got him back, and he was intact, and he had all of his stuff. To encourage you they came back with an intelligence report of what it was and they said he had very little on him except bandages and narcotics, and he had an enormous amount of narcotics. It couldn't have been just for pain. It was giving these narcotics to people before attacks if they were frightened or whatever.

Mark: Yeah, well, I'd like to move on to some of the psychological impact of combat, something in your field you perhaps had a little bit more --

Burkhalter: Yeah.

Mark: Prospective on. I would imagine the Chinese human wave attacks, for one thing, just to get this conversation started, I would imagine they would have tolled on their opponents psychologically.

Burkhalter: Yeah. This is the thing I was telling you about that after -- for some people maybe from the inception, but for others from the time contact was established and maintained for a while, this was the thing that made you feel very isolated and that you were alone. You had to really force yourself to say "Well, the guy in the next fighting position isn't giving up. He is down there fighting, too, and I am going to stay here and fight." That was the spirit you had to build in your people. That was the thing you had to do yourself

because, yes, it was something that was overwhelming. The other thing we tried to tell people before they happened, that hadn't been involved in them, that one of the reasons that they didn't want to get up and run is that they would find that our side would be trying to kill everybody that was up and moving. I'll go back further than that. I think the hardest thing to learn between training and actually being in combat is that you are trying to kill somebody. For a lot of people that motivation starts out with "I am going to kill this guy before he kills me, but that's the only reason I am going to kill him." I think most infantrymen, not all, but most after they have been in one battle recognize that the sooner they kill the other guy the safer they are and the better, the closer they are to getting their mission accomplished. What do they think afterwards? That's the stuff that PTSD comes from, is the misgivings about how things were done. Why, I'll even get into it if you want me to go -- I have my own beliefs as to why there was more PTSD from Vietnam Veterans than there was in Korea. I think is pretty true.

Mark: I'd be very interested.

Burkhalter: Certainly it's there, even World War II vets I have, you know, helped people with cases from all those periods. Never a World War I vet. I didn't have that many after I got out of the Army and became a CVSO. I think it's that the enemy was pretty clearly recognized Korea. The enemy was pretty clearly recognized in World War II. There was experiences as it's defined in DSM-3 and DSM-4 that are well beyond normal human experiences in terms of negative conditioning which is what I think is at the basis of this and the disorganizing behavior that results from it. But, the enemy wasn't clearly recognized Vietnam. My first tour, I took a battalion over there and the one question that bothered me the most from my the troops was "Colonel, how the hell do we know who the bad guys are?" I know in order to counter that I went and I found a Vietnamese major and a Vietnamese army civilian woman that were at the post I was at being trained. I had them come in and tell the people, but I couldn't get them down to the level of what it was, but I started seeing the picture that you really don't know who the enemy is because it's a civil war. I think we probably, although people didn't live as long, had a lot more of this in the Civil War. Some of the worst PTSD cases I have seen are guys that were driving a-- I don't want to identify them, so "critical load" in a truck, by themselves on a road ran into a human roadblock. Which was the VC would go get a village that wasn't particularly of their ilk, women and children, squat down in the road, anybody gets up we are going to nail them from the side of the road. And they are, and you are coming down the road. What do you do? You tell me. What do you do? The guys that are here to talk about it dropped from forth to third and went right on through. All right, and they still can hear the screams of those people. Right? Today they can still hear the screams. That is different than killing an enemy, all right. One of the tough cases I had was

a guy that was on Phoenix, Operation Phoenix. They were to go surgically and remove headmen that they suspected of being VC. One of the things they did, the Vietnamese speaking person that went in with them told them they would get a full hearing and; if they weren't, they were gonna be back. I had one soldier that went out with this group and got this guy and he was coming back out and he thought he could prove his case and he was coming back and he thought he could prove his case, so he was coming with them. His twelve- or thirteen-year-old boy jumped them and they were coming out and this GI shot the boy. The man boldly turned around and shot him. It took...fourteen years before he really went. The guy had owned his own business and stuff like that. All gone, family gone, completely. It just kept working on him and that was it. Hard times with the case because he was in an intelligence job and his records said he was doing a very innocuous job some place else. It took forever to get all the records married up and so forth to get 'em approved by the VA. But, those are the things where it's not clear-cut who the enemy is. That is even more so because that's one that the rationalization process downstream doesn't work for. The rationalization process is: Okay, I nailed this guy on the Fourteenth July, 1953. He was coming own the trail, and I got the drop on him first, and I let him have it. He just dropped right off the trail and went down the hill. I know we got him. Okay. The rationalization is if I had not got him, he would have got me. But in Vietnam there were so many instances where that wasn't true, that wasn't true. And then there were so many instances where somebody else had done something on someone, you came across it, and it wasn't what the other person thought. These weren't enemy soldiers. They were a bunch of school-age children or something like that. These are the guilt trip kind of things that get to people, what isn't clear cut. That's why I think there was so many more of them there.

Mark: Yeah.

Burkhalter: Didn't run into too many of 'em from Desert Storm. The only one in Desert Storm that I dealt with personally the guy kept saying, "I don't know whether he was just trying to get away or whether he was coming after me." I can't, you couldn't resolve that. Is he resolving it in therapy? I hope so, but, you know, I don't know, I don't follow everything that closely. But what are some of the things that stay with you? I can tell you one. Trench warfare, if you think back to World War II. There are two general kinds of combat that you are involved in. You are patrolling. A lot of the stress during the Korean War was in patrolling. The patrolling is an attempt to keep contact with the enemy. You patrol out to a point to see is he still occupying this place. A lot of patrols are that he is doing the same damn thing. The worst thing is for two patrols to meet out there somewhere in the middle of the night. Absolute confusion. Your senses are very high. We didn't have all the night vision devices that the guys had later on. One of the

ways you can tell and it was – I don't know there's something really gets to you on this. I told you that one of the smells of Korea is Kimchi. You look at the map and the map would say there was a little village here. That was one of your checkpoints. Well, by the time I got to Korea, the particular terrain had been fought off so many – there weren't a stone on top of each other where that village was, but if you went there in the middle of the night you could still smell the kimchi pots which were down under the ground. And it was the funniest thing, because here you are in the dark you can't even tell if there is a village here, but you know that the human habitation was there because of that. I don't know why that then, but that's as vivid to me as you sitting there, still. I don't know. I have a lot of people because if you're a professional soldier and you were at it a long time and you went back a second time voluntarily and what have you... I think that one of the differences... and more of my friends are not, you know, and we talk about... one of the things I think you come to is that getting killed is a part of the work just like if you are high-speed race driver. You run a risk of dying and that's one of the things in there. I guess I got to that early on. I am as afraid of dying on the highways as you are, but I wasn't afraid, you know, to the point where it was incapacitating in any way of getting killed. I was always afraid of being captured. God, I hated it. I was in Saigon. I left Saigon on the last fixed wing airplane in '75 and that was a chaotic, dark side of the moon experience. People say "Weren't you afraid of getting killed?" I said, "No, I was afraid of getting captured." I was afraid I would have a car accident or something, and get knocked out and then when I woke up, there are the VC and there I am, you know, "Aw, crap!" [laughs] I want no part of that. That is what worried me. I don't know why. Certainly, I, like I told you, am as scared of dying as the next guy, but I don't know whether you get used to it or you accept it or whatever. Guys that get injured badly at Indy go back and race again. Does that answer the question you had lurking?

Mark: Oh, I suspect there's no answer.

Burkhalter: No, but I can just –

Mark: It was just something to chew on, that's for sure. That's interesting.

Burkhalter: Yeah, and the two things are bad attitude and getting to where you accept that what you are doing is that you're knocking yourself figuring out how to kill somebody else. You're not brought up that way. I was brought up in a church that's within a hundred and fifty yards of where we sit here in Madison, and they didn't bring me up to kill other people. Okay? And that hit me the worst at Fort Benning.

Mark: Training.

Burkhalter: In training, yeah, and then it became real. When I first went in contact with the enemy it became very real.

Mark: Yeah, there's apparently debate about that among veterans.

Burkhalter: What's that?

Mark: The sort of, is there postwar guilt in terms of killing other human beings or not?

Burkhalter: Oh yes, I'm sure there is. Anybody who says that there's not, I say that certain situations in which you've killed somebody else you can continue to rationalize it better than others. That's all. Do you get over the guilt? Unh, ahh. Do we have people in the United States that don't have any guilt? You bet. There are people that have psychopathic personalities to start with, and there are people that never had any real strong ethical moral underpinnings in their raising. But if they've been brought up particularly in the Judeo-Christian heritage you cannot say that you don't have guilt ever... I have a passage I should have brought with me, written by a Greek officer who went up the outpost area on the fourth time. He talks about while he was up there and the wind was blowing it started uncovering a young Chinese soldier's body, and he couldn't leave where he was. He was in his position. There was no way he could get out of it. He was continuing to fight, but here was this young Chinese body, and he said he kept thinking, "What if this guy hadn't died there? What would his life been like?" He couldn't keep himself from thinking that, and he kept thinking about that. But he came back to the same thought: that if he didn't do his job right and get all the breaks, *he* was going to die there, and he didn't want to. He didn't want to. He was beyond the point where you could get up and run, you know, there was no place to run to.

Mark: This is interesting.

Burkhalter: Running away from one's unit seldom saves one's life in combat. And I think the most recalcitrant of combats soldiers discovers that fairly early on.

Mark: Did that ever happen in your experience?

Burkhalter: Yeah, um hmm, yup. I had a soldier who I thought never should have been in a combat unit. My field of study as I told you was psychology, and I just think this guy probably had an IQ in the 80s. I think he should have never been in the infantry. I kept volunteering him to do things like pass out towels at the shower point, and stuff like that to keep him from coming up. When we were on the Boomerang behind the Outpost Harry some soul decided that he'd had enough time in the rear and sent him back up to me. And he sent

him back up to me. He got to the top of the hill: It was just about dark so I took him down to his squad and put him in the closest position there he was. Well, there was a Katusa in that position. He spoke a little English but not much. This guy got in there and he started talking. When it got dark the Katusa didn't want to talk anymore. He wanted to listen to see if anybody was coming. I have to assume this is the kind of thing that happened. It got dark, and this guy started screaming "George, George!" Well, that was the squad leader's name, George Koa Kai. Nobody going to answer to a name like "George" in the middle of the night in a combat zone [laughs]. He screamed about four times and he got up and he just started running, and he ran right off a cliff. What do you say in the letter you write to somebody like that's family?

Mark: That is a tough one.

Burkhalter: You lie. That's what I did. I lied. I lied, my company commander lied.

Mark: Interesting.

Burkhalter: He just got up and ran. It was almost dark when I put him there. I didn't know that in front of him twenty, thirty yards was a cliff. This guy was so unintelligent – the battlefields are chaotic and you need every bit of your ability to perceive to figure out where you are, where the enemy is, what's likely to happen and stuff like that. It is very easy to get turned around. He happened to be in a position that was facing south. He was facing an avenue of approach into the position, but it was facing south. It really wasn't a real dangerous position, but he became panicked. He did what he shouldn't have done. He started running. It was a pretty good cliff. I don't think he ever knew what hit him.

Mark: That's a peculiar story.

Burkhalter: No, it isn't. You asked me and I think if you ask anybody else that was an infantry leader, they could tell you what happened to at least soldier who ran away from a unit in a combat position. What usually happens is somebody shoots them because they don't know what or who they are.

Mark: I talk to World War II Vets --

Burkhalter: Yeah.

Mark: And the term "battle fatigue" will come up and guys cracking up in combat and that sort of thing. Did that happen up there with you?

Burkhalter: Yes. But it didn't happen with Americans. World War II guys didn't have a rotation system. By the time I got to Korea the goods and ills of a rotation system were there for everybody but the Katusas and I had a Katusa get this way. Absolutely paranoid. He finally got to the point where he threw a grenade, blew the arm off of another Korean. The other Korean lived but he became very paranoid. I sent him back to our doctors where something got lost in translation. I never said the guy was manic, he wasn't. He was paranoid, absolutely, which is the way battlefield guys get. Everything is now a stress. A blade of glass, glass goes, and it's threatening. Yeah.

Mark: And rotating people out, then --

Burkhalter: Yeah, it made 'em --

Mark: Has its merits, I mean, 'cause after Vietnam, of course there's the rub that people look to the rotation policy as being one of the bigger mistakes.

Burkhalter: Yeah, but the thing about it is it does make unit integrity worse and it does start building into people the idea -- We still had some of the national ethic left in us during Korea that even if you finished we still had an unfinished war over there. That wasn't true in Nam. They got on the airplane, and "That's somebody else's look out." I am sorry, but I don't—I know all kinds of full colonels feel that way or felt that way at the time. You know, when my time is up that is it. I turn my back on this. If I had a job where I have to deal with it, fine. I did. I went in the Pentagon and I had to deal with it continuously after I came home from first tour. I had to go back again. I knew I was gonna have to go back again. But, while you were away from it, during -- one of the big differences between my two full tours, I was a TDY in between while I was on the Army staff and I went back after I finished the Industrial College to my final tour at which time we were cleaning up to come home. I was closing down a wholesale supply system on the last tour. During the first tour the idea that the country was not behind you was not permeating.

Mark: And these were which years?

Burkhalter: '67 and '8, '67 and '68 the first time; '71 and '72 the second, I'll put a pleasant face on it and say and by the '71 - '2, if some of the combat commanders I was dealing with had the conservation of personnel attitude, you'd think somethin' was wrong with 'em, but by the next tour, I'm talking about lieutenant colonels and colonels, they knew. "Why should I get these kids killed? For what?" You know, "I am not going to look that deep because, not gonna win this, babe." I came over there with full knowledge of when we were going to pull out. I had worked on the plans. That was one of the reasons I was sent back. I knew pretty well who was going when out of

there. Sometimes their own commanders didn't know. I knew they were going to be gone. I had all of their requisitions cancelled before they left 'cause it was a long-term thing, six, eight months. That is what I was doing. I knew, I didn't fault people for not saying "Okay, let's mount 'em up and go out there and tear these guys a new one." What I didn't know then that I know now is the extent to which the VC had reestablished this extensive underground infrastructure and so forth in War Zone D on Marble Mountain and so forth. I just knew that some of the things that happened in those areas defied imagination. You couldn't understand how they could pop back that way. It's 'cause they were all there, underground. All they had to do was come out, and they were right back on you again. It was very well organized. I think there was a terrible failure both the militarily and especially politically to fail to recognize that we were involved in a civil war because the other side espoused an idea that we really, really, really didn't like. But it was still a civil war.

Mark: We'll come back to Vietnam.

Burkhalter: Yup.

Mark: I'm quite interested to hear that, too.

Burkhalter: Yeah.

Mark: I want to go back to Korea, though for a second. I got one last combat related area of questioning and that involves equipment, uniforms and that sort of thing and some of the museum type of stuff, I guess. Infantryman and Infantry Officer are on the line in Korea...describe for me, what it is they were wearing. What sort of equipment they have, how many grenades, what sort of rifles.

Burkhalter: Okay.

Mark: what sort of uniform variations do you or do you not use?

Burkhalter: Okay, I always used the World War II type pot, okay?

Mark: The helmet.

