

**Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center**

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
THEODORE SHANNON
Military police, U.S. Army, World War II

2011

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Shannon, Theodore., (b.1918). Oral History Interview, 2011.

Approximate length: 58 minutes

Contact WVM Research Center for access to original recording.

Abstract:

Theodore Shannon discusses his service in the Army during World War II as a non-commissioned officer at Fort Hayes (Ohio) and then a commissioned officer in Algeria as part of the Allied Military Government of Occupied Territories (AMGOT). He outlines attending basic training in Spartanburg, South Carolina in 1941, and comments on soldiers' prejudices towards southerners. Shannon describes working as part of a double company at Fort Hayes (Ohio) that processed and court martialed Army deserters. He reflects on the advantages he gained because of his college education. He details being commissioned at Fort Custer (Michigan) and deploying to Algeria as a military policeman with the Allied Military Government of Occupied Territories. Shannon and his daughter Pam discuss the formation of AMGOT and give anecdotes from Shannon's deployment.

Biographical Sketch:

Theodore Shannon (b. 1918) enlisted in the Army in 1941 and served 26 months stateside at Fort Hayes (Ohio). He then served an additional 26 months overseas as military policemen with the Allied Military Government of Occupied Territories during World War II.

Interviewed by Molly Graham and Jeff Kollath, 2011.

Transcribed by Lexie Jordee, 2014.

Reviewed by Claire Steffen, 2015.

Abstract written by Claire Steffen, 2015.

Interview Transcript:

Shannon: Well why don't I just say that you can divide my military experience into two parts. The first half I was a non-commissioned officer in--state side and the second half I was a commissioned officer overseas. So neatly divided

Graham: Two years and two years.

Shannon: Twenty-six months and twenty-six months--

Graham: Yep.

Kollath: Okay.

Shannon: --so that's an even division. I was a non-listed man here and an officer there.

Kollath: Um, well, one of the questions I wanna ask is, I was reading this and you said you did your basic training in Spartanburg South Carolina. So of course one of my questions is how does--how did you adjust coming from Danbury, Connecticut to Spartanburg, South Carolina?

Shannon: Anybody placed in the south if you're from the north [laughs] and there was an adjustment.

Kollath: Yeah can you talk a little bit about that and what it was?

Shannon: Yeah sure. I was totally prejudiced against the south, but I was before I went there.

Kollath: Mhm.

Shannon: You know, that--I carried it with me. And we got there and it was a segregated society. You know, you walked down the streets and the blacks would step off the curb and walk in, you know, get off the sidewalk. Interestingly, Spartanburg--well of course we didn't do a lot of—we didn't get into the city very much because we were out in a fairly new camp. And we were pretty, pretty much occupied with basic training. But on the occasions we went to the city we could reaffirm our prejudices about the south if you're from the north. Good or bad.

Kollath: Can you elaborate a little bit more about it? What--before you left what did you view the south as?

Shannon: Well I viewed the south as sorta backwards and needing more education and being fairly--I always thought of the south as very military. That is to say they were very oriented towards the military and they had a lot of bases in the south.

Kollath: Mhm.

Shannon: But I didn't know an awful lot about it. Most of it was from lack of knowledge that, you know, what do you know about Spartanburg, South Carolina if you're outta--if you're from Connecticut?

Kollath: Yeah.

Shannon: You don't know a hell of a lot. You think the Mississippi River is some place down there but [everyone laughs]. But I had just had this feeling that they had never gotten over the war and, cause, you know, this is recollections from many years after cause it was in '41 that I was in there. But I do definitely remember that my contingent was mostly from the North, many of 'em from Connecticut. And we all felt about the same.

Kollath: Mhm.

Shannon: We didn't like their music. If we had this corny southern music on the radio somebody would make a dash for it and turned it off, put something else on. But-- And most of the personnel were southern. That is the people that--the officers and the non-coms, mostly southern. Regular army people, many of 'em, especially the non-coms, the enlisted personnel, they'd been in the army for a long time and they knew their way around the army. And we didn't like it. We weren't all that happy with them. Fact a guy said to us once, fellow from Amherst Massachusetts, a high school teacher, said "I'm gonna bend over and I want you all to kick me." And we said, "What's that about." He said, "I'm not gonna remember all the fun I'm having with you guys, with my companions up here in the north." He said, "I'm gonna, no, I'm gonna remember, I wanna remember the crummy times here I don't wanna remember just these nice times that I'm having talking to my fellow new Englanders here." [everybody laughs] So how about that? Now that tells you--gives you a sense of the feelings. We were critical of the way they spoke. We were, you know, a guy would come in at 2 o'clock in the afternoon and say, "Now this evening" Say, he would say, you know. Then we would say, "No this is the afternoon, not this evening" Well it was one of those--it was raw prejudice we had. We un--I don't know what you'd say, uninformed prejudice or just informed prejudice.

