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AN INTERVIEW WITH DENNIS DOUGHERTY

FOR THE

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INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Nicholas Trajano Molnar: This begins an interview with Colonel Dennis Doherty on January 2, 2013 in Westfield, New Jersey with Nicholas Molnar and thank you for having me here today.

Dennis Dougherty: Thank you for reaching out to me, Nick.

NM: Great. Just for the record, can you tell me when and where were you born?

DD: I was born in Newark, New Jersey at Beth Israel Hospital, August 18th, 1946. I grew up in and around Union County and also later in high school years in the Poconos in Pennsylvania. I went to local schools in Union County in Rahway, in Linden, and Clark, and then on to high school in Strasburg High School, and then Pocono Mountain Regional High School is where I graduated from; a lot of moves.

NM: It sounds like you moved around a lot. Is there any reason for that?

DD: My dad was in the hotel and restaurant industry, so as a result we moved with the seasons. By the time I was in high school he was working in Pennsylvania, in the Poconos in the resort industry there, and that's where I would up. … I went to university at East Stroudsburg and from there into teaching back here in New Jersey.

NM: Tell us a little bit about your father and his background.

DD: Sure, he grew up in Scranton, Pennsylvania. He was born in 1906 so he was growing up in the '20s and the '30s. … From what I understand he actually played some professional baseball for a while, never made it to the big leagues, got into the hotel and restaurant business, and from there it was back and forth from Pennsylvania to New Jersey to Florida 'till I guess he had met my mother in the 1940s. … They got married in '46--I think in '46--I'm not sure and here I am. 1946 I was born.

NM: Tell us a little bit about your mother and her background, was she from the area?

DD: She grew up in Rahway, and worked as a secretary most of the time and wound up working for Pitney Bowes in the New Jersey office, was the secretary to the gentleman who ran the New Jersey section of Pitney Bowes and again moved back and forth with my father through New Jersey and through Pennsylvania, and eventually wound up back here New Jersey.

NM: Did you have any siblings?

DD: A brother and sister. My sister Maryanne is ten years younger than I am. My brother Joe is 18 months younger than I am.

NM: You mentioned that you went to various schools in Union County and moved around with the seasons. What are some of things you remember about living in New Jersey and in Union County in the 1950s that stand out in your memory?

DD: [laughter] I realize I don't remember much. You think about it people ask you about all the things that were going on with the Cuban Missile Crisis and the Kennedy Presidency. [Editor's Note: These events occurred in the 1960s.] … I guess I was in high school by then. … I just remember having a good time and going to the park and swimming, riding my bicycle, and delivering newspapers, it was a part-time job, [and] just growing up with all my cousins.

NM: You had aunts and uncles in the area?

DD: A lot of aunts and uncles, a lot of cousins, yes, a large Italian-American family. My mother was Italian ancestry, her last name was Pepe, P-E-P-E. I had maybe two dozen cousins. We all basically grew up together. …

[TAPE PAUSED]

NM: Was religion an important part of life growing up?

DD: Well, you know, I was raised Catholic. I went to Catholic school for a couple years up until about the fourth-grade and then I went to public schools after that. It was an important part to my family. We obviously went to church all the time. Like any other young guys in a religious family, just more traditional than anything else nothing really special one way or the other.

NM: You mentioned that you had a part-time job selling newspapers.

DD: Delivering newspapers.

NM: Did you have any other jobs growing up?

DD: Oh, yes. Absolutely, when I moved up to the Poconos I spent most of the summers working as a caddie in various golf courses up there. … Pocono Manor and Buck Hill are primarily the two places I caddied at. Those are resorts that are golf resorts even today in the Poconos.

NM: What about when you were in Union County, did you have any other jobs besides delivering newspapers?

DD: No, I was a paperboy. We actually moved into Pennsylvania and stayed there for probably the longest time, for four years plus. It might have been eight plus years when you count high school and university. We stayed there. Obviously, I was working and I used to work … when I was a younger kid [I worked] as a caddie and then I found the world's coldest lake to be the lifeguard at, at Pocono Manor. … That was a very good place to be a lifeguard because no one went swimming. [laughter] It's the truth, it was very cold, the water was a spring fed lake, … it was about 60 degrees on the hottest days, but it was a good place to be a lifeguard. I caught a lot of trout at that same lake, and in the winter time I worked in their indoor pool as a lifeguard for a little while and then I worked in the hotel and restaurant business myself. I was waiter at a place called Mount Airy Lodge. It's the same Mount Airy that you see in all the … honeymoon

commercials, absolutely. It was good place to earn a buck and I guess I went to school on a "Mount Airy Scholarship" you could say. My dad had worked there earlier in his career so I I knew a lot of the people. … People who worked for him were now my bosses so I guess if it's incestuous working, I guess it was, you know what I'm saying. I was hired probably because I was his son more than anything else, but I made up my mind, as a result I didn't want to be in the hotel and restaurant business so it worked out. I went to school to be an educator.

NM: Did you participate in any sports when you went to school?

DD: Oh, sure, yes at Strasburg High School and at Pocono Mountain I was on the rifle team. It sounds strange but I used to bring my gun to school with me, and right on the bus, I'd keep it in my locker. Couldn't do that today, could you? It was a .22 target rifle but you know it's still a rifle, it wasn't an assault weapon thank god. … There was actually a rifle range in both schools. … I played football at Pocono Mountain for three years and I played golf also in high school. So, those were my high school sports. They kept me pretty busy along with everything else a kid does when he's growing up.

NM: Did you join any organizations like the Boy Scouts?

DD: I was a Boy Scout in New Jersey. Unfortunately, when I moved to Pennsylvania there weren't any active Boy Scout troops near … where I lived. Later in life, I got involved in scouting with my sons, [they] are Boy Scouts, and I was a scoutmaster for a while.

NM: What were your plans for after high school?

DD: You know what, I went to East Stroudsburg State College at that time, now it's East Stroudsburg University. I planned to study history and become a history, really education teacher. I went on to be a history teacher, not by accident, it was by design but, you know, when I graduated from the university I didn't think I was going to find a job and I wasn't looking around. I figured it was 1968, I was going to wind up in the military … and I was figuring on getting drafted and I didn't at least in August of '68. … I was applying for jobs, and I got a job at Governor Livingston Regional High School in Berkeley Heights, New Jersey.

NM: I just wanted to go back a little bit. In high school, had you always planned on going to college?

DD: Yes. Yes, I had. It might sound shallow or I don't know why, but I just thought I was going to do that. … That was the career path I took.

NM: What led you to be at East Stroudsburg?

DD: It was close. It was right down at the bottom, I lived in Mount Pocono. It was right down at the bottom of the hill, really 20 miles away, all downhill. Even though I lived in East Stroudsburg, I didn't stay at home. It was just I was familiar with it.

NM: I want to get a little bit at your college education and what led you to pursue a degree in social studies.

DD: Well, [there are] a lot of teachers in my family on my mother's side, two of my uncles were teachers. A lot of my cousins actually, kids that were my age went into education, at least started their careers in education. I look at it, I think I'm the only one that actually stayed in education. They went on to other things. I kept on, I stayed as an educator like my biography says for thirty-nine years. So, I guess I stuck to it a little bit more than they did, and I liked it. … It was what I was interested in.

NM: Sometimes the transition from high school to college can be challenging. Did you find anything about the transition challenging?

DD: Well, in high school I wasn't much of the student. I had maybe a B average, a low B average and in university, you know what? [laughter] I wasn't much of a student either. [laughter] Not until I got to graduate school did I really, if you look at my grades, you know, I think I got out of the university with a 2.2 average. I don't think I could even get into a teacher's program in New Jersey now, I think you have a have a 2.50 even to be considered to get into an advanced program, but I have no idea why. I was busy doing other things, … and going to school was one of the things I was busy doing. I was busy playing golf, I was busy working, I was busy just growing up.