Burkhalter: Helmet, yup. Had some kind of a cover on it at all times. It was either just a camouflage net or something, but it almost always had a cover on it. The liner was painted up and had my crest and the patch of the Fifth RCT on it because when we came off line they expected us to look decently. In the wintertime, by the time I got there we had the OG-108 uniform. In the summertime, we wore the rip stop HBT, fatigue T which is, I tried to help

you get some. I guess the moths liked them. They're hard to get. We didn't have thermal insulated underwear. We in the cold wore long johns and in the summertime we wore T-shirts and boxer type shorts. Your underwear was exchanged at shower points, except long after the shooting stopped. Wash them or something like that, but during combat, what we're talking about, that stuff was always exchanged at a shower point. **[End of Tape 2, Side A]** You almost never got a change, we didn't in the Fifth, almost never tried to change uniforms and stuff like that when we were on line, all right? When we were on line seventy, seventy-five percent of the time we eat C-rations. Maybe one meal a day, sometimes we would get a meal brought up, made up from modified B-rations by our kitchens and fed to us. Go down groups at a time on the reverse slope. Hope that they didn't figure out we were down there and shoot at where we were. Sometimes they'd come awful close. Weapons: Odd. When I first started I guess I carried an M-Deuce carbine most of the time. We almost always had at least two thirty banana clips taped together. I can almost always remember carrying at least two grenades. Sometimes they were fragmentation grenades. Sometimes they were the concussion type grenades, depended on what we were doing. I don't ever remember carrying riot type agents although I talked to guys that did, in attack, carry riot type agents: baseball grenade with, like, tear gas in, okay? I thought that it was kind of dumb. I didn't think people -- In the Fifth RCT, once I got over in back into the mountainous area I didn't use an M-Deuce carbine very much any more. I had a Thompson that I used when I went on patrol. During the daytime I carried a regular M-1 rifle with four or eight rounds of tracer in it, and I kept that so I could pick out targets for tanks behind me. I would establish communications with a tank, and then I would start squeezing off rounds and walking the fire into where I wanted them to fire, and, say then "That's it," and they would fire. Here it'd go by me: a thump behind me, a thump ahead of me. They usually put it right in. Shooting out machine guns and 76-millimeter antitank type of weapon that the Chinese used to snipe us with, and if they hit you, lucky if you found the boots with anything in them. They really... I had a veteran from my county that this happened to. Just with two other guys and they weren't ahead of the lines, they but "remains not recovered." They just, they're not there. But that is unusual because of the terrain that we were in. The Thompson sub was very good on night patrols. It got so you pointed it like your finger. Ah, where'd they come from? Damned if I knew. We in the Fifth RCT when I joined them they had the Marine Corps type flak vest. We got the new Army one right at the end of the war, the one that was not Doron plates. In the wintertime, we had thermal boots and over stuff and we had, if they were brought up to us, we had sleeping bags and sometimes air mattress if we were in a place long enough for stuff like that to come up. Oh, communications. The main communication thing was the double EE-8 telephone. Sometimes to listening posts and some place like that, sound powered telephones. The PRC-6 and PRC-10 radio, we just changed over

before I came into Korea. In the Fifth RCT, we had the old World War II style jeeps until the end of the war, same with our trucks, deuce and - halves. We changed over to the M-series vehicles after the shooting stopped. We were one of the last units to changeover. Mixed blessing.

Mark: Why was that?

Burkhalter: People thought the old World War II ones were more rugged. I think they just knew more about how to keep them running.

Mark: What would you say was the most useless piece of equipment? I've talked World War II Vets, for example, who would say the gas mask.

Burkhalter: Well, they didn't give us our gas masks in Korea.

Mark: No, but was there something similar that they gave you that was just completely useless?

Burkhalter: That people threw away?

Mark: And then I suppose what was the most precious piece of equipment?

Burkhalter: I can't think of anything that people routinely threw away. Flashlight that worked was awful hard to come by when you were on line after a while. Batteries would give out and they wouldn't come up. Having good batteries for your radio was very important because of the amount of artillery fire, even though we would try to bury our telephone lines and stuff like that, telephones would go out in an attack and you would be back on radios pretty quick. You would stay off radios because the Chinese would be on time like that. You didn't know what you were saying. We used shackle codes. It'd give you a little bit of time but not much. I can't think of, I know gas masks were a useless piece of equipment, but we didn't bring our gas masks forward. When we were in Ninth Corps I knew they were at Uijongbu, and packages to be delivered by helicopters and air and stuff like that. Within the company supplies. I know, from being a CBR Officer, you had your gas identification kit. I didn't drag it up on line [laughs]. I just, I didn't take it up there with me, stayed back in the rear. So you know there wasn't any real threat so that wasn't a real important piece of equipment. What was the piece of equipment that people really -- If you needed snowshoes, they brought snowshoes up to you. We didn't carry them along. One of the things that happened, if you did go into a place in the latter part of the war, where you were defending an area and you were taking it over from another unit, there would be a thing called sector property. It'd be additional machine guns and additional recoilless rifles and additional mortars and so forth that were necessary to the tactical situation. But in the Fifth RCT they usually

went into chaos. We didn't go in and relieve some unit and sign for their sector property. Sometimes we would set it up, they would issue us sector property, and then we would turn it back over to a division. Otherwise, I probably wouldn't know that sector property existed. But in terms of something like the gas mask in World War II --

Mark: Nothing you can think of?

Burkhalter: No. I'll tell you one of the things that we did that was codified during Vietnam and that is shiny brass was bad news, and when you were going up you would just rub sweat all over your gold bars and your crossed idiot sticks and stuff like that. Within an hour or two they would all turn dull green, [laughs] You'd leave 'em that way 'til you came off line. I was in a spit and polish outfit. They'd do that anyhow, and, of course we wore subdued insignia [laughs] in Vietnam because you just didn't want anything shiny. In Korea the same problem they did in Vietnam was that the radio operator would get nailed and anybody standing close to a radio operator would get nailed because they wanted that group to be out of communication so they'd be the first people snipers would try to get and stuff. Yeah.

Mark: I guess there are a couple more combat-related questions

Burkhalter: Go ahead.

Mark: One: air support. How much did you see of that? In particular I am curious about the role of the helicopter in Korea.

Burkhalter: Okay, and naval gunfire you didn't mention.

Mark: I didn't, but --

Burkhalter: I would like to bring that in.

Mark: Absolutely.

Burkhalter: Outpost Harry we got air support, a mixed blessing. Among other things they completely destroyed one of my trucks. The general configuration of the hill Harry was on was a little Boomerang. I could see why a guy in a jet could get screwed up because they didn't have their identification panels out and we did. And he thought he was on the flank of Harry, and he wasn't. He was on an access road. Shot up a three-quarter ton. The guy got out. The truck burned up. It was a Navy-- I don't know if it was a Marine Corps or a Navy guy firing 'cause it was a Navy type fighter that did it. The Air Force flew F-80's. The Navy would get down so you would know what they were

doing. I never saw the Air Force guys come down very far. God, they'd drop napalm from enormous heights over there.

Mark: Accurately?

Burkhalter: No. Christ, you didn't know where it was goin'. The air support that I saw, and you have to remember these guys were back in the back where they were getting a lot better individual information than we were, and you know as far as they were concerned the war would end any day. They should come down on the deck, you know [laughs], and leave their wife a widow? I can understand why, but during the period of time I was in Vietnam I got some awful high -- and you'd would get on the radio and they would say, "Well, you just had your air strike." That was my air strike? [laughs] Geez, awful far away. When we were over in the east I think I saw one air strike. They couldn't pull artillery in the range to support us. So we were supported with "Four-Deuce" mortars which were packed in by Korean "chiggy bearers" and the ammunition was too, and then the Navy offshore was firing. We were within sixteen-inch range, but none of the smaller stuff. So, you know, sometimes if you had to have artillery you got an awful overkill. I was amazed at how accurate it was. I also was chagrined at how long it took to get it laid on. I don't know what more I can say --

Mark: Is this naval fire in particular or just artillery in general?

Burkhalter: Naval fire. No, when we were able to get artillery fire, no, no problem, not where I was. Over in Ninth Corps we had artillery fire where we wanted. A matter of fact, I saw artillery used in places where I thought it shouldn't have been. Light fixed-wing aircraft were used a lot more than they were any place else. The L-19, later was named the O-1, was used for observation. It was used for throwing out flares. We were facing an enemy who liked to fight at night. If you were using mortar flares, one, they didn't last very long, and two, somebody had to bring them way back up to where you were, and that was a big logistic problem, so you want to shot them too long. So, if we were getting something coming, we would start with mortar flares and then maybe we would get maybe L-19 come by and pop a few. Then a DC-3, a C-47 would come by going in lazy circles and just start dropping flares for the rest of the night. Did that in Vietnam, too. It's a simple thing, makes a big different. Helicopter evacuation. Helicopters were new, okay. The four of us that were wounded on the round that went off next to me, three of them went out by helicopter, and that just about wiped out the helicopters. I was strapped to the hood of a jeep. I was just screaming at this kid who went down a road that was barely wide enough for a jeep. I was sitting there where I could just watch all on the hood of the jeep. [laughs]. I wanted to get up and walk. I'd walked back from the hill I was on. Then the medics decided because of one in my hip, I wasn't to walk anymore. That was a

terrorizer. But when I got there, some of my people had been at the MASH two and half-hours before I got there. So, it was a lot quicker, it really was, and I think it saved a lot of lives. Well, they were evacuating people on the same thing you saw in the movie, *M*A*S*H*, on the Bell H-13. And if the pilot was in there and they weren't two bigger people, he could have one over each skid. And if there were a pretty big person, and he was a pretty big person and he didn't have much gas, he could only take one person. The next larger helicopter that we had over there was the H-19, the Sikorsky H-19, and we made one training preparation to make a heliborne assault. We were going to do it if the war wasn't going to end the 27th. We were going to break out of the area, we were with a heliborne assault.

Mark: But that had not been done by the time the Korean War ended.

Burkhalter: Once. It was done once by somebody and I can't tell you who. I think in the Seventh Division. The Marine Corps did it once, too. And then the H-34 was just coming along. The H-34 was what the Marine Corps started in Vietnam with the H-19 had four swivel wheels underneath the bottom. It was a Sikorsky, bigger than -- it had two big wheels in the front. I think, you could, after the crew was in there, I think you could carry five guys in the H-19. But, you know, everybody wasn't going in one lift and stuff like that, but the idea was you start off at the top of the hill. Pretty good reason for that: I have seen through binoculars, too far away to help, Americans soldiers stand there with their rifle like this and just be bayoneted to death, just absolutely exhausted after attacking up one of those hills 'cause it's just somethin' else. One of the most frustrating things I've ever seen in my life. Nothing you can do. You are looking through high powered glasses and you're seeing this happen, but it is way out of range for you to do anything. Was the Chinese counter attacking after we'd attacked the hill, successfully counter attacking. Guys couldn't even organize a defense, just exhausted when they got there. Idea is if you could put enough of them in to start with, and hold the top of the hill you made it untenable for anybody else.

Mark: One last area involving combat operations. The Chinese vs. North Koreans, now there were two main enemy forces were there appreciable differences from you respective as a military officer? Why don't you tell me a bit about them.

Burkhalter: I didn't even consider the North Korean soldiers to be very much of a risk. If you knew you were opposite North Koreans, all you were concerned about was when the Chinese was coming in to replace them. They were still all the way to the end of the war, pretty much I think, a demoralized force. There could have been some units that were intact. I didn't run into any. I didn't run into any of 'em. Very prone to surrender when you got near them. Not true with the Chinese. Chinese had very little thought to surrendering, unless

they were cut off and starving or wounded. The Chinese were much more disciplined soldiers than the North Koreans were. I think our soldiers were more disciplined than the South Korean soldiers were. They were not the force they are today by any matter of means. They weren't as demoralized as the North Korean soldiers, but they, on the other hand, neither training or confidence in their own units was high. They had been fighting for a long time. Their officers would frequently go home to attend to their affairs and then come back and so forth. I've run into battalions with nobody at a higher grade than captain being around. That's a little unusual.

Mark: Now, in terms of the Chinese fighting capabilities, I mean beyond the human wave assaults which have their own devastating effect, I guess, did the American soldiers view them as a formidable force?

Burkhalter: Well, the one thing about it, if you were one-on-one, I don't think they would have nearly to that extent. It was the appreciable numerical superiority they had. Mobility didn't account for an awful lot if you were in rugged terrain. So the fact that we had more trucks and stuff like that didn't count an awful lot. Except in the broader valleys, armor didn't count for an awful lot. We had better weapons than they did. We had more ammunition than they did. We had much better communications than they did. They did not have anywhere near the sophistication and communications that we did. But on the other hand that meant it was a real sweat if your communications were broken down, very much so. We gave a lot of our communications to the South Koreans. They had innovative uses like using the magneto for the double EE-8 telephone as an interrogation device. Do you know what I'm taking about?

Mark: Unh unh.

Burkhalter: Okay. Unfortunately, I had to be present during that. There was no way of stopping it because it was their show.

Mark: I don't know if I should ask about that.

Burkhalter: No. Let's let it, let that one lie.

Mark: Okay. I guess that's all. That's pretty much it with the combat experiences. This two hour tape is about to end. I do want to start with the non-combat, Your non-combat experiences in Korea, as far as contact with Koreans themselves. Did you get into the villages much? Did you have much contact with the Koreans?

Burkhalter: Well, you know, until January of '54, I was ahead of an imaginary line called the "farm-line." The only time I went south of it was right after I was

wounded. I was the S-4 supply officer in my battalion. When we set up a camp I went back down to Seoul to liberate a generator and things like that, big generator that infantry units usually aren't authorized. I saw Koreans when I did that. When I told you we had Korean soldiers we had Korean houseboys the whole time. They were there when I got there. They were there through the end. We had a heck of time getting them straight with their own country's draft after the cease-fire [laughs] and what have you, because most of them had come there as little kids and had grown up and we hadn't turned them in for their military service. Christmas of 1953, I think, was the first time, Christmas or Thanksgiving, memory doesn't serve, where we had Korean orphans and their caretakers come up to have dinner with us, a disaster because these little kids couldn't eat American rations. They just got horribly sick.

Mark: Too rich for 'em?

Burkhalter: Yeah.

Mark: Yeah. I think it was probably Thanksgiving, the first one, because as I recall at Christmas then we used the rations we drew for the Korean soldiers that they didn't eat and prepared those for the kids, you know, rice and stuff like that, other things that they like. It was kind of hard because these young teachers came up with these kids and the GI-s away from them because they had been isolated from anything but the donut dollies for a long time. There were always some people, Korean people, who were out to exploit the situation. I am talking about civilians trying to run prostitutes and alcohol and drugs north of the "farm line." I got kind of minimally involved in that partly because one my tent mates was the battalion physician, the surgeon. He would get involved and sometimes I would come down with him to try to calm people down. People that had been on wood alcohol particularly, really difficult, geez. We had an engineer lieutenant, that got court-martialed 'cause he took charges and went into the cages where prostitutes were working and just threw charges in there and kept going and concussions killed a lot of them. He got court-martialed for that. That happened about three or four miles from camp that we established in the fall of '53 in Ninth Corps. Then in January my hold battalion went south to Taegu which was right in it. So we were right in with Koreans, you know, had a fence around our compound, but we were in Taegu, the city of Taegu. So that was quite different. We got to know a lot more about the Koreans. One, they're Asians so they were different. I probably by now can do better than that. I spent a total of eleven years in Asia, and I was married to a Vietnamese woman for ten years. I know how to use chopsticks [laughs] to say the least. But you know in terms of being a people they had never really gotten their act together after World War II. They'd never gotten their county anywhere close to where they wanted it to after having been a vassal state of Japan

which is the only way to describe it and then the tremendous disruption of the war. So the social fabric, the governmental fabric and what have you of the country was either nonexistent or very weak. The public transportation system was just getting put back together and so forth. There was a lot of effort being made to do it, but they had an awful long ways to go at that time. I found that the attitude of the Korean people was, well, it was the same kind of attitude you ran into in France: “Why don’t you damn Yankees get out of here?” to “We’re grateful for what you did to us,” to “What can you do for me?” I have never been any place that those three attitudes didn’t predominate at some balance, some balance.