Graham: What do you think they'd say about you?

Shannon: Uh, I thought they--yeah that's a good question. I'm not entirely sure how they reacted. For one thing, the first thing they reacted to was the fact that we were raw recruits, didn't know our way around. So as soldiers I'm sure they thought we were stupid, you know, from the point of view of being military personnel. That's at that, at that military level. They might of thought that we were arrogant and they might of thought of us as elite, I'm not sure. Although, god knows we were,

we were a cross section of people from, you know, we were civilian army so it isn't as if we'd had any special training or necessarily special education. Many of the people I was with in basic training, many of them had had college degrees, but subsequently that is in the next stage that I went to, I was the only college graduate in my unit. But down there we were a cross section and I think they thought we were--probably they thought that we thought that we were superior to them.

Graham: What year was this?

Shannon: '41.

Graham: And how did you get from Connecticut to basic training?

Shannon: By a train. Old trains--the old troop trains in those days when they--whatever they didn't use for regular human beings they turned over to the military. I mean they were pretty crummy trains that took us down. You'd open the windows and the dirt would--the soot come in. They were locomotives and--that were probably coal fired. We used to say they had square wheels, you know, and it took us forever because they--whenever there was another train with a higher priority we'd be shunted to the side. Took us quite a while to get from Hartford, no from Fort Devens, Mass to Spartanburg, South Carolina. And we--hmm--it was a different world for us and in the beginning I'm sure most of us were unhappy about the world we'd arrived at but the interesting thing is because we were mostly--all of us were from the north and northeast, we felt a, sort of a camaraderie and a friendship in our group as contrasted to the regular army people who were gonna shape us up.

Kollath: Mhm

Shannon: There were some very admirable guys we discovered. Most of 'em we didn't think much of but there were some very unusual guys that we thought were pretty smart.

Kollath: Can you--I mean when you got in the military you'd already graduated from college and--.

Shannon: Yeah I was a year out.

Kollath: You'd been teaching for a year. So can you talk a little bit about the role education played? I mean your--personally now and education played in military service and how it got you through your four years.

Shannon: Yeah actually if--the fact that I had a college degree gave me a leg up throughout my whole experience in the military. From the very beginning when I got to Ohio. I went from Spartanburg to Columbus, Ohio and there was a fort in town, it's not

there any longer, Fort Hayes was in the heart of Columbus, right in the city. It was an old fort, probably, I don't know built right after the civil war or something that was the barracks and permanent buildings. And it was staffed by regular army persons, most of whom were in the military because it gave 'em three square meals a day, it gave 'em a place to live, and it gave 'em a career. Many of whom were unlettered practically, some of 'em could hardly read and write. Not all of 'em. And there were--and there were personnel who had gotten there before I and my group had who came from other states and were staffing Fort Hayes and they were, generally speaking, pretty competent people. And there were some regular army people, I'm thinking of non-commissioned officers, who had learned a lot in the army. In fact who had--because they had made a career in the army, they were competent and knew their way around. And oh, the first sergeant that we had there was an--one of the nation's top experts on army regulations and how they applied. And in our case, Fort Hayes was a corps area. So it was a headquarters, we had a headquarters company, but it was also a headquarters for the 5th Corps area which included a number of Midwestern states, West Virginia, Ohio, I think Indiana and maybe a couple other states. So they had jurisdiction over--military jurisdiction over these other places. One of our major jobs, and this is interesting, was to apprehend American soldiers who had gone AWOL or who had deserted and court martial 'em and send 'em back to some unit or other, either to their old units, or to ship 'em overseas to units that went overseas. It was pretty remarkable. And in the beginning we, you know, we were outraged, that is those of us who came from the north to think that here was a place called the army and they were apprehending American citizens. Now the American citizens, in most cases, I would have to generalize, had been drafted without time to take care of their families back home and a lot of 'em were just desperate to get back and stabilize their family affairs. And that's why many of 'em had taken off, they were just feeling desperate. They had left wives and kids and what-not behind. And so they had gone back, you know, they'd gone AWOL, they'd gone back to their homes. And the local sheriffs would pick them up and bring them back. And sometimes they got paid by the head. Sometimes they'd wait 'til they had a good truck full or whatever and then deliver them to us mind you. You know and then our job--the job that--we had two companies combined. We were a guard company, our personnel guarded the fort. And then we were a company of clerks and other personnel required to work up Court Martials for American soldiers. You know we were shocked when--our first thought was, this is a horrible thing, we won't participate in it. "How can you do this", you know, we'd say to some of the people who were there who'd been drafted a year before, and we'd say "how can you do this, why?" You know and you're sittin' there smirking over it, you think it's great that you caught these guys and what not. Cause they were pretty rough on them.