NM: While you are in college, did you follow what was happening in the world?

DD: You know, not as much as I thought I would be. I knew the Vietnam War was going on, obviously. I knew the civil unrest back in New Jersey in Newark was going on. Did it bother me one way or the other? No. Did I have friends who obviously out of high school who joined the military, a whole bunch my friends joined the Marines, tried to convince me to do that, I didn't do that. … I won't say I was oblivious, but I was having, you know, I was like any other kid growing up in the 1960s doing a lot of different things. I guess school was only one of them.

NM: Did you live on campus?

DD: I lived on campus for three years and I lived off-campus for one year. At campus I had some obviously roommates and off-campus I had some roommates and for a while I lived by myself, and my senior year when I was just student teaching I just went back home because I was teaching closer to where I lived at home than where I was going to school so it just made more sense to me at that particular time. That's what was going on.

NM: During the time that you are going to school, at other universities students are vocal about various issues. Did anything like that materialize on campus?

DD: … If it did I don't remember. I think people vocalized what they were doing that weekend, or football. … By the time I was a junior, there were a lot of people that I knew who were already serving in Vietnam one way or the other and I figured like I said the … United States was committed to a war in Vietnam, whether you like it or not, and lots of people were going

there. I did know people who did that, and I realized sooner or later, I had a deferment at that particular time. However, sooner or later, I knew I'd probably wind up in the military.

NM: Can you talk about how that factored into your plans for after college?

DD: It didn't, it absolutely didn't. … I figured it was going to happen, I didn't bother looking for a job. … I sent a couple resumes out. … Eventually, the folks at Governor Livingston Regional High School actually called me, and I have no idea why. I really don't. I was sent in to interview. … I guess probably one of the reasons why was my uncle Walter who was on the Board of Education in Clark, probably gave the assistant superintendent Dr. Jacobson, gave him my resume, and said, "Take a look at it," but I mean. … He said, "There's a job here, maybe you should be put in for it." So, I put in for it. I went for an interview with Miss Keith, the social studies supervisor, and she hired me, I have no idea why. [laughter]

NM: Tell me about the first year of teaching.

DD: First year teaching, okay, sure. It was completely different. It was different, alright, obviously, I made friends with a lot of the faculty. I actually lived with one of the fellas I taught with, Bill (Yeager?). I think we had an apartment in North Plainfield. You know everything associated with being a first-year teacher, … I can understand later in life when I was supervising student teachers and first-year teachers, a lot of the challenges they had. It was finding a job, keeping up with your lesson plans. Every teacher I know always had a second job working someplace else. In fact I was actually working as a waiter … my first year in school and had a good time. I didn't do much as for advising students at that particular time because I was still learning how to be a teacher myself. … I was 21 years old, the kids I was teaching were 17 and 18 years old. I wasn't much different than they were. … A lot of learning went on for both of us. … I was probably one of the younger people, faculty members, at the school at that particular time.

NM: You had to relocate to New Jersey for this job?

DD: Oh yes, I relocated from Mount Pocono to New Jersey; … hour drive. Some people today I guess drive that much just to go to work. In fact I know there are people from the Poconos who work in New York City and drive two hours every day. That wasn't me. I mean I drove 15 minutes to work every day which was not a big deal. … There was still traffic on Route 22. [laughter] Like there is today, like you drove over from Rutgers, right? There was still traffic on Route 22 and it wasn't any easier to drive at that particular time. Like I said, my social studies supervisor Miss Keith was very helpful. My principal, Fred (Aho?) was very helpful, a lot of support from the folks I worked with and, you know what, I think when you look at it, it probably takes you about five years to learn … just to become comfortable in what you're doing. You know, the first year--and I only taught one year--because in the spring of 1968, really the spring of 1969, excuse me, I got drafted. I got my draft notice and my superintendent looked at it and said, "We'll work on that," and I put it back to the side of my mind. … You know what, he worked on it, he got me excused till June which was it, and I had about at least five or six other male cousins who lived here in New Jersey who didn't get drafted. … The draft boards, it was no big deal, there are lots of people who were enlisting. But I was registered in Pennsylvania

and there weren't as many young men my age, so I got drafted and I'm sure that's the reason why. … It was really funny because at the end of the school year I was living in New Jersey, my draft board was in Wilkes-Barre Pennsylvania. I had to get on a bus and drive up to Wilkes-Barre and then get on the bus from Wilkes-Barre and drive back to New Jersey and then went to Fort Dix for basic training. … That was a little bit of shock because I was again, I was 22 then, just turned 22 and all the people in my squad room were all 18. The kids were old enough to be my students and I really didn't feel like being there with a bunch of kids, even though I was a young guy myself.

NM: When you were drafted, did you think you were automatically going to be sent to Vietnam?

DD: No, I had no idea. I didn't even know if I was going to wind up in the Army because when you get drafted, they put people into the Marines, the Navy, and the Air Force and at Wilkes-Barre they were just, "Army, Army, Air Force, Army, Army, Marines, Army, Army, Navy." More people went into the Army than the other branches obviously, and that's what I remembered. … There were people … in all the services who were drafted at that particular time, so I don't know, and like I said I was pretty consigned to my fate. I didn't know if I was going to be back to being an educator at that particular time. I figured I would, the draft was only three years, two years, … and we'll see what happens. That's what happened.

NM: Would your school district hold your teaching position for you until after you completed your service in the military?

DD: Well, you know what, I thought there would be. I wasn't that familiar with the laws on military leave. I wasn't even thinking of it at that particular time. My employer was because my assistant superintendent, two years later, kept on writing me letters asking me when I was going back, so I guess I had a job. … By then I was a lieutenant in Berlin and I used to keep on telling him, "I'd be back at the end of my military obligation." I would never give him a date. In fact, I think he tried to terminate my employment at one particular time. … I didn't find this out until after we were de-regionalized, … when I actually got my official records that they held in the Union County Regional [District] because I was now on the Clark Board of Education, they gave me all my records and I saw that Mr. (Bauman?) … our assistant superintendent … had gone to a … labor judge or whatever to see if they had to keep on employing me. … The judge said, "Yes, they had to." Charlie (Bauman?) and I had a professional relationship for all those years later when I came back because he was … our assistant superintendent for 25 years. … We got along, but I never knew he tried to, and I can understand why, he wanted to find someone else, work cheaper. … When I came back out of the military, I came back and I had four years of sick days, they paid into my pension for four years. … They actually treated me pretty good, but they only gave me three years credit. … The law at that particular time said they had to give you four, but they decided to give me three, and school boards were lost into themselves, and in the big picture I guess it didn't make a big difference because I stayed for 39 years. So, I would have liked to have one step sooner and have another 50 bucks in my pocket because that's about all the raise it would have would up, and it went on from there.

NM: Before you were drafted and before you started your first year of teaching, had you considered joining any of the services in the military?

DD: No, [laughter] you know what, it's funny because here I made a career out of the military, my second job, and it was not even on my mind. I figured I'd go do my time, that was all right, and we'd go from there.

NM: Let us talk about getting to Fort Dix. What do you remember about your induction?

DD: … Like the process is before you actually get drafted, you come to the draft board or the military, what do they call it, MEPS, it's an acronym where they give you physicals and they give you tests and they decide your suitability for service, and I took those tests in the spring, came back. … My number finally came up in June. … In fact, I took them the year before after I got out of college, … whenever the original deferment was up, I took it then, it took about a year for them to catch up with me, … get my number and from there, took the tests, got the notice in the early spring, got inducted in June and off to Fort Dix in June. From there, got their bus, … because I had started off in New Jersey, … went to Wilkes-Barre, came back to New Jersey later in the day. [laughter] I got off, get into Fort Dix, probably, maybe 10, 11 o'clock at night, and got put into a barracks and then we started the process of joining the military. …

NM: Can we talk more about that process?