Mark: In terms of the troops, US troops, in war and in combat when you weren’t on the line, what sort of duties did you do, and did you do to occupy what seems to be what little free time you had?

Burkhalter: One, we did an enormous amount of training, okay. After the cease-fire, the Fifth RCT started to get draftees. That was really different. [laughs]

Mark: How was that?

Burkhalter: They weren’t nearly as well trained and they didn’t have the same kind of attitude and stuff like that and yet we were trying to maintain those kind of things. I won’t say we didn’t have any draftees before, just very few. They were very much in the minority. So, you know, they kind of fit in with the other people. There wasn’t enough of them to say, “Okay, to hell with you lifers” kind of thing. I can’t remember an awful lot of that being in the Fifth RCT, by the way, of a lot of divisiveness of that nature. Like I said, I did see a lot of that in Vietnam, but then again, it had different roots. But I would say the biggest thing that the troops did were, one, they spent more time than you would think making life more comfortable. Actually building shelters, improving areas, setting up recreational areas. If they had a building already, improving upon it, painting it and fixing the roof and what have you, and making life more comfortable. The second most important thing was unit training. Going out in the boonies and doing it. Everything from the basics of rifle qualification and close order drill to company-sized and in some cases battalion-sized type of operations. I remember setting up some battalion size field exercises in the neighborhood of Taegu. I can recall doing that. I can also recall that some guy from the States came over and decided that downtown Taegu needed an armed forces motion picture theater. It was part of the exchange system. They set it up, and it stayed empty. So, we went to them and said, “Will you let us move it?” They said “Yes.” So, we tore it down and put it back up again in a US compound, after which it was standing room only. It was different because you could see a movie for nothing over there as long as you had to stop between reels, but if you showed it continuously, I think it was, you had to charge two bits and it

went to the exchange service. In this one the troops were glad to pay their two bits to not have to wait between reels and see a little more closer to first run pictures. Yeah, they put up that.

Mark: Were these movies fairly current?

Burkhalter: Yeah, after the exchange service got into it they were much more current than they had been when it was a, you know put the sheet up over the end of the tent and let 'er rip. The hard part of that other one was getting electricity that was reliable enough to run a motion picture projector. That was tough, because you had to have the cycles fairly close and everything and the voltage for the elements all that stuff.

Mark: Now you mentioned drinking and prostitution and these sorts of things. Was there much of that? Was it much of a problem? Was there much opportunity?

Burkhalter: Ahead of the "farm line," a Korean civilian had to have a special pass to be up there see. So, no, but when troops did get in contact with those people, one, the booze was the kind of stuff that would make you blind and the girls were horribly infected. So, you know, you would know they had been though. You would be kind of a roving band kind of thing. That's just, you know, man I've been maltreated, and so I am going off with these people. Most of the troops got at least one R and R if they wanted it in Japan. And I know that when I was a company commander, the deal was that if a guy came up with VD it wasn't counted against my unit if it was reasonable that he contracted it in Japan. But if he got it in Korea, [laughs] you were in big trouble about explaining just how he got it and so forth.

Mark: What would be the consequences of if GI-Joe or GI-Frank had a venereal disease?

Burkhalter: What would happen, well, one, see it went on a report against that unit. That unit automatically had low morale, as I recall, and first sergeants weren't happy about being the first sergeant of a low morale unit. So, all kinds of little informal sanctions would come the way of somebody that had the unfortunate experience, yeah absolutely. Now, when we got to the South, a guy would go out on a pass and go on a date with a Korean girl if he wanted to. I honestly can't remember very well whether a lot of it went on. I remember that there were dances on the compound that girls came into, and I think most of them were put on buses at the end and taken out of there. Did anything else go on? I don't know. It wasn't my job to go police it up and see. During Vietnam anybody who was not in contact with the enemy could have hard liquor. Wasn't true in Korea. Enlisted personnel could not have bulk, bottle of booze. **[End of Tape 2, Side B]** Could have cans of beer, but

couldn't have a bottle of booze. They could go to an EM-club and have it by the drink. The people running the EM-club were supposedly responsible for seeing that they didn't become overly inebriated. That wasn't true in Vietnam. A guy could have a jug of Jack Daniels in his footlocker. That was, you know, whether it was a difference in legal interpretation or whatever the hell it was, I know that was one of the differences and so on in the use of alcohol.

Mark: Okay.

Burkhalter: Quite a difference.

Mark: I always ask Korean War veterans this question being from Wisconsin. You hear about how cold Korea was.

Burkhalter: Mm hmm.

Mark: And of course Wisconsin isn't exactly a balmy place either. So, by way of comparison, in your assessment how cold was it really?

Burkhalter: The coldest I have ever been in my life was the top of a hill trying to defend it in Korea. We were 'til the date, 'til the moment we were told to pull out, I was in two sleeping bags up to here trying to talk on the radio and slithering around and getting to other people and so forth 'til we got the word to pull off there. They figured the Chinese couldn't even come up after us it got so damn cold. The thing about it is that you don't appreciate is that most of the larger units fighting near the end of the war went on on the mountain tops. Was it that bad down in the valley? No. Maybe not even snow down there depending on what time of the year, but up on top of the hill, holy crap, cold beyond belief. I mean, when your feet are just about ready to give on you, they're in "Mickey Mouse" boots and you are inside of a sleeping bag, it's cold. Will weapons fire? Do troops urinate upon weapons when the enemy is upon 'em to try to get them to start firing? Yeah. What are some of the better weapons for starting to fire? The M-1. BR is bad, bad, bad news. Too small of clearances. The light machine gun, fair. The heavy machine gun, bad. Bazooka will fire if it isn't getting moisture in that little magneto thing that you squeeze to make the electric impulse; a bazooka will fire. A .45 will fire if you kept it inside you and didn't have it hanging on the outside where it got snow on it.

Mark: That's a pretty definitive statement, I guess.

Burkhalter: Yeah, it was cold. [both laugh] Bloody, bloody cold, I'm telling ya, really. Yeah, and not only am I from Wisconsin, I told you I spent the early part of

my life in the UP. I got up there a lot after that because my mother's family was up there.

Mark: And the Korean cold impressed you.

Burkhalter: You bet.

Mark: Okay. The side of this tape is just about to end. Well, I guess we've got a couple minutes left. I don't want to slack off missing half a conversation. Just for anecdotal purposes if nothin' else, tell me about where you were and what you thought when you learned that the armistice had been signed.

Burkhalter: Yeah, I was in Clearing, Clearing Company of the Forty-fifth Division. I had just had a field surgeon take some shell fragments out of my shoulder and out of my left hip, and I wanted to go back to my unit. I went and I asked the commanding officer that because I wanted to be with my unit when it ended. Unless you have been in this situation, I don't think most people realize that if you are with a unit and you really think a lot of that unit, that's where you want to be. It was an uncertain thing, you know. An armistice, what's that? It wasn't "whoopie, it's all over," just big unknown. So I went in to talk to this guy and he said "Get out of here." So I left. He meant his office, and I know it to this day, there had to be some paperwork done on that later. I am out on the road hitchhiking and they'd had to cut my uniform away when I was wounded and I looked like the "Wreck of the Hesperus." But I found my battalion rear, and the battalion executive officer would not let me go up that night. I was angry. That is where I wanted to be. I wanted to be with my people when that happened because I thought the last night would be hell and it was. Both sides, they got the idea every round they fired they wouldn't have to carry back. So that is what they did. They shot and shot and shot right up till ten o'clock.

Mark: So this was not VJ Day or anything like that.

Burkhalter: No, No. Not there it wasn't.

Mark: Yeah.

Burkhalter: And as we came back it was-- they backed away from it. They didn't pack up, turn around and march to the south. They backed away from it. [Approx. 10 sec. gap in tape]

Mark: Okay, Okay, we're back. This is Tape 2 [Incorrect - actually Tape 3] of the Burkhalter interview, same day, a little later in the afternoon. We left off with the Korean armistice, and we had discussed previously your experiences in Korea after the armistice. Tell me about your voyage home.

Burkhalter: Okay, as it neared time to come home, because I was a regular officer, they weren't in a hurry to send me home at all. They were trying to keep the strength up in Korea. So, I was finally, well, told "you had better go down to Pusan and see if you can get a job on ship going home."

Mark: This was supposed to be a way to get home.

Burkhalter: Get home, yeah. So I went back down to Pusan and I became a liaison officer which was mostly a training inspector in the S3 section of the Headquarters of the Fifth RCT in Pusan. It wasn't for too awful long. One of my additional duties for a while, I was the Commander of the Band because the Band Commander, a warrant officer was my roommate, and he left to go on something for three weeks or a month. I found the commanding a band to be very interesting. They were most unusual soldiers that I ever dealt with.

Mark: Why was that --?

Burkhalter: Well, they did what they were told to most of the time. Ah and as the time came close, two things happened. One, I did find a job on a ship going home. It was tough because I had been a company commander so they didn't want to give me a job of less than a compartment commander on the ship. I really didn't care, but the people that set these things up wanted to do that. I kept getting knocked out of berths by senior people or reserve officers that had to get home. The other thing that happened is I suddenly got a set of letters orders, from the Quartermaster General saying that, in the matter of several weeks, I would belong to him, and on that date, I was to report to the nearest airport, buy a ticket and come home, and he would give me back the money. In those days the chief of tech services were very separate and powerful people, particularly in their own personal areas. I had joined as a quartermaster officer with a two year detail to the infantry which was about up. And I then asked to stay in the infantry, but with my wounds, they told me I should go to the quartermaster corps for at least two more years. So I said "Well, okay." I had one more year before I could get out because I had a three year obligation for taking a regular commission. So, I went aboard a C-5 transport that took thirty-two days to get across the Pacific Ocean, which was something else and disembarked at Seattle. They had delayed us so that we would get off at the Fourth of July so that we would fit into the Fourth of July celebration for the City of Seattle.

Mark: So you did get your parade?

Burkhalter: Oh, yes. We weren't very interested in the parade, I am sorry to say. I went into another meeting hall, where they were looking for car commanders for

the train going to Fifth Army Headquarters at Fort Sheridan. They kept calling people off a roster. If either your relatives were there, or you had the papers to indicate you were picking up a new car in Seattle, you could get out of it. Otherwise, and the guy ahead of me, it was the last car and it did not have an excuse. So I left very quickly during the middle of the festivities so go to Sea-Tac, Seattle-Tacoma airport to get an airplane to come back. Flew to the Twin Cities. Called my family and said I would be in Madison shortly. Took a DC-3 again, in the good old days. No, I think when I came back maybe it was a Martin 202, I can't recall, and came down to Madison and got organized, bought a car, and took off for Fort Lee, Virginia, in the peacetime Army.

Mark: Describe that for me.

Burkhalter: Okay, well, the first thing is, when I got there I had a very interesting experience. Fort Lee had one of the last all black battalions left in it. Three lieutenants and two captains had just came back from Korea that were Caucasian-type people were assigned to it to start blockbusting.

Mark: What's blockbusting?

Burkhalter: Well, we were going to make it an integrated unit. When we reported in to the Battalion Commander, he put on his hat and left and retired from the Army. He didn't want any part of it. The Executive Officer became the Battalion Commander, and what had been a labor service battalion, we not only integrated but converted into a patrolling supply battalion. They said I did such a good job with one of their companies, they gave me the MOS of a- that's the Military Occupational Specialty of a petroleum supply officer I knew very little more than how to put gas in a five-gallon can or a truck, but I got the MOS. I went off then to school after that to learn how to become a quartermaster officer. That lasted for about seven, eight months. At the end of that, they worked on us to go into our career fields. The career field I had selected when I left the University of Wisconsin was research and development. When I wanted to go into that, I said, "Well, how about going to graduate school?" They said "You're too young." So I worked on going to a field test agency. I was accepted there, and then they turned around and told me I was going to graduate school. So I left there and went back to the Ohio State University, and got a masters in the same field. Although there, there they called it, and still do, Organizational Psychology. That's the people that do the research for the personnel people, what have you, in addition to the Engineering Psychology, kinds of things with a minor in industrial engineering. Then I worked in R & D. I went to the Natick Laboratories and worked there for three years. Then my supposed success in this first quartermaster battalion, I was in, caught up, and they sent me to

France to be a member of a petroleum command. I found myself receiving tankers which is a little more than throwing five-gallon cans.

Mark: I'll bet it is.

Burkhalter: Very quickly, yeah. A lot of hitting the books at night and what have you. I stayed there for three years. During that time both my first wife and myself lost our mothers here in Madison. Two days apart in St. Mary's Hospital. In the peacetime Army it was extremely difficult to get any priority to get home. Her mother was dead before we got here. My mother died the day I arrived. Then we went back there, finished up, came back, and went to the Command and General Staff College and got promoted to Major. I had made Captain while I was in R & D, but I came back and went to the Command and General Staff College. Stayed at Fort Leavenworth on the graduate facility of the Command General Staff College. That's the time when Congress gave them the authority to grant a Master of Military Arts and Sciences as a companion degree for the Bachelor of Military of Arts and Sciences which is given at the Military Academy. I served as a graduate facility advisor for people that were doing survey and test and what have you because that kind of fell in my field. At the same time I was working on the development of doctrine and requirements for equipment and field testing of new equipment.

Mark: If you mentioned exactly why it was you decided to stay in the Army, I must have missed it.

Burkhalter: Oh, oh, oh, yeah, about the time I could get out they had me back in graduate school doing what I wanted to do. I picked up another three-year obligation doing that. I don't think I had more than five years that I wasn't on some kind of an additional obligation for accepting some kind of school or promotion until I retired. Because that's the way they do it. They give you an opportunity, but it's usually a fairly small window. I think I'm almost to where I went to Vietnam. Do you want me to continue on up to that?

Mark: I've got a couple questions.

Burkhalter: Okay, shoot.

Mark: Now this is the Cold War. Korea and Vietnam are just part of a larger Cold War with the Soviet Union and the Chinese.

Burkhalter: Yup.

Mark: I've got two questions about the Cold War. One involves the readiness of the armed forces. I'm interested in your assessment of the readiness, and

then I want to move on to the sort of ideology of the Cold War, just how deeply, how important the anti-communism and that sort of thing within the military itself. First of all, in terms of readiness.