Kollath: Mhm

Shannon: Sometimes they were even shot for trying to escape but that wasn't most of the cases but they were very hard. A lot of these people who'd come in a year before us or thereabouts were very hardened about the people they were dealing this. By

this time they felt, you know, that they were put upon. They couldn't get vacations, they couldn't get furloughs. Why not? Because the traffic and the business that had to be done was so heavy that you just had to work all the time and you couldn't get away. And one way we got away, got some relief, was if we volunteered to take a prisoner, this was later, if we volunteered to accompany one of these soldiers--American soldiers, back to where he was being sent off to, we could get a couple of days delay enroute and go home and that was the way we got on furlough or got some time off. And you could see over time how this wore on people and on their nerves to think these SOBs are now causing me to be away, you know, to do all this work, to be away from home, that kind of stuff. Over time, you know, you gradually--your ideals eroded and you got to just a cynical--got to be just as cynical as they guys who were there when we arrived. Some of those guys were wonderful. Some of 'em I was friends with for the rest of my days practically.

Kollath: Did you ever accompany someone when?

Shannon: I did!

Kollath: Yeah. Can you talk about that?

Shannon: I accompanied a guy, twice I think, at least twice that I can remember. I accompanied a guy to Cape Cod, Buzzards Bay. Now I don't know what the base is up there but we had to get to Buzzards Bay. We went by train. We were supposed to be handcuffed throughout the whole period of the trip. Never take the handcuffs off. And the first guy I had was a little immigrant Italian guy who could hardly speak English but who intrigued me because he was trying to learn English by reading the New York Times, imagine. Think of how I felt, I thought "oh, wow here's this guy trying to better himself by reading New York Times," you know, became buddy buddy with him. We got to New York Grand Central Station and I thought this is crazy. I took the handcuffs off this guy. [laughs] And I turned around he was gone. I, you know--what they had said to us was if you lose a prisoner you finish his time, you take his place. Well I was--at that point when I turned around and he wasn't there, we had overcoats, it musta been winter time and the handcuffs were under the coat, you know, and I was a good guy, I let 'em off. And I didn't know what the hell I'll do, you know, should I get on the phone? Should I call camp? What? Then I turned around again and he was there! He had picked up a newspaper. Well what he had done was walked over and picked up a newspaper and come back. And we chatted away. Well I can tell you what a relief that was to know that I had not on my only trip--first trip lost a prisoner. Well when we got up to Buzzards Bay, they had no idea why we were there. This was typical army. Nobody had told 'em we were coming. They didn't know who this guy, what they hell we were doing, you know. And here I'm trying to get rid of him so I can get out of training and go down to Connecticut, you know, cause I had a couple day leave of absence. Delay en-route it was called.

Kollath: Mhm

Shannon: Well finally--I can't remember now what the particulars were, they obviously had to take him, you know, I was there on--I had orders. He was supposed to be there, so. That was that experience. We carried side arms all the time. Whenever we were on official duty we had side arms. We didn't, yeah; we weren't armed on the fort, on the post. But when we left the post on official duty we carried our side arms. And you know we had to walk through towns. It's like Wisconsin now, only it's not a concealed weapon, it had to be shown. Well that was one occasion; I don't remember the particulars of the other one. Yeah I did it a couple times in order to get some time off and get to see my family. Um the, as I say there was a real change of attitude and change of heart and all that. We really got hardened about these people who were, you know, we thought were causing us all this grief. When the real people who had the grief were they themselves, you know, most of them were just ordinary citizens who had gotten swept up in the draft without time to put their affairs in order back home. And the majority's story was that they were just desperate to get back and try to figure out ways to make their families more comfortable. And then they were planning to come back, most of them. There were very few, as I remember bad guys. You know, I mean really tough criminal types. I don't remember--I remember almost none of 'em. And we processed hundreds of people that way. And most of the personnel were occupied with different parts of the system, the military justice system as they called it, to get these people from A to Z, where they were supposed to be going. We did a whole bunch of other things. We guarded the fort that we had to have; it was a routine that had to be maintained. But that became sorta ho-hum. We'd do that every day and that was always. The other big thing that we did is--we did a couple of big things. I don't know how much--I suppose it was planned, we were able--the officer corps at Fort Hayes was made up--there was a few regular army people who'd been in the army for a long time and the head of the camp, the fort, was a colonel but the officer corps of our company, our double company, were people who had been activated either out of ROTC or out of National Guard units. And they knew very little about army procedures and regulations and what not. And those of us who'd been there for a while, we were there for a couple years almost, we got to know the ropes, military ropes. If you wanna get something done in the army, I suppose the same thing today, go to a non-com, go to somebody who was doing the work, you know.