DD: Basic training, like I said, and there was a bunch of 17 and 18 year old kids, I'm 22, didn't want to be there. I did okay, it wasn't that physical, it wasn't that hard mentally. No Army school has ever really been that hard, challenging, they're more of a physical challenge than anything else at least at that particular time. Spent eight weeks at Fort Dix, did not, I guess we got a pass about the fourth week. I can remember going home, I can remember watching the American spaceman on the moon that night. [Editor's Note: On July 20, 1969, Neil Armstrong became the first human to walk on the moon, an event televised across the world.] Coming back the next day, like I said, it was not far away, and then going on to basic training. It was very much directed towards the infantry at that particular time because we're in a war. … That's the most common denominator, basic rifleman tactics. Now, I found out later that I was going to be a combat engineer. When basic training was over in August, maybe early September I don't remember anymore, eight weeks from when I started, off to Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, which was a trip by itself. You've been to Missouri?

NM: No.

DD: You don't know what the state flower is in Missouri?

NM: No, I don't.

DD: The rock. [laughter] It was hot, it was dry, it got cold and dry. It was Fort Leonard Wood, maybe, first time I got on an airplane from Philadelphia to St. Louis, landed in St. Louis with an airplane full of kids just like myself on the way to Fort Leonard Wood. I guess there's one pretty interesting story. There was another fellow who looked very much like me, his name is Tom

Dougherty [pronounced Dockerty]. … I'm Dennis Dougherty, we spell it the same--he was from Philadelphia--so we had gotten on to kidding with many people and every time they asked for Dougherty, [Dockerty] would show up, and every time they asked for [Dockerty], Dougherty would show up, and we did this all through AIT, we became friends at AIT at Fort Leonard Wood. … Eventually we went on to officer candidate school and did the same thing all through officer candidate school to people. We wound up with, I don't remember if I became a PFC, but one of us did. … They promoted the wrong guy by mistake, it flip-flopped. … We both had the PFC stripes on our uniform for about an hour and then when we got to Fort Benning, Georgia. Eventually at the end of our 24 weeks of--maybe it was 26 weeks of OCS--I became a signal officer, and Tom became an infantry officer, and then they changed it again, because I was supposed to be the infantry guy and Tom was supposed to be the signal officer. You know what, it worked out fine. … I knew Tom went off to Vietnam as a signal officer. Dennis went off to Germany as an infantry officer, so I guess it worked out okay for me. I often wonder what happened to Tom Dougherty, or [Dockerty], excuse me, but we lost touch after that.

NM: Wow.

DD: That's a neat story, isn't it?

NM: Yes.

DD: In fact, down in Philadelphia there's a Cardinal [Dockerty] High School, Dennis J. Dougherty, it's just like my name, but you go down to South Jersey I'm a [Dockerty] also, but you know I'm a Dougherty here.

NM: How long were you at Fort Leonard Wood?

DD: Fort Leonard Wood? I think it was either six or eight weeks for advanced individual training and I knew I was in trouble. All these guys are teaching us how to do demolitions and we were only practicing with wood and you'd see these guys shaking, holding these wood blocks and it's supposed to be simulating dynamite and C-4. I said, "I have to find," it's then I decided to should go to officer candidate school. I took the test for OCS and I was successful and I thought, oh, this is great, … I was an enlisted engineer, I figured I was going to be an engineer officer or at least go to engineer OCS and you know, didn't happen. … I would up going to infantry OCS. … At that time there were three OCS programs. There was an OCS program for engineers in Fort Belvoir, Virginia. There was an OCS program for artillerymen at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, and there was an infantry OCS program at Fort Benning, Georgia. … What do I know? If there were ten people going to OCS, eight would go to Fort Benning, one would go to Belvoir, one would go to Fort Sill. I mean, the chances of going to Fort Benning were pretty good but no one ever told you that when you're going to the program.

NM: Before we move on to Fort Benning, what other skills did you practice at Fort Leonard Wood?

DD: Well, you obviously learned all the infantry skills, marksmanship, familiarization with crew-serve and individual weapons. Obviously, taking a lot of orders, and following

instructions. … Some of the things I can remember about combat engineers, clearing minefields, basic demolitions, building bridges, building roads, and we learned those skills, the entry-level skills, private level skills of those. … Most of those people probably went to Vietnam as combat engineers. Some of us went on to officer candidate school, and that was unusual. I guess we were unusual because we didn't go on from there, so it just delayed deployment for another six months because officer candidate school at that particular time was six months long.

NM: You mentioned this was your first time on an airplane.

DD: Yes, first time on an airplane.

NM: Is this the first time you are in a situation with people from all over the country?

DD: Well, basic training was like that, I mean I can tell you, one of the kids I was at basic training with, he was from Newark, Ohio. … I guess today you would say he might have had some cognitive issues, because the first day we had leave he got on the bus for Newark and wound up in Newark, New Jersey. That just wasn't the same Newark. That's a true story. Now you think about that, he thought he was going home, he wound up in Newark, New Jersey in the summer of 1969. Okay, I mean there were a lot of stories like that. They were just pushing numbers through, and again you were doing individual weapons training, a lot of physical training, crew-serve weapons training, more physical training, more marching, and then they would put you on details, obviously KP, *et cetera*. Being a little older than most of the people on details, and you've got to remember Fort Dix was very busy at this particular time, very, very busy. Hard to keep track if you were out on a detail, but there was a PX to go to, if you know what I mean, there was a movie theater to go to, so to say that I wandered off some of these details, probably true, probably true. I don't know if other people wandered, but I mean, I was only looking after myself at that particular time, but by the time I got to advanced individual training, there was no place to wander at Fort Leonard Wood. There is no Jersey Shore obviously, it was hours outside of any place that you get to easily. You had to take a bus if you wanted to go somewhere. …

NM: Could you talk about your experience at officer candidate school?

DD: Oh, absolutely life-changing place, Fort Benning, Georgia. It was the ultimate physical challenge and the ultimate leadership challenge and it changed a lot of my directions. … We grew up a lot faster, I grew up and became a lot more mature as a result of going through there. Now picture this, you get to Fort Benning, however you got there, you're greeted by upperclassman who are immediately in your face, push-ups, sit-ups, physical training, you know, rope crawling, and you haven't even signed in yet, and that was your introduction. … There were approximately, I was in the 97th Company of the 9th Student Battalion OCS. … We started off in a typical Army cement building, three stories high. There are 250 of us we started off with. The academics, so-so, there were key academic things you had to pass, gates to get you through, map reading, how to use crew-served weapons, mortars in particular, call for fire and PT. They were the crucial points along with leadership. Now, our class was very unusual because our class was almost exclusively college graduates, guys like myself, including my friend Tom and other guys I had met in basic training in AIT. By the end of AIT, a bunch of us