Burkhalter: Okay, I would say that the readiness in the Army, day to day readiness, hit a low under President Eisenhower. For a guy that had been an Army General, he really I think was convinced that what was facing the country could be handled by strategic air in nuclear weapons. He didn't give us much money, but he hedged his bet. Where there was money was in the R & D field which is where I was working. We had enough money to be working on new items. When we got a new item done and ready there was very little incentive to declare the stocks of the existing item it was to replace obsolete and buy it and stock it, okay. If it was meeting an absolutely new requirement it would be bought. Otherwise it wouldn't. So, from that point of view the readiness continued to be based, except in aviation, on primarily the maintenance of World War II type of equipment. There was the M series vehicles that we were buying right at the end of the Korean War, but there wasn't a big thing beyond that. There was a uniform change. Right at the end of the Korean War we did away with the World War II type uniforms and the Army's duty uniforms went to the Army green. The Air Force completely got out of their old Army uniforms and went into the Army blue-gray uniforms. Went through iterations of that by 1960, as a matter of fact. First one, they got criticized as being too much like bus drivers. So, they changed the shade and the weave of their materials a bit. I think came up with a better uniform. So, we did get new duty uniforms. But there wasn't, like I said, other than some modest buys in the aviation field, there was some good R & D. If there haven't been that R & D when Vietnam hit it would really have been very bad. We were at least ready to go into procurement by 1960 on some items, but we didn't have a lot in stock. Now, the second question, ideology. The ideology of anti-communism was more than something you looked at it in *Life Magazine* and maybe discussed it over drinks with your buddies or something. Officers' calls and troop information topics, at least fifty percent of them, were on the dangers of worldwide Communism: what it was, how it was being developed into an international thing, and what the dangers to ordinary people were.

Mark: Was it taken seriously by you and other young officers?

Burkhalter: Was it taken seriously? I think the need to educate the troops as to what the problems were that facing them was, was the complete party line of what was wrong with Communism bought by everybody? Not as much. I mean, you taught what was on the lesson plan. If you embellished it, you embellished it more along your own beliefs. My own beliefs were that the biggest thing wrong was state socialism. Let's call it what we were really faced with at that time--Communism is a gleam in the eye even for state

socialists-- is that it doesn't make real provision that has proven over time for human motivation. And that the thing that capitalism has over it is that it makes more provision for human motivation and that the decisions on what's going to be produced is based upon demand rather than on engineered command, actual demand.

Mark: Now, of course, we found out in the '60s that world communism wasn't the monolithic entity that some people thought. Is that fair [to say] in the '50s? When you were in Korea, I mean, were you fighting the Soviet Union, did you think?

Burkhalter: I didn't. Some people did. I, for instance, I thought it was ludicrous that they thought if they would have gone after the Chinese Communists that the Russians would have come in. I think the Russians would have done whatever was best for them. I think they were very nationalistic, much more so than a lot of others thought, but the official party line was that it was monolithic, yeah, very much so. In the little things you got for your troop information topics and stuff like, it was very, as I recall, that was just kind of an underlying assumption.

Mark: Now, in terms of believing that the Soviets were going to attack. Was there a real sense of crisis in the Cold War?

Burkhalter: Yeah.

Mark: So called peacetime army?

Burkhalter: Uh huh.

Mark: And there was a real sense of readiness?

Burkhalter: Yes. A real concern that this would happen and that continued on up through my service in Europe the second time in the late '70's. There was no doubt in the professional people's minds that the Russians were likely to try this, although later on, it was, I think most of us that were older and had been around more thought, as the situation developing where it would be a desperation more on their part. In order to hold their empire together they would have to orient it onto threat, and they would orient it on to threat by actually provoking something.

Mark: Now, in terms of life in the Army in peacetime. You have been overseas at least once to France. You had a wife and started having kids.

Burkhalter: Yup.

- Mark: What's it like to raise an army brat, to raise a family in the Army in the 1950's?
- Burkhalter: Well, it was difficult. You were doing it on less money than your friends that weren't doing this. You were moving your kids a lot. I have one child that was born, in my first family, 'cause I've got a couple of 'em. My first family was, my daughter was born in Virginia after I came back. I had a son that was born in Natick, Massachusetts near the laboratory that I was assigned to after graduate school. My third son was born in Croix-Chapeau which is near Aigrefeuille, France which was a 140 miles from where we lived because [laughs] there were very sparse units. It was a long distance between them in France. I was there when De Gaulle was actively trying to get us out of there. So, we had only the most essential of units there. Port detachments, and as I said I was in petroleum intersectional command where we off loaded tankers and sent a small amount of product out by rail and truck. Most of it we had a high pressure pipeline across France that eventually delivered into Germany.
- Mark: Where were you in France by the way?
- Burkhalter: I lived in a town called La Boule which is near a town called Saint-Nazaire which was a big submarine base on the estuary of the Loire river. The headquarters of the terminal district I was in was a little town named Donges which is just up river from there a short ways. We had tank farms all over that area, Bretagne, lower Bretagne, because the idea was we had to have our stuff stored so that no one nuclear blast would take it all out. I think that today people would be kind of mystified at the lengths we went to too passively reduced our vulnerability to nuclear warfare.
- Mark: I just had a question, now I lost it. Oh, France. In terms of keeping your kid in school, was your kid old enough by this time?
- Burkhalter: Oh, yeah. We had a dependents' school there. It was a very small American community, and just before my daughter was to start in French schools I'd sent her to a French kindergarten. I was elected the president of the PTA. And I got a call as the president of PTA in the following fall saying: "You're not going to get any teachers this year. See if any of the dependent wives will become teachers." So, we tried to set up the dependent school. It was a mess, so I put my kids in French schools and kept them there. We had kids that spent three years in school, came back to the States, and they put them right in the grade they were in the last time they left the States, they were so bad. This wasn't an indictment against the DOD system, the Department of Defense school system. It was that we were in such isolated areas that economics just weren't right. The living conditions were such that they had trouble getting teachers to volunteer to come to places like that. We had no

commissary, but a small PX with a doctor who fortunately his wife was a doctor so we had two doctors most of the time and a dentist. You just heard the support, okay?

Mark: Not too much.

Burkhalter: Yeah, and the closest hospital and the closest commissary were respectively 140 and 120 miles away. I remember an uncle of mine wanted me to get a paper notarized for him. It had to do with my mother's estate. I flat told him, I said "You know it will take me three days to drive someplace and to get this notarized by an American legation. Do you have any idea of what you are asking me to do?" Because there was, it just wasn't much. There was an American detachment of an officer and one enlisted man up in Brest at the center of the naval infrastructure for the French Navy, and our little place where we had a transportation truck company, a sea transportation documentation company that worked with French companies, off loading ships, our little detachment that ran this base section of this petroleum distribution command. The reason we had a PX was because people's POV's, privately owned vehicles, came in here and we had to have a place that stocked enough parts to get them running again when they came off the ship.

Mark: Now, how were the relations with the French?

Burkhalter: That varied by the individuals. I still have friends in France. You don't communicate with them often, but still communicate with 'em. They are like most Europeans. They take a lot longer to get to know. We lived completely in the French economy. The first year it was really terrible. By the second year-- because before we were in a resort area-- the second year the locals taught us the ropes and stuff like that. I don't know, they're like people anywhere. Of course when you're in their country you gotta try to meet 'em - - most Americans I find say "Oh, I can't stand Frenchmen. They do this and they do that." Well, it's their country! And they [Americans] make no effort to try to do things their [the French] way. If they did they might find that their stay there was a lot more pleasant. Certainly you can run into unpleasant people. The thing about it is that during the time we were there, their president wanted us out. He saw us as a threat to his sovereignty and he wanted us out. I got a chance to meet him.

Mark: Oh, did you? De Gaulle himself.

Burkhalter: Yeah, he came down to christen the *Normandy*. I was there when she was launched. There wasn't that many military there, and by that time I'd made major, the third ranking military officer in the entire area [laughs]. So, yeah, I got to --

Mark: So what was it like? Just out of curiosity.

Burkhalter: What was he like?

Mark: Yeah.

Burkhalter: Oh, I thought he had a very unbalanced personality, let me put it that way. I have read about the man's life. I know what he was through, but he was firmly convinced that, you know, he was his country's destiny. He did something at the launching that really got to me. His wife smashed the champagne bottle and she started down the ship, and he **[End of Tape 3, Side A]** held out his arms like he was being crucified. He started screaming at the top of his voice, "Vive la France, Je suis France." [laughs] I'll never forget it. You know what, the first thing that came to my mind about the second time he said it was "Geez, is this the French Hitler?" [laughs] Because, you know, he was taken with himself, no two ways. It was a tough day for me. I had been discharging a tanker and I made her stop which meant we had to pay her wait time. But, no wait a second. It wasn't the *Normandy*. It was the *France*, the *France II*. When the *Normandy* was launched, she ripped three or four sales off their mooring because of the enormous waves she made when she came down always, so I made 'em stop, took all the hoses and put double springs on. It was a good thing I did. Then I came back after the thing was over and we hooked it up and finished discharging it. It was a difficult assignment in that we were staffed for peacetime duties which were about six tankers a month. While we were there we had the Cuban Crisis, the Berlin Wall and the Congo Crisis, all of which required vast amounts of aviation fuel. So we were taking an average of fourteen vessels a month with the same staffing, and we just didn't get home very often. We worked enormous hours to do that. When we got near the end, they mobilized a petroleum supply company depot in the States and sent it to us. They were so afraid that we would get nuked, they put this company way out in the country, and they spent most of their time riding to and from their work sites. That wasn't very efficient, but it was some help. But we were handling a lot more fuels in Germany and in France at that time we were almost up to our wartime criteria.

Mark: Yeah, well that was a particularly busy period.

Burkhalter: Yes, it was.

Mark: The Kennedy years.

Burkhalter: This was '60 to '68.

Mark: Yeah.

Burkhalter: Yeah.

Mark: So, Vietnam, I guess.

Burkhalter: Okay.

Mark: This is the war that kind of sneaked up on America.

Burkhalter: Yeah.

Mark: As an Army officer in the middling ranks by now, did it sneak up on you?

Burkhalter: Yeah. We first started hearing about this, when I was in -- left France and came back to Cand GSC, and I told you that before, command and General Staff College, and Kennedy was assassinated while I was in there. And this thing started. They started changing our curriculum, and I kind of had the feeling that they didn't know what the hell to tell us. You know we had a lot of this anti-counter insurgency training and we had nation building training. Had a lot of guys in -- I read Bernard Fall's book, "Street Without Joy". At the time it was one of the few definitive works on what had happened while the were there. I couldn't shake the feeling this guy is writing about a civil war. This is a people that are fighting a revolutionary war for their own freedom. Okay, we don't like the kind of freedom that they say that they want, but this is gonna be awful tough, and it did turn out to be awfully -- turned out to be impossible I think. There were just as there was in our country, in Vietnam, and I saw it before I even went there, there were people that wanted status quo as there were people wanted the status quo in the United States. They had good reason to, and there were people who didn't want the status quo, and they had good reason not to.

Mark: Now, as the troop built up started, say '65, '66 or so, how did things change for you? I know you went over in '67, so in the couple three years before you went over?

Burkhalter: But what I was doing, I was supposed to first go over there as the Secretary of the General Staff of the 1st Log Command just as it was getting organized from my position in Fort Leavenworth and, I got put on a promotion list. I didn't know I was on it, but they'd completed their work, but they hadn't done it yet, so they made that known to the command I was going to, but they didn't tell me. They decided to put me in a different job, and the people that made my assignments didn't like that, so to gain more time they then sent me to the Armed Forces Staff College in Norfolk which is a six-month course. So I went there, and it was an interesting course. It was in the old

days during which Army officers taught particularly Navy officers how to do staff work 'cause the Navy didn't teach 'em. That was for joint duty. It was [laughs] an interesting school, but they gave us a lot of other interesting things. We went out and dove a submarine and all kinds of things. It gave you a pretty good feel for how other folks were organized and how joint task force were done and so forth. I got done with that. An officer that I had served with at Leavenworth, who eventually became assigned to the National Security Council as a Reserved Foreign Service Officer, and unbeknownst to me, he had recommended that I go over, be appointed as a Reserve Foreign Service Officer and go over in this nation building effort that I can't even remember, some alphabet soup, USALDS, something like that. When you had one of those assignments you went over and your family was in the Philippines. You came back once every month for a long weekend and stayed for two years. Well, my first wife had never recovered from her mother's death. She was in and out of the psychiatric hospitals the whole time so they said they'd make an exception, and they'd send me over there for an eighteen-month tour with a 30-day leave in the middle of it. So, I brought my family back to Madison, bought a house, here and stuff like that and I was ready to go, and just as I got ready to move I got an enormous pain. So I had a neighbor to drive me out to Truax. It was like kidney stone, but it was like kidney stones, but it was like gravel the guy said. So they sent me to a local hospital and took care of that. They said, "No, you can't go to a tropic area because you've got this problem." So I spent the rest of the summer at Valley Forge getting my blood chemistry straightened away. Well, somebody else had to take this job, so that job evaporated. They told me I had may be a month to go out at Valley Forge, and they wheeled a phone in my room and it was the people that detailed me. They said "Well, now we can tell you. You are on this next promotion list." I said, "Why that's interesting." They said "We want you to go to Fort Lee and organize a battalion to take to Vietnam. Do you think you can get out of there by so-and-so?" I said "I'll talk to my doctors and call you back." I talked to the doctor, new ring. So this is how I went there. I went a full year later than I was planning to because that fall I went by Washington and I got all the officers that were going to be assigned. Then I went down to Fort Lee and I started this from scratch which is one of the most interesting things you can do. We were ready to go in January, and I got a message saying no. They didn't need us. Then I found out that the requirement for my battalion had evaporated due to the tactical situation and we were probably going to be disbanded, but they wanted met to go into post training cycle. I was a direct support battalion, as a general support battalion, so I did. Everybody on my battalion thought I was crazy. So then, they told me that they had another general support battalion that had failed their training test. And they were a part of the Qui Nhon depo. So that's where we were going. And I took my advance party and flew over there, and my exec took the troops in the troop ship, and we went off to Vietnam in the spring of 1967.

Mark: This is your second war now. When you got there--

Burkhalter: Yeah.

Mark: What were your initial impressions when you got there??

Burkhalter: Oh, I had impressions before I went.

Mark: I'm sure.

Burkhalter: My biggest problem as a battalion commander was wherever I went troops would say to me, "Colonel, how are we going to be able to tell whose the enemy is? How are we going to be able to tell whose enemy is?" I couldn't tell them, and when I got there I couldn't tell them. I could tell them what their job was, couldn't always tell them *why* it was a job worth doing, but I could tell them what their job was because our mission orders were clear. The reason for it wasn't always, and sometimes you couldn't discuss the reasons. But the big thing you couldn't tell them about is: who is their enemy? We were -- when my troops weren't out on a convoy, or were not out doing something like recovering supplies from the fields from a unit that had been overrun something like that, they were in an area that was generally safe except during Tet. Tet was a separate situation. But on our unit day, a year from the date that our unit was organized which was -- I was relieved shortly after that. You only get to keep a battalion for a year under most circumstances -- we were attacked. We were attacked. We successfully defended our place in an area that was quite pacified. So, you know, who's doing it? We don't know. We do know that we were just to the south of one of the enemy's main supply routes from the Ho Chi Minh trail down toward the coast and would also meet up with supplies coming in from the coast and being distributed into that area. I don't know, that time I was a part of the Qui Nhon depot. We were supporting the Fourth Infantry Division, the First Cavalry Division and about half the support for the Americal Division and the Korean Tiger Division.