Kollath: They worked harder.

Shannon: Yeah they were the workers and they--we got very savvy about military affairs. And that was good because when I went overseas I, you know, felt very comfortable in the army. I knew my way around. I felt a little superior to other people who hadn't as a matter of fact, I can remember that very well. So one of the things, one of our functions, thought I think it was indirect, was to train these officers who were coming through and teach them the ropes, get them to understand what was going on, what had to be done, how you processed pay rolls,

how you handled disciplinary issues, that whole business. The non-coms unofficially trained the officers who were coming through who had had academic training in colleges or in their units back home as national guards people but didn't know the workings of the military until they got there. So part of our job turned out to be, I don't know whether this was intentional or not, you never know with the army, that was one of our major functions, was to train these military people, officer personnel who came through. The other job was to provide cadres of persons to new camps that were being opened by the dozens around the country. There weren't, you know, when the war came we had to expand this limited army like mad. No we didn't, I mean the military had to do it. And they needed trained personnel, non-commissioned officers to go to be instructors in these other camps. In some cases they were reopening camps that had been shut down. In other cases there were new camps that were being built and people had to be assigned to those places. And a lot of 'em were assigned from the old camps, like the one I was in, the old forts from Fort Hayes. Fort Hayes sent a lot of people around the United States as permanent cadres for new camps that were being opened up. That was a big job that we had. And we spent a lot of time sending people down there. And in some cases we sent the bad guys, as you might guess, you know the ones that--troublemakers. That was a typical military trick, you know. If you had people that weren't cutting the mustard and suddenly you're requested to put some names on a list, you know, you were very tempted to put--who do you put on the list. And I remember doing it myself, you know. Well actually we did it in behalf of these officers who were in charge. But, you know, they obviously depended on us to make the recommendations to them. And one guy, I can remember doing this, who was a real trouble maker. And one of the things that he should not have been doing but was, it was against army regulation, he was lending money out to some of these poor guys who didn't know any better, you know, they get their pay check. In fact they all came in once a month; get their 21 bucks or whatever. And the officer would sit there with a pistol on the desk and read off the names, he'd read off the names to the guy giving the money. And one guy was the moneylender. And he'd wait outside the door. And these poor guys come in, they're West Virginia guys, could hardly read and write, you know, they didn't know what was up and they spent their money the first couple days of the month and they were out of money for the rest of the days for, you know, cigarettes and what not. And this guy would stand there and lend 'em money. You borrow ten bucks; you pay back ten bucks on top of that. So it was 100 percent, this guy would get, per month, on these guys. And that was totally, it was totally against army regulation. You couldn't lend money out, period. Let alone doing it at usurious rates. And I remember he was such a bad guy. And there were a couple other reasons we thought he was a bad guy. And ripe for the next assignment that we were asked for, or would come through send somebody to Shelby, Mississippi or some other hell hole as far as I was concerned. [all laugh] And his name appeared at the head of the list. And I remember sitting' there and I heard this great shout go out, "Why!" [laughs] You know this guy. It had gone up on the bulletin board. You can't do this to me! Why not? I mean what are we doing to you? Well and then he started to say, "but I got all this money out,