knew where we were going. However, when we got there none of us expected what it was like; did not walk until about our 18th week. We either crawled or we ran, most of time we ran, very, very physical. Very much leadership, you're all given leadership positions sometime during your time there. You were always evaluated by all your peers in the platoon. The platoon was 40 people. We started off with 40 people, probably by the time we got done we had far less platoons, just divide 40 into 250 and we had far less people. By the time we graduated we were down to under 100 people. … I want to say about 94 or 96 people, and people were being eliminated right up until the week we graduated, and if for some reason it was a physical thing, you got healed, and you recycled back into another OCS company, or if you were hurt you were discharged, but most people, you know, it was your feet, or an arm, or some other appendage. … If it was for leadership, you were immediately out of the program and within the week you were in Vietnam. That's just the way it was. Like I said, life-changing, the people I met, the things we did, the place we were. … Our instructors, our tac officers were either right from Vietnam, right, or right on their way to Vietnam after they got done with us, so it was serious business. We joked and laughed about it a lot but it was serious business. It was deadly serious because you were going into a war zone, and it was very unusual that you didn't wind up in, I don't know why, but it is very unusual you didn't wind up in Vietnam. I've probably figured it out, because if you do the math, I got there in 1970, … January, and I graduated in June. At that time, they kept young lieutenants, by the time you finished your schooling, which we didn't have any of the schooling, because we went through a program that was designed to make you an infantry lieutenant, it's not that way anymore. Now, you've got to go to a branch school, but by 1970, if you had to stay in the United States somewhere for six to eight months, it's almost 1971, and most of the infantry units are on their way out of Vietnam by late '71, '72. I'm not so sure how many of my classmates actually wound up in Vietnam. The people who didn't get commissioned in infantry wound up in Vietnam, like my friend Tom who would up in the signal battalion. He went to Vietnam, others did, I'm sure, don't get me wrong but you know again, being such a big organization, I lost touch with him. … I wound up actually extending my career. … I wanted to go to airborne school, and onto a future assignment. … I was hurt in airborne school and never finished it, unfortunately for me, but maybe luckily for me, because I wound up going to Germany, and wound up in a replacement battalion, and from that replacement battalion I was assigned to the office of the Deputy Chief of Staff Operations for training in Europe. Lord knows why they wanted a lieutenant there, I have no idea, but I met a bunch of midrange officers, majors and lieutenant colonels who treated me very good, and a couple of Department of Army civilians who were retired lieutenant colonels and colonels who treated me very good. … My boss, Colonel Farley, little did I know, he said, "If you stay here for six to eight months and you do a good job for me, you go to anywhere you want to in Europe." … I thought that was a pretty good deal and Colonel Farley said, "Do you know how to write?" I said, "Yes, I can write all right," and he gave me entry-level jobs in the department, the DCSOPS, Department of Deputy Chief of Staff Operations for training, they supervised all the training in Europe. So, I went to places where training took place, predominantly Grafenwoehr. … It was my job, when someone came to visit Grafenwoehr to go with them as an escort. … The first time I had a tough time finding Grafenwoehr so some escort I was. I can remember that with an Iranian … Lieutenant General who I had met for the first time when I greeted him at the Reinmein airport in Frankfurt. I saw this little guy in an Iranian uniform get off the airplane, and he had three stars on his uniform, and this big hat like the Iranians wear. I thought he was the general because he had three stars on his uniform. I was such a rookie, I didn't know the difference, the three stars

meant basically he was a captain because in most military systems, one pip or a star is a second lieutenant, two is a first lieutenant, three is a captain. … This other guy right behind him, in this suave suit, very smooth, … he says, "Hello, lieutenant, how are you, I'm General (Bermaden?)." … We went to visit training locations. At that time, Iran was our friend, and we wanted to sell them TOW missiles, made my Hughes Aviation. … Me and a fellow from the Hughes Aviation basically took him to see TOW missile training, and I guess the Iranians bought them, I don't know, but they were going to put them on Russian armored personnel carriers because that's what they had at that particular time and the guys in Hughes Aviation were more than happy to sell them a TOW missile. We went to Grafenwoehr and we shot TOW missiles and we hit a few things with them, we missed a lot of things with them, but he was impressed enough, and who knows why, I'm a lieutenant, he's a three-star … lieutenant general who knows why. That was one of things I used to do. … But anyway, … I had gotten there in September, October, come the summer, Colonel Farley said; I had seen most of the units in Germany, and he said, "Where would you like to go?" … There was an airborne brigade in Europe at that particular time, and I could go back to airborne school in Europe which they had. … I told him, "I'd like to go to Berlin," because Berlin was the only place I hadn't been in Germany prior to that, and it looked like a pretty neat place to go, and that's how I would up in the Berlin Brigade. … He called up one of his former friends who was in charge of the United States Army Berlin, his name was General Cobb, and Roy Farley, they had both served in the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment together at different times being regimental commanders. He said, "I got a lieutenant for you," and he said, "Okay," and that was it, a handshake, and I was in Berlin. I drove to Berlin, one day, not that far to do, the biggest part, I loaded everything in my car and a couple days later, well, really one, the same day I was in Berlin later in the afternoon. … You had to go through, it was very interesting, because I had to go through the Soviet Zone of East Germany, and that was, you know, you had to drive down the autobahn which I never driven down before, at least not the autobahn between the West and East. … You had to get a briefing in Helmstedt which was the western end of the autobahn, 110 miles outside Berlin. … At Helmstedt you got a briefing from the MPs there and the people at the detachment at Helmstedt. … They gave you a little picture book, and, "You should turn here, and should turn here, and you can't speed, you've got to go 100 K's," which is 60 miles an hour and if you go too fast obviously, 110, if you go too fast you're speeding, and you'll get a ticket when you get there, and we'll throw you out of Berlin, you'll go right back. So obviously it was a little, it wasn't that bad, but I mean drove to Berlin and I met the fellow who was my sponsor, who introduced me, got me a house, BOQ, and eventually took me over to our battalion, the Second Battalion of the Sixth Infantry which I wound up serving in, and got ready to go to work the next day.

NM: Just for the record, how long were you in Germany before you went to Berlin?

DD: I was there about six months. I got the Germany in the end of September. In August, I wound up in Berlin, and from August of '71 till August of '73 I was in Berlin. I served in the Sixth Infantry for about a year as a platoon leader, and then I was the executive officer of the Headquarters Company of the Berlin Brigade for another year.

NM: From what I understand, becoming an officer extended your military obligation.

DD: It extended my obligation, yes, it extended my obligation for at least two more years. Obviously, my teaching career was still on hold, and this is where I started playing games, not games, but tag with Mr. (Bauman?) my assistant superintendent because he said, "Oh, you're going to drafted, you'll be back in two years, if you survive Vietnam, then we'll take you back." … I didn't tell him where I was going, I didn't communicate with them. Eventually I told them I was now a lieutenant and because I was a lieutenant … I just said I had an extended military obligation and I told him I'd be back after my military obligation and that was it. … Every year he'd send me a letter, and every year I'd tell him I'd be back at the end of my military obligation. In 1973, … I couldn't stay in Berlin any longer, I'd been in Berlin long enough, I said well you know what, time for me to go back to being a history teacher because I thought I had done my duty, that'd be enough, and we'll go from there. … I finally said I'll be back for the September 1973 school year, "I'll see you then," and that was it, I was back. Now, are you going to ask me why I went to OCS? … Actually, I went to OCS, actually, because I thought I could do a little bit more than I thought. … I thought I could have more influence on my life and what I was doing as a lieutenant as opposed to a private, and that's the reason why I got to OCS. … I didn't know anything, and then after OCS, … it was a very unique time as a lieutenant in the Berlin Brigade. It was unique also obviously, don't get wrong, working in Heidelberg, because people looked at me and they'd say, "Where were you before you came in here?" I said, "I was in Heidelberg," and they go look at me, "Whoa, … how did you get here?" … "Colonel Farley took care of me," I told them. … It was very unusual to wind up in the Berlin Brigade the way I came there. Most of the officers in the Berlin Brigade were graduates of the United States Military Academy. When you graduated from West Point, you got a job based on your academic credentials, and the higher you are in your class, you bid on jobs to go to, so organizations like the 82nd Airborne Division and the Berlin Brigade and the units in Hawaii were the number one on the list for everyone. Here I came back into the Army, and I had not gone to airborne school, which was one of the hallmarks of an infantry officer, and I had not gone to ranger school. Again, one of the things you should have done to be in that battalion. Here I was, as an infantry platoon leader, even though I had all the basic, don't get me wrong, I had all the same basic infantry schools these guys had. I had all of the, everything you needed to be an infantry platoon leader, but, you know, what do I know. In Berlin, all the other guys were a couple steps ahead of me. They were all airborne rangers, most of them were West Pointers, a lot of them were going to make the military their career. I didn't know I was going to make the military my career. I thought I was going to do my time and get out, do my extra two years that I had signed up for, because I became an officer, and that was it. Well here I am, and my battalion commander looked at me, … and shook his head, says, "We'll give you a try." Basically, what's he going to say, I'm here. So, he assigned me to C Company and I became an infantry platoon leader. Now, being an infantry platoon leader there are some unique jobs. Obviously, you're not in combat but you're surrounded by, you know, the Berlin Wall is a hundred plus miles around, and it's 110 miles inside of East Germany, and thousands of Russians, and thousands of East German soldiers all around you. You do all the skills you do as an infantry platoon leader, … all the practices of movement to contact, rifle qualifications, a lot of marching again. We walked all over the city of Berlin. … All we had in an infantry company at that particular time, … the commander had a jeep, the first sergeant had a jeep, and the company had a couple of two and a half ton trucks and the mortar platoon had three quarter ton trucks and that was it. So, we walked everywhere. I guess the most unique thing I did at that particular time was guarding Rudolf Hess. You know who Rudolf Hess is, right? … Rudolf Hess was the idea man for Nazi Germany. Rudolf Hess