Mark: Then so from the start you had a sense that something was unusual?

Burkhalter: Oh, yeah. It is awfully hard to, you know, keep the troops fired up when you wonder, you know, why you are doing this. There were times because I had all the outlying areas of the depot when I got there I thought, well, maybe the whole plan was to pave the whole country [laughs] so that there wouldn't be any place for the VC to hide, because we brought in cement and asphalt and stuff like that in just unbelievable quantities to reestablish the roads. A road that wasn't paved was always suspect because it was going to be mined period. Again you didn't know who the enemy was. You didn't where the enemy

was. It really came upon us on Tet. I'll talk about Tet when we get into it, but we're not quite to that yet 'cause I was still, we're still in the part where I was the Battalion Commander. Mission-wise it was very difficult because we didn't have any active force, enough logistic type units to set up something of the size of Vietnam. We didn't choose politically to call up those units that were in the reserve components that could have done the job. So when I got there I had tailgated loads, I mean hundreds of acres of tailgated loads, to consolidate these supplies, identify 'em, put them in, bring them up on the records and so forth so that they could be used. While I was there both with the assignment and the subsequent one I moved a depot. When I got it all moved and got all the operating supplies out of some other place there was an enormous amount of junk that had been sent there, evidently by people in the States that wanted to get rid of it. I couldn't possibly see how anybody could have ever requisitioned it. It was during the very early forced feed and things that were absolutely useless that we're sending back, much the worse for wear.

Mark: Now, we've touched on this already, but let's talk about it a little more clearly and that involves morale.

Burkhalter: Yeah.

Mark: Pre-Tet. We haven't gotten to Tet yet.

Burkhalter: Okay.

Mark: What's going through the young GI's minds?

Burkhalter: Okay, first of all, after he gets there, he wonders why he is there, okay, and now I am not talking about the infantry troops, now, I am talking about support troops. Second thing is, they were expected to work twelve hours a day seven days a week, period. Now, have you ever worked those kinds of hours?

Mark: No.

Burkhalter: It get to be somethin' else. But officially we were to work our troops twelve hours -- so they worked twelve hours handling supplies. Of the remaining twelve hours, they had two to four hours of guard, their personal requirements and sleep which may be during daylight or night because we generally had one crew on in the daylight hours which was a larger crew and a smaller crew at night. Then if there was an alert they were up all night.

Mark: Mark was that a common occurrence?

Burkhalter: To have an alert? A couple of times a month. For 1st Log Command troops if they got off of our areas and into town or something like that, if they took one foot that was no longer on the asphalt road in town, they were off limits. They had to have at least one foot there. So, you could stop at a roadside stand and talk to somebody or something like that, but if you took off the second foot or walked inside to look at some merchandises you were off limits. I remember one of the local entrepreneur's ways of making money was to set up a think called a "truck wash" so that drivers could get trucks and jeeps washed. Then they'd have a few little girls working out in back to take care of the driver while this was going on. There was a tremendous amount of effort spent trying to police those [laughs] -- That was only somewhat successful. It was a military justice type of problem to try to enforce those things, but they were big time --

Mark: And they were enforced?

Burkhalter: Oh, yes.

Mark: Or as best as you could --

Burkhalter: Oh, yeah, they were enforced pretty well as a matter of fact. I would say, that overall, not just among enlisted men but among officers where I was, I have never been any place in the Army where the morale was lower, where people felt they were being treated more unfairly, more uncaringly by the people that they worked for.

Mark: And that would include your second tour?

Burkhalter: Nope. First tour. Not even talking-- not even to the second tour. People came over there during my first tour thinking they were fighting for their country. They went over there in '67, okay. We weren't barraged. I had one captain in one of my companies that didn't come with us that had been in Vietnam and he was going, forced to go back, and he put a writ of habeas corpus against the Secretary of the Army so I had to take him out of this company. He did not go with us. I don't know what happened to his case. I didn't continue to follow it. I was too busy. But he did sue and not go. Did that have effect on the rest of my people? You bet. They all knew what was happening, particularly the people in his company, and that particularly company, when I got overseas, I gave to another battalion and took one of theirs. They had very complicated rules so that nobody had a big rotation hump. That was inimicable to unity integrity. You were only allowed the first three months to keep the people you brought over there and then after that you had to start what they called breaking the hump and there was a regular formula for doing that.

Mark: Are we ready for Tet? Is there something else you want --

Burkhalter: If you wish. Yeah, I turned over my battalion, and I started working on moving the depot out of the city of Qui Nhon as the director of storage. Got a new commander which helped. There wasn't anything wrong with the old one except he was the dumbest guy ever made full colonel I ever met.[laughs] He just -- if it hadn't been for the fact that Korea was, he'd never have made it. Sergeant Major even told me that. He said "Don't feel badly about some of the things he says and does to you." He said "he's just, he is a good-hearted guy who's not very bright." Used atrocious language about people to them which is to me a bad sign of leadership to start with. He hit the guy that was commanding over him. In the area it was bad news. Ran a lot of people out of the Army, as a matter of fact. Good people. But, these were people that I think under ordinary circumstances would have not still been with us. I think I have to tell you that. They were -- and they created some chaos. Okay, so I was in the midst of doing this, and, we brought over experienced people, civilians from the States that could recognize items and put them to a stock number. G.I.'s couldn't. I mean, geez most of them had been in the Army what? Two or three months, you know, and look at this and it's a repair part for a cannon. "I don't know what it is. An old piece of metal in a plastic sack." So, we brought these people over to help identify this stuff so we could rebuild these stocks that had been dumped all over the place. I had a big thing going on that. I tried to get along with my Vietnamese people, and I did some things in the community to try to help them. For instance, I wanted some brighter people to handle the stocks of things like transistors and stuff like that. People that were nimble and sharp knew some English and what have you. I shouldn't call it that. What do you call it?

Mark: A convent?

Burkhalter: A convent, yeah, we had a nunnery -- that taught nurses and they were an order of Belgian nuns. So I went down and I helped them and they helped me. They let their girls, as long as I said, you know, that we would kill anybody that moneyed with these girls because (chuckles) they were going to become nuns. They would come in in a group and they would go to work. I had certain people picked out to supervise 'em and stuff. The quid pro quo was these nuns were constantly building onto their place and they were getting things like electrical conduit and switches [laughs]. Things just would materialize for them. Usually it was nonstandard stuff that I couldn't put back in stock. They were delighted to get it. So we had things like that going. Well, near Tet, which was in mid-January of that year. It's on the Chinese lunar calendar so it jumps all over the place. My Vietnamese people started telling me they were afraid to stay out of the place that night of Tet, and the word came down after I told a bunch of them they could go home

and get their wives and kids and come back and I would put them in one of my bunkers because we weren't going to use it. We were putting our people out on the perimeter, armed. The word came back, "Turn all your Vietnamese people outside the gate. We don't want anybody inside the compounds." Thought that wasn't the smart thing to do. I left my people in there. I put a guard on 'em. I said, I've got to put a guard on you. Don't anybody try to leave here. From now on in you have facilities to go to the bathroom and so forth 'til tomorrow morning 'til you hear from me or one of the other officers. Do no leave here. You will be shot." So they stayed in there. That night is the first night they hit us, and it was a big deal. Not knowing who your enemy was, one of the guys dead on our fence in the early morning/night was the chief barber of our PX barbershop, okay, VC. We were fighting the VC for about a week in town. They were holed up in various places and so forth. But the people, the Vietnamese people that wanted protection that had come in that worked for us, their loyalty was unquestioned from that day forward. You know, there was no more stealing from us or anything like that. They were very good employees from there on in. I had stuck my neck out for them, and they were sticking their neck out for us. It was really, it was something else because Vietnamese were very much divided. The whole time I was over there they were either-- I am talking about city people-- they were either loyal to the government of South Vietnam or they weren't. The people out in the country in Binh Dinh province, I didn't think cared who ran it, and they thought there was one bunch of crooks in Hanoi and another bunch in Saigon, and they just wanted to be left alone. Does that sound familiar?

Mark: Yeah.

Burkhalter: Yeah. I mean, it's kind of a normal political situation, and yet we acted like it wasn't. That's what used to get my goat.

Mark: At the time or in retrospect?

Burkhalter: Both, both. I was somewhat of a maverick. Some of my leaders got unhappy with me, and they said the best thing I could do was shut up.

Mark: Did you?

Burkhalter: No. I eventually got to work for William Child Westmoreland, and I got along with him fine.

Mark: Did you now? Was this right after Tet?

Burkhalter: Shortly thereafter, yeah.

Mark: In Vietnam?

Burkhalter: No, in the Pentagon.

Mark: Back in the States. Well, we'll come back to him. You write down "Westmoreland" here (Burkhalter laughs). I'll want to know about him. I'll just put "Westy."

Burkhalter: Yeah.

Mark: So how long did you stay in the Vietnam after Tet?

Burkhalter: I stayed until April. I got dengue fever. I didn't know it, and I passed out. About three o'clock in the morning I was out. I had a daytime and a nighttime deputy. They found me in a ditch along a walkway in the depot. I had been out for a couple of hours. They took me to hospital. When I got better they said, "You are going to go home in two weeks, you're gonna go home now." And they sent me home.

Mark: I am curious to know how you in Vietnam viewed what was going on in the States at the time in terms of --

Burkhalter: While I was in Vietnam?

Mark: Yeah, the political restrictions you hear about, then the antiwar movement you hear about. Were you guys too busy to think about that sort of thing or did it --

Burkhalter: The way I knew the most about the antiwar movement was the attitude of the replacements coming in. By the time I went home in '68, they were coming with a very different attitude. Not just the replacements to outfits like mine but the replacements going to combat units. One of the units that we supported was the battalion that Lieutenant Calley was in, you know, for My Lai. The Support Battalion Commander of that brigade one of the days on when I went home came down and told us "Geez, we had a terrible thing. We had this village that put up so much resistance that the guys just had to level and kill every man, woman and child." I mean, at that time we didn't think it was a war crime, you know. I didn't hear about it again. I knew about in the Pentagon because the guy that was the real Battalion Commander, not this Task Force Commander, was one of the guys that sat in the same office with me at the Pentagon. The only reason he was there is so they could lay his hands on him, for -- oh, he did a lot of other work, but they had him off in hearings, you know, almost for a year. That was a very unfortunate incident, but it came from the same thing that I told you about, that the average soldier didn't know who his enemy was. And when he

turned around and somebody shot at him, he turned back and he shot at whoever the hell he could see. Not a good thing to have to do. Not a good thing from the point of view of winning the hearts and minds of the people. Not a good thing to do in terms of developing PTSD in your own folks in the long run because they find out later that they have done some pretty horrible things.

Mark: Well, okay, you went back to the States.

Burkhalter: Yup.

Mark: We will come back to Vietnam.

Burkhalter: Okay.

Mark: 'cause you did go back.

Burkhalter: I came back. I went to the Army staff. I worked in force development. It had nothing to do with logistics. Why force development? Well, 'cause in my research and development work I had started doing operations research and I got somewhat of a reputation for it. I went into force development because we were just starting to use computer models rather than "experts" to build forces. Two things, the Department of Defense didn't recognize the expertise of the experts. They thought that they were biased and they couldn't see the basis upon which they were making these many small decisions that ended up with this particular force. So I worked on the first, almost untouched by human hands--it wasn't really, but it was by comparison untouched by human hands-- force development system. And it started out with a war game that all services pretty much agreed on, called "Atlas." It was very complex. It had a numeric, even numeric based terrain and weather and stuff like that on it. It fought the wars too quick. Everybody said, "Geez, all wars don't last very long." One of my contributions was I talked to one of the guys in the "beltway bandits" that we were doing this all with. I said, "Let's re-fight the Korean War." The Korean War was over in nine months. I said, you know, what we're doing is we're missing all of the political, logistic, super delays due to climatology and stuff like that that are affecting decisions. So, we had to really work on getting rules of engagement that everybody agreed on to do that 'cause you see that affects the speed at which you have to mobilize forces to get them to some place which is one of the biggest argument in force structuring that we have. Can it be in the reserve? Can we get it ready in time? Can we get it there? Or, do we have it in active forces, ready to jump on airplanes and go the day after tomorrow? So I worked on this, and suddenly I got to General Westmoreland's knowledge through a guy named Fritz Kroesan who was the general I worked for. The last time I worked for him, he was

commanding Europe. We had started working on a unit as large as a division. Do we have to have all of it in the active force? Are there parts of it that we can have in the reserve? 'Cause a unit isn't gold, but a unit as big as a division doesn't go altogether. Today we have very few whole divisions in the active force. But we started that composite division thing there, and he got interested in that. Although General Westmoreland is not a very abstract thinking guy, I can tell you. He recognized it, and he had a deputy by the name of Bruce Palmer that was, and that's the reason he had him. I used to, when I briefed him I usually briefed the two of them together, and he got interested in it. He asked one time what did I usually do. I said, "Well, I am working on this force model." He said, "It's high time we start working on the post Vietnam force and how we are going to get out of Vietnam." He said this to my boss, and he picked it up, and myself and about twenty other guys that is all we did for the next two years. **[End of Tape 3, Side B]**. So, I knew before I went to the Industrial College, which is where I went from there, what the plan was. It had been approved before I left the Pentagon. No implementation date. When I got close to the end of being in school which is the time that my first wife decided she'd had enough of the Army, I got called back to the Pentagon and they gave me the date and said you are going back to Vietnam to close down the wholesale supply system. Because you have to start turning those faucets off, some of them a year in advance.

Mark: So why don't you tell me what the plan was? How well it worked or didn't work.

Burkhalter: Oh, the plan is way too complex to tell you, but it was --

Mark: In a nutshell, as much of a nutshell as you can.

Burkhalter: Okay, in a way of a nutshell, okay. Generally the middle of the country shut down first, okay which is the Qui Nhon Pleiku quarter. Then the units in the central part of the country that were supported out of Cam Ranh Bay. Then we shut down the things up north out of Da Nang. Didn't take all the troops out of there but went way down, one brigade from what had been roughly three divisions. Then the final thing pulling around Saigon and out. It happened very quickly. The majority of the troops about 250,000 of them left over a three month period. I mean we were running 747s out of there like you wouldn't believe. You say how do you get all of this stuff out with a 747? The equipment did not go out with the troops except in a very few instances. We had a roll up of the equipment in which was classified, you know, as condition and sent out either to Taiwan to be rebuilt for the military assistance program or back to the States. Most of it that went back to the States they figured the classifiers had been too easy on it. It was hard to get good classification. One of the things we set up is we gave the classifiers a stamp that was their personal property because there were

people forging stuff and what have you to get the job done. It was bad. But we got - got straightened away one of the things is the certification there were no human remains or live ammunition in the vehicles and then sent them back to Okinawa, some of them. The materials themselves, unbeknownst to the Vietnamese, we went back down to the advisory system and took up to five years of their requirement. Got the permission of the Congress to fund up to five years. MAP, but only for the existing equipment and transferred it to the Vietnamese against their MAP program and transferred most of the rest of it out to countries for their MAP Program. The cost of transportation starts getting involved, you see, so some of it went to Korea and other places and what have you. The scrap was turned into the Department of Defense there who sold most of it on site. There was more scrap than we thought there was gonna. Like any war, people had buried things and all kinds of junk. We tried to uncover as much of that and get it out of there. Did it work? Yeah, I think if we hadn't done that, you know, would have been a loss of billions and billions and billions more. We closed the last depot in June of 1972. A lieutenant colonel that worked for me stayed behind packed up the computers and sent them out and that was the end. The units that were left in Vietnam, from direct support units sent their requisitions all the way back to an agency in the States that just handled the funding and what have you. Ordered it, came back on expedited transportation right to that unit, and that is what we started going in Europe, after we did that. The only depots in Europe were filled with wartime emergency supplies. We sometimes rotated those supplies out of there and brought the new supplies, out of there and brought the new supplies into there and sent the old ones out to the troops, but they weren't run as regular depots. They weren't run with regular stock control and so forth. The DSS system was born doing that, and that is how the last units were that were there for a year or two 'til they went down to nothing more than the last 10,000 which was an advisory force, then those things all came in to the MAP program, the Military Assistance Program, to the South Vietnamese.