you know, how am I gonna collect?" But he couldn't say that because that was totally against the army regulation. You know, what are you talking, you know, you wanna tell the captain about it? That was--that happened in the military. And as a matter of fact, throughout the military, I've been reading a book that Pam knows I've got, it's an unpublished book by Bob Fleming, he had written a book about his military experience mostly in Germany. And he makes a big point about this. About what the military did. They'd come in and say, you are a select group of people, we have selected you to do so and so and such and such. And what it was, you know, either you were--they didn't know what to do with you and they had this job they could assign you to or for all manner of reason they would take advantage of the fact that they'd been asked to supply people and the first people who went were on the top of their lists. And that was typical army behavior. I guess that's--but Fort Hayes was, for me, a place where I really learned the ropes of how to be a soldier. Not a combat soldier but a bureaucratic soldier. And I remember when we arrived, the morning after we arrived at the barracks, were all sittin' around, and this old first sergeant came in. He was raised in the army, I mean; he grew up in the army. Joined it as a kid and by this time he was in his late '60s I would guess. And he was one of the smartest guys, one of the most responsible people I ever met. Regular army guy, full time in the army, and just as many years in the peace time army. And he was depended on by bureaucrats all over the United States for his knowledge about army regulations concerning American prisoners. And he came in and I remember he looked over the class and said, "Who's the school teacher here?" And I raised my hand, I was the only guy with a college degree in that early period, in that group of people that arrived there. And I got--you asked about education, I went right into the office from then on I was in the headquarters office with this fellow who's first sergeant and a bunch of other personnel. And it gave me a leg--I could type. It gave me a leg up on all the rest of the people and for the rest of my days I was a couple of steps ahead of those guys who followed as a consequence of the fact that I had a college degree and had been a school teacher. It made a hell of a difference in those days. Remember there weren't that many people going to college in those days, probably 10 percent of high school grads, 20 at most. And the personnel in the regular army, unless they had come up through the academies, were civilians who during the depression had gone into the army because it was a way to keep body and soul together. They were in there to survive. And that meant that they were from all levels of education. From the lowest to the, wantest [??].

Graham: How come you had decided to go to college in the first place? How come you decided to go to school?

Shannon: Oh my family was pretty well--was pretty much oriented to learning and education and my parents encouraged me to go to school. And my brother and I--we were four; I had two sisters, older, and a brother who's younger. And my brother and I went to college. He went to Antioch and I went to a local teacher's college in my hometown, and didn't go to graduate school until after the service. My brother came back and finished his college degree 'cause his college was

interrupted by the war. And then he went to graduate school at Columbia. I went to Yale. But on a G.I. Bill, you know, both of us did it on a G.I. Bill. Matter of fact I think we oughta have a G.I. Bill right now. I think if we were gonna get--pull ourselves outta this recession that were in and out of our status in the world, which we've slipped so badly at, we should infuse the country with educated people. The way the G.I. Bill infused thousands of people with college degrees and technical degrees and what not. And just, it just, it fueled our economy for so many years. And now instead were cutting back, you know. When our solution is more education, were selling off schools. Terrible.

Kollath: Can you talk a little bit about your family background, as far as your parents and?

Shannon: Oh yeah my parents were both--.

Kollath: And how you got your name?

Shannon: Yeah, my parents were both from Lebanon, from the same community. My father came over as a kid in 1896; he was about fourteen years old I think, twelve or fourteen.

Pam: He would have been fifteen or sixteen.

Shannon: Fifteen or sixteen.

Pam: Fifteen, 'cause he was born in 1881.

Shannon: Yeah, so came over in '86.

Pam: Came over in '96.

Shannon: Yeah and went right to West Virginia where he had a sister, his older sister. And he was from a large family. And he was a peddler and he put a pack on his back and went around calling these German farmers in the West Virginia and Ohio, on the river. They were across the river. And he was there; he did that for about ten years and then went back to Lebanon, met my mother and married her. Came back and they never went back again. Came back in [inaudible] and they never went back. And we were four children. And they had ma and pa stores, grocery stores and what not, food stores and that. And then--and he also got a--Danbury was a great hat center of the world, they don't make any hats there anymore, that was their only business really. And he got into that, with his brother in law, did some of that as well. And when I came back, I was out for about a year and then went back and went to graduate school, got my degree and then came here. And the story is here, in Wisconsin, 1950. Pamela came out as an infant [laughs] in an airplane. My father took her into an airplane and he didn't believe in airplanes, he didn't think they were safe. He thought suppose a spark plug broke around here.

Used to drive a model-T and he didn't trust planes. But he carried her into the airplane; I think he wanted to see what an airplane looked like.

Pam: And he wanted to make sure it was safe.

Shannon: Make sure it was safe for his granddaughter, going out into Indian country, he thought, I'm sure he thought of that.