was Hitler's number two guy in the early parts of his rise to power. Hess had been obviously a Nazi for a long time. … During World War I was in southern Germany, he went to Bavaria, he actually studied history. … He learned about the whole idea of lebensraum, living space, and he believed that the German Reich should move east. This is a lot of the place where Hitler got his ideas of lebensraum. Now, at the conclusion of World War II, all the Nazi war criminals that survived, the big guys, were all put in Spandau Prison. There was about a dozen of them. Hess was the last one there when I was there in 1972, really it was the winter of '72, '73, and I was assigned as the platoon leader of the American platoon that would guard Rudolf Hess. We did it on a quarterly basis, the French, the Russians, the British, and ourselves. … Now, I didn't do the change of command with the Russians because we were … there for three months and I was in between, but this room we're in is about as big as the area that Hess walked around and we were not the professional wardens, we just guarded the prison itself. Can we break a minute please?

[TAPE PAUSED]

DD: … Okay, back in Sixth Infantry, here I am with Captain Eddie Woody who was a really first-class soldier, and the fellows I was platoon leaders with were excellent. … Woody had been to Vietnam as a helicopter pilot and as an infantry company commander, had a Distinguished Service Cross as a LRRP in the Ninth Infantry Division. The Distinguished Service Cross is the second-highest medal that our country gives. Also was quite a great aviator, flew Cobras there. … I didn't realize this, a lot of professional soldiers at the time of the Berlin Brigade, it wasn't his first time in Berlin. People who joined the Berlin Brigade tended to continue trying to get stationed to come back to Berlin, and his wife was a Berliner, and he had first served in Berlin as a sergeant. So it was not unusual for people to do this. As I got to know my senior NCOs, my squad leaders and my platoon sergeant, they also had married girls from Berlin and they would come back from multiple tours and it was not unusual, and I didn't realize this, … if you were in the infantry after you served more than half your tour in Vietnam, at that time, you could reenlist if you signed up for three or four more years in the Army and you come back to another duty station if this was like more than your second tour in Vietnam. So there were a lot of people who used to enlist to come to Berlin. … It was a unique place, everyone had a very, very good military record or you couldn't get there, especially enlisted soldiers. You couldn't have any Article 15s, you couldn't have any non-judicial punishment, you had to be, you know, the best of the best to be there, and if you gave any inclination of not being that, you were soon shipped out of Berlin. In fact, there was one young kid in our company who put on his greens to go downtown with his girlfriend and get his picture taken. … He told some of the idiots, excuse me, some of his fellow soldiers that he was going downtown to jump over the wall and they told someone that. … [laughter] He was out of Berlin by the end of the week, so you couldn't even joke about that sort of stuff. … We laugh about it now but it was very serious business, you know, you're like the tripwire of the Free World, being stationed in Berlin in the early 1970s, and there was always very serious business, I guess, I'm not sounding as serious as I should be. It was very serious business being stationed there, always on constant alert, like I said, I had the opportunity to guard Rudolf Hess, he's one of the people you see in the history books. … I often used to talk about that when I was a history teacher. … We'd look at that and we'd say, "How about that." You'd watch World War II movies and say, "I know that guy." … Rudolf Hess and I used to walk shoulder to shoulder when he was out in the garden walking around in the middle of the wintertime with his big heavy Nazi greatcoat on, but he would never

talk to you. He wasn't supposed to talk to you and if you talked to him he'd report [you]. … We were all briefed on this before. … The prison itself, a very small room, maybe a 20 x 20 room that was the orderly room, and when the Americans were there, the prison itself was not in great shape. It was our orderly room when the Russians, and the British and the French, there were actually barracks in the prison also, but when the Russians were there, they all lived in that 20 x 20 room, a whole Russian platoon. Now think about this; eating, cooking, everything associated with being in that same room, because they never wanted to let them see what a barracks was like and the barracks was no great shake. It wasn't as good as the barracks they had over at the headquarters in McNair Kaserne in the other part of … Berlin. Spandau was a different section of Berlin, maybe an hour's ride away. Berlin's a big city. … Even today it's the biggest city in Europe, land wise. … There were farms in Berlin in the inside of the wall. There was a very urban area in the Mitte in the center of city, it was very urban, very industrial, you know like any other big world capital. … A third of the city was woods, the Grunewald and a third of the city was water, the Wannsee and the other associated lakes, and a third of the city was land. … Where we were in Zehlendorf, the American district where the Americans were, was very much like Westfield, New Jersey. … I did not figure that out until I came back there in 2006 and I looked around and said, "This looks like the place I live." … You took a train into the center of the city, people here in Westfield take a train to New York City every day. It took you about half an hour to get there. It takes you about half an hour to take the train from here to New York City. … I started talking to one of my friends who was still a friend, Peter, who was a Berlin policeman when I was a Lieutenant, and I said, "Peter this is amazing, I'm living in the same town I lived in--just an observation--trees." Zehlendorf had not changed from 1940, it was the same, it really was the same. They didn't have any heavy bombing, there was no war damage to speak of, downtown was obliterated, on the east side at that particular time it was very drab and dour and they had no lights, and people were, everything you wanted to know about a Communist country it was there in East Berlin, and that was the best place in the East, and the people still had to wait months for refrigerators or cars and consumer goods and things like that.

NM: Did the enlisted men in the Berlin Brigade tend to be the people who volunteered for service or were they drafted into the military?

DD: They were draftees, a lot of them had served already. They were professionals. … Obviously, after your first tour, if you stayed in the Army, you were a professional soldier. A lot of them were, a lot of them were draftees, but you know though the Army's personal process they were the best of the best draftees, in particular, the guys in the infantry, and MPs. … Let me tell you what the Berlin Brigade was, first of all, that might help explain [the environment]. There were three infantry battalions when I was there, each of about 800 people, … there was a tank company plus, another 250 people. There was a special troops battalion, engineers, signal, quartermaster, supply and service, and the headquarters of the Brigade. There was a very large Army security agency, which were the electronic intelligence gathering, the equivalent of a brigade of Army intelligence agents, a couple, I don't really know anymore, but probably several hundred Army ASA. There was a small special forces detachment that at that particular time, there were not supposed to be any elite troops in Berlin but you know what, they were all elite troops, but the special forces guys in Detachment A, you didn't see much of them, and they didn't wear uniforms and most of them were multilingual in a lot of different languages and then there was the Air Force. The Air Force was in Berlin also, Tempelhof Airport, and all the associated