Mark: Now in this plan as it was thought out and then implemented, how much attention was given to --

Burkhalter: The tough -- Excuse me, but the tough decision was what do you do with the forces you are taking out. See, we had to get the Department of Defense and even the President to agree, on what the overall force structure was going to be because we wanted to keep as much intact units and bring them back. And units that were not going to be, until the last minute thought they were going to be, some of them were deactivated in Vietnam. People went home as individuals. It is cheaper, okay, because we had to be fitting to the post Vietnam force structure which was smaller than most of our generals thought it was, by a hoot and a holler. They were up in arms when they found out how small it was, but that's all politicians would go for. They

spent a lot of time trying to get just a little bit more of the politicians. At the end it was the Nixon Administration people and the Congress. But you were going to ask me another question before I interrupted.

Mark: Oh, I was going to ask about provisions being made for the South Vietnamese government.

Burkhalter: That was the other --

Mark: This is the Vietnamization process.

Burkhalter: Yes, uh huh.

Mark: As you're pulling things out --

Burkhalter: That is the other side. That's what I went over there for in between. I went over to work with our advisors to the Vietnamese with a companion set of force structuring programs for the Vietnamese to develop an independent force rather than an add on force to the US forces, okay. The other allies were really miniscule when you look at it from a force structuring point of view--

Mark: Ordering supplies and that sort of thing.

Burkhalter: Yeah, they were, the Koreans were the biggest one. The Thais weren't all that much. The Aussies weren't...I am not saying that they didn't do a good job where they were, but in terms of numbers it wasn't all that big. The Koreans were a good size of chunk. They had two divisions in there. You can't say that about the Koreans, but they were very definitely supported as an adjunct to the US forces, and they came out with us. They did not stay, okay. So the idea was the South Vietnamese to get them to be an independent force in terms of combat forces being balanced, combat support forces being balanced and their logistics back-up being developed. One of the things we wanted to do is we wanted to go up and teach classes at their Command and General Staff College. The Vietnamese wouldn't let us do that. I was over there with two other people to do that.

Mark: Why wouldn't they?

Burkhalter: I don't know. I wasn't in on the negotiations. Okay and that's where I first meet General Abrams, when I was doing that. I got to meet him one other time.

Mark: I want you to describe General Abrams.

Burkhalter: Oh, he was a very different guy. We lost a lot when he died. The last thing he said to me was not, you might not think it is kind, but he turned out to be right. I went to get his permission to marry a Vietnamese girl [**Approx. 5 sec. gap in tape**] In 1972 we got our forces out of Vietnam. They were essentially out of there.

Mark: In time for the 1973 Peace Treaty.

Burkhalter: Yeah.

Mark: For the treaty.

Burkhalter: Yeah.

Mark: I guess behind all the plans and all that sort of thing, in your own mind, and perhaps you even discussed it among other officers, how seriously did you take the South Vietnamese government? Did you really think that all these to make them a credible force, did you think they were going to work? Or did you think that you were just pulling up stakes --

Burkhalter: Well, look, I am a pretty old guy, and I've slowed down a lot. I used to be one of those hyperactive guys more like you. I got my job pretty well finished over there, all right? So one of the other things I did to occupy my time is I started working on developing a job resources databank for the South Vietnamese government. Because having lived in France I knew that all they gave a damn about, did you have your first or your second baccalaureate and so forth. We trained people in data processing and all kind of things that they needed in nation building, okay? I got started working with our embassy on this, and just before I left in '72 the guy I was working with when I went down said, "Now, let's me and you go to lunch." So we went downtown and we went to lunch. He said, "Tom, we are going to drop it." I said, "Why? Don't you think they can use it?" He said "When you look at the probabilities that it would be used by the North Vietnamese to locate those people who had been working with the American forces rather than the South Vietnamese for nation building, we think it's too dangerous." And he was right, okay? So we dropped it. So did I know when I left there -- I probably married my Vietnamese wife because I figured she was a very patriotic person and I figured the North Vietnamese would nail her butt, okay? As it turns out, I got her mother, father, and eleven of her brothers and sisters out of there right at the end. But that was my concern because you know they had completely committed and I didn't think, no, I did think they were going to win? I didn't. I didn't think they would go when they did, and I've got things I still can't talk about as to why I didn't think so. There were U.S. programs to help 'em when they got into the thing they finally lost it that a conscious decision was made not to help them by President Ford and

that's all I can tell you about that. But that was done. I think that McNamara is -- even in one of his books, indicated that this was set up, and he didn't know why it was -- I know why it wasn't pulled. He just didn't do it. He had a way -- Why do you think the South Vietnamese government failed when it did militarily? Why do you think? You're a historian.

Mark: Why do I think?

Burkhalter: Yeah.

Mark: Geez, I don't know. I'm not the one making ---

Burkhalter: I know you're not, but why don't you tell me why you think, and I'll tell you what I think.

Mark: Why did it fail in the face of an invasion?

Burkhalter: Yeah.

Mark: From what I understand about the South Vietnamese army, it was corrupt ridden. Morale was low. Again, it was a civil war without terribly much popular support.

Burkhalter: I think those are all contributing things, but the immediate military thing is they ran out of artillery ammunition. And we had it to give to them and chose not to.

Mark: Well, that's not information I had.

Burkhalter: I'm tellin' ya, and I can't get any more detailed than that. Would it have been enough? It might have been enough to stop them half way down the country, which was what our goal was, to stop them at the Qui Nhon-Pleiku lie. But what had happened, and I don't fault the political decision because what had happened by that time is, yes indeed, Vietnamese troops were throwing their weapons in the brush, taking civilians clothes from civilians, throwing their uniforms away, and joining the civilians throng running to the south. I don't know where they thought they were going to run to. Yes, that was happening, but maybe if their leaders had thought that they were going to get the ammunition to make the stand, maybe they could have turned it around. I don't know. I wasn't there. I was down in Saigon when those things were happening. I stayed in Saigon until the North Vietnamese arrived there.

Mark: Well, let's - I still want to talk about your second tour in Vietnam during '72.

Burkhalter: Yeah; '71-'72.

Mark: Yeah. I want your reflections and impressions on how things were different between your first tour in '68

Burkhalter: Oh, yeah. All right.

Mark: And then how had things changed?

Burkhalter: One, Mr. Average American GI was completely demoralized. He thought he was in prison. He wasn't over trying to help his country anymore. He wasn't trying to help somebody gain their peace. He was just picked upon and put into prison. I am talking about Mr. average drafted soldier, all right? Whoever and whatever was running the war of using heroin on American troops was in *high gear, big time*. Long Binh Jail was a drug rehab place. They wanted me to quit what I was doing, and I couldn't, in order to run that. Another friend of mine, who was a psychologist, said "Well, he's here. I am going home. Let him run it." I had to go all the way to a three star general who knew who I was there who said, "No, not him." 'Cause they were gonna move me there. We had enormous problems. I mean when I would be walking to breakfast in the morning, the crunch of the vials that the heroin came in, the heroin in granular form, would be crunching under your boots. A sea of drugs, okay? The amount of people that were on drugs was fantastic. The morale of the people there was fantastically low. Yes, it was, really, and most commanders were saying: "Okay, I'll do my job but I'm not going to hazard these troops one more bit," and that's not a good way to be a commander because when you are in a fight you want to keep the other person off balance and they weren't. They were not sticking their necks out at all by that time. Very few things in '71 and '72 went on -- A Shau Valley, but it didn't work. I worked afterwards for the guy that was in command of that. I don't think he ever understood why it didn't work.

Mark: Why didn't it work?

Burkhalter: Troops weren't interested in going. It was tactically a very bad odds to start with, and then you're sending people that just came off the streets where they were screaming and were -- and you're sending in troops with peace symbols [laughs] on their goddamn helmets, come on! You know I am not saying that every guy...

Mark: Oh, I understand.

Burkhalter: ...didn't fight. That isn't the point. There was enough of it so that it was a real problem, and when you put it along with the individual rotation thing,

and with the thoughts that people were under sentence when they were there. "My séance is almost up." You know if you find a guy up in Waupun that is near the end of his sentence that screws up, you got a nut your hands [laughs] okay? 'Cause this is a guy that wants to go by the parole board and walk out. Well, these guys wanted to live long enough to get on that airplane. Big bird back to the real world. This was not part of their life. This was something that was being carved out of it by government and they were damn mad that it was happening to them.

Mark: A remarkable change in the few years between your tours, I would imagine.

Burkhalter: Well, yes, but you have to remember that the great majority of people had come from a population where the ideas had changed, drastically. What was happening here in my good old hometown blew up the Math lab among other things.

Mark: While you were here. Was that-- were you here?

Burkhalter: No, no, I was in Vietnam.

Mark: '71, '72. You're right.

Burkhalter: Yeah. I was in Vietnam. See, you know you look back at that and say, "Well, what the hell? Why were these things happening?" Remember again that it wasn't-- you can think of it and I can think of it because near the end of my military career I wasn't dealing with draftees anymore. But through a lifetime I can tell you dealing with draftees and dealing with enlistees is very different, okay? On the average, the enlisted guys are not as sharp. They don't have, you know, the native intelligence. They don't have-- they are not educated as well. But they are more interested in doing what they're doing and being successful at it. Where the average draftee, is "Well, if you tell me why this is important, I'll even tell you a better way to do it." [laughs] That's entirely different, and of course you get some people they get so damn mad when a guy's got an attitude like that, they will put that person in a position where the next thing they know they are sitting in front of a board for being unsuitable [laughs]. You see that as a CVSO. That's a wonderful background to have so when someone walks in your office as a CVSO you can say "Here's somebody I can do something about his discharge." *If*, you know, everything else is equal.

Mark: Okay, so the evacuation of Saigon in '75. I want you to describe why you were there.

Burkhalter: First of all, I was stationed at Thailand at that time. I was the number two guy in what turned up to be the MACTHAI Support Groups which was the

successor to the US Army Support Thailand which had been a command that had been run by a major general, and then a brigadier general and then there were two colonels running it at the end, myself and another guy. There were very few people in Vietnam. They would come back over for business and respite and what have you, because more people throwin' hand grenades at us and so forth, really. One of the guys that came back over, we got a lot of people out at Cambodia 'cause we were supporting Cambodia tooth and nail. We were only the backup support for Vietnam. Vietnam was supported directly from the United States, logistically, although there were some things we did for them. I had a guy come over and he met my wife. His name was Jack Madison. He was the American member of the four-power commission. My wife told him about her mother and dad, this is my second wife, the Vietnamese girl, and her brothers and sister that were all in Vietnam that she was so worried about. Part of the bug out plans is one of the lieutenant colonels that worked for me was supposed to go over and help some guys from an Airforce base that didn't exist legally or in Thailand to set up the air traffic control system for the evacuation. He wasn't hot to go. So Jack called my boss and said "Why don't you let Tom come over and do this because he's set up systems for the FAA, and I'm sure we can even get this thing going and he can also get his in-laws out of here." So my boss called me and said, "Do you want to go?" and I said, "Sure." He said "Go over to [unintelligible]. There's a CIA flight leavin'" So I went over and got on it. Our signal to land at Tan Son Nhut was that the lights were on in the officer's club pool, but there was no talking to us from the tower. We were in a C130 that had very little markings on it. The guys put full flaps on open back doors which really increases your drag. We just circled right down to the end of the runway and made a power flare. Came to the runway, turned off the first taxi way, hoped nobody else was landing. That's how I got into Vietnam. I worked with these guys and we set up a very interesting -- I am not sure if I want to have on here how that traffic control system worked other than to say that the sound of mine or anybody else's voice went all the way to Washington and back before the pilot in the cockpit on short finally heard it. Which was interesting [laughs] but it worked, okay? It didn't work from where the Vietnamese thought we were. Now, the South Vietnamese, you know, had said you are deserting us. Stay the hell out of our way, we are still fighting a war. We were bringing in C-241s and we were taking out the people, and Madison was doing the negotiations and the four-power commission. We still had some guys from State there getting out people that Madison said, "You don't want to look bad to the world. We are leaving. Just cool your water. Let us get out the people you think you'd have to shoot anyhow." All the intelligence types and stuff like that. We were grinding them out of there in C-141s. So Madison went down to talk to this Air Force guy that was working for the embassy and we put my wife's family's names on there on the basis that they had a son-in-law who was an Army colonel. [laughs] I wasn't going to be too healthy either. Then I went down and got

them in a four-power car and got 'em out of there, okay, and then I went back to work again. We were doing interesting things like wiring the place so that it would go up. Right near the end, and then the next morning they called me and said they had the last planes leaving Thailand. I went out and got on that...I'm leaving out some things. I just don't think they belong in something like this...I got on an Air Force T-39 which a North American business jet that they used for training. We took off; we had a hell of a time getting out of Tan Son Nhut. We were low on fuel, made it back into Thailand, landed at a closed base. By radio I managed to get some fuel on the way. It got there much quicker than I thought it would. I got this back, and then I got back into Thailand and we started working on recovering the VNAF, the Vietnamese Air Force. We wanted them to fly the planes that they had back into Thailand. Now in order to do this, one of the things I was working on was letting VNAF pilots that were going to fly back get their families in with the people that were goin' out because they were bad guys, [laughs] okay, so that their families would be there. So we did a lot of that, too, all right, and that's who the refugees were. The next thing that happened is I flew back and we setup some of these airfields and these recovery systems. You know people criticize us for training a lot of foreign officers in our military system. Some of those officers really helped us, some of the Thais. They did things like certify that our aircraft never left Thai airspace. We were flying all over Southeast Asia picking these people up and picking airplanes up, putting a little more fuel in 'em, taking 'em off of a highway, flyin' to Nepal. Planes guys had no idea what the maintenance background is, maybe hadn't even flown this model before. [laughs] It was very interesting. We didn't have, the only accidents that we had were Vietnamese pilots. We had two head-ons on the main runway at U Taphao. People got nervous and made a downwind landing. But not too many people got killed. We got these aircraft out of there. At the same time that was going on, the last people were leaving by helicopter from Saigon. They went out to two ships. They went out to the *Midway* and the *Blue Lake*. You don't hear much about the *Blue Lake*. She worked out of our port. We had set it up and hand used it for two evacuations before. By the way, in the meantime we'd evacuated the people out of Phnom Penh when Phnom Pauh had fallen. So we did that, and when the ships came around to us the *Blue Lake* went right to Bien Hoa to meet up with the other people that we had been flying out. The Philippines had stopped taking the refugees from Vietnam. Had to mount 'em back up and fly 'em to Guam. They didn't talk about that much in the States, and that was kind of the beginning of the ending with the Philippines 'cause we got provoked, you know and we didn't think they should have done that. The *Midway* came around and we used "Jolly Greens" from up country and flew the people in to U Tapho. We had our hands full gettin' people out of Thailand and back to the States. These were our American civilians from Saigon area including the commander from over there, a guy by the name of Smith, that I'd known for years. We had a

hard time. We didn't want him to talk to the press, and he wanted to talk to the press. We didn't do that. We got him back, and he didn't talk to the press until we got to Hawaii and he'd simmered down a little bit. Because he wanted to say, you know, "Our President put these people down." It wouldn't have been a good thing for him to say. He retired shortly after that. I still stay in touch with him, a fantastic guy. We got the people off of that, and that kind of finished off Vietnam. We took the people, the Cambodians that we had that wanted to go back to the States, and we mixed them in with the Vietnamese that had come off, that we were putting through Thailand and got them the hell out of the country. We had ninety-seven Cambodians that wanted to go home. The Thais talked to them one last time about what a folly it was. Five of them changed their mind. We let them go back with the others. Took ninety-two of them to Aranya-- put that-- made a deal, put 'em across the border. Ninety of them were dead within three hours. Two of them came back. One of them had pulled off one hand and one both hands, skin loose. Sad days, I'm telling ya. The American press said "No, this is not the domino effect. This is just normal stuff." [laughs] The *Mayaguez* incident happened. *Mayaguez* was coming to me when she was hijacked [laughs]. Made life interesting, yeah, and about that time I was also shipping these aircraft that we recovered out of Vietnam, out of country. Thailand had had an election. The Prime Minister thought he wanted to give those aircraft back to his new friends from North Vietnam. King Bhumibol said no. We shipped 'em out, and I left Thailand very quickly, persona non grata. [laughs] I took the rap. And that was the end of Vietnam.