Pam: Mhm

Shannon: One day Wisconsin had the cold--after we got here, the winter of 1950 was the coldest winter on record up to that point, went down to thirty-four degrees below zero in case you're interested. From being from Long Island.

Graham: I think I'll have another chocolate chip cookie [all laugh]

Shannon: And he saw this in the newspaper in Connecticut and he clipped it out and mailed it to me. And I saw the newspaper and I mailed it to him. Thirty-four degrees, he wondered what the hell are they doing with my granddaughter out there at thirty-four degrees? And we said if they only knew we were changing her diapers on the sofas in Frautschi's while we're buying furniture [all laugh] they'd a gone nuts. Well the other thing that happened, there was a black bear in Mazomanie not far from Waunakee. And he saw that headline and thought "jeez these guys had really gone to Indian Country." 'Cause in Connecticut you don't have black bears I don't think. At least you don't talk about 'em, you don't report 'em. So and we both clipped our--I clipped this thing saying "Mazomanie" and he wondered what kind of a name was that anyway and mailed it to him. And he saw it, clipped it and mailed it to me. Thought, "jeez, my son has gone west of the Hudson River, who knows when he'll come back, with my granddaughter."

Pam: You know what's funny; we were talking about pack-ratism. We have the boarding passes from that flight.

Shannon: Oh really? Really.

Pam: Yeah. I know exactly when I arrived in Madison.

Shannon: Is that right?

Pam: And on what flights.

Shannon: Yeah, you were too young to fly; they didn't want you--too small, matter of fact. They didn't want you to fly for another five weeks. So that's the story of how we got here.

Graham: What year were you born in?

Shannon: Eighteen, 1918. You wanna do the math?

Pam: I think a lot of things about your family that's interesting and different and probably was a factor in some things that happened for you during the war was that you grew up in a family that spoke two other languages. Your mother was fluent in French as well as Arabic, and of course your father in Arabic.

Shannon: Yeah.

Pam: And you guys spoke both languages before you went to school.

Shannon: Yeah, yeah, yeah before we went to school. English and Arabic. French was a secondary language we'd, cause my father didn't speak it.

Pam: But your mother did.

Shannon: My mother did and she would use it frequently. And that was common in Lebanon, as a matter of fact, French was a second language in Lebanon, where as English may as well be now. Actually they're trilingual I think in Lebanon. French and Arabic-French--and the fact that I spoke Arabic and French probably also helped in my military career because when I finished my commission, I and a group of others were sent to a school right at Fort Custer in Michigan where we got our commission for occupational military police. My commission was in military police. And I was in a class, a class that only just started, I was in it a couple of days when I got a TWX to move, to leave immediately for Maryland and Virginia for embark issues and go. And the fact that we were going to Algeria led me to think that probably they had been riffling through the records and saw Arabic and French and said; well that's what you speak if you go to Algeria. I always assume that that's why I was whisked out of class and sent over. I was with the first contingent of people prepared to work in military government overseas. And that effort in military government was the first ever for the US army. And Pam could show you the correspondence, which I knew nothing about, between Churchill and Roosevelt before the war or maybe in the early stages of the war, about their notion that there oughta be an allied military government effort in World War II. Before that, you know, nobody gave a damn about civilians. Particularly wars were meant to get rid of civilians and they were horrible on civilians. But in this case, this was a concerted effort on the part of these two leaders to be sure that the military, at the same time as they had a combat mission, also had a mission to take care of the civilians who were there. Now that wasn't necessarily totally philanthropic because what they wanted to do, probably comes through I haven't read that history extensively, but what they wanted to do was relieve the combat commanders of their requirement to take care, worry about civilians, they could take 'em off their minds and their agendas. That they would have a unit within the army, and that was a big back and forth, should it be in the army, should it be outside the army? But they decided that it

should be a part of the army mission to worry about what was happening to the civilians during World War II. While the combat people worried about what to do with the enemy combat forces. In other words it relieved the commanders, the fighting commanders, of the responsibility for--direct responsibility, although ultimately they were always in charge. And so they formed something called AMGOT, Allied Military Government of Occupied Territories. And I went over with the first contingent. The general officers were trained at the University of Virginia at Charlottesville. And the police officers were trained in Michigan where I was commissioned. Okay you guys, good enough?

Graham: Well, where should we go next?

Kollath: Um, well how are you doing? Keep going or are you done?

Shannon: Oh I'm all right. Yeah, I have time. It occurs to me that what were doing here is sorta getting, I would think, an overview and if, you know, if you want to continue it, it will be after I return from Arizona I suppose.