transportation that came in and out of the city. On top of that, there was a very small organization called, which was really in Potsdam, which was there from World War II treaty agreements which were the US Mission to East Germany and there was a British Mission to East Germany, the Soviet zone, not East Germany, and Soviet Zone of Germany. There was a British mission there, there was a French mission, there was an American mission there, and a Russian mission. … The Russians had the same thing in Frankfurt, there was another one for the Brits in Braunschweig, the British sector and there was in southern France, there was one for the French in Baden-Baden. So we were all entered in that area, maybe it's Saar, I'm not exactly sure exactly where. … These guys were really spies with uniforms. They were allowed to drive wherever they wanted to drive within the city or within that zone of Germany. There were three groups of Russians down in West Germany, in what we called the Zone, and there were three groups of Allied soldiers in Potsdam. … Later when I got the Potsdam after the [Berlin] Wall came down years and years later what a beautiful place Potsdam was. [Editor's Note: The Berlin Wall, which divided East Berlin and West Berlin since 1961, was demolished in 1989.] … It was neat. We didn't see much of them. We were very much concerned with our own skills of being infantry soldiers. Now, we would go to West Germany to an area called Hohenfels or Wildflecken and we would go there every year, we'd go there twice a year for a month. So do the numbers. If you're there twice a year for a month, and you're there twelve months, you're out of the city two months there. If you go to … Spandau guard duty you'd go two weeks at a time all right, that's another two weeks you can be away. You're out on the Grunewald training which was again not that far away, easy, … doing weapons and maneuver training. In the springtime, Memorial Day, a lot of parades and official ceremonies because Allied Forces Day, the liberation of the city, … you always had several parades you had to participate in, I mean multi-division, thousands of people in these parades. We would roll, the Americans, the British, and the French, would have a parade on what we called Memorial Day, they called Allied Forces Day, same time of the year. We had marched out Straße des 17. Juni, one of the large boulevards in Berlin. … I know there were always a lot of antiwar demonstrations by the German people who didn't want us in Vietnam, and they would always be looking at us and hollering and screaming and calling us whatever. … The Russians did not participate after the Wall went up, the Russians stopped participating in this parade, but they always came and watched and same thing with May Day, over on the East. The Russians had a big May Day. The Russians and East Germans used to march down Unter den Linden in Berlin on the east side, and we'd go over and watch, and it was very unusual. … We were allowed to go to … East Berlin as visitors. Obviously, you wore your dress uniform. It was funny because, and this is a little quirky thing; in Berlin we never wore nametags and supposedly that was to keep the Russians from finding out who we were. … All it kept us was from trying to learn everyone's name because we didn't have nametags. Our army fatigues had nametags on them but the greens never did. Eventually, all the lieutenants got to know who the lieutenants were, but you know, and obviously rank told you who was in charge there. But a trip to East Berlin, you had to get something called "flag orders" which we called flag orders because in order to go to West Germany you had to have flag orders, and the flag orders, I wish I had kept a copy of them, I never kept a copy of them, I used to throw them away, but anyway, had the American, the Russian, the British, and the French flag on top of them, that's why they were called flag orders. They were in English, in Russian, in whatever the language was, but not in German, because we didn't deal with the East Germans, we dealt with the Russians. So as we drove through Checkpoint Charlie to go shopping, or to go look at the Russian war memorials, or whatever we were going to do, we didn't pay any attention to the East

Germans, we just drove right through. … They knew we weren't going to pay attention, it was a game, and we'd just drive right through. … If you had a friend with you who was an American dependent, like my sister visited me, and she was allowed to come with me in my car because she was, I claimed her as a dependent, but she had a girlfriend with her. … The girlfriend, she had to go through the East Germans, so they give her lots of hard stares, and lots of talking to, and when you left, you had to exchange all the money you had with you for East Marks and when you left you couldn't bring East Marks out of the country, it had to be donated to the East German Red Cross i.e. the East German Army. … I used to take all our money, and put it in my pocket, and we'd meet her on the other side. … The same thing, we had friends who came and visited us from other parts of Germany. If they weren't American military dependents, same thing had to happen. … In the early '70s, it was a little more different, it was disconcerting. If you drove from, first of all, you weren't allowed to drive on the autobahn so you had to take the train. … You saw the guards, the machine guns, the dogs, the death strip. If you're a high school kid or a young kid, it's a little unnerving to see all this, and you don't understand it till you get there to see it. So, my cousins came to visit me and they saw this and obviously they weren't my dependents, so they saw all these things.

NM: It sounds like you kept in close contact with your family while you were in Germany.

DD: A little bit, … not like today; a phone call once in a while, lots of letters, especially to my mother. … She would always call me up on New Jersey time. [laughter] We had phones but they weren't, you had no Internet. … So, if she's calling me six o'clock New Jersey time, it's twelve o'clock Berlin time at night, … six hour time difference, five, six hour time difference depending on if it's daylight savings or not. So, yes, but not as often as you think. … Kids who get deployed today, they talk to their families daily, you know, if I got a monthly letter that was a lot, and when I left I didn't come home. … I was gone for three years, no excuse me, I did come home once, and I was so bored at home, I was supposed to be home for two weeks, I was back in a week. There just wasn't anything here in the United States for me [except] obviously, my family. … I got back on the airplane, went back to Germany, because I was having a good time. I think my parents understood, but I mean, what can I say.

NM: You said that your cousins and sister visited you in Germany.

DD: My sister came when she was in high school, she was a junior in high school, and she came, … she came with a girlfriend. … We went to Bavaria, we went to Heidelberg, we went to Berlin. She was here for two weeks. It was a big deal for her. Obviously, a high school, seventeen years old, and never traveled before. … It was unusual and to have your little sister with. … I was 26, she was, 16 at the time.

NM: I wanted to draw out some details about your experience in Germany. You mentioned that you saw people protesting the Vietnam War while you were stationed there.

DD: Oh, yes, absolutely. … I saw many more antiwar protests in West Berlin than I ever saw back in New Jersey, or back in the United States and much more violent. I won't say violent, but more active, you know, German police did not hesitate to use their clubs or tear gas or their dogs to break up riots. No one in the east, not that there would be a war protest, but they wouldn't

even think about rioting because the East Germans were much more severe than the West Berlin police force ever was. … I have to tell you, I was very lucky to be stationed there. … One of the reasons why I selected there, the creature comforts. Even though probably if I was in a typical year I was in Berlin ten out of twelve months, because we were always out training and training cycles just like everyone else, and you didn't have a lot of free time, but there were many, you know, think about what you could do in a city like Berlin instead of being stationed someplace in West Germany. Now, obviously we couldn't drive to Paris on the weekend, or to Amsterdam, but we could go downtown to the capital of Europe, I mean, you know, you could go to downtown Berlin, lots of social life if you wanted it. I played more golf there than I played in a long time. … They had a nice golf course. Met some good German friends who I still have. One, my friend, Peter (Barnicle?) who when I was in the executive officer of the Headquarters Company, he was in the (Bridenshaft?) Polizei, that's the special action police like the SWAT team of the Berlin police force, and we became friendly. … He was a golfer and I was a golfer and we used to play golf. It's funny because they wouldn't let him in the golf course. Actually, during World War II, he was born in 1937, so he was ten years older than me, his family lived around the golf course in that part of Berlin. However, in 1970, he couldn't even get on the golf course because he was a German but he came with me. As a kid, he caddied at the golf course, [we had] like similar experiences, he was a caddie, I was a caddie, but we played golf a couple times and it was really funny because when the American forces left in 1994, they gave the golf course back. There were 27 holes of golf, the Americans took as wartime reparations, we took 18 of the 27 holes from the Germans. It was an American golf course. … He now is the captain of the senior team of the Berlin Wannsee golf course. He's quite a good golfer, much better golfer that I am even today. … His family was very kind to me, very opening, I spent Christmas at his house one winter, it was very nice. … We still corresponded back and forth, but we'll talk about that later when I get back to Berlin in 2006 as a retired guy. …

[TAPE PAUSED]

NM: When you first get that there as a young officer, did you get advice from your NCOs who had been there a while?