Mark: So, as a career army officer,

Burkhalter: Yeah.

Mark: Who had done a couple tours in Vietnam as well as Korea what's going through your mind as this is all unfolding or folding in - or --

Burkhalter: Okay, let me tell ya. I think what we did in Korea was right, and I think it had, considering all of the limitations, one of the better outcomes. What we did in Vietnam I'm not nearly as sure was right at all. I think that we were maybe overly concerned with the theological kinds of considerations, and I mean that. It was almost a religion that these people are anti-religion and stuff like that. It certainly was in Vietnam, because the people that had come down from the North that were Catholics couldn't stand the Communists. That was a very religious thing for them. The really devout Buddhists in the South didn't care for the Communists, okay. So from that point of view it was kind of a religious thing and it was very definitely a civil war. Ho Chi Minh, if you look at his history and you read it, you wouldn't have expected him to do anything else, and he did have firm control. So I really don't know why people believed it would come up any other way. The only other thing

we could have done is put in even more military force; put us at risk with starting a war with China. I couldn't tell you whether it would have started or not. It would have imposed what I think would be an unpopular government to most Vietnamese people, and then sat back and waited and maybe there would be another revolution. Maybe it wouldn't have been Communist. What is going to happen in Russia? I don't know. I think they are going to become more socialistic at least for awhile. But is it going to **[End of Tape 4, Side A]** be more of a-- what am I trying to say?-- an intellectual kind of thing with less religious fervor? Because there's no doubt about it. Anti-Communism was a religious fervor. You picked that up. You picked it up during the Cold War period, and that marched right on in. The written doctrine on antiguerrilla warfare and stuff like that is very careful not to say what the political things are and talk about methodology, but you would have to be an idiot not to see that is what they are talking about. Why weren't the Special Forces able to do more with partisans than they were? Why do we have the remnants of what we tried to do in the way of partisan warfare in places like Sheboygan yet today? The first "Yards," the first Montagnard type people that I met I thought it would be hard enough for urban Vietnamese to settle in the United States or other places, but this is like taking people that had never been off the reservation. I don't even think that we got anybody in the United States that primitive and tried to put them some place. I hear the hateful comments [makes funny voice]: "Hey, they built a fire in the house. This guys screws his own daughter," yeah. All the things they do they have been doing for hundreds of years. I don't expect them to make a big change. Were they loyal? Yes. The Special Force guys that recruited these people and put 'em into things, they were very loyal to them. No two ways about it. I've seen it. I've worked with some of these units. I used to fly when they were short of pilots, and I used to fly out to these long-range patrols. The big thing they would do is they'd march off their maps, and then we would go out and find them with a device to find, to home in on their FM signal, and then we'd find them we'd [laughs] drop them maps, medicine and whatever the heck else they needed out of an 01. Talk to 'em because they were having trouble talking on their radios because they usually needed batteries too. They were out there with these people and they were terribly loyal to them. If you left them there other people just would have killed them because even the non-communist Vietnamese had no love for these folks. What did that prove? Did it stop the Ho Chi Minh Trail? Nuh uh. The Ho Chi Minh Trail worked pretty dang well.

Mark: In terms of what Vietnam did to the Army, of course you stayed in the Army...

Burkhalter: Yep.

Mark: ...and you watched the Army get to its low point.

Burkhalter: Yeah, then start back.

Mark: Describe that process in your thoughts.

Burkhalter: Okay. Well, I came back in '75, and there just aren't jobs waiting for colonels, you know, because everybody's got their own specialties and so forth. I had a lot of leave so they said "Well what do you want to do?" I said "I'll take some leave and go work with these Vietnamese refugees helping them to get in." So I went around and had a lot of chicken on toast and so forth from Kiwanians and Rotarians [laughs] and Lions and Optimists tryin' to get 'em to take a Vietnamese family in there. My wife stayed back and worked on the other end. While we were doing this we were looking for a place to get her rather large family taken care of. They ended up in Janesville. We did that for a couple of months. I was kind of out of the loop on what was happening. I called once in a while people to find out what was going on, and then I went back and did things that were non-mainstream. I worked for the Troop Support Agency, which ran garrison the mess operations and the commissaries in the States. They don't any more. That's been completely reorganized, but they did then. I did two things. They were reorganizing the commissaries from being kind of stores that were run by post commanders into a chain, and they wanted to automate the management of that. So the first edition and the plan of the second and third edition of the software to do that was part of my responsibilities. Which I did when I was at Fort Lee. I had some very talented people working for me. I told you before I had been playing with automated supply systems and building models in the Department of Defense. So I wasn't-- you know, I had some idea what could be done there. The other thing I did is I ran a test in central food preparation which the Congress had told the Army to do some years before, and people had just -- they knew it wasn't a very good idea and so they just didn't do the test. Congress, the General Accounting Office, was getting ready to really lower the boom on some people. So I put this test together and got it going. It didn't work. The disease vector problems were something that they just had not look at carefully [laughs] when they proposed this. There were certain parts of it that were nice and are used today like the preps of salads and so forth are done centrally and so forth, but making all the meatloaf in one place and sending it all over the post wasn't a good idea. It was expensive and it didn't work, but I did that, and I was kinda out of the net, and I could see things happening. A close buddy of mine was commanding the post I was on, Fort Lee. There were things he didn't like. There was kinda the feeling that, you know, something has to change here, but what the hell is it, you know? So I started harassing people for a job; they kinda expected you to go find your own. So I told them, there is one thing from the time that I was a Lieutenant in Korea, one of the things I had to do with my rifle company was to guard a corps headquarters after

the shooting had stopped but we weren't sure what the Chinese were gonna do. I really got to liking corps [laughs]. Later on I said "I always wanted to be a G4 of a corps." Well, you were an "operating logistician"; by the time I became one, I went to Europe, and I was a G4 of Fifth Corps for three years. What we did during those three years was make the Forward Defense Plan a reality. Politically to placate the Germans we said the NATO plan is to defend right up -- because otherwise middely [sic] you can cut Germany in half with no plan. But, logistically when I got there, there was no way you could do that. The ammunition as well on the other side of the Rhine for one thing. So we did a lot of things in terms of changing where troops were stationed so they didn't cross as much and so forth when we called 'em out. We couldn't practice calling them out because they'd know what roads we used so I had an old loft and I put one of these big maps, and we did like World War II when the air warning systems, you know. People pushing little convoys around on this big map, and we did it in fifteen minute intervals. We had the guys that led these convoys actually come through and every fifteen minutes they would push their damn convoy through on their ammunition upload points and all their -- found out these plans wouldn't work worth a crap. Completely redid them. Got the Germans involved so the Germans would give us hardened communications to use for this. So we got that done. Senator, what's his name? The one from Utah that's still there.

Mark: Hatch.

Burkhalter: Hatch. Orrin Hatch. Orrin Hatch. got stuck in Frankfurt, so he came in to be briefed. We gave him the standard corps briefing. My [unintelligible] was last always, and he said, looked at me and he said, "Colonel" he says, "This goes 'clunk' when it drops to me." I said "Well sir, some things need to be done." He said "What are the things that you need done?" I told him how many ammunition bunkers I needed on this side of the river, and I said if "we're really going inter-operate with the Germans, we have to have a waiver to the Foreign Military Procurement Act so that we can use the NATO supply system and if I got a part the Germans need they can requisition it form me and visa versa when we go on maneuvers. He says "It makes sense to me," and went back and got the legislation passed like that. Before I was out of there both those thing were done. We had our first inoperability field exercise with the Germans.

Mark: Now Frankfurt was your last duty station?

Burkhalter: Yeah -- no, no. I came back for my last two years at a duffer place. I went to the Presidio of San Francisco; that's log of Sixth Army, yeah. That was dealing with a reserve component almost exclusively.

Mark: So what year did you actually retire?

Burkhalter: '82.

Mark: '82. So you had left service after President Reagan had been elected --

Burkhalter: Yes, uh huh. He got in long enough to see that my second wife, who a judge told me I had to divorce or give up my son for adoption, got a stipend for the rest of her life because Mrs. Reagan had convinced him to sign an Executive Order [laughs]. Yeah, I'll thank him for that forever.

Mark: Maybe I shan't tread on that territory.

Burkhalter: No, don't tread on that one!

Mark: But in terms of the military finally getting things it needed--

Burkhalter: Yeah.

Mark: Did you find that to be true?

Burkhalter: Yeah, it started.

Mark: Was it just Reagan or did it start under Carter and accelerate under Reagan?

Burkhalter: It was really odd. Jimmy Carter came to Europe. Do you remember that?

Mark: I was in high school at the time.

Burkhalter: Ok, you were just a little kid. But he came to Europe to meet the Germans, and of course this was going to be a big NATO leader thing, and anybody wearing a star wanted nothing to do with that. They just wanted it to just go "clunk." I went to my boss who was three-star general. I said, "Hey you will regret this to the end of your days." I said "I don't care whether he's a jackass. He's still the President of the United States." He said "Well, what do you want to do?" I said "Well, the Germans want to hold it in Wiesban." So a buddy of mine, head of the corps independent brigade which was the only reserve we had until people came from the States. I said "Let him do it." He said "Well, he hasn't got good equipment." I said "Well, we are going to swap equipment around the corps and he's gonna look good." So that's what I did. I got people to swap off equipment with him just for this big exercise. It was a German brigade and a US brigade there, and Jimmy Carter had heard before he came that the military was going to support him because he had been an asshole to us. He came and this went off great. He promoted my buddy to general [laughs] which was good for him, but it did get him to soften up. His next budget he started putting some things in.

Didn't do as well as Mr. Reagan did, but he did ease up because he found out, hey, if we are going to do this, we have to do it right. He came and he asked, you know, he said, "You looked pretty well equipped." He said "Sir, he said, I had to beg, borrow, and steal this equipment from all over the corps area." He said "You really have?" He said "Yes." He said "Are these people what they're telling me that you need, do you really need it?" He said "Yes." He did ease up. They just didn't take as much out as they did in the past so things started coming up. I would say from what I know of the Soviet guys that we were dealing with that they started getting really worried, in about '79 and by '81 - '82 they were damn worried and that if the guys in the Kremlin ever told them to go that they were not going to see the light of day. They started getting a few defections, and it really got nasty. These guys, every time they came to something they would have to send their wives back to East Germany. Because they were afraid they would leave while they did that. They were really keeping track of them. One of the things we did, too -- do you know what the REFORGER exercises were?

Mark: Mmm hmm.

Burkhalter: Okay. We had always done the REFORGER exercises in areas that excluded these military liaison missions. You know. We had a military liaison mission some place in East Germany. I know the name. It just doesn't come. It's over near Berlin. Oh, there was one in Frankfurt. We never had a REFORGER near Frankfurt or near the autobahns because these guys could watch. I said to the boss, I said, "Why the hell are we doing that?" I said, "We're doing good. What are they going to see that's going to do anything other than scare the pants off them?" So, he went back up and he told his boss and got out of him, "Okay." We did it right along the autobahn. Man, they were out in force watching this thing. The word we got back from the intelligence people was that it was terribly demoralizing to them because we brought that year the Fifth Mech Division in. They fell in on their equipment and they were there so fast and were operable so fast it just made the Russians' head spin. Now, would everybody have done that well? I don't think so because all of the pre-positioned equipment wasn't quite that well off. The units that came over were always, they gave 'em the cream of the crop to look good. But you know if they could do that that well, the rest wasn't that far behind. You know the million little things, like getting the batteries all [laughs] going again and stuff like that that have to be done. That, if it's organized right, it gets done, and it gets done in a minimal of time [sic] and those troops are there almost like they were stationed near the French border. The thing that got to me the most was just before I left. The French came up in civilian clothes and started really doing interoperability with us, and one of the last things I did is myself and the chief of my support command went down into France to work with them on what some of their units would have do to come back up. We were supposedly

inspecting cemeteries because this was so sensitive to the French people, but the French government and their military people were so sure it needed to be done. I think those are the things that kinda -- because I think that one of the most demoralizing things to the Soviet Union was they came to the conclusion that if they pulled the chain, they were going to lose.

Mark: The next fifteen minutes or so, I am interested in how you got to be a retired Army officer, county service officer, and how you got back to Wisconsin.

Burkhalter: It gets awful personal, but I'll tell you.

Mark: Well, okay, let's put it this -- let's never mind how you got there.

Burkhalter: Well, I'll try --

Mark: If you want to. I'm interested in your work--

Burkhalter: Right after I retired I had to divorce my Vietnamese wife. She'd -- a couple of things had happened to her, big mental problems; she abused our kid, and I had either had to put him up for adoption or divorce her, and I did. During that period of time I had been working as a consultant in industry, okay, as an inside consultant. Do you know what the difference is?

Mark: No.