Graham: Yeah we might have to do this in stages, if you have a lot to say.

Shannon: It depends on how much you want; yeah I can go on forever. [All laugh]

Graham: This has great battery life.

Shannon: Is it charging? Yeah. And Pam, what Pam has might trigger off--give us an idea of what we oughta be talking about. As I said at the beginning, you can divide my army experience into two parts: the enlistment part which was in the states and the officer part which was overseas. And they were two quite very different experiences. And both cases unique in the sense that, you know, having been at a place like Fort Hayes and with the responsibilities that we had there, that was different. And then going overseas and working, in North Africa, Sicily and Italy. In Sicily and Italy I actually did governmental work. And then when I went to England, I joined Supreme Headquarters and continued to do military government work because this was the first time the army had had a fifth--A G5, there were G1, G2, G3, AND G4, as you military people know. And there was a G5 which was military government and civil affairs. And that was--so there were five units of shafe[??]. What would have been four units in previous wars, G1, G2, three and four, there was also G5 which had the responsibility of supplies and economic for the civilian population of Europe. Under Eisenhower--that was an interesting innovation that was new in the history of American military. Now I don't--we had armies of occupation before, but that was different from having personnel with the combat units taking care of civilians during the war.

Kollath: Mhm

Shannon: Both in the Mediterranean Iran and later in the European, main European, Western Europe. And I don't know, I have wondered whether that has continued. I have asked people in the military, you know, whatever happened in the Gulf Wars when things went so bad for civilians and the civilian institutions in Iraq for example. What the hell happened to military governments there? Do they still have a military government? I was told by some military personnel, yeah they have military government. But it sounds to me like they were totally ineffective when you consider how say for example the museum in Baghdad was--I mean their artwork--this was not, this wasn't just Mesopotamian history, this was history of civilization and they were, you know, disseminated, dispersed. But I don't know. The other thing is, I don't know how much history has been written about military government and this is where you guys come in, I found a book in the library here on the administration of military government. And I had no idea it had been written. I'd been looking for literature about it. And the book--this is why I asked earlier how much research is being done. The book was pretty rag tag, I mean, it had been heavily used. And I was delighted to find it and I looked all over for a copy of it and I found it in England. I finally went; I found it in London as a matter of fact. I looked at Oxford; I looked in a number of other places, 'cause I wanted a copy for myself. And I finally got one from a neat bookstore in Barkley Square. I wondered if anybody's done--somebody must have done research based on this text or history. And because it was so worn I just figured some grad student had been going through it. I don't know whether anybody has or whether anybody here in the history department was interested enough to do work on that. I've asked some of the historians but they haven't--I haven't learned anything, I might learn from you guys. Was there anybody--How much there had been written about military government. And also the question of how much is there left in the actual military forces here in actions. Pam has found materials. And I remember talking to a colleague, well a guy who had been in the military government with me, just as he was retiring at Berkley and he had just written a book but I've never found a copy of it, but I didn't follow up on it, it was just a casual reference. I probably ought to. I haven't made a systematic search of the materials written up. I know that there have to have been some of these, couple of these three things that we discovered. I don't know what, what was the periodical or I guess it was a history book where you found this exchange of correspondence between--.

Pam: Yeah there are two volumes, of-- Um it's a book that was written by people that were affiliated with the war college. I have them at my house, I can show you them. And they chronicle in great detail with primary sources the birth of military government in World War II and correspondence between the vets and Americans about how that should look. And a lot of going back and forth, like you said, about whether it should be in the military or out of the military.

Shannon: At the State Department or someplace else.

Pam: Where it should be housed and who was gonna run it.

Shannon: Yeah

Pam: How you know, were the Brits gonna be in charge? Or the Americans? Were they gonna join forces, which is what did happen. And it's two volumes; each one is about this thick, with just one interesting bit of correspondence excerpts from letters and other materials. They have a lot about the training materials that were actually used in Charlottesville, you know, they did the, the training for the rest of Virginia, and then how it all played out in the occupied territories. And there's actually a reference to an incident that happened in a town that my dad was in charge of. They don't mention him by name but they mention the incident where a mayor that was a Nazi sympathizer had to be removed and somebody put in that was going to be helpful to the allies. And some local Italian official complained up through the British chain of command about this imperious decision to get rid of this mayor. And there's some correspondence about how it was anything but an inappropriate decision and etcetera etcetera. So it's an interesting, you know, it's a--.