DD: Oh, absolutely. My first platoon Sergeant, was actually a survivor of the Bataan Death March, he was a Filipino. [Editor's Note: The Bataan Death March began in April 1942 in the after tens of thousands of Filipinos and Americans had surrendered to Japanese forces during the invasion of the Philippines. Thousands would die during the relocation.] Oh, yes, a Filipino American's name, his name was (Hepa?). … Obviously, think about this, he spent all of World War II, or most of it, in a Japanese prison camp. When the war ended, he stayed in the American Army, spent most of the Korean War in Korea, had been in Vietnam at least two times as a platoon sergeant and here it is 1971, '72, and he's just worn out, very much, I'd listen to him, but he was just tired, I mean he was worn. Think about that, … let's just say he's been in the American Army since '41, it's now '71, 30 years right? Probably three and a half years as a prisoner of war, maybe eighteen months in Korea, two years at least, maybe three years in Vietnam--he had at least two, maybe three tours in Vietnam. Think about it, he was just worn out, burned out, and he died of cancer. … His other place he used to be stationed was Hawaii. Eventually, he was buried in Hawaii at the Punchbowl, just unusual but he was a professional soldier, I mean he really was. … NCOs keep their lieutenants away from problems and he kept

me away from problems. The squad leaders who I had in my platoon were again professional soldiers. They were all, they were long time multi-year, probably twelve to fifteen years as squad leaders, and they were of service already, and you think about it, lieutenants pass through platoons, the platoon sergeant stays forever. We might get to be a platoon leader, if we're lucky, a year, and then we're off to be a company executive officer somewhere, but these guys stay there for, … if their tour is three years, they're on the job for three years. … I learned very much to depend on even as a lieutenant and later on as a senior officer, depend on my NCOs to make sure things happen, because they're what makes things happen in the military. The officers pass through, you're only borrowing the platoon from them, or the battalion, or the brigade that you're in charge of, you're only borrowing that organization from the NCOs who live and breathe and do everything for you. … They tolerated me, and they gave me a lot of good advice. I was lucky to have them, was lucky to serve with them, all of them, the draftees and the regulars.

NM: What was the relationship like with the civilian population in Berlin with the American military?

DD: You know what, it was pretty good, even today it's pretty good. I actually was back in Berlin in 2010 as a guest of the city of Berlin. We can talk about that a little later I guess in the interview. Yes, they valued, you know they had a wall around [them], they knew if the wall came down and if we left, they'd be taking orders from the Russians, and there are a lot of people who remembered the Russians and what they did in the conquering of Berlin by the Russian Army after the war. So, yes, they were very friendly, the young Germans friendly too, but very much anti-military for the most part, I mean that the military soldiers themselves but the organization, because Berlin was the only place in Germany, if you were a German, that you didn't have to serve in the Bundeswehr. If you're a young German guy you were going to serve in the Bundeswehr but if you are living in Berlin you didn't have to serve in the Bundeswehr. So, therefore, it attracted, … I won't say they were draft dodgers, but a lot of young Germans came to Berlin to avoid their military service, not everyone, believe me, but the Free University is a very liberal institution, all the liberal ideas that go along with universities, and the Vietnam War was unpopular there as much as it was here. So that was that, and they knew many of the soldiers who served in Berlin had been either going to Vietnam, or had served there already, but very friendly, go out of their way to be nice to you, everyone spoke English. If you made an attempt to speak some German, they were very helpful. If they didn't want to speak to you in German it's probably because they just didn't want talk to you at that particular time, but they could usually understand you.

NM: Can you talk about the differences in what you saw between West Germany as compared to East Germany?

DD: Oh, absolutely, yes. It [East Germany] was a police state, I mean everyone was always looking over their shoulder, I'm sure when I stepped across the border there were someone following me, not that I really cared, because I wasn't going to do anything wrong, but it was just the culture that they grew up in, with the Stasi and everyone else. If I went to a restaurant to eat, which I did obviously, I always got special attention. I can remember one restaurant, the (Emeralhous?). It was a restaurant … for communist functionaries, they used to eat at. … It was a very good restaurant but to show up there in an American military uniform, I even remember I

took my sister to dinner there and her girlfriend and walked in, an old guy playing the piano, and he'd talk to you. He'd be playing all the old tunes from the 1940s and the early '50s, and everyone looking at you. … You had to be on your best behavior, you couldn't really do anything crazy. … You just had to be on your best behavior when you were there. … You go into a restaurant in West Berlin, it was just like any place in the United States, very informal, very cutting-edge. … It was really neat place to be growing up in the 1970s, I was very lucky to be there, and I was very lucky being a bachelor I guess being there to. What time we had, we trained hard, but you also had time to … relax, too.

NM: You mentioned when you went to East Germany that you had no interaction with the civilian population.

DD: Oh, yes, a little bit, you could say hello to them. Excuse me for not being clear, you could say hello to them, you could ask them directions. The older East Germans citizens would talk to you. You could go buy stuff from their department stores, very inexpensive. East German Marks were about four to one with West German Marks at that time. A West German Mark was maybe a little, like closer to three to one with a dollar. So, therefore, you can get Marks, very inexpensive, you know, maybe ten Marks for a dollar, and you can eat in the best restaurants and spend $2.50, three dollars. … You could buy adult beverages, let's say Stolichnaya Vodka, you used to be able to buy it for fifty cents a bottle. … I'm not a big vodka drinker, but I know that it costs more than you can buy that now in the United States. It's a lot more expensive than that right now. You could buy Cuban cigars if you were a smoker, because the Cubans were big allies of the Germans, the East Germans. You could see Vietnamese there, you could see Cubans there, you can see people from all these blocs, but he had to be aware of what you were buying, because if you bought up too many, … you go into the department store, which there was only really one big department store, the name I forget. … The consumer goods weren't worth buying. Some of the technical things like film and cameras were worth buying, but if you bought it, and you bought up the whole supply of it, you know, you get some strange looks because they wouldn't be available for the East German citizens to buy, and sometimes you'd see whole--because East Berlin is very close to Poland--whole busloads of Polish citizens would come in and they'd buy all the consumer goods and that caused a lot of hard feelings with the East Germans. … Let's say they bought all the photographic film, because the consumer goods no matter how cheap and how poorly made they were in East Berlin, … the further you go east the worse they were I think. So if they had a chance to buy German goods they bought German goods, because German goods were always pretty good. … There were never a lot of consumer goods for the people to sell, you know, cars, nonexistent. … The Trabant which is the East German car was shabby, glass and crystal ware they sold, and you could buy it, things like that, but there wasn't a lot to buy. … How many East German flags do you want to buy? I mean, you don't want any of them, to tell you the truth, or things like pictures of tanks, there just wasn't a lot, but you could drive down the main street, Unter den Linden, and there wasn't a lot there, there just wasn't a lot of consumer goods, not like today. Today, it's beautiful on the East German side, the Mitte, the center of city. It's all rebuilt.

NM: Did any posturing between the Soviets and the United States take place while you were there that impacted your unit? Was any of that obvious?