Burkhalter: The people in the company I was with thought I was "Job Jockey", warehouse manager or something like that. I was really working for the board of directors and getting a second paycheck so I could see what was going on in the inside. So I could make really reasonable recommendations. I was doing that -- I did that for a couple companies. Then I was having difficulties as a single parent with a little boy to raise, so I stopped-- I finished one contract in California, and I went back into the headhunter business, you know, for helping executives, people find executives and vice-a-versa for a little while. And my ex-wife was a problem because she was really mentally ill, and she would bother us all the time. So, a job came up with another consulting company working on a highly classified Army base out in Utah desert. So I took it. No way she could get in there. [laughs] So I worked out there and got that problem done. It was about a two-year job. I didn't like working for this company, so I talked to my older brother in Wisconsin and said how about *he and I* doing this, and I'd come back there. Well, my older brother really didn't want to go back to work. Both my bothers are "chemys" and my older brother always had the idea he was going to retire when I did, which he meant from the Army. He was going to quit working. He was eighteen months older than I was. And he did. He wasn't crazy about going back to work. So I called him and said "Okay, a job I was

looking at in Utah fell through because I was not a member of the Latter-day Saints Church and that was evidently one of their requirements. So, I was a little more than angry to tell you the truth. My brother said, "Get a truck. Pack your stuff up. I'll come out there and help you. You're coming back here." So I came back and he said, the next night when we were on the road, he said, "Betty has rented you a home in Richland Center." I said, "Well, that's nice." He said "Follow me." He was driving my little truck and I was driving the U-Haul. He said "Follow me." Then he got up there and he said "I want you to pull the truck right up on the lawn." Okay [laughs], I pulled the truck up on the lawn. He said "Okay, you are now a bonafide resident of Wisconsin. I have signed you up to take the County Veteran Service Officer's test for this county. It is on in forty-five minutes." I had been on the road for three days driving a truck. So I went down to the courthouse and took the test.

Mark: You passed?

Burkhalter: Yup, evidently. And I worked in Richland Center for four and a half years, and then I got married again. I married a woman from Ozaukee County, who got to know the Ozaukee County VSO. When he found out he had cancer he called me up and said, "Why don't you compete for my job so your wife can come back?" So I did. I had to do it twice because they had a little fight in Ozaukee County about the selection procedure. I've been there, and I am going to retire from there next September I'm pretty sure.

Mark: Oh, are you?

Burkhalter: Mm hmm.

Mark: That's news to me.

Burkhalter: Oh, I'm old enough. [laughs]

Mark: Compared to this spring chicken, perhaps.

Burkhalter: Yeah, well how long in your life do you think you're gonna work?

Mark: Oh, geez, I have no idea.

Burkhalter: Guess. What do you think?

Mark: I expect to work well into my seventies.

Burkhalter: Really? Well, good. I don't.

Mark: You never know.

Burkhalter: I am going to write, but I am not going to go into an office everyday and I am not going to pick up other people's grief everyday 'cause that's what's hard about being a CVSO.

Mark: Well, that's what I was getting to. Now, what are the challenges of it? What are the problems with it? From your respective what are the problems that veterans face?

Burkhalter: Well, first of all let's talk about the problem CVSOs face. The problem that the CVSOs face is still and more-so every day as we get more and more people making political decisions that are not veterans. [They ask:] "Why the hell have this?" One of the reasons is: "why should veterans have a tax-supported service that other citizens don't have?" I think that is the biggest question. So that makes it difficult to get adequate funding for a full-time officer in a smaller county. Today, I think, to do a good job my personal belief is you should be automated so that you can do things in close to real time. That you have adequate numbers of people in your office so that people can expect it to be open and you still have enough time to do those things as an advocate that you are supposed to do. It is hard to convince county board members that when this whole thing was set up that they recognized the fact that you could be a political advocate, which is why you're tenured. It's the only real reason to tenure anybody, so that if they don't like political approach that you are taking, that's too bad. They can't fire you for that. Hopefully it's gonna be a pro-veteran one, and not based on something else. I think, knowing my colleagues, there would be very few exceptions to that. You know, like to discuss anything political except as it relates to veterans. And they seldom -- I can't think I have ever heard a serious discussion that says "this major political part is more pro-veteran than that one." I can't ever remember that happening. One of 'em is more for certain kind of benefits than the other is for other kinds of benefits. So what can you say? The most difficult continuing thing is outreach, and it has been since day one. The people that need the help the worst need to be sought. They just don't seek you. And are we successful? I still see way too many people that should have seen somebody like me a year or two or three, or four or five ago. What do you think when a guy comes in to you and has since been service connected for PTSD in World War II? That was on of the fortunate ones that wouldn't let them give him electroshock therapy because they thought he was schizophrenia? Because he was having flashbacks that they interpreted to mean hallucinations. Therefore, he was schizophrenia. It was almost that simple-minded. He wouldn't let them, thank God. Been treated for PTSD and he got well enough so a wife that couldn't stand him left him. [laughs] She had been taking care of him for years. He gets along well on his own now. Sad that she left, but he is getting over that. But he is

service connected for it, and he's drawing money for it, and he is getting treated for it by the VA and what have you.

Mark: So, you find still to this day someone from a conflict as early as World War II?

Burkhalter: Yeah.

Mark: They're still coming out of the closet to use the terminology?

Burkhalter: Yeah.

Mark: Still happens.

Burkhalter: Still happens, yup, and a quarter to a third of your time is taken for the continuing saga of your worst off veterans; the guys and gals that are hundred percent for something in the 9,000 Series. That's all the mental illnesses. The people with mostly physical ills, everybody can see 'em; most people understand it. They get encouraged to seek the medical attention that they need. People in the 9000 Series that's not true. If they have a family that's understanding of the fact that it's an illness, and if they get seen properly, if they take their meds when they are supposed to, they will have a much better life than if they don't do this. I think when they have the same kind of a life as somebody, yeah, else. We are not that good yet. The last issue with the house organ or the American Psychological Society—not Association. The Association is primarily practice. The Society is primarily research-oriented— says we are at the threshold; we are ready to have a lot of men dumped in and get to the point where the preponderance of the diagnosis and treatment we do is based on scientific knowledge not clinical information. I'm not knocking clinical information, you know, we wouldn't be any place, even in medicine, without it, but I am saying that we know enough scientifically now so that we can break that hump. If you were being treated for cancer would you want a treatment that was based on scientific research? Or, would you want a treatment that was based on well, this worked for forty other doctors? That is pretty much--kind of what the difference is. Any part of clinical machines is based partly on scientific research and partly on clinical practice. No two ways, and it will be over thus, but, we would like to see the balance in the 9000 Series get to be more based on research. I think that PTSD is one of them that is amenable to this. To me, PTSD is an extreme case of negative conditioning. If you look at the behavior, it is all the kind of behaviors you get. Go read a book on negative conditioning in rats even, and you will see this same kind of thing, either withdrawal or extreme disorganized behavior or what have you. And this extreme disorganized behavior, what is that? It's a mal-perception of some type. To me, PTSD is the only neurosis in which the direct antecedent of the

behavior is a mal-perception-- flashback. And yet it is not a psychosis. I think anybody that's worked with it is not going to be amenable to the approaches that are taken in psychosis. The sad thing about it is, why does it keep getting worse in some people? And it does. If you have dealt with very many cases, you know that about a third of them just keep progressing even through treatment and what have you. In the last but not least, the last war we had, we send a bunch of GIs off to some place where they said "we will cut off your private parts if you mess with the local people," and we sent the largest number of women as part of that force that we ever had in the history of our nation. Are we ever seeing the PTSD over rape and forced sexual intercourse and stuff like that! I am. Some of my colleagues are willing to talk about it, and some of them don't see it. I would say that those who don't *see* it, that their female clientele are just reluctant to talk.

Mark: I never thought of that.

Burkhalter: If you get a chance ask Kris. I have never asked her outright. I mean, she is a woman of about the right age. They are not going to be any more prone to talk to the gal from up in Eau Claire, I don't think. Because she is, you know, of an earlier generation. I don't know why they talk to me. I suppose 'cause I have been trained to get people to talk to me, same way you have in interviewing. I think that I am missing a lot of them, but every so often I have some girl just blurt it all out: "I keep having in the middle of the night-- I wake up, and they're doing it again--" Well, here we go. But I must say the VA has been very, very good at setting up programs for this. I don't have to wait for the service connection or nothing. I just refer them down to the hospital and they start right away. They are well into the case before the people in the benefits administration are sending out development letters. Thank goodness, because -- and is it going to make a difference? Too early to say, too early to say. What is going to happen to females that became POWs? Because almost every POW I have got, after you start digging, maybe they're not even ten percent, but is there a PTSD problem? Yeah. Most of them that you get them in for an evaluation they usually come up around thirty percent.

Mark: So --- not much time. We've got a little bit of time. You mentioned that PTSD seems to get worse as time goes on.

Burkhalter: Hello.

Mark: That would follow that some of the worst cases might be the World War II veterans or the Korean War veterans. Now you said they don't to get it as much, but do you see much farther advanced cases among these older veterans than among the younger?

Burkhalter: Yes, except that I think that they develop support networks. The people that I look at that I think gee, if I had been around when this guy came out, and the programs had been there, I think we would have done something a little differently, than they have. But, you know, the World War II veterans built their support networks and they built it around veterans' organizations. There's just not very many Vietnam vets that are in anything but BVA. There's not many Persian Gulf people that are [End of Tape 4, Side B] in anything.

Mark: Do you think the organizations are important --

Burkhalter: Yeah --

Mark: For the mental illness --

Burkhalter: Yeah, I think that the ability to get with people that they visualize as understanding what they're going to say put them in a position where they could talk about these things and rationalize them. Because after all, what do you think these guys are doing in group?

Mark: Talking.

Burkhalter: They're talking about it. They are doing two things. As they talk about it with each other, they are rationalizing it. In other words, they are taking the emotional experience and they're making it rational so it can be dealt with better that way, not completely, but at least to a certain degree. The second thing they are doing is they're exchanging practical remedies. Whether it's a short term how to get out of the room before you blow your widget to actually taking care of something so that you get it back down to where it's handling, and they're passing this kind of folklore back and forth. In the sessions that I have gone to in a group for people that are really PTSD, I don't see much more than that happening. I don't see some of the things that are happening with other kinds of illnesses going on. The insight that is being developed I see is the passing on of a "folkway" that works, not an individual thing. They seem to do better, the guys that seem to do better don't look at this so much as something that's-- the big thing that's a revelation when I start dealing with some of these [veterans] is: "Good God, I am not the only person in the world that this has happened to." That alone brings some people to at least *hope*.

Mark: So, would it be fair to say that the Vet House type of counseling session for the Vietnam veteran is not unlike the Legion bar, the club house twenty, thirty years before hand?

Burkhalter: I think that they do a certain degree have met some of the same need. I really thing the Vet House thing is a lot more focused.

Mark: More sufficient too.

Burkhalter: Yeah, and a lot more effective, and didn't lead people to being alcoholics [laughs] perhaps as much, but, you know, did it help people? Yes. I think that one other this is, it allowed people who thought that something that happened to them was peculiar to them-- they saw it happened to somebody else, and somebody else has survived it, and somebody else has been able to handle it. That has allowed them to proceed.

Mark: Are some organizations that might be more or less effective with vets? For example, the VFW takes only veterans of foreign wars which means they'd all been overseas as opposed to the Legion which could have --

Burkhalter: I think there are too many other things that erupt from the community that fashion those local posts that I wouldn't hazard a guess. I think that you will find all the way to -- I went to Canada summer before last. I couldn't find anybody to help me in this little Canadian town, so I went to the Canadian Legion who was very helpful. But they had to find a real member for me to answer my question because they had become such a social club that less than ten percent of their members were really veterans. So that's an extreme in terms of saying that the community in turn focuses and forms the organization. I have run into some Legion Posts which have people that I would consider actually veterans of real combat. I find others that are primarily peopled by aircraft and automobile mechanics and cooks. But the same is true of VFW Posts. I don't know any rhyme or reason for that. I have been to VFW posts where, hell, half the members were -- either had a ship or an airplane shot out from under them or, they were wounded themselves, or they were POWs. I find other ones where everybody seemed to have been a clerk in England or the Philippines [laughs] or something like that, and you know, so I see there's too many --

Mark: Variables.

Burkhalter: Yeah, there's too many variables to say that one organization is more one way than another.

Mark: I see. This has been very interesting. You have pretty much exhausted all my questions.

Burkhalter: That's good.

Mark: Anything that you would like to add?

Burkhalter: No, other than that I am fully aware that my experience is one guy's experience and that I have a different view than some guy who went in a private and came out a PFC. He had a different view of the organization, what it was trying to do, and he didn't have access to the information that I had. If you have different access to what an organization is trying to do, your attitude about what they are doing is very different. In the military establishment, you run into one thing over and above the normal lack of communication that you do in industry vertically, which may or may not be exacerbated by a union environment or maybe be exacerbated by a highly competitive environment, and that is the security thing, particularly in wartime. You just can't tell people where we are going, why we are going, what are we going to do. I mean months on and you're gettin' 'em ready. You know where they are going and what they are going to do. You can't tell a soul. It is tough. In a way, you would like to tell people because they might have a better idea than you do about something that you could be doing. My people all understood they were going to Vietnam. It was very interesting when I organized this battalion to go to Vietnam. When I came down to Fort Lee I got an interview with a post commander who was very supportive. He said "Well, it's nice to meet you Burkhalter." He said, "You know as soon as we knew you were coming" he said, "I must have had ten lieutenants colonels in here, wanted to kick you out of the saddle. They said 'Geez, this guy is only a major promotable and he is getting to organize a battalion. Let me have that General, let me have at it.'" He said "Yeah, he is organizing to take it to Vietnam." And he said "They changed the subject." [laughs]. He said almost all of them changed the subject almost immediately. It was very -- it was different, and I hearken back to the things that I knew about World War II while I was organizing this because we had one of our officers who had his wife there. Everybody else was separated from their family. He happened to come from the post because you were not authorized to move your family under those circumstances, see. So it was very, very different, you know. Officers were in an old set of old World War II BOQ's because we weren't a permanent part of the post, [laughs], you know. Troops were down in an old set of barracks down on the edge right next to where the old WAC center was. Post Chaplain opened up an old World War II type chapel down there for us. It was rather interesting. It made me as a historian, and I have always been interested in history, it made some of this stuff really become a lot more real. A lot more real because it was an unusual situation to organize -- and again, I have to emphasize the only reason we did those was the political reluctance to do what we are doing today which is activating reserve components. They found out that the public doesn't rise up as a man and as soon as you give these people weapons they buy the ammunition and then come and shoot the local senator. They don't do that. We are lucky in our country that they don't. I

am getting older now and there is only one tradition in our country that I hate to see pass.

Mark: Which one is that?

Burkhalter: The citizen soldier. It is. I think that seeing it pass -- the biggest problem is the public at large thinks of the members of the armed forces as something other than their brothers, sons, uncles and what have you. They are some other guys, okay. That is the biggest single problem, and the other problem is, you get people that say I would never do that as a job and therefore they never get the experience. I think that the training, whether it was military or something else, but some kind of training to do national service, I think, promotes citizenship. I got two kids, two boys, one is eighteen and the other is going to be eighteen soon. One of 'em wouldn't -- he said "They'd shoot me before I'd go in any military service." The other can't go for a health reason and wishes he could. I don't know, how does that make sense to you?

Mark: Kids.

Burkhalter: Yeah, kids. You'll find out when yours get older. It's been a pleasure talking to you today.

Mark: You too, absolutely --

Burkhalter: Okay.

Mark: Very interesting.

[End of Interview]