Shannon: Was this in Serracapriola? Are you talking about--.

Pam: Yeah, yeah. Serracapriola, yeah. And so this is a really detailed, you know large two volume.

Shannon: Yeah I should read all of that history.

Pam: Yeah.

Shannon: I've never gotten back to picking it up again.

Pam: Yeah, yeah, well I have. And if you wanna take me to Arizona you can. It's fascinating and I thought it was an incredibly good background piece.

Shannon: Yeah, matter of fact we have some of the correspondence that relates to that incident.

Pam: Right, right. Yeah well that's one of the other things we have in our collections here, is correspondence and in the case of this incident in this particular town, we met the son of the mayor that my dad ended up installing in this town, he was a delightful guy, as my father remembers him. And we went and visited that town a couple years ago and by interesting set of coincidences got to meet this guy's son and the son had kept the order that my father signed in 1943 installing his father as the mayor. So when we made a cold phone call to this guy, Pascarra[sp?] two summers ago, and this Italian guy we were talking with at city hall could put the call through, cause this guy was a friend of his. When Theodore Shannon was mentioned, the guy said "I know who Theodore Shannon is, he's the one who installed my father as the mayor Serracapriola in October of 1943 and I have the order here at my home that he signed." And the next morning he drove over to the

town where we were, to Serracapriola, and provided my father with a laminated copy of the order.

Kollath: Hm.

Shannon: Yeah. It was quite an experience.

Pam: Yeah. Well and it strikes me, it's interesting to me that, pretty much everything that happened to you stateside really prepared you for everything you did, really positioned you for everything you did once you got overseas. I mean those experiences, especially in Columbus, where you were the educated person who could type, that was the thing you forgot to mention.

Shannon: Yeah. I was the only one who could type, can you imagine?

Pam: He was the only one who could type in addition to being the only college educated. And the reason he could type was, that a friend of his in high school had convinced him that they should sneak into a typing class which wasn't available to students that were on the college track. High schools had a dual track in those days. And they were in the college track and they weren't supposed to bother themselves with learning how to type. But my father's friend, Arthur, was a trouble maker and wanted to learn to type and so they snuck their way in. By the time they got caught and kicked out of class, they knew how to type.

Shannon: Yeah.

Pam: And so it was another skill that--.

Shannon: Yeah

Pam: Turned out to be critical in the kind of work you did.

Shannon: Yeah well it gave me a leg up on, you know, the kind of work I could do while I was at Fort Hayes.

Pam: Right. And then served you well overseas in all your capacities.

Shannon: Oh yeah, well, I was jumped ahead. I mean, I could get to officer candidate school. Well that was the other thing I was gonna say that everybody pretty much throughout the early part of the war, they were trying to expand their officer corps. The personnel had, you know, we had to go from a tiny peace time army to a humungous worldwide presence. And they needed to expand their non-com corps as well as their officer corps in order to accommodate the rush of people who were going into the service. And where we sat in the headquarters offices, we saw all of the prospects going off to officer candidate school. I remember orders were coming out all the time stating that there were openings in different officer

candidate schools and they were looking for candidates. We would post these but early on I decided, well yeah, I think I'll just as soon be an officer as being a non-com. And frequently we'd talk to the guys, the officers and suggested, well yeah it's about time for me to make application, and, you know, if you let me go. And they dragged their feet because we were the ones who were training them and teaching them how the army worked cause we were the non-coms and what not. And they kept saying, you stay as long as I'm here then I'll let you go, you know some such thing as that. And finally one of the officers said, the next one that comes through you can have, you know, the next officer to go to OCS. And so the next officer was to military police school, you know. I was--I didn't have--oh I thought in those early days that I'd be in the cavalry, yeah. [laughs]. There was still a cavalry out in Fort Devens in Massachusetts and I'd go out and watch these guys and I thought, jeez that would be fun. But that cavalry was on its way out of course. If I'd gone in for the cavalry, I woulda landed in the tank corps or some place. But, you know, I didn't plan on going to military police school but that was the next one that came up. I made application and was taken.

Kollath: Maybe we should call it for today and give us a chance to go over all this stuff.

Shannon: Yeah, you can look at the stuff.

Graham: We can pick up where we left off next time.

Shannon: Yeah. You still have a battery in there, right.

Graham: Yeah we could go on.

Shannon: I think that's probably enough for now, don't you think.

Graham: Yeah, chapter one.

[end of tape]