DD: Part of it was, if you drove in and around (Karlstors?) which was the Russian headquarters in the East, you would see lots, you would see a heavy, heavy Russian presence. Obviously, if you're there around May Day, all the flags … of all the Russian and East German flags … were up, getting ready for the very large military parades. You didn't see the Russian soldiers because they never left their barracks, they weren't out, they weren't allowed out. The East Germans you saw in uniform, they obviously would not make contact with you. The East German citizens were very curious of the Americans. … If you happened to see a group of East Bloc tourists, or they happened to see you, they were completely curious, because they had never seen, and here they are in the socialist headquarters in the capital of socialism, and you see an American walking around. They would look twice, especially the Cubans. There were Cubans there, and they'd look at you, and go what, what is this, why are there Americans here. … East Berlin was the showplace of communism at that particular time. So, if they saw an American soldier walking around, or they saw me driving, at that time I had a 1970 Volvo, which was a pretty nice little car especially for a young kid driving that around in the east. So, I mean, it was nothing special over on the west side, but it was very special in the east. You got a lot of strange looks especially in the restaurant. I can remember going to the small restaurants, and people just looking at you, like, "What are you doing here?" Normally, we were there at lunchtime, and not at dinnertime because by dinnertime we were back in the west. Only a couple times, and you have to remember, … I'm talking like I was there … all the time and it's not the case. Maybe I was in East Berlin half a dozen plus times, because you didn't have that opportunity, you had to be a soldier. You just couldn't go there all the time, and there were other things, and why would you want to. … The best thing I can say is when all of the big German international conglomerates all had lots of lights, and they all face the east, so if you're sitting there in the east you could see all these beautiful lit up buildings, everything is modern, everything shiny, and on the east side of the Wall there were no lights, it was dark and dingy and drab. … It just wasn't there.

NM: While you are in Berlin, were there any periods where there were increased tensions with the Soviets or the East Germans.?

DD: You know what, I don't remember, I'm sure there were sometimes, but we were busy being soldiers. … You're a lieutenant, you're at the bottom of the food chain. So, no it wasn't obvious to me, it just wasn't. … My world revolved around the second platoon of Charlie Company of the Sixth Infantry or the Headquarters Company of the Berlin Brigade and I was a lieutenant, and I didn't, obviously I talked to some captains, didn't talk to any majors or lieutenant colonels, and it was really a big deal to see a colonel or a brigadier general. I mean come on, the brigade commander was a brigadier general, he was the only one. … There were maybe a couple colonels and everyone else was a lieutenant colonel. … Your universe was a lot smaller than that, your lieutenants are who you socialized with.

NM: Could you describe what a typical day was like?

DD: Okay, a typical day, you got up, first formation was 6:30, seven o'clock; breakfast in the mess hall if you ate it there. Vehicle maintenance and training, weapons maintenance and training, lunchtime, more training, PT, always sometime during the day, not that much so. … I look at soldiers today and they do a lot more PT than we did then. … Because of the nature of

where we were, a lot of spit and polish, … everything was first-class, everything was the best America had. I'll give you one example. There was always an immediate reaction force, if someone was, some East German which occasionally they did, tried to escape and got caught in the wire, we were supposed to go get them. … That only happened once, where a fellow by the name of Peter Fechter I believe the name was, the East Germans let him die in the wire, down by Checkpoint Charlie, right off to the right of Checkpoint Charlie, and the Americans said they'd never let that happen again, so they made an immediate reaction force to deal with that and that happened in the early '60s, right when the wall went up. [Editor's Note: Peter Fechter was shot during an attempt to escape East Berlin. He would bleed to death in the barbed wire between East Berlin and West Berlin.] … By the '70s it was very sophisticated. Your infantry platoon had armored personnel carriers, which was not the case, there was only one platoon of armored personnel carriers in the whole battalion. Your platoon was given armored personnel carriers for the week you had this duty, you had an attachment of combat engineers and their engineer vehicles, you had a platoon of tanks, and you had all the communications gear in the world, and you had a codebook, and a special key that you hung around your neck so your radio could be secured. Your cell phone today probably has more security than that radio had, but it enabled you to talk to anyone within your universe, and enabled you to have direct communication and when you had that duty, it went for a week. … Several times you had alerts where you had to move to certain places within the city and sometimes it happened in the daytime, more than not it usually happened at night, just because there's too much traffic in the daytime to take tanks and armored personnel carriers and run through the middle of city, unless it really, really was an emergency so we knew it was going to happen in the very early morning or the late-night this was going to happen and we'd always do this, you'd always have, everyone would always come and inspect you, and they'd always test you, and you would make sure you were familiar with your weapons, and your personal gear, and like I said, you'd be called out, but you could figure out when the call out was going to be because you'd see always see a German MP, German police cars around, because you couldn't drive through, you couldn't take five or six of our personnel carriers, an engineer vehicle, four or five tanks and just drive through the middle of Berlin at thirty miles an hour. … You kind of figured what was going to happen, but there was always one surprise, and you did that for a week. I think it was a week, it was multiple days, and you basically stayed dressed all the time, and were ready to go all the time during that time period. … That was probably the most stressful time, that and you didn't want anyone to embarrass you when you were on Spandau prison duty obviously, you know, when you're guarding Rudolf Hess, which was not that hard to do either because, you know what, the biggest thing is to keep the guards from not falling asleep in the tower, because Rudolf Hess wasn't leaving, he had a professional guard force around him. … Usually a month at a time we went to West Germany to train, to Wildflecken or Hohenfels usually. If you're an artilleryman, or if you were a tanker, you'd go to Grafenwoehr which was adjacent to Hohenfels. It's all part of the same complex.

NM: Was this just the Berlin Brigade that did this?

DD: Well, all the units in West Germany trained at these locations. Now, the difference is, they could drive there usually in one day. For us it was a multiple day trip because we had to go through East Germany, and there was only one route, one officially approved group that you could go there. You probably could've driven straight down the autobahn to get to Bamberg and

go straight, I think it's the U4 Audubon but we had to go out and make a big left turn and come down south into Bavaria. So, it was usually a three-day march. … Vehicles always break down when they're driven hundreds of miles at high speeds because they're not made to be doing that, they're made to be driven over tactical. … Not all the soldiers you had would fit in the vehicles, so therefore the majority of the soldiers would travel on the train, which was an overnight trip, so you coordinated all that. Sometimes you were in the convoy, and sometimes you were on the train. I only went on the train. I never was in one of those convoys.

NM: Did you have any contact with the British or the French in West Germany?

DD: Didn't have much contact with them, a little bit. Once in a while we did … some joint training, we did shop at their stores and they did shop at our PX. We did eat at the French restaurants, there was a French restaurant, the (Pavilion de Luc?), everyone liked to go and eat the French food there, just more of a novelty than anything else. The Brits and the French used to come to our place, and we'd buy, you could buy wine from the Frenchmen. … The British had nothing you wanted. [laughter] The French really didn't have a whole lot we wanted either to tell you the truth, but it was just the novelty of going to see the kasernes. We did socialize with some of the British officers. … They were a little younger than we were. … If we were 23, 24, they might have been 20, 21. I think their system produced officers a little sooner the way it worked, I'm not sure. I could be wrong, I don't know.

NM: The French units that you had some interaction with, did they speak English?

DD: No, not a lot. Again, they were draftees like we were draftees, they didn't spent a lot of time. The British and the French rotated units in and out of Berlin, where the American units were stationed in Berlin forever. … We moved people, they moved units, which is a difference in what we did at that particular time.

NM: Is there anything you want to add to your time that first year in Germany?

DD: … That's about it, we can take up I guess talking about the headquarters which was a completely different set of challenges. … I probably wound up there because I probably wasn't an airborne ranger and I wasn't going to be a career officer. … One of the few times I talked with my battalion commander, he said, "Do you want to become a support platoon leader?" And I wasn't smart enough to pick up on it, and support platoon was the people who had all the truck drivers, had all the ammo specialists, had all the people who supported infantry, all the non-infantry MOSs, and I said, "I'm not too interested in that." He said, "Okay," and before I knew it I was the executive officer of the Headquarters Company of the Berlin Brigade which in retrospect, was pretty good. It meant I didn't have to go to West Germany to train with the infantry battalions but I had a lot of different challenges. …

NM: We can pick up where we left off in the next interview.

DD: … Okay, sounds good. …

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Reviewed by Nicholas Trajano Molnar 6/13/2014
Reviewed by Dennis Dougherty 7/23/2014
Reviewed by Molly Graham 7/30/